



REFORMATION COMMENTARY ON SCRIPTURE

NEW TESTAMENT
I

MATTHEW

EDITED BY
JASON K. LEE AND
WILLIAM M. MARSH

GENERAL EDITOR
TIMOTHY GEORGE

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COMMENTARY ON MATTHEW

OVERVIEW: Reformation commentators continued the ancient and medieval practice of providing a “preface” on books of the Bible. These “prologues” aimed to orient readers to the central theological meaning or subject (i.e., *argumentum*) of a biblical book alongside establishing the distinctive contribution of the human author as an instrument through whom the Holy Spirit conveyed authoritative divine intention and truth. The Gospel of Matthew received such prefatory treatment, sometimes in prefaces submitted for all four Gospels as a whole and at other times in prologues devoted solely to Matthew’s Gospel. In general, Reformation writers were concerned that the Gospel genre not be mistaken for mere historical record. Although the Gospel of Matthew certainly presented a narrative or “story,” what made it “gospel” was its faithful proclamation of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Son of David, according to the Old Testament (i.e., “the Law and the Prophets”) Scriptures for the forgiveness of our sins and our salvation. In fact, Christ was to be beheld properly in the Gospel accounts as in the rest of the New Testament writings rather than sought after in venerated relics. Here in the text of holy Scripture the crucified and risen Lord Jesus would be seen more clearly and truly than if he appeared bodily before one’s very eyes. The reformers are careful to indicate that it is the Spirit of Christ himself who is at work in a biblical author like Matthew, utilizing the human author’s own personality, style, and rhetoric to convey under divine inspiration and power the gospel’s promise of righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ. Christ is the mediator of eternal salvation—that is, God’s bestowal of the truly blessed life.

Prolegomena

THE LIVING CHRIST BEHELD IN THE WRITTEN GOSPELS. DESIDERIUS ERASMUS: If someone exhibited a print made by the feet of Christ, how we Christians would prostrate ourselves, how we would adore! Why, then, do we not rather venerate his living and breathing image, preserved in these books? If someone displayed the tunic of Christ, would we not fly to the ends of the earth to kiss it? But even if you were to produce every possession he owned, there is nothing that would show Christ more clearly and more truly than the written Gospels. Through our love of Christ, we enrich a statue of wood or stone with jewels and gold. Why do we not rather adorn these books with gold and jewels and anything more precious, for they recall Christ to us more vividly than any little statue. A statue shows only the appearance of his body—if indeed it shows anything of that—but these books show you the living image of his holy mind and Christ himself, speaking, healing, dying, rising to life again. In short, they restore Christ to us so completely and so vividly that you would see him less clearly should you behold him standing before your very eyes. PARACLESIS.¹

ONLY ONE GOSPEL. MARTIN LUTHER: The gospel is a story about Christ, God’s and David’s Son, who died and was raised and is established as Lord. This is the gospel in a nutshell. Just as there is no more than one Christ, so there is and may be

¹CWE 41:422 (LB 5:144B-D).

no more than one gospel. Since Paul and Peter too teach nothing but Christ, in the way we have just described, so their epistles can be nothing but the gospel. Yes, even the teaching of the prophets, in those places where they speak of Christ, is nothing but the true, pure, and proper gospel—just as if Luke or Matthew had described it. For the prophets have proclaimed the gospel and spoken of Christ, as St. Paul here reports and as everyone indeed knows. Thus, when Isaiah in chapter 53 says how Christ should die for us and bear our sins, he has written the pure gospel. And I assure you, if a person fails to grasp this understanding of the gospel, they will never be able to be illuminated in the Scripture nor will they receive the right foundation. A BRIEF INSTRUCTION ON WHAT TO LOOK FOR AND EXPECT IN THE GOSPELS.²

THE GOSPELS ARE ABOUT CHRIST'S MEDIATORIAL OFFICE. JOHN CALVIN: Again, the four histories, which relate how Christ discharged the office of mediator, have with great propriety received this designation. As the birth, death, and resurrection of Christ contain the whole of our salvation, and are therefore the peculiar subject of the Gospel, the name of Evangelists is justly and suitably applied to those who place before our eyes Christ who has been sent by the Father, that our faith may acknowledge him to be the Author of a blessed life. THE ARGUMENT, COMMENTARY ON A HARMONY ON THE GOSPELS.³

