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RESPONSE TO THE ARTICLE, “SOME QUESTIONS REGARDING ADYLSON VALDEZ’ TREATMENT OF THE GENEALOGIES OF JESUS” (JOHN F. MCCARTHY, *LIVING TRADITION* 160 [SEPT. 2012], PP. 1-6)

by Adylson Valdez

The purpose of this text is to contest several of the passages in the review entitled “Some Questions Regarding Adylson Valdez’ Treatment of the Genealogies of Jesus,” by John F. McCarthy, published in *Living Tradition* 160 (Sept. 2012) pp.1-6.

My article “The Genealogies of Jesus,” object of the review mentioned above, was written originally in Portuguese and published in Spanish in *Revista Bíblica* 71/3-4 (2009) 193-218. It may, however, be read in English at the following WEB address: <http://www.pesquisasbiblicas.com.br/enggenjesus.pdf>

I would like to thank Msgr. John F. McCarthy for giving me the opportunity to present this response to his review.

For practical reasons the review that is being contested here shall be mentioned in the responses by the abbreviated title “Some Questions.” At times I shall present an introductory explanation if it is not specified in the reproduced passage what is the subject to the response.

A. Number 1: 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.

Response of Valdez: I agree with “Some Questions.” Nevertheless, as my main purpose was to bring to light details on the genealogies of Matthew and Luke that up until then had not been published, I was thus concerned in proportioning more space, in my analysis, to that part (2.1 and 2.2). *Revista Bíblica*, in which my article was published, required a certain number of words for publication. This forced me to treat the harmonization theses in a shortened manner. Because of this, I reported only the first formulators of the harmonization and adoption theses (1.1), to also criticize them later only briefly (1.2).

B. Number 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. **Response of Valdez:** If it is possible to imagine that there were levirates and adoptions among the genealogies, it is also possible to imagine a Davidic ascendance for Mary through another of David’s sons, in order to satisfy the biological-theological need for Mary’s Davidic origin. In truth, imagination is at the basis of all these interpretations. None of the hypotheses can be proved, for there are no data in the Gospels that can ensure any hypothesis. Julius Africanus himself, notwithstanding the fact that he bases his theory on oral tradition according to which Jesus’

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relatives had preserved his genealogy, states that the explanation through levirate has not been attested (*Hist. Eccl.* 1.7.14-15). Thus, all of us, including Africanus, remain in the field of hypothetical imagination. However, I would like to observe that the simplicity of my hypothetical proposal of a parallel Davidic genealogy for Mary seeks to preserve the genealogies of both Gospels, in their original formats, without dismantling them through invented levirates and adoptions.

C. Number 7: 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.

Response of Valdez: As I have already explained, I had to summarize the theses in order to afford more space to the new details I found in the genealogies. However, I would like to take advantage of this reply to examine Masson's thesis now.

I do not have full knowledge of Masson's formulations. I only know a few of them through mentions by Raymond E. Brown and John F. McCarthy. Below I have reproduced the citations by these authors.

Raymond E. Brown, in *The Birth of the Messiah*, p. 588: "I must wonder whether, without the religious assumption just discussed, Masson would have devoted his immense Angelicum thesis (*Jésus*) to reconciling the genealogies. He argues that Shealtiel (both genealogies) was the husband of Jechoniah's daughter and the adopted son of Jechoniah: Matt gives the legal male parents from Solomon to Jechoniah, while Luke gives the natural parents of Jechoniah from Neri back through Nathan to David. (Yet in this monarchical era Luke has names not attested elsewhere at all for this period, or attested only in the postexilic period, or only levitically!) As for the names from Shealtiel to Joseph (also differing in the two lists), Masson makes another appeal to legal and natural differences."

John F. McCarthy, in "New Light on the Genealogies of Jesus" (*Living Tradition* 11 [May 1987]), number 1: "Masson argues as follows. Jechonias, having no son, adopted Salathiel, husband of his daughter and son of Neri, who was descended from David through Nathan. Salathiel thus became the *legal son* and *successor* of Jechonias. By the Law of the Levirate, the name of Salathiel's biological father disappears from the genealogy and the name of Jechonias appears. Salathiel becomes a common ancestor of both Jacob and Eli. More proximately, both Jacob and Eli are descendants of Eliud/Esli. Achim of Matthew's Eleazar was the eldest son of Eliud/Esli. Naum was a younger son. Thus a levirate adoption by Jechonias and later levirate marriages raising up seed to Achim and to Jacob, the legal father of Joseph, solve the contradiction of the two fathers of Joseph and the disparate lines of descent from David to Joseph."

