

THE MIRACULOUS BIRTH OF JESUS

IT IS not strange that men should question the teaching of the Bible respecting the miraculous birth of Jesus. Voltaire, Paine, Ingersoll and others have denied it. Nor do we question the right of Rev. Dr. Aked and others of today to take up the same arguments. We live in a free country. Candor in our day need not lead anybody to the stake. We rejoice in these liberties.

But we are surprised that Dr. Aked should still claim to be a Christian, and still retain the pastorate of a Christian Church, while denying the very foundation of the Christian religion. Our amazement grows when we learn that after he had frankly acknowledged his unbelief he was elected to be the head of the Church Federation in San Francisco.

Think of the meaning of the votes of more than three-fourths of that Federation (78), agreeing that Jesus was not supernaturally born! Less than one-fourth of these Federationists (22) believe the fundamental doctrine of Christianity!

We can hear these learned gentlemen remonstrate, saying, Pastor Russell, you should realize that there are two Christianities in our day. We belong to the newer and larger one, which has the backing of all the colleges. We therefore have first right to the name Christian. The old view, which you uphold, has doctrines of human depravity – of a Divine sentence, which must be met by the death of a perfect, sinless Savior. We "Modernists" still hold to Christ, but as a great Teacher – not a Redeemer. Your old view deals with *personal* sin. Our newer, broader view deals with *national* and *civic* sins and their cure and a gradual evolution of the race to perfection and everlasting life – only the fittest surviving.

A RESPONSIBILITY UPON THE MINISTRY

Were numbers and influence the sole criterion by which Christianity is to be discerned, we might be forced to concede the point. But they are not. Christianity was established by Jesus and His Apostles. The unbelief of few or many cannot change Christianity. If we shall prove our points, we shall hope that the seventy-eight believers in the Christianity (?) of the colleges will realize that in retaining the name of Christian and holding pastorates in Christian churches, they are sailing under false colors; and they should resign or induce their congregations to unite with them in some new name, such as "Humanitarians."

Merely to endorse a few of Jesus' teachings, such as the Golden Rule, while rejecting His other teachings, would not give any one the right to the name Christian. Plato, Confucius and other sages uttered some teachings which we approve. Why not adopt their names? Is it because they are less popular in our day?

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Dr. Aked admits that St. Matthew gives the line of Joseph, who adopted Jesus as his foster-child – the son of his virgin wife by Divine Power. He admits that St. Luke gives the genealogy of Mary, the mother of Jesus. He admits, also, that St. John's Gospel tells of the pre-human existence of Jesus.

But Dr. Aked challenges proof that Jesus Himself claimed a supernatural birth. He boldly declares that St. Peter never refers to it. He exultingly points us to the Epistles of St. Paul, as not teaching that Jesus was a supernatural Person. One might suppose, when reading Dr. Aked's statement, that he fully believes and endorses all the teachings of Jesus, St. Peter and St. Paul; and that if they had told of the miraculous birth he would be a hearty believer in it and an advocate of it. Let us see! Let us give Dr. Aked and his seventy-

eight supporters the proof of their error and accept the Bible. "Charity hopeth all things!"

The Bible stands or falls as a whole. Its Plan of salvation, made up of the teachings of Jesus, the Apostles and the Prophets, cannot be *accepted* in part and *rejected* in part. If Jesus and His Apostles taught that He had a special birth for a special purpose, and this were not true, they were wicked deceivers. Then not one word of theirs should be accepted or trusted. To call Jesus the Great Teacher and then to say that the basis of His teaching is falsehood, is inconsistent, would imply sympathy with falsehood.

ST. PETER'S TESTIMONY

The teaching of Jesus was chiefly by induction. He had been with His disciples working miracles for probably two years before He asked them, "Whom say ye that I am?" When St. Peter declared, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," Jesus replied, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in Heaven." – Matthew 16:15-17.

Did not St. Peter thus declare his faith that Jesus was the Son of God – not the son of Joseph? And did not Jesus approve this, and refer to the Heavenly and not to an earthly father?

What did Jesus mean when He declared, "Before Abraham was, I am?" By induction He told of a pre-human existence – or He deceived! Similarly He prayed to the Father, "Glorify Thou Me with Thine own Self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was." (John 8:58; 17:5.) If He had no previous existence, but was born like others, His words were deceptive. Was the great Teacher the great Deceiver?

Again Jesus told His disciples about His ascending up where He was before. If He had no previous existence, if He had not a special birth, how could we understand these words except as

deceptive? Similarly Jesus referred to Himself as "the Bread which came down from Heaven." – John 6:62,32-35,41.

Surely Jesus was miraculously born, or else He was the greatest and most successful of all deceivers, and therefore the worst of all deceivers. Let each take his choice. There is no middle ground.