MATTHEW, FROM FRAUD TO FAITH. JOHANNES BRENZ: [He] also wanted to show in the character of the clerk[†] the greatness of the power of the gospel of Christ, as well as the extent of the efficacy and power of true faith in Christ. Matthew was for sure a wicked man and a well-known fraud. But after he was gripped with love of the gospel and believed in Christ, it became so foreign to his character to continue perpetrating crimes and deceits that he preferred to abandon all of his own interests, and

even his own life, rather than neglect Christ's calling and lead a wicked life. Therefore, the one who once had been a fraud became through faith a righteous man. He who had once been wicked became through faith holy. He who once did not refrain from engaging in every type of sin became through faith a zealous adherent of every good work. A faith that is fraudulent and merely imagined permits a man to pursue his former sins. But true faith, as it regenerates a person in Christ, so also remakes them to pursue the calling of the Holy Spirit when the lusts of the flesh have been tamed. Therefore, let us strive after this goal, in keeping with Matthew's example, to lay hold of and pursue true faith in Christ. But may we also receive and hold in mind with the greatest diligence what Matthew wrote: the verdict of the final judgment will not be rendered according to the laws of Solon, Lycurgus, Justinian, or the popes of Rome.[‡] No, it will be based upon this teaching of Matthew: he who has faith in Christ will be saved. He who does not have that faith will perish. Matthew is not the least of those of whom Christ himself testified. "Truly I say to you," he said, "that you who have followed me will also sit upon twelve thrones—when the Son of Man sits on the throne of his majesty at the renewal—judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

This is the precise point when it comes to Matthew: that we know we are to listen to his account not as we usually do when someone describes mere secular histories. Rather, we must apply our ears to him as the one who proclaim the very oracles of heaven. PREFACE ON THE APOSTLE AND EVANGELIST, MATTHEW.⁴

MATTHEW'S GOSPEL ESTEEMED BY THE EARLY CHURCH. HEINRICH BULLINGER: The Gospel of Matthew had so much authority in the church of

²LW 35:118-19* (WA 10:1.1.10); citing Rom 1:2; Is 53.

³CTS 1:xxxvii (CO 45:2).

⁴Brenz, *In Scriptum Apostoli et Euangelistae Matthaei*, 10-11; citing Mt 19:28. [†]*Cancellarius*, i.e., Matthew. [‡]Solon (c. 630–c.560 BC) and Lycurgus (c. 625 BC) established the constitutions of Athens and Sparta respectively. Emperor Justinian (482–565 BC) compiled and revised Roman law into the *Codex Justinianus*. Gratian (c. 12th c.) began the codification of papal, or canon, law with the *Decretum Gratiani*.

the Lord from the time of Christ that it was always placed among the foremost documents and in the first rank, and finally it was expounded by the very apostles of the Lord. St. Athanasius[†] tells us that James, the brother of the Lord, expounded the Gospel According to Matthew to the church in Jerusalem. And he says that the histories provide evidence that the apostle Bartholomew expounded the same gospel to the Indians very faithfully. Therefore, dear readers, let us not be reluctant to apply our whole selves to it with the greatest rigor and fervent prayers, that we may understand the most holy Gospel of such an important apostle—a Gospel inspired by the Spirit of Christ our Lord and recorded with utmost scrupulousness by a most trustworthy apostle. May we understand it correctly, truly, and with devotion, and to the great benefit of our souls. The fruit that we should hope for from it is not at all typical but actually everlasting life. For the heavenly Father has offered the world life in his Son, and this Gospel proclaims that Christ is the Son of God, that whoever believes in him has everlasting life. **ON THE GOSPEL OF ST. MATTHEW, THE APOSTLE AND HIS WORK.**⁵

A GOSPEL FOR AFFLICTED CONSCIENCES.

