CSI: BEGETTING

Mistranslations, corruptions and bias on the "origin" of the Son

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As the saying goes, 'for those who came in late', the title of this study takes after those popular crime shows on television which are involved in *C*rime *S*cene *I*nvestigations of all kinds. The Bible is riddled with them. As we will see, these are 'crimes' committed by people not only in the past but also in the present. This article will take on the style of those shows, in an effort not only to uncover the biblical crime scene, but to try and bring clarity to the issues at hand.

CRIME SCENES

Our first case deals with those texts associated with the "begetting" of the Son of God, "the man Messiah Jesus" [**1Tim 2.5**]. As the evidence will show, there is a strong case to be made that very early in the transmission of the NT letters, people at times sought to obscure and, in some extreme cases, totally remove evidence relating the *unique creation* by God of His Son. This took place not in some "time before time" [as per the Creeds], but in a small Jewish village near Jerusalem some 2 000+ years ago.

Exhibit A: Ps 2.7
While our first exhibit does not necessarily show any signs of tampering or indeed corruption, it is those verses associated with it that will lead us to the first 'crime scene'.

As it stands, the text of **Ps 2.7** says:
> "You are my son. Today I have *begotten* you." [cp. **2Sam 7.14**]

The verse as it appears in the LXX [Greek translation of the Hebrew c. 300 years before Christ] translates the Hebrew for "begotten" [*yalad*] as *gennao*. Scholars are adamant that, in its OT usage/background, "the few passages (**Dt. 32**:[**15**], **18**; **Ps. 2.7**; LXX **110.3**[LXX **109.3**]) in which God appears as subject of [*yalad*] *must be interpreted figuratively*". So that in each case these verses allude to the "*enthronement* of the [Davidic] king"[1], as opposed to a physical/literal "begetting" by YHWH. Yet, the verse as used by the NT writers [**Acts 13.33; Heb 1.5; 5.5**] gives it an altogether *literal*, as opposed to *figurative*, meaning. It is here where we will discover clear signs of 'violence' based on Christological bias.

The verse is first cited by the writer of Acts [**13.33**] in a sermon the Apostle Paul gave to a Synagogue in Pisidia, Antioch. Paul aptly explains how some of the Jews did not recognize Jesus as the promised Messiah because they could "not understand the words of the prophets" [v.**27**]. Though unjustly killed as a criminal, God raised him from the dead, thus proving to everyone that he was the Messiah. Paul then explains how these events were fulfilled when God "*raised up* Jesus, as it was written" in **Ps 2.7**.

Crime scene 1: Acts 13.33
Early on in the translation of v.33, it was taken as a second reference [the first being at v.30] to Jesus having been '*raised* up from the dead'. For example the KJV [1611] added the word "again", whereas some modern translators paraphrase it as "from the dead". This has led to its wide acceptance amongst many noted scholars and commentators.

For example, the popular *Vine's Expository Dictionary of the NT*, under their definition of *gennao* in **Mat 1.20** makes the claim that "it is used of the act of God in the birth of Christ, **Acts 13:33; Heb. 1:5; 5:5**, quoted from **Psalm 2:7**, none of which indicate that Christ became the Son of God at His birth." Yet, when giving us the definition of the Greek word translated "*raise* (up)" [*anistemi*] they note:
> "[It is] said of Christ, **Acts 3:26; 7:37; 13:33**, RV, 'raised up Jesus,' not here by resurrection from the dead, as the superfluous 'again' of the AV [NCV; WNT] would suggest; this is confirmed by the latter part of the verse, which explains the 'raising' up as being by way of His

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[1] *TDOT*, yalad. Emphasis mine.

incarnation, and by the contrast in ver. 34, where stress is laid upon His being 'raised' from the dead, the same verb being used."

So, even though the word *can* be used in reference to being "raised up from the dead", the context dictates the meaning of the expression. Thus, in **Acts 13.33**, God is said to have "raised up" His Son onto the scene; a clear allusion to and in complete harmony with, the writer's use of **Ps 2.7**.

Furthermore, many have argued [incredibly enough] over the centuries that **Ps 2.7** should be understood in reference to Jesus' resurrection and not his birth!

A running debate amongst scholars has to do with the variant reading found in some ancient manuscripts, as well as patristic writings that quote **Ps 2:7** in connection with Jesus' baptism. (Even though the weight of the manuscript testimony is against this reading, some still argue for its inclusion.) Most of these obviously agree with the assumption, as stated above, that Jesus only became Son of God at his resurrection and not at his virgin birth.

