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Jesus the Virgin-Born

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Jesus the Virgin-Born

Biography delights to trace the lineage of him whose story it writes. The rugged sense of mankind smites with scorn and contempt the claim to birth, only when it stands upon the merits of a past which it is powerless to reproduce. Jesus of Nazareth is the most illustrious person in all the annals of time. In all the heraldry of birth, he is the last member of the human race whose ancestral history can be carried back, in unbroken succession, to Adam, the first man.

In the Christian faith, Jesus of Nazareth is held to be the Messiah of prophecy, the Christ of history, and the Saviour of the world. This gives his followers a perennial interest in his origin. Are they the disciples of a child of shame, born out of lawful wedlock? Are they the worshippers of a mere human being, born of human parents like other children, however lovely his character, or matchless his speech, or philanthropic his conduct? Or are they justified in hailing him as a divine-human person, and in proclaiming him Messiah, Christ and Saviour? The answers to these questions depend upon the opinions men may hold about the story of his virgin-birth.

The genealogy of Jesus is unique, in that

the Christian Scriptures give it both prophetically and historically—prophetically as Messiah, and historically as Christ.

GENEALOGY OF THE MESSIAH.

“Messiah” is Hebrew. “Christ” is Greek. The two words are synonyms. They mean precisely the same thing,—literally, “the anointed one.” In religion they are technicalities for that person whom God has “anointed,” or “consecrated,” or “ordained” to be the Saviour of a sinful world.

There is no way to deny the fact that a Messiah looks out of the pages of the Old Testament as a face looks out of a window. Everywhere the Hebrew Scriptures throb with the prediction that sometime, somewhere, somehow, there would come a person into this world who would set up God's kingdom of saving grace in the earth. His coming was the glorious hope and the prophetic expectation of all Israel. There is a careful description of the genealogy of this “messianic” person, foreshowing his family-history.

After the sin and fall of the race, it was proclaimed at the very gates of the Garden of Eden that “the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head.” This was an early promise and prophecy that some person would emerge in the human race—that some child would be born of the line of Eve—who would bruise the head of Satan, who had

tempted her to eat the forbidden fruit, to chose evil instead of good. It was a star of hope which God hung between the gate-posts of the garden, out of which the race had been driven on account of its sin and fall.

Later, the Old Testament drew closer the line of the ancestral derivation of this “messianic” person. The world was told that, of the multitudinous descendants of the woman, the Messiah would be of the “seed of Abraham.” This was to be the particular family of which this predicted person would come in the fulness of time.

Abraham, however, was the father of several children, each of whom became the progenitor of a numberless posterity. But the prophecy leaves us not to guess and surmise. It carefully defines that this “messianic” person would be of “the seed of Isaac.” Mahommed had an Abrahamic derivation, but he was descended from the bastard Ishmael, and all his claims are barred on genealogical grounds. No Arab can possibly be this predicted Messiah and Saviour.

Isaac, however, had two sons—Jacob and Esau. But again the prophecy does not leave us to speculation as to which of these is to be the progenitor of the promised Messiah. He is to be of “the seed of Jacob.” No mongrel descendant of Ishmael and Esau can be the Messiah and Prophet of God. The very blood in his veins would prove him to be a “false prophet.”

Jacob, however, was the father of twelve

sons, but the Scriptures assure us that the Messiah is to come of "the tribe of Judah," the fourth son of Jacob. This item excludes all claimants which may come from any other tribe in Israel. It specifically bars "Mormon," whose followers claim that he was a "messianic" prophet that arose out of the Ten Tribes, after they had become lost to history and had emigrated to America, to become known at a later time as the Indians of the Western continent.

But the prophetic description of this "messianic" person does not stop here. It draws the line of his pedigree still closer. Of "the tribe of Judah," we are told, he is to be of "the family and house of David." He is to come of the royal line in Israel. He is to belong to the succession of kings. Royal blood must course through his veins. His title to the throne must be sound, whether recognized or denied by the Jewish people and the Roman world.

David, however, had many wives and many descendants. To which of these must the world look for the Messiah? The prediction does not leave us in doubt. Of "the seed of David" he must be born of a "virgin in the town of Bethlehem." Her lineage is defined—she must be of the house of David. The place of his birth is foretold—he must be born in Bethlehem. All human paternity is excluded—he must be born of a virgin. He can have no human father. He can have no mother but a Davidic virgin. He can be

born nowhere but in Bethlehem, and in that Bethlehem which is in the tribe of Judah. He is to be an "Immanuel," which, literally translated, is a divine-human person. "Behold, a virgin shall give you a sign: 'The Lord himself shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel'" (Isa. 7:14).