JOHANNES BUGENHAGEN: Matthew first writes that Christ the Son of God, promised in the Law and the Prophets, came in our flesh for both Jews and Gentiles. This means that he who saves his people from their sins was born of a virgin and the flesh of David according to God's promises. Then in the third chapter Matthew begins from John's preaching as do the other Gospel writers and shows us Christ, who reveals by his teaching of the gospel and amazing works that he is the Son of God in our flesh. But finally, he brings this God and man before us on the cross as our high priest, the sole sacrifice for our salvation, the eternal King rising from the dead, and the continual priest and

mediator at the Father's right hand. Afflicted consciences will not deny that this, moreover, is a description of Christ, that it is the true gospel. **THE ARGUMENT.**⁶

MATTHEW, A HUMBLE INSTRUMENT OF THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST. HEINRICH BULLINGER: Now the actual construction or building of any narrative or historical account consists both in subjects and words.[†] The subject is the actual deeds and words of Jesus Christ the Son of God as they were exemplified in his particular circumstances. Specifically, it is that blessed life which—in Christ, through faith, freely—is bestowed upon those who believe. It is promised in the gospel, but it is also that truly righteous life that both Christ's words and actions exemplify and impress upon us. This is the argument of Matthew's entire work.

In addition, the subjects are related by a twofold arrangement. I mean first that natural arrangement whereby events are described in the order in which they occurred. And second, there is the arrangement dependent upon the writer's design [*artificiali*], whereby the natural order is not preserved in every detail, but events are explained as the writer thought fit and as the needs of his audience required. In the course of the narration and series of books, I will show that Matthew made use of both types. I have divided my commentaries on Matthew in two separate volumes for this reason especially, to make the Gospel storyline perfectly clear, to render it conspicuous, and to aid the readers' memory. Matthew uses words that are suited to history, ones that are simple, straightforward, appropriate to the subject, and not at all recondite, and the diction moves along with a certain kind of consistent gentleness. Indeed, Matthew wastes no time in his treatment of subjects on laborious descriptions of events, persons, places, and things. And he takes the same approach to the complex discussions of causes and similar practices used

⁵Bullinger, *In . . . Evangelium secundum Matthaeum commentariorum* (1546), 2v. [†]Athanasius, *Synopsis Scripturae Sacrae*, PG 28:431-32.

⁶Bugenhagen, *In IIII. Priora Capita Euangelii secundum Matthaeum* (1543), A5-A6.

here and there among secular histories with great pomp, as decoration for their accounts. Therefore, in the way he composes phrases Matthew does not employ rhetorical trappings and embellishments, highly colored and gaudy words. He simply offered himself as an instrument to the Spirit of Christ, and what the Spirit revealed and suggested Matthew indiscriminately set down [*profudit*]. Now the Spirit of Christ is humble, plain, untainted, undefiled, and candid. And so his style, which Matthew used, is pure and entirely distinct

from all the exaggeration and passion of human arrogance. That most divine Writer understood that it is not the polished tongue barking learnedly on the outside, but the Holy Spirit working efficaciously within that works to produce salvation. ON THE GOSPEL OF ST. MATTHEW, THE APOSTLE AND HIS WORK.⁷

⁷Bullinger, *In . . . Evangelium secundum Matthaeum commentarium* (1546), 3v. ¹This is a quite close adaptation of Cicero's *De Oratore* 2.15.63.

1:1-17 THE GENEALOGY OF JESUS CHRIST

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

²Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, ³and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram,^a ⁴and Ram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon,⁵ and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse,⁶ and Jesse the father of David the king.

And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah,⁷ and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asaph,^b ⁸and Asaph the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah,⁹ and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah,¹⁰ and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh,

and Manasseh the father of Amos,^c and Amos the father of Josiah,¹¹ and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon.

¹²And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Shealtiel,^d and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, ¹³and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor,¹⁴ and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud,¹⁵ and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob,¹⁶ and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.

¹⁷So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations.

