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"In his humiliation justice was denied him"

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THE DOCTRINE OF VIRGIN BIRTH

The church doctrine that Jesus was born of a "virgin":—

- was not taught by the disciples
- imposes a barrier between Jesus and the rest of humanity
- misrepresents the values Jesus stood for
- falsifies the issues which brought him into collision with the priestly establishment
- conceals the motives of those who caused him to be crucified
- attributes to the disciples' accounts of the birth of Jesus, a meaning which the disciples clearly never intended their accounts to have.

This church doctrine hides the fact that the values, issues and motives connected with the name of Jesus of Nazareth are precisely the same, without respect of time, place or person, wherever and whenever truth is crucified by men in daily life.

By the standards of the world, Jesus of Nazareth had no position in the social hierarchy. He belonged to the people. He was born as the result of a normal conception. The doctrine of virgin-birth is an attempt by the theologians to "reclassify" his birth to make it more acceptable to a status-conscious community. The New Testament states candidly that Jesus was the son of a man other than the man his mother married.

By means of the doctrine the leaders of organisational christendom have achieved, on an intellectual level, what their predecessor priests in Jerusalem hoped to achieve on the physical level, that is —

THE COMPLETE DESTRUCTION OF THE MAN JESUS OF NAZARETH AND THE PRINCIPLES AND VALUES HE STOOD FOR.

The priests of Jerusalem employed brutal means to destroy Jesus. The priests of christendom, on the other hand, employ subtle means. The former opposed Jesus directly. The latter pretend to be championing the cause of Jesus and actually masquerade as his representatives.

In view of its significance as outlined above it is not surprising that the doctrine of virgin-birth is the one doctrine on which the divided sects and denominations of christendom are agreed. These ostensibly christian sects and denominations further the interests of the crucifiers, not the crucified.

The churches pretend to have obtained the doctrine from the Bible. As their evidence they usually quote:

- the prophet Isaiah (740 B.C.) — in the Old Testament
- the gospel of Matthew, chapter 1 — in the New Testament
- the gospel of Luke, chapter 1 — in the New Testament

Occasionally they endeavour to produce other “evidence” from the Bible. Sometimes, also, they use the term “incarnation” – which many people assume means the equivalent of virgin-birth – in two distinctly different, and confusing, senses. One usage implies virgin-birth, the other does not.

The facts are that none of the original authorities makes any reference to virgin-birth at all. Translators conversant with the original manuscripts are aware of this. But they have manipulated several key words when translating from Hebrew and Greek into English. Scholars make no attempt to popularise these crucial facts. The people are kept in ignorance.

For Roman Catholics belief in the doctrine is essential. Should a Roman Catholic deliberately deny – or doubt – that Mary “conceived without the cooperation of man” then he or she is guilty of the sin of heresy and automatically becomes subject to the punishment of excommunication.

The purpose of this pamphlet is to place the facts in your possession. You will then see the actions of Jesus, and the motives of the priests, in correct perspective. It will be apparent that the values, issues and motives connected with the events surrounding the name of Jesus of Nazareth are not limited to Jerusalem or to the Roman year now called 30 AD.

A guide to the evidence

The evidence will be presented, and the factors summarised, in the following order:

- Section 1 — The priestly misrepresentations. A short summary.
- Section 2 — The facts as given in the Bible. A summary in 21 points.
- Section 3 — Documentation of the facts. Quotations from authoritative works.
- Section 4 — The traditions by which the priests bolster the doctrine and attempt to explain away the facts.
- Section 5 — The crucifixion viewed as a further stage in the conflict between truth and the lie. The doctrine of virgin-birth furthers the interests of the crucifiers.

Section 1: The priestly misrepresentations. A short summary

The position, as it has been commonly misrepresented by the priests, is this:

- That Isaiah predicted, in or about 740 BC, that a “virgin” would conceive.
- That the Jewish people therefore expected a virgin-born messiah.
- That young Hebrew maidens, after the time of Isaiah, grew up hoping that they would be selected by God as the ‘virgin’ mother.
- That Jesus’ claims to messiahship hinged on ‘virgin’ birth.
- That the disciple Matthew recorded that Jesus had been born in this particular manner, and
- That Luke, in writing his gospel, gave a detailed description of how Mary received a message from God that she had been chosen to be the ‘virgin’ mother of the messiah.

Section 2: The facts as given in the Bible. A summary in 21 points.

The facts which are here summarised in 21 points, fall under 6 main headings. For quick review read only the underlined points.

(A) ISAIAH DID NOT PREDICT A VIRGIN-BIRTH. NO PROPHECY MEANS NO EXPECTANCY AND NO FULFILMENT. CONSEQUENCES.

1. The prophet Isaiah did not predict that a 'virgin' would conceive.

About 740 BC Judah was attacked by Syria and Ephraim. Isaiah predicted to the king, Ahaz, that Judah would ultimately be victorious. A visible sign – a child, not yet born, who would be named Immanuel – was to be the king's assurance of the accuracy of the prediction.