Finally, the advent of this "messianic" person, having the foregoing lineage, is to be preceded by some conspicuous forerunner—"a messenger who is to go before his face and prepare his way" (Isa. 40:3; Mal. 3:1).

Such is the genealogical chart of the promised Messiah. It would seem that the world could not possibly fail to identify him by such marks. It outlines a person, and not a kingdom, or a state, or a condition.

1. The Seed of the Woman.
2. The Seed of Abraham.
3. The Seed of Isaac.
4. The Seed of Jacob.
5. The Seed of Judah.
6. The Seed of David.
7. The Seed of the Virgin.
8. Born at Bethlehem.
9. Preceded by a Forerunner.
10. Named Immanuel.

GENEALOGY OF JESUS OF NAZARETH.

Readers of the Bible sometimes wonder why so many genealogical tables, lists of hard and almost unpronounceable names, were preserved in the Christian Scriptures. The

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explanation is, they were made and kept by the Spirit of inspiration that the world might test the claims of any pretender to the messianic and saving office. In the controversy between Jew and Christian, they are worth their weight in gold. They enable us to trace the family-history of Jesus of Nazareth, and identify him as the true Messiah and Saviour.

John the Baptist was his conspicuous forerunner. He was born of the Virgin Mary, at Bethlehem in Judah. All his expositors and commentators delineate him as a true Immanuel, a divine-human person. Matthew traces his lineage through "Joseph, the husband of Mary" and the legal father of Jesus, back to Solomon, to David, to Judah, to Jacob, to Isaac, to Abraham, to Adam, to God. Luke traces his lineage through his mother, Mary, to Nathan, to David, to Judah, to Jacob, to Isaac, to Abraham, to Adam, to God. Using all the genealogical lists in both Testaments, the family-tree of Jesus of Nazareth can be made out.

OBJECTIONS.

The identification of Jesus of Nazareth and the Messiah of prophecy and promise would thus seem to be complete and indisputable. But his virgin-birth is so exceptional and unnatural that its credibility is attacked on scientific, philosophical, critical and popular grounds. Many feel that it is at once the most vulnerable and the most fundamental fact in Christology.

UNSCIENTIFIC.

The Christian is told that natural science, which devotes itself to the observation of facts, can find nothing analogous to the virgin-birth in all the annals of the organic world. There is no known plant or animal or human that is not the product of both the masculine and the feminine principle. Hence the idea that a child had a mother but no father, is in the teeth of the well-known course and constitution of nature. To believe it is to contradict all science and the common observations of mankind.

The Christian admits this accusation. He alleges that the birth of Jesus was supernatural, miraculous, and exceptional. He holds that a person who was so unique and so unlike all other men in all his character and conduct, was also unlike all other men in the very mode of his advent into this world. Exceptional in his life, exceptional in his death, exceptional in his resurrection, exceptional in his departure out of this world, the Christian has no difficulty in applying exceptionalness to the very mode of his birth.

But the Christian, being a theist, cannot admit that he is any more irrational in believing that God created Jesus out of the substance of the Virgin Mary, than he is believing that God created Adam out of the dust of the ground and Eve out of the rib of Adam. He cannot believe he is any more

absurd in believing that Jesus entered the world out of the womb of a maiden, than he is in believing that he re-entered the world out of the grave of Joseph of Arimathea. Obviously he who can believe the one cannot stagger at the absurdity of the other.

UNTHINKABLE.

Then the Christian is told that the virgin-birth is not only contranatural, but that it is utterly unthinkable—an illogical absurdity. Father and mother, he is reminded, are correlative terms. No man can think the one without thinking the other, any more than he can think of one side of a coin without thinking of the other side of the coin. Maternity implies paternity; one is the effect of which the other is the cause. To believe in the virgin-birth requires a man not only to contradict nature, but to contradict the laws of his own mind—to make a fool of himself, by trying to upset his own faculties.

The Christian replies that it is true that father and mother are correlative terms, and that there can be no maternity without an antecedent paternity. His doctrine of the virgin-birth, however, does not require him to assert the maternity of Jesus, and at the same time deny all paternity. He asserts both the paternity and maternity of Jesus of Nazareth. He holds that Jesus had both a father and a mother. He denies that his father was human, and asserts that he was divine. He is no advocate of a fatherless Jesus. He

believes that God was his Father, and that Mary was his mother. He consequently holds no such absurdity as a maternity without any sort of paternity.

