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The Genealogies of Jesus

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THE question of the reconciliation and interpretation of the genealogies of Jesus as they appear in Matthew 1 1-17 and Luke 3 23-38 has been a subject of earnest discussion since before the time of Sextus Julius Africanus, from whom we have an explanatory reconciliation written before 240 A. D. I will not burden the reader with a review of the voluminous literature, most of which I have not read, but refer all interested to Peter Vogt, *Der Stammbaum Christi bei den heiligen Evangelisten Matthäus und Lukas* (*Biblische Studien* XII, 3, Freiburg, 1907) and to J. M. Heer, *Die Stammbäume Jesu nach Matthäus und Lukas* (*Biblische Studien*, XV, 1, 2, Freiburg, 1910). All the possible natural interpretations appeared early and have been often repeated. They are as follows: 1) Both genealogies belong to the father Joseph and the differences must be removed or explained; 2) Both belong to Joseph but do not have to be reconciled, for one represents the natural descent, the other the legal; 3) One is the genealogy of Joseph, the other of Mary. A word should perhaps be added about the second. The Jewish law required a man to take into his household the childless widow of a brother and raise up children to continue the name of the brother. Thus Joseph was said to be the natural son of Jacob but legally the son of Heli, who had died childless. As Heli and Jacob were stepbrothers having the same mother but different fathers, the two genealogies naturally gave the lines of different families, uniting however in David. Thus in substance Julius Africanus. It would have been equally easy to find the legal descent in Matthew, the natural in the Luke genealogy, and in like manner the third method of reconciliation

might have a double form according as we assign the Lucan genealogy to Mary or Joseph. Into this controversy I shall not enter. It is sufficient to note that the genealogies of Matthew and Luke differ absolutely in the portion from David to Joseph, but agree from Abraham to David. Luke alone has the part from Adam to Abraham. Furthermore, Matthew agrees with the Old Testament in the main, and for that reason his genealogy has sometimes been called the kingly genealogy, while that in Luke was called the priestly.

A different turn was given to the discussion by the discovery of a notable variation in the form of Matthew 1 16 in the Sinaitic Syriac and related authorities¹. The main points of the discussion as emphasized by this discovery are as follows: the genealogy in which descent from father to son is traced as far as Joseph appears in direct conflict with the virgin birth as set forth in the immediately following verses 18-25. This opposition is sharpest in verse 16, where we read "and Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ." Yet the only variant attested in Greek MSS is in the Ferrar group, ϕ *μνηστειθείσα παρθένος Μαριὰμ ἐγέννησεν*. This form is supported by all the more important Old Latin MSS and the Curetonian Syriac. It appears to be an intentional change, made with the thought of further harmonizing the genealogy with the virgin birth. In the oldest Syriac MS, the Sinaitic Syriac palimpsest of the fourth century, we find the opposite form: "Joseph, to whom was betrothed Mary the Virgin, begat Jesus called the Messiah." This is supported by the Syriac *Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila* and by two MSS of the Palestinian Syriac. With the publication of the Sinaitic Syriac in 1894 many scholars seized upon this peculiar variant as positive proof that the opposition between the genealogy and the divine birth was irreconcilable, and that the latter must be a later insert in the text of Matthew; it was of course claimed that Syr S represented the original Matthew text for verse 16. Yet in the work cited Burkitt with regret discards this view and derives the Old Syriac variant from the form found in the

¹ For handy citation of all the variants see Burkitt, *Introduction to Evangelion da Mepharreshe*, p. 258 ff.

Ferrar group and Old Latin MSS, while Heer p. 180 accepts the text of Syr S as old, if not original, but interprets it, "Joseph, to whom Mary the Virgin was betrothed, caused Jesus to be enrolled in the Book of Births as his son." The difficulty which the defenders have in saving the text of Matthew is apparent. The general proposition, that the genealogy is inconsistent with the virgin birth, seems practically unavoidable.

