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SOME QUESTIONS REGARDING ADYLSON VALDEZ' TREATMENT OF THE GENEALOGIES OF JESUS

by John F. McCarthy

1. Adylson Valdez' article on "The Genealogies of Jesus" appeared in *Revista Biblica* 71/ 3-4, Buenos Aires, 2009, pp. 193-218. The magazine abstract for the article states that various theses over the years aiming at harmonization of the two genealogies in Matthew and Luke create too many "unconvincing and unacceptable complications" for a critical study and that this article of Valdez points out their errors and incongruities. The Author claims to have reviewed these harmonizing arguments by means of a "thorough analysis" of the structures and names on the lists while adding new details and observations that "should lead to more logical, appropriate, and enlightening solutions." But it seems that whoever undertakes a "thorough analysis" of proposed solutions to a question should take into consideration all of the harmonizing possibilities formerly proposed as well as their relationships to all of the fundamental facts and principles involved, but it appears that the Author has not done this. For instance, he observes that "The genealogy in Matt 1:1-17 seeks mainly to demonstrate that Jesus Christ has regal ascendancy represented by David and his descendant kings, thus claiming for him the right to inherit David's throne and the quality of the Messiah" (2.1). This is true, but Matthew qualifies this demonstration by first tracing the descent of the male seed from Abraham to Joseph, and then he clearly points out that the male seed in this series did not extend to Jesus. Therefore, in this sense, Matthew's genealogy is not the natural genealogy of Jesus. Instead, Matthew traces the seed of David to Joseph, "the husband of Mary, of whom (Mary) was born Jesus." He consistently uses the word "begot" (*egénnēsen*) to insist on the fact that he is tracing the natural seed and the physical descent as far as Joseph, where it ends. And Matthew explains why he is doing this. The reason is that the conception of Jesus was virginal, using no male seed at all. And to illustrate this fact, he quotes from the prophecy in Isaiah 7:14, addressed to the royal House of David: "*Behold, the virgin shall be with child and bring forth a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel* (which, translated, is) *God with us.*"

2. Many contemporary theologians and exegetes interpret "the virgin" in Isaiah 7:14 (*hē parthénos* - Septuagint version) as being "a young maiden" and play down the idea of a nature-miracle. Some exegetes, especially historical critics, try to reduce this statement to a prophecy about a commonplace event, downplaying the wonder of a virginal conception, but such an interpretation is out of the context of the historical situation in which this prophecy occurred. The prophecy was made to a king of the royal House of David, and its meaning is that the male seed of the royal House of David would not produce the Messiah, because the Messiah, "God with us," would be born of the Virgin. These kings were proud of the expectation that the great king and messiah to come would be of the male seed of their royal house, and Isaiah here tells King Ahaz that this will never happen. And this is the main point that Matthew makes in what we now read as the first chapter of his Gospel.

3. Matthew's first chapter begins with the words "Book of the generation of Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abraham." What does the sacred writer mean by "book of the generation" (*bíblōs genéseōs*)? The Greek word *bíblōs*

Editor: Msgr. John F. McCarthy, J.C.D., S.T.D.

Associate Editor: Rev. Brian W. Harrison, O.S., M.A., S.T.D.

Please address all correspondence to: www.rtforum.org e-mail: <jfm@rtforum.org>

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originally derives from *bímblos*, which means the inner bark of the papyrus plant. So a *bímblos* was a piece of this bark upon which words were inscribed. Later it referred also to more than one piece of papyrus bark sewn together into a codex, and still later it came to mean any book [See Lidell and Scott's *Greek-English Lexicon* (seventh and eighth editions, Oxford University Press, 1901 and 1975). So why, then, does Matthew call this descent the "book of the generation of Jesus?" This "book of the generation" could be purely conceptual, but probably Matthew was quoting this list of names from an actual piece of papyrus which had been presented to him. This *bímblos* need not have contained all of the names going back from Joseph to Abraham, but would have included at least the names from Joseph back to Zorobabel in order to show Joseph's Davidic and kingly descent. Now, Matthew in this same first chapter tells us that the angel of the Lord who spoke to Joseph in a dream called Joseph "son of David" and so implied that Joseph, by adopting Jesus, would give Him legal title to this kingly descent. So the "book of the generation of Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abraham" now becomes the piece of papyrus upon which Matthew has just copied the names from the older list plus his own additions and would include the true generation of Jesus in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit. And this whole list of his would thus become, through the adoption of Jesus by Joseph, a true legal but not a biological genealogy of Jesus.