^a Greek *Aram*; also verse 4 ^b *Asaph* is probably an alternate spelling of *Asa*; some manuscripts *Asa*; also verse 8 ^c *Amos* is probably an alternate spelling of *Amon*; some manuscripts *Amon*; twice in this verse ^d Greek *Salathiel*; twice in this verse

OVERVIEW: The Reformation commentators indicate that the primary purpose of Matthew is to identify Jesus as the Messiah seen in his being the promised seed of David and Abraham. Jesus fulfilled all the messianic expectations of the Old Testament promises, even if not those of his Jewish contemporaries. From the genealogy provided to the narratives that follow, Matthew's readers have every reason to receive Jesus as the promised Messiah. The commentators also observe a variety of intriguing features of the genealogy. For example, Thomas Cartwright notes that Matthew traces Jesus' lineage through Solomon rather than Nathan, as in Luke's Gospel, perhaps because Matthew is not interested in a detailed, natural lineage but in identifying Jesus as being in a succession of kings.

Others remark that the inclusion of "sinners" in Jesus' genealogy is to help identify him as the one who will save his people from their sins, including his progenitors.

Among the apologetic questions that the Reformation authors address are the supposed historical inaccuracies in Matthew's genealogy and why Matthew uses Joseph's instead of Mary's lineage. Potential historical inaccuracies appear when comparing Matthew's genealogy with the Old Testament narrative texts that chronicle the lives of the kings of Israel and Judah. Two common parries to this skeptical thrust are the appeals to Matthew's technique of condensing the genealogy to fit the pattern of fourteens (Mt 1:17) or to copyist errors when there are additions to the

genealogy. On the issue of Joseph's lineage, many commentators assert that since both Joseph and Mary descend from David either could be used, while noting that Matthew prefers Joseph due to Jewish custom of tracing the lineage through the father.

1:1-6 *Jesus' Genealogy to David*

THE END OF GENEALOGICAL CONTROVERSIES.

MARTIN LUTHER: It is therefore enough to know from this genealogy that Christ came from the tribe of David, the son of Abraham. And if that is the case, then endless wrangling over the generations of all individuals and lines is in vain. For once it has been established that Christ, the King and Priest, comes from the tribe of Judah, the Levitical priesthood is overturned at its foundation, and the boasting of the Jews about their Levitical priesthood as if it were everlasting is false, since Christ, the King and Priest, even if he were yet to come (according to their error), would nevertheless take away their Levitical priesthood and take its place. For it is written, "You are a priest forever."

Therefore, Matthew straightaway puts forward the argument that this man, Jesus of Nazareth (who had certainly come, seeing that the Jews not only knew him but even crucified him), was the Christ, that is, the Son of David, the son of Abraham. He thereby wished to teach the Jews right at the very beginning [of his Gospel] that their worship and priesthood and kingdom had come to an end. The Jews certainly could not deny that Jesus was this man from the tribe of David, the son of Abraham. For Matthew confidently takes this as granted from their very own genealogies. But the point he makes is that this very Jesus is the Christ, the promised one they were awaiting. ANNOTATIONS ON MATTHEW.¹

THE BOOK OF THE BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST.

WOLFGANG MUSCULUS: The Evangelist intended to cover not only the history of the birth of Christ

but also his life, teaching, miracles, death, and resurrection. Nevertheless, he wished to begin his history in this way because of the Hebrews, for whose sake he wrote his Gospel, so that he could declare that this Jesus was the one whom God formerly promised to their fathers. He did this to show that Christ was born by a succession of generations from Abraham to David, according to the oracles of God. The Evangelist knew that all who were required to keep the faith of the Jews shared this same beginning. With this introduction, he certainly provided no little encouragement to the minds that were not absolutely blinded when reading these commentaries, because those Jews who were godly waited with such great eagerness for the lineage and ancestry of not just anyone, but him who was promised, who was the Messiah: Christ the Lord. Therefore, the Evangelist does not say, "The book of the birth of Jesus of Nazareth or Galilee," but "The book of the begetting of Jesus Christ," that is, the Anointed One, which the Hebrews call Messiah in their own language. COMMENTARY ON MATTHEW 1:1.²

THE GENEALOGY AS A GUIDE FOR READERS.

