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The
VIRGIN BIRTH
OF OUR LORD



by
Earl H. Tschudy

Teacher of Biology, High School, Hazleton, Pa.

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FOREWORD



THERE are, of course, numerous works on the Virgin Birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. In addition to writings having to do entirely with this theme, much other literature on the subject may be found in the standard biographies of Christ, in expositions of *Matthew* and *Luke*, and in monographs on the supernaturalness of Christ, the Apostle's Creed, and the like.

In presenting this brochure, Brother Tschudy has no intention of replacing the exhaustive and scholarly volumes already in print. Rather, he offers, at the request of some, his own conclusions after very thorough study of the subject in the Gospels and other available literature. It was at the writer's solicitation, that *The Virgin Birth of Our Lord* first appeared serially in *Our Hope*, and the number of comments received by the editors fully justifies the writer's interest in it, and, in fact, demands its publication in booklet form.

Earl H. Tschudy, M.A., is not a trained theologian, but is the teacher of biology at the high school in Hazleton, Pennsylvania, and is at the same time the director of a live testimony for the Lord in that city. He is well qualified to write on the subject matter, and presents here a logical and convincing testimony of the miraculous conception of the Lord Jesus.

This treatise has been a very great blessing to the writer, and we can think of no higher commendation of it than that we already know of two men who have received Christ as Saviour through reading this work.

E. SCHUYLER ENGLISH.

Associate Editor, *Our Hope*.

The Virgin Birth of Our Lord



The Virgin birth of Jesus Christ is THE Fundamental of all the Fundamentals of the entire Gospel program. It is the cardinal principle around which all the Scriptures revolve as the focal point of God's eternal provision for man. Broader still in its scope, it is the keystone of the arch that spans the endless millenniums of the eternities, the eternity past, and the eternity future.

Without His Virgin birth there could have been no sinless, spotless living for Him. As the Virgin-born One there flowed from Him a mighty stream of miracle-working power and words of life and light for man groping in spiritual darkness. If He had not been Virgin-born, He could not have died a vicarious death on the Cross of Calvary. His bodily resurrection and His ascension back to His Father's right hand, to intercede there for redeemed ones, were likewise conditioned by His Virgin birth.

If He had not come that way the first time, He cannot come the second time with great power and in majesty and splendor. The fulfillment of all the Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament was possible, primarily, because of this distinctive characteristic of the Messiah. In addition, those concerning the future state of Israel, as well as all the New Testament promises relative to the Church, will materialize strictly on the basis of the authenticity of His Virgin birth as an established historical fact.

Not Reason

There are those, however, who say that it does not make much difference whether or not we believe that Jesus was

Virgin-born. We are told that it was an event of little consequence or significance and is not necessary for man's salvation. We must believe, according to certain critics of the Scriptures and the founders of false religions, that men are sufficient unto their own salvation. Others declare that the Virgin birth of Christ is a biological mystery far beneath the dignity and acceptance of modern minds. There can be no controversy with those of the first century, or succeeding centuries, for adhering to it, because they did not enjoy the enlightenment that we possess. Then, too, they were perhaps rather zealous and over credulous about their beliefs. With great authority and finality, remarks such as these come from the lips of those who would reduce His birth to a rational basis, but it cannot be done. It must be accepted purely as a matter of faith. The human mind simply cannot understand it, and therein lies the license for some men to express their refusal to believe it.

Several years ago the writer met a young man, who at the time was a medical student in one of our large Eastern Universities. After dinner the conversation turned to spiritual things. Presently he made the following remark: "What I cannot explain, I will not believe." That was his attitude toward a personal God and all of His marvelous works. The writer asked the student what he had eaten for his dinner. Each item was promptly named.

"What is happening to it?" was the next question.

At once came the reply, "It is being digested."

"What will happen to it after that?"

"It will be absorbed into the blood and circulated throughout the body."

"And what after circulation?"

Fully a minute elapsed with no reply forthcoming. The young man suddenly became strangely evasive and attempted to dodge the issue that he himself had raised. He was keen

enough to foresee how his answer would involve a refutation of his original statement and boast.

Then appealing to the student's own sense of veracity, the writer said, "Young man, if you have never been honest in your life, please be honest now. You surely have had sufficient scientific training to know what will take place next." That was about the only way in which he could be restrained from evading the question and changing the subject.

With great reluctance he answered, "It will be assimilated."

When urged for a definition of assimilation, he said that it was the changing of food into living matter. It is the process by which the food that we eat is converted into all of the tissues of the body. Dead food becomes bone, nerve, heart, lung, brain, etc.

The student was asked to explain it. Again he became very reticent about the matter. Finally he dropped his head and rather painfully said, "I can't."

"You believe it to be a natural process. Do you not?"

"Yes."

"Does it operate in your body?"

"Yes."

"How long has it been taking place?"

"Ever since birth." And he might have added, "Even before birth."

"And you believe it?"

"I must believe it," he answered.

"Yet you cannot explain it."

"No, not at all."

"What I cannot explain, I will not believe." This mental device constituted what the student felt was an impenetrable defense against his own responsibilities toward the overtures that God was making in his life.

But Faith

A Christian cannot help but feel deeply sympathetic toward a young person who comes to realize the foolish and absurd position into which such boasting has inveigled him. Neither the medical student, nor any other individual upon the face of the whole earth knows and understands the intricacies of assimilation. Investigation and research have not yet revealed how all the various cells of the body are able to take digested meat, and bread, and potatoes, and milk, or any other food, and convert any of it, or all of it into matter like themselves. It is not a question for reason at all. May we reiterate with vehemence that it lies completely within the realm of faith.

There are, furthermore, hundreds of items in man's daily experience to which he gives credence, and for which he has no adequate explanation. Yet he resigns himself to them as contributing factors of an established order, and seldom considers the mechanics of their functions. Just so it is with all things Divine, including the Virgin birth of Jesus Christ. No one can fathom the complexity of a human birth, much less the birth of the Son of God. It is a mystery, a marvel; and any phase of human experience is a marvel to the one who cannot comprehend it.

Necessary for Salvation

We are told repeatedly that the Virgin birth of Christ is an insignificant subject not worth pondering upon. Yet these same men, who tell us this, take abundant time in their lectures, or ample space in their writings, to exert an extra effort in order to belittle it. They deny its authenticity and discountenance the veracity of the records presenting it. Men who are well occupied during the course of a day often

display their contempt and disdain at the prospect of coping with matters trivial and non-essential. They chafe under the responsibility they incur thereby; but when it is a question of things Biblical—well, that is an entirely different matter. The critics are content to cast to the winds all essence of propriety, and thrust the full force of all their energies against a Book that has survived all of its assailants, and that shall remain intact throughout the ages to come.¹

The Virgin birth of Jesus must indeed be of some considerable importance, or there would not be so many scornful epithets directed toward it, or so much time wasted in railing against it. Sad to say, the result is that many, many of our young people glibly ape the “scholars” and boldly take their stand beside them in their criticism. To deny the Virgin birth of Christ is to rob Him of His Deity, a deplorable state of affairs, finally plunging men into infidelity, atheism, and communism.

If the statements that the critics make concerning Christ's birth are true, then the Bible is a book of mistakes. On the other hand, if it is correct in its unmistakable declaration that He was Virgin-born, the critics are wrong. Some one must be in error, either God or the critics. Man is the only one of God's earthly creatures ever to revolt against Him. He has retained for himself the audacity to cast defiance into His face, and loudly justify himself by doing so. He has usurped the prerogative to pass upon all of God's Word, and whatever runs counter to his own theories and philosophies must be stricken from the inspired records as untenable and unreliable. Apparently then, the final authority lies in any human brain that dares to set itself up in opposition to the Almighty.

¹Matt. 24:35; 1 Peter 1:23, 25.

Oh, the brazen insolence of puny man in his shameless impudence to match his superficial and microscopic intellect against the omniscience of the omnipresent, omnipotent God! The gap between the two is so immense that there is not the slightest possible chance of any equality, or congruity whatsoever.

Either Christ was Virgin-born, or He was not. There can be no other alternative. To say that it matters little or nothing at all whether or not one accepts it is to adopt an attitude of denial and defiance toward the entire scheme of redemption. If His Virgin birth is to be renounced, then there are other phases of His life that must also be rejected. The matter of repudiating the Scriptures is a cumulative affair. There must be other denials to cover the first one. There must be more abnegations to cover the second, and so on, *ad infinitum*. Every detail of His life and ministry, public and private, must then be looked upon as grossly exaggerated to the point where they become futile, ineffective, and inadequate for man's betterment.

As a result, Christ is reduced to the level of an ordinary man, to the status of a great Leader or a brilliant Teacher. His miracle-working power is deftly explained away by substituting for it a series of natural causes, and where that is not possible the story of the miracle becomes a simple myth. His death is minimized by making Him a martyr to a good cause. His enemies stoutly affirm that He did not rise from the tomb, but wasted away into gases. At least the critics are consistent to the extent that they disclaim all of the supernatural in Christ.

But to remove the doctrine of the Virgin birth of Christ from the Bible is to take away the central platform upon which the Gospel of Salvation is built. It is the foundation of redemption by His shed blood. Whenever it is ruthlessly torn from its moorings in the only Gospel plan by which

sinful man may be reconciled to God, the entire superstructure collapses into a useless jumble of meaningless words, worse than the incoherent babble of a troop of monkeys in their trees in the jungle. If men are really honest with themselves, they will have to admit that they are not willing to jeopardize their eternal destiny for a high ideal, or simply for a beautiful story. It must be substantial with its roots deeply anchored in truth.

In like manner the Virgin birth of Christ must have been an actuality, for there are too many people who are unreservedly depending upon it in order to reap all the benefits that it represents. Entirely too much hangs in the balance for it not to be true; even an eternity in His presence, to "be like Him," and to "see Him as He is."

If Not Virgin-born—Then He Needed a Saviour

To maintain that Jesus was not Virgin-born is to contend emphatically that He was born of human generation just like any other man. In this connection let us not forget that there is much more involved in this particular aspect of our study than appears on the surface. If we have to account for the birth of Jesus on a strictly human basis, then we must also attribute to His resulting human nature all that we would expect of any other person. No matter what may be said about a child at birth—however lovely it may be, irrespective of how innocent and attractive it may appear—there lies beneath it all a great basic principle, and that is the fact that it was unquestionably born in sin.

David was perfectly aware of his state at conception and at birth when he said, "Behold I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me."¹ The laws of heredity

¹Psa. 51:5.

had done their work well. They had operated to hand down all the traits that lay in the first man and woman, for the truism, "Like begets like," prevails in the spiritual realm in the same degree that it does in the physical realm. When the sons of Adam were born, there had been transmitted into their beings something that their father did not possess when he was originally created. In the day that he sinned, he died a spiritual death, and every ordinary child ever to be born into the world had already died with him.

If Jesus was born that way, He was born in sin, a sinner, with sin on Him, the curse of spiritual death upon Him, and He Himself direly in need of a Saviour. In that event it would have been utterly impossible for Him to die for the sins of the whole human race. An ordinary man can substitute for no more than one, and then only in a physical way, not spiritual. Even if it were possible for a man to die for more than one, by the limitations of his humanity his sacrifice would have no potency beyond the lives of his contemporaries. But the Son of God, and He alone, could substitute for all mankind in any generation, even in this present day—centuries after His death has occurred. "His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by Whose stripes ye were healed."¹

In order for His death to be efficacious for sin, His life had to be pure and clean, spotless and perfect, guiltless and guileless, absolutely righteous and holy, with no sin in Him or on Him. He had to be incapable of sin, even of yielding to temptation to sin. Had Jesus been born of two human parents, He could never have fulfilled any one of the characteristics and requisites of a Redeemer any more than could any other individual.