In Luke, where the story of the divine birth has never been called in question, the inconsistency is just as decided; and besides the insertion of the genealogy at 3 23 is extremely awkward, coming as it does directly after the voice from Heaven proclaiming him the son of God. Even if we should be willing to omit the whole story of the divine birth, as given in the first two chapters of Matthew and Luke, we should still find the same belief a natural inference from other passages of all four Gospels: e. g. Matthew 3 17 ("this is my beloved son"), Mark 1 1² ("Son of God"), 1 11 ("thou art my beloved son") Luke 3 22 (*ditto*), 4 41 ("thou art Christ the Son of God"), &c. Cf. John 1 34;³ 3 35, &c. For Paul note Gal. 4 4: "God *sent forth his son, made of a woman, made under the law.*" It is true that no one of these passages is convincing by itself, but their combined evidence accords with the belief in the virgin birth which was undoubtedly held by the Church from a very early period. For my purpose this is sufficient, as I do not propose to discuss its origin.

With this state of the case in the Gospels and Paul, it remains to attack the genealogies, if we will remove inconsistency. That critics have not already solved the problem in this way is not surprising, for there can be no question that the genealogy is a Jewish idea and was known to the early Church; cf. among many passages, Rom. 1 3 (of the seed of David according to the flesh), 2 Tim. 2 8 (Jesus Christ of the seed of David), Acts 13 23; John 7 42; Luke 1 32; Matthew 9 27; 21 9; 22 42; and it is implied in Luke 24 27. A genealogy was the natural adjunct

² N 28, 255 IR 191 Epiph 427 Or 1, 389 Bas Titmanieh Serap Cyr Victorin Hier omit.

³ N* 77, 218, e Syr^{cu} have "the chosen one of God."

to this Old Testament prophecy and may well have been traced out early in the history of the Church. But such a genealogy to be consistent with the divine birth must give the descent of Mary, not Joseph, as is apparently the case in both Matthew and Luke. Also in the other earlier sources the genealogy is understood to belong to Joseph and only later is it referred to Mary. The reason for this early attitude is well given by Chrysostom⁴: διὰ σωθῆναι τὴν Παρθένον, καὶ ὑποψίας ἀπαλλαγῆναι πονηρᾶς. Εἰ γὰρ τοῦτο ἐξ ἀρχῆς τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις γέγονε κατάδηλον, κἂν κατέλευσαν τὴν Παρθένον κακουργοῦντες τῷ λεγομένῳ, καὶ μοιχείας αὐτὴν ἔκριναν ἄν. Chrysostom says that this idea is not from himself but from "our fathers, wonderful and distinguished men." Who these older authorities were we do not know, but so surprising a statement points to an author old enough to know that the genealogies had been in general circulation before the story of the divine birth was taught by the Church. Yet whatsoever the earlier beliefs of the church may have been, at the time of writing the Gospels belief in the virgin birth held sway. Jesus might still be, and as we have seen from the citations above, was spoken of as the son of David; but it was quite a different matter to attempt to prove that descent by tracing his genealogy through Joseph. That is an inconsistency so direct as to force us to consider the possibility of divided authorship. Yet at whatever time the genealogies came into the text of Matthew and Luke, they are presumably derived from earlier lost documents or from still older tradition. Their admittedly ancient character, however, can not be used to bolster up their claim to a place in the present Gospels, for that is a question to be settled on the basis of text criticism, and the evidence against it, though scanty, is definite and old.

For Matthew 1 1-17 we have above noted the evident attempts in the Greek MSS of the Ferrar group, Old Latin MSS, and some Syriac authorities to accommodate the genealogy to the divine birth by a change in verse 16. Furthermore, if the text of Syr S is the earlier, all Greek MSS have suffered a similar though less drastic change. By the aid of the Syriac *Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila* and the Palestinian Syriac the Syr S

⁴ Cf. *Hom. iii. in Matt.*

text can be traced back to about 200 A. D.⁵, while the regular text finds its oldest representative in Tertullian at about the same time. We can see why the contradiction between genealogy and divine birth should be smoothed over, but it is not clear why a change should be introduced merely to emphasize it. Even against Burkitt I must hold that Syr S represents an older form of the text than that found in the Greek MSS. This is tantamount to saying that the whole genealogy is from a different author than the rest of the Gospel.

