

## e. Sun Gods

# Investigating Biblical History

*The anti-Papal conspirator, Scaradino, executed in 1629, thought only fools believed in hell, and rulers wanted their subjects to believe in it to allow them to rule as they liked.*

## 1. Sun Gods as Atoning Saviours

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### Abstract

*The doctrine of salvation by crucifixion had an astronomical origin. The sun is hung on a cross or crucified when it passes through the equinoxes. The sun god exists as twins, a bright twin and a dark twin, summer and winter, bright and dark. People in northern climates were saved by the sun's crucifixion when it crossed over the equatorial line into the season of spring, at the vernal equinox at Easter. The sun that is crucified is the dark winter sun, lacking the warmth and brightness of the summer. It is resurrected as, or supplanted by, its twin, the bright warm fertilizing summer sun that continues on to ascend into heaven. In the hot climates of the ancient near east, the summer sun is cool winter sun that had brought the rains, and his death was bewailed by people forlorn until he came again in the autumn. In Ezekiel, women outside the temple gates bewailed the death of Tammuz. Christianity confused the two traditions.*

### Atoning Saviours

I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified,

writes Paul in *1 Corinthians* 2:2. The determination not to know anything but the crucifixion of Jesus Christ was narrowing down knowledge to rather a small compass. Evidently converts in Corinth were questioning, and Paul begins by establishing that questions are not allowed to Christians. Paul has to berate the wise and praise the foolish in this epistle. God chose the foolish things of the world not the wise. And so it has always remained—the most marvellous way of gulling the credulous. Anyway, already in the 50s of the first century some people were asking questions and one of the questions will have been whether Jesus was really crucified.

Irenaeus, one of the most frequently quoted Christian writers of the ancient bishops, declares upon the authority of the martyr Polycarp, who claimed to have got it from S John and all the elders of Asia, that Jesus Christ lived to be about fifty years old. There must have been a margin for distrusting the fact of the crucifixion. Yet, if Jesus was a saviour, it is likely that he must have been crucified because other saviours of the same type were. “Sacrilege!” Paul’s Christians, trained in foolishness, cry. “Jesus Christ was the only crucified saviour!” Sorry, other saviours are suspected of crucifixion, and certainly many were cruelly punished for saving humanity. Irenaeus might have felt it politic to deny crucifixion to distinguish the Christian saviour from the others!

The Persian equinoctial ceremonies dedicated to Mithras seem to have involved crucifixion, when Haman the Wicked, standing for the winter sun, is crucified in *Esther* to arise as the summer sun who is the Saviour, Mithras. The slain Divine Intercessor of the Caucasians, Prometheus, suffered hung on a tree or a rock for the sins of mortal beings. Attis, Ixion, Tantalus were all hung on trees or wheels in crucifixion. Yet the Christian disciple hugs to his breast the bloody cross of the murdered Jesus, confident that he was the one god that ever died for the sins of man.

## **The Twin Sun Gods**

There are two suns, summer and winter, bright and dark or stormy, and these are seen daily when the sun crosses the heavens bright, then sinks to the west darkening and remains dark through the night until dawn. The sun god therefore exists as twins—a bright twin and a dark twin. The god of the full year—the complete annual movement of the sun though the zodiac—is divided into its two half yearly parts—the good god, and his twin, the evil god. In solar mythology, the sun god has two twin sons.

These gods represent the summer and the winter but which is which depends on where you are. In the northern climates, the good god is the bright and light summer sun, while the wicked god is the dark and cold winter sun. In the ancient near east, the good god was the stormy sun of winter which brought the rains, while the wicked god was the fiercely burning hot sun of summer that scorched the earth and parched the vegetation. Either way, their lives are intertwined in the annual cycle, and give us the dualistic ideas that preceded the regression to monotheism. The crucified one, in the ancient near east, paradoxically, is the dark twin which is why saviour gods often have a dark or black complexion.