4. Throughout his analysis Valdez follows the overall view that the two genealogies are not reliable historical documents. This is a common opinion among historical critics. Raymond Brown, for instance, in *The Birth of the Messiah*, expresses his opinion that the genealogies of Jesus in Matthew and Luke "tell us nothing certain about his grandparents or his great-grandparents."¹ It is Valdez' opinion that, "if it is biologically and theologically necessary that Mary belong to Judah's tribe and be David's descendant, then, instead of looking for such complex explanations as the levirate, it would be preferable to imagine, hypothetically, that Mary may be David's descendant through one of his other sons, rather than Solomon and Nathan (1.2f). And then he draws the sweeping conclusion that, "it being evident that the evangelists had only to express Joseph's genealogy and that Mary could have descended from another one of David's sons, the hypotheses of legal, natural and adoption lineages lose their significance, causing them in truth to become rather forced, ingenious theses that create suppositions that go beyond the Gospel texts and the evangelists' original intentions," and "the same can be said with respect to the levirate idea" (1.2g).

5. It is not clear how *imagining* that Mary might have been a descendant of David through one of his other sons, and not through Solomon or Nathan, could be a logical and historical solution to the problem of the two genealogies, but this suggestion seems to be based upon the Kantian split, which is built into the historical-critical method. According to the philosophy of Immanuel Kant all theological thinking about the text of the Bible is on the subjective side of human thought and, therefore, is purely imaginative and not conveying reality. But Kant's false teaching does not make us free to imagine whatever we want about this historical question.

6. I have described in some detail the main harmonizing solutions in an article on the genealogies of Jesus published in *Living Tradition* in May 1987.² The solutions that I described are those of *levirate marriage*, *Marian genealogy*, *legal adoption*, and *consanguinity*. Therein I presented the arguments of the most notable writers for each of the theories: for the argument from levirate marriage, I presented the thinking of *Julius Africanus* and *Jacques Masson*; for the argument from Marian genealogy, I presented the thinking of *Cornelius a Lapide*; for the theory of legal adoption I presented the thinking of *Urban Holzmeister*; and for the theory of consanguinity, I presented the thinking of many writers, including *Cornelius a Lapide* and *Francis X. Patrizi*.³

7. Valdez, in the notes to his article, mentions the harmonizing writings of Julius Africanus, Jacques Masson, Cornelius a Lapide, Urban Holzmeister, and F.X. Patrizi, in presenting what he calls his "thorough analysis" of the names in the genealogies and, therefore, complete refutation of these and all other harmonizing attempts, and he goes into some detail with regard to the theory of Julius Africanus, but he makes only a few passing remarks about these other theories and actually gives virtually no refutation of them. He gives a brief description of the Law of the Levirate theory, the earliest recorded attempt to harmonize the two genealogies, as presented by Julius Africanus, including the problem that Joseph is presented as having two different fathers and that the names of his ancestors in the two genealogies are almost entirely different going back as far as Zorobabel. He also touches on other problems with the names listed in the two

¹ Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah* (Doubleday, 1977), p. 94.

² J.F. McCarthy, "New Light on the Genealogies of Jesus," in *Living Tradition* 11 (May 1987) [www.rtforum.org]

³ Julius Africanus, Letter to Aristides, in Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 10, col. 64; Jacques Masson, *Jésus, Fils de David dans les Généalogies de Saint Mathieu et de Saint Luc* (Paris:Téqui, 1982); Cornelius a Lapide (Cornelius van den Steen: 1567-1637 A.D.), *Great Commentary*, commenting on Lk 3:23; U. Holzmeister, "Genealogia S. Lucae," in *Verbum Domini* (1943), [pp. 9-18]; Francis Xavier Patrizi, *De Evangelii* (Freiburg in Breisgau, 1853), vol. 2, pp. 82-105.