> "**Ps 2.7** is much used in the NT. At **Acts 13.33** the "to-day" of the generation of the Son of God is the resurrection. At Lk. 3.22 (western reading) it is the baptism…At Hb. 1.5; 5.5…it is again doubtful whether the reference is to his birth or his baptism…This begetting is more than adoption. For the resurrection, in which it was consummated, is the beginning [of something new]…"[2]

Crime Scene 2: Matthew 1:18
"*The origin* [genesis] *of Jesus the Messiah was like this…*" [TNIV]
Matthew records the "origin" of Jesus Christ. Trinitarians who were uncomfortable with "genesis" (beginning, origin, birth) changed it to "gennesis" ("birth").

Bart Erhman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, pgs. 75-76:
"The first question to be asked, then, is which of the readings the original is more likely. In addition to claiming the earliest and best manuscript support, the reading genesis seems to cohere better with the preceding context. Matthew began his Gospel by detailing the 'book of the genesis' of Jesus Christ [i.e., his genealogical lineage; 1:1], making it somewhat more likely that he would here [v.18] continue with a description of the genesis itself. And so the majority of textual scholars agree that gennesis represents a textual corruption, created perhaps out of deference to the following account of Jesus' birth. [Also see Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, pg. 8]
At the same time, something more profound may be occurring here. Both genesis and gennesis can mean "birth", so that either one could be appropriate in the context. But unlike the corrupted reading, genesis can also mean "creation", "beginning" and "origination". When one now asks why scribes might take umbrage at Matthew's description of the genesis of Jesus Christ, the answer immediately suggests itself: the original text could well be taken to imply that this is the moment in which Jesus Christ comes into [existence]. In point of fact, there is nothing in Matthew's narrative, either here or elsewhere throughout the Gospel, to suggest that he knew or subscribed to the notion that Christ had existed prior to his birth.
Orthodox scribes found Matthew's account useful nonetheless, particularly in conjunction with statements of the Fourth Gospel supporting the notion of Jesus' existence with the Father prior to his appearance in the flesh. The orthodox doctrine, of course, represented a conflation of these early Christological views, so that Jesus was confessed to have become "incarnate [Gospel of John] through the virgin Mary [Gospels of Matthew and Luke]". Anyone subscribing to this doctrine might well look askance at the implication that Matthew was here describing Jesus' origination and might understandably have sought to clarify the text by substituting a word that 'meant' the same thing, but that was less likely to be misconstrued."

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[2] TDNT, *gennao*.

NOTE on **Matthew 1.20**: Of the 96 times the Greek word *gennaö* appears in the New Testament, this is the only place where it has been rendered 'conceived'. That should tell us something. 'Conceived' is not the intended meaning of the original Greek.

Crime Scene 3: Luke 1.35
"*The child that will be born will be called holy, the Son of God*". A number of witnesses emend this declaration to include a significant prepositional phrase: "*the child that will be born from you will be called holy…*"

Orthodox Corruption, pp 139-141:
"A different aspect of the Gnostic understanding of Jesus' birth appears to be under attack in an orthodox corruption of the opening chapter of Luke…Scholars are virtually unanimous in considering this longer text secondary. Despite its support in Western, Caesarean, and secondary Alexandrian witnesses, it is not found in the earliest and best manuscripts, which demonstrate an even more remarkable range in terms of both geography and textual consanguinity. Moreover, if the variant were original, it would be difficult to explain its omission throughout so much of the tradition. It certainly presents nothing that could be construed as objectionable to the prevailing tastes of early scribes. The shorter text is therefore more likely original.

Why was the text changed? …The theological possibilities of the longer text. In point of fact, the longer text could prove to be significant for opponents of certain kinds of separationist Christology. Both Irenaeus and Tertullian took offense at the Valentinian claim that Christ (i.e., Jesus, the so-called "dispensational" Christ of the Demiurge, upon whom the Christ from the Pleroma descended at baptism), did not come from Mary, but came through her "like water through a pipe" (Iren., Adv. Haer. I, 7, 2; Tert., dependent on Irenaeus, Adv. Val. 27). In this view, the "dispensational" Christ used Mary as a simple conduit into the world, receiving nothing from her, least of all a physical human nature. In contrast to this, the heresiologists urged that Christ came from Mary, because otherwise he neither experienced a real human birth nor received a full human nature, without which he would be unable to bring salvation to those who are fully human (*Adv. Haer*. III, 22, 1—2). And so, in an explicit attack on the Valentinians, Irenaeus urges that:

> It is the same thing to say that he [Christ] appeared merely to outward seeming and to affirm that he received nothing from Mary. For he would not have been one truly possessing flesh and blood by which he redeemed us, unless he summed up in himself the ancient formulation of Adam. Vain therefore are the disciples of Valentinus who put forth their opinions, in order that they may exclude the flesh from salvation, and cast aside what God has fashioned (*Adv. Haer*. V, 1,2).

