

THE
SUPERNATURALNESS
OF CHRIST

Can We Still Believe In It?

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CHAPTER III

THE SUPERNATURAL ELEMENTS IN THE GOSPEL RECORDS OF OUR LORD'S BIRTH

GRANTED that the Christian faith must rest solidly upon the historic Christ, how important it is that the facts pertaining to the *beginning* of Christ's life on earth should be firmly established, not upon myth or speculation, but upon evidence of indisputable historical validity. There are only two detailed accounts of the circumstances surrounding our Lord's entrance into this world that have any historic value at all—namely, the first two chapters of the Gospel according to Matthew, and the first two chapters of the Gospel according to Luke. Here, as also in the records relating to the end of Christ's life on earth, involving His Resurrection and Ascension, we have what we might call a veritable accumulation of supernatural elements and events. In this chapter we would draw attention to six of these separate supernatural elements, though we will not have space to discuss any of them but the last with any detail. Some of our readers may not agree with the writer that all of these six elements in the Nativity narratives of our Lord are to be considered as involving the miraculous, but certainly it will be admitted that the Virgin Birth is most emphatically a miracle, and whether the other five will so be considered or not, will not in any way destroy the final verdict of this chapter, which is that *the entrance of Christ into the world was, according to the Gospel records, a supernatural event*. The reason why I have set the following matter out with as great fullness as space allows is because I have not found

some of these points spoken of in the most important commentaries and apologetic works of our day (or for that matter of any previous day).

THE MIRACULOUS PRESERVATION OF THE MESSIANIC LINE

In the first seventeen verses of the first chapter of Matthew, we have presented to us a genealogy of Joseph, the husband of Mary, running back through forty-two generations, to Abraham, covering a period of approximately two thousand years. That there are some omissions in this genealogy, and that in differing somewhat from the genealogy recorded in the third chapter of Luke it raises a number of questions, does not in any way invalidate the simple fact which we have just stated, that there is here a record of what we might call "the Messianic Line" running back to the Father of the Hebrew people.

It is of course admitted by all that every living man in the world today has a long line of male ancestors, a father, a grandfather, a great-grandfather, a great-great-grandfather, and so on, back for thousands of years. That we do not know *who* our male ancestors were, hundreds of years ago, does not in any way destroy the fact that such ancestors we have had. There is nothing miraculous in that. But in looking at this genealogy, we must remember that God definitely promised to Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3) a seed which would bless the world, from whom kings and nations would come, and, as Paul reminds us, this prophecy ultimately pointed to the Messiah (Gal. 3:16). This promise was given about two thousand years before the Lord was born. Three hundred years later, more or less, Jacob, one of the grandsons of Abraham, on his dying bed told his son Judah that through his line a Ruler in Israel would some day be born (Gen. 49:10). Some six hundred and fifty years later, to a descendant of Judah, David, son of Jesse, God

through the prophet Nathan declared that this Messiah promised to Abraham, to Jacob, and to Judah, would be born of his flesh, that is, would be born of his descendants (II Sam. 7). This was about one thousand and forty years before our Lord was born. Now one begins to see what such a series of promises as these necessitated: that God was required to keep the Messianic line, from Abraham down to the time of the birth of Christ, fertile in such a way that there would be born *in this Davidic line*, coming down through Abraham, Jacob, and Judah, and, subsequently, through David, Solomon, etc., at least one male child in every generation who would grow to manhood and have a son who, in turn, would likewise have a son, until *in this one line*, running back for two thousand years, there would be *an unbroken succession of male descendants until our Lord should be born of Judah*.

At once, someone might ask, how does this involve a miracle? Perhaps we might illustrate this from the life of our great President, Abraham Lincoln. Abraham Lincoln (Feb. 12, 1809-April 15, 1865) had four children: Robert Todd, born Aug. 1, 1843—died July 26, 1926; Edward Baker, born March 1, 1846—died February 1, 1850; William Wallace, born Dec. 21, 1850—died February 20, 1862; and Thomas, born April 4, 1853—died July 15, 1871. Of these four children, one died in infancy, one in youth, and one in early manhood, before marriage. The only one of President Lincoln's children to marry was Robert Todd, who had three children: two daughters—Mary, born in 1869 and Jessie Harlan, born in 1875, and one son—Abraham, born in 1873, who died in 1890 before marriage. While it is true that Mary had a son by her husband, whom she named Lincoln, and Jessie had a son by her husband, whom she named Robert Lincoln, yet the *direct male line* from Abraham Lincoln is today *extinct*, an extinction that has taken place *within three generations*. It is now impossible for Abraham Lincoln to have anywhere in this country a grand-

son born of his own son, Robert Todd—or a great grandson, born of a son of Robert Todd. That which terminated in less than a century in the line of this great man, it was necessary for God to continue for two thousand years, until our Lord was born. This to some may not seem evidence of a definite miraculous nature, and with such we will not quarrel. But to us at least it seems most remarkable, and certainly manifests *the definite overruling of Divine Providence.*

MIRACULOUS FOREKNOWLEDGE CONCERNING THE BABE JESUS

In Matthew 1:21 we read that the angel said to Joseph, concerning his wife and the babe subsequently to be born, "She shall bring forth a Son; and thou shalt call His name Jesus; for it is He that shall save His people from their sins." The testimony of this verse to any foreknowledge on the part of the angel is only valid if we believe the record is historically true, that is, if we believe, not that Matthew at a later date ascribed these words to the angel, without any evidence to support his statement, but that the angel did actually utter such a statement as this to Joseph, before the Lord Jesus was born. If the angel did thus speak to Joseph, then the angel knew two things about the babe to be born which no father and mother can ever accurately know about any of their children before birth. In the first place, the angel knew that the babe would be a *son*. When a mother is expecting a little one in the home, she does not tell a close friend that "a son" is expected, or "a daughter," but that "a babe" is soon to arrive in the home. She makes no pretense of knowing whether the babe will be a boy or a girl.

During the spring of last year a man in New Jersey, who claimed to have carefully studied pregnancy charts for years, dared to predict not only the day on which his

wife would give birth to a child, but actually sent out announcements weeks before the child was born, telling his friends, not that "a child" would be born, but that that child would be a *son*. When, however, the little one was brought into the world, it proved to be a daughter! This entire incident was written up with great fullness in all the newspapers of the North Atlantic seaboard at the time of its occurrence.¹ It led the New York Academy of Medicine to declare—"As far as human beings are concerned, we know nothing as yet as far as prediction of sex is concerned."

Furthermore, the angel knew what the babe would do when he grew up—that He would be a Saviour of His people, not one who would save them from their enemies, but one who would save them *from their sins*. Incidentally, of no other person in the Bible is such a statement made. The Bible speaks of the greatest saints of the ancient world, men who walked with God, Enoch, Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Isaiah, Daniel, and, in the New Testament, the Apostle John, the Apostle Paul, etc., but of no other person anywhere in the Bible is it said that he would, during his life, or by his death, save his people, or any people, *from their sins*. The point we are getting at, however, is this: no father or mother knows, when a babe is born, exactly what that babe will do in life. The angel knew what the babe Jesus would do when *He* became a man.