This view finds further support from the omission of these verses in the Old Latin MS r₂, though it is not absolutely certain that the omission was original. Mr. Alfred de Burgh, librarian of Trinity College, Dublin, gives the following information in regard to this MS: "r₂ (Garland of Howth) is all on separate leaves, perhaps cut by the binder in 1831. It begins at Matthew 1 18 with a very large, ornamental XPI fully parallel to the ornaments at the beginnings of the other Gospels." Yet in spite of this he expresses the opinion that an earlier leaf containing verses 1-17 has been lost. His reason is doubtless a widespread characteristic of old Bible MSS of Ireland and England, noted by Wordsworth with the words, "the genealogy was treated with greater freedom than the rest of the text as being in some sense outside of the Gospel; many MSS, both British and continental, make a new departure at *Christi autem generatio sic erat* often with large and elaborate initials."⁶ Wordsworth and White in the edition of the Vulgate note this characteristic in the MSS D ℞ L M Q R V Y, to which we may add P Z, dimma, mulling, harl. 1802, harl. 2797, Codex Aureus, Brit. Mus. Reg I A xviii, Paris 256, &c. Wordsworth further notes that there is an addition after verse 17 in some Old Latin and Vulgate MSS, giving the number of generations from Abraham to Jesus; also the Lindisfarne MS (Y) actually begins the Gospel with the words *Incipit Evangelii Genealogia Mathei* and inserts the true title *Incipit Evangelium secundum Mattheum* before verse 18. This change in title is now found to be supported by a later hand (9th or 10th century) of MS Z;

⁵ Cf. Burkitt and Heer, *loc. cit.*

⁶ Cf. *Old Latin Biblical Texts*, i. p. xxxvi.

also a similar variation is found in the Book of Deer, which has no title, but after 1 17 inserts *Finit prologus. Item incipit nunc Evangelium secundum Matheum*, while 1 18 begins the next page with fine capitals. Brit. Mus. Reg I B vii supports these, starting a new column with ornament at 1 18, before which there is a vacant space extending over half a column. MS \mathfrak{P} (through the fault of the binder) begins with 1 18 and the genealogy comes two leaves later. Vulgate G, supported by Sangallensis 49, has added before 1 1 an extra genealogy from Adam to Abraham, which seems drawn from Genesis and Luke. Not only is the statement of Wordsworth about the free treatment of the genealogy well supported, but on the basis of this evidence we may class r_2 with Y, Book of Deer, and Z^2 as beginning Matthew at 1 18, and so it is quite possible that in this MS also the genealogy was originally prefixed as an introduction. It may, however, be noted that r_2 has a more extensive ornament at 1 18 than is found in the other MSS.

The genealogy in Luke was added still later, and much more decided evidence of its original omission remains. The Washington MS of the Gospels (W) of the fourth century omits it, giving Luke 3 23 in the form found in \mathfrak{B} L fam. 1 &c., but stopping with Ἰωσὴφ . Verse 1 of chapter 4 follows with projecting paragraph and preceded by slight vacant space at the end of the previous line, as is usual in W before a paragraph. There is not the slightest sign that the scribe knew of any omission at this point. The genealogy was surely omitted by the parent of W, which must be dated soon after 300 A. D. W is supported in this omission by minuscule 579, a 13th century copy of a very early uncial MS, which in Mark, Luke, and John shows strong affiliation with \mathfrak{B} &c., though often having older so-called Western readings.⁷ Furthermore, 579 omits all of verse 23, thus lacking the statement about the fatherhood of Joseph, which is found in W. This introduction to the genealogy varies much in the different families of MSS and may have been originally only a gloss; but whether original or a gloss, it certainly determined the place for the insertion of the whole genealogy. Because of the somewhat awkward character of