The summer “bright” sun god is born at the winter solstice, and the increasing hours of lightness in the day show him growing in strength until he reaches his greatest power, the summer solstice—the longest day. The winter “dark” sun god, is born at the summer solstice, and the increasing hours of darkness show him growing in strength until he reaches his greatest power, the winter solstice—the longest night. As one twin grows in power, the other declines in power in an endless battle between light and darkness and good and evil. John the Baptist gives us pause for thought when he says of Jesus:

*He must increase, but I must decrease.*

***Jn 3:30***

A relic of the original belief in the dual solar nature of the Christian myth, it must have been said at the birth of the summer sun at the winter solstice, for, in this myth, John is the winter sun, as his association with water makes clear. He is Oannes, the Babylonian equivalent (Ea), born at the summer solstice and dying at the spring equinox. 24 June, the end of the summer solstice, was supposedly the birth date of John the Baptist in the Christian calendar, who was born six months before Jesus, according to gospel tradition. In fact, “Jesus” is not a separate god but a title of John—Saviour. The gentile Churches deliberately confused the tradition to distinguish Christians from the followers of John the Baptist. Both were Nazarenes and both had the same sun god, but the Christians had to distinguish their god from the Baptist’s. So they made John the Baptist the herald of Jesus.

In the gospel stories, Jesus actually has a twin called Thomas but that is not his name. It simply means twin, as does his *New Testament* surname, Didymus. He takes no part in the drama except to doubt the resurrection for which he demands proof and is allowed to put his hand into the god’s spear wound. This is the mythical relic of the spear wound being caused at his hand.

The gospels also count among the apostles John and James of Zebedee who are brothers and rivals. John is the same winter sun. James is a rendering of the Hebrew Jacob, and Jacob in the Jewish scriptures is the twin brother and rival of Esau. Jacob is said to mean supplanter—he supplants his brother—and Esau is said to mean hairy. John the Baptist dressed in rough clothing of camel’s hair. Christian images remarkably show John the Baptist as horned like Moses—explained away by Christians as horns of light—and even with the limbs of a satyr and cloven hooves. Esau therefore equates with John, and they are emblems of summer fertility, effectively the classical god of woods and fields, Pan. The reason is again astronomical. John the Baptist is of course the water carrier of Aquarius, but the summer rains in Palestine extend over December and January and so include the month of Capricorn. He is therefore also the Goat.

Like Esau, Jesus has a brother called James who supplanted him—he becomes the leader of the Nazarenes after him. He has the title, “The Just,” justice being a solar function, and perhaps particularly the harsh summer sun’s. Thus, the two solar gods of the original Christian myth are revealed as John the Baptist and James the Just, the winter and summer suns respectively, John being the Saviour—Jesus. The biblical books try their best to disguise the solar meaning underlying them, but leave enough tantalizing clues to make it evident, if not clear. The real life of a patriotic Jewish bandit has been forced into the container of this solar myth to give us Christianity.

In the complete original solar myth, each god dies when slain by their twin at the equinoxes. The winter dark sun dies at the spring equinox, when the daylight hours exceed the night time ones, while the summer bright sun dies at the autumn equinox, when the night time hours exceed the daylight ones.

In Welsh mythology, as Mike Nicholls has shown, Gronwy slays Llew and Llew slays Gronwy at each equinox in turn. Gronwy, Llew's dark self, strikes Llew with a spear, but Llew is transformed into an eagle, an interpretation of the sun in Scorpio—the autumn equinox. Llew is the Welsh god of light, and his name means “lion.” The lion is the symbol of the bright sun god because Leo is the constellation of midsummer—the summer solstice. The goat is the symbol of the dark winter sun, being strongest in Capricorn—the winter solstice. Later, Llew kills Gronwy with a spear to have his revenge, while he is standing at the same spot, not literally, but the equivalent spot, the other equinox—Gronwy is the winter sun.