HUGH BROUGHTON: The holy genealogy of Jesus Christ—which may not be reckoned in the number of those profane ones that St. Paul condemns in 1 Timothy 1:4—does not consist in a vain repetition of names, as many do think. Neither is the knowledge thereof superfluous—as some do affirm. But verily—if it be rightly understood—it is of exceedingly great use and consequence; not only to prove Christ to be the promised seed, which is a weighty point, but it also serves as a special guide to direct us in the true understanding of all the holy story. For the native judgment of all men teaches that histories cannot be learned rightly without knowledge of the person upon whom the narrations go. That being so, all who look for salvation by Scripture, which calls us unto our Savior, should have a special care to know our Lord's line. For upon it all the stories

¹LW 67:8 (WA 38:448-49); citing Ps 110:4; Heb 5:6; 6:20; 7:17, 21.

²Musculus, *In Evangelistam Matthaeum Commentarii* (1556), 3.

principally go, either in open phrase of words, or else with some close relation. The one who will take but a serious view of our Lord's line of fathers shall soon see how all the holy story depends upon it, and from it, as from a fountain, branches itself into a most pleasant variety of all God's holy proceedings, in the wonderful preservation of his church, and in the fearful overthrow of all the enemies thereof. . . .

St. Matthew begins the story of our Lord's fathers no higher than Abraham. First, because the land of Canaan, where the kingdom should arise, was first promised to Abraham. Second, Christ was first promised to him in open, distinct, and plain words. Third, he is made father of all the heathen that should follow his belief, and the heathen were to offer first fruits at Jerusalem . . . and so for Jews and Gentiles, the beginning from him is very fit. **THE HOLY GENEALOGIE OF JESUS CHRIST.**³

JESUS AS SON OF DAVID AND SON OF ABRAHAM. CHRISTOPHER BLACKWOOD: Here is a description of Christ's genealogy from Abraham to Christ in a direct line: Abraham begat Isaac, Isaac begat Jacob, Jacob begat Judas and his brethren—that is, Jacob begat not only Judah but the other eleven patriarchs who were in a collateral line. The Evangelist goes no higher than Abraham to derive Christ's pedigree because he counted it sufficient to show that Christ according to the flesh was the Son of Abraham and David, to whose families the promise of the Messiah was bound, "In your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed"; "When you shall sleep with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever." **AN EXPOSITION UPON THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW.**⁴

THE SONS OF DAVID, THE SONS OF ABRAHAM. WOLFGANG MUSCULUS: These two are distin-

guished and foremost among the fathers just as certain family heads are distinguished among the rest. Their reputation and memory had always been most sacred to all Jews, especially because of the promises made to them concerning the Christ, who would be born of their very own seed. For more about these promises, see Genesis 12 and 22; 2 Samuel 7; 1 Chronicles 17; and Psalm 89 and Psalm 132. This Evangelist knew this, and from the beginning he immediately and clearly called Jesus Christ the Son of David and Abraham, so that he would make the Jews consider with more attentive minds the list of the fathers which he drew up. **COMMENTARY ON MATTHEW 1:1.**⁵

JESUS AS BOTH CHRIST AND SON. CORNELIUS JANSEN: Jesus is the proper name of the incarnate Word. *Christ* functions as a personal title (*cognomen*),[†] not a general title of office, though in Greek it plainly signifies the same thing as the Hebrew *messiah* and the Latin *unctus* (anointed). He has been called by this personal title so that, first, he might be distinguished from others who were called "Jesus" in ancient times. Then it is signified that this [Jesus] is called "Christ" or "Anointed" in a personal and unique sense. He is the highest king, priest, and prophet, whom kings, priests, and prophets prefigured by the anointing that dedicated them to their offices. This is why this personal title (*cognomen*) "Christ" applies to our Jesus so uniquely that nobody except he may be understood when it is expressed without qualification. He was anointed with the oil of righteousness and the Holy Spirit in a singular way, beyond all his companions.[‡]

"Son of David, Son of Abraham." That is, he was their descendant according to the common Hebrew usage. All the same, Matthew preferred to say "son" rather than "descendant" here because Christ was born from other parents for the sake of David and Abraham, not the reverse. He mentioned only these two because they above all received the promise that Christ would be born

³Broughton, *Holy Genealogie*, unpaginated, sections 1 and 2 including the preface "To the Christian Reader."*

⁴Blackwood, *Expositions and Sermons upon . . . Matthew* (1659), 6*; citing Gen 22:18; 2 Sam 7:12, 13.

