
A table of contents for *Bibliotheca Sacra* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bib-sacra_01.php

THE

BIBLIOTHECA SACRA.

ARTICLE I.

PATRISTIC VIEWS OF THE TWO GENEALOGIES OF OUR LORD.

BY FREDERIC GARDINER, D.D., PROFESSOR IN THE BERKELEY DIVINITY SCHOOL, MIDDLETOWN, CONN.

THE genealogies of our Lord, as given by the first and the third evangelists, are marked by such differences as have called forth a variety of explanations. By some the difficulty is simply passed over as one for the solution of which we have no sufficient data; and among others there is great difference, and even contrariety, of opinion. It seems, therefore, worth while to inquire what view was taken of the matter by Christian antiquity; and if the result of that inquiry shall be to show that for many centuries there was no settled and definite opinion at all, it will leave us the more free to determine the question simply on grounds of probable evidence.

In estimating the value of such explanations as we may find in the Fathers, it is to be noted that the differences between the genealogies are of a character to attract attention whenever the Gospels were carefully compared together. Such comparisons were made at an early date; and if the reasons for the differences had been positively known, they would have been distinctly and uniformly stated whenever the matter was discussed at all. Moreover, unless there

were some explanation generally received, as there evidently was not, we should expect to meet with the statement of these reasons somewhat frequently in the early treatment of the Gospels. This is not the case; and in the investigation of ancient opinion, it soon becomes evident that each writer merely proposes what seems to him the most probable solution of the difficulty, or, knowing nothing better, adopts that of some one who had gone before.

The earliest mention of the subject is in a fragment of Julius Africanus (†232), preserved by Eusebius. He discusses the question at length; and his hypothesis is adopted by Eusebius, who says that Julius had received it from his ancestors (Eccl. Hist. i. 7; vi. 31). Julius himself, however, intimates that his explanation was not altogether satisfactory, and disclaims any authority in its support. From his discussion it is quite plain that in his time — say at the close of the second century — there could not have existed any trustworthy tradition on the subject; but that the ancients, like ourselves, were obliged to consider the question on its merits.

Julius Africanus considers both genealogies as designed to show the ancestry of Joseph. This view was taken for granted, apparently without inquiry, by many of the ancients, because both genealogies terminate formally in Joseph; and from these Fathers it has passed on to many modern writers. Julius considers that "the families descended from Solomon and those from Nathan were so intermingled, by substitutions in the place of those who had died childless, by second marriages and the raising up of seed, that the same persons are justly considered as in one respect belonging to the one of these, and in another respect belonging to others." He explains the last three links of the genealogy in detail, thus: Nathan (Matt. i. 15) married a woman named Estha, as tradition records her name, by whom he had a son Jacob, and died; Melchi (Luke iii. 24) now married the widow Estha, and by her had a son Eli. Jacob and Eli were thus half-brothers by the same mother, and were, of course, next of kin to each other. Eli dying without issue, his half-brother

Jacob married his widow, and by her had a son Joseph, who is thus reckoned by the first evangelist naturally as his son, but by the third, legally, as the son of Eli. After some further discussion, Julius adds: "This is neither incapable of proof, nor is it idle conjecture"; but it does not appear whether he means this to refer to the general law of levirate marriages, or to the particular case of Jacob and Eli. He then relates that the public records of Jewish pedigrees were destroyed by Herod, but the relatives of our Lord — the desponsyni — had yet, by memory, "or in some other way," preserved their pedigree, and gave this account of the genealogies in the Gospels. Nevertheless, he closes the whole discussion by saying: "Whether, then, the matter be thus or otherwise, as far as I and every impartial judge would say, no one certainly could discover a more obvious interpretation. And this may suffice on the subject; for, *although it be not supported by testimony*,[1] we have nothing to advance either better or more consistent with the truth." At the close of the letter he reiterates his hypothesis, and Eusebius adds that thus Mary also is shown to be of the same tribe, "since by the Mosaic law intermarriages among different tribes were not permitted"; a very doubtful argument, yet testifying to the desire felt for some knowledge of the genealogy of the Virgin.