First of all, one must say that the relation of kinship between Solomon's and Nathan's descendants is primarily one of uncles and of nephews, and only then of cousins *ad aeternum*. According to Gen 38:8 and Deut 25:5-10, a levirate could only occur between brothers who dwell together, not between uncles, nephews, and cousins (the examples in Gen 38:11-30 and Ruth 4 cannot be considered levirates; this is also applicable to Num 27:5-11 and Jer 32:6-15). Therefore, if a descendant of Solomon's or Nathan's was a legal father through levirate, it would be with his brother, not with his uncle or nephew or cousin.

Secondly, the greater the gap in time and number of generations between cousins, the greater the distance in the degree of kinship, thus the relationships would have been diluted to the point where they were no longer kin. What could have happened, at most, would have been accidental marriages between relatives who had been brought together without knowing they were kin.

The harmonization theses need to ignore these circumstances and invent a mother in common to transform cousins into brothers, as Africanus does, for example.

On Masson's side, he first invents the adoption of Salathiel, Neri's son, by King Jechonias (causing Neri to disappear through "levirate," although he is his cousin instead of his brother), then he creates repeated levirates between Achim-Naggai and Eliud-Esli (at least that is what I have deduced from John F. McCarthy's explanation), and yet another between Jacob and Eli.

In regard to the rest of the descendants of the genealogies, Raymond E. Brown and John F. McCarthy say nothing. Nevertheless, it appears that Masson ignores several of Nathan's descendants: 17 descendants from Mathatha to Melchi; 6 descendants from Joanan to Mahath; and 6 descendants from Amos to Levi. In all, 29 descendants were ignored. If we consider 17 as the average age for a descendant to beget a child, we will find a gap ignored by Masson of at least 493 years.

It is also highly improbable that King Jechonias would have adopted the son of his cousin Neri, with Nathan's line

of kinship separated from Solomon's by 289 years, from Mathatha to Melchi. And this would not prevent the return to Luke's genealogy, that is, to Reza, since he was also Zorobabel's son (supposedly together with Abiud). Besides, the immense gap in time apparently created by Masson between Josias and Jechonias, Zadok and Achim, and Eleazar and Mathan, caused respectively by Eliachim to Melchi, Semein to Mahath, and Amos to Levi, who appear among Nathan's descendants in parallel to Solomon's, completely decharacterizing the genealogy in Matt 1:2-16.

It would appear that Masson prefers Matthew's genealogy, thus inventing at will an improbable adoption in order to pull Salathiel and Zorobabel into the list of Matthew's kings. This arbitrary preference becomes evident when we realize that a contrary movement is possible if we, in exchange, prefer Luke's genealogy, in the following manner: Jechonias begets Salathiel, who is assumed through the adoption by Neri, and Zorobabel begets Abiud and Reza. The artificiality of the hypotheses by Masson, Africanus, and others is demonstrated by this versatility (see Adylson Valdez, in "The Genealogies of Jesus," 1.2: b).

One might object, albeit, that preference should fall upon Matthew's genealogy because 1 Chron 3:17 states that Jechonias was Salathiel's father. However, in order to solve this, we could simply infer that Matthew's genealogy is the natural ancestry, whereas Luke's is the legal ancestry.

One might observe that the contrary movement is also possible in the other entanglements proposed by Masson: Achim begets Esli, whose legal father through levirate is Naggai; Eliud begets Nahum, whose legal father through levirate is Esli; Jacob begets Joseph, whose legal father through levirate is Eli.

Clearly, Masson's thesis presents quite an inapplicable invention and versatility, and it goes contrary to what the evangelists wanted to pass down to us, that is, that the issues were successive, without entanglements.

D. Number 9: The two Evangelists agree, he says, in insisting that Joseph was a descendant 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 descendant in question" (1.2: e). But, we might ask, did this rule apply to one who was virginally conceived?