¹ 1 Peter 2:24.

If Not Virgin-born—Then His Claims Were False

No one but the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, could be Virgin-born. If He were not, the assertions that He made for Himself were false, and He becomes the greatest impostor that the earth ever saw, barring none. The fact of the matter is that the human mind is limited to adopting only one of three conclusions concerning His person. All that Christ ever said about Himself was either true or it was not true; and a serious consideration of truth reveals the fact that there can be no middle-of-the-road attitude toward it. If His claims were altogether reasonable and legitimate, then He was exactly what He represented Himself to be, God incarnate. If they were not true, either He knew they were not, or He did not know they were not. In the event that His claims for Himself were fictitious, and He knew that to be the case, may it be said very reluctantly and respectfully—He was a prevaricator. On the other hand, if they were a fabrication and He did not know it, the only conclusion at which one may arrive is that He was nothing short of a deluded maniac.

Reader, could you conscientiously worship a maniac? Would you want to pay homage to a liar? It is common knowledge that neither of them is very reliable. Such people can contribute little indeed, yes, nothing at all toward one's eternal welfare because they are themselves guilty before God as sinners and in need of salvation. Would it not rather indicate a weakness of character on the part of one who should bow down in adoration to an individual who displays much less intelligence, or manhood, or moral strength, than is possessed by even an average person? But how much more comforting and assuring it is to depend implicitly upon One Who could vindicate Himself by mighty works; Who could

demonstrate in a most unmistakable way that He was God manifested in the flesh!

The changed lives of those who have acknowledged Him as their personal Saviour are the ratification and the confirmation of His death as the terrible price that He paid for man's redemption from sin. Unless Christ in all His utterances and His life is absolutely unimpeachable, the Gospel plan of salvation by His shed blood becomes nonsensical and impotent with too many flaws in it to be of any real value. In that event, in order to realize peace for our souls, or hope and assurance of everlasting life, we may as well lift up our hearts to some other man, or to some thing, and become rank idolaters.

Many thousands of people in their recital of the Apostles' Creed attest their faith in the Virgin birth of Christ. "I believe in God the Father almighty, maker of Heaven and earth: And in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary," etc. Notwithstanding the fact that it is a man-made creed it enjoys a great antiquity. It embodies all the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel and has been the expression of the faith of much of Christianity for many centuries. Portions of this creed originated in about the middle of the second century, while the present form was in use in Rome and other sections of Europe as early as the seventh century. Perchance it is a presumptuous collection of trifling words; then for countless numbers of people who have taken time to recite them, it has been a useless expenditure of energy to do so. Consequently, great hosts of mankind have been duped into believing something that is hardly more than fancy and fable.

Virgin Birth Versus Evolution

In this connection it might be well to mention a bit of evidence which may appear to be somewhat irrelevant to the

subject under discussion. It is, however, something worthy of consideration, and should be given special emphasis as one means of combatting the insidious theory of organic evolution. It should be stressed particularly for the benefit of young people who have been subjected to its teachings and influence. The tenacity with which it grips the thinking of many is displayed by their attitude toward revealed truth of which the following is but one example: "I can be a Christian, and still believe in the theory of evolution as the explanation to account for the origin and multiplicity of life on the earth." Nothing could be farther from the truth.

The Gospel of salvation and the theory of evolution do not mix any more than oil and water mix; and the reason is very simple to comprehend. In short it is this: if man evolved from lower animals, so did the Virgin Mary and her Son. If man was placed on the earth in any other manner than by the way the Bible says he was, then the Virgin Mary was also a product of that same system. If man is the work of evolution, it must follow as a natural consequence that the human body of her Son must also have developed from some brute beast. If the humanity of the Son of God ascended from some animal, irrespective of whatever species it may have been, it is sad to say, but none the less true, that He was no better than any other man. By the same token neither is He worthy of worship, much less of reverence, and esteem, and respect. Such is the inevitable result of the foolish dogma that would make all creatures kinsmen of each other. But the fact of the Virgin birth of Christ as the merit for His redemptive work stands as a mighty bulwark against the subtle encroachments of all the vicious onslaughts of the devil, no matter what form they might assume.

The most terse and concise statement concerning the incarnation of the Son of God to be found anywhere in the Bible is given to us by the Spirit through the author of the

Epistle to the Hebrews: "A body hast Thou prepared Me."¹ What kind of body was it? The Holy Spirit through the Apostle Paul tells us that He "was made in the likeness of men," and was "found in fashion as a man."² The Bible clearly teaches that man was put on the earth by the creative power of an omnipotent God. The preamble, furthermore, to that mighty act, "Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness,"³ expresses the unalterable determination on the part of God to begin His preconceived plan of history according to His own will and purpose. At the same time it is an undeniable declaration of the fact that this particular product of creation was to be a unique and distinctive individual, in that he would be a human replica of His own divine image. Neither was there anyone in all the confines of the vast universe who was important and powerful enough to prevent Him from carrying out this decree.

The three pronouns—*us* and *our*, used twice—in the passage quoted above are in the plural number, and are an indication that the entire Trinity has done the speaking. Man was undoubtedly created in the image of God, primarily, because He knew that he would need a Redeemer, and His Son in the form of a man would have to supply that need. Since the Lord always existed in the image of His Father's person,⁴ that image could in no wise be marred by tying it to an evolved body, either physical, spiritual, or moral. On the other hand, man was the only one of Earth's creatures ever to be made in the image of God. But his image became spoiled by sin. It is most reasonable to expect then, that the Son would clothe His own person in the likeness of the first man's original image, and thus combine the image of the Deity and the image of man in one person, and become perfect man, God in human form. Thus His divine image

¹Heb. 10:5.²Phil. 2:7, 8.³Gen. 1:26.⁴Heb. 1:3.

remained intact, and through His perfect human image made it possible for man's defaced image to be restored to the condition where it was before Adam fell into sin. As David puts it, "He restoreth my soul," or as it is more literally, "My soul He turneth back."¹

To have united God's image with a personality that did not reflect His image in a human way would have produced an individual positively incompatible with the established order of His eternal program and entirely contrary to the principles of inspired Scripture. It would hardly be consistent with the character of the Godhead, or with any part of His Word, to believe that the Son would take upon Himself a body that had been the product of a scheme which must be explained upon the basis of an atheistic or even a theistic philosophy. There is absolutely no room for a program of organic evolution in a relationship such as the Son enjoyed while He was with the Father in Heaven, or while He was finishing His plan on earth. If there were no other argument against this pernicious theory fully to convince one of its error, the sole fact that Jesus came as He did would be entirely sufficient and adequate to accomplish that very purpose. Since evolution had no hold on Him, neither can it apply to man or any other creature, plant or animal. That being the case, the only logical manner in which He could step out into human history with His two natures, with His two images, with His sinless character, was by way of Virgin birth.

Did Christ Teach His Virgin Birth?

We may be fairly certain that Jesus not only reminded His followers of His Virgin birth but referred to the event as positively essential and basic to the prodigious task that He

¹Psa. 23:3.

had come to perform. Recall the incidents of the early resurrection morning. Two disciples were walking toward Emmaus. Jesus suddenly stepped into their company and went with them to their destination. "But their eyes were holden that they should not know Him."¹ As they walked along the road He started the conversation, and in so many words said to them, "What seems to be your trouble? You must be burdened about something. You look sad and depressed."

One of the disciples asked Him whether He were a stranger in Jerusalem. He was questioned concerning His information about the events of the last few days. "And He said unto them, What things? And they said unto Him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, Which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and have crucified Him. But we trusted that it had been He Which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, today is the third day since these things were done."²

What a wave of compassion must have swept over Him because of their ignorance and unbelief! His reaction to their complaint was not only a beautiful manifestation of His grace toward them, but it also brought to their hearts and minds some much-needed instruction. "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself."³

Later that same day when Jesus appeared to the group of frightened, unbelieving disciples behind barred windows and locked doors, "He said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the Law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning

¹Luke 24:16.

²Luke 24:19-21.

³Luke 24:27.

Me. Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures.”¹

What were the Scriptures that He used? The only ones that He had, the Old Testament. Knowing what we do about His exactitude, we find it difficult indeed to imagine that He would overlook any of the references to His Virgin birth. It is not likely that He would lose the opportunity of mentioning it either to the disciples on the way to Emmaus or to the group in that secluded room somewhere in Jerusalem. If “He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself,” He undoubtedly pointed out the prophecies pertaining to every phase of His life and ministry, His death and resurrection. To be consistent with the Scripture that we have just quoted, He certainly must have included those passages relative to His coming into the world. He surely did not fail to direct their attention to the very first promise of a Redeemer which goes back to Genesis 3:15. Adam and Eve had apparently not been in the Garden very long before they wilfully and voluntarily violated the Word of God, and rebelled against His will. When the Lord God appeared upon the scene and stood in the presence of the three—Adam, and Eve, and the serpent—He put a curse upon each of them. Fixing His penetrating gaze on the serpent, He saw through the disguise and directed His words to the malign, subtle personality who incited our first parents to sin. It was to Satan He spoke when He said, “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel.”

Biology Proves It

The phrase “between thy seed and her seed” is really a rather curious expression. Observe carefully, and may it not

¹Luke 24:44-45.

be misconstrued when we say that there is no more unscientific grouping of words between the covers of the Bible than is found here. By no means does this discredit the Book or declare it to be in error. We are simply stating that this is an unscientific grouping of words, and from the human standpoint they are positively incongruous with respect to each other. They are, nevertheless, arranged as they are for a very specific reason.

How could the seed of the woman crush the serpent's head when the woman of herself has no seed? It is a well-known biological fact that the seed lies with the male. In other words, if this portion of Scripture were ever to be literally fulfilled, if it were to mean the introduction of the Messiah of Israel into the world, the King of the Jews, the Saviour of all mankind, He had to come by way of Virgin birth. This passage, we believe, embodies the first promise of the Virgin-born Redeemer.

Perhaps a little instruction in biology would not be out of order at this point, and by way of illustration a chicken egg will serve to present some very interesting facts. Upon opening an egg, one may observe a pale spot on one side of the yolk. That is the nucleus of the egg cell. When it is examined with the aid of the high power of a compound microscope, under proper conditions of course, one finds in it tiny bodies called chromosomes. These are the units in a cell which have to do with the transmission of hereditary characteristics. They make the offspring what it is to be. In addition, the genes lying along the chromosomes are responsible for transmitting into it all the structures that it will come to possess.

A comparison of the nucleus of an unfertilized egg with the nucleus of a cell from the body of the hen that laid the egg would reveal just half as many chromosomes in the nucleus of the egg as there are in the nucleus of the body

cell. We can understand then, why it is that when a setting of eggs is placed under a hen they sometimes do not all hatch. It is not the fault of the hen or the incubator, as the case may be, but the eggs themselves. The probability is that the eggs that did not hatch were not fertilized. They might be left there indefinitely, and they would never hatch, for the simple reason that they had not acquired the necessary seed.

This applies only to unfertilized eggs. Before they can hatch they must have seed. They must have been fertilized by a sperm from the male, which is simply the contribution of the other half of the chromosomes that those in the egg must have before an embryo can be developed. Fertilization is the union of the chromosomes in the sperm nucleus with the chromosomes in the egg nucleus to produce a fertilized egg. The nucleus then divides and redivides until the embryo is formed. One of the fascinating features about a fresh, fertilized chicken egg is the fact that it contains a chick embryo about eleven hours old; but without the seed of the male it would never be there.