Other examples are Gwyn and Gwythyr, Balder and Hoder/Loki, Gawain and the Green Knight, Lugh and Balor, Balan and Balin, Romulus and Remus, Prometheus and Epimetheus, Merodach and Haman, Krishna and Balarama, Esau and Jacob, James the Just and John the Baptist (Jesus).

Their mode of death is by crucifixion, by transfixing with a spear, or perhaps an arrow, against a tree which thereby makes the shape of a cross with the projectile, or by being burnt on a pyre. In practice, one half of the myth is often suppressed to put more emphasis on the other which leads to salvation.

Solar myths were mixed up with the vegetation myths, the seasonal cycle that required the priests to tell the farmers the proper time to start ploughing. This needed the equinoxes to be noted easily. There is no actual cross in the sky that lets anyone know directly when the equinoxes happen, so the priests found proxies for them. The main one was the start of the year, the autumn equinox. This was noted as when the sun was in Virgo, and its sign was when the sun rose heliacally as if it was replacing the star Spica, which gave its name to the month originally (Chaitra). Spica is significant at the other equinox too because it rises just as the sun sets. The vernal equinox was when the sun was in Aries but there was no clear star marker for it. In Yehud, the sign will have been when the shafts of the dawn sun illuminated the Holy of Holies, and the orientation of the temple will have been fixed to capture the heliacal rising of Spica in Virgo. It meant that the temple was not oriented directly east but about 85 degrees from the azimuth. H Van Dyke Parunak's revised estimate (*Was Solomon's Temple Aligned to the Sun?*) was 84 degrees.

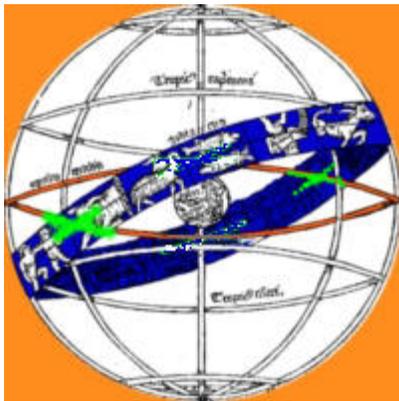
More widely, the deity whose death brings on the death of vegetation is Kore at Eleusis, the daughter of Demeter, the corn Goddess. Yet elsewhere it is a dying god, Attis, Adonis, Tammuz, Osiris. The Persian religion is also unclear because Mithras and the goddess Anahita were so closely connected that Herodotus mistook Mithras as the goddess. Mithras killed the primeval bull which is likely to be the sun rising heliacally in Taurus, suggesting that Mithras is the summer half year, and the good sun of the northern tribes. Anahita does not seem to have been introduced until the Persians entered the near east in which case she would have been the Virgin sun heliacally rising as Spica in Virgo, and standing for the winter sun, the good, sun of the hot near eastern climates. Anahita was a water goddess which would mean she was associated with

the winter rains that fertilised the earth. Mithras had been considered a good god in the north but now had become the bad sun of the hot season. The Persians in the fifth century swapped their calendar and made the day for celebrating Mithras an autumn day, in September. Thus the God and the Goddess stood for the same period of time, the wet season of winter.

Spica is the sheaf of corn held by Virgo, and the September sunrise might have been seen originally as the birth of Mithras, the winter sun. Virgo will have been Anahita seen as walking the land preparing it with her water, and Mithras the benevolent sun fertilised it with the water of life—semen. In spring, the winter sun died, crucified as the hot sun of the dry season rose into the sky. Anahita sacrificed a bull, the heliacal rise of Taurus, to bring back the winter sun to life, and since Mithras was the winter sun, this will be likely to have been where Herodotus made his error. The priests or priestesses of Anahita sacrificed the bull for Mithras.