Response of Valdez: This would not apply to a virginal conception. But the evangelists did thus determine it, possibly suggesting Jesus' adoption by Joseph, through the insistence that the genealogies they present are through Joseph and not Mary.

E. Number 10: The Author acknowledges this claim of à Lapide, but offers no response to it.

Response of Valdez: "Some Questions" alludes to à Lapide's statement that the name Eli in Luke's list refers to the name Eliachim, which, according to à Lapide, implies "Joachim," Mary's father. I believe that Luke's Eli is not Eliachim. If he were, the evangelist would have placed Eliachim, instead of simply Eli, as can be seen in Luke 3:30. Moreover, the tradition of Joachim being Mary's father came much later than Luke's Gospel, who represents Eli as Joseph's father, not Mary's.

F. Number 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 analogical (final), but in his article Valdez makes no use of this approach as his own.

Response of Valdez: "Some Questions" alludes to the application of the allegorical method to Matthew's genealogy with respect to the number of generations. I did not use the allegorical method because the literary gender of the biblical genealogies does not accept such a method, not in respect to the genealogies, nor to their number, nor to the names. What can be found is a symbolic meaning for number 14 in Matthew and for number 7 and other numbers in Luke, as well as considering the meanings of names as reasons for their choices by Luke (see Adylson Valdez, in "The Genealogies of Jesus," 2.1 and 2.2).

G. Number 18: He divides the first 40 names of Luke's genealogy into two sets of 20 names (separated by three names) and then sees that first-letter groups appearing in the first twenty names are repeated in the second twenty. ... 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.

Response of Valdez: With respect to the two groups of twenty names, in reality they are separated by two names, not three. The two names are Zorobabel and Salathiel.

Regarding the lack of transmission of new meaning or a message of positive value to Christian readers of the Bible, I wish to say that this was not my intention. I thought only to pass on to researchers of the Bible my new findings on the genealogies, which are clearly demonstrated in my article "The Genealogy of Jesus," and especially in the tables

that appear at the end of it and in the other article that I have written, not yet published, entitled “The Genealogy of Jesus: a complementation,” which can be found at the following WEB addresses:

<http://www.pesquisasbiblicas.com.br/enggenjesus.pdf>

<http://www.pesquisasbiblicas.com.br/enggenjesuscompl.pdf>

REPLY TO THE RESPONSE OF ADYLSON VALDEZ

by John F. McCarthy

Number 1: Valdez points out that concern to save more space for “details on the genealogies of Matthew and Luke that up until then had not been published” forced him” to treat the harmonization theses in a shortened manner.”

McCarthy Replies: In my article, “New Light on the Genealogies of Jesus” (*Living Tradition* 11 [1987]), I presented a detailed study of the principal expositions of the so-called “harmonizing theses” regarding the genealogies of Jesus in Matthew and Luke. Valdez lists these sources in his bibliography, but we now see that the reason why he gives hardly any citations or page references to them is that he did not even read and study them before publishing his “thorough analysis” and total rejection of them.

Traditional Catholic biblical scholars have been outstanding in giving a reference to the originators or the most notable representatives of conclusions that they convey. But it is a writing defect of many Catholic historical critics that they typically do not mention earlier representatives of ideas that they convey, unless these representatives happen to be fellow historical critics, thus leaving readers to suppose that they discovered these ideas from their own biblical research. In my 1987 article in *Living Tradition*, “New Light on the Genealogies of Jesus,” I described in detail the outstanding hypotheses defending the historical truth of the two genealogies of Jesus (see **Numbers 8-12** of my review), and I presented five principal representatives and many other representatives of these hypotheses (see **Number 7** of my review). Valdez used this collected information of mine rather extensively, but he made no mention of my article in the text of his writing or even in a footnote reference.

Number 5: Valdez clarifies here that, in suggesting that *imagining* that Mary might have been a descendant of David through one of his other sons, and not through Solomon or Nathan, would be a better solution to the problem of the genealogies.

