

The third book "Jesus" of Benedictus XVI
and
The article "Liever anders" ("Preferably otherwise"; on the virginal birth)

The Summary of the article.

Nowadays, understanding the Virginal Birth in a biological sense, like the catechisms of the Catholic Church does, hampers the believer's intimate life towards God, his faith, even though that is the goal of the incarnation stories of Luke and Matthew. The article shows why the first believers needed these stories and we do not. It opposes a biological reading of the Virginal Birth because this does not honour the human nature of Mary nor of her Son, nor the significance of Joseph's fatherhood in handing down the promise to Abraham. Jesus was as human as we are without any unnatural difference and we are human in the same way as He is/was. So our human nature is fit for being connected to the divine nature just as his nature already was from the moment of his conception.

Our salvation is real and complete because of his complete being human without any 'Yes, but...!', our being child of God is -so to say- ready and a Spirituality is offered on the basis that the mystery of incarnation was never so close for us. The fact that Mt and Lc place their incarnation stories before the oral tradition shows the view of the ancient church on the elaboration of The Holy Spirit in the believer self and in the community.

It is explained where and why the catechism needs to be amended as it makes a substantial fault by mixing two ways of thinking.

Thinking about Mary might be somewhat more reasonable.

The article in relation to the book

General:

The way of thinking and the argumentation above mentioned are published at the site "Over Geloof" ("On Faith") in 2000, in the Dutch "Boek over Geloof" in 2008 more developed (the critic on the catechisms is not mentioned in it, only in the CD of the book) and -finally- they have their present content, 8 December 2012.

Meanwhile the "Prologue", the third book of the pope "Jesus of Nazaret" is published in Dutch language. After reading it I could not disregard my impression that the pope didn't know the arguments in the article brought forward. In spite of the holy father's contagious confession of faith I maintain my ideas as long as they are not disproved.

Sometimes the pope points out that numbers are used in the Scripture but their meanings are not mentioned what could support clearly his intentions.

A short contribution might be permitted wherein I take in consideration only the item of the virginal birth in the pope's book.

Main points:

The intellectual argument for the natural birth of Jesus is that the Jews (not they only) didn't know the biology of the conception, how new life comes into being. In their view the "seed" (1Pet1,23) of the father contains a complete being, like a piece of grain (pollination has occurred), that is brought into the empty womb like a farmer the grain sows into the field. So the child was a continuation of the father (John 5,18 "his *own* ! father") and that is why Joseph couldn't be the father of Jesus because Jesus was God and Joseph just a human being. Since app. 1875 we know how it goes on and we consider the child as an original being in which "all Fullness should dwell" (Col.1,19).

Reflecting the mystery of the incarnation at the crib we can think that it has taken place in an unnatural child without a natural mother and father or in a child, natural as we, humans, are. When incarnation is more complete? When it is more to the point? That is the reasonable argument for the natural birth. Add to that the nature, i.e. creation, serves so the Father Creator.

The advantage of the begetting of Jesus like a common human being - of course concerning his human nature- is that our redemption by/in him is complete real because then he is complete human as we are without any 'yes but ...' .

Further, our human nature then is as fitted as his one to be connected to divine nature like his human nature already was from the very beginning: to become child of God (John 1,12) is ready so to speak.

Next, this gives space to a Spirituality that is based on the reality that the mystery of incarnation never has come - even comes - near to us so irresistible and recognizable.

At last, the thread of the continuous passing of the promise "to Abraham and to his seed for ever" is not broken at Joseph but is completed via him in such a way as a human being could not do it.

In my opinion the viewpoint of the non biological virgin birth solves the most - if not all- of our questions, problems and the like.

Some details:

I raise objection to the (Dutch) words "vrome legende", "pious legend" in chapter 2.5 of the book. It is about the 'holy story', the myth, traditionally used by people to express what can't be said in words; by the phenomenology of religion it is taken serious and has not to do with 'pious'.

The addition of the childhood stories to the gospels of Luke and Matthew later on seems to me rather an outcome of development than a item of discretion and secret (Ch. 2.1 and 2.5 of the book). At first they were not a part of the (oral) preaching (Mark); as the young church came to know the Holy Spirit, they became useful - thank goodness - and told in the way the preaching was at that moment. Initially the incarnation shall not have been a problem; simply said: Jesus was God - a view raised from the beginning of his public life. The problem and the explanation how it was possible before his baptism in the Jordan might raised later on. Had a human being become God? The answer on that was: God became a human being, so from the very moment of - as we say - the conception. It might be obvious that in Mary societies elements for that purpose were present but the interpretation of the 'holy story' of the annunciation as historical and keeping it as a secret until after Mary's death seems to me somewhat good-humoured in the history critical area. This does not detract from the Mystery but it hampers the accessibility of it.