It will be observed that Julius finds the natural parentage of Joseph in Matthew's genealogy; his legal, in Luke's. This is not inconsistent with his general view of *both* genealogies as made up partly of natural and partly of legal descents. But later criticism seems to have established the fact that Matthew gives (as he was bound to do) the official or legal genealogy throughout, whether it concurred with the natural, or not. The shortness of his whole list, with the omission of several known names, its artificial arrangement for mnemonic purposes, his certain adoption of the legal descent in the case of Salathiel, and his adherence to

[1] καὶ ἡμῖν αὕτη μελέτω, εἰ καὶ μὴ ἐμμάρτυρός ἐστι, τῷ μὴ κρείττονα ἢ ἀληθεστέραν ἔχειν εἰπεῖν.

the royal line, all concur to show his design. On the other hand, the only satisfactory explanation of Luke's tracing the genealogy through an inferior line, and his far greater fulness in the mention of the generations, is now generally felt to be his purpose to give the *actual* in contradistinction to the legal descent, at least as far as Eli. With these characteristics of the purposes of the two genealogies, it is consistent that Eli should be the legal, and Jacob the natural, father of Joseph only on the supposition that Luke was really intending to show the actual descent of Mary.

Origen, in part the contemporary of Julius, discusses the difference between the genealogies (Hom. 28 in Lucam); but he evidently knew of no solution of the difficulty, as he takes refuge in a mystical explanation, making Matthew's genealogy "through many sinful persons" the genealogy of Christ, as he was born to save sinful men; while Luke gives not an actual, but, so to speak, a baptismal genealogy. The latter, he considers, speaks of his second birth in baptism.

Perhaps next should be placed the *Quaestiones ad Orthodoxos*, attributed to Justin Martyr, but certainly not his, since it refers (Resp. 86) to Origen as an authority. This author (Quaest. 131), in answer to the question how there came to be more generations in the legal genealogy of Luke than in the natural of Matthew, says: "In the genealogy of Luke Eli only is the legal father of Joseph; but from Eli even to Nathan all who are mentioned in the succession were the natural (actual) sons of those with whom they are connected." And again (Quaest. 133) he repeats the same statement, adding that Luke, as well as Matthew, gives the natural succession, both before and after David, with the exception of Eli, who was only the legal father of Joseph. He thus deviates from the theory of Julius Africanus, and so far as the genealogy of Luke is concerned, we conceive that he has substantially hit upon the true solution. It is to be noted that of these three earliest writers on the subject, Julius alone considers Luke's genealogy as giving the actual descent of Joseph, and even so, with many legal links interwoven.

Athanasius, in common with many others,[1] speaks of Mary as of the house of David. They do not give the grounds of this decision, which may have rested on the language of the angelic salutation, and on the fact of her journey to Bethlehem just before the birth of our Lord; or, more probably, on a sense of the fitness that the mother of "the Son of David" should herself have been descended from the house of David. Still, it is not impossible that they may have conceived the genealogy of Luke to be that of the Virgin; and this is the more likely, because the scriptures which speak of Christ as "the Son of David after the flesh" are often cited by them in this connection.

In the fourth century, Epiphanius (Haer. 78, post med.) mentions Joachim (instead of Eli) as the father of Mary. He doubtless gives this name on the authority of the apocryphal books of the Protevangelium of James and the History of the Nativity of Mary. The suggestion that this is but another form of the name Eli can hardly be admitted, except by a process which would transmute into one another any two names of the London directory. Still, a double name is not improbable; and the mention of the name at all by Epiphanius is entirely incidental. But, however this may be, Epiphanius is clearly quite too late to be an authority on the matter, and he makes too many and too gross mistakes in this same treatise to allow us to attach very much weight to his opinion, and the apocryphal books from which he drew the name contain too many absurd traditions to be entitled to any credit in the matter. They may be right in saying that Mary's father was of the tribe of Judah, but are certainly wrong in attributing to him great pastoral wealth. Epiphanius exercised little discrimination in regard to such traditions. Just before, i.e. near the middle of Haer. 78, he says that James, the Lord's brother, was alone allowed once a year to enter into the holy of holies, *because he was a*