The importance of the *varia lectio* of **Luke 1:35** in such controversies, then, is that it supports the orthodox notion that Christ actually came from Mary. Tertullian appears to preserve an allusion to this very text. With characteristic verve he castigates Valentinians who deny that Christ assumed real flesh:

> But to what shifts you resort, in your attempt to rob the syllable "of" [Latin ex, Greek BK] of its proper force as a preposition, and to substitute another for it in a sense not found throughout the Holy Scriptures! You say that he was born through [Latin per] a virgin, not of [Latin ex] a virgin, and in a womb, not of a womb (*de carne Christi* 20).

And so the corruption of **Luke 1:35** appears to reflect controversies over the Valentinian Christology, which both asserted a distinction between Jesus and the Christ and posited a Jesus who, as a direct creation of the Demiurge, did not assume complete humanity. An anonymous orthodox scribe of the second century inserted the phrase [from you], a phrase whose theological significance is cloaked by its

innocent literary virtue: it provides a symmetrical balance for the angelic pronouncement to Mary while confuting the Christology of Valentinian Gnostics."

NOTE: According to the *IVP Bible Background Commentary*, **Luke 1.31** "follows the typical Old Testament structure for a divine birth announcement"[3]. The story echoes the miraculous accounts of the patriarch Isaac, whose parents were too old to conceive [**Gen 21**], and Samson, whose story closely parallels that of Jesus [**Judg. 13**]:

> "The point of [Luke] **1:36–37** is that God, who acted for Elizabeth as he did for Sarah, could still do anything (Gen 18:12–15)."[4]

Crime Scene 4: John 1.18

> "The variant reading of the Alexandrian tradition, which substitutes "God" for "Son," represents an orthodox corruption of the text in which the complete deity of Christ is affirmed: "the unique God [*ho monogenes theos*] who is in the bosom of the Father, that one has made him known."…"

> It must be acknowledged at the outset that the Alexandrian reading is more commonly preferred by textual critics, in no small measure because of its external support. Not only is it the reading of the great Alexandrian uncials (a B C), it is also attested by the earliest available witnesses, the Bodmer papyri 66 and 75, discovered in the middle of the present [20th] century…

> Here it must be emphasized at that outside of the Alexandrian tradition, the reading *monogenes theos*, has not fared well at all. Virtually every other representative of every other textual grouping—Western, Caesarean, Byzantine—attests *ho monogenes uious*. And the reading even occurs in several of the secondary Alexandrian witnesses (e.g., C3 Y 892 1241 Ath Alex). This is not simply a case of one reading supported by the earliest and best manuscripts and another supported by late and inferior ones, but of one reading found almost exclusively in the Alexandrian tradition and another found sporadically there and virtually everywhere else. And although the witnesses supporting *ho monogenes uious* cannot individually match the antiquity of the Alexandrian papyri, there can be little doubt that this reading must also be dated at least to the time of their production. There is virtually no other way to explain its predominance in the Greek, Latin, and Syriac traditions, not to mention its occurrence in fathers such as Irenaeus, Clement, and Tertullian, who were writing before our earliest surviving manuscripts were produced. Thus, both readings are ancient; one is fairly localized, the other is almost ubiquitous…

> It is on internal grounds that the real superiority of *ho monogenes uious* shines forth. Not only does it conform with established Johannine usage, a point its opponents readily concede, but the Alexandrian variant, although perfectly amenable to scribes for theological reasons, is virtually impossible to understand within a Johannine context."[5]

> "The earliest manuscripts say the only God (using the same word for "only" as 1:14, meaning "unique, one-of-a-kind"). John refers to two different persons here as "God," as he did in v. 1. John concludes the prologue by emphasizing what he taught in v. 1: Jesus as the Word is God, and he has revealed and explained God to humanity." *ESV Study Bible*

Crime scene 5: Heb 1.5-6

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[3] Keener, Craig S. Intervarsity, 1993, S. Lk 1:31.

[4] *Ibid*., S. **Luke 1.36**.

[5] *Orthodox*, pp 78-79.

The "western reading" of the Lukan account of the baptism seems to have affected the way the parallel accounts of Jesus' baptism have been transmitted in **Mat 3.17; 17.5; Mar 1.11; Luke 3.22; 9.35**[6]. This is the reason why most scholars wrongly connect **Ps 2.7**[7] to Jesus' baptism and/or his resurrection.