genealogies, and he concludes that the harmonizing argument based on the Law of the Levirate is too narrow to be convincing, inasmuch as it is restricted to a few generations and ignores similar problems elsewhere in the two lists. He discusses several places in the genealogies which seem to be contradictory, taken mainly from old discussions that have been occurring over the centuries, often without mentioning the answers that have been supplied for them. He criticizes the third century theory of Julius Africanus, but often without adverting to the answers supplied by others in later centuries and especially in the monumental research done in our day in support of the theory by Jacques Masson, who presents an elaborate study of all of the preceding generations in both genealogies which is more comprehensive than that of the Author and with a precision that cannot be ignored. Masson's harmonizing effort in favor of the levirate hypothesis is not limited to a few generations, nor are the efforts of many other proponents of the theory so limited, as the Author generically claims. Valdez does not address and refute any of Masson's harmonizing arguments.

8. The Law of the Levirate states: "*When brothers dwell together, and one of them dies without children, the wife of the deceased shall not marry another, but his brother shall take her and raise up seed for his brother. And the first son he shall have of her he shall call by his name, that his name be not abolished out of Israel*" (Deut 25:5-6). According to an explanation going back in essence at least to Julius Africanus in the first half of the third century A.D. (who claimed to have heard it as handed down by the relatives of Jesus), Joseph's grandmother (Estha) bore Jacob to one husband (Matthan) and Eli to a second (Matthat). Joseph's mother married Eli, who died without children; then she married his uterine brother Jacob, who raised up Joseph as seed to Eli. Thus Joseph had Eli as his legal father and Jacob as his biological father. The conclusion usually drawn from this theory is that the genealogy of Matthew shows the biological ancestry of Jesus, and that of Luke the legal ancestry.⁴ But some conclude the other way around.

9. We have seen that Matthew was really not intent upon giving the one true (and therefore biological) descent of Jesus, but actually gives his legal genealogy through his adoption by Joseph (nos. 1-3 above). Now let us look at what Luke says about the origin of Jesus. The Author believes that the argument holding that Matthew gives the forebears of Joseph and Luke presents the forebears of Mary "has no grounds," because "the evangelists were not worried about this distinction: both of them wanted to express Joseph's genealogy with real vehemence" (1.2e). The two Evangelists agree, he says, in insisting that Joseph was a descendent of David, but "about Mary's origins they declared not a thing." Furthermore, he adds, "among the Jews, the genealogy could only be formed by the male ancestors of the father of the descendent in question" (1.2: e). But, we might ask, did this rule apply to one who was virginally conceived?

10. The theory of Marian ancestry is based on one of the following readings of Luke 3:23: "*And Jesus himself was beginning at about thirty years of age, being son, as it was supposed, of Joseph (but really) of Eli, of Matthat,*" etc. (Cornelius a Lapide). This reading makes Jesus the biological grandson of Eli, who is understood to be the father of Mary. A second reading would go like this: "*And Jesus himself was beginning at about thirty years of age, being son, as it was supposed, of Joseph, (adopted son or son-in-law) of Eli, of Matthat,*" etc. In my article on the genealogies of Jesus, I listed as principal supporters of the theory Cornelius a Lapide and more than twenty-four other writers who held or at least were open to the theory.⁵ How this listing may have come about I shall discuss below. Valdez talks about this theory (notes 8 and 9), but he offers no substantial refutation. He notes that recognizing Eli as the father of the Blessed Virgin Mary goes against the second century tradition in the Protoevangelion of James that her father was named Joachim. Cornelius a Lapide addresses this problem and counters it with the argument that the name Eliachim is an alternative for Joachim, as is illustrated in the Old Testament. He explains that Joseph (Lk 3:23) is called the son, that is, the son-in-law, of Eli, and Eli by apocope is short for Eliachim, which is an alternative name for Joachim. To be sure, we read in 4 Kg (2 Kg) 23:34 that "Pharao Nechao made Eliakim, the son of Josias, king in place of Josias his father, and he changed his name to Joakim" (cf. 2 Chron 36:4). Again, in Judith 4 the high priest is called Joakim in the Septuagint and Eliachim in the Vulgate and in some other manuscripts; in fact, the same man is called by the Vulgate "Eliachim" in Judith 4 and "Joachim" in Judith 15:9. The etymological basis for the interchangeability is that the syllables 'Jo' (Jehova) and 'El' (Elohim) are both names of God and that both names mean "God makes firm" or "God raises up." The Author acknowledges this claim of a Lapide, but he offers no response to it.

