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The Virgin Birth of Christ.

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V.

The disgrace of being the earliest known impugner of the Virgin Birth falls upon the head of Cerinthus, a contemporary of the Apostle John. Cerinthus taught that Christ, the son of Joseph and Mary, at his baptism received the *ἄνω Χριστός*, "the Christ [from] above," who, however, departed from Him before His suffering. Soon after Cerinthus, the Ebionites, a Jewish sect, appeared upon the scene as champions of the purely human origin of our Lord. They taught that He was a mere man, whom God had elected to the Messiahship because of His extraordinary piety. In the so-called Ebionite gospel the chapters in which the evangelists teach the Virgin Birth were omitted. The Gnostics, many of them at least, could not find any room in their monstrous speculations for the Virgin Birth. They either denied the true humanity of Christ or else represented Him as a human being upon whom the *ἄνω Χριστός* descended at baptism. Of course, we find Marcion (ca. 100) and the Docetae on the side of the enemy. The philosopher Celsus (second century) delighted in pouring out his contempt upon this doctrine in particular and thereby came into conflict with Origen (*Contra Celsum*). Celsus was what the psalmist would no doubt call a brutish man; he called Jesus a bastard and spread the blasphemy that He was the offspring of an illicit union between Mary and a soldier named Panthera. It would seem that Satan finds a fiendish pleasure in stirring up men to renew the attacks of these ancient slanderers from time to time. Luther, as we have already heard, had his troubles with men who departed from the Scriptures also on this point. Schwenckfeld, *e. g.*, taught a "deification [*Vergottung*] of the body of Christ." The Anabaptists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries seem to have cherished the rather peculiar notion that Christ brought a body

along with Him from heaven. After the days of Luther there was a lull in the storm. In the last century and a half, however, the waves of opposition have almost without ceasing rolled high. The *Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia* says: "In the latter part of the eighteenth century an assault on the doctrine was made by Thomas Paine (*Age of Reason*). Voltaire and most of the Deists and rationalists declared for the natural explanation of Jesus' birth." De Wette (1780—1849) calls Matthew's and Luke's narratives of Christ's birth "poetic symbols of religious ideas." The opening sentence of Renan's *Life of Christ* reads: "Jesus was born at Nazareth, a small town of Galilee, which before his time had no celebrity. . . . His father Joseph and his mother Mary were people in humble circumstances." (Orr, *V. B.*, p. 5.) Schleiermacher likewise had stirred up the troubled waters. The storm increased in fury when *Pfarrer* Schrempf, in Lenzendorf, Wurttemberg, was deposed from office in 1892 because of his refusal to use the Apostolic Creed at the administration of Holy Baptism. Professor Harnack sprang to his defense. And since then hardly a year has passed in which no new attack has been launched upon this important doctrine. To-day things have come to such a pass that in Brockhaus's *Lexikon* the brazen statement is made: "*Nach der urspruenglichen Ueberlieferung hat Maria Jesum ihrem Gatten Joseph in rechtaessiger Ehe geboren,*" and that countless pulpit orators and theological professors repeat over and over again that the Virgin Birth is unacceptable to theology, to science, to history, to sound human reason. One cannot but shudder at the blasphemous tone of the remarks made by some of these men, who would still lay claim to the name Christian. Soltan, professor in Zabern, Alsace, in his *Geburtsgeschichte Jesu Christi*, says: "*Wer noch weiterhin fordert, dass ein evangelischer Christ glauben solle an die Worte: 'Empfangen von dem Heiligen Geist, geboren aus Maria der Jungfrau,' der macht sich wissentlich zum Mitschuldigen an einer Suende wider den Heiligen Geist des wahren Evangeliums.*" (*Syn.-Ber. d. Mich.-Dist.*, 41, p. 27.) R. J. Campbell says: "The credibility and significance of Christianity are in no way affected by the doctrine of the Virgin Birth, otherwise than that the belief tends to put a barrier between Jesus and the race and to make Him something that cannot properly be called human. . . . It operates as a hindrance to spiritual religion and a real living faith in Jesus." (Orr, *V. B.*, p. 5.) Kaftan stamps the Virgin Birth as a doctrine "having no religious value." (Pieper, *Dogm.*, III, 366.) Fosdick declares with reference to his

denial of the Virgin Birth that he is "far from thinking that he has given up anything vital in the New Testament's attitude toward Jesus." (*The New Knowledge and the Christian Faith*, p. 10.) In cyclopedias (e. g., *Encycl. Biblica*, Cheyne), in commentaries, sermons, pamphlets, and the daily press we meet this damnable heresy. It has representatives among the Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and other prominent denominations. Hastings, in the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, has a long list of publications directed against the Virgin Birth.