There are a few cases in nature, however, where unfertilized eggs do hatch and produce normal individuals. Possibly the best and commonest example of this occurrence is the drone bee. The queen lays both fertilized and unfertilized eggs. The former metamorphose into workers, the latter into drones, which by the way are the males in the household. This natural phenomenon is called parthenogenesis. Now, there is a beautiful relationship between this principle and the Virgin birth of Christ as suggested by the Greek word in the New Testament which is translated Virgin. The word is *parthenos*, and from it the first part of the English word parthenogenesis is derived. It is in itself a strong indication of the manner of His birth.

Virgin Birth—Because God Willed It

If virgin birth may occur in the insect division of the animal kingdom in the normal process of generation, then we have every right to believe that Almighty God could intercept one of His own biological laws to work out His will for His own glory with respect to the birth of His Son. It certainly puts a lot of limitations on God if He is to be robbed of that prerogative. What has been said about the chicken egg and the principles which determine its hatching may also be said about the embryological development of man. They prevail wherever reproduction by fertilization occurs in the entire natural realm.

So, we can readily see why it is that so far as it depended upon man, the prophecy in Genesis 3:15 was an utter impossibility. It was, nevertheless, an unconditional pledge to deliver the Messiah into the world by way of Virgin birth. But in order for this promise to materialize, the seed had to be supplied by some means other than by an ordinary man. The affair had to be performed exactly as the records prescribed and implied; and those who approach the Book containing them have to be careful lest they manipulate them to their own destruction.¹ Nothing may be added to them; nor anything subtracted from them. No one has the authority to make them read what they do not say.

His Plan Could Not Fail

The first verse of Genesis 4 indicates that Eve believed that God had already fulfilled His promise, for she said, "I have gotten a man from the Lord." When her second son, Abel, was born, the hatred and animosity that Satan

¹2 Peter 3:16;

had in his heart for God, soon began to bear additional fruit. We need not wonder why men and women, as well as young people, frown upon the Virgin birth of Christ. The devil did that almost from the beginning of man's existence on the earth. He used, moreover, every possible means to pollute the human family in his attempt to keep the Messiah from being born. At one period in the Lord's ancestry, the success of God's plan depended upon a pair out of eight people, Shem and his wife. Some time later it hinged upon the life of a six-year-old lad, Joash the boy king, when he was the only survivor of the royal family in Judah. But the promise had to be fulfilled, and from the beginning of the controversy there was no question at all about the outcome. No matter what the issue may be, the balance of power always lies with God the Father. He knows how to solve problems that are far too difficult for either man or the devil to unravel.

The Prophets Foretold It

Jesus certainly must have emphasized the prophecies relative to the birth of the Messiah that are found in the book of Isaiah. "Behold, a Virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel."¹ It is interesting to note that the word Virgin in this verse comes from the Hebrew word *almah*, and properly means a young, unmarried woman, who is of marriageable age, and has preserved the chastity of her body.

How the Emmaus-bound travelers must have literally hung upon every word as Jesus explained why "a child is born," and "a Son is given."² They must have been deeply impressed with the difference. The child had to have a mother in order to be born, but the Son—"Wonderful, Coun-

¹Isaiah 7:14.

²Isaiah 9:6

sellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace”¹ had to be given. He could not be born; He always IS.

Perhaps in His exposition, the Lord called the attention of Cleopas and his companion to the fact that the Messiah’s entrance into the world would be a case of where “A woman shall compass a Man.”²

Town Names Alluded To It

But not only did the prophets foretell His Virgin birth. Even the names of some of the towns in the land cried out in silent acclaim that He would be Virgin-born. We wonder whether He reminded His disciples of this fascinating aspect of Old Testament prophecies. In the book of Joshua there is a very engaging account of the distribution of a part of the land of Canaan. We are told that “The second lot came forth to Simeon, even for the tribe of the children of Simeon according to their families: and their inheritance was within the inheritance of the children of Judah.”³ Simeon’s portion lay within Judah’s portion; and the reason for this inter-tribal arrangement gives us an excellent example of practical unselfishness, neighborliness, and friendliness. “Out of the portion of the children of Judah was the inheritance of the children of Simeon: for the part of the children of Judah was too much for them: therefore the children of Simeon had their inheritance within the inheritance of them.”⁴

The tribe of Judah was the one through whom the Messiah should come. When Jacob called his sons to his death bed and pronounced upon each of them a particular prophecy, to Judah he said, “The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and

¹Isaiah 9:6.

²Jeremiah 31:22.

³Joshua 19:1.

⁴Joshua 19:9.

unto Him shall the gathering of the people be.”¹ Accordingly, Shiloh, the Tranquil One,² must come through the tribe of Judah; and of all the tribes, Judah was the only one in the land when Christ was born. Besides all this, the distinction that it had retained throughout its checkered history was surrendered only some time after its most illustrious Son had come in fullest accord with the words of the dying patriarch.

Incidentally, for the benefit of our Jewish friends in particular, let us observe how God through the prophet Isaiah not only emphasized what He had said through the lips of Jacob concerning Judah, but also elaborated on it to some extent. By a careful examination of chapter seven we come to understand that the house of David should stand until the Virgin of his prophecy should give birth to her Son. His name was to be called Immanuel, which means “God with us.” He would be the Jew’s Messiah. His Virgin birth would also be the sign by which Israel would know that the royal house of David would soon become extinct. In other words, the kingly line would be continued until the Messiah was born; but when He had come, the kingdom and house of David would cease. Surely no one would be willing to say that they are any longer in existence. They have long since lost their identity, and only God knows whether there is a single descendant of the king living on earth today. Either the prophecy in Isaiah has been literally fulfilled, or Judah still retains his scepter, and the kingdom and house of David are still intact and functioning in Palestine. History for almost two thousand years, however, bears out the fact that Judah has lost his scepter, and that the kingdom

¹Genesis 49:10.

²The word *Shiloh* is quite difficult of interpretation. In addition to Tranquil One, it has been variously translated as Peace-maker, Peace-bringer, Bringer-of-prosperity, Pacificator, Rest.

and house of David have been destroyed. Herein lies proof positive beyond any shadow of a doubt that the Messiah has come, and the only way His coming could possibly be accomplished was by Virgin birth.

So, as Judah had plenty of land and to spare for his brother Simeon, in like manner the grace of God through His Virgin-born Son has overflowed the bounds of Judah until it has encircled the entire globe.

In the portion that was given to Simeon, but contained within the tract belonging to Judah, there were a number of towns with rather odd names. Of the entire group of communities the names of three, Eltolad, Bethul, and Hormah, have very wonderful meanings and pertain especially to our study. According to Hebrew scholars Eltolad means, "whose posterity is from God," and Bethul, "Virgin." In the first book of Chronicles these same names are mentioned, but with slightly different spellings, except the third, which is spelled just as it is in the book of Joshua. Eltolad becomes Tolad. El, the Old Testament designation for God, is dropped here. Tolad means "posterity." Bethul becomes Bethuel,¹ "the Virgin of God." Thus the very names of the towns have their own stories to tell, and bespeak the fact that when the long-expected Messiah comes He must be Virgin-born. But what sort of person should He be? What about His character, His life and work? The name Hormah tells us by its double meaning that He was to be "consecrated to God" and "anathema." The "Virgin" "whose posterity is from God," or the "posterity" of "the Virgin of God," shall be "consecrated to God," and at the same time "anathema."

Now, who can deny that these names fully define His entrance into the world of man? Who can dispute the fact

¹ Chron. 4:29, 30.

of His consecration and devotion to God? He said, "I do always those things that please Him."¹ He was most holy and spotless, "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth: Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously."² In His death He was "made a curse for us," when He "redeemed us from the curse of the Law."³ "He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."⁴ Ah, yes! The names of the towns, the rightful property of Judah, were mute prophets of His Virgin birth.

Little wonder that the two disciples who walked with their Lord to Emmaus on that ancient day should be so stirred as to say, "Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?"⁵ It was their own characteristic manner of expressing the deepest exhilaration of their souls for the privilege of attending so novel a Bible conference, "by the way," and for what they had absorbed from the comments of their Beloved Teacher.

It Demands Honest Consideration

The question of Christ's Virgin birth is not one upon which snap judgments may be made with complete impunity. The very nature of the case demands the closest kind of attention. Before anyone is capable of rendering an unbiased opinion concerning it, it will be necessary for him to scrutinize the records as prudently and as carefully as possible. Without such an approach, the expressions against it are apt to emanate from a mind that is befuddled

¹John 8:29. ²1 Peter 2:22, 23. ³Galatians 3:13.

⁴2 Corinthians 5:21. ⁵Luke 24:32.

with bigotry and prejudice, and at the same time betray the basest ignorance as to the facts involved in the matter.

On the other hand, when the earnest inquirer delves into the Scriptures pertaining to this subject he discovers that they speak for themselves. They are plain statements not requiring any elaborate embellishments, and when he assembles all the related evidence, he is bound to come to the unalterable conclusion that the One Who was laid in Bethlehem's manger more than nineteen hundred years ago really was the Christ of God. Besides, his conclusions will serve to bring him to the added realization that what he has found is but a small contribution to the great mass of indisputable proof that the Book through which he has searched is God's verbally inspired and inerrant Word. How else could all the details, not only of Christ's birth, but of His life as well, accumulate throughout the centuries, written by different men and under various conditions unless they were "God-breathed?"

In applying the principles of the foregoing to this study, let us depart from what is perhaps the conventional method of presentation, and imagine that it were possible to interview the leading characters in this all-important occurrence. And that we may consider the series of associated events in their proper sequence, it will be necessary to present them in the order in which they affect this story. Perhaps the reader might consent to being pressed into service as a jury of one to weigh the testimony as it is given, and finally pass upon its merits, which we trust will at the same time serve to fortify his faith in the Virgin birth of Christ. May it also break down any preconceived notions on the part of those readers who have any scruples against accepting Him as their Saviour and Lord.

Gabriel the "Man of God"

As our first witness, therefore, we shall summon the angel Gabriel, the heavenly messenger who carried the tidings of the Messiah's approximate arrival in the flesh to the Jewish maiden who was to become His mother.

"Gabriel, will you please take the witness stand for several minutes? We should like to ask you a few questions about the Virgin birth of Jesus."

We can imagine his readiness to respond to any inquiries we might make by his immediate answer to the question that Mary asked him.¹ Without reluctance or hesitancy he assures us of his willingness to assist us in any manner that he possibly can.

"Kindly tell us how you came to be connected with this momentous occasion."

The detailed introduction to the story of the birth of Christ from the pen of Luke serves well for his reply. "In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a Virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the Virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her."²

"Tell us just what you said to Mary. Will you?"

"Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women."³

"Did you say anything else?"

"And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a Son, and shalt call His Name Jesus."⁴

"What did you say about Him?"

"He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne

¹Luke 1:34. ²Luke 1:26-28. ³Luke 1:28. ⁴Luke 1:31.

of His father David: And He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end.”¹

“Is that all you said to Mary?”

His prompt reply follows: “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that Holy Thing Which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.”²

“Now, Gabriel, we do not mean to doubt your word, but our minds are somewhat dull and slow to grasp the truth. Tell us how we may really know that this is the correct account of your connection with the birth of Jesus.”

With the certainty of one who speaks with the utmost authority he assures us that his words are absolutely true. We are also reminded of his credentials which positively establish the veracity of this witness. His name means “Man of God.” He was God’s personal representative in this case. He had come directly from the throne of God to Mary, a lowly, Jewish, virgin maiden, to transmit the message exactly as he had received it from his immediate Superior.

“In order that we may not misunderstand—and that there be no doubt in our minds concerning this important problem—permit us, Gabriel, to presume upon your good grace and patience to ask you once more who was to be the father of Jesus.”