McCarthy Replies: What Valdez says he meant was to *imagine* this as a working hypothesis, just as the harmonizing theses are all imagined hypotheses. However, the harmonizing hypotheses are all based on the assumption that the two genealogies are historically factual, while Valdez avers that in large part they are not historically factual but are artificially concocted to look like they are factual. Hence, from the Author’s point of view, the two genealogies are products of religious imagination, and he is implying that we may change the text of Luke’s genealogy at will by inserting an object of our own religious imagination to solve the problem at hand. I said in my critical review of the Author’s article (see **Number 5** of my review) that this idea stems from the “Kantian split” which is built into the historical-critical method and which regards the contents of the Bible and all reasoning from the Bible to be products of unreal religious imagination, and my point was that true Christian believers are not free to follow the false philosophy of Immanuel Kant by suggesting such imaginary solutions.

Number 7: Valdez justifiably points out (quoting from my summary of Jacques Masson’s book) that the Law of the Levirate solution, as Masson defends it, involves the inventing at will of levirate mothers and other complicated relationships and applying it, not only to brothers, but also to uncles, nephews, and cousins. So Valdez suggests that “we could simply infer that Matthew’s genealogy is the natural ancestry, whereas Luke’s is the legal ancestry.”

McCarthy replies: However, as I have pointed out in my review, what needs to be added is that Matthew’s genealogy is the natural ancestry *only of Joseph*, whereas Luke’s genealogy is, at best, the legal ancestry *of Joseph*. The title and main subject of Valdez’ article is not “The Genealogies of Joseph,” but “The Genealogies of Jesus,” and I have pointed out at length in my critical review the difference that governs here, namely, that Joseph’s genealogy is not the natural genealogy of Jesus, but only the legal genealogy of Jesus (see **Numbers 1-3** of my review), and Luke’s genealogy is probably the natural genealogy of Jesus but, at best, is only the legal genealogy of Joseph, because, as Luke points out at the beginning of his list, Jesus was only “supposed to be the son of Joseph,” while, according to a tenable reading of Luke’s text, Jesus was probably the real natural grandson of Eli (Joachim), who was the father of the Blessed Virgin Mary (see **Number 14** of my review). Hence, in this matter, Valdez is not looking at the full context of either genealogy, and thus he misses what is really being said there.

Number 9: Valdez maintains that the two Evangelists agree in insisting that Joseph was a descendant of David, but “about Mary’s origins they declared not a thing.” And, he adds, the evangelists did insist that “the genealogies they present are through Joseph and not Mary.”

McCarthy replies: As explained in **Number 16** of my review, Matthew in his first chapter presents two disjoined genealogical lists, the first descending from Abraham to Joseph, and the second descending from Mary to Jesus or from the Holy Spirit to Jesus. In making this division, Matthew is taking Joseph out of the line of natural ancestry of

Jesus and placing Mary within that line. Matthew does not therewith present the more remote origins of Mary, but he is clearly insisting that Mary, and not Joseph, was in the immediate line of the natural and biological ancestry of Jesus.

On the other hand, Luke does not insist that Joseph was in the line of natural ancestry of Jesus, but rather that Joseph was thought (popularly) to be in that line. In **Number 14** of my review I described a clear historical possibility of how this popular understanding could have come about in the actual historical circumstances of the birth and early life of Jesus: the document containing the genealogy of Joseph presented by Luke was drawn up by Joseph and Mary at the time of their return to Palestine after their sojourn in Egypt. While Luke, in keeping with the custom of the time, substitutes the qualified name of Joseph for the name of Mary, her presence in the list is implied by Luke and expressed by Matthew.

Number 10: Valdez believes that, “Luke’s Eli is not Eliachim. If he were, the evangelist would have placed Eliachim, instead of simply Eli, as can be seen in Luke 3:30.”

McCarthy replies: In **Number 14** of my review, I presented a simple explanation of Luke 3:23, based upon the historical circumstances of the birth and early childhood of Jesus, according to which Mary’s genealogy was purposely altered for pressing historical reasons to become a supposed second genealogy of Joseph. I said that it is likely that the name of Mary’s father Joachim was artfully changed to its equivalent Eliachim and then shortened to Eli to throw off possible attempts of the legal authorities to tie Joseph to his genealogy registered in Bethlehem as a direct descendent of King David and thus to identify Jesus as the babe whom King Herod had tried to kill in the massacre of the innocents.