INDECENT.

It is sometimes whispered to the Christian that his doctrine of a virgin-birth is indecent; that, in implicating God and a maiden, it reflects upon both the virtue of the Deity and the honor of the young woman.

The Christian retorts that the coarse suggestion is a gross misrepresentation. The nativity story contains not a hint of any liason. The mode of incarnation was not by generation, but by creation. The delicate language of the announcing angel to Mary was, "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" (Luke 1:35). The power of God terminated upon the dust of the ground, and created out of it the body of Adam. The power of God terminated upon a rib of Adam, and created out of it the body of Eve. So the power of God terminated upon the substance of Mary, and created out of it the embryonic body of Jesus. There is nothing in the narrative that hints a consortium.

John says, "The word was made flesh" (John 1:14). Paul said to the Galatians that God's Son was "made of a woman" (Gal. 4:4). To the Philippians he said Jesus "took

upon himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men" (Phil. 2:8). To the Hebrews he said that Christ "took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham" (Heb. 2:16). He also puts in the mouth of the Redeemer the words, "a body hast thou prepared me" (Heb. 10:5). Consequently, the incarnation was not evolutionary and generative, but creative and voluntary.

DISCREPANT.

A fourth objection to the virgin-birth of Jesus is based upon an apparent discrepancy in the story of his nativity. His genealogy is given by both Matthew and Luke, but they do not agree as to his pedigree. Both tell us that Mary was his mother, and that Joseph was the husband of Mary. But Matthew says Joseph was the son of "Jacob," and Luke says he was the son of "Heli." Hence the two give us different ancestral names, on back to David. It is argued that both lists cannot be correct, Joseph cannot be the son of both "Jacob" and "Heli"; we cannot tell which is correct; consequently the whole genealogy is undependable.

The Christian replies that this discrepancy is only apparent. Every married man is the son of two fathers—the natural son of one, and the law-son of the other. The evangelists say that Joseph was the son of both "Jacob" and "Heli." He was consequently the natural son of one of these men, and the son-

in-law of the other. Matthew tells us that "Jacob begat Joseph," and so makes it clear that he was the natural, begotten, son of "Jacob." He was, therefore, the son-in-law of "Heli." Besides Luke uses no language that intimates that Joseph was the natural son of "Heli." Hence "Joseph, the husband of Mary, the mother of Jesus," was the born-son of "Jacob," and the son-in-law of "Heli."

Matthew, then, starting with "Joseph, the husband of Mary," carries the lineage of Jesus back, through a succession of ancestors, and reaches David through Solomon. Luke, starting with "Heli," the father-in-law of Joseph and the father of Mary, carries the lineage of Jesus back to David through his son, Nathan. Matthew traces through Joseph, and Luke traces through Mary. Hence the variations in the lists of names occurring in the two genealogies. Thus at one stroke the two genealogies are seen to be not discrepant.

Then we are asked, Why both genealogies? If Jesus was virgin-born, why give his lineage through Joseph at all? Mary was his mother, and the fountain of his natural heredity, and so the only ancestral history that was pertinent.

To this the Christian answers that two genealogies are given in order to leave the objector no ground to stand upon. The prophecies required that the Messiah should be the "seed of the woman," the "seed of Abraham," the "seed of Isaac," the "seed of Jacob," the "seed of Judah," the "seed

of David," the "seed of a virgin" belonging to the house of David. Jesus claimed to be that Messiah. Now take his ancestral history either way, and it fulfils the messianic outline. If he be tested by his legal lineage, his line goes back through Joseph, his legal father, through the royal line to Solomon, to David. If he be tested by his blood lineage, his line goes back through Mary to Nathan, to David his father. That Jesus was of Davidic lineage is proved by the fact that when he asked the Pharisees, "Whose son is he?" they promptly replied, "The son of David" (Matthew 22:42).

CONTRADICTED.

It is objected to the virgin-birth that one ancient version distinctly ascribes the paternity of Jesus to Joseph. This is the Sinaitic-Syriac version. In this version, Matthew 1:16 is given in this form, "Joseph, to whom Mary the Virgin was betrothed, begat Jesus, who is called Christ."