In the Cybele myths, Attis is said to have been revived as a goddess, seeming to combine the female and the male vegetative principles. The good winter sun was crucified or castrated in spring and the Virgin goddess was revived in autumn, giving birth to the good sun as the heliacal rise of the sun in Virgo. The goddess is both mother and lover of the sun god, their mutual love causing the plants to grow. She is also the old nurse, in many myths such as those of Eleusis, so that she appears in her triple aspect of Maiden, Mother and Crone.

## Origin of the Crucifixion of the Gods



The doctrine of salvation by crucifixion had, like many of the ancient forms of religious faith, an astronomical origin. The sun is hung on a cross or crucified when it passes through the equinoxes. People in northern climates were saved by the sun's crucifixion when it crossed over the equatorial line into the season of spring, at the vernal equinox at Easter, and thereby gave out a saving heat and light to the world and stimulated the generative organs of animal and vegetable life. The sun that is crucified is the dark winter sun, lacking the warmth and brightness of the summer. It is resurrected as, or supplanted by, its twin, the bright warm fertilizing summer sun that continues on to ascend into heaven.

When the dark sun is the undesirable one that is crucified, it shows that the myth is appropriate to northern climates. The legend is read as the salvific death of the evil winter sun to resurrect the summer sun. This seems to have been the Persian new year ceremony when it was the wicked

Haman who was crucified. The Persians coming from the north and settled on the cooler Iranian plateau will have had the northern view originally, but changed it when they adapted to hot Babylonian conditions, and changed their calendar, as historians know they did.

In the hot climates of the ancient near east, the summer sun is undesirable because it burns up the landscape, so the myth was read as the unjust death of the desirable winter sun having nourished the land, leaving the people forlorn until he came again in the autumn. The cool winter sun that had brought the rains, the bounteous sun, made the sacrifice, and his death was bewailed. He had done nothing but kindness, but still had to die at the hands of his cruel adversaries. In *Ezekiel*, the women outside the temple gates bewailed the death of Tammuz, suggesting the latter interpretation.

The date of Jesus's resurrection is the position of the sun at the time of the vernal equinox when the priests could declare that the winter sun was dead—the day was now longer than the night. March 25th was considered the end of the sun's passing through the vernal equinox. Christ is plainly the loved sun god not the hated one, so he is the dark winter sun of the ancient near east, like Krishna, and is depicted as dark skinned in some pictures. Moreover, the “black but comely” lover of the *Song of Songs* was said to mean Jesus.

At a later part of the year the autumn equinox sees the bright summer sun transform into the dark winter sun. The ancients in the near east must once have celebrated the death of the blazing summer sun and the arrival of the stormy sun at the autumn equinox, when they carved or painted sexual organs on the walls of their holy temples with fertilization in mind. This was certainly the case with the temple at Jerusalem, the symbolism of which is purely sexual, the temple being the womb of the land, fertilized by Yehouah at the autumn equinox when its rays shone directly into the holy of holies from the Mount of Olives.

## The Cross

The fertilizing winter sun having been crucified, and the summer sun risen into the heavens in resurrection, the blood of the grape, ripened by its the heat, was symbolically “the blood of the cross,” or “the blood of the Lamb.” Jesus is not the true vine for no reason.



Because of our Christian culture and its imagery, the cross is necessarily the instrument of the saviour god's torture. However, because the celestial origin of crucifixion in solar myths is that the sun crosses over the celestial equator, the heavenly sign of the equinoxes, the image of a crossover in the sky would be a cross like the Greek letter Chi (X) not a Plus (+). Constantine's cross in the heavens that signalled his victory at the Milvian bridge was a Chi not a Plus, and the traditional Roman sign of the Christian was Chi Ro, the first two letters of the name Christ. This shape is the shape a man takes when he is stretched out by bonds such as he might have if tied to the ground, to a tree or a wheel. So we might be looking for icons in which the god is depicted such that his body forms a cross, like that of the famous illustration by Leonardo.

It has always been presumed that death, and especially death by crucifixion, involved the highest state of suffering possible to be endured by mortals. Hence, the gods must suffer in this way as an example of courage and fortitude which their followers must emulate. To do this they must be superior to their devotees. They must not merely die, but submit to the most ignominious mode of suffering death that could be devised—crucifixion. This gave the highest finishing touch to the drama.