[1] Athan. c. Apoll., ed. Col. 1686, Tom. i. p. 616 d. Serm. de Annunciat. p. 1041 d. Among others who express this opinion are cited Gregory Thaumat., Jerome, Leo the Great, Serm. 29. Epiph. Her. 78, etc.

Nazarite, and connected with the priesthood. His view of the genealogy appears from the earlier part of the same treatise, in which he speaks of Joseph as the son of Jacob, whose cognomen was Panther. He makes him a widower of eighty years or more at the time he was espoused to Mary. On the whole, it can hardly be considered that Epiphanius throws much light on the question of the genealogies; and if any weight be attached to his mention of Joachim, it still remains that this may have been merely a double name.

In the same century, Gregory Nazianzen devotes the eighteenth of his *Carmina* to the discussion of the difference between the two genealogies. He follows the plan of Julius Africanus, except that he makes Nathan, the son of David, a very eminent priest (cf. 1 Kings iv. 5), and the line descended from him and recounted by Luke a priestly line. Mary he expressly says (line 39) was a Levite, but also of the royal line, because Naason (*sic*) married the daughter of Aaron (cf. Ex. vi. 23, where it appears that Aaron married the sister of Naason), and there were frequent subsequent intermarriages between the tribes. He says, however (line 57), that Joseph (who was of the royal line of David) and Mary were of the same tribe. Finally, he makes the royal and priestly lines unite in Christ, the royal Priest, on the one hand by means of Joseph's natural sonship to Jacob, and legal to Eli; and on the other by Mary's priestly ancestry, and the intermarriage of those ancestors with the tribe of Judah. Gregory caps the climax of the perspicuity of his explanation by telling us (line 47–49) that the distinction of the tribes had been lost since the time of the captivity of Babylon. So far, however, as anything can be gathered from him, it is that he considered Luke's genealogy to be that of the Virgin.

Somewhat later Ambrose (in Luc. iii. 15, p. 1319 a. b. ed. Bened.) again repeats the explanation of Julius, but with this important difference, that he makes Eli the natural, and Jacob the legal, father of Joseph. His words are: "Rursus Heli, fratre sine liberis decedente, copulatus est fratris uxori,

et generavit filium Joseph, qui juxta legem Jacob filius dicitur." It is plain that in these days each writer considered himself free to vary the hypotheses as seemed to him reasonable and probable.

This investigation will, perhaps, have been followed far enough, if attention is given to the views of two leading writers and influential minds of this century, Jerome and Augustine.

Jerome (in Matt. i. 16) notices the objection of the emperor Julian on account of the discrepancy of the evangelists, and contents himself with saying of Jacob and Eli that one was the natural, and the other the legal, father of Joseph, but without committing himself as to which of them was the one, and which the other. He refers to Julius Africanus and to Eusebius's lost work, *De Dissonantia Evangelistarum*. as entering fully into the discussion of the question. Under verse 18, he remarks that Joseph and Mary were of the same tribe. It seems probable, therefore, that, while Jerome did not care himself to enter into the merits of the question, he allowed the current explanation of Julius to pass without challenge.

