

## **AN OPEN LETTER TO THE CLERGY OF QUEENSLAND — CHRISTMAS 1963**

Gentlemen:

You have proclaimed for a great many years that Jesus of Nazareth was born of a 'virgin'. You insist that this doctrine was taught by his Hebrew disciples. As evidence for your doctrine you refer to certain passages from the Bible.

The very texts you appeal to do not support your case for 'virgin' birth at all. Your doctrine has nothing to do with Hebrew christianity. This open letter provides you with the opportunity of explaining to the people of Queensland how you square your doctrine with the following Biblical facts:

1. There never was a prophecy in the Bible that a 'virgin' would conceive. The word 'virgin' was a known mistranslation 1800 years ago.
2. There was a compelling reason – not even remotely connected with virgin birth – for the disciple Matthew to show Joseph was only the nominal father of Jesus.
3. Mary was of one tribe and Jesus, by conception, was of another. Could a 'virgin' birth produce such a result? Is it not strange that the Heli of Luke 3:23 is of the same tribe as his 'son' Jesus?
4. The Hebrew expression 'Son of God' relates to ethical sonship. Biological sonship of the gods – in one form or another – figures prominently in pagan mythology.

There is general agreement on the basic facts. But theologians – by methods of reasoning which are inconsistent with their claims to scholarship – reach conclusions which are remarkable only for their controversion of the facts. Here is a small but representative selection of the evidence of scholars concerning Isaiah 7:14 (point 1. above), the text traditionally translated as 'virgin will conceive'. I have taken the liberty of adding certain remarks by way of notes:

- A. Universal Jewish Encyclopedia: "The Hebrew word for 'virgin' is invariably 'bethulah'; hence to translate Isa. 7:14 as a virgin will conceive is definitely incorrect."
- B. Catholic Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: "The Hebrew word here translated 'virgin' is not the technical term 'bethulah' but its practical equivalent 'almah' which means an unmarried maiden of marriageable age presumed to be a virgin by the strict moral code of the Hebrews."  

(Note: this presumption of virginity is logically invalid because: The strict moral code governed every almah. Accordingly, every almah was presumably a virgin. Therefore every almah conceiving was presumably a virgin conceiving. Result of such presumption: 50,000 virgin births?)
- C. Ronald Knox 1949 (R.C.) translation: "In the Hebrew text the word used should perhaps be translated 'maid' rather than 'virgin' since it refers rather to a time than to a state of life."

(Note: In basic English Knox's statement says that the word almah means 'young woman' and does not refer in any way to virginity.)

- D. Catholic Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: “Over seven centuries before, the prophet had announced a Davidic king to be born of a young woman (a ‘virgin’ LXX) by Divine intervention.”

(Note: This quote reveals that the Hebrew word means ‘young woman’ and that the Greek Septuagint (the LXX) mistranslated this Hebrew word as ‘virgin’. Further evidence shows that this mistranslation was carried from the Greek into Latin and from the Latin into English.)

- E. The “Courier Mail” of 25/11/1952 carried a front page news item in which a University expert was quoted as saying that the rendering ‘virgin’ was a mistake in translation. On this occasion, the “Courier Mail” featured as part of a news item a fact which was known to the ‘university experts’ 1800 years ago.

Attached you will find – for your information – a copy of a questionnaire which circulated in the Forum some time ago.

What I am aiming at is quite simple. I have no desire at all to disturb anyone’s beliefs. All I want to do is destroy the pretence that these beliefs (such as ‘virgin birth’) have anything to do with the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. This involves nothing more than that the theologians should tell the people what the facts really are.

Statistics of circulation of this pamphlet will be permanently recorded in my next Annual Report from the Public Forum.

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