The context in which these appear "is that Jesus is the Melchizedek high priest and the catena texts which introduces the letter" points to the uniqueness of his sonship in contrast to God's holy angels. The writer does this by citing two specific OT texts which show YHWH "begetting" a son, the Messianic king.

> "This was the world view of the ancient priests of Israel and *owes nothing to Platonism* [where Philo had a similar view, interpreting such priesthood passages like **Lev 16.17** as] *He shall not be a man when he enters the holy of holies*… (*On Dreams* 2.189, 231) For Philo, **the high priest was more than human**…The *Logos* was the High Priest, the King, the Firstborn, the Beginning, the Name, and the Man after God's Image and his archangel.[8]"[9]

But, as the comment from the *ESV Study Bible* shows, "Platonism" did take over the biblical meaning of these passages. The *ESV* says that it describes how God entered "into a *new phase* of that Father-Son relationship [so that the text] *should not be pressed* to suggest that the Son *once did not exist* [since God has] begotten the *already living* Son 'today'". At **Heb 1.6** they note that "since only God is worthy of worship (**Ex. 20:3–5; Isa. 42:8; Matt. 4:10; Rev. 19:10; 22:9**), this is *further evidence* [where's the rest?] of the Son's *full deity*."

Such interpretations of the text go against the language used in the virgin birth accounts. For example, notice the words in the phrase "the holy child *to be born*". The first is the word *tikto*, variously translated "to *bring forth*, give birth". This word is related to another that is often used in reference to the Son, *prototokos* ["firstborn"] related to *gennao* ["cause to exist"] and *ginomai* ["come into existence"]. This explains why throughout the rest of the NT Jesus is identified by both spiritual beings [the Devil, **Mat 4.3**] and humans [the Baptist; Nathaniel, **John 1.34; 49**] as *the* **unique** *Son* of God.

The same sentiment is reflected under the definition in *The Complete WordStudy Dictionary* given to the word *gennao* in **Mat 1.20**. But in this case the commentators find themselves with no choice but to 'confess' giving the game away:

> "The designation of this relationship by words with a temporal notion ["*this day* have I *begotten you*", **Ps 2.7**] has **troubled theologians**, who have proffered *various explanations*. Origen understood this as referring to **the Son's relationship within the Trinity** and was **the first to propose the concept of eternal generation**. The Son is said to be **eternally begotten by the Father**. Others have viewed the language more **figuratively** and connected it with Christ's role as Messiah. Upon **Christ's exaltation** to the Father's right hand, God is said to have appointed, declared or officially installed Christ as a king (**Act 13:33; Rom 1:4; Heb 1:5; 5:5**)."

The verdict

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[6] Texts vary between "my Son"; "my (the) Beloved"; and "(only) elect". See *WBC* verses cited.

[7] "The allusions in the remarks of the text recall **Ps 2:7**…" *NET Bible Online*, **Mar 1.11**.

[8] *On the Migration of Abraham* 102; *On Dreams* 1:215; *On Flight* 118: *On the Confusion of Tongues* 41, 146.

[9] Margaret Barker, 'The High Priest and the Worship of Jesus', *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism*: papers from the St. Andrews Conference on the Historical Origins of the Worship of Jesus, ed., C.C. Newman, J.R. Davila, G.S. Lewis, p. 99, 1999.

What many fail to see with these interpretations are the clear Gnostic-pagan overtones that they introduce to the biblical text. As many scholars note, "what we find in Matthew and Luke is not the story of some sort of *sacred marriage* (*hieros gamos*) or a *divine being* ["the Son"] *descending to earth*…in *the guise of a man*…but rather the story of a *miraculous conception* without aid of any man, *divine* or otherwise."[10]

Addendum

Ps 40.6 [MT]; [**39.7**, LXX; **Heb 10.6,** NT]: "*Heb* 'ears you hollowed out for me.' The meaning of this odd expression is debated (this is the only collocation of "hollowed out" and "ears" in the OT). It may have been an idiomatic expression referring to making a point clear to a listener." *NET Bible Online*

"Dr. Kennicott has a very ingenious conjecture here: he supposes that the Septuagint and apostle express the meaning of the words as they stood in the copy from which the Greek translation was made; and that the present Hebrew text is corrupted in the word   *oznayim*, ears, which has been written through carelessness for   [body]…On this supposition the ancient copy translated by the Septuagint, and followed by the apostle, must have read the text thus: '*Then a body thou hast prepared me*': thus the Hebrew text, the version of the Septuagint, and the apostle, will agree in what is known to be an indisputable fact in Christianity; namely, that Christ was incarnated for the sin of the world.
The Ethiopic has nearly the same reading: the Arabic has both, "*A body hast thou prepared me, and mine ears thou hast opened.*" But the Syriac, the Chaldee, and the Vulgate, agree with the present Hebrew text; and none of the MSS. collated by Kennicott and De Rossi have any various reading on the disputed words." *Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*

