

The Divine Sonship of Christ

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"When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the Law"

Gal. 4:4

PART THREE

THE Josephite theory creates a difficulty which is insurmountable. **If Christ was a mere man, how is it that he was sinless?** Was any other man ever known or heard of without sin? Experience says "No;" and the Bible says —

"There is not a man that liveth and sinneth not."

"If any man say he has no sin, he is a liar, and deceiveth himself."

How, then, are we to explain the fact that Jesus was without sin?

The testimony which the Josephites would throw overboard, explains it, because it reveals the source of Christ's high capacity and impulse in a divine direction, in a **divine paternity**.

This explains everything. The clay of fallen human nature, in the hands of the Divine Potter, was fashioned unto the likeness of the divine: that by the instrumentality thus established, a door of escape from the pit might be opened for this doomed race. Admit that Jesus was the son of Joseph, and then it is not true that —

"God hath concluded all under sin."

It is not true that —

"All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

For Jesus is an exception: he was sinless, and yet by this theory a mere man; and if Jesus was sinless any other man might have been sinless; and Christ's being the Messiah was a mere accident; every man his own saviour, and Christ's Name ("JEHOVAH shall save by an Anointed") a great fallacy! This is the conclusion to which the Josephite premises lead.

THE APOSTLES AND THE MIRACULOUS CONCEPTION

THE Josephites say if the apostles held the doctrine of the miraculous conception, it would have been as prominent in their teaching as it is in the religious writing of the present day.

SO IT IS. Nothing is more prominent in all their writings than that Jesus is the Son of God, and every time this proposition is affirmed, the miraculous conception is proclaimed; for the divine sonship of Christ is a myth without it.

But the Josephites argue that because the phrase "miraculous conception," or some literal equivalent is not made use of by the Apostles, they did not believe that Jesus was the Son of God in that way.

Apply this to cases of ordinary paternity, and the fallacy will be apparent. We say such a man is son to so-and-so; we do not go further. The rest is implied—maternity is understood. The means are always involved in the expressed result.

It is sufficient to say that Jesus is the Son of God. The iteration of this statement is virtually a repetition and prominent setting forth of the miraculous conception; for it involves it. Jesus could not be the Son of God without it.

If other men who have not been miraculously conceived are called "sons of God," it is because they acquire this title from Christ, and possess it only in prospect of being made like him —

"We are all the children of God **through faith in Christ Jesus**" (Gal. 3:26).

By union with him, they are legally covered with his Name, and incorporate with his relationship. They are not adopted till the resurrection (Rom. 8:23; Luke 20:36). They are only sons by virtue of connection with him who was primitively and pre-eminently **THE SON OF GOD**.

The relation had its origin in him, and in judging of what constituted that relationship we must not look at those who have only a borrowed title; and say that because that they are mere men; therefore Jesus was.

PAUL'S TESTIMONY

THE Josephites demand a quotation from Paul (who, they point out, "declared the **WHOLE** counsel of God") in proof of the miraculous conception.

We possess but a fragment of the speeches to which Paul refers, when he said he had declared the whole counsel of God. What we have, however, taken in conjunction with his letters, furnish the proof desired. The very first thing recorded of him is that after his conversion —

"Straightway he preached Jesus in the synagogue, that **HE IS THE SON OF GOD**"
(Acts 9:20).

If it was believed at the time by any considerable section of professed disciples that Jesus was the son of Joseph (which the Josephites contend was the case), this shows the side of the question Paul took.

To say that he simply preached that Jesus was the son of Joseph, was raised from the dead and that this is what he meant by preaching that Christ was Son of God, is to play with words.

The resurrection of a son of Joseph is one thing; declaring that such a man is the Son of God, quite another. The propositions are not interchangeable. Christ was the Son of God **BEFORE** his resurrection.

A crowning proof is furnished in the incident recorded in connection with the cured blind man, who was cast out of the synagogue for confessing Jesus (John 9:35-37)—

"Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and when he found him, he said unto him,
"Dost thou believe on the **SON OF GOD**?
"He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?
"And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is **HE THAT TALKETH WITH THEE**" (John 9:35-37).

When Paul, therefore, "straightway preached that Jesus was the Son of God," he proclaimed something that was a fact previous to Christ's resurrection.

Did he simply preach that the son of Joseph, a righteous man, was filled with the Holy Spirit? The suggestion seems absurd. He brought before their notice a man whose origin was direct from God, and, therefore, who was Son of God, as declared by his resurrection.

Paul's letters, more than Paul's speeches, (which are scarcely preserved), furnish conclusive evidence of the miraculous conception. In Gal. 4:4, he says —

"When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth **HIS SON**, made of a woman, made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."

The Josephites try to escape the force of this by citing the language of Job —

"Man that is BORN OF A WOMAN is of few days, and full of trouble."