⁷ Cf. Schmidtke, *Die Evangelien eines alten Unzialcodex*, Leipzig, 1903.

this introductory phrase, when separated from the rest of the genealogy, it is difficult to decide whether it was an insertion in some ancestor of W or omitted by the parent of 579; but I am inclined to think the form in 579 original, and therefore W gives a form of text corrupted by the insertion of a gloss, though we must admit that the insertion was very old, far antedating the parent of W.

The evidence for the original omission of the genealogy of Luke is probably not much strengthened by its absence in all the older lectionaries of Matthaëi (47, 50, 51, 52, 53), though it is well to note that the later lectionaries have it. Matthaëi thought that the omission was due to the fact that for a certain time the genealogy was not read in church; but we now see that the omission, if it be so styled, occurred as early as the third century. As the texts of the lectionaries developed to some extent independently of the regular Bible MSS, the failure in a branch of that tradition may be considered as additional evidence of early or original omission.

The evidence of the sixth century Greek-Latin MS D d is more puzzling and has been generally disregarded. Allowing for some changes in transmission the text of D d gives the genealogy of Matthew in the place of the Luke genealogy, but in inverted order to agree with the Lucan form and with the addition of the names from Adam to Abraham, which Matthew did not give. Also after *ιεχονιον* the two names *ιωακειμ* and *ελιακειμ*, and after *οδεια* the three *αμασιον*, *ιωας* and *οχοδιον* are inserted, and *αβιονδ* replaces *αβια*. For all these except *ελιακειμ*^s there is old though scanty authority in the Matthaean tradition of the genealogy, but not in the Lucan. The explanation of this peculiar combination is not far to seek. The original D d text omitted the Lucan genealogy, as do W and 579. Neither was any Lucan genealogy known in the home of the D text at that time (early second century?). A genealogy showing affiliation to Old Latin, Old Syriac, and Ethiopic MS tradition was accordingly borrowed from Matthew. Later the text was superficially brought into accord with the then current Luke genealogy

^s *ελιακειμ* occurs later in both genealogies, so it is here only a mistake due to careless correction or an intrusion from the neighboring column.

by adopting the inverted, abbreviated form and by adding the names from Adam to Abraham. Either the scribe making the change did not fully understand the difference in the names from David to Joseph; or he was trying to bring his text into seeming accord, but at the same time to retain as much as possible of his original. D, however, shows elsewhere such decided likeness to the earlier portions of the W text that I have no hesitation in claiming the original D text as another authority for the omission of the Luke genealogy. Not only does it seem necessary to date the common ancestor of W, D, and 579 early in the second century, but all the later Church fathers, from Julius Africanus and Origen on, seem to have known both genealogies. On the other hand Epiphanius has Cerinthus and Carpocrates (early second century) refer to the genealogy of Matthew alone as proof that Jesus was the son of Joseph.⁹ As these men were the leaders of heresies maintaining the purely human origin of Jesus, it is not likely that they would have referred to the genealogy of Matthew specifically as the proof of their contention if other genealogies had been current.

Further evidence for the original omission of the Luke genealogy can be drawn from the forms of the names in the Sinaitic Syriac. In spite of the extremely early character of the text as a whole, there are names which show the influence of Greek mistakes, or rather of mistakes appearing in the Greek MSS **Ⲡ** and **B** with but little if any other support; cf. *Jobel* (= **Ⲡ B**)¹⁰ against $\omega\beta\eta\delta$ of all other authorities; the interchange of **Λ** and **Δ** was common in Greek uncials; *Sala* (= **Ⲡ*** **B Eth**) against $\sigma\alpha\lambda\mu\omega\nu$ of all others; *Adam* (= **Ⲡ*** **Eth**) against $\alpha\mu\nu\alpha\delta\alpha\beta$ of all others. A careful study of all the names would exceed the limits of this paper, but the secondary character of the text is shown by Syriac mistakes as well as by Greek. This accords so ill with the rest of the text, that the genealogy seems best explained as a later insert. Somewhat doubtful also is the evidence derived from Cyril's failure to mention the genealogy in his commentary on Luke. Alone this would not be a very

⁹ Cf. *Haer.* xxx. 14.