"The reading *soma de* [a body] could be either a case of an interpretative translation of the Hebrew idiom, which was subsequently corrected in the revisions of Aquila, Theodotian, and Symmachus to read *stia* [ear], in conformity with the Hebrew text.[11] Alternatively, the original *stia* [ear], chosen by the Gottingen Septuagint as the *lectio difficilior*, might have evolved to read *soma* [body] as result of corruption in the transmission of the Greek text.
Textual evidence suggests that the reading *soma* [body] and not *stia* [ear] was more likely to have been the text in the Author's *Vorlage*. This variant also provides a more plausible explanation of the development of the other variant. The Septuagintal reading obviously is more conducive to a Christological interpretation than the Hebrew parallel text.[12] …the application of this Scripture to the Incarnation of Christ is directly provided by the Septuagint of Ps. 39 LXX [40 MT]." R. Gheorghita, *The Role of the Septuagint in Hebrews*, pp. 48-49, 2003.

"The Greek version cannot well be explained as representing a variant or corrupted Hebrew reading;[13] it is rather an interpretative paraphrase of the Hebrew text. The Greek translator

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[10] Green, Joel B.; McKnight, Scot; Marshall, I. Howard: *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*. Intervarsity, 1992, S. 70.
[11] Attirdge, Hebrews; Bruce, Hebrews; Lane, Hebrews.
[12] Karen H. Jobes argues unconvincingly that the reading *stia* [ear] in the Author's Vorlage was modified to read soma [body] on rhetorical considerations, "Rhetorical Achievements in the Hebrews 10 'Misquote' of Ps 40", Biblica 72 (1991) 388.
[13] As though MT *'oznayim*, "ears", were a corruption of *'az gawah*, "then a body" (B. Kennitcott). Neither can *soma* be satisfactorily explained as due to a corruption in the transmission of the LXX, as though it replaced an earlier *stia* ("ears"), as has been suggested, e.g., by F. Bleek, G. Lunemann, and A. Kuyper. J. Moffat says: "Whether *stia* was corrupted into *soma*, or whether the latter was an independent translation, is of no moment" (ICC, *ad loc.*); true enough, but that it is a corruption is, as F. Delitzsch rightly says (*ad loc.*), "highly improbable". (**Aquila,**

evidently regarded the Hebrew wording as an instance of *pars pro toto* [(taking) a part for the whole]; the "digging" or hollowing out of the ears is part of the total work of fashioning a human body.**14** Accordingly he [Hebrews writer] rendered it in terms which express *totum pro parte* [(taking) the whole for the part]. The body which was "fashioned" for the speaker by God is given back to God as a "living sacrifice", to be employed in obedient service to him.

But if our author had preferred the Hebrew wording, it would have served his purpose almost as well, for in addition to reminding him and his readers of the psalm from which it was taken, it might have reminded them also of the Isaianic Servant's language in the third Servant Song [**Isa 50.4**f.]." F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, p 240, 1990.

"The early Christians understood the psalm as messianic prophecy, vv. **6-8** are quoted in **Heb 10.5-7** in the LXX version where the somewhat curious Hebrew 'ears you have dug for me' (NRSV 'you have given me an open ear') is replaced by 'you have prepared a body for me', which was taken to be a reference to the incarnation. The origin of the LXX phrase is uncertain; it may have been internal Greek corruption (the Gk. Words for 'ears' and 'body' are not too dissimilar, but could hardly have been confused except in a damaged MS) or a part of the body ('ears') may have been taken to represent the whole." J. Barton, J. Muddiman, *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, p 379, 2001.

Ps 110.3 [MT]; **Ps 109.3** [LXX] "…the clause LXX Ps. **109:3** ["I have begotten thee from the womb before the morning", Brenton] is comparable to **Ps. 2:7**ab.b [MT/LXX]… LXX **Ps. 109:3** is easier to read and comprehend than the MT counterpart… The idea, then, is that it reflects a Hebrew *Vorlage* that depicts Yahweh's giving birth in a way comparable to **Ps. 2:7**. Moreover, the difficult MT, on the contrary, assumed to be the result of a corruption."[15]

"…refers to the king's **divine adoption** (see on **Ps 2**), although the text of verse 3 is obscure and poorly preserved… Verse 3 would be sort of poetic commentary of **Ps 2:7**."[16]

"…the LXX translation is rather surprising [, though it could be] justified as free renderings of the Hebrew… **Ps 110.3** is never explicitly cited in the NT period. It was not until Justin took it up in the middle of the second century AD (*Dial*. 63.3[17]; 76.7[18]) that it began to be used as a prophecy of Christ's pre-existence."[19]

"The interpretation of this verse is so uncertain that it cannot be given a place of importance…the problem is complicated by extensive corruption [mutilation] of the text of Ps 110, especially v. 3. Rowley

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Theodotian, and Symmachus, with Origen's Quinta and Sexta, and some late LXX editions, read *stia*, by way of conformity to the MT.)