⁵Musculus, *In Evangelistam Matthaeum Commenarii* (1556), 3.

from them. Matthew put David first because the memory of the Davidic promise was more recent, honored, celebrated, and pleasing to the Jews, as Chrysostom⁵ and his followers. An everlasting kingdom was attributed to Christ as the successor of David. Therefore, he is everywhere acclaimed and called “the Son of David” by the blind, the crowd, and children, as is clear in Matthew 12:21, and elsewhere.

The word *son* in the second place in the sequence can be in reference to Christ as well, so that he is identified as the son of both David and Abraham. Or else it refers to David, so that Christ is Abraham’s “son” by consequence. The latter corresponds to the Hebrew custom, which in ordered genealogies tend to refer the term “son” to the immediate predecessor. COMMENTARY ON THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW.⁶

OUTSIDERS BROUGHT NEAR. RICHARD WARD: “Boaz of Rahab.” It may here be demanded: Why in the genealogy of our blessed Savior are none of the holy women reckoned up but only those whom the Scriptures tax and reprehend as sinners? I answer: This was done first of all because Christ came into this world to save sinners and to take away their sins. Sinners are reckoned up in his genealogy, and he is said to be “descended of them,” because he descended from heaven “for them.” Christ, for the comfort of poor penitent sinners, assumed that nature which once was sinful that he might separate it from sin. . . . Third and last, this is done to manifest Christ’s glory, in that he took not any of his holiness from his parents or progenitors, they being wicked.

⁶Jansen, *Commentarius in Evangelium secundum Matthaeum*, 24-25; citing 1 Kings 5:1. ¹A cognomen in ancient Rome was a “third name” or nickname, such as “Africanus,” that often was passed down through a family line, effectively becoming part of the family name (or surname). Jansen’s sense throughout this passage is that “Christ” does not function as a general title for Jesus as it did in the Old Testament but applies to him in a personal and unique way (*antonomastice*, meaning “to use an epithet as a personal name, surname”). ²Compare the Vulgate translation of Ps 45:7 (Vg. Ps 44:8) and Heb 1:9. The echo of the latter passage especially seems intentional. ³Chrysostom, *Homilies on Matthew*, NPNF¹ 10:10-11.

“Salmon begat Boaz of Rahab: and Boaz Obed of Ruth.” Here it will be questioned, to what end these are set down, for they do not seem pertinent to the matter in hand. I answer, these things are not set down in vain, but for our instruction, teaching these three things to us. First, Rahab was a harlot and yet her husband took her to himself, even though she was such. So, Christ has married himself to the Gentiles, who were spiritual fornicators through sin. Second, Ruth was a stranger and very poor, yet Boaz did not despise her for her poverty nor abhor her for the wickedness of her country. No more does Christ despise us, being most poor and beggarly, through the want of goodness and worthy to be abhorred for the wickedness of our lives. Third, to teach us that as Ruth left her country and her father’s house and all her kindred, and then was ennobled by this marriage. So, we must likewise leave our old conversation so that we may be joined in marriage to Christ. THEOLOGICAL QUESTIONS.⁷

1:7-17 *Jesus’ Genealogy from Solomon to Jacob, Joseph’s Father*

MATTHEW’S GENEALOGY COMPARED TO THE PROPHET’S. FRANCISCUS GOMARUS: With respect to the kings, adversaries attack Matthew, and in their own examinations they endeavor to disagree with the prophets to demonstrate by a twofold argument (but both not of the same weight).