⁴ Julius Africanus, Letter to Aristides, in Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 10, col. 64. Cf. Eusebius of Caesarea, in Migne, PG, vol. 20, col. 93; *PC*, vol. 22, col. 901. Julius Africanus has Eli as the son of Melchi, rather than of Matthat. See the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, (1913 edition) p. 411.

⁵ Cornelius a Lapide (Cornelius van den Steen: 1567-1637 A.D.), *Great Commentary*, commenting on Lk 3:23. Among those who have held or at least have been open to the possibility that Luke gives the genealogy of Mary, a Lapide lists Augustine of Hippo, Denis the Carthusian, Cajetan, Peter Canisius, Melchior Cano, Dominic Soto, Francis Suarez, and others. Holzmeister, op. cit., pp. 10 and 14, adds the names of six ancient writers (Justin Martyr, Celsus, Origen, Irenaeus, Epiphanius, and John Damascene) and eleven twentieth-century writers up to that time (1943) who held the theory: p. Vogt, J.M. Heer, V. Hartl, J. Pfättish, E. Mangenot, p. Pous, R. Riezler, Th. Innitzer, Simon-Prado, J. Geslin, and E. Ruffini. Jacques-H. Vosté, in *De Conceptione Virginali Jesu Christi* (Rome: Collegio Angelico, 1933), p. 100, lists nine late nineteenth and twentieth-century writers who hold the theory, including B. Weiss, A. Capecelatro, P.H. Didon, and E. Le Camus.

11. The theory of legal adoption, as presented by Urban Holtzmeister, transforms the theory of Marian ancestry into a theory of special adoption as opposed to the theory of generic adoption held for a time by St. Augustine, which contemplated the (childhood) adoption of Joseph by Eli, until Augustine withdrew it in favor of the theory of levirate marriage. Holtzmeister says that, if Mary was an only child, as we have every reason to believe, it would have been entirely in keeping with Old Testament law and custom for her father to adopt her husband and transfer to him all of his rights and possessions. If this happened, then the genealogy of Luke could well be biologically the genealogy of Mary, but legally the genealogy of Joseph, who had inherited Mary's ancestry from her father by way of adoption. Hence, all of the names in Luke's genealogy beginning with Eli are ancestors of Mary, but she is not named. He finds a precedent for this kind of adoption in 1 Chron 2:34. Sesan had no sons, so he gave his daughter (unnamed) in marriage to his Egyptian servant Jeraa, and she brought forth to him (Sesan) a son named Ethei. Thus Ethei was the son of Sesan through his unnamed daughter and his adopted (and named) Egyptian son-in-law. The Author counters by referring to the view of a recent writer (Yigal Levin, 2006), who "has shown that this thesis can be discarded, because this kind of adoption system was unknown in Jewish law at the time of the birth of Jesus," but the Author presents no proof of this. On the other hand, Masson⁶ claims with Urban Holtzmeister that the special adoption of Joseph by Joachim, where Mary was the only child of an elderly couple, was possible in Jewish law at that time.

12. The theory of consanguinity. Many Fathers of the Church have claimed that Mary was a close relative of Joseph. Valdez points out (in note 9) John Damascene's claim that Eli was Joseph's cousin, and Patrizzi's claim that Joseph was Mary's uncle. According to the speculation of Cornelius a Lapide, Matthew gives the ancestry of Mary through her mother Anne, but Anne's brother Jacob is mentioned to keep the male tenor of the list. He says also that, according to Numbers 36:6-10, women who are heiresses of their parents are ordered to marry a close relative, lest the inheritance pass to outsiders. How would this apply to the Blessed Virgin Mary? Mary was a consecrated virgin, and, if she was the only child of her parents, then Joseph would have been a close relative of Mary, perhaps a first cousin or even her uncle, as some have held, who was marrying her simply to be her protector and with no thought of sexual relations in mind. And he would thus by adoption have inherited her father's ancestry and her father's genealogy.