Augustine took more interest in the matter, and in various works frequently refers to it, putting forth in earlier life an opinion which he subsequently modified. In his work, *De Consensu Evang.* (lib. ii. c. 1, 2, 3) he considers Joseph as the natural son of Jacob, but the *adopted* son of Eli, and at some length he illustrates historically the custom of adoption, and shows that it is not at variance with the phraseology of Luke. In cap. 2 he argues that Paul's statement (Rom. i. 3) shows Mary to have been of the house of David, and Luke's (i. 36, 5) that she was also of the house of Aaron, and hence Christ was of both the royal and priestly race. In this last point he has followed Gregory Nazianzen; but his theory of *adoption* seems to have been original. In his *Quaest. Evang.* (lib. ii. 5) he proposes three possible solutions of the question, "how Joseph could have had two fathers": First, by adoption; secondly, by his birth from a levirate marriage; thirdly,

by one of the fathers mentioned having been not his actual father, but his more remote ancestor. Of these he thinks the second should be rejected, because the progeny of a levirate marriage bore the name of the deceased. He therefore considers the solution of the difficulty to lie either in the first or the third method proposed, or in yet some other way which did not then occur to him. Augustine several times discusses the question why the genealogy of Christ should have been given through Joseph, and not through Mary (cf. especially Serm. 51 c. 10; c. 20). He then certainly did not consider either of the lines to be that of Mary. The theory of adoption is put forward again, and sustained at some length in Serm. 51 (c. 17, 18), with the hypothesis of a levirate marriage (c. 19) added as an alternative. In his treatise *Contra Faust. Manich.*, again, treating the question of the genealogy being traced through Joseph, and not Mary, he stoutly maintains (c. 8, 9) that Mary herself was of the seed of David. This he holds would be true if any of her ancestors, even female ancestors, had married into the house of David, although she were herself, as Faustus alleged, the daughter of Joachim of the tribe of Levi. Some such hypothesis he says he would adopt, "if I were bound by the authority of that apocryphal book in which Joachim is called the father of Mary." In an earlier part of this same treatise (lib. iii. c. 3) he has again discussed the question of the two fathers of Joseph, which he says covers the whole difficulty of the disagreement of the two evangelists. He again solves it by the theory of adoption, and again illustrates this at length historically; but he does not here propose any alternative hypothesis. Finally, with that honest frankness which characterized him, in his "Retractions" (lib. ii. c. 7. 2), he wholly withdraws the hypothesis of voluntary adoption, which he had so often and so strongly urged, and substitutes for it the "legal adoption" by the levirate marriage, expressly on the authority of Africanus. Augustine, then, long held one view as the result of his own study and reflection, and finally abandoned it in deference to the view of an earlier writer.

From Augustine's time down for some centuries the explanation of Julius Africanus was currently accepted, and it seems unnecessary to pursue the inquiry further. But Julius himself, as we have seen, did not consider his solution of the difficulty as quite satisfactory, and speaks of it as his own explanation, expressly disclaiming any testimony in its behalf. We cannot but think Augustine's objection to it, mentioned above, to be well put. Quite a variety in the details of the explanation has appeared among the intermediate writers. They all seem to have been absorbed with the difficulty "how Joseph could have had two fathers" — a difficulty which pressed so heavily that Origen was driven to the fancy of a spiritual genealogy, and Gregory was led into an inextricable confusion of explanation. Thus absorbed, they failed, with the exception of Gregory, to ask whether Luke's genealogy might not be really that of the Virgin Mary, and thus Joseph have become legally the son of *her* Father, and the representative of his family, by marrying his only child. This is the simplest possible solution of the difficulty. Luke, in his "diligent inquiries," would probably have obtained from her her own family pedigree; and in case she were an only child, as is most likely, this, after her betrothal to Joseph, would have formally terminated with his name as the representative of her family. Had this occurred to them, they would also have been relieved of that other difficulty of which they so often treat, "how Christ was shown by the genealogy of Joseph to be of the seed of David." And they would thus, too, have reconciled the almost universal persuasion that Joseph was only the adopted or legal son of Eli with the fact that Luke otherwise, gives evidently, the natural, in contradistinction to Matthew's legal, table of descent.

The Fathers generally do not seem to have troubled themselves about the occurrence of the two names, Salathiel and Zorobabel, in both genealogies; but rightly considered the lines as distinct from David down, until, by whatever means, they unite again in Joseph.