If men of this type were to be regarded as representative of the true Church, we certainly could not derive very much encouragement from their testimony. However, a brief review of the position of those whom we honor as eminent men in the Church of Jesus will strengthen us in our faith. In the *New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* we read: "The doctrine that Christ was born of the Virgin Mary through the operation of the Holy Ghost received its first authoritatively formulated statement in the earliest Roman creed, not later than 150 A. D., and probably earlier (in its earliest form, adopted by Harnack, about 140, by Zahn about 120, by Kattenbusch about 100)" (sub "Virgin Birth"). Orr, in his *Virgin Birth of Christ*, says: "Apart from the Ebionites, or narrower section of Jewish Christians, and a few Gnostic sects, no body of Christians in early times is known to have existed who did not accept as part of their faith the birth of Jesus from the Virgin Mary, while, on the other hand, we have the amplest evidence that this belief was part of the general faith of the Church." (p. 138.) Ignatius (ca. 110) accepted it; he says to the Ephesians: "Our God, Jesus Christ, was, according to the appointment of God, conceived in the womb of Mary, of the seed of David, but by the Holy Ghost." (Orr, *V. B.*, 144.) Aristides (ca. 125), in his *Apology*, gives this as a part of the Christian faith, that the Son of God "from a Hebrew Virgin took and clad himself with flesh." (*L. u. W.*, 68, 133.) The great men of the early Church were ever ready to fight for this article, e. g., against the Gnostic sects. They attached great significance to it. Orr says: "The doctrine of the Virgin Birth was brought into practical use as guaranteeing, on the one side, the true humanity, but not less, on the other, the divine Sonship of Jesus. This is the ground taken by Irenaeus, by Tertullian, by Clement of Alexandria, by Hippolytus, by Origen — by all who discuss the subject." (*V. B.*, 148.) He quotes a number of pertinent passages from the Fathers. The position of the Christians of the first centuries was shared by those of the following.

We have the confession of the Virgin Birth in the Apostles' Creed, in the Nicene Creed, in that of Chalcedon (451). Schaff-Herzog: "The traditional doctrine remains for nearly fifteen hundred years the common, well-nigh undisputed tradition of the Church, even among the Arians and the Socinians" (sub "Virgin Birth"). In the Lutheran Church the Virgin Birth has been taught since the days of Luther. We find repeated reference to it in our symbolical books. (*Conc. Trigl.*, 821, 12; 1017, 6; 1023, 24; etc.) In other churches, too, there are great hosts who cling to the doctrine. Orr mentions these men: Godet, Bishop Lightfoot, Sir Wm. Ramsay, Canon Hensen, Philip Schaff, Dr. Briggs. In our day Fosdick and others have contributed their share toward revealing that among Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists, Episcopalians, and others there are still many thousands who confess with us: "I believe in Jesus Christ, conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary."

VI.

Rebuttal of the arguments advanced against the Virgin Birth is of little importance to the Christian so far as he is a Christian. For the Christian bases his faith upon the infallible Word of God and has the assurance that the very gates of hell shall not prevail against the teaching of the Lord. But we are not yet one hundred per cent. Christian. The old Adam within us is inclined to doubt the truth and occasionally needs to be shown his woeful ignorance. Over against the enemy, too, a reasonable amount of apologetics may at times render valuable service. We shall, therefore, in the concluding chapter consider some of the arguments most frequently brought forward by our opponents.

The supernatural element of the Virgin Birth is sometimes urged as proof of its impossibility. Matthew Arnold: "I do not believe in the Virgin Birth because it involves a miracle, and miracles *do not happen*. I have no place for them in my intellectual scheme." (Orr, *V. B.*, p. 12; quoted from *Literature and Dogma*.) Men of such broadness of mind that they must be classified as Deists, pantheists, evolutionists, and extreme rationalists cannot logically find any room for the Virgin Birth in their religious systems. The man that denies all supernatural phenomena is to be pitied; he is doing violence to sound reason. In connection with the denial of this doctrine there appears an element which otherwise is absent, or at least less prominent, namely, the evil and corrupt will of natural man, the inborn enmity toward God and His holy Word. Our Lord is a "stumbling-block to the Jews and