As a mere matter of words, there is a coincidence, but the subject and nature of the allusions are as different as possible. In Job's use of the words, one can see the poetical association of weakness of origin with ephemerality of nature: but there is no poetry in Paul's words. His is the language of fact and logic.

He is here stating the mode of deliverance adopted by God with reference to those who, under the Law, were in hopeless condemnation. He says God "sent forth HIS SON" (not that He adopted a son of Joseph); and, indicating the method of the sending, he adds "made of a woman."

This agrees with Luke, Matthew, and Isaiah, who say that for this purpose, He begat a Son of His Own by a virgin of the house of David, overshadowing her with the creative power of the Holy Spirit.

It is very significant that Paul should have inserted the words "made of a woman" in such a connection. They are not the only words in which Paul, in declaring the whole counsel of God, affirms the divine sonship of Jesus. He says (Rom. 8:3)—

"What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God (hath done in) sending HIS own SON in the likeness of sinful flesh."

Here the sonship of Christ is placed in contrast to the weakness of the flesh. The Josephite theory destroys the contrast, since it makes Jesus part and parcel of that flesh, the weakness of which, Paul says made salvation impossible.

SON OF GOD FROM BIRTH

JESUS was the Son of God in his sending forth, and not merely at some stage of his life. He was Son of God by constitution. How else are we to understand Paul's other words—

"THOUGH HE WERE A SON, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered"
(Heb. 5:8).

Did he not learn obedience before he was thirty? Did the Father not pronounce Himself "well-pleased" with him at that age, at his baptism, which was part and parcel of his obedience? And what was the basis of this approval, publicly proclaimed, if it was not his obedience which he had learned? This obedience he HAD learned "though he were a SON."

Therefore he was a Son in the first instance, instead of only becoming one in some recondite sense by the anointing of the spirit at his baptism. He was a Son, because of his direct procreation by the Father through Mary, without human intervention.

This explains Paul's other words, in which, declaring the counsel of God, he virtually affirms the miraculous conception, those in which he quotes Ps. 40:6-8—

"When he cometh into the world he saith, Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but A BODY hast Thou prepared me . . . Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God."

"He taketh away the first that he may establish the second, by the which will, we are sanctified by the offering of THE BODY OF JESUS CHRIST once for all."

All this is intelligible in view of the miraculous conception. The sacrifices under the Law were incapable of taking away sin (v. 4), because the sin of a human being could never be punished in an animal. Sin requires the death of the sinner; the Law admits of no substitution. It fastens on the offender and destroys him, and that which commits him to destruction holds him in destruction.

The only remedy in the case was the one that has been adopted, and that was for God to manifest Himself in the nature under condemnation, and meeting the full requirements of the Law in death,

vanquish it in a resurrection necessitated (on account of sinlessness) by its own operation. This plan was foreshadowed in the words of the Spirit through David—

"Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not."

As an ultimate arrangement, sacrifices were worthless. They were merely part and parcel of a provisional order of things, established intermediately to teach preparatory lessons, and pointing, allegorically, to the real remedy in contemplation. As a final means (which ignorance was apt to regard them)—

"In them Thou hast no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come."

The Spirit was to accomplish the real work, and to enable it to do this—

"A body hast Thou prepared me."

The body required to be sin's flesh, that is, the nature of Adam, which by reason of sin, was under condemnation. This was one ingredient in the preparation—

"He took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham."

"He was made sin."

"He was sent forth in the likeness of sinful flesh."

But had the body been a mere product of Adamic procreation, it would not have been serviceable for the purpose. A mere human being would have been a sinner.

Had Jesus been the natural son of Joseph, he would not have been the body prepared; because as the son of Joseph, he would not have been sinless, and though he might have "died for our sins," he could not, as a sinner, have risen again, for that which kept all the children of Adam in bondage would have held him, and the scheme of salvation would have been a failure.

It is in resurrection after suffering where the success is achieved (1 Cor. 15:17). This success, as between God and man, is limited to Christ, but he is invested with power and authority, as a mediator, to operate towards all who come unto God by him, and to dispense the results of his victory to all who receive them by faith. He is their judge and life-giver—the resurrection and the life.

Being begotten by the Spirit, Jesus was a prepared body; for by this means he was made capable of sinlessness. He received a stamp and capacity of mind which qualified him for greater accomplishments than were possible in the polluted channel of merely Adamic generations; and was thus qualified to be the Saviour of the world.

PAGAN CORRUPTIONS

AS TO the idea of miraculous conception dating back into antiquity, it is not worth much. The misapplication of truth in times of ignorance, does not destroy it. The ancients believed that the righteous became gods after death. Is it therefore untrue that it is the destiny of the righteous to become elohim, after the death state is at an end? The heathen fable was the truth in distortion.

The Babylonians believed Nimrod to have been miraculously conceived; is it therefore untrue that the true Captain of salvation—the seed of the woman—who was promised from the earliest times, and whose tradition was misapplied to Nimrod, was "sent forth made of a woman?" There is an ingredient of truth in fables sometimes.