ST. PAUL'S VIEW OF THE SUBJECT

Having heard from Jesus and from St. Peter, let us hear from St. Paul. What is the force, or significance of St. Paul's statement that Jesus is "the Firstborn of every creature," and that "by Him were all things created, that are in Heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible...all things were created by Him and for Him; and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist"? (Colossians 1:15-17.) These words by the Apostle are surely not in accord with the theory that Jesus began His existence the same as others – that He was the son of Joseph.

Again St. Paul writes, "Our Lord Jesus, though He was rich, for our sakes became poor." (2 Corinthians 8:9.) Again he declares, "Who, existing in a form of God, counted not equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men." – Philippians 2:6,7.

Again, what is the meaning of St. Paul's declaration that Jesus was "Holy, guileless, undefiled and separate from sinners"? (Hebrews 7:26.) If Jesus was the son of Joseph, He was not separate from sinners, but belonged [**R5768 : page 280**] to the same stock with all others and would also have needed a Redeemer.

ST. JOHN'S STATEMENTS

The early Church all believed Jesus' declaration that He was the Son of God, whom the Father had sent into the world to be the Savior of men. (John 3:17.) Indeed, this feature of the Master's teachings

especially angered the Jews; for they declared that in claiming to be the Son of God He was establishing Himself upon a pedestal of honor, dignity, glory, in competition with Jehovah. To this Jesus replied, "Say ye of Him whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest! because I said, I am the Son of God?" – John 10:36.

The Gospel by St. John was written later than the other Gospels; hence it was not necessary that the writer should take up the miraculous birth of Jesus. But it was eminently proper that through him God should give us a glimpse into the pre-human condition of the Savior. Mark well the particularity of the Apostle's words: "In the beginning was the Logos, and the Logos was with the God, and the Logos was a God. The same was in the beginning with the God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not one thing made that was made...And the Logos was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." – John 1:1-14.

BASIS OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE RANSOM

Separated from the doctrine of the virgin birth of Jesus, the theology of the Bible would not hold together for one moment. Its claim is that the Divine sentence following Adam's sin was a death sentence. The basis of that Divine judgment is that no sinner is worthy of life everlasting. The six thousand years of the world's history, from Adam's time until now, demonstrate that man is unable to regain perfection, and unable to resist the curse of sin and the sentence of death – "Dying, thou shalt die." – Genesis 2:17, margin.

The teaching of the Bible is that God arranged this death sentence purposely, so as to make necessary the death of Jesus. St. Paul so declares, saying, "As by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead; for as all in Adam die, even so all in Christ shall be made alive, every man in his own order." (1 Corinthians 15:21-23.) In other words, if God had not provided a

sinless Redeemer, and if that Redeemer had not died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and risen from the dead for our justification, then there would have been no future life for humanity – the death of mankind would have been like that of the brute, a hopeless one. There would have been no resurrection. Death would have been an eternal sleep.

St. Paul emphasizes this thought, declaring that if there be no resurrection of the dead, then all faith is vain, all hope is vain, all preaching is vain. (1 Corinthians 15:13,14.) No one will question the declaration of the Scriptures that all humanity are misshapen in iniquity, and that in sin did our mothers conceive us. Father Adam and Mother Eve gave us, as their children, a legacy of imperfection of mind and body and of sinful tendencies. God's provision is that Christ shall make good for the transgression of the first Adam, and that eventually He shall be the Second Adam, who will be successful, who will give life everlasting to all those who will exercise obedient faith in Him.

BASIS OF THE DOCTRINE OF RESTITUTION

The first offer of everlasting life through Christ has been going out for nineteen centuries; but few have hearing ears and understanding hearts. It is to these few that the call now comes to leave the world and to become associates with Jesus in the glory, honor and immortality to which He has attained. He attained the glorious station which He now occupies, "far above angels, principalities and powers," at the right hand of the Majesty on High, as a reward for His obedience to the Father's will – obedience in coming into the world, in enduring faithfully the trials of His earthly ministry, and finally in dying a sacrificial death. St. Paul writes of Him, "Who for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame and is set down at the right hand of the Throne of God." (Hebrews 12:2.) The invitation of this Gospel Age to all who have the hearing ear is to follow in the steps of Jesus, to become

joint-sacrificers with Him, and to be sharers of His Heavenly glory and His Messianic Kingdom.

When the Church shall all have been gathered, then Messiah's Kingdom will be established, for which we pray, "Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven." For a thousand years Christ and His glorified Church will bless mankind, uplifting them to human perfection, mental, moral, physical. Whosoever will may then attain to the everlasting life secured for all by the sacrificial death of Him who was "holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners," by virtue of His special birth.