to the Greeks foolishness." In consequence of this natural hatred the sinner cannot think straight when questions concerning Christ arise; else he would admit the possibility of the Virgin Birth. "That which may be known of God is manifest in them, . . . even His eternal power and Godhead." Rom. 1, 19 f. Only the fool says in his heart, "There is no God." Ps. 14, 1. If there is a God, the almighty Creator of heaven and earth, a Supreme Being whose dominion is universal and absolutely illimitable, it is certainly an act of arrogance for any man on earth to presume to determine *a priori* the possibilities of His relation to created things and His operation in the universe. Nature, reason, and the unanimous conviction of all nations teach: There is a God. Grant the existence of God, and you will have to proceed a step farther and grant the possibility of miracles. And if miracles can be performed, must we not, then, admit the reasonableness of the Virgin Birth?

There are some who insist that the Virgin Birth can be accepted without believing that it was a miracle. Augusta Gaskell, in *Science: an Aid to Faith*, endeavors (in her own words) "to prove that the belief in the physiological event of the Virgin Birth is entirely congruous with the most advanced findings of science and that modern science affirms nothing that discredits the doctrine of the Virgin Birth." (*Theol. Monthly*, 3, 72.) She draws attention to the fact that in nature parthenogenesis is not by any means an unknown phenomenon. She says: "G. Bohn produced artificial parthenogenesis in *Strongylocentrotus lividus* eggs, exposing them to radium rays; and Loeb caused the eggs of *Arbacia* and *Chaetopterus* to segment by exposing them to ultraviolet radiations from a quartz mercury arc." But, I ask, what relation is there between these interesting phenomena and the birth of Christ? Christ is not a *Strongylocentrotus lividus* nor a *Chaetopterus* nor anything of that nature. The Scriptures describe His birth as a miracle wrought by the Holy Ghost and not by ultraviolet rays. You cannot explain away the Virgin Birth by means of biological data of this kind. However, as has been remarked in the preceding chapter, one might grant that the fact of parthenogenesis in the natural world supplies us with proof of the possibility of the parthenogenesis of Christ.

"Schleiermacher affirms the natural paternity of Joseph, but accounts for the archetypal nature of Jesus' consciousness through a creative divine deed in His birth, by means of which the original idea of man became realized." (*New Schaff-Herzog Encycl.*) Schleiermacher has numerous imitators. Orr mentions Keim,

Beyschlag, and the Ritschlians Kaftan, Loofs, Haering. These gentlemen grant that there was something miraculous connected with the birth of Jesus; however, they do not concede a physical miracle, but only a miracle of a spiritual, moral, psychic nature. According to this theory, God poured a pure, immaculate soul into Christ's body, which was begotten and born according to the laws of nature. But that is not the teaching of Scripture. The Bible ascribes holiness to Christ, holiness of body and soul, not merely sanctification, but perfect sanctity ("that Holy Thing"). Christ knew no sin. The Bible says: "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," Col. 2, 9; and in scores of passages it calls Him the Son of God. Granted that Christ is holy, absolutely holy, the theory of Schleiermacher and his followers collapses. Orr correctly says: "It is a corollary from the known laws of the connection of mind and body that every mind needs an organism fitted to it. If the mind of man is the product of a new cause, the brain, which is the instrument of the mind, must share its peculiar origin. You cannot put a human mind into a simian brain." (*V. B.*, p. 199.) If we put Schleiermacher's brain into the skull of an ape, would this monster be another Schleiermacher? And what would result if we were to put a sinless soul in a sinful body? We cannot but say that those who grant that Christ had no sin must concede that He has a sinless body; and if they make this concession, they must continue along this line and admit that His body had a supernatural origin. The miraculous element in the person of Christ cannot possibly cease at any intermediate point of His existence. It must reach back to the very beginning of His being; indeed, beyond that point. Of course, if Christ's sinlessness was merely relative, Schleiermacher's explanation may seem satisfactory. But Schleiermacher and his ilk assume that Christ has a perfect spirit. We retort: A perfect spirit cannot dwell in an imperfect organism.

Higher critics have discovered a very simple way of ridding themselves of this inconvenient doctrine of the Virgin Birth. They simply expunge every Scriptural statement that does not harmonize with their views, either denying the genuineness of the first chapters of Matthew and Luke or else attacking the integrity of the text. Meyer, in his *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament* (8th edition, Bern. Weiss), says: "*Die Echtheit des ganzen ersten und zweiten Kapitels ist bestritten oder wenigstens verdaechtigt worden von Williams, Stroth, Ammon, Eichhorn u. a.*" Wellhausen's *Das Evangelium Lucae, uebersetzt und erkluert* begins with ch. 3, 1.