The mother of Martin Luther did not know that her babe would be a reformer; Thomas Edison's mother did not know that her babe would by his inventions illuminate the western world; Abraham Lincoln's mother did not dream that her babe would some day be the President of the United States. We have thousands of men and women in our penitentiaries today, and how fortunate it is that no father or mother ever could foresee, when any one of these prisoners was a babe in their arms, that they would end their days as condemned criminals, behind the iron bars of a penal

institution. No, we do not know, we cannot know, and perhaps in many cases it is most fortunate that we cannot know, what our children will become, and what they will do. The angel did know that the babe, still unborn, would be the Saviour of the world (see also Luke 2:10, 11). Is not such foreknowledge a miracle?

A PROPHECY REFERRING TO THE BIRTHPLACE OF OUR
LORD THAT DEMANDS A RECOGNITION OF A
SUPERNATURAL REVELATION

When the wise men came to Jerusalem asking where He was to be found who was born King of the Jews, the learned scribes, in answer to Herod's question regarding this event, immediately acknowledged that the Messiah would be born in *Bethlehem*, for, so they said, thus prophesied Micah (Matt. 2:5-6). The prophecy will be found in the fifth chapter of Micah, and reads as follows: "But thou, Bethlehem, Ephratah, which art little to be among the thousands of Judah, out of thee shall one come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting."

It is recognized on every hand that Micah prophesied about 700 B.C. That he definitely foretold that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem cannot be escaped. It is impossible, by any legitimate critical device, to lift his verse out of the text of the book of Micah. There it stands, there it was read for hundreds of years by faithful Jews before our Lord was born. What possibility is there of any man, by his own wisdom, predicting the birthplace of someone not yet born? No possibility at all! Let a student microscopically examine every piece of American literature down to the year 1830, and he will not find one single phrase even suggesting that a future President of the United States would some day be born in Harlan County, Kentucky. The man who will be President of the United States forty years

from now has already been born, but we do not even know where his birthplace *was*, for we do not know who he is. In 1765, James Boswell spent a few weeks on the island of Corsica, making extended notes of all he saw and heard, but he did not know, he could not know, that *only four years later* a babe would be born on that same island who would, in forty years, have most of Europe at his feet—Napoleon Bonaparte. Micah put his finger on one of the smallest countries in the world in which he lived, Palestine, and in that country, he designated one of the twelve provinces in which the Messiah was to be born, namely, Judah; in that province he put his finger on one small village, Bethlehem, and said that *there* some day the Messiah must be born. Someone will suggest that Micah could have made a good *guess*, and indicate Bethlehem as the birthplace of the Messiah because there David was born. The truth is that David is the only King of Judah that ever was born in Bethlehem; all the other kings, descended from David, generation after generation, until Judah fell, were born in the royal city of Jerusalem, most of them, probably, in the palace. If a prophet of Micah's day would have *guessed* the birthplace of the Messiah, he would certainly have glorified the coming King by designating the royal city as the place of his advent, Jerusalem, not Bethlehem.

Circumstances prevailing at the time of Christ's advent were against the fulfillment of this prophecy, for at this time Joseph and Mary were not living in Bethlehem, but ninety miles away, far up in Galilee, in the hill-town of Nazareth. It was only because an edict had gone out from Rome concerning taxation, which compelled Joseph and Mary at this particular time to go to the ancient homestead of the Davidic family, that Mary and Joseph were in Bethlehem when our Lord was born. If the conception of the Virgin Mary had occurred six months before, the babe would have been born in Nazareth, and carried in Mary's arms to Bethlehem. If the conception had taken place six

months later, she would by the time of the babe's birth, have returned to Nazareth and the babe would then have been born there.

Two other facts we ought not to forget, one, that no Jews have lived in Bethlehem for the last eighteen hundred years; secondly, that there is not a Jewish family anywhere in the world today, which has an unbroken genealogical record today tracing their descent from King David. This means that no Jewish mother today has any *grounds* for hoping that any son of hers will be the Messiah, for she does not know if her family is of David's line. Such a prediction, concerning the locality in which the event referred to would occur seven hundred years after such a prophecy is given, is nothing less than the consequence of a Divine revelation. If this is not evidence for the supernatural, then nothing can be called evidence for it.²

THE SUPERNATURAL SIGN IN THE HEAVENS

We read in the second chapter of Matthew that the wise men were guided from the East (from what point in the East we do not know, possibly Babylon) to Jerusalem, and apparently from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, by a certain star moving in the heavens. There have been thousands of pages written about this star, but it has always been a subject pertaining to the birth of our Lord about which I have felt reluctant to speak, not because I do not believe in the record, but because I am not able to understand the exact nature of this star. In the first place, I do not know how these wise men ever ascertained that the star *would* lead them to the place where the King of the Jews was born, though I know they did, and correctly. Secondly, I do not know if this was a specially created star, which was withdrawn from the sky when it had accomplished its purpose in guiding these wise men, or whether it was a star that is still moving in some orbit in the heavens; nor, if I may

be frank, do I think that anybody else *knows* the solution of these problems.

I think Dr. Adam Fahling, in his recent scholarly *Life of Christ*, has expressed all we can definitely know, and really need to know, about this particular heavenly manifestation. "Whatever the physical nature of the star of the magi, whether it was one of the known or unknown heavenly bodies, whether previously existing, still existing, or not, or whether it was only a star-like supernatural light (so said Chrysostom), moving in the region of the terrene atmosphere (so said Augustine), its purpose was evidently to serve as a sign and a guide. One verse more, and the evangelist could have explained all, but he does not bring that verse. And therefore, accepting the miraculous, and without attempting further explanation, we hold that the magi in their unknown, oriental, native land, and for some undisclosed reason of divine providence, had both a revelation and an astral phenomenon, a sign which betokened the birth of the Jewish Messiah King."³

Whatever the star was, it was a supernatural manifestation. However, if any one should feel that the evidence for this particular aspect of our Lord's Nativity is inadequate to serve as evidence for belief in the supernatural, the episode can be put aside, for there is an abundance of material relating to other aspects of our Lord's birth which do, it would seem, absolutely require an acknowledgment of supernatural intervention. To say that one does not understand the meaning of this star is never to be taken as a synonym for not believing in the miraculousness of our Lord's birth.

THE MIRACULOUS CONCEPTION OF CHRIST

We now approach one of the most important and one of the most disputed episodes in all of the New Testament, the conception of the Lord Jesus in the womb of the Virgin

Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit. The annunciation to Mary by the Angel Gabriel of this stupendous miracle is found in great detail in Luke 1:26-38. Matthew tells us (1:18, 19) that Mary, before the consummation of her betrothal to Joseph, "was found with child of the Holy Ghost." The same writer records for us the brief announcement of such a miraculous conception to Joseph by the Angel of the Lord (verses 20, 21).

