

## EDITORIAL

### WHO PREEXISTS WHO?

Speaking of the doctrine of the preexistence of Christ, which so many take for granted without bothering to think much about what it means, James Mackey remarks: “There are linguistic difficulties here [in the problem of preexistence] — as soon as we recoil from the suggestion that something can preexist itself we must wonder what exactly, according to this term, preexists what else, and in what sense it does so — because it leads directly into the main difficulties encountered in all incarnational and Trinitarian theology.”<sup>1</sup>

The orthodox view of Christ maintains that he has two natures, but when this proposition is unpacked it appears that the *ego* of Jesus is the preexisting eternal Son who takes to himself in the womb of Mary an “impersonal human nature.” This description of Jesus is more or less inevitable once it is believed that the Son was alive *before* his begetting in the womb (Matt. 1:20, “that which is begotten in her is from the holy spirit”). But what are the results of the orthodox theory in terms of the *Messiahship* of Jesus?

True Messiahship involves a lineal and biological descent from David and indeed from Eve. The Son of God of the Bible is destined according to Old Testament prophecy to arise as a descendant of David. He cannot also be *prior* to David. Descendants are not also ancestors. If in fact the Son of God preexisted his own birth, he cannot also be the descendant of David. This would amount to two persons, a preexisting Son plus a genuine son of David. Orthodoxy “solves” the problem by denying that the Son is “a man,” and by speaking of human nature gained from Mary. But “human nature” cannot possibly be the lineal descendant of David. Thus the orthodox theory, driven by the presupposition that the Son was living before his birth, destroys the Messiahship of Jesus. This is a serious consideration and merits some meditation.

This journal is not the first to tackle this issue. We are pleased to include in this edition the attempts of Barton Stone and Alexander Campbell to deal with the problem of the preexistence of the Son. Neither, we think, arrived at the simplicity of the Messianic Christology presented so lucidly by Gabriel in Luke 1:35. In some 18 words the angel presented the ultimate solution to all Christological problems, succinctly and with transparent simplicity.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *The Christian Experience of God as Trinity*, SCM Press, 1983, 51.

<sup>2</sup> Readers may be interested in Anthony Buzzard’s presentation at our recent 14<sup>th</sup> Theological Conference which develops this theme in more detail.