Repetition is sometimes good practice. It is not only one of the first rules of memory, but it is also a useful vehicle for stressing significant truths. The Holy Spirit Himself must have considered it to be an important principle because it is fairly common throughout the Word of God.

No matter, then, how often our witness might be required to restate his testimony, we recognize the same words as they

¹Luke 1:32-33.

²Luke 1:35.

pour into our consciousness until they finally become ingrained in our very memory. They are altogether the identical statements no less uncertain than before, but perhaps somewhat more emphatic and in the simplest of language so no one can mistake their meaning. By his reply we know assuredly that the Holy Ghost, and none other, was to bring about the conception that would produce "That Holy Thing," "The Son of God."

"Just one more thought, Gabriel. Is there anything of importance that you have not told us that we ought to know?"

"Nothing. Not a thing. The record is complete."

Under cross examination the testimony of the witness remains absolutely unshaken; and we have no right whatsoever to change it. We must be impartial enough to base our conclusions upon the evidence as it has been given, for to reason from false premises sooner or later leads to confusion and even to disaster. Truth is the manifestation of known facts.

Mary the Virgin

As the first witness is dismissed, and the next one takes the stand, we are impressed by her lowly state. Yet there is something rather captivating about her demeanor as she unfolds the details of the event that projected her into the most unique and distinctive position in all womanhood.

While studying the Virgin birth of Christ, we are inclined to emphasize only one side of the story and either entirely overlook or minimize the other side. To be sure, the proper consideration of the Lord's part in it is of tremendous importance; but there were certain qualifications that Mary had to possess before He could be Virgin-born of her. In view of this fact we might justly ask, "How are we to know that

she fulfilled every human requirement necessary to become the mother of the Messiah?" This question provokes another: "What were those requirements?"

One's first impression may lead him to suspect that to find a logical answer might be a rather difficult problem. The matter, however, becomes relatively simple in the light of just one small portion of the manifold Word of God. For nearly all the characteristics essential to Mary's magnanimous task are fully contained in the one Greek word, *parthenos*, which is translated Virgin in Matthew 1:23 and Luke 1:27.

Mary, a Noble Character

She had to be a young, unmarried woman, of marriageable age, and maintain the chastity of her body. While it is true that Mary was already betrothed to Joseph, yet all these things occurred to her "before they came together," which amply demonstrates her unmarried state. The very fact that she was Joseph's intended bride proves conclusively, too, that she was old enough and sufficiently mature to become married. On the other hand, there is reason to believe that she had not lost the vigor that is so characteristic of young people. She was energetic enough to travel from her home in Nazareth to Elizabeth's home and to do it with haste. Then again, she was still living when Jesus died on the Cross at thirty-three years of age. Notwithstanding the fact that she could not have been very old when she entertained the heavenly messenger and listened to his awe-inspiring words, she was no longer a mere child.

The language that Gabriel used in her presence is not the kind of speech that one would employ in addressing a person who was either mentally or physically immature. All of his expressions were made in accordance with the intelligence of a normal adult: one who had acquired an adequate under-

standing of the ways of life, and had properly oriented herself with respect to that knowledge. As a matter of fact we may be quite positive about her being a responsible person. Her assertion "seeing I know not a man," is the language of one who had lived long enough to be able to speak with astuteness, discernment, and discretion, concerning the basic problems of mankind. At the same time her words establish her virtuous character beyond any possibility of controversy.

But that is by no means all that may be said about her. A careful examination of the first and second chapters of Matthew and Luke reveal additional traits that mark her as having been a choice instrument in God's service. Her observance of the Mosaic Law bespeaks a life of faith and consecration toward Him. When she realized the force of Gabriel's message, she understood that he was speaking to her with the finality and ultimate authority of the Godhead. As a result, her ready and unqualified submission to His will was but the spontaneous expression of her whole-hearted devotion to her Lord.

Her mild-mannered conduct through the quick succession of strenuous events attending the birth of her Son, and their subsequent flight into Egypt, is an indication of her patience, her willingness to comply with every vicissitude her life might hold. It gives us an insight into her contentment through all the trials and tests that God might permit her to endure. Through it all we can detect a piety that must have been pleasing to Him; that brought much glory to His worthy name through a daily communion that expressed itself in sweet, rich fellowship, and an intimate walk with the living God.

There was no room in her heart for pride. She could never be accused of manifesting an imperious or arrogant spirit among those with whom she came in contact. She had

nothing about which to be haughty or self assertive. Attributes of character such as these are rarely to be found in one who is constantly mindful of her own "low estate."¹ Mary was poor, furthermore, and was not ashamed to admit that fact even to the priest in the Temple "when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for Him after the custom of the Law."² She herself had come to worship, "to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the Law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons."³ That was the ritual for those who could not afford to bring a lamb.⁴

How she must have hated false pretense and hypocrisy. She just could not bring herself to the place where she was anything but her own, humble self. Little wonder that Joseph should come to love so admirable a character, and look upon her as a desirable, life-long companion. In the home her children had the advantage of a conscientious mother who was endowed with a goodly portion of sound intuition. While out in the community, through her kindly disposition her fellow citizens came to regard her as a genial, friendly neighbor.

Blessed among Women

The Holy Spirit, however, has brushed aside all need for mere deductions and conjectures concerning the person of this great woman. He has caused the writers of the narratives to speak of her in very plain and comprehensive terms. We are told that Gabriel was "sent from God" "to a Virgin," "and the Virgin's name was Mary."⁵

The record in Matthew also infers that she was the very one through whom all the ancient prophetic utterances con-

¹Luke 1:48.

²Luke 2:27.

³Luke 2:24.

⁴Leviticus 12:6-8.

⁵Luke 1:26, 27.

cerning the birth of the promised seed would be fulfilled. In order to see the force of that inference we must read the entire account. Suffice it to quote the two particular passages which bear more specifically upon the point in question: "Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a Virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a Son, and they shall call His Name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us."¹

As God had raised up various individuals during former dispensations to further His aims, so He raised up Mary as the one through whom He would begin to culminate His eternal plan of redemption. She was the woman whose seed was to bruise the serpent's head. The names on the sign posts of the ancient towns of Judah and Simeon pointed down through the stream of humanity to the humble home in Nazareth where lived this lowly, Jewish maiden. She was the Virgin of Isaiah's prophecy, the woman of whom Jeremiah wrote. When God covenanted with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to bless all nations through them, He had this certain Mary in mind all the time as the last link in the chain of His human generations. In the books of Isaiah and Matthew the definite article is used in the original languages to designate a particular Virgin as "the Virgin," who of course was always known to God.

As all the light that passes through a convex lens is brought to a focus at a single point, so the Virgin Mary was the one through whom every Messianic prophecy and promise converged to center in her adorable Son. "That Holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God,"² "For He shall save His people from their sins."³ These wonderful words of the angels to Mary and

¹Matthew 1:22, 23.

²Luke 1:35.

³Matthew 1:21.

Joseph seal forever the possibility of any further Divine, Messianic revelation. When the celestial visitors had finished their precious messages of hope and expectation to these two devout Jews, they everlastingly closed that interesting and fascinating chapter of the Messiah's story. There can never again be any more prophetic utterances concerning His first advent. We need not look for another. He was here once; but He is coming again, and that blessed event may happen sooner than we anticipate.

Mary's Testimony Additional Proof

Now to return to our witness.

"Mary, you have heard the testimony of the first witness. Practically every statement that Gabriel made involved you in a very definite way. Did you hear these things before?"

"Yes."

"What was the occasion?"

"The angel's visit to my home in Nazareth."

"How did his statements to you then differ from the testimony that he just gave?"

"There is no difference."

"Not even a slight difference?"

"Word for word they are precisely the same ones I heard before."

"Tell us something about your first impression at hearing the angel's salutation."

The narrator describes the dignity of Mary's conduct. He tells us that "when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be."¹

"What did he say to you in order to set you at ease?"

"Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God."²

¹Luke 1:29

²Luke 1:30.

“Briefly, what did he say next?”

“By what the angel said, I understood that I was to become the mother of a Son.”

“Did you say anything to Gabriel?”

“I asked him, ‘How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?’ ”¹

“You realized by the angel’s reply that you were to become the mother of a Son without the intervention of a man.”

“Yes.”

“You mean to say then that Joseph was not the father of Jesus?”

“That is an absolute fact.”

“Some men believe that it was some one else.”

We cannot appreciate the righteous resentment and indignation that must have welled up in the heart of Mary upon hearing unholy assertions such as this. But with all the composure of a pious daughter of the house of David, her emphatic negation need be but a recital of the angel’s annunciation: He shall be conceived by the Holy Ghost, and therefore shall be Virgin-born. “He shall be called the Son of God.”

Her own convincing expression, “seeing I know not a man,” is indeed a valuable piece of information which no one can conscientiously disregard. Once again we must base our opinions and beliefs on the unconfuted evidence that has been written down by the inspired writer, Doctor Luke, the one whom Paul calls “the beloved physician.” A physician is beloved because of his sympathetic understanding of his patients; and also by the fact that he knows his profession well enough to help them, and not lose too many of his cases. He had to be dependable to be beloved. The genuineness of the record, therefore, is fully established because

¹Luke 1:34.

it is related by a witness who was there and took part in the conversation concerning this epoch-making event. In addition, it was recorded by one who was trained in the art of accuracy, and who enjoyed the reputation of being honest and reliable in what he had to say.

Mary herself was the recipient of God's condescending grace. She was the focus of all the prophetic utterances of the Old Testament with respect to the birth of the Messiah. She could speak for herself; and we have to accept her testimony as uncontaminated and sound.

"Mary, you know more intimately than any other person the circumstances surrounding the birth of your eldest Son. Would you mind telling us how much you had to do with this affair?"

"Nothing whatsoever, except to give my consent to God that He might use me as an instrument in His hands for His own purpose and plan. I simply resigned myself to His will. When I said, 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word,'¹ the matter was entirely beyond my control."

"What did you do when the angel left you?"

In the House of Zacharias, a Priest

The story takes an interesting turn at this point. "Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda; and entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elizabeth."² And anticipating our next question, she continues, "I 'abode with her about three months.'"³

Probably Mary stayed with Elizabeth until John was born, and then returned to her own home in Nazareth.

¹Luke 1:38.

²Luke 1:39, 40.

³Luke 1:56.

Now, note carefully what she did. She went down into the house of Zacharias, a priest, and lived there about three months. We can readily appreciate the intimacies that must have passed between these two godly women, who were cousins, during this time. It is rather significant that the story in Luke should be recorded by a physician, and that he should adopt a woman's language in presenting the details of this case. We know that human nature has changed very little down through the ages; and we can imagine something concerning the topic of conversation about the coming events. Especially was it a joyous occasion because many homes in Israel had long wished for the privilege of introducing his Messiah to him. That home had now been selected. The Virgin in that home had been singled out, and the days of Israel's hope were finally drawing nigh.

Did the Priest Know?

Perhaps we may in our imagination visit that ancient home and catch a glimpse of the preparations that were being made for the arrival of Mary's baby boy, as well as Elizabeth's. One thing we may be certain about, and that is the fact that Zacharias, the priest, was definitely acquainted with the entire situation. For how could an unmarried, at least as we understand the term today, expectant mother, live in the same house with a man and his wife without having both of them know all about the conditions? More especially was the presence of Mary of tremendous significance in the house of Zacharias because he had been trained to notice the slightest infraction of the Law.

He had come to hate sin. The record states concerning Elizabeth and himself that "they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of

the Lord blameless.”¹ A young, unmarried woman, an expectant mother, apparently a clear-cut case of adultery, and what is more living in the house of a devout priest! Yet there is nothing at all in the records anywhere in the entire New Testament to indicate that Zacharias had any intimation of anything amiss.