Others, *e. g.*, Pfeleiderer, Schmiedel, Usener, Hillmann, J. Weiss, Cheyne, Conybeare, Harnack, excise certain parts from the text, *e. g.*, in Luke's gospel, vv. 34 and 35. Moffatt, in his New Testament, interpolates words that make Joseph the father of Jesus. (*L. u. W.*, 70, 146.) The devil can take a good, long nap if he can persuade us Christians to follow this method; for in that event the story of the Virgin Birth would be a plain invention, having no basis whatsoever in Holy Writ. But we ought to think twice before accepting the word of the higher critics. The opening chapters of Matthew and Luke are in all MSS. Concerning Matthew, Meyer writes: "*Alle Codices und Versionen enthalten die beiden Kapitel.*" "Much has been made of a reading of the Old Syriac gospels or *Evangeleion da Mepharresche*, in a palimpsest found by Miss Agnes Smith Lewis in February, 1892. In this MS. Matt. 1, 16 reads as follows: 'Joseph, to whom was betrothed Mary, the virgin, begat Jesus, who is called the Christ.' It seems evident that in this MS. 'begat' is used here in the conventional sense of 'became the legal father of.' For in this MS., in vv. 18—25, is the same clear account of the Virgin Birth as we read in other innumerable MSS. This is not so strange; for according to Jer. 22, 30 Jeconiah really had no son, and we have therefore to understand that he whom he 'begat,' according to Matt. 1, 12, was simply his legal son. Similarly must be understood 1 Chron. 3, 17." (F. Pierce Ramsay, *The Virgin Birth*, p. 51.) The same must be said about Luke. We find the first chapters of these two evangelists in the Vulgate of St. Jerome, the Peshito, in all the Coptic versions, in the *Diatessaron* of Tatian (ca. 160); even Celsus refers to the Biblical account of the Virgin Birth over and over again and uses it as a source of ammunition. (Orr, *V. B.*, p. 42.) There is no reason either why we should look upon Luke 1, 34, 35 as spurious. The passage is contained in all MSS. and all translations, the only exception being the so-called Ebionite gospel. And shall we be so foolish as to accept the testimony of that gospel, the very first verse of which is all wrong, reading as it does: "It came to pass in the days of Herod, king of Judea, that John baptized with the baptism of repentance," and which is totally unreliable otherwise too? If the story of Christ's birth were not in the Scriptures, we could not explain its origin among the early Christians. Furthermore, it seems almost unbelievable that the gospel should nowhere refer to Christ's birth. In every chapter, mention is made of miracles connected with Him. Since the writers of the gospel report the events of His unique life, His unique death, His unique victory

over the grave so explicitly and accurately, one cannot but deem it self-understood that they make at least some reference to the beginning of His life. The denials of higher critics are not motivated by critical considerations, but by dogmatic interests. That is evident; else they would not deny the existence of witnesses for the Virgin Birth.

The opposition does not content itself with flat denial, but offers explanations of the origin of the so-called myth. It cannot but engage in ventures of that kind since it is undeniable that Christians have for many centuries believed and taught that Jesus was born of the Virgin. Chiefly two explanations are offered: 1) the theory of a Jewish mythological origin, 2) that of a pagan origin. Both theories have insuperable difficulties even from the historical point of view.

Let us first take up the assertion that the story of Christ is of Jewish invention. The matter is explained thus: The character of Jesus, His mighty words, His great deeds, made such a deep impression upon His followers that, unintelligent as they were, they inclined to the belief that He was the promised Messiah. Soon the question arose in their minds: What was the source of His greatness? They recalled having read something in Isaiah about a virgin's son; and they at once jumped at the conclusion: Jesus is that virgin's son. Another explanation runs something like this: The Jews in the course of time, especially in consequence of the Christology developed by Paul, persuaded themselves that Jesus is God. And so they were under the necessity of providing for Him a supernatural entrance into the world. Influenced by their recollection of Is. 7, 14, they arrived at the conviction that their wonderful Leader might, perhaps, be the virgin's son referred to in that passage. Ere long it was generally assumed: Jesus is the son of a virgin. This sounds somewhat plausible. But there is something rotten here. In the first place, it seems more than passing strange that this "myth" developed with such astounding rapidity. The entire Christian Church of the first centuries (excluding the Ebionites, if you want to look upon them as part of the Church) believed and taught the supernatural conception and the virgin birth of our Lord. Nowhere do we meet the faintest trace of a contradiction. Barely twenty-five, thirty years after Christ's death, Matthew and Luke broadcast the story that He was virgin-born. Also this should be considered: At the time of the publication of Matthew's and Luke's gospels there were men still living who had been acquainted with Mary. Now, if Matthew and Luke had published a product of