Indeed, the first, and trivial, is dependent on the fact that in Matthew 1:8 he writes, “Uzziah of Joram.” But indeed, in contrast, the sacred history in 2 Chronicles 26:1 asserts that he was the son of Amaziah. But this is of lesser importance and explained well by men of education. Because these two, which they endeavor to combine with one another, are different but not opposed. For Amaziah—as it were his father, the closest one—begat Uzziah (also well-known as Azariah), but

⁷Ward, *Theological Questions upon . . . St. Matthew* (1640), 9*; citing Ps 45:10.

indeed Joram also, as forefather, through the great grandson Amaziah, from afar off. In the same manner, in the sacred writings, posterity is called by the name not only of their own father but also of grandfathers, even of a son here and there. However, although Matthew may omit the three kings in between, nothing has made it an oratorical attack on history, but to make it suitable, helpful to the memory (to harmonize into groups of fourteen), and of profit.

But in the second, a more serious argument is seen concerning kings Josiah and Jechoniah, and with major difficulty it has thrown not a few better-known interpreters into confusion. For Matthew in verse 11 said, "And Josiah begot Jechoniah and his brothers during the deportation to Babylon." But against this, the prophet claims in 1 Chronicles 3:16 that Jechoniah was the son of Jehoiakim, from which they object that their disagreement is apparent.

With some difficulty it is attacked in two parts by ancient and later theologians. For some deny obstinately an antecedent cause of one, but others a consequence. Indeed, an antecedent cause, wherein what is put forward might not be a genuine Matthean reading, on account of those words being changed in common copies. This happens as one may be omitted by Matthew while placing descendants between Josiah and Jechoniah, following after a defect of copying. And this they regard to be demonstrated from it, because in this genealogy from the Evangelist (as v. 7 itself concludes) there are fourteen generations from David to the Babylonian transmigration, and from there to Jesus Christ, just as many are recounted and therefore just as many are maintained in a correct reading.

For neither is it still likely from anyone of sound mind to arise a writer, much less an Evangelist, who in the final bringing together of a few names of this kind (not describing process) is able to wander in mind. And, if that common reading is strong in one of two groups of fourteen (evidently second or third), a descendant may clearly be needed for a correct number. Although, with

respect to an old error of copyists, that may be rejected. On the other hand, it may not be an unimportant conjecture, or regarding a reading of codices of uncertain reliability, but restored in an earlier place by Matthew (the calculation of the number rightly withdrawn and thus, by God's providence, opposing the means of corruption) by clear evidence from sacred history. And therefore they produce another fuller and genuine reading, but they disagree, as is fitting to themselves, with a variety of names.

For some, with reference to this, with carefulness with regard to copies of this genealogy, after the words "and Josiah bore Jechoniah" recommend reading, "But Jechoniah bore Jechoniah." Because clearly, Jehoiakim himself would have the same name as his son Jechoniah. ON THE GENEALOGY OF CHRIST.⁸

THE KINGS IN JESUS' GENEALOGY. THOMAS CARTWRIGHT: The same we read to have been done of king Abijah of the posterity of David, who married in the same tribe of Benjamin. Neither ought it to trouble any, as if the stairs of Christ's natural pedigree from the Virgin Mary were thus made hazardous, unless in the tribe and family of Joseph, the tribe also and family of the virgin be concluded. For by the testimonies of the angel and the Evangelist, he is infallibly verified to be the son of David by the persecution of Herod raised against the infants of the house of David, and finally, by the constrained journey of the holy virgin to go to Bethlehem, the city of David, to be taxed. And although it is called into doubt whether our Savior came from Solomon or from Nathan, and therefore also doubted whether his natural pedigree or lineage be laid out by Matthew or Luke, yet—they both being the sons of David—there is by this doubt no question moved whether he be David's son or no. Moreover, as it is evident that the light of Solomon was quite quenched in Jechoniah, who was the last of that family, it is

⁸Gomarus, *Examen controversiarum de genealogia Christi*, 301-2; citing 1 Chron 3:11-12.