And thus the legend of the crucifixion became the crowning chapter, the aggrandizing episode in the history of their lives. It was presumed that nothing less than a god could endure such excruciating tortures without complaining. Hence, when the victim was reported to have submitted with such fortitude that no murmur was heard to issue from his lips, this circumstance of itself was deemed sufficient evidence of his godship.

The story of the crucifixion, therefore, deified or helped deify great men and exalt them to the rank of gods, though it was usually falsely added for this purpose. Though some of the disciples of Buddhism, and some of the earliest professors of Christianity also, including, according to Christian history, Peter and his brother Andrew, voluntarily chose this mode of dying in imitation of their crucified Lord, they were not promoted to divine honours. Christianity focused all its attention on the singular sacrifice of its Christ but had it evolved slightly differently some of the earliest saints at least would now be worshipped as gods. They had been granted the divine qualification of crucifixion.

To retain their following, religions are based on unchangeable dogmas which disciples must accept to the exclusion of all knowledge adverse to their own creed. Whenever they are able, they actually destroy contrary evidence for fear of rivalry. Then they magnify their own religion to a unique position above all others. The earlier Christian saints, having determined like Paul, to know only "Jesus Christ and him crucified," made stern efforts to obliterate from the page of history facts damaging to their case.

The disciples of the Christian faith have burnt books, blotted out passages and bowdlerised testaments which suggested the opposite of their belief. Not only that, they have demolished monuments showing crucifixions of previous atoning gods so that they are now unknown. Hence, the disbelief of Christians when other cases are mentioned. It continues in more recent times.

An ancient sculpture or icon in context tells us more about origins, and there have been reports of a crucified Hindu god, assumed to be Krishna, in ancient temples. Iconography can be placed in a historical period more closely than a text. Those responsible for evaluating these pictures should do so, not just pretend they are not there. Documents themselves are often unreliable, especially religious ones that have a clear purpose of persuasion to a particular belief. It is better to regard them as unreliable until they can be shown to be genuine.

A report on the Hindu religion, made out by a deputation from the British Parliament, sent to India to examine their sacred books and monuments, was left in the hands of a Christian bishop at Calcutta, with instructions to forward it to England. On its arrival in London, it was so horribly mutilated as to be scarcely recognisable. An account of the crucifixion was gone. But, if the Christian myth was syncretized to Krishna in the years since Christianity arrived in India, written sources like this would be valueless. No one knows when a legend was introduced.

## Krishna



Krishna, which means dark, plainly suffers huge losses, cursed as he was to lose the whole of his people and to die alone and miserable. The only death of Krishna now in the Mahabharata is to be shot him in the sole of his foot by a hunter's arrow while practising yoga in a forest. It seems odd, to the western way of thinking, that a man who had seen everyone he knew, including most recently his brother, Balarama, killed off under a curse, should be peacefully practising yoga in the forest. That is the way of mythology. It gave Krishna, by sitting crosslegged—possibly a remnant of the original myth—a way of receiving an unlikely wound in the sole of his foot, just as Achilles was killed in his heel. Christians will say that crossed-legs can hardly be seen as an indication of crucifixion, but they are indeed symbolic of the equinoxes, as the symbolic torchbearers of Mithras's icons show. The uplifted torch with right leg over left is the bright summer sun, while the downturned torch with left over right is the dark winter sun. The hunter, Jar, who killed Krishna only has to be identified with the brother, Balarama, to restore the original myth—the summer sun killed the winter sun by crucifixion.