Valdez claims that “the tradition of Joachim’s being Mary’s father came much later than Luke’s Gospel, who represents Eli as Joseph’s father, not Mary’s.”

McCarthy replies: There is no evidence that the later documented evidence of Mary’s father being named Joachim is not based on the historical fact that the name of Mary’s father was Joachim. In **Number 14** of my review, I presented a reading of Luke 3:13 by which Luke is *not* saying that Eli was Joseph’s father, but rather he is saying that “Eli” (Mary’s father Joachim) was the biological grandfather of Jesus, and thus Luke is implicitly including Mary as the biological mother of Jesus.

Number 16: Valdez responds that he “did not use the allegorical method because the literary genre [genre] of the biblical genealogies does not accept such a method, not in respect to the genealogies, nor to their number, nor to the names. What can be found is a symbolic meaning for number 14 in Matthew and for number 7 and other numbers in Luke, as well as considering the meanings of names as reasons for their choices by Luke.”

McCarthy replies: From Adylson Valdez’ point of view the literary genre of the biblical genealogies does not accept the allegorical method of interpretation, because he is using the concepts of the form-critical method of Hermann Gunkel, Rudolf Bultmann, and other form-critics. He does not say this, but the origins of the form-critical method are steeped in naturalism, rationalism, and modernism, and so the reductive purview of form-criticism is blind to the full picture presented by the Sacred Scriptures. The *naturalism* built into the form-critical method rules out the possibility of any divine nature-miracles as narrated in Sacred Scripture. The *rationalism* built into the form-critical method excludes what is written in the Sacred Scriptures as a source of real knowledge. And the *modernism* built into the form-critical method deletes any acceptance of real divine providence or true inspired prophecy. As a result, the form-critical method does not accept the real distinction between the literal and the spiritual senses of Sacred Scripture or that the divinely inspired allegories recognized in the sacred text by the Fathers of the Church and other ecclesiastical writers pertain to historical reality.

Catholic historical-critics pulverize the text of Sacred Scripture with their basically uncritical use of the form-critical method, which, with its inbuilt naturalism, rationalism, and modernism, tends toward conclusions that undermine Catholic faith, but Catholic form-critics typically evade drawing these conclusions by practicing a kind of dualism in which their Catholic faith is held apart from their research as historical critics. Yet, they have never given a good answer to Rudolf Bultmann’s taunt: “Once you begin to use the form-critical method, where can you draw the line?”

Thomas Aquinas, especially in his *Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Matthew*, has made a good beginning of showing the overall picture of the allegory of Christ and of his Church in the etymological meaning of the names listed in Matthew’s genealogy of Jesus and in the numerical symbolism of his three sets of 14 generations (see **Number 16** of my review).¹ Before Valdez says that there is no allegory in these genealogies of Jesus, he should read what Thomas Aquinas and other ecclesiastical writers have shown about the superimpressed allegory in these genealogies and elsewhere in the Old and New Testaments.

¹ Obviously, after more than seven centuries without systematic study of St. Thomas’ presentation, his work needs to be updated and revised. Until recently the text of St. Thomas’ commentary was available only in Latin, but now an English translation by the Rev. Paul M. Kimball is extant and is available from Dolorosa Press, from Amazon Books, and from some other dealers. Additional material on Thomas Aquinas’ exposition of the allegorical sense of Matthew’s genealogy is available also in his *Catena Aurea*, available in English from Preserving Christian Publications, Inc., P.O. Box 6129, Albany, New York 12206, and from some other dealers.

Number 18: Valdez Responds: “Regarding the lack of transmission of new meaning or a message of positive value to Christian readers of the Bible, I wish to say that this was not my intention. I thought only to pass on to researchers of the Bible my new findings on the genealogies”

McCarthy replies: The point that I was making in my critical review of Valdez’ article is that form-critical studies as such aim for the most part at finding errors and other weaknesses in the sacred text of the Bible and then incorporating these findings into their overall negative conclusions concerning the biblical text, without being much concerned about the problems that this kind of research raises for Christian believers. While Valdez may have been thinking particularly of how other form-critical scholars might evaluate his negative findings, it is my concern that other researchers, working with sound historical method and the insight of Christian faith, make the final evaluation.