There is no question about the fact that he was fully aware of the situation; and he did not have to depend upon eavesdropping, or even upon his keen observation, for his information. Mary had hardly stepped across the threshold of the home of her cousin when “Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: and she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.”²

If Zacharias were anywhere in the house, as he probably was, he surely could not help but hear the voice and understand the words of his wife. In the event that he was sleeping at the time, he might have been awakened easily by her loud voice, for aged people are usually not very sound sleepers. In case he may have been away from the house upon Mary’s arrival, why would not his friends, or the neighbors who knew what had occurred, tell him about it? It is very likely that he did not venture either often, or far, from his home for several good reasons. His wife’s condition was no doubt a source of grave concern for him, since it was but a matter of a few months until she would become the mother

¹Luke 1:6.

²Luke 1:41-45.

of his son John. Then, too, she was old, and he himself was aged and "dumb."¹

For his incredulity upon hearing Gabriel's annunciation of the birth of his own son he was stricken "dumb." He was not able to speak until after his son had been born, even until he was eight days old.² While a mute is compelled, occasionally, to communicate with someone through the medium of a writing-pad, nevertheless, it is not a satisfactory practise. The possibility is that Zacharias was not acquainted with a mute's language, and had to use a "writing table" whenever he spoke to his friends as he did when he informed them that his son's name was to be John.³

Yes, Elizabeth spoke loud enough to be heard all through a small Eastern home. But what about the things that she said? In the first place, who ever heard of a human fetus six months old, or any other age for that matter, an unborn baby in its dark cell, leaping "for joy"? Some one might strenuously object to inserting this question into our study by proposing that what Elizabeth was talking about was nothing more than the characteristic quickening in the normal development of her child. While we must admit that fetal movements are quite common at six months, the age of John at the time, yet in this particular case it was much more than just an ordinary, natural experience with his mother. "When Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb"; and since she herself tells us that "the babe leaped,"⁴ we may rest assured that we are confronted with an unusual bit of truth. She gives, furthermore, the reason for this convulsive pulsation on the part of her unborn boy, in that it was "for joy." That is the record concerning John. While his mother "spoke out with a loud voice," he leaped "for joy" to give impetus and deep meaning to her joyful exultations.

¹Luke 1:20.

²Luke 1:59-63.

³Luke 1:63.

⁴Luke 1:41, 44.

Are we not deeply impressed with the sanctity of the scene in the home of the priest? How the happy words of Elizabeth do put the critics to shame! Any sane-minded person would surely concede the fact that this is rather dangerous and inconsistent language to address to one who has in modern times been regarded as an adulteress. "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb,"¹ could hardly be said of one who had been guilty of violating the commandment, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." The appellation "the mother of my Lord" would be sheer blasphemy for Elizabeth to use unless she were absolutely certain that it was entirely appropriate. In this case, however, her certainty lay in the fact that her words came by inspiration of the Holy Ghost, who in turn can make no mistakes.

Was the Priest at Home?

The question arises as to whether or not we may be reasonably certain about the priest's being at home either when Mary came, or during her protracted visit. There is a strong possibility that he was at home when she arrived, and a close examination of the clues that Luke has recorded, lead to some very interesting facts that should substantiate one's conviction in this matter.

Zacharias was "of the course of Abia,"² or "Abijah," the eighth of twenty-four courses of priests.³ Each family or order of priests served in the Temple for a week at a time. We find that when he had finished his priestly functions, he went home. "And it came to pass, that, as soon as the days of his ministrations were accomplished, he departed to his own house,"⁴ which was possibly in Hebron.⁵ Just before

¹Luke 1:42.

²Luke 1:5. ³1 Chron. 24:10. ⁴Luke 1:23. ⁵Joshua 21:9-13.

Gabriel terminated his mission with Mary he said, "And, behold, thy cousin Elizabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren."¹ Maybe he said what he did to stimulate the faith of Mary. But why did he have to tell her that "this is the sixth month with her?" Well, let us notice something which might at least be a reasonable answer to this question.

Six months in the Hebrew calendar total one hundred seventy-seven days, for the days of the months alternate thirty and twenty-nine throughout the year, and as a result any six consecutive months aggregate one hundred seventy-seven days. Since there were twenty-four courses of priests, and Zacharias was in the eighth, it meant that he would not return to duty in the Temple until the beginning of the next twenty-four-week period. In other words, when Zacharias again completed his duties in the Temple, twenty-four weeks, or one hundred sixty-eight days would have elapsed. He could easily have spent another week ministering there, allowing him the difference between one hundred seventy-seven days and one hundred sixty-eight days, or nine days for travel to his home before Mary received the information from Gabriel concerning Elizabeth's condition. Since Hebron, supposing that to have been his home town, is about forty miles south of Jerusalem, even though he was "well stricken in years,"² necessitating slow travel, he had ample time to reach his home before Mary's celestial visitor departed to the place from which he had come.

Had the priest tarried in the city for several days, or even until Mary was ready to leave her home in Nazareth, he still could have been able to greet her when she reached her destination, his own home. Luke informs us that she "went

¹Luke 1:36. ²Luke 1:7.

into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda; and entered into the house of Zacharias.”¹ She came with haste, covering the distance between Nazareth and Hebron, about seventy miles, just as quickly as possible. The story is very specific in telling us that she entered the “house of Zacharias.” So that the probability is that he had arrived home just a few days, or at least a little while before Mary came.

Of course we cannot be absolutely certain and dogmatic about some of these things. The facts remain, however, that he was not on duty in Jerusalem when she arrived on her visit to Elizabeth, and was not during her entire stay of about three months, eighty-eight or eighty-nine days. There is a possibility, too, that he did not return to Jerusalem to officiate in the Temple after his experience with Gabriel because of the handicap that was imposed upon him as a result of his unbelief when he was stricken “dumb.”

We see, then, how difficult it really was to shield Mary, and to keep the all-important information, the fact that she was also a prospective mother, from coming to the ears of the priest. It all serves to convince us that Zacharias knew that he was harboring in his home a young, unmarried woman, one who was earnestly and expectantly looking forward to “blessed” motherhood.

What Does It Mean?

No doubt the reader finds himself asking a very urgent and pressing question. “Why make so much ado about Mary’s living in the house of Zacharias?” Indeed it is an exceedingly important link in the chain of evidence from the Word of God to confirm the Virgin birth of Jesus Christ. Among the bits of Scripture that we may use with effective-

¹Luke 1:39, 40.

ness to rout the theorizing of the critics is Deuteronomy 22:23, 24. "If a damsel that is a Virgin be betrothed unto an husband, and a man find her in the city, and lie with her; then ye shall bring them both out unto the gate of that city, and ye shall stone them with stones that they die; the damsel, because she cried not, being in the city; and the man because he hath humbled his neighbor's wife: so thou shalt put away evil from among you."

It is delightful to know how the Old Testament Law can come to our assistance in a very remarkable way to answer questions which might otherwise become quite perplexing. It would seem that the Lord deliberately planted Mary in the house of Zacharias, not to defy the Law or the priesthood, but to put the lie on all ungodly critics.

What does it all mean at any rate? Just this. If it were a clear cut case of adultery with Mary, then something had to be done about it. According to the Law it was the duty of the high priest to pronounce sentence upon her and have her stoned to death. The Law was a rigid institution and demanded the strictest observance. Israel at this particular time, however, was no longer entirely governed by theocratic laws, but by the civil laws of Rome. Consequently the Jews had to relinquish their right to punish offenders of the Mosaic Law in the prescribed way and were compelled to submit any whom they deemed worthy of death to the legal authorities in Jerusalem. Incidentally this accounts for the death of Jesus by the Roman method of crucifixion rather than by the Jewish method of stoning; the latter act His enemies were desirous of accomplishing on several occasions.

Those who oppose the doctrine of the Virgin birth of Christ might seize upon the admission of this particular fact as an indication of a serious weakness in the arguments that we have presented in its favor. To the contrary it

serves to magnify the truth of this wonderful story rather than to detract from it even one jot or one tittle. If Mary were guilty of the awful sin of adultery, then Zacharias was surely placed in an extremely peculiar and serious position. While he was not the high priest, yet under the circumstances he would have felt most keenly the restraint imposed upon his priestly function by virtue of the fact that Israel was under the yoke of Rome, thus depriving him of carrying out the mandate of the Law by turning her over to the Sanhedrin for execution. Since Mary was the cousin of his wife, and for the sake of their relationship, it would probably not have been so much a case of being anxious to see her die, as it would have been a deep desire to somehow punish her great iniquity because of his godly hatred of sin.

There would have been a decided psychological effect upon the vast majority of persons who might find themselves in a similar predicament. Almost any one would have let his human nature assert itself to express his sentiments in no uncertain terms in a situation such as this. The condition, if it had really existed, would surely have stirred the righteous indignation of Zacharias against the audacious manner in which Mary literally flaunted her sin in his very face. Even though he was a mute, he could have impressed upon her in a most emphatic way his utmost condemnation of her, perhaps by facial expressions and gestures, or by telling her how he felt about the matter through written messages, or by manifesting an unfriendly disposition toward her, or by a number of other ways. How it must have irked him to realize that he was helpless to prosecute this sinner, if sinner she was.

In light of all these possibilities then, it would not be unreasonable for one to expect to find statements from the lips of Zacharias somewhere in the New Testament denouncing so dastardly a deed, especially on the part of one who had the temerity to make his home her own temporary abode.

But nowhere in the entire volume can a single instance be found of anything derogatory concerning Mary. Not once, not once, anywhere in the Word of God, do we find any accusation at all against her, either on the part of the high priest, or any of the officiating priests. Neither is there any hint of any gossip on the part of the townspeople themselves. Zacharias had no occasion whatsoever to accuse her of being guilty of violating any law in the code of ethics and morality.

While he was a mute for more than nine months, there is no reason to believe that his sight and hearing were in any way impaired. He could still receive all the necessary information for his own satisfaction through these two senses. We may safely conclude, therefore, that he was fully cognizant of this entire affair from the beginning to the end. For when he regained his speech, through the delightful words of his *Benedictus*,¹ he not only put his stamp of approval on the irreproachable character of Mary, but also expressed the innermost thoughts of his mind with respect to the Divine nature of her coming Son.

Once more we have come to face evidence that we have to accept as it is given. It is evidence that goes beyond the merely circumstantial stage, that becomes perplexingly, to the critics, but to the Christian, persuadingly tangible. We must be cautious about warping it. We may not give it an interpretation which suits our own individual fancy. To do that may ultimately lead to its complete rejection. But because of the possibilities involved no one can afford to take a stand such as that.

“Well, Mary, you have been very patient with us. Kindly accept our sincerest thanks for your splendid assistance in our search for truth and knowledge. We appreciate it immensely. You may be excused.”

¹Luke 1:68-79.

Joseph a Just Man

“Joseph, will you kindly take the witness stand while we ask you a few questions?”

“Most gladly, sir.”

“You are the husband of Mary. Are you not?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Tell us, Joseph, how Mary and you became engaged.”

An Interesting Custom

In order to understand his reply we shall have to turn the pages of history back to the time in which they lived. In those days young people became engaged somewhat differently than they do today. Usually the suggestion or proposal of marriage originated with the family of the groom. But instead of the prospective groom himself informing the “bride to be” of the choice that had been made, he sent a friend to obtain her consent to marriage. Sometimes it was obtained through her father or brothers. After the selection had been agreed upon, engagement was followed by a procedure akin to a contract. The business-like proceedings were not entered into by either of the contracting parties, but by a friend of the groom and the parents of the young lady. Espousal was confirmed by oaths on the part of each and with the presentation of gifts to the intended bride. Before actual marriage occurred, however, a period of one year elapsed, as was the custom in the case of a Virgin.