their own imagination, do you not suppose that their story of the infancy of Christ would have met with instant contradiction from the family of Jesus? For if their words are a free invention, what disgrace falls upon Mary and her Son! Furthermore, the critics, as we have heard, base their opposition to the Virgin Birth to a large extent upon the silence of Paul. If the myth was in process of evolution at his time, we should have reason to expect that he would have known something about it and made some mention of it. The opponents themselves destroy the foundation of their theory, declaring in the same breath that the myth came into being at an early day, and, again, that it was unknown to Paul, the greatest teacher of the day. — Secondly, it can be proved that the Jews did not deem it self-understood at all that their Messiah would be born of a virgin. Edersheim, in his *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, lists 456 passages which the Jews understood to have a Messianic meaning. Is. 7, 14 is not among them. There is a total lack of evidence that the Jews, who were such sticklers for the purity of matrimony and family life, who looked upon children as gifts of God, who had no order of virgins consecrated to divine worship, had any inclination at all to develop the notion that a virgin might conceive and bear a son. — Not much need be said as to the theory that the myth was evolved from the Christological teaching of St. Paul. This view receives its death-blow from the fact that a written report of the Virgin Birth was extant before him or, at least, contemporaneously with him. And one is once more tempted to inquire whether mythology anywhere knows of a legend that reached its full development in so brief a time, say thirty or thirty-five years.

The difficulties connected with the Jewish mythological theory have moved some critics to search heathen mythology for an explanation. Among the heathen we meet with innumerable legends about profligate gods, who fathered a considerable contingent of demigods and heroes. This blasphemous speculation about the pagan origin of the chaste story of our Savior's birth hardly deserves to be dignified by an attempt at refutation. We shall, however, point out several reasons why we must regard it as totally irrelevant.

The parallels that are said to exist in heathen theology have nothing in common with the Biblical account of Christ's birth. Fosdick says: "According to their faiths, Buddha and Zoroaster, and Lao-tse and Mahavira, were all supernaturally born. . . . When a personality arose so high that men adored him, the ancient world

attributed his superiority to some special divine influence in his generation, and they commonly phrased their faith in terms of miraculous birth. So Pythagoras was called virgin-born, and Plato, and Augustus Caesar, and many more." (Sermon on *Faith and the New Knowledge*, p. 9.) He intimates that the story of Christ's birth lies on the same plane. Others have drawn the same comparison between the Virgin Birth and the old Greek and Latin tales about their idols. Again we say: "Where is the point of contact? Is there any resemblance between the immoralities of heathen gods and the beautifully chaste account of the conception and birth of Jesus? Zeus, *e. g.*, inflamed with the fires of concupiscence, enters the chamber of Danae in the form of a golden rain and begets Perseus. On another occasion he becomes enamored of the beautiful Antiope and approaches her in the form of a Satyr, with the result that she gives birth to twins. Mars falls in love with the vestal virgin Rhea Sylvia, and after a reasonable time she is delivered of Romulus and Remus. These are all instances of a divine paternity. The act of begetting, on the part of the god, is physical and, we might add, bestial. These mothers are not virgins; they have had sexual intercourse with a god. The same observation holds with respect to Perictione, who is said to have become pregnant with Plato in consequence of having had intercourse with a phantom of Apollo. Alexander, much to his mother's displeasure, spread the tale that he had been begotten by a serpent. Caesar Augustus told a similar story about himself. We find similar tales in Egyptian literature. All these grotesque inventions correspond in this, that a god takes the place of a human father. There is nothing in them about a virgin birth. . . . Fosdick mentions the history of Zoroaster." Hastings, in his *Encyclopedia* (sub "Virgin Birth"), has this to say in this connection: "A substance called the 'heavenly glory,' created by Ahura Mazda, mingled with all the stages of birth in Zoroaster's ancestral line. The sacred books tell how his father ate a plant containing the fravashi of Zoroaster, and how both his parents ate food containing his substance. But this leads up to his actual physical generation. So also when the myth tells how the future savior Saoshyat would be born of a girl, this is because some of the semen of Zoroaster, preserved through long ages, will enter her womb." In ancient writings of the Parsees his father is expressly mentioned, a man bearing the name Pourushaspa; and it is reported that Zoroaster was the third of five brothers. (*Luth. Witness*, 41, 327.) — Buddha also figures more or less prominently in the literature of those who ascribe the origin of the Virgin