To this the apologist for the virgin-birth replies that the word "begat" has somehow unwarrantably gotten introduced into the text of this version. He supports this opinion by the following considerations: (1) This rendering of Matthew 1:16 never got itself accepted. It failed to pass the scrutiny of the past. The text of the Authorized Version, which leaves out the word "begat," and reads, "Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born," has long been received as correct. (2) Then the

Sinaitic text is inconsistent with itself. It says Joseph begat Jesus of Mary, and yet represents Mary as a *virgo intacta* when Jesus was born! (3) This Sinaitic version which says that Joseph was the father of Jesus contradicts Luke's account of the nativity. Luke says Joseph was "supposed" to be the father of Jesus. That is, was held by the public to stand *in loco parentis* to Jesus. There are no variant readings of Luke's account. (4) Finally this version which says that Joseph was the father of Jesus contradicts the four most competent witnesses on the subject—Joseph, Mary, Jesus, the angel. Joseph denied his paternity, and was about to put away Mary because he knew he was not the author of her condition. Mary denied the paternity of Joseph. Jesus never acknowledged Joseph as his father. Not once did he ever call him such. An angel from heaven was sent to both Joseph and Mary to explain to them how she came to be "with child." Her condition was explicitly imputed to the Holy Ghost.

INADEQUATE.

It is common to hear the objection that a fact so strange as the virgin-birth is inadequately certified by the Christian Scriptures. We are told that only two of the biblical writers assert it. Naturally we would have expected them all to mention it, and make the most liberal use of it. As many of them do not even allude to it, a fact so astounding could hardly have been generally accepted by the early Christian community.

To this the Christian replies that the paternity of God is asserted by all the biblical writers, without exception. There is no dispute about the maternity of Mary. The debate is about the paternity of Jesus. Who was his father? Many times over Jesus called God his "Father." He never once called Joseph his father. Many times over he called himself the "Son of God," but he never once called himself the son of Joseph, or of any other particular man. Over and over again, every one of the New Testament writers called God his "Father." Not a single one of them ever called Joseph or any other man his father. If we are to believe Jesus, God was his Father. If we are to believe Mary, God was his Father. If we are to believe Joseph, God was his Father. If we are to believe the angel, God was his Father. If we are to believe Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, Peter, James, God was his Father. It is the only paternity ascribed to him in all the Scriptures; and a **divine paternity** is ascribed to him by everyone of the biblical writers.

Paul flatfootedly asserted the incarnation in his epistles. "In the fulness of time, God sent forth . . . the son of Joseph? He never said it: . . . God sent forth his Son (God's Son), made of a woman, made under the law" (Gal. 4:5). To the Philippians, this same apostle says, that Jesus, being primarily "in the form of God," was "made in the likeness of men" (Phil. 2:6). To the Hebrews he says Christ "took not on him the

nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham" (Heb. 2:16). The claim that Paul, whose epistles are looked upon as the earliest of the New Testament writings, did not assert the virgin-birth, cannot be held in the light of the fact that he everywhere asserted the incarnation and the divine paternity.

Moreover, the early apostolic fathers held Paul to be responsible for the Gospel of Luke, and Peter to be responsible for the Gospel of Mark. Luke was held to be the amanuensis of Paul, and Mark was held to be the scribe of Peter. If this is true (and none can dispute it), then the nativity story in Luke was of **Pauline** origin. We have then the conclusion, that in his epistles Paul asserts the fact of the incarnation, and in his Gospel of Luke he gives an account of the mode in which the Son of God became the Son of man.

The New Testament writers are not silent on the subject of the paternity of Jesus. On the contrary they are outspoken. Over and over again they assert the paternity of God, and never once do they allege the paternity of any particular man. If they make anything clear, they make clear the divine fatherhood of Jesus.

INVENTED.

Then we are told that the story of the virgin-birth of Jesus was invented by his early admirers and worshippers, and read back into the narrative of his origin. Such

a fabrication was not necessarily the result of conscious fraud, but was probably the result of fervent devotion and exalted affection for his person.

We are reminded that there are some things in Matthew, Mark and Luke which are common to all three; that there are some other things which are common to Matthew and Luke; and that there are some other things that are common to neither of the three. These similarities and variations create what is called the "synoptic problem." The favorite solution of this problem is to assume that Mark's story is the oldest, and that both Matthew and Luke elaborated their stories of Jesus upon Mark's account. But this not sufficing to fully resolve the problem, it is assumed that Mark must have made up his story from some pre-existent "sources"—from "Ur-Mark," or the "Logia," or some indefinite document called "Q." Inasmuch as Mark does not tell the nativity story, and Matthew and Luke "cribbed" freely from him, the virgin-birth could not have been original, and so must have been a later invention. The aim is to lose the virgin-birth of Jesus in the tangle of the "synoptic problem."