In the meantime she lived with her family or friends, and carried on communications with her intended husband only through the medium of his representative, “the friend of the bridegroom.” In addition they practised a sort of chaperone idea, and saw each other only in his or her presence. During that year, however, she was virtually considered to be his

wife, which accounts for the language in Matthew 1:19, 20, 24, where Mary is mentioned as the wife of Joseph. We wonder how popular or how efficient such a system would be today.

When we know the prevailing customs of the day, we understand fully the relation between the clause "before they came together,"¹ and the fact that Mary is mentioned as Joseph's wife in the three verses to which we have just referred. There is no discrepancy here at all, but complete agreement with the conventional practice of the times. We must be impressed with the fact then that even the accepted etiquette concerning betrothal forbade any collusion in this matter, the question of Christ's Virgin birth.

"Did you observe this custom?"

"Yes."

"For a number of weeks at least, Mary and you were not living together. Is that correct?"

"Yes."

"In the meantime you discovered that Mary was to become a mother."

"Yes."

Joseph Was an Honorable Man

For his more elaborate reply, we shall have to turn to Matthew's Gospel, chapter one, because the account there is primarily Joseph's side of the story. It is precisely as positive and convincing as the evidence given by Gabriel and Mary, and stands on an equality with theirs. We read: "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: when as His mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost."² The word "espoused" here, and "betrothed" in Deuteronomy 22:23, have the same meaning. So then, the expression,

¹Matthew 1:18.

²Matthew 1:18.

“before they came together,” simply bears out what has been mentioned previously. Before Mary and Joseph started living together as husband and wife, “she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.” As to how, or when he obtained this important information we cannot tell. The record is silent about it. And there is as much inspiration in the silence of the Word as there is in what has been written down.

“Joseph, you loved Mary. Did you not?”

“I loved her dearly.”

“When you learned that Mary was to become a mother, what were you inclined to do?”

The following passage tells us about his intention. “Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily.”¹ A perusal of these words would seem to indicate that Joseph believed that Mary had been unfaithful to him. By his attitude toward her he demonstrated at the same time that he personally had no connection with this situation, and as a result could not be held accountable for it. If he had been to blame, he would not have tried to put her away.

He must have been a man of very admirable character; for he enjoyed a singular distinction that was not common to everybody. We know that he was “a just man,” which also implies that he was not only pious and righteous, but honorable and conscientious as well. Surely one with such noble qualities would exercise more discretion than to regard his obligations so lightly as to resort to subterfuge in order to escape the liabilities involved. On the other hand, propriety would demand that he assume full responsibility for the matter if he had had anything to do with it.

He was “a just man,” and was fully aware of the provisions of the Law, and knew only too well that if this were a ques-

¹Matthew 1:19.

tion of adultery he would have to sever his relationship with Mary. Joseph knew that the demands of the Law must be met. Since this offense, moreover, was against himself, as he supposed it, he determined to set her aside privately by divorce. Then too, he might retain his own dignity by observing the instructions that were given to Israel by God Himself, which allowed him to "write her a bill of divorce-ment, and give it in her hand, and send her"¹ away. In this way Mary could be spared from being summoned by the local Sanhedrin for censure and judgment. Joseph loved her; therefore he was not anxious to make her an "example" through a public trial. He probably foresaw the lifelong slander that would descend upon her as a result of such an unhappy experience. Because of his deep affection for her, he tried to prevent anything so vexatious if it lay within his power to do so.

The impersonal manner in which the account in Matthew is given, minimizing Joseph's connection with this story, is also an indication of the fact that he could not be implicated in this affair. Even though he was greatly concerned and annoyed about the matter, there is little intrusion of his own personal feelings into the narrative. There is no speech at all on the part of Joseph to be found anywhere in the entire account. He is simply an awe-inspired listener; and fits into the details of the incident by his unrestrained obedience, not to his own carnal impulses, but to the voice of one who he recognized was speaking with the utmost authority, "an angel of the Lord."

"Joseph, what happened after your decision to put Mary away privately?"

"I fell asleep."

"Surely there is nothing unusual in that. Sleep is a most natural consequence of any day's activities."

¹Deuteronomy 24:1.

The record, however, explains how God ordered this sleep to accrue to His own glory. It also reveals an additional characteristic on the part of Joseph. He must have been a man of deliberation. "While he thought on these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream."¹

"Did he say anything to you?"

"Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His Name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins."²

"What happened next?"

"Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: and knew her not till she had brought forth her first born Son: and he called His name Jesus."³

It is an excellent practise to allow a night of restful sleep to intervene between what often proves to be a hasty decision, and the carrying out of the impulse to meet the demands of that decision. By following this procedure one usually finds himself rising with a mellowed disposition, realizing the folly of the determination of the preceding day, and rejoicing in the new opportunity to profit by past experience. Joseph had the added advantage, through the instructions given to him by the angel, of being quite certain about disregarding his resolve and pursuing a different, but a definite course of action.

"Then you are not the father of Jesus?"

"Most emphatically no."

"Do you know who was?"

"The only information I can give you is what I learned from the angel, 'That which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.'"

¹Matthew 1:20.

²Matthew 1:20, 21.

³Matthew 1:24, 25.

“Joseph, we want to express our profound appreciation to you for your kindness in assisting us in our study of the Virgin birth of your foster Son. We shall relieve you from any further questioning.”

But Not the Father of Jesus

By Joseph's complete reversal of his attitude toward Mary, he demonstrated that he acknowledged the words of the angel as the impartation of an inescapable fact. The account, furthermore, is specific enough and sufficiently explicit to dispel for all time any notion concerning the probability of Joseph's connection with the parenthood of Jesus. Notwithstanding the fact that he was closer to her by his love and affection than any other man, he still has to be exonerated from any share in the Saviour's birth.

In spite of the partial relationship that he came to enjoy with respect to his wife's eldest Son, he simply became the representative of all other men then living in the entire world in that they too could never for a moment be involved in this piece of history in any manner whatsoever. “Before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost;” “and knew her not till she had brought forth her first born Son,” are simple statements by which we are assured that every man in that ancient day was excluded from any possible participation in the Messiah's birth. To reason any other conclusion out of the evidence in hand would mean that it would have to be distorted beyond the point where it could any longer be accepted as valid and reliable.

The veracity of the testimonies of Gabriel and Mary and Joseph must stand, each upon its own merits. Every bit of evidence that has been, or shall yet be given is quite like a diamond that radiates and scintillates its brilliance from all of its facets to the delight of the eyes upon which it falls.

It may be scrutinized from any angle, and no matter how it is turned, the only light that it reflects is that which flashes into the mind the reality of the fact that Jesus was Virgin-born.

However persistent the cross-examination may be, the testimony of these three remains absolutely unshattered. No iniquitous vilification or traducing disparagements can successfully undermine what they have said. So far as Mary and Joseph are concerned, furthermore, their lives, their personalities, and their characters, stand irreproachable, and with respect to the Virgin birth of Christ they remain unimpeachable forever.

Joseph was not the father of Jesus, and if any other man had anything to do with His parenthood, He was an illegitimate Son. That is exactly what He was if He were born in any way other than the way the Bible says He was. If His birth were not precisely as it was promised and prophesied, then He was born out of wedlock. Such a condition must not exist under any consideration whatsoever. Surely no one would want to worship "a bastard."

Jesus could never be accused of bearing such a stigma even with respect to His foster father. When He was conceived by the Holy Ghost, Joseph was already recognized as the husband of Mary although he was not living with her according to custom. When Jesus was born, Joseph and Mary were living together as husband and wife, although Joseph "knew her not," according to the Word of God. So, from a purely ethical standpoint, the birth of Jesus bore every evidence of perfect legitimacy, and showed every indication of having been effected in honorable wedlock. God is greatly to be praised for the manner in which He overruled every human and superhuman condition that might have left a taint upon the holy character of His Beloved Son, for so shaping affairs as to leave no flaws at all, either

in Him as the God-man, or in all the authentic records that we have concerning His life and work.

The genealogy in the first chapter of Matthew is further proof that all the men of Joseph's time must be debarred from having even the slightest connection or contact with the birth of Jesus. Through Mary, who was of the lineage of Nathan, He came into possession of the legal right to the throne of David. But He had to have every right to that throne, not only legal, but regal as well. God had taken care of that important detail some time before the birth of His Son by bringing Joseph into the picture as Mary's lover, and he in turn was a descendant of Solomon. Through Joseph, then, as the husband of His mother, Jesus came to obtain the royal right to the throne of His illustrious forebear.

This right, however, would have been denied Him in no uncertain manner if His foster father, whoever he might have been, could not substantiate the same claim for himself. On the other hand, if He had been the son of any of Joseph's contemporaries who were not of David's line, that would naturally have given Him a place in some other family, a condition which would have eliminated Him immediately from a double inclusion in the royal house of the king. Under these circumstances, in order eventually to fulfill His mission for Israel, principally twofold, that of Messiah and King, He would still have had to claim a two-sided inheritance to the Davidic throne. In that event the name of the man who had become His father would have had to be inserted into the genealogy in place of Joseph's, with the result that it would have become a rank forgery. It would have defeated the very purpose for which it was intended, and either way we view the situation, Christ would have forever lost His unconditional and indisputable right to occupy David's throne.

Various phases of Jewish history were recorded in the form of carefully and accurately compiled genealogies which may not be altered in any fashion. They were highly important documents which had to be consulted again and again in order to ascertain certain facts, and to settle any controversies that might arise concerning past events in the nation's development. When Gabriel announced to Mary the birth of Jesus, and later when "an angel of the Lord" confirmed it to Joseph, His Name was inserted in the genealogies of both with all the propriety befitting Him as "the Son of David, the Son of Abraham."¹ There could be no confusion or misunderstanding as to that Name, for to each, individually, had come the command, "Thou shalt call His Name Jesus."²

Thus the "Man of God" and "an angel of the Lord" concluded the records by which the Son of God was indisputably designated as the personified fulfillment of the outstanding covenants of assurance for the world and hope for the Jew, the Abrahamic of Genesis 12, and the Davidic of 2 Samuel 7. While some of the other covenants of the Old Testament contain Messianic promises, yet these two, the fourth and the seventh, may be said to be more far-reaching and more inclusive than all the rest. The Name of Jesus, furthermore, shall forever remain where it has been placed. It can never be removed from these registers because it was inserted there by virtue of His Virgin birth. Joseph was fully aware of the fact that that was the only basis upon which the Name of Jesus could be included in his own pedigree, and so far as Mary was concerned, she realized, too, that that was the case with respect to herself.

¹Matthew 1:1.

²Matthew 1:21; Luke 1:31.

Two or Three Witnesses

Another delightful bit of collaboration in the matter of the Lord's Virgin birth is the beautiful manner in which an Old Testament mandate is borne out here to demonstrate the inspiration and accuracy of the records that we have been considering. It was one of the provisions of the Law that "at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established."¹ We are impressed with the importance of observing this command in governing and determining the veracity of a man's words, more especially because the Holy Spirit has incorporated the gist of this quotation into the New Testament.²

We have already examined the concurring testimony of the three principal characters in this wonderful event, Gabriel, Mary, and Joseph, the greater portion of the latter's really revealed to him by "an angel of the Lord." A careful analysis of all that the two angels said reveals that each conveyed four outstanding facts about the Son Who was to be born. It is indeed fascinatingly interesting to note that two celestial messengers transmitted two sets of information to two people, Mary and Joseph, and were recorded by two authors, Luke and Matthew. Instead of attesting the copy, therefore, in the mouth of only two witnesses we may be trebly certain that what we have been meditating upon is nothing but the unvarnished and undisguised truth of God's Word.