14 There is no ground for relating **Ps. 40:6** to the boring of the servant's ear in **Ex. 21:6; Deut 15:17**.

15 Gard Granerod, *Abraham and Melchizedek: Scribal Activity of Second Temple Times in Genesis 14 and Psalm 110*, pp 177-78, 2010.

16 L. Sabouring, *The Psalms, their Origin and Meaning*, pp 360-61, 1969.

17 "Trypho said, 'This point has been proved to me forcibly, and by many arguments, my friend. It remains, then, to prove that He submitted to become man by the Virgin, according to the will of His Father'…I answered, 'This, too, has been already demonstrated by me in the previously quoted words of the prophecies…what is said by David, 'In the splendours of Thy holiness have **I begotten Thee from the womb, before the morning star**'…does this not declare to you that [He was] from of old, and **that the God and Father of all things intended Him to be begotten by a human womb**?...Therefore these words testify explicitly that He is witnessed to by Him who established these things, as **deserving to be worshipped, as God and as Christ**."

18 "David predicted that **He would be born from the womb before sun and moon**, according to the Father's will, and made Him known, **being Christ, as God strong and to be worshipped**."

19 Dunn, *Christology in the Making*, pp. 70-75, 1992.

has stated the matter thus: the MT text is certainly not in its original form; the textual difficulties are so great as to render restoration impossible.[20]

For the MT's "Your youth" several MSS, HO, LXX and Syriac appear to have read, "I have begotten you." MT's form is rare, occurring only in Eccles 11.9 [the consonants without the vowels]; while LXX's reading is identical with that of Ps 2.7 in both MT and the Versions…many recent commentators have preferred the LXX's variation.[21]

In the light of the Versions of Ps 110.3 and of other texts examined in the present study, a conception of God's "begetting" the Messiah need not be regarded as a later messianic interpretation of royal psalms; the conception was taken over intact from the earlier psalms.

The king is "begotten" or "brought forth", by God; he becomes God's son, receiving thereby the special status and powers of one in close relationship to God and in the capacity of standing for or representing the people before God."[22]

According to *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* by Bauer, Arndt and Gingrich, **gennaö means 'to beget — literally to become the father of'** as in **Matthew 1:2-16** and **Acts 7:8, 29**…Fenton's translation says the conception was 'produced by the Holy Spirit'. Rotherham's translation says, 'the source of the pregnancy being the Holy Spirit'. William's translation renders the passage, 'for it is through the influence of the Holy Spirit that she has become an expectant mother'. **You could substitute the word 'produced' with 'caused', 'generated', 'brought forth' or 'begotten' and the meaning would still be the same**. *Gennaö* refers here to **the action of the Holy Spirit in producing or causing the conception**. *Gennaö* does not mean 'conception' in this verse any more than it means 'quarrels' in **2 Timothy 2:23**.

Contrary to what some have thought, *Strong's* dictionary does not say *gennaö* means conceived. Strong says the word *gennaö* means 'to procreate (properly of the father, but by extension the mother); fig. to regenerate'. That's where the definition ends. Strong goes on to cite the various ways the King James translators render *gennaö*. But **a rendering is not a definition**."[23]

John 1.13: Douglas Edwards, *The Virgin Birth in History and Faith*, 1941:

"On every one of the 6 occasions on which St. John speaks of the Christian as one who 'has been born of God' it is precisely so that he does speak of him—as one who has been born. In all 6 cases it is the perfect tense, or the perfect participle, that is used…But of Christ's birth from God St. John writes as of a specific event, describing Him as 'He who was born of God'…[This explains why in actual fact St. John never speaks of 'Christians' as God born; nor again of any particular Christian.] The point requires laboring because it has become blunted by familiarity and obscured by prejudice [thus the one] keeping the faithful [safe] was Himself born of God at a certain point in history [1 John 5.18]…Indeed, in the New Testament…this particular phrase of St. John's First Epistle is unique. On the other hand…the earliest written witness to the text of John 1.13 shows that in the second century almost the identical phrase (Who…was born…of God) was to be found in St. John's Gospel also."