THE VIRGIN BIRTH NARRATIVES INSEPARABLE PARTS OF THE ENTIRE NATIVITY STORY

The first point we ought to consider in our investigation of the records of this miracle is the place it has in the Nativity narratives of St. Matthew's and St. Luke's Gospels. If the fact of the Virgin Birth is removed from the first chapter of Matthew then, (1) the pregnancy of Mary is left unexplained; (2) the annunciation to Joseph is purely fictitious, and must be also removed; (3) the comment of Matthew himself, indicating that this miraculous conception was the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14, must also be removed, and Matthew indicted as a careless writer who attempted to discover the fulfillment of certain prophecies in the Old Testament in events in our Lord's life which really never occurred; and, (4) the entire act of Joseph's kindness toward his wife, and his care for her until the babe Jesus was born (verses 24 and 25), must likewise be deleted. In other words, if the miracle of the Virgin Birth is not an historic fact, then the value of the opening chapter of our New Testament collapses, and we must confess we know absolutely nothing about the birth of our Lord. If the first chapter cannot be believed, how can we be sure that the other chapters are worthy of credence? But this is in exact contradiction to the evidence which we examined in the preceding chapter, in which we found that the Gospel writers are in every way trustworthy,

that they carefully recorded, with historic accuracy, the events concerning which they wrote.

Some suggest that, perhaps, the first two chapters of Matthew were not written by Matthew, but were inserted by a later hand, and are not an original part of Matthew's composition. Without here considering the question of authorship, we should remember that all the most ancient and most trustworthy manuscripts of the Gospels include these two chapters of Matthew. Moreover, Matthew has a fondness for certain words and phrases, so that almost every passage of considerable length in his Gospel contains some of them. These two chapters of which we are speaking contain no less than five Old Testament quotations, accompanied by the regular Matthew formula. "We may say, in fact, that if the Nativity story be not an integral part of the First Gospel, it must be counted one of the cleverest adaptations: a verdict that is not likely to be passed on it by a sane criticism."⁴ Professor Moffatt has not exaggerated the situation when he says that, "no hypothesis of literary criticism or textual emendation can disentangle the conception of a Virgin Birth from a story which is wrought together and woven on one loom."⁵

Turning to Luke's more detailed narrative, if the section devoted to the account of the Virgin Birth should be removed, then (1) the account of the journey of Mary to Elizabeth's home in the hill-country of Judah is left hanging in the air, without cause (1:39-56); (2) if the story of the Virgin Birth is not according to fact, we are forced to ask, *how came Mary to be "great with child?"* (2:5); (3) if the story is not true, how did Luke construct out of any story the ancient world possessed, such a pure and exquisite passage as the account of the annunciation to Mary?⁶ It is not our particular problem to investigate, or even ask, how Luke came to have this, what we might call, very confidential information concerning the conception of our Lord. (Incidentally, every critic admits that the accounts in Mat-

thew and Luke are distinctly independent, that one does not rest upon or derive from the other.) Still, I believe the words of the great New Testament scholar, Sir William M. Ramsay, on this particular point, might prove helpful to the readers of this book, in attempting to correctly appraise Luke's matchless narrative.

"The beautifully told story of Luke i, ii, is an episode of family history of the most private character. The facts could be known only to a very small number of persons. If Luke had the slightest trace of historical instinct, he must have satisfied himself that the narrative which he gives rested on the evidence of one of the few persons to whom the facts could be known. It is not in keeping with the ancient style that he should formally name his authority; but he does not leave it doubtful whose authority he believed himself to have. 'His mother kept all these sayings hid in her heart'; 'Mary kept all these sayings, pondering them in her heart'; (ii.19, 51) those two sentences would be sufficient. The historian who wrote like that believed that he had the authority of the Mother herself.

"But those two sentences are not the only indications of the source whence Luke believed his information to come. Some facts intimately concerning Elizabeth are mentioned in i.24 and 41; and the narrative carefully explains how these facts became known to Mary, i.36, 41; she had been told. But it is never stated that facts intimately concerning Mary were mentioned by her to Elizabeth. The narrative has the form which is natural only if Mary is understood to be the authority throughout: she simply states what concerned herself, while, in what concerned Elizabeth, she not merely states the facts, but also explains that she has first-hand authority.

"Moreover, what concerned Mary is expressly said to have remained secret, known to herself alone and pondered over in her own heart. It would be a contradiction that this secret of her heart should be the property of others to tell about her. The historian, by emphasizing the silence and secrecy in which she treasured up the facts, gives the reader to understand that she is the authority."

THE SIMPLICITY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT
ACCOUNTS OF THE VIRGIN BIRTH

If either a Christian or an unbeliever should open the New Testament to the two narratives recording the birth of Jesus, and read them with an open mind, approaching them just as he would any other piece of exalted noble literature, he could not help but realize that the narratives, whatever else he might think of them, are utterly free from all artificial embellishment, remarkably devoid of unnecessary details, without the slightest tinge of mythological exaggeration, and in every way showing sobriety and restraint in composition. This is definitely contrary to what one would expect to find in the account of such an amazing miracle as the Virgin Birth. We do well at this point to quote the finely worded testimony of that great New Testament scholar, Professor R. J. Knowling, who, in speaking of Matthew's account of the birth of our Lord says: "We hear nothing of any anger or reproach on the part of Joseph against his betrothed, although as a 'righteous man' he feels that only one course is open to him. But with this decision other considerations were evidently still contending,—considerations the very existence of which bore testimony to the purity and fidelity of Mary. The words of the Angel say nothing of the appeasement of indignation, they speak rather of the befitting conquest of hesitation and doubt: 'fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife,' i.e., to take unto thee one who had and still has a claim to that honored and cherished name. No wonder that Dean Plumptre could write that the glimpse given us into the character of Joseph is one of singular tenderness and beauty. If anyone will read this delicate and beautiful description, and place it side by side with that given us in the *Protevangelium Jacobi*, where, e.g., both Joseph and the priest bitterly reproach Mary, and a whole series of prurient details is given, he will again become painfully aware of the gulf

which separates the Canonical from the Apocryphal Gospels." 6

THE PRE-EXISTENCE OF OUR LORD NECESSITATES SUCH A MIRACULOUS CONCEPTION

The Apostle John tells us (1:1) that the Word who became flesh was from the very beginning with God. Our Lord Himself said, while on earth, that He was actually before Abraham (John 8:58). All the subsequent New Testament Epistles testify to the pre-existence of the Lord Jesus, that is, to the fact that He lived in glory before He came down on earth to be born of Mary (II Cor. 8:9; Phil. 2:5-11; Col. 1:15, 16; Eph. 1:4, 10; see also John 1:1-3). 9

Now it is perfectly evident, at least in these modern scientific days, that no son or daughter ever born in the world had *any existence whatever* one year before his or her birth. Whatever superstitious metaphysical Hindus may believe, all of us educated in the western world today, unanimously reject the idea of reincarnation. We most emphatically do not believe, for example, that George Washington, dead some one hundred and forty years, will appear again as a new-born babe in any home in our country. We do not believe that any husband and wife by natural union can ever give birth to an individual who lived at some previous time on this earth.