What are those facts just referred to?

To Mary, Gabriel said: (1) Jesus will be conceived by the Holy Ghost. (2) He will be Virgin-born, for no one knew her physical condition as did God and she herself. (3) He would be called the Son of God. (4) He was to be

¹Deuteronomy 19:15.

²2 Corinthians 13:1; 1 Timothy 5:19.

the King of Israel. "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: And He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end." These were the happy words of Gabriel to the believing heart of a Jewish Virgin. Jesus was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, God become man, the King of the Jews.

To Joseph, the angel said: (1) Jesus was conceived by the Holy Ghost. (2) He will be Virgin-born. (3) "They shall call His Name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." (4) He would be the Redeemer of mankind, "for He shall save His people from their sins." These were the happy words of "an angel of the Lord" to a perturbed husband. Jesus was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, God become man, the Redeemer of the world.

How truly wonderful it is that from His throne in glory God should condescend to convey this double stream of information about His Son, through two angels, through two people, through two writers. The more precious is it that He should preserve this fund of knowledge intact for us through almost two thousand years of time. Two sets of four characteristics, similar in three respects, by three groups of double witnesses: surely no one can lightly disregard all this as so much imagination, or simply as a collection of foolish expressions from hyperactive minds. The remaining characteristics embody the whole purpose of God's plan for the world, and can be very concisely stated in two easily understandable words: Saviour, King.

HE WAS KING BECAUSE VIRGIN-BORN
AND
VIRGIN-BORN BECAUSE HE WAS KING

Gentile Wise Men Worshipped the King

It is evident from the context of the prophecy that fell from the lips of Gabriel that when Jesus was born He would come a King.¹ He was to have a kingdom, and He was to be the kingdom's King. There can be no doubt about that. When the wise men came to Jerusalem and paid Herod a visit, they asked him, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?"² The nation of Israel had possessed the ancient prophecy of Micah for more than seven hundred years. By it the people knew very well that their Messiah would come to be their King, and the place of His birth had even been located for them. "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."³

Isaiah had told his people long before Micah wrote that "The government shall be upon His shoulder": "Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever."⁴ Whether the wise men knew anything about this prophecy we do not know. They are looked upon as having been descendants of the people by whom Daniel and his countrymen had been taken and held captive. The Easterners may have learned something about the Promised One from him and his companions while they were held in captivity in Babylon. In turn the information could have been transmitted by "word of mouth" to each succeeding generation of Magi.

¹Luke 1:32, 33. ²Matthew 2:2. ³Micah 5:2. ⁴Isaiah 9:6, 7.

Because of the activities of these men, Daniel and his friends, as well as others no doubt, and as a result of their zeal for the living God and His Word, many of the Babylonians must have come to know something about the spiritual things in which they were interested. We feel certain that since Nebuchadnezzar "blessed the most High, and praised and honored Him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation," if he thought it proper to "extol and honor the King of Heaven, all whose works are truth, and His ways judgment,"¹ then many of his subjects would likewise learn something about "the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob." It seems reasonable, moreover, to expect them to be acquainted with the prophecies concerning the coming of Israel's Messiah and King. They may have become familiar with the Old Testament prophecy, "There shall come a Star out of Jacob."²

The company of wise men who came in search of the King had asked a question which startled Herod and all Jerusalem out of their complacency and lethargy. In the same breath they made a rather significant statement; one that implied some previous knowledge of the One Whom they had come to find. They said, "We have seen His star in the east."³ However much or little they may have known about Him, the fact remains, nevertheless, that they were convinced that a boy was living somewhere in the vicinity of Jerusalem who was destined to be the King of the Jews.

These Gentiles had made a long and arduous journey in order to visit this King. They knew something about His deity, for when they found Him they worshipped Him. They also recognized the dignity of the Child as worthy of the treasures that they had carried from afar. It must have

¹Daniel 4:34, 37.

²Numbers 24:17.

³Matthew 2:2.

been a moment of ecstasy for them not only to find Him, but also to place before Him the gifts befitting so noble a character. The gold typified His deity, the frankincense His spotless humanity, while the myrrh symbolized His sacrificial death.

Prejudiced Countrymen Rejected the King

The entire Gospel of Matthew presents the Kingly aspect of Jesus Christ, and was dictated by the Holy Spirit to convince the Jews that He was their King. When He rode into Jerusalem "upon a colt the foal of an ass," "some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto Him, Master, rebuke thy disciples." His prompt and pointed reply demonstrated the inevitableness of that particular situation. "I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out."¹ Why? Simply because He had ridden into Jerusalem that day as a literal fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy of Zechariah 9:9; and His enemies knew it.

He had presented Himself at the beginning of His ministry in the synagogue in His home town of Nazareth as the people's Messiah. He presented Himself again publicly at the end of His ministry as the Messiah of Israel, and the King of the Jews as well. The populace in Jerusalem understood precisely the challenge that now confronted them. "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass," must have flashed through their perverse and bigoted minds.

Jesus Christ was undeniably the King of the Jews, and "His own" were aware of it, but were not willing to admit

¹Luke 19:39, 40.

it; and one of the incidents that bears out this thought is recorded by John in his Gospel. Pilate had written the superscription "JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS," "and put it on the Cross." The chief priests asked him to change it and make it read, "He said, I am King of the Jews." But Pilate refused to change it,¹ and when Jesus died the superscription announced to everyone present, to all who could read Hebrew, or Greek, or Latin, that the agonizing form on the middle Cross was none other than the King of the Jews. Although the wording of the superscription in each of the Gospels is slightly different from the others, nevertheless, they all agree in emphasizing this tremendous truth.

A Haughty Governor Questioned the King

But, let us ask, where did Pilate get the idea of designating Jesus as the King of the Jews? The answer is to be found in the initial charge that he heard from the Lord's accusers when He was brought to him. They said, "We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that He Himself is Christ a King."² It seems that the one phrase of the multitude's varied accusation of Jesus that made the greatest impression on Pilate was the reference to His Kingship. He hastened to ask Him, "Art Thou the King of the Jews?" It is quite probable that the Holy Spirit desires to impress upon us also the supreme importance of the question that was foremost in the mind of Pilate; for He caused each of the Gospel writers to record it, using exactly the same wording in each case. Toward the end of their conversation, according to John, Pilate plied Jesus with a similar question. "Art Thou a King then?" The reply that Jesus gave was sufficiently clear to convince

¹John 19:19, 21, 22.

²Luke 23:2.

not only the governor, but all the Romans gathered in the judgment hall, of the majesty of His claims. "Thou sayest that I am a King. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice."¹

Pilate soon found himself facing the howling, angry mob that was clamoring for the death of Jesus. In his attempt to appease the multitude he asked the people, "Will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews?"² Some time later, again standing before the same crowd he said, "Behold your King."³ At the same time he made one final effort to pacify the enemies of Jesus, and arouse in them an attitude of sympathy and friendliness toward Him when he asked them, "Shall I crucify your King?"³

Reliable Witnesses

The following array of witnesses are unanimous in according this supreme position in the nation of Israel to our Beloved Lord.

Jacob—predicted it.

David—emphasized it.

Isaiah—repeated it.

Micah—reechoed it.

Gabriel—confirmed it.

Nathanael and others—believed it.

The crowds accompanying Jesus as He rode into Jerusalem—proclaimed it.

Pilate—acknowledged it.

The superscription—published it.

¹John 18:37.

²John 18:39.

³John 19:14, 15.

What Does It Mean?

Why do we lay so much stress upon the Kingly claim of Jesus? If we can show that this claim was altogether valid, we can establish a bit of evidence which will completely dispel any possibility that He might have been an illegitimate son. If that were His state in life He could never, never have been recognized as the King of the Jews. Neither could He ever hope to realize such a high place in the history of the world when He returns to earth again to establish His millennial reign; and if He cannot serve in the capacity of Israel's King, then He cannot be King for anyone else. In that event, the probability of His ruling the earth in equity, and righteousness, and justice, and peace, from Jerusalem as the political and ecclesiastical center of the world, is certainly very remote indeed. In that wonderful event, however, lies the solution of this old world's perplexing problems including the great question of peace. When He comes in majesty and splendor, with great power and glory, He will be accepted and acclaimed as the "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."¹

His Kingship must be definitely ascribed to His Virgin birth, while on the other hand, His Virgin birth implied His Kingship. Once more we have but to invoke the Mosaic Law to determine just how trustworthy a statement like this may be. For "A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; even to his tenth generation shall he not enter into the congregation of the Lord."² In other words an illegitimate son could never hope to become a magistrate or a judge, much less a priest or a king in Israel. The expression, "shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord," stood between him and whatever aspirations he might

¹Revelation 19:16.

²Deuteronomy 23:2.

have cherished for himself, and prevented his ever holding any public office, either civil or religious.

With Jesus, however, it was not a question of presumption and vain ambition. Soon after He began His ministry, He substantiated His claims to Messiahship, and later to Kingship over Israel. When He did so, He left no doubt in the minds of the people as to His long foretold identity, although He was hated the more for it. Since He definitely proved every one of His claims to be altogether sound, it is quite evident then, in light of the Old Testament passage just mentioned as a commentary on His birth, that there can be no question whatsoever about the legitimacy of it. When we honestly consider, moreover, all the conditions that it involves, the only position left for us to take is to acknowledge His unshaken integrity as the Virgin-born Son of God; and it becomes a comparatively simple matter for us to understand the correlation between His Kingship and His Virgin birth. They stand or fall together.

The Word of God is also quite specific about the priestly function that Jesus Christ now exercises in Heaven. "For such an High Priest became us, Who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens."¹ "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into Heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us."² These references by no means exhaust the list that the Word supplies concerning His priesthood, which has been established not upon the Aaronic order, but according to the order of Melchisedec, continually untransmissible, forever. Passages bearing on this phase of Christ's present office occur again and again, each literally shouting its commendation of the Virgin-born One, Who serves

¹Hebrews 7:26.

²Hebrews 9:24.

continually as the High Priest of those who have been born again.

Mary's Helplessness a Proof of Her Son's Virgin Birth

One of the most convincing pieces of evidence that we have to confirm the Word of God and substantiate the records concerning Christ's Virgin birth is the fact that when He died, Mary, His mother, never raised her voice in His defense. On the basis of this fact, she might be adjudged cruel and heartless for her apparent neglect of her Son. Let us not, however, be too ready to condemn her for her action during His trial and death. We have every reason to believe that the emotions and instincts of the human heart are much the same now as they were in Mary's day.

Who has not read the headlines of our newspapers informing us that a boy, a son, was about to die for his misdeeds? The electric chair, or the gallows, or the lethal chamber, was about to claim another victim who was to pay the penalty for his crime. Somewhere in the article we usually find statements of the boy's mother sparing no energy at all, making every effort possible to save him from the untimely death to which he has been condemned. In many cases she knows him to be guilty of the crime for which he is to be punished. Yet while diligently seeking the proper legal agencies, she entertains every hope that she may obtain a commutation of sentence in order to prolong the life of her wayward boy.