13. St. Jerome affirms that Mary was a close relative of Joseph, and, therefore, a member of the tribe of Judah and of the family of David. This testimony is reinforced by St. Ambrose, Tertullian, St. John Chrysostom, and St. John Damascene. The Fathers of the Church almost unanimously defend the Davidic descent of Mary.⁷ Francis X. Patrizzi prefers the explanation of Possini, Zaccaria, and others according to which Joseph was actually the paternal uncle of Mary and the brother of her father Joachim. He finds this explanation to be in conformity with the data on Mary's family provided by St. Epiphanius and also with the testimony of Julius Africanus, who says that Joseph was the third son of Jacob, and with some very early Christian records. Thus Joachim, Cleophas, and Joseph were the three sons of the last Jacob in Matthew's genealogy. Marriage of an uncle with his niece would seem to have been forbidden by Jewish law, but Patrizzi maintains that some exceptions were made, especially by way of the Law of the Levirate, since Joachim and Joseph were brothers. He cites also the case of Aristobulus, King of the Jews, whose uncle Absalom became his son-in-law.⁸

14. Valdez' argument depends heavily on the idea that the theory of the levirate is too complicated to be true and that the other harmonizing theories are too ingenious to be true. Obviously they can't all be true, but elements in each of them can be part of the truth. There is also possibly a simple solution that is in keeping with the historical circumstances of the infancy of Jesus. According to the first two chapters in the historical narrative of St. Luke's Gospel, Jesus was born at the time that Joseph and Mary were in Bethlehem to enroll in a census of the people. Now, to enroll meant for Joseph to register his name, and the way to register one's name was to present one's genealogy. So we can assume that Joseph presented his genealogy to the authorities in Bethlehem at that time, probably the kingly document that Matthew records at the opening of his Gospel. Following this, as Matthew narrates, came the flight into Egypt and the massacre of the innocents in Herod's effort to murder Jesus. When Herod died, Joseph and Mary thought about returning to Palestine, but they were concerned about the safety of Jesus, considering that Joseph's genealogy, registered at Bethlehem, showed direct descent from King David. We have no internal or external evidence of this, but it is possible that Joseph decided not to use his kingly genealogy any more, and Mary offered her father's genealogy to Joseph to use from then on as his

⁶ J. Masson, op. cit., pp. 437-439 and 347.

⁷ Jerome (345-420 A.D.), *Super Matthaëum*, commentary on Mt 1:18: (in PL, vol. 26, col. 24): "Since Joseph is not the father of Our Lord and Savior, how does a genealogy coming down to Joseph pertain in any way to Our Lord? To this we reply, first, that it is not the custom of the Scriptures that the category of women be woven into genealogies; secondly, that Joseph and Mary were from one tribe: whence by law he was obliged to receive her as a near relative, and they were registered together in the census in Bethlehem, as having sprung from one tribe." So also, for testimonies of Irenaeus, Ambrose, and Tertullian regarding the consanguinity of Mary and Joseph, see H. Didon, *Jesus Christ* (Paris, 1891), p. 416.

⁸ Francis Xavier Patrizzi, *De Evangeliiis* (Freiburg in Breisgau, 1853), vol. 2, pp.99-103.

genealogy. But, in order to keep the civil authorities off the track, this exchange would have required a little cosmetic surgery, namely, to change her father's name Joachim to its alternative name Eliachim and then to shorten the new name to Eli. And that is why Joseph would from then on have used only this genealogy and this use would have been in keeping with the whole truth if Joseph was actually the adopted son of Joachim, as some have speculated. Both Matthew and Luke could have copied their genealogies from original documents. The kingly descent would have been kept secret by Joseph and Mary until Jesus had died on the Cross, but there was no need to keep it secret from then on. Mary could have shown the document to Matthew as early as when she and the apostles were gathered in the upper room or at any later time. Similarly, Mary would likely have been in possession also of Joseph's Lucan genealogy, and the document could have been shown to Luke at some time during his research into the life of Jesus.