Hindus had a motive to suppress any crucifixion myths—to avoid parallels with Christianity that might have lost proselytes to the missionaries. Editors of the Hindu sacred texts will have altered the legend in the present era—when Christianity reached India with the heretical Christians

called Nestorians—to avoid any implication that they had derived it from Christianity, or indeed to eliminate any possibility of Krishna being mistaken for Christ that might have assisted Christian proselytizing. The Krishna legends were still changing in the Christian era, as is shown by the accretion of the legends of Gopala to those of Krishna in the early centuries AD.

If this is true, Christians argue, it would have been better for Hindus to have kept Krishna crucified. Having their own crucified saviour would have stopped the Nestorians from making converts among the Hindus, whose crucified saviour was much older than Christianity itself, and who had existed long before Christians ever came to India. The assumption is that the crucifixion of Krishna had the same import as the crucifixion of Christ. Naturally, it would have been important as the god's ultimate sacrifice, but Christians made it central to their outlook—Hindus probably did not. Indians attracted to the idea of crucifixion, and the success of Christianity shows it is an attractive idea, will have been more prepared to turn to Christ if they saw him as an aspect of Krishna, or even as another avatar of Vishnu. For most sun gods, crucifixion seems to have been an essential but not always the central part of the god's myth.

There is nothing surprising about any god with a solar aspect being crucified or suffering some equivalent fate, and so we should not be surprised to hear that there is or was such a legend about Krishna. And it would not help to ask a Hindu what they thought the original legend was, or whether they counted Krishna as a sun god. A Hindu cannot enlighten us about the true origins of Krishna, once it had been suppressed, any more than a Christian can enlighten us about the suppressed history of Christ. Both have their preferred mythology that they will believe despite any evidence to the contrary.

Krishna is considered to have been a historic figure, like Christ, living about the time of the Indo-European conquest of India in 1000 BC. But he has acquired the attributes of a sun god just as Christ did in his elevation. He was an avatar of Vishnu, a sun god, who creates Krishna the dark twin and his brother Balarama the light twin from two hairs of his head, one dark and one white. He also had the patronymic Vasudeva, signifying he was a sun god.

The Romans saw Christ as a sun god and put the control of the solar religions of Rome in the hands of the bishops. No one can deny that Christian iconography shows Christ as a sun god. Later religions might have syncretized with Christianity by adopting a crucified saviour, but Christians do not like the fact that crucifixion was an earlier syncretization of ancient mythology with Christianity. Paul and others realised the value of having a newly crucified example of an old phenomenon.

## **Suffering Saviours**

These myths arose before the time of Christ, but their exact date cannot be fixed, because the history of ancient mythology is not known and probably cannot ever *be* known, and not least because chronology before the time of Alexander the Great (330 BC) gets increasingly uncertain. Some, like Alcestis, can be dated to before the life of the author of a work in which they appear. The dating of icons, especially from distant or isolated cultures is also uncertain. Even mainstream studies of the ancient Near East are involved in controversy over dates, Peter James,

for example, claiming in a well argued case that several centuries have been mistakenly inserted into near Eastern chronologies.

Nevertheless, these instances show that the belief in the punishment of gods was prevalent long before the crucifixion of Christ. These crucifixions and atoning deaths are not vouchsafed as actual occurrences. They are mythical not real events. To establish the atoning punishment of divine saviours preceding Christ is an easier task than showing that some were crucified, but six will prove it as well as the sixteen given by [Graves](#). Indeed, one case is sufficient. The reader is left to decide.

Tammuz was a god of Assyria, Babylonia and Sumeria where he was known as Dumuzi. He is commemorated in the name of the month of June, Du'uzu, the fourth month of a year which begins at the spring equinox. The fullest history extant of this saviour is probably that of Ctesias (400 BC), author of *Persika*. The poet has perpetuated his memory in rhyme.

*“Trust, ye saints, your Lord restored,  
Trust ye in your risen Lord;  
For the pains which Tammuz endured  
Our salvation have procured.*

Tammuz was crucified as an atonement offering: “Trust ye in God, for out of his loins salvation has come unto us.” Julius Firmicus speaks of this God rising from the dead for the salvation of the world. This saviour which long preceded the advent of Christ, filled the same role in sacred history.