It is but a mother's heart attempting to express an undying love for her offspring. Did Mary love Jesus any less? Hardly. She loved Him because of all the shepherds had said, and "kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart."¹ She "marveled at those things which were spoken

¹Luke 2:19.

of Him”¹ by Simeon. While He was in the Temple at the age of twelve, she heard Him speak rather strangely about Himself. At least she must have thought so. But she “kept all these sayings in her heart.”²

Mary loved Jesus not only as her first-born Son, but also for the marvelous works that she had seen Him perform; for the incomparable words that He had uttered. Where is there a mother who would not love her son for his achievements, his accomplishments, and his attainments? An attitude such as this is to be expected, and that from a purely human standpoint. In Mary’s case, however, it was profoundly more than mere maternal attraction for her Son. She loved Jesus because He was the Son of God. In that portion of Luke’s Gospel commonly called the Magnificat, we find Mary expressing herself in these words: “My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.”³

She loved Him with all the devotion of which a mother’s broken heart is capable. She stood near the Cross to the very end. She, His mother, witnessed the brutal and horrible death of her Beloved Son, and knew Him to be entirely innocent of the shame and reproach that both Jews and Gentiles were heaping upon Him. She had at last come to experience the fulfillment of Simeon’s prophecy, “A sword shall pierce through thy own soul also.”⁴ Hanging there, nailed to the Cross, was the beaten and battered form of the Man Who was her Son. He was dying by the most cruel death that had ever been contrived by a fiendish brain; and yet she was absolutely unable to assist Him in any manner whatsoever. He was dying for His testimony that He was the Son of God, which meant also that He was Virgin-born.

¹Luke 2:33.

²Luke 2:51.

³Luke 1:46, 47.

⁴Luke 2:35.

Condemned to Death Because of Who and What He Was

The Spirit through Matthew informs us, just how and why the Sanhedrin came to pronounce the death sentence upon Him. "And the high priest answered and said unto Him, I adjure thee by the living God, that Thou tell us whether Thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard His blasphemy. What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death."¹

When Pilate brought Jesus before His enemies, he was alarmed at the brusqueness of their accusation of Him. Their cynical contumely reflected more profoundly still the malice and hatred that they bore toward their Messiah. Pilate had for the third time expressed his conviction concerning the innocence of Jesus. But "The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God."²

If His testimony could be proved to be nothing more than pure perversion, then He might be spared this ignominious death. Jesus could not revoke any statement that He ever made. Whatever He said was to remain unchanged for time and eternity. There is no record anywhere, neither is there so much as an intimation in any of the Gospels that Jesus at any time said anything on any occasion that He later changed or corrected. Nor did He ever give what He had previously said an entirely different meaning. Whatever He said at any time was just what He intended to say and was

¹Matthew 26:63-66.

²John 19:7.

complete and sufficient for the occasion. He never changed His mind. He did not have to do that, for He was very God in human form. If he had ever changed His mind, it would immediately have put a tremendous human limitation upon Him, and would have been conclusive proof that He was not the Son of God, much less God manifested in the flesh. To reverse His statements at any time would have given His enemies a valid reason to conclude that what He had said before was not true; or to express it in plainer language, that it might have been a lie. It would simply have meant that Jesus was not "The Truth" as He said He was, and that if He was God, He could lie.¹

His testimony concerning Himself must stand exactly as He expressed it; and in spite of the stress of the situation, He would not, He could not change it. There remained then only one person who could possibly clarify the situation if it were to be clarified at all. Of course, we cannot prove that this is what really happened. But let us assume that someone, perhaps a friend of Mary, or of her Son, or maybe one of her other children, even though they did not believe in Him, slipped up beside her in a final attempt to ascertain who was the father of Jesus. The motive behind this little conference, of course, was to learn whether she might have something to tell which would alleviate His suffering, and deliver Him from the hands of His accusers.

"Mary, won't you tell us now? Joseph was the one. Was he not?"

They might be ever so tactful in addressing her so as not to cause her any more concern than necessary. But irrespective of their earnest sympathy and diplomacy, their words must have sunk deeper and deeper into her distraught sensibilities to aggravate the torture of her grievous ordeal.

¹Hebrews 6:18.

We may be able to visualize the deep lines of anxiety and distress on her face, drawn there by the pain in her heart and the pangs in her soul, from what her weary eyes had eventually come to behold. With all the grace and charm, nevertheless, at her command and with the same emphasis by which she previously refuted such unkind presumption she once more stoutly affirmed her former position.

“Then it was another man?”

“No.”

“Tell us quickly. Who was he?”

In spite of any pressure that may have been brought to bear upon Mary in that awful time she remained honest to her righteous convictions, and in her honesty lay her helplessness. She was absolutely unable to assist her Son however much she might have desired to do so. She had to stand by and see Him die for His testimony which she knew to be the undisguised truth. Even though her own soul was tremendously burdened to see Him agonizing thus in excruciating pain, she could not lie about the matter. If His claims were false, Mary would have been quick to come to His defense, but she could not. When He died of a broken heart,¹ her heart was crushed, too. But she knew that He was just what He represented Himself to be, the Son of God, Virgin-born.

Mark and John—Though Silent, Yet They Speak

One of the arguments that is often broached to discredit the Virgin birth of Christ is that only two books in the Bible present the story of the event. On the strength of this fact, men have convinced themselves that His birth must be given a subordinate place in history. “Surely,” they say, “it could not have had much significance or importance since neither

¹Psalm 69:20.

Mark nor John mention it.” But when we consider the theme of these Gospels we can understand just why they do not introduce their account with the history of His birth, or include it in their narratives at all.

The Gospel of Mark depicts Him as the lowly Servant Who “came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.”¹ Without any pre-history or genealogy, the treatise plunges directly into Christ’s public ministry. “Who cares about the history of a servant at any rate?”¹ How many people have either expressed themselves this way, or have adopted the attitude toward servants that is embodied in this question? This is often the impression of those whose social status lies on a plane above the ones who are either fortunate or unfortunate enough to be compelled to play and live the role of a servant. He or she is usually of such lowly surroundings and humble heritage that few are really interested in his or her biography. The opening of the book of Mark is therefore in full accord with the general trend of the Gospel.

In the case of John’s Gospel, Christ is presented as the Son of God, God in the form of a man. Again there is not a hint, not even the slightest suggestion of His birth. There could be none. There could never be a story of the birth of God since He is The Great “I Am.” He always IS, the Self-existent One. John’s work also opens appropriately because it immediately carries us back “In the beginning” where Christ is God. Let us ask our critic friends to consider this question: “If you were writing the Gospels where would you locate the story of His birth?” So far as the Gospels of Matthew and Luke are concerned those are the only logical places where we should expect to find it discussed.

¹Mark 10:45.

More Evidence

In Matthew Jesus is King. And surely all the details of the King's birth and generation need to be most meticulously accurate and precise. Some day the King is going to return to the earth to establish His millennial reign. Once again He will fulfill all the rigorous demands of the genealogies in Matthew and Luke, then, to the complete satisfaction and acceptance of the Hebrew remnant who will embrace Him as their long expected Messiah.

The Gospel of Luke is a discourse upon the Son of Man, the Man Who was God; and it is altogether appropriate to incorporate the story of His birth there, as well as the genealogy which traces His lineage all the way back to Adam, and even a step farther, connecting Him to God Himself.

The fact that Paul and other New Testament writers do not mention Christ's Virgin birth as such cannot be proposed as any proof at all that they did not accept it as authentic. Whatever they have written is most assuredly based upon the unqualified statement that He "is the image of the invisible God."¹

Those who discountenance, furthermore, the Lord's Virgin birth are sometimes the ones who adhere most rigidly to the "Sermon on the Mount" as the basis of their deliberations and teachings, and as being sufficient Scripture for anyone's consideration. By their position and attitude toward the Word of God as a whole, they feel that they can justify their exclusion of the most fundamental Scripture in the entire Bible. Yet it is rather interesting to note that only two books in the Bible contain the "Sermon on the Mount." Upon the same basis of reasoning, then, any one might

¹Colossians 1:15.

reject it as being a nonentity because only two of the sixty-six books mention it.

One of the gratifying features of the Scriptures is that they enable a child of God to penetrate the superficial thinking, and refute the shallow arguments of its enemies. It so happens that the same two books which present the Virgin birth of Christ also record the "Sermon on the Mount." Now, it would hardly be reasonable to be dogmatic about a part of a book, a part of which is looked upon as being inspired, and reject the most indispensable portion of the same book. If we reject some of it, we have to reject all of it. If we consider a portion of it to be infallible, we must by all the laws of reasonable and consistent persuasion regard the remainder in precisely the same light.

What Shall We Say?—"Yea Lord, I Believe"

If Christ's Virgin birth is to be nullified, then how shall we correlate all the magnanimous remarks that we find in Luke's inspired record about His glorious character? Since character is the manifestation of the real nature of an individual, revealing exactly what he is, we cannot lightly disregard the gladsome thoughts that were expressed by those whom Luke introduces into the beginning of his story. Fascinating beyond measure is the fact that he mentions eight distinct testimonies by these various individuals, or in one case a group of individuals, four prior to, and four just following Christ's birth.

In the Scriptures eight is the number for resurrection, or a new beginning. Of all the examples that may be found, one shall suffice. The first verse in the Old Testament is composed of seven Hebrew words, while the first verse in the New Testament contains eight Greek words. In Genesis 1:1, we find a perfect beginning which was subsequently

marred by sin. In Matthew 1:1, God made a new beginning through His Son by Whom He was going to establish a new order of things against which not even the gates of hell should prevail.

These eight witnesses further manifested God's revelation not only for the Jew but for the entire human family that He was about to make a new beginning in His dealings with sinful men. Each spoke out of the fulness of assurance gained either by contact with Christ, or by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, or by both. Their voices blended, as it were, in one great and joyful anthem suggesting a note of hopeful anticipation of the day when through this Virgin-born One every born-again soul should enjoy the "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh."¹

Accordingly, then, the Gospels record the events in the life of the One about Whom these eight were exulting. They are a perfect commentary upon these utterances, truthful records of the literal fulfillment of every word that fell from their lips.

The entire Old Testament can be summed up in this one statement: "Jesus is coming."

Gabriel said, in so many words, in his annunciation, "He is on the way." "That Holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."²

Elizabeth sometime later, a matter of not more than several days, very discerningly said, "And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?"³

Mary, in the Magnificat, at about the same time declared, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour."⁴

¹Hebrews 10:19, 20. ²Luke 1:35. ³Luke 1:43. ⁴Luke 1:46, 47.

Zacharias, a little more than three months later, speaking in the Benedictus about his son in terms of his ministry said, "And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways; to give knowledge of salvation unto His people by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the Dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."¹

The entire New Testament can be summed up in this one statement: "Jesus has come."

"An angel of the Lord" said in effect, "He is here." "Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."²

The shepherds impelled by the expectancy of their faith, came with haste to Bethlehem, "and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child."³

Simeon, when Jesus was eight days old, said in the Nunc Dimittus, "Mine eyes have seen Thy Salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel."⁴

Finally, Anna "coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of Him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem."⁵

Was Christ Virgin-born, or was He not? What shall our answer be? It is not so much a question of what shall WE say, but what saith the Scriptures? We have tried to keep this study as free from human philosophy as possible. By delving into the Scriptures, we have permitted them to speak

¹Luke 1:76-79.

²Luke 2:11.

³Luke 2:16, 17.

⁴Luke 2:30-32.

⁵Luke 2:38.

at sufficient length and depth to answer this question, we trust, with convincing and persuading certainty. We have by no means exhausted the material dealing with this fascinating subject. What has been presented has barely scratched the surface of this all important matter. To those into whose hands it may fall, we earnestly commend it for serious consideration, with the hope that it will stimulate and deepen the reader's faith in the Virgin-born Christ. We trust, furthermore, that it will be instrumental in revealing to many their need of Him as their crucified and risen Saviour, and that they in turn may recognize Him as such by a simple act of faith. That He may be greatly honored and glorified thereby is the ardent desire and prayer of the writer's heart.

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