15. The forty-two generations. Valdez observes that St. Augustine was the first to attribute the meaning of plenitude to the number seven, and that this meaning appears to be insinuated in Luke 8:2 and 10:1, 17 (note 34). He makes no mention of a possible allegory of names in the genealogy, but he makes another passing reference to the allegory of numbers where he attributes to two contemporary writers (W. D. Davies and D.C. Allison) the belief that the name David is the key to this numerical pattern of 3×14 , since David appears in the fourteenth position, and the three Hebrew consonants in the name David represent the three numbers $4 + 6 + 4$. Actually, this idea has been in Catholic exegesis since the early centuries of the Christian era. The Author rejects this reading as a less logical choice than that of the fumbled arithmetic of the evangelist (note 20), and he favors the idea that this numerical pattern arose in the mind of the evangelist from the simple observation of the fourteen names in the list from Abraham to David, which led him to "force this pattern" upon the following two sets, "even if it were to be done in a specious and artificial manner, with the intention of giving the impression that there had been perfect historical cycles" (note 20) and that "the regal lineage, the chronology, and the Jewish history had been determined on a perfect, occult divine plane" (2.1). He goes on to describe with other historical critics how this editor or evangelist did not even count accurately as far as fourteen, since only the second set of names presents fourteen generations, while the first and third sets show only thirteen generations each. Actually, Matthew in his first chapter presents two disjointed genealogical lists, the first descending from Abraham to Joseph, spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the second descending from Mary to Jesus or from the Holy Spirit to Jesus. If Matthew counts the first name on each of the two lists as a generation, then there are forty generations in the first list and two generations in the second, making forty-two generations in all.

16. According to the teaching of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (numbers 113-119) Sacred Scripture is to be interpreted in keeping with a framework of four senses: the literal, the allegorical, the tropological (moral), and the anagogical (final), but in his article Valdez makes no use of this approach as his own. In his analysis of the names in Luke's genealogical list, he sees "theological principles," "theological motives of symbolical meaning," "theological aims," "theological preoccupations," "possible biblical, theological, and typological relations," and "typological analogy," but he sees them only in reference to the "creativity" of the evangelists, that is, as fictitious inventions not reflecting historical reality. He makes no reference to the allegory of names brought out in the writings of the Fathers of the Church and summarized brilliantly in the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas, who, especially in his *Commentary on the Gospel according to Matthew*, has made a good beginning of showing the overall picture of the allegory of Christ in the genealogy of Matthew, but which has not been adequately pursued by later interpreters. This allegorical meaning of the names in Matthew's genealogy could be another reason why the evangelist counts forty-two generations in the list, because each of the forty-two names is construed to represent Our Lord Jesus Christ and his Church in a mystical way, including the names of Abraham and Mary or the Holy Spirit. The allegory of Christ and his Church illustrates the *generation* of insights into the objects of faith and the moral allegory illustrates the *generation* of divine grace in the souls of believers. On a chronological basis and also as a function of the allegory of names and the allegory of the numbers seven and fourteen that many have claimed to see in Matthew's genealogy, Matthew is seen to have divided the combined two lists into three sets of fourteen generations each. Various Fathers of the Church and other biblical commentators have speculated on this affirmation of the three sets of fourteen generations in Matt 1:17.

17. In another article published in 1987, I discussed the literal and symbolic levels of the three sets of fourteen generations reported in Matt 1:17.⁹ Based largely upon indications given by the Fathers of the Church and other ecclesiastical writers, I examined the possibility of a symbolic meaning conveyed in the text of this verse tied to the image of the waxing and waning of the moon, and then, through a study of ancient calendars, the suggestion of an even more cryptic message in the literal sense of this verse that might actually give the exact date of the birth of Jesus, which by my calculation would then be, on the Christian calendar to emerge several centuries later, 25 December 5 B.C.

⁹ J.F. McCarthy, "The Historical Meaning of the Forty-two Generations in Matthew 1:17" in *Living Tradition* 13 (September 1987): [www.rtforum.org].