When you and I came into the world, we were *new* individuals. When the Lord Jesus came into the world, He was *not* a newly created individual: He was the Eternal Son of God. At His advent, He became, for the first time, a true man; for the first time He was born of a woman; for the first time, He actually lived as a member of our race on this earth. But He had lived from Eternity, previous to His advent, in glory with the Father. If no natural union of husband and wife could ever bring into the world an

individual who had lived previously, then Mary and Joseph by natural union could never have brought into the world the pre-existent Son of God. For one to be conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and to be born of her, who was indeed none other than the Eternal Second Person of the Godhead, of necessity required divine intervention, and this is exactly what we have in the narratives of Matthew and Luke.

THE SINLESSNESS OF CHRIST IMPLIES AN EXTRAORDINARY BIRTH

That our Lord was absolutely without sin, from the day of His birth to the day of His death, the whole of the New Testament testifies. It is a fundamental New Testament conception regarding His character, and absolutely required in the New Testament idea of His vicarious sacrifice for us. The problem immediately arises as to *how* it was possible for any person to be born into a race universally contaminated with sin, to live among a people all of whom were tainted with this dreadful disease, to live a normal life, that is, a life of eating, working, walking, talking, sleeping, praying, to live a normal life in a wicked world, and yet to live absolutely free from sin. Here in itself is a moral phenomena which simply cannot be explained by natural law. How does it happen that only this one Person, in six thousand years of human history, has lived utterly pleasing to God every minute of every hour of every day without sin, in thought, or word, or deed? Such a miracle as this demands, among other things, a miraculous entrance into life.

Some will immediately ask, does not the fact that Jesus was, even though miraculously conceived, born of Mary, involve His acquiring a sinful nature from His mother? Mary was, certainly, a member of a sinful race, and thus did partake of the sinful taint of human nature. Why, then,

was not the sinfulness of her human nature communicated to the nature of her first-born son? This is an important point. The answer to this question will be found in the words of the angel to Mary herself. Not only was our Lord divinely conceived by the Holy Spirit, but Mary, during all the months that intervened between His conception and His birth, was overshadowed by the same Holy Spirit. "The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the most high shall overshadow thee; wherefore also the holy thing that is begotten of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35).

As Dr. G. Campbell Morgan has wonderfully expressed it, "The angel answered the biological question, saying: The thing shall be done by the direct act of God, the power of the Most High, the Holy Spirit, wrapping thee round, overshadowing thee, producing in thy womb the Man-Child; and *also*, by that same act, by that same energy, by that same force, the Holy Spirit overshadowing, that which is begotten shall be held from contamination with the sin of thy nature, and in human nature. It shall be holy. It shall have being in thy womb by the act of God; and it shall be held from contamination with the sinfulness of thy nature, by the same act of God. The possibility of the Virgin Birth, and the way of the Immaculate Conception were declared by the angel."

While quoting from Dr. Campbell Morgan, it may not be out of place to give the concluding paragraph of his remarkable exposition of this particular portion of the Nativity narrative, inasmuch as it bears directly upon the subject of the supernaturalism of our Lord. "This is the Biblical interpretation of the Person of Jesus. A naturalistic philosophy necessarily cannot accept this as true. Then that philosophy is called upon to account for Jesus in some other way; and the only way to do that, is to do what naturalistic philosophy does, change the Jesus that is presented in this New Testament. To deny the supernatural origin of Jesus, is to make

Him natural merely. To do that invalidates the records, not of His Being alone, but of His teaching, and His power in human history. The reason why men reject this story is discovered in their philosophy of God. If He is limited by their knowledge, this thing cannot be. But we are not among the number of those who hold this philosophy of God. We do not think of Him as imprisoned within the laws we have discovered, and the forces we know. Therefore the answer of the angel carries our rational consent; because it is the only accounting for Him, that satisfies our reason."¹⁰

Another point to be remembered in our discussion of the Virgin Birth of our Lord is that it is in perfect conformity to all that we know of the subsequent life, and all that we know of the Person, of the Lord Jesus Christ. Even such a critic as Dr. Charles A. Briggs was forced to admit that, "historically and logically, the divinity of Christ and the Incarnation are bound up with the Virgin Birth, and no man can successfully maintain any one of them without maintaining all."¹¹ As another has said, "While through Mary, Jesus was vitally incorporated with the race, and without sin, inherited our entire humanity, he had a paternity befitting a life indwelt with all the fullness of the Godhead. Surveying the breadth and length and height and depth of the Incarnation, must we not say that it would have been unnatural if the birth of the Saviour had been natural."¹²

In fact, as Dr. Warfield reminds us, "It is just in proportion as men lose their sense of the divine personality of the Messianic King who is Immanuel, God with Us, that they are found to doubt the necessity of the Virgin Birth; while in proportion as the realization of this fundamental fact of the Christianity of the New Testament remains vivid and vital with them, do they instinctively feel that it is alone consonant with it that this Being should acknowledge none other Father than that Father which is in Heaven, from whom alone He came forth to save the world."¹³

THE DOCTRINE OF THE VIRGIN BIRTH HAS BEEN
BELIEVED BY THE CHURCH FROM
ITS BEGINNING

It must never be forgotten that the entire Christian Church, from its very beginning, has declared its faith in the doctrine of the Virgin Birth of the Lord. Luke, who says he examined many documents in the writing of his own Gospel, would seem to imply that this doctrine was *already* the faith of the Church even when he wrote, for he says that the things he writes are, "those matters which have been fulfilled among us," or, as the margin more accurately has it, "those matters which have been fully established among us."

Belief in the Virgin Birth "appeared in the earliest form of the Roman creed, which is placed by Kattenbusch as early as the year 100, and cannot be much later, the words being 'He was born of the Holy Ghost from the Virgin Mary.' This corresponds with the fact that we find it part of the regular Church tradition from the beginning of the second century. So Ignatius writing to the Ephesians (Chapters 18-19), said 'For our God, Jesus the Christ, was conceived in the womb by Mary, according to a dispensation, of the seed of David but also of the Holy Ghost.'" ¹⁴

THE EXTRAORDINARY INFLUENCE OF THESE BIRTH-STORIES

Dr. Arthur C. Headlam, now one of the most distinguished Bishops in the Church of England, and for some years the Principal of King's College, London, makes a fine point in his very significant volume on the miracles of the New Testament, one so seldom stated in treatises on the Virgin Birth, that we take the liberty of quoting him in full.