Birth of Christ to a heathen source. Hastings (*Encycl.*) remarks: "The myths of his birth came into being long after his historical existence, and, being based on transmigration, they expressly contradict his own teaching. Buddha, existing in heaven, decided to be born again on earth for the enlightenment of man. For this purpose he chooses his father and mother, and this puts his virgin birth (commonly asserted also of him) out of court. His mother dreamt that in the shape of a white elephant he entered her womb. The next day this dream was interpreted by several Brahmans, who told Suddhana that he would have a son, the Buddha. The ordinary physical generation is implied, but to this is added the supernatural element of Buddha's preexistence. . . . It is nonsense to speak of his mother as Maya the Virgin." This fable is said to have originated in India long after the spread of the Gospel, and hence cannot have served as a source for Matthew and Luke. — Lao-tse, the founder of Taoism, had a father, who, according to tradition, at the age of seventy, married a forty-year-old woman. — Mahavira, the prophet of a Hindu sect, was said to have been born in a supernatural manner; but the story was told long after the birth of Christ. His sect, known as the Jains, who honor him as their prophet, have a literature dating back only to the fifth century. — So in paganism we have not found any trace of a virgin birth.

Among uncivilized peoples of various parts of the world there are weird legends of the pregnancy of virgins caused by swallowing pebbles or blades of grass or by contact with some material object, by bathing, or by the rays of the sun. The statement has been made by some (Hastings, *Encycl.*) that these legends contain the key to the origin of the stories of Christ's birth. But even though fanciful tales of this nature are encountered in Australia and elsewhere, there is no evidence of their circulation before the birth of Jesus or of their having contributed as much as an iota to the rise of the so-called Jesus myth. This observation leads us to our second objection to the assertion that the narrative of Christ's birth developed in heathen soil. There is a complete lack of proof that these heathen vagaries exerted any influence at all upon Jewish thought. There is a link missing in the chain; indeed, the whole chain is non-existent. Even if the stories to which reference has been made were genuine legends of virgin births, we could not but ask what possible connection there exists between this heathen fancy and Jewish thought. Where is the proof that the early Christians were familiar with these tales? Where is the proof that if they were familiar with them, they applied them to Jesus? Even the *New Schaff-Herzog*

(otherwise, as is well known, rather liberal) says: "The connection proposed between the story of the Virgin Birth and stories of supernatural births in the Old Testament, in classic antiquity, in the wide-spread hope of a world-redeemer, has not been established." And Harnack declares: "The Greek or Oriental mythology I should leave entirely out of account; for there is no occasion to suppose that Gentile congregations in the time up to the middle of the second century adopted, despite fixed principles, popular mythical representations." (Orr, *V. B.*, 176.)—New sources have therefore been sought. Cheyne speaks of a "pre-Christian sketch" based upon Babylonian mythology. Cheyne himself never saw this sketch and does not know any one else who did. It is non-existent. He must have been dreaming when he brought it from Babylon. And if it had existed, proof of its influence upon the Jewish spirit is lacking. Moreover, the Babylonian stories that are said to have served as source of the "pre-Christian" sketch are not descriptions of virgin births, but rather, as Cheyne himself says, stories of "goddess-mothers" who were independent of the marriage tie, in other words, high-class harlots.

The theories that have been invented to explain the rise of the Biblical story of Jesus' birth contradict each other. We have a case of internecine warfare here. One is reminded of the witnesses who took the stand against Jesus at His trial before Caiaphas and whose witness agreed not together. The rival theories are hopelessly at variance with each other. The Jewish theory cuts the throat of the Gentile theory. The heathen theory disposes of the Jewish theory. The Babylonian theory gives the death-blow to the Jewish and the pagan theories and goes down to destruction with them.

Our prayer is that God, in His mercy, may preserve us in the true faith in His holy Word, that we may never waver in sincerely confessing: "I believe in Jesus Christ, His only-begotten Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary." Amen.