2. Isaiah's prophecy related to a visible sign and to a span of time, not to a peculiar type of conception.

The span of time was to be measured by the growth of the child named Immanuel. The child was to be a visible sign to King Ahaz, a living chronometer by which the king could measure the years which would see Isaiah's prophecy of victory brought to complete fulfilment.

3. The word 'virgin' is a mistranslation of the word used by Isaiah.

Isaiah referred to the mother-to-be as a 'young woman.' He used the word 'almah.' The Hebrew word for 'virgin' is 'bethulah.' The 'almah' of Isaiah's text was mistranslated into Greek as 'parthenos' and, much later, into Latin as 'virgo.'

4. The churches knew 1800 years ago that virgin was not a correct translation.

The first recorded claim that Jesus was born of a virgin dates from the years 110-117 AD. The first recorded dispute over the mistranslation of Isaiah's prophecy dates from about 135 AD. About this time translations from Hebrew into Greek by Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion, rendered the 'almah' of Isaiah 7:14 correctly as 'young woman.' Irenaeus – a Greek speaking churchman of Lyons, France, who was a prominent figure in early church history – commented on the corrected translations of Isaiah 7:14 in about 180 AD. Yet it was not until 1952 that the English translation was corrected.

5. The Jewish people therefore did not expect a virgin-born messiah. The concept is foreign to Hebrew thinking.

Neither Isaiah, nor any other prophet of the Old Testament, predicted a virgin-birth. The Jewish people never expected a virgin-born messiah at any time, and the very concept itself is foreign to Hebrew thinking.

6. The disciples did not record that a prophecy of virgin-birth was fulfilled in Jesus. No such prophecy existed.

The disciples, writing some 800 years after Isaiah, had no authority to alter the meaning of Isaiah's words. The evidence shows they made no attempt to do so. They did not say that Jesus fulfilled a non-existent prophecy. Some scholars continue to endeavour to wrest the meaning "virgin" from the words of Isaiah, so that they may then claim there was a prophecy which Jesus could fulfil.

(But other scholars – realising, in their turn, that the claim concerning Isaiah is untenable – propose that it is the very absence of a prediction that proves Jesus was conceived in the "miraculous" manner stated in their doctrine. These scholars begin from the false assumption that the New Testament records a virgin birth. They reach the conclusion that the N.T. simply states virgin-birth as a fact because, (they say) as the idea would have been otherwise unknown to the N.T. writers, it could only have been suggested to them by the fact itself.

On this point you have an instance of scholars trying to have the best of both worlds.)

7. Gossips may have been interested in how Jesus was conceived. No person of mature intellect would have had the slightest interest.

There was no expectancy of a virgin-born messiah nor any prediction in the Old Testament which would awaken curiosity as to the messiah's physical parentage. Gossips and other neurotic types would have developed a curiosity on the point perhaps. The self-righteous may have interested themselves in Jesus' conception also. The spiritual descendents of these types today preach the doctrine of virgin-birth, by which they affirm that had they lived in the time of Jesus they would have conjectured as to his manner of conception.

The interest displayed by Matthew and Luke – at a much later date – was essential in order that Jesus' claims to messiahship might be stated in their narratives in an adequate manner, as shown below.

(B) PREVAILING JEWISH ATTITUDES. MEANING OF TERMS. NO ORAL TEACHING OF VIRGIN BIRTH BY THE DISCIPLES.

8. The New Testament was brought into existence many years after Jesus. The titles ascribed to Jesus by his contemporaries do not imply virgin-birth.

The Hebrew title 'messiah' and its Greek equivalent 'christ' do not imply a claim to be virgin-born. There are many messiahs (christs) referred to in the Old Testament. These words are left untranslated in our bibles only where they refer to Jesus. Similarly, the description 'son of God' does not imply virgin-birth. Again, the devout Hebrew regards the spirit of God as operating directly in the conception of each individual. In the Old Testament book of Job it is recorded of Elihu: "The spirit of God hath made me and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life." To the Jewish people a virgin-birth was both unnecessary and purposeless. (Refer to point 5).

9. Neither Jesus nor the disciples preached virgin-birth.

We might naturally expect an essentially greater emphasis upon the doctrine by Jesus and the disciples – if they taught it. Without such emphasis the Jewish people would be in

ignorance. The New Testament records the teaching activities of the disciples up to about 63 AD. It records not one single instance of John the Baptist, or Jesus, or any of Jesus' disciples, preaching virgin-birth. The birth of Jesus was subsequently referred to in writing in but two places:

Matthew 1

Luke 1

That these writers refer to a normal conception is made clear in points 11-19 below. Other references in the New Testament state that Jesus sprang from the tribe of Judah and was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and there is no reference anywhere to virgin-birth having been taught.

(C) THE NEW TESTAMENT EXCLUDES JOSEPH FROM PHYSICAL FATHERHOOD OF JESUS. JOSEPH'S DESCENT FROM JECONIAH.

10. The disciples believed Jesus to be the 'messiah' and 'son of God' while at the same time they acknowledged him to be of human parentage.