External Evidence

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[20] *Festschrift Alfred Bertholet*, Tubingen, 1950, pp. 469-70, n.3. Eerdmans comments: "All translations are little more than presumptions"—*op. cit*. 501f. Ringgren, however, suggests that "even the MT might be intelligible without changes": *The Messiah in the Old Testament*, London, 1956, p.14. Johnson's reconstruction also follows the consonantal text of the Hebrew: *op. cit*., pp. 121ff.

[21] *Inter alia*: Mowinckel, T.C. Vriezen, Johnson, Widengren.

[22] Cooke, Gerald. 'The Israelite King as Son of God.' *ZAW 73* (1961): pp 218-225.

[23] Gene Nouhan, *The Meaning of* Gennao *in Matthew 1.20*.

"…the 'singular' reading [is] quoted by no less than four 2nd century writers [Martyr, 1 Apology 22.2; 23.2; 113.10; Dialogue, 111; 116; Tertuallian, De Carne Christi, 19; 24; Irenaeus, Against Heresies, 3.16.2, 19.2; 5.1.3; Epistula Apostolorum], from a text itself in all probability derived from Ephesus, is also intrinsically far more probable than the current reading…the Verona Codex (Old Latin) stands alone [among the 9 or 10 primary manuscripts—discovered thus far] in having the reading of John 1.13 attested by Tertullian…[But as Streeter in The Four Gospels, p. 308, points out] 'What carries most weight—apart from considerations of the intrinsic probability of a given reading—is not the number of manuscripts which support it, but the number of local texts which the manuscripts supporting it represent, or the age to which by patristic quotations it can be pushed back…even if every other manuscript is against it.'…there is the question also of its distribution, that is to say, of the area or areas in which it was current [2 representing Italy: Tertullian, Martyr; 1 in Gaul/Spain: Irenaeus; 1 Ephesus: Epistolum]. In this connection, Streeter has some interesting things to say about the Verona Codex, which is, he observes, 'the typical manuscript of the European Old Latin'. According to him, there is a certain amount of evidence that this text and that used at Ephesus in the second century are closely akin…

This digression on the connection traceable between the reading 'was born' in John 1.13 and the birthplace of St. John's Gospel will have been worth making if it helps to show that what counts in manuscript evidence is not quantity but quality. In any case it needs to be remembered that there is no passage in the Gospels for which we have such early and such explicit evidence as we have for the 'singular' reading of John 1.13…Thus the antiquity of this reading is very great indeed…It is an exhilarating probability that [Martyr], at the time of his conversion (in mature life, c. A.D. 130) had spoken with men who had themselves known the author of the Gospel…It will then appear less surprising [to have Harnack], in his lordly way…speak of the singular reading, quite casually, and without deigning a word of explanation, as 'the true text'! [Date of Acts, p. 148: 'These ideas [of the Virgin Birth and of Conception by the Holy Spirit] are declared to be primitive by the fact that at the end of the first century…they were the common property of Christians, as St. John [Chap. 1, according to the true text] and Ignatius teach us.']"

Internal Evidence
"Now the 'plural' reading presents at least 3 obvious difficulties."
1. "There is the abrupt introduction of the phrase His Name into a context where no Name, properly speaking, has as yet appeared. Later in the Gospel we read of 'the Name of the only-born Son of God' [John 3.18] or of 'the Name of Jesus' [John 20.31]. But such an expression as the Name of the Light or the Name of the Word is unexampled. In the singular reading, on the other hand, this Name is defined—it is the Name of Him who was born of God. Moreover, descriptive relative phrases in the singular number are a marked characteristic of the Gospel—or rather of St. John's style generally.

2. The curious confusion of the past and present tenses. It is 'those believing; or 'those who are believers' or 'those who persevere in believing'—'who were born' [it's necessary to read 'His Name' instead of 'the Name of Him', and 'were' for 'was' to get the current text] When were they born? Were they born of God as a result of their welcome of the Light: or did they welcome the Light because, first, they were born of God? If the singular text is read, there is no such obscurity…the Evangelist answers this urgent question without an instant's delay. They, he says, to whom this right was given, are 'they who believe on the Name of Him who was born of God'.

3. The way in which it conflicts with the direct and simple yet delicately allusive style of the Fourth Gospel as a whole.

For the description there given of 'the believers in the Name of the Light' (itself an odd expression) is cumbrous in the extreme. They were not born, it seems, of sexual intercourse, fleshly craving, nor male

will. On the contrary, they were born—of God. In this form the passage does one or other of two things. It either suggests that believers are not creatures of flesh and blood at all, or else it laboriously points out that a spiritual birth—a birth 'of God'—has nothing to do with sexual intercourse, fleshly craving, or male will. But then who could possibly suppose it had? Does it not become more and more odd the more one ponders it that a birth which (according to this reading) was either the cause or the consequence of receiving the Divine Light should be meticulously differentiated (three times over) from the various stages or antecedents of physical generation?