To this the Christian apologist answers: (1) That the whole "synoptic problem" is itself a pure invention to escape the historic doctrine of inspiration, as the "source" of all the evangelist narratives. Who knows anything about "Ur-Mark," or the "Logia,"

or "Q?" All such documents are pure hypothesis. (2) But the effective reply is that Mark's Gospel expressly asserts God's paternity of Jesus. The opening words of his Gospel are, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mk. 1:1). The beginning of the gospel of the son of Joseph? Mark never said it. The beginning of his Gospel is the beginning of the story of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Then a little later at the baptism of Jesus, Mark reports the heavenly voice as saying, "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Mk. 1:11). Thou art the son of Joseph in whom I am well pleased? The voice from heaven never said it. Mark says it was God's voice saying that Jesus was his Son in whom he was well pleased. A little later he reports the unclean spirits and demons as saying in his presence, "Thou art the Son of God" (Mk. 3:11; 5:17). Jesus did not repudiate such a paternity alleged by the wicked spirits. The whole effort therefore to construe Mark as knowing nothing about the divine paternity of Jesus breaks down. Mark himself asserts it; he quotes the devils as asserting it; and he does not represent Jesus as denying it.

THE SON OF MAN.

But did not Jesus expressly call himself "the son of man?" If we are to believe that statement, how can it be squared with the claim that he was born of a virgin by

the power of the Holy Ghost? To be the "son of man," we are told, he must have had a human father.

To this the orthodox Christology replies, that Jesus did call himself "the son of man," but that he did not call himself the son of any particular man. He also called himself "the Son of God." How, in strict literalness, can he be both? The answer is perfectly obvious, if the virgin-birth be a fact, and it is impossible, if the virgin-birth be false. All natural history—the most elementary biology—teaches us that "like begets like"—that the progeny is of the same nature with the parents. If, therefore, Jesus had a human father and a human mother, he could have been only "the son of man," for it is impossible for even God to create a divine being. Such a parentage would preclude the possibility of Jesus ever being anything but human. If, on the other hand, he had a divine Father and a human mother, as the nativity passages allege, then he must have been at once "the Son of God" and "the son of man," or a divine-human being.

If the New Testament Scriptures assert anything, they assert that Jesus was "the Son of God," and that he was also "the son of man." Such statements cannot be rationally held unless there was a virgin-birth. The whole biblical Christology necessitates the fact of a divine paternity and a human maternity.

HEATHEN.

Since the rise of the science of comparative religion, it is quite common to hear that the idea of a virgin-birth is common to all religions, and so the legend of the virgin-birth of Jesus has crept into Christianity from heathen sources. In Egypt Horus is said to have been born of the virgin Isis, to whom Osiris stood as a nominal father, as Joseph was to Jesus in the Christian tradition. In China Fo-hi, or Fu-hsi, or Hou Chi, the mythical founder of the Chinese Empire, is said to have been born of the virgin Chiang Yuan, who trod in the footprint of God, and was encircled by a rainbow until her child was born. In India Buddha is said to have been born of the virgin Maya. In Persia it was said that Zoroaster was born of the virgin Dughdhova. In Greece Perseus was said to have been born of the virgin Danae, who was the fabled mother of the Greek people. And so we are told that the Christian legend that Jesus was born of the virgin Mary is on a part with these and other heathen stories, just as incredible and just as monstrous as they.

To this the Christian apologist replies that such reasoning is attractive only to those who have accepted the hypothesis that Christianity is an evolution of the heathen religions. If such is its origin—if there is an organic connection between Christianity and

heathen religions—if Christianity is but the present stage of the naturalistic evolution of religion—then such an explanation of the virgin-birth of Jesus would be plausible.

But the study of comparative religion leads another class of minds to a very different conclusion—to the conclusion that all the heathen religions are degenerate corruptions of the true religion of the Bible. If we can credit the Christian Scriptures, immediately after the fall of man, and when Adam and Eve were the only members of the race, God fastened to the outside of the gates of Eden the promise and the prophecy that the “seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head.” That promise must have had its influence upon the minds and hopes of men in the antediluvian period of the world’s history. It was repeated to Noah who brought a remnant of the race across the flood. In the dispersion at the building of the tower of Babel, that redemptive promise of salvation by the child of a woman must have been carried to the four quarters of the earth. The farther removed from its original source, the cruder, the grosser, the more corrupt it must have become. Hence, all these legends of virgin-born persons, who were the fabled founders of nationalities, empires and religions, were but the depraved echoes of God’s original promise that “the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head.” It is for this reason that such data, gathered from comparative religion, confirm,

in a collateral fashion, the protevangelical promise that the seed, not of the man, but “the seed of the woman,” that is, one virgin-born, should be the Saviour of the fallen race. There was probably a historic basis for a tradition so world-wide, and lead so many peoples and religions to incorporate among their myths and legends and dreams so many stories of virgin-born founders and saviours. The very origin and prevalence of such curious legends of virgin-born characters demands explanation, and can be but perverted echoes of God’s primal promise that “the seed of a woman” would be the Redeemer of the race.