"I would suggest first of all that the extraordinary hold that the birth-stories of Jesus have had on the Christian mind is some evidence for them. Christianity was to be a religion for all peoples; it is a religion, not a philosophy; a religion capable of

being embodied in simple stories which appeal to the human mind, to the simple and untaught as well as to the educated and thoughtful. It may be argued that the stories have had their day. I think not. I think that probably most of us will feel that however lofty may be the theological and philosophical conceptions which have been built up round Christianity and appeal to our intellectual needs, it is still the simple Gospel narratives which have the greatest hold upon our heart. Our own religion is simple, and a simple story means much more for us than an elaborate dogmatic statement. A Christmas hymn can stir us far more than many a Christmas sermon. Of course, it might be argued that we are dealing with myths, true in idea but not in history. I do not think it likely that such prominent parts of the Gospel would be untrue, nor do I see any particular grounds for thinking that they are." ¹⁵

OBJECTIONS TO THE VIRGIN BIRTH

There are a number of objections to the Virgin Birth continually raised by those who deny the supernatural aspects of our Lord's life, and even by many who claim to be thorough-going Christians, but who refuse to accept this particular teaching of the New Testament scriptures. It is essential that we give some careful attention to the main criticisms brought against this important doctrine.

THAT IT IS A BIOLOGICAL IMPOSSIBILITY

Some years ago a great deal was heard about the "impossibility" of such a thing as Christ being born of the Virgin Mary in any other way than by natural generation, it being claimed that such a birth was contrary to all biological law. The idea of an egg cell developing without fertilization by a male element or sperm cell is called *parthenogenesis*. For some decades, parthenogenesis was considered a biological impossibility, but today it is recognized as frequently happening, both in some plants and in

some animals. In fact, the 14th Edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* gives two full columns to this very subject. And the article begins, not by arguing that such is possible, but by stating that such a law actually prevails in nature. "A drone bee develops from an unfertilized egg, thus having a mother, the queen, but no father. . . . In three classes of animals, there is a frequent exhibition of parthenogenesis—namely in rotifers, crustaceans, and insects. Among insects, it occurs in many gall flies and saw flies. . . . Among plants, the development of an egg cell without fertilization is seen in *chara crinita*, one of the water stoneworts, represented in Northern Europe by female plants only. Parthenogenesis is the rule in the dandelion, and also occurs in some hank weeds."¹⁶ No critic of the Virgin Birth today would dare speak of the "biological impossibility" of such an event. We dismiss this particular criticism without further discussion.

THE THEORY OF SUPPOSED CONTRADICTIONS

Others attempt to invalidate the New Testament evidence for the Virgin Birth by insisting that there are contradictions between Matthew's and Luke's account. But, as Professor Orr has well said, "It seems much more remarkable that there are agreements, for if we study them carefully, they prove to be more numerous than one would, at first, believe." Professor Orr then proceeds to give a list of twelve points, "which lie really on the surface of the narratives, yet give very nearly the gist of the whole story. (1) Jesus was born in the last days of Herod. (2) He was conceived by the Holy Ghost. (3) His mother was a Virgin. (4) She was betrothed to Joseph. (5) Joseph was of the house and lineage of David. (6) Jesus was born at Bethlehem. (7) By divine direction He was called Jesus. (8) He was declared to be a Saviour. (9) Joseph knew beforehand of Mary's condition and its cause. (10) Nevertheless he

took Mary to wife, and assumed full paternal responsibilities for her child; was from the first *in loco parentis* to Jesus. (11) The Annunciation and birth were attended by revelations and visions. (12) After the birth of Jesus, Joseph and Mary dwelt in Nazareth. This, however, is not the whole. . . . But careful inspection of the narratives shows that, even in the respects in which they are divergent, so far from being discrepant, they are really, in a singular way, complementary; that where a careless glance suggests contrariety, there is really deep and beautiful harmony."¹⁷ This compact statement should be closely studied.

THAT THE STORY WAS WRITTEN TO SHOW A FULFILLMENT OF PROPHECY

Some have attempted to discover the origin of the Gospel accounts of the Virgin Birth of Christ in the Messianic expectation of the Jewish people at the time of Christ's advent, making out a case that, because of the prediction of Isaiah 7:4, wherein it is announced that the Messiah would be born of a Virgin, it was necessary for Matthew and Luke to *construct* such a story as this, that the prophecy might seem to be fulfilled. The answer to this is a simple one: there was absolutely no expectation, among the Jewish people of Christ's day, or among any of the Rabbinical teachers preceding the advent of Christ, that the Messiah would be (by miraculous conception) born of a Virgin. There is not one single sentence, in any contemporary Jewish writings, that would indicate that the Messiah would be born as Matthew and Luke indicate He was born. In fact, the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14 seems to have been either lost sight of, or was not understood by the Jewish people, until it *was* actually fulfilled in Christ's Virgin Birth, and then it was recalled. The simple facts of the case make it impossible that Matthew and Luke should ever have built up such a remarkable story around a verse like this, which was not being discussed

with these implications during the time of Christ's advent on earth.

THE SO-CALLED "ARGUMENT FROM SILENCE"

One of the most important arguments continually brought against the doctrine of the Virgin Birth is the so-called "silence" of the Gospels of Mark and John, and the Epistles of St. Paul, concerning this fundamental teaching of Matthew and Luke. This has been replied to again and again, and we believe in a very convincing way, but the words of Professor Headlam on this point are so unusually fine and conclusive, that we take the liberty of quoting his entire answer to this objection.

"Now the argument from silence is always precarious. How little stress can be laid on it in this case a single instance will shew. There is no reference to the Virgin Birth in the Acts of the Apostles. This is really quite natural, because it was not part of the ordinary apostolic missionary preaching. It would not be likely that it should be. It did not give any proof to outsiders. It was something that the convert would learn later, and would then harmonize with his other beliefs; but it was not part of the missionary preaching of the Apostles such as S. Luke gives in the Acts. There was therefore no need for it to be mentioned; but we know that S. Luke also wrote the Gospel, and he wrote it before the Acts. Therefore, he clearly knew of the Virgin Birth as part of the Christian teaching. If we had not the Gospel but only the Acts, it would at once have been argued that the author of that book had no knowledge of the Virgin Birth. This is an instance which brings out how little stress can be laid on the argument from silence. The writers of the books of the New Testament composed their works to meet the needs of their own day, and did not write to assist people in the twentieth century in the particular controversy in which they might be engaged.

"As for the omission of the doctrine in the Gospels of St. Mark and St. John, we must content ourselves with asserting that there is nothing in either Gospel which could make us doubt the story

of the Virgin Birth, and that it was not in accordance with the plan of the writers that they should give any account of the Nativity. All the books of the New Testament are very short, and it is obvious that the writers in producing them must in each case have confined themselves to the particular purpose they had in view.