18. Valdez finds that Luke's genealogy is an elaboration of a possibly preexisting document, based by the evangelist on the respective meanings of key names, all of which lead to the idea of priesthood and Messianic government. The use of the number seven, he says, indicates plenitude (2.2). He claims that he has demonstrated in his article that the two genealogies "were elaborated according to name and lineage models that follow chronological order and biblical history as well as internal symbolical-theological principles that obeyed intervals with significant numerical groups" (Conclusion). He sees that the genealogy in *Luke's Gospel* is composed of eleven times seven names, of which the first group of seven names (Jesus, Joseph, Eli, Mathat, Levi, Melchi, Jannai) is formative especially of the following 5 x 7 names, inasmuch as five of these seven names appear again and there are many names with forms similar to the names in the first group. Again, he finds recurring subgroups identified according to the first letter of each name. He divides the first 40 names of Luke's genealogy into two sets of 20 names (separated by two names) and then sees that first-letter groups appearing in the first twenty names are repeated in the second twenty. An example would be that the initials J-J-E-M-L beginning the genealogy (see above) appear again in the second set of twenty names with one inversion as J-E-J-M-L and so on throughout the 40 names (2.2). In this way Valdez identifies some unnoticed patterns, but he offers no new meaning or message in these patterns that would be of positive value to Christian readers of the Bible.

19. Remaining within the reductive limits of the historical-critical approach, Valdez undertakes to dismantle the historicity of the two genealogies, but in doing so he also fails to address the full depth and scope of these two texts. He claims to have discovered some information regarding repeated patterns of names in Luke's genealogy, but his findings need to be reviewed by readers who are fully aware of the depth and historicity of the inspired text. These repeated patterns may exist, but they do not necessarily imply that the list is unhistorical or fabricated. Max Luna, working from the research of Ivan Panin, points out some amazing recurrences of the numbers seven and fourteen in the text of Matthew's genealogy. He shows in detail that, counting letters, words, parts, etc. in the Greek text of the genealogy, there are twenty-five different ways in which the numbers seven and fourteen appear. For instance, in verses 1-11, down to the deportation to Babylon, in the Greek text, there are 49 words, of which 4 x 7 begin with a vowel and 3 x 7 begin with a consonant. These 49 words contain 266 letters, that is, 19 x 14 or 38 x 7 letters. Of these 266 letters, 20 x 7 are vowels, and 18 x 7 are consonants.¹⁰ In his book he claims to present "thousands of amazing facts concerning the sacred number 7" in the text of the whole Bible, which is an indication that intelligence beyond the capacity of the human writers of the Bible has influenced its composition. So also the claimed recurring patterns of names and letters in the inspired word of Luke's genealogy could, in the providence of God, be based upon real historical occurrence.

20. Conclusions:

- a) Adylson Valdez' presentation of a division of the genealogy of Jesus in the Gospel of St. Luke into groups and subgroups according to the repetition of the names and of the initial letters of the names listed may be a new discovery, but this claim needs further critical review by readers who are fully aware of the depth and historical truth of the inspired text.
- b) The Author fails to show that the various theories that have been advanced over the centuries to harmonize the genealogies of Jesus in Matthew and Luke create too many "unconvincing and unacceptable complications to a critical study," because he gives virtually no refutation of the arguments of the main proponents of these theories.
- c) The Author's assertion that the various harmonizing hypotheses are "rather forced, ingenious theses that create suppositions that go beyond the Gospel texts and the evangelists' original intentions" is not proved, because his own suppositions do not conform entirely to the full depth and meaning of the Gospel texts, and he does not seem to recognize that the road to progress of any science and art, including biblical exegesis and modern science and technology, is paved with ingenious solutions.
- d) The Author's observation that "the genealogy in Matt 1:1-17 seeks mainly to demonstrate that Jesus Christ has regal ascendancy" is true, but only in the sense that Jesus, in being adopted by St. Joseph, became a legal descendant of the Davidic kings of Judah.
- e) There is no historical basis for the idea that the Blessed Virgin Mary may have descended from a son of David other than Solomon or Nathan.
- f) The three sets of fourteen "generations" referred to in Matt 1:17 can be read as mathematically correct in keeping with the literal intention of the evangelist and the allegorical dimensions of the inspired text.

¹⁰ Max Luna, *The Number 7 in the Bible* (BRYAN PRESS, City of Industry, California [1979]), pp. 118-120.