From the titles ascribed to Jesus by his contemporaries in his 30th year – as recorded in John chapter 1 – the disciples clearly acknowledged Jesus as of human parentage. They saw no conflict with his role of messiahship in such a situation.

11. But though commonly supposed to be, Jesus could not in fact be, the son of Joseph if he were the messiah.

An examination of Joseph's line of descent shows that no son of his could be the messiah. His line was debarred from the kingship of Israel and thus from messiahship.

12. Matthew showed that Jesus was not the son of Joseph and kept intact his claims to messiahship.

It was necessary for the NT to show that Jesus was not the son of Joseph. It was not necessary, on any grounds, for the NT to show Jesus was born of a 'virgin.' In points 14–21 below, the alternative solutions to Joseph's fatherhood, the only ones possible, are discussed —

- that Mary conceived Jesus without the cooperation of man.
- that Mary conceived Jesus with the cooperation of some man other than Joseph.

13. The churches knew at least 1500 years ago that Joseph was debarred from fatherhood of Jesus for a valid reason which has nothing to do with virgin birth.

The line to which Joseph belonged was debarred from kingship because of descent through Jeconiah (Coniah). The early church theologian, Ambrose, makes reference to this fact.

(D) THE NEW TESTAMENT ALSO EXCLUDES THE POSSIBILITY THAT MARY CONCEIVED WITHOUT THE COOPERATION OF MAN. HER LEVITICAL DESCENT.

14. If Mary did conceive without the cooperation of man, it is essential that she be a descendant of David in the tribe of Judah.

The New Testament makes clear in several places that Jesus had sprung from the tribe of Judah as a physical descendant of David. He was “born of the seed of David according to the flesh.”

15. Mary was a member of the tribe of Levi.

Luke considered Mary to be a member of the tribe of Levi. He described Mary's relationship to Elizabeth, (a Levite), by the Greek word 'suggenes.' This establishes Mary's tribal affiliation conclusively.

16. A descendant of Mary by virgin-birth would be, by conception, a Levite. No such person could be the messiah.

If Jesus had been descended from Mary by virgin-birth he would not have been a Judahite born of the seed of David according to the flesh. He would have been a Levite and, as such, would have had no claim to messiahship. Adoption into the tribe of Judah, through a foster-father, would not alter this position.

17. The church has been conscious of Mary's Levitical descent since earliest times.

References to the question of Mary's tribal descent appear in early church literature.

(E) THE NEW TESTAMENT NAMES HELI AS THE PHYSICAL FATHER OF JESUS.

18. Jesus' claims to messiahship are invalidated unless a physical descendant of David, with claims to kingship, was responsible for his conception.

As both physical paternity of Joseph, and virgin-conception by Mary, invalidate Jesus' claims to messiahship, there is no alternative remaining but to acknowledge that some descendant of David, other than Joseph, was the physical father of Jesus.

19. Luke names Heli as the father of Jesus.

This fact is acknowledged by Luke when he gives the genealogy of Jesus. Theologians prefer to view the genealogy given by Luke as contradicting that given by Matthew. There is no contradiction or conflict. Matthew gives the genealogy of Joseph, the supposed father of Jesus. Luke gives the genealogy of Heli, the actual physical father of Jesus.

20. Conscious of this fact, the church concocted traditions to escape the significance of the genealogies and to preserve the doctrine of virgin-birth.

Each tradition is supposed to be true. Taken collectively the traditions are conflicting and mutually contradictory. The ludicrous results which follow the amalgamation of these “true” traditions may be seen in Section 4 of this pamphlet.

(F) THE ORIGIN AND PROGRESS OF THE IDEA OF ‘VIRGIN-BIRTH.’

21. The Hebrews considered maternity praiseworthy. To the Greeks and Latins virginity was the praiseworthy attribute.

Virgin-worship was part of the non-Hebrew culture pattern. The Parthenon of Athens, temple of Athena Parthenos, the Virgin Goddess, was constructed about 450 BC. Rome was adorned by the Temple of Vesta. With this temple the Vestal Virgins were associated. The idea that the man Jesus of Nazareth was born of a virgin first appeared, not in the New Testament, but in the writings of Ignatius – himself a product of non-Hebrew culture – between 110 AD and 117 AD, that is, some 120 or more years after Jesus was born.

THE EVIDENCE SUBSTANTIATING THE ABOVE 21 POINTS COVERS MANY PAGES. THIS PAMPHLET IS ISSUED IN AN ABRIDGED FORM AND SECTIONS 3, 4 AND 5 ARE NOT INCLUDED. THE SOURCES QUOTED INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING AUTHORITATIVE WORKS OF THE ROMAN CHURCH:

1. Catholic Encyclopaedia
2. Catholic Commentary on the Holy Scripture
3. Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma (Ludwig Ott)
4. Summa Theologica
5. The Sacred Canons
6. Biblia Sacra
7. Knox Version (1949)

Portion of the evidence has been given already in pamphlet 11.