"Similarly it is never safe to argue from the silence of S. Paul. His letters were in all cases occasional documents. They assume the ordinary Christian preaching and the ordinary knowledge of the Gospel history. They were not written to provide future ages with a complete idea of what Christianity was, and in a sense it must be considered accidental that any particular point of early Christianity is found in them. Supposing that I Corinthians had not survived, it would have been the customary thing to argue that S. Paul knew nothing at all about the Lord's Supper. S. Paul's Christological doctrine was of such a character that it would be natural for him to believe that our Lord was born in a remarkable manner. . . . It is more important to emphasize the general statement of S. Paul that the Second Man was from heaven, and his conception of our Lord as free from any taint of Adam's sin such as might be engendered by ordinary human birth. We may not have sufficient evidence to assert that S. Paul must have known the story and must have accepted it, although the fact of his relation to S. Luke would make it extremely probable. We can argue quite definitely that he had such a conception of the person of Christ, of His heavenly origin, of His freedom from sin, as might seem to justify the belief in His supernatural birth."¹⁸

In the matter of the "silence" of St. Paul, Professor Orr makes a very interesting point, when he reminds us of the deeper teachings of Romans 1:3, 4, where it is said that Christ was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection of the dead." Professor Orr says, "I confess it is difficult for me to read this passage in Romans and rid my mind of the impression that there is a relation between it and what we find in Luke 1:35."¹⁹ St. Paul's profound passage regard-

ing the incarnation of our Lord, Phil. 2:6-8, certainly implies a miraculous entrance into human life, and what of his phrase, "made of a woman," in Gal. 4:4?

THE THEORY OF MYTHOLOGICAL ORIGIN

We must consider just one more attempt on the part of those who deny the truth of the Virgin Birth to account for this story appearing in the Gospel records, i.e. the attempt to trace it to Greek or Babylonian myths. This has been a favorite argument not only with rationalists, who have no regard at all for the Person of our Lord Jesus, but it is also frequently used, we regret to say, even by many professors in theological seminaries.

The two fundamental and, it seems to me, absolutely conclusive arguments against such an idea as this are, first, that in pagan mythology, it is not claimed that any hero is born of a virgin, and, secondly, that it would be utterly horrifying for any Jewish writer or early Christian Gentile writer of the first century to attempt to construct the story of Christ's birth and infancy from the sordid elements of pagan myths. In regard to the non-existence of virgin births in pagan mythology, we, of course, must admit that many of the Greek, and Babylonian, and Egyptian deities were said to have been born in some unusual or (as they claimed) supernatural manner. But not only do these myths refer for the most part to beings that never actually existed, but the records in themselves always involve lustful, sensual elements, which are wholly absent in the accounts of our Lord's nativity. Among the Greeks and the Babylonians, a god or goddess would be said to be brought into the world in some miraculous way either by the co-habitation of some heavenly being with a woman on earth, or, even more vulgarly, by the adulterous relationships of the gods and goddesses themselves. In no account of these fictitious births do we read of an actual

virgin giving birth to a son. One can read hundreds of pages of these mythical stories and realize anew when he has finished what a chasm separates these humanly created and often wicked stories from the exquisite, beautiful, holy records of our Lord's own birth. In fact, as Dr. Thorburn has said, "All these various stories of supernatural conceptions and births, which we meet with in folklore and the history of mythology have this one point in common—they serve to point not so much to the similarity as to the complete *contrast* and dissimilarity which exists between the Christian Birth-story and the tales which were current in various pagan circles."²⁰

Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick, from time to time, in his writings, in advocating a mythological origin for the Virgin Birth story in the Gospels, compares this account of our Lord's birth to references in ancient literature to the birth of Buddha, Zoroaster, Caesar Augustus, Plato, and Perseus.²¹ Let us look at the facts for the moment. As for the birth of Plato, the great Greek scholar, Prof. J. P. Mahaffy, begins his famous chapter on Plato in his *History of Classical Literature* with the following two sentences: "Plato, whose proper name was Aristocles, was born either 429 or 427 B.C., at Ægina, where his father held property. His father, Ariston, son of Aristocles, and his mother, Peristione (sister of Charmides), were both of ancient and noble descent." As to the birth of Perseus, who, by the way, was only a god of Greek mythology, and never actually lived and walked and suffered on earth, as did the Lord Jesus of whom we are speaking, one of the greatest authorities on Greek mythology begins his discussion of this Greek god as follows: "The daughter of Acrisius was Danaë, of surpassing loveliness. In consequence of an oracle which had prophesied that the son of Danaë would be the means of his grandfather's death, the hapless girl was shut in an underground chamber, that no man might love or wed her. But Jupiter, distilling himself into a

shower of gold, flooded the girl's prison, wooed, and won her. Their son was Perseus." Such an account of a birth is as far from the beautiful, reasonable, believable narrative in Luke's Gospel as the East is from the West.

As for Zoroaster, many of the accounts of his birth are so vulgar that we are prevented from repeating them in this book, but we will note one of them which is not too gross. "According to another account which we find in Shahrastani God hid the spirit of Zoroaster in a tree (perhaps the Haoma plant) which he caused to grow in the highest heaven and which he afterward planted on the top of a mountain in Adarbaijan. There he mingled the spirit of Zoroaster, the Frohar, with the milk of a cow, which the father of Zoroaster drank. From this, seed and a portion of flesh passed into the body of Zoroaster's mother, who in the course of her pregnancy had a prophetic dream, which announced to her the divine greatness of her son." There is certainly nothing here which either Matthew or Luke could ever have used for the foundation of our Lord's birth.²²

As regards Caesar Augustus, every historian knows that his mother was Atia, the niece of Julius Caesar, and his father was Caesar Octavius of a respectable family from Velitrae.

Furthermore, the attitude of the early Christians, as well as of the Hebrews, whether they were Christians or not, in the first century of our era, was utterly antagonistic to all pagan myths, and the idolatrous practices that accompanied contemporary paganism. Christianity did not take its materials from paganism, but by its coming into the world, it was that which destroyed paganism. *There is not a single "mythical" element in all the four Gospel stories.* There seems to be here a previously unknown beauty and purity characterizing the thoughts and acts of men, as though a veritable breath of heaven had fallen upon them. There is a loftiness, a sweetness, a heaven-

liness, a freedom from all the foolish traditions and vain imaginations of men, in the Gospel stories that is really amazing, when we consider that they were written in the very midst of an atmosphere that had been saturated with paganism for centuries. If the Hebrews of Christ's day could rise up in revolt against Herod because he attempted to hang images in the Temple of Jerusalem, how utterly inconceivable it would be for these same Hebrew people, with the spirit of Christ dwelling in them, to ever even conceive of attempting to explain the advent of Christ into the world by these sordid, historically unfounded stories from a pagan world which they themselves looked down upon.