¹⁰ **D⁶⁷** has $\omega\beta\eta\lambda$.

convincing proof that the genealogy did not stand in his copy of the Gospel; but added to our other old evidence of omission, it must bear the same interpretation.

I have reserved one piece of evidence, and that in my opinion by far the weightiest, because it applies equally to Matthew and Luke. Theodoret tells us that in the Diatessaron Tatian omitted the genealogies and all other passages which show that Christ was born of David by the flesh.¹¹ There are two MSS of the Arabic Diatessaron, of which the younger, a Vatican MS, contains the genealogies as a part of the text, but the older Borgian MS has them added as an appendix with the title "*The Book of the Generation of Jesus.*" This contradiction of authorities is a striking parallel to what seems to have been the history of the genealogy in Matthew. In the case of the Diatessaron the statement of Theodoret is sufficient to establish the true conditions. The Diatessaron originally lacked the genealogies; later someone added them as an appendix, so as to harmonize with the New Testament. The form with the genealogies inserted in the text, as found in the Vatican MS, exhibits the work of a second harmonizer. The Latin harmony of Victor of Capua (Codex Fuldensis) preserves only the arrangement of the Diatessaron; the text is that of the Vulgate and the genealogies even are contained. However, a table of contents in Vulgar Latin precedes the text, and in this there is no mention of the genealogies, so we may assume that they are a later insert here also. We must further note that the Arabic Diatessaron (4 29) has Luke 3 23a, thus agreeing exactly with W in the amount of the Luke genealogy omitted. The conclusion that we reached above, *viz.* that the insertion of the statement about the fatherhood of Joseph must have antedated the immediate parent of W, is fully confirmed. The agreement of W and the Diatessaron in retaining this sentence while omitting the genealogy, is conclusive evidence that they are reproducing an established text form.

On the other hand Theodoret seems entirely wrong in his statement that Tatian omitted all other passages which show that Christ was born of David by the flesh. Against this we

¹¹ Cf. *Haer. Fab.* i. 20.

can cite: Arabic Diatessaron 1 33 (= Luke 1 32) 'his father David'; 12 33 (= Matthew 9 27) 'son of David'; 35 6 (= John 7 42) 'the Messiah shall come of the offspring of David, and from Bethlehem the village of David'; 35 18 (= Matthew 22 42) 'the son of David'; 39 32 (= Matthew 21 9) 'son of David'; in fact all such passages naming or implying that Christ was the son of David appear in the MSS in the proper place. It seems clear that Theodoret was giving the reason why he thought the genealogies were omitted, and so assumed that the similar passages must have been omitted also. As he was wrong in the one case, so he probably was in the other. Tatian omitted the genealogies because they were not present in the MS or MSS of the four Gospels used by him in making the harmony. As the composition of the Diatessaron fell between 150 and 180 (probably about 175), the MS or MSS which he used, rank among the most ancient authorities for the Gospels of which we have any definite information.

This is the evidence against the genealogies so far as I have been able to gather it. There is perhaps too much of inference and too little of actual MS authority for us to consider the matter proved, but it affords a more natural explanation for the inconsistencies and omissions noted than any alternative explanation. The very early heresies noted by Eusebius as well as by Epiphanius¹² might well have caused the insertion of genealogies in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, if other books or records, then extant, contained them.

¹² Cf. *Haer.* xxx. 14.