manifest that Matthew does not propound unto himself the natural descent of our Savior, which draws the line of his pedigree by Solomon. For the other governors of the people, which are reckoned up after Jechoniah, are not his natural posterity or succession, but only—as they are called—legal. That is to say, those whom the laws of the princes under whom the people were in bondage did appoint to succeed to him in government. Wherefore, as Luke unfolds the natural pedigree of our Savior Christ, so does Matthew set forth the kings and princes that ruled over the people of God, thereby to declare that our Savior Christ is the king and prince whom all they were the figures and shadows of. For as it is necessary to know that he was David's natural son, so it is also requisite to be understood that he succeeded him in his kingdom, to the end that the promise of the everlasting kingdom of David might be verified. The truth of which is in Christ alone, the outward scepter being utterly wrung from the hands of David's posterity. CONFUTATION OF THE RHEMISTS TRANSLATION.⁹

THE KINGS AFTER BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY.

JOHN CALVIN: That is, after the Jews were carried into captivity: for the Evangelist means that the descendants of David, from being kings, then became exiles and slaves. As that captivity was a sort of destruction, it came to be wonderfully arranged by divine providence, not only that the Jews again united in one body, but even that some vestiges of dominion remained in the family of David. For those who returned home submitted, of their own accord, to the authority of Zerubbabel. In this manner, the fragments of the royal scepter lasted till the coming of Christ was at hand, agreeably to the prediction of Jacob: "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come." And even during that wretched and melancholy dispersion, the nation never ceased to be illuminated by some rays of the grace of God. . . .

By the name "Christ" ["Messiah"], "Anointed," Matthew points out his office to inform the readers that this was not a private person, but one divinely anointed to perform the office of Redeemer. What that anointing was, and to what it referred, I shall not now illustrate at great length. As to the word itself, it is only necessary to say that, after the royal authority was abolished, it began to be applied exclusively to him, from whom they were taught to expect a full recovery of the lost salvation. So long as any splendor of royalty continued in the family of David, the kings were typically called *christoi* (anointed). But that the fearful desolation which followed might not throw the minds of the godly into despair, it pleased God to appropriate the name of *messiah* (anointed), to the Redeemer alone: as is evident from Daniel. The evangelical history everywhere shows that this was an ordinary way of speaking at the time when the Son of God was "manifested in the flesh." COMMENTARY ON A HARMONY OF THE EVANGELISTS.¹⁰

MATTHEW'S REASONS FOR DESCRIBING JESUS' BIRTH.

THOMAS MÜNTZER: In the Gospel before us, we must see why Matthew describes the earthly birth of Christ and why it is being dealt with today. For when Matthew was preaching that Christ had been the Messiah, it must have been objected that his works had not preceded him. For it had been predicted by David and Isaiah that the work of the Messiah would be to bring the whole world under his power. Likewise that he would gather together all the Jews who had been scattered. Likewise that there would have to be peace throughout the earth, so that weapons would be turned into plowshares and billhooks. Likewise that he would take away death, casting down death for all eternity and that God would wipe away the tears from every face and the disgrace of his people from the whole earth. . . . Likewise that Christ, who was supposed to be the Messiah, should not be born in Galilee, but of the root of David in Bethlehem in Judah. For all these

⁹Cartwright, *A Confutation of the Rhemists Translation . . . on the New Testament* (1618), 3*.

¹⁰CTS 1:92-93 (CO 45:61)*; citing Gen 49:10; Dan 9:25, 26; 1 Tim 3:16.

reasons, therefore, Matthew was constrained to describe the birth of Christ. Now in the lineage of Christ, fourteen patriarchs, fourteen kings, and fourteen priests are to be found. This accounts for the wondrous joy of the blessed virgin and the praise and adulation accorded her, for the Virgin Mary is also titled a patriarch as the daughter of Abraham; a queen, as one of the lineage of David and a priest.

Matthew could not have shown that Christ was descended from David unless he had added Mary's name in the Gospel. For by Jewish law, Gentiles were incorporated by marriage. That is how it is shown that both Christ and Mary have descended from David. Two SERMONS FROM ZWICKAU.¹¹

¹¹Müntzer, *Works*, 384-85; citing Is 11:12, 2:4, 25:8; Jn 7:42.

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