TESTIMONIES TO THE TRUTHFULNESS OF THE VIRGIN BIRTH

Just this week I happened to be turning the pages of a very sane, stimulating, but not too well-known book, *We Would Know Jesus*, by Dr. John A. Scott, Professor of Greek in Northwestern University for the last forty years. Professor Scott received his Doctor of Philosophy Degree from Johns Hopkins University in 1897, continuing advanced study in Gottingen and Munich. During his brilliant career, he has been President of the American Philological Association, and President of the Classical Association of the Midwest and South. Dr. Scott published this particular book at the age of seventy, so that we can safely say that whatever is here written may be considered as the mature convictions of one of the greatest Greek scholars of our country, a man of the highest intellectual ability, who knows what is worth knowing about classical literature, and is able to accurately appraise the historical value of any ancient record. In turning the pages of this book, as I have said, I came across a remarkable paragraph relating to Luke's account of the very matter we are discussing, and I would like to place Professor Scott's

verdict on this matter before my young readers, that they might have the assurance of knowing what one of our leading scholars, even of this modern day, is willing to tell the world is his own conviction regarding this supernatural event. "Luke was not only a Doctor, and a historian, but he was one of the world's greatest men of letters. He wrote the clearest and the best Greek written in that century. . . . Without Luke, we never could have had a report from a competent man of science on the birth from a Virgin. If Jesus had two human parents, why did the shrewd Gentile Physician never suspect that fact? Since the arguments were sufficient to convince Dr. Luke, we know that we are dealing with no ignorant childish fancy."²³

I think that to get the full emphasis of this quotation, we ought to repeat the question which Dr. Scott asked: "If Jesus had two human parents, why did the shrewd Gentile Physician never suspect that fact?"

And while we are here speaking of Luke as a physician, we might do well to quote what one of the greatest surgeons of our country has to say about this very matter, i. e., about Luke's account of the Virgin birth. The physician I refer to is Dr. Howard A. Kelly. A word concerning the career of this distinguished surgeon will give added weight to the testimony we are about to quote. Dr. Kelly received his Bachelor of Arts Degree from the University of Pennsylvania in 1877, when he was nineteen years of age, and his M.D. degree from the same University in 1882. At the beginning of his brilliant professional career he was the founder of the Kensington Hospital, in Philadelphia; for thirty years he was one of the four world-famous members of the medical school of Johns Hopkins University, as Professor of Gynecology and Obstetrics, 1889-1899, Professor of Gynecology, 1899-1919, and emeritus Professor since 1919; Gynecological Surgeon in Johns Hopkins Hospital, 1899-1919; and Consulting Gynecologist in the same institution since 1919. He has been the chief surgeon and

radiologist in the Howard A. Kelly Hospital in Baltimore since 1892. Among other honors that have come to him are the Hunterian lectureship at the Mansion Lord Mayor of London—1928, Honorary Curator of the Division of Reptiles and Amphibians in the University of Michigan, Honorary Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, together with many other honorary fellowships in other scientific societies, Commander of the Order of Leopold (Belgium, 1920), Order of the Cross of Mercy (Serbia, 1922), etc. Dr. Kelly is the author of a great many text books in the subject of gynecology, together with something over five hundred articles in different medical journals published in this country and abroad. His work from which we quote, *A Scientific Man and the Bible*, was written when Dr. Kelly was sixty-seven years of age.

"The Bible being a living book, its right use soon genders conviction, and so as I read, unsophisticated and as a child, these lofty and spiritually beautiful narratives drive arrows of conviction deep into my heart, first arousing wonder, then adoration and absolute faith, and then follow the very fruits of the life. . . . The Virgin Birth is the great key to the Bible storehouse. If I reject the Virgin Birth, the New Testament becomes a dead, man-made letter, recounting the well intentioned imaginings of honest but misguided men. . . . He who violently wrenches the narratives of the Virgin Birth from the New Testament in order to be consistent must also uniformly expunge all other miracles and with them the atoning death, the Resurrection, the Ascension, and the present mediatorial office of our Lord. The Virgin Birth is a fact fully established by competent testimony and abundant collateral evidences, believed by men all through the ages as a necessary factor in their salvation, secured by an ever-living, ever-acting Saviour, viewed with wonder by angels in heaven and acknowledged by the Father."²⁴

Supplementing Dr. Kelly's fine testimony, it may be of interest to all of our readers to have a second, later testimony, from another country, and from another distin-

guished surgeon, Dr. D. M. Blair, formerly the Professor of Anatomy and Dean of the Medical Faculty of the University of London, and, when this particular verdict was given, in 1936, the Regius Professor of Anatomy in the University of Glasgow.

"It may be well to explain why such special regard can be paid to a physician of nearly two thousand years ago. Had Luke lived nearly one thousand years ago, it would be a very different thing: no weight could have been put on the medical testimony of a physician of those times which were the Dark Ages in medicine as in much else. But Luke was a product of the Greek medical school that flourished from the time of Hippocrates in the fourth century before Christ to the days of Galen in the second century of the Christian era, and is recognized as having been imbued with a true scientific spirit. Diagnosis, in this school, meant logical deduction from careful observation. . . . Such, then, was the man whom the Holy Spirit chose to write that Gospel, and the first history of the Christian Church. Of what advantage to us is it that he was a doctor? The answer to that question begins in the very first chapter of his Gospel. Has it ever struck you that the only circumstantial account of the Virgin Birth of our Lord is found in the one Gospel written by a medical man? Luke goes into extraordinary detail. It is as though his professional instincts were aroused and he said to himself, 'Here is a marvellous thing; it is my duty, as a medical man, to see that a careful record is made of all relevant details. . . .' It is essential to recognize, without any equivocation whatever, the Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to deny the Virgin Birth is the first step towards denying that Divinity."²⁵

SUMMARY

The narratives of our Lord's birth are emphatically records of supernatural events. If they are not true, we know nothing of the circumstances attending our Lord's advent, for the miraculous aspects of His birth are so interwoven with the natural, commonplace aspects of the

same event, that to repudiate the former as unhistorical is to have the entire story evaporate before our eyes. If the narratives are not true, these two writers, Matthew and Luke, must be admitted to be men of the greatest literary genius, and at the same time undependable inventors of fiction. But there is every reason for believing that the narratives *are* true, and, there is no theory or theories that have ever been proposed that can reasonably explain away these narratives on a rationalistic basis. If Christ is the only begotten Son of the Father, the Virgin Birth is not only credible but necessary. If Christ lived throughout His life without one iota of sin, such sinlessness can in part be accounted for by the Virgin Birth. If Christ made His exodus from death by the miracle of the Resurrection, and His exit from this world by His ascension, we can easily believe He entered humanity by such a miracle as the Virgin Birth.

NOTES

¹ The facts of the case are as follows: Mr. Sidney A. Forlet, of Newark, N. J., sent out cards in March, 1939, announcing the expected birth of a son to occur June 17 or 18. On June 20th, at the Beth Israel Hospital, Mrs. Forlet gave birth to a baby girl, to the utter astonishment of the father, who claims to have made a study of pregnancy charts for some years past, and asserted he was definitely capable of predicting the time of birth and the sex of the child to be born. In both matters he was wrong. The above information is taken from the *New York Times* of June 21st, page 7, column 4, and June 25th, Section II, page 8, column 3.