Nevertheless, if the 'plural' form is authentic, it must be confessed that St. John's touch has for once (inexplicably) failed him. His style, his unique style—at once profound and delicate—has become crude and clumsy; and that at the one point where delicacy and directness were most to be expected…In addition, this reading fits the context. Not only is the [Who…was born] picked up by the [Only-born from a father or God only-born] of John 1.14,18: besides this, the 'and' which joins v.14 to v.13 is then seen to be adversative like the earlier 'ands' noted above—'Not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of a male, but of God was He born: and yet the Word became flesh.'

What is interesting is that the layman is so impressed by the conflux of manuscripts that he regards the fact that the plural reading is grammatically easier as adding to the weight of evidence in its favor. Actually, of course, the grammatical ease of the phrase would admirably explain how a copyist could come to write [they] instead of [who] (and then conform the verb by writing [were born] instead of [was born]). In that case also (as the centuries passed and endeavors were made to secure a uniform text) this unconscious corruption would the more easily be accepted as the true text. [This is not necessarily to say that the Valentians deliberately altered the text, as Tertullian accused them of doing. More probably, perhaps, they exploited a text which had become accidentally corrupted because of the grammatical ease od the alteration. After all, in Greek, the two English phrases 'His Name' and 'the Name of Him' are identical. More easily than 'the Name of Him' a scribe would understand 'His Name'. Having done so, he would then be obliged to go back to 'those believing' for the antecedent to the relative. Once the change had thus, in innocence, been made, the scribe (that is to say, the copyist, whose business precludes deep thought) would prefer the plural reading because, as Sir Edwyn Hoskyns well remarked, 'the plural is grammatically easier' [The Fourth Gospel, Vol. 1]…True, Tertullian, writing c. 208, bears witness also to the existence of a 'plural' reading; but clearly that reading (whether or not a forgery) was at least an innovation. Before then, the only text known to Tertullian (and his readers) was the text which has the reading of John 1.13 with the relative and its verb in the singular.

To us it is second nature to assume that a birth 'of God' must be a purely spiritual birth and have nothing to do with the flesh at all…the simple verb gennao is never used in the NT of any other birth than a birth from the womb…Even in its active form, 'to beget', it is only very rarely used except of physical begetting [1Cor 14.15; Phil 10]…The fact is that gennao (especially on Jewish lips) is such a predominantly fleshly word that it does not lend itself to metaphor except in context where any confusion with physical birth or begetting would be quite out of the question…[For both John and Paul Jesus was begotten] in the literal, bodily sense—born of God [1 John 5.18]…there has been a Birth which, albeit a genuine birth from the womb, was none the less a new Birth—the Birth of One, of whom it could be specifically said that HE was born of God…

[Even John] does not record the Virgin Birth [as such, like the Eucharist, his] constant identification of the Christian with Christ in His Birth corresponds to St. Paul's identification of himself with Christ in His Death…An actual Crucifixion, and an actual Birth 'of God', is presupposed in either case. In a word, St. John's whole proclamation of the Gospel assumes that Jesus was born of God in a sense quite other than metaphorical. And this was not a private Johannine fancy, but a public Christian fact…if the Virgin Birth was not common knowledge, the arguments lose their point, while the phrases and turns of speech

become confusing instead of illuminating. [The conclusion being] that the Virgin Birth is no theory, no induction, no poetic idea, but an integral element of a Primitive, Apostolic tradition."

1 John 5.18: "**He who was born of God** is a reference to Jesus Christ, who in his physical birth was "born of God" in that he was sent from God the Father and was conceived by the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35) and in his resurrection from the dead was "born of God" in that he was brought back to life (Col. 1:18)." *ESV*

Heb 10.6: "*a body have you prepared for me.* The *ESV* translates the corresponding phrase in **Ps. 40:6** as, "you have given me an open ear." Literally, the Masoretic (Hb.) text reads, "ears you have dug for me" (**Ps. 40:7–9** MT). The **Hebrew metaphor** has been understood by the Septuagint translators (**Ps. 39:7–9** lxx) and by the writer of Hebrews to indicate **the physical creation of a person's body**. (NT quotations of OT texts are not always precise; **NT authors often reword them or adapt them to suit their own purposes, yet always in a way that is compatible with their original meaning**.)" *ESV Study Bible*