I think I gave a useful answer to the question of the pope concerning Mary's "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" Mary does know a man but not such a man having that 'power'. (Ch. 2.3) Then the answer is useful.

Luke 2.50 says that Mary and Joseph didn't understand the answer of Jesus. This does not agree what is said by Gabriel in the Annunciation. If someone should understand Jesus, then Mary and Joseph. The pope's explanation (Epilogue) is not convincing me. They are two different 'holy stories', so history is point two; point one is: the one preaches incarnation, the other his being at home with the Father.

In Chapter 2.4 the pope writes that the fourth these concerning Jesaja 7,14 has no context in Jesaja. It seems to me that it lays in " ... house of David" (Jesaja 7,13). Not only the king is addressed but Israel, the people, too. The pregnant woman can present the faithful people, who do hope, a sort of core within the people, the 'Tsaddiek', just people (like Joseph). They are 'daughter Sion' - seems to me. Within that scope the pope brings the dilemma of 'believe - disbelieve' up , to what I add 'hope - no hope' because of pregnancy. Immanuel is a name, like the 'sons' of the prophet also have, a name that the Christians at last could fill in using the attributes of the hope child of Jesaja 9,5.

I think I have given a better exegesis of John 1,12.13 than the pope considers in chapter 1. In my view the meaning is that the origin of the person is not relevant whether he is born in a Jewish marriage (so faithful, within the Covenant, husband and wife of Jewish blood), or in a common (not faithful) marriage or out of marriage - everybody can become a child of God. So birth, virginal birth as well, is irrelevant in that context. John 3,3.7 also is about an existing human being, a person, who will be born "again, new/from above".

My apologies to the great Barth, to whom the pope refers at the end of chapter 2.5: in my view of the birth of Jesus no interference in the nature is needed, on the contrary. God does not need a miracle; He uses the nature, his Creation. Also concerning the resurrection it is much more revealing to suppose that spirit is able to express itself in what can be perceived by our senses, in matter, than to suppose an interference. Nature is not to be bypassed.

Let me explain it shortly.

We should consider the resurrection of Jesus not from an earthly point of view but from heaven, the reign of the Spirit. From his showing himself to his disciples it is clear that Spirit is able to 'express' himself - i.e. The Second Person, Jesus, the Christ - in matter, a body, his body by which his disciples know him as a person. But in a special way - he comes and goes unnaturally but does eat and may be touched. From that unnaturalness I conclude he doesn't need his dead body. Resurrection never is introduced as the revival of a dead body. That may decay naturally as earthly and nature remains intact.

His 'new' body is necessary for earthly people to recognise him. It is real but without the restrictions of time and place, stays within the 'dimensions' of eternity. This shows that the person remains in a real way, even if for heavenly beings, in the reign of the Spirit, an earthly 'body' is not as relevant as for earthlings. The earthly body decays but if there is no question of 'person' anymore, of an identity, eternal life doesn't make sense. Jesus is completely human as we are; his earthly body decays as ours; that doesn't wrong Him and confirms our eternal life as independent of our earthly body.

Our earthly body decays but He (Philippians 3,20) "shall change our vile body, that may be fashioned like unto his glorious body according to the working whereby He is able to subordinate even all things unto himself"; after all "He is before all things". Conclusion: the person remains.

Being a 'heavenling' I should myself present to earthlings who know me by my real earthly body - if I could; I am not a creator. The glorified body replaces, represents the earthly body. So we, earthlings, may use 'body' as a grip for our way of imagining.

So spirit is before matter, creates matter and expresses itself by matter, which is subordinated to it. That is why I prefer "subordinated" in the Philippians text instead of "subdue" read by The King James Bible - according to that Greek word. In my feeling "subdue" insinuates that matter already existed before it was subdued.

In continuation of that I wonder how great The Creator of the creation shall be.

And, what about me?

Nowadays, October 2017, I realise that I have to be honest: if the Second Person is able to present himself with his body and to take it 'away', why couldn't that body be 'away' from the tomb? It is his body, belonging to his person. What started as nature ends 'heavenly'. In this way his natural birth plus the empty tomb is the maximum appraisal of nature. Therefore, preferably an empty tomb. According to the pope at the end of chapter 2.5

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