² For more elaborate consideration of this interesting subject of Micah's prophecy, may the author take the liberty of referring to two articles of his, "Why was Bethlehem the Birthplace of our Lord?", in *Revelation*, December, 1936; and, "The Miraculous Choice of Bethlehem," in the *Sunday School Times*, Dec. 5, 1936. The statement here made regarding Jewish genealogies existing today going back to the time of David, is made upon the basis

of a long and interesting letter concerning this subject from Professor Meyer Waxman, Professor of Hebrew literature in the Hebrew Theological College of Chicago, in which this point is extensively elaborated upon.

³ Adam Fahling: *The Life of Christ*, St. Louis, 1936, pp. 111, 112.

⁴ See F. C. Burkitt: *Evangelian Da Mepharrisha*, pp. 258, 259, quoted in James Orr: *The Virgin Birth of Christ*, New York, 1907, pp. 51, 52.

⁵ James Moffatt: *An Introduction to the Literature of the New Testament*, New York, 1910, p. 251.

⁶ The late Senator Albert J. Beveridge was acknowledged a master of literary style. His work on Abraham Lincoln was the result of years of incessant labor, and painstaking research. This is his description of the environment in which Lincoln was born: "Far from the turmoil across the mountains, in a log cabin in the heart of Kentucky, on February 12, 1809, Abraham Lincoln was born. The earth was the floor of that shelter. The roof of rough slabs was held in place by poles and stones. In the log walls a small square opening, possibly covered with greased paper, let in a scant, dim light. Two long, broad slabs, fastened together and attached by hinges of wood or of hide to the side of a cut in the walls high enough for a man to pass through, served as a door. At one end of this cabin was a rude fireplace of stone with a chimney of sticks and clay. In a corner opposite was a pallet or bed, the frame made by a crotched stick driven into the ground upon which the ends of a long and short pole rested, the other ends thrust between the logs of the cabin. Across this frame were placed rough slats, and upon these bedding of some sort was spread. The whole structure was of wood, no iron being available. This log hut stood on the edge of a tract of poor land, with few trees and covered by tall, coarse grass. Immediately in front of the cabin the ground sloped sharply downward. A spring flowed from a horizontal cave-like channel of rock in the low hillside and, dropping abruptly into another but perpendicular opening of rock, disappeared." Albert J. Beveridge: *Abraham Lincoln*, 1809-1858, Vol. I, Boston, New York, 1928. Chapter I, "Kentucky: Birth and Childhood," p. 23.

This is certainly a good piece of literary work, but now compare it with Matthew's account of our Lord's birth (1:18-25), or with Luke's account of the Annunciation to Mary (1:26-38), or of the adoration of the shepherds (2:8-20), and realize at once

the infinite superiority of the New Testament records to Senator Beveridge's carefully worded paragraph. Will *his* lines be studied and sung by millions of people for nineteen hundred years to come?

⁷ W. M. Ramsay: *Was Christ Born at Bethlehem?* London, 1898, pp. 74, 75.

⁸ R. J. Knowling, art. "Birth of Christ," in *Hastings' Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*, i, 206; also E. Digges LaTouche: *Christian Certitude*, London, 1910, pp. 147, 148.

⁹ On this entire subject of the Pre-existence of Christ, nothing could be finer than the superb discussion by Thomas Whitelaw, in his (now) too-little known work, *How Is the Divinity of Jesus Depicted in the Gospels and Epistles?* London, 1883, pp. 11-110; also, Alexander Patterson: *The Greater Life and Work of Christ*, 2d ed., 1898, pp. 17-127.

¹⁰ G. Campbell Morgan: *The Gospel According to Luke*, 1931, p. 24.

¹¹ Charles A. Briggs, "The Virgin Birth of Our Lord," *American Journal of Theology*, April, 1908, XII, p. 201.

¹² John McNaugher: *The Virgin Birth of Jesus*, Pittsburgh, 1939, p. 30.

¹³ B. B. Warfield: *Christology and Criticism*, New York, 1929, p. 454.

¹⁴ A. C. Headlam: *The Miracles of the New Testament*, London, 1914, pp. 280, 281.

¹⁵ A. C. Headlam, *ibid.*, pp. 295, 296.

¹⁶ Sir John Arthur Thomson, art. "Parthenogenesis," in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. 14th ed., XVII, 341, 342.

¹⁷ James Orr: *The Virgin Birth of Christ*, pp. 36, 37.

¹⁸ A. C. Headlam, *ut supra*, pp. 278-281. See the similar testimony of T. Zahn, in Orr, pp. 220-223.

¹⁹ James Orr, *ibid.*, pp. 119, 120. Those who wish to examine this particular subject, should read Bishop Richard J. Cooke's *Did Paul Know of the Virgin Birth?* New York, 1926, pp. 152.

²⁰ Thomas James Thorburn: *A Critical Examination of the Evidences for the Doctrine of the Virgin Birth*, London, 1908, p. 158.

²¹ As, e.g., in his *As I See Religion*, 1932, p. 36.

²² The references for this material are J. P. Mahaffy, *A History of Classical Greek Literature*, Vol. II, Part I, 5th ed., London, 1910, p. 162; Charles M. Gayley, *The Classic Myths in English Literature and in Art*, new ed., 1911, p. 208; Elwood Worcester, *Studies in the Birth of the Lord*, New York, 1932, p. 168.

²³ John A. Scott: *We Would Know Jesus*, Chicago, 1936, pp. 124, 131.

²⁴ Howard A. Kelly: *A Scientific Man and the Bible*, Philadelphia, 1925, pp. 89, 90, 94.

²⁵ D. M. Blair: *A Doctor Looks at the Bible*, London, 1936, pp. 17-19. Dr. Briggs well said, "It should be said that St. Luke who gives us the fullest statement as to the Virgin Birth was a physician as well as a historian and, undoubtedly, aware of the biological processes connected with conception and generation. Doubtless modern biologists know more than he did about those subjects; but the ancient Jewish, Greek and Roman physicians knew as much as the moderns of everything connected with conception and generation that can in any way have to do with the doctrine of the Virgin Conception and Virgin Birth. If Luke saw no biological difficulties, and if the greatest physicians the world has produced have not hesitated to answer the doctrine, it is vain for any modern biologist to object to it. They do not in fact object from biological reasons but because they are unwilling to accept the supernatural or any kind of divine interposition in the world." *Ut supra*, XII, p. 203. See also his *Incarnation of the Lord*, New York, 1902, Chap. X, pp. 215-235.

THE
SUPERNATURALNESS
OF CHRIST

Can We Still Believe In It?

WILBUR M. SMITH, D.D.

BAKER BOOK HOUSE
Grand Rapids, Michigan

Paperback edition
Reprinted 1974 by
Baker Book House

from the 1940 edition
by W. A. Wilde Company

ISBN: 0-8010-8020-7

PHOTOLITHOPRINTED BY CUSHING - MALLOY, INC.
ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
1974

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