USELESS.

Finally we are told that the dogma of the virgin-birth of Jesus is perfectly useless. Whether true or false, Christianity is not affected by it. At bottom it is just a subject for academic dispute. No practical consequences are involved, however it may be determined.

To this the orthodox Christologist replies that the facts of Scripture are the data of all the doctrines and duties of the Christian religion. He holds that the virgin-birth of Jesus is an essential fact and yields essential doctrines. If it be false, the whole Christian faith breaks down. If it be true, the whole story of Jesus as a Saviour is unassailable. The following vital things hang upon the

truthfulness of the story of the virgin-birth of Jesus.

1. Upon it the truthfulness of the Christian Scriptures depend. Starting back at the very beginning of the Bible, in "the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head," it goes all through the Old Testament Scripture. And beginning with Matthew, there is no interpreting the New Testament upon the theory that Jesus was the son of a human father and a human mother. These Scriptures are the source of all the facts of the Christian faith. The theme of the Old Testament was the prophetic Messiah, and the theme of the New Testament is the historic Jesus. If the Bible be discredited, in this particular, the very source of all the contents of the Christian religion is discredited.

2. The very person of Jesus depends upon the virgin-birth. Without such an origin, he cannot be an "Immanuel," a divine-human person. He claimed to be "the Son of God." He claimed to be "the son of man." His entire biography as reported and commented upon by all the biblical writers was that of a divine-human person—one truly God and truly man. To him they ascribe all divine perfections, and all human attributes. Their portraiture is always that of a divine-human being. This he could not be, if his parentage was of one kind only. If, however, his Father were divine and his mother

were human, then he would be a divine-human being so certainly as there is an atom of truth in the maxim that "like begets like."

3. Nothing is made truer both by Scripture and observation than that all mankind, descending from Adam by ordinary generation, sinned in him and fell with him in the first transgression. If, therefore, Jesus were descended from him by ordinary generation, he too sinned in him and fell with him in that first transgression. We are bound to hold that Jesus descended from Adam by extraordinary and supernatural generation, in order to maintain his **sinlessness**. If he had been a full sharer in the racial history, he would have been a full sharer in the racial sinfulness. All other men are born sinners. Why was not he? The only possible answer is that he was born out of the ordinary. Granted his virgin-birth as told in the Gospels, and his moral purity follows obviously and necessarily.

4. Nothing less than the virgin-birth can rationally explain the **sonship** of Jesus. Sonship, in strict literalness, is the communication of the nature of the parents to the progeny. Jesus was undeniably "the son of man," and this designation can be true only on the supposition that a bona fide human nature was communicated to him in his birth. He is also described as "the Son of God," and this can be true only upon the supposition that a genuine divine nature was communicated to him in his birth. We are

bound, therefore, to invoke a divine-human parentage, to explain his two natures.

But he is called "the Son of God" in two senses. He is called "the only-begotten Son of God," and he is also called "the first-begotten Son of God." Theologians call the one his monogenetic, or trinitarian, or eternal sonship, and the other his primogenetic, or mediatorial, or redemptive sonship. As monogenetic Son he had no birth-day, he had only a divine nature, and he had no brothers and sisters. As primogenetic Son, he had a birth-day, he had a divine-human nature, he had many brethren and sisters—he was the Elder Brother in an innumerable household. How can these conceptions be put together, except upon the supposition that "the eternal Son of God became man, by taking to himself a true body and a reasonable soul, being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the virgin Mary, and born of her, yet without sin?"

5. Finally the very saviourhood of Jesus depends upon his virgin-birth. To be the Saviour of mankind, he must be the Messiah of prophecy, and the Messiah of prophecy had to be virgin-born in order to fulfil the prediction. To be a Saviour, he had to be a divine-human person to be qualified for the redemptive office and the redemptive task, and to be a divine-human person he had to have a divine-human parentage. To be a Saviour, he had to be sinless, and to be sinless he had to be virgin-born.

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