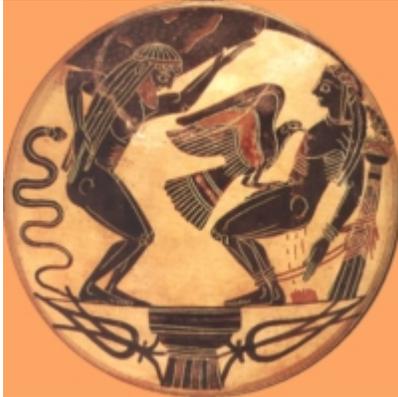
Even the *Catholic Encyclopedia* notes:

*“Nature Worship generally, and Agrarian in particular, were responsible for the Tammuz cult of Babylon, with which the worships of Adonis and Attis, and even of Dionysus, are so unmistakably allied. Much might have been hoped from these religions with their yearly festival of the dying and rising god, and his sorrowful sister or spouse.*

The cross of Christ, as experts seem to agree, was actually a bar placed across the top of an upright, so it was not a cross at all. It was a “Tee” (T), called “Taw” in Hebrew and “Tau” in Greek. So the cross that the victim was suspended from was actually a crossbar, and perhaps in those days this was called the cross. The “Taw” sign was the symbol of the dying and rising god, Tammuz, and “Taw” was the sign that was made on the heads of those marked for salvation by the god. So, crucifixion images might not be as conventional as the ones based on the Catholic crucifix.

Speaking of this crucified Messiah, the *Anacalypsis* informs us that several histories are given of him, but all concur in representing him as having been an atoning offering for sin. And the Latin phrase “suspensus lingo,” found in his history, indicates the manner of his death. He was suspended on a tree, crucified, buried and rose again. Attis is the Phrygian version of Tammuz, and Adonis and Jesus could equally well be included here as other versions of the same god.

## Prometheus (Hesiod 800 BC)



Prometheus was an Indo-European sun god, as his procurement of the sun's energy as fire shows. He was the Caucasian Orpheus, the benefactor of humanity, whom he taught skills he had learned from Athene (whose birth from the head of Zeus he had assisted). The skills were those such as architecture, astronomy, navigation, mathematics, metallurgy, medicine and such like. In Attica he was worshipped as the god of craftsmen.

Zeus wanted to destroy humanity and spared them because of Prometheus's plea. But Prometheus was getting too clever and suffered the fate of several saviours who upset Zeus. The legend of Prometheus justifies the sacrificial practice in the ancient Near East of offering fat (for the fire) and bones (for the sweet smell) to the gods while the lean flesh is reserved for the priests. In particular, Prometheus stole the fire of the sun from Olympus by hiding a glowing charcoal in a stalk of fennel and taking it to mortal beings who had been condemned by the angry Zeus to eat their flesh raw. He is depicted as Zeus Prometheus at Thurii, where he holds a swastika (Sanskrit, *pramantha*—prometheus), the symbol of the sun and fire—produced by a fire drill (swastika), often a tedious process which made the Aryans prefer to keep their fires permanently alight. So, the cause for which Prometheus suffered was his love for the human race. Humans were punished by Zeus but Prometheus took pity on them and gave them warmth. Therefore, he too was punished by Zeus.

The punishment of Prometheus was described by Hesiod, and other writers. Prometheus was crucified on a symbolic tree, depicted as a post, situated near the Caspian Straits. Hesiod writes:

*“With shackles and inescapable fetters Zeus riveted Prometheus on a pillar.*

The illustration is of an ancient Laconian bowl with Prometheus on it, tied to a pillar, a symbolic tree like the cross, while the eagle eats at his liver. The point about the carrion eating birds in these legends is that the crucified corpse was left hanging to be pecked by birds, doubtless a familiar sight at one time, and deserving a mythical explanation. An anonymous poet describes a scene like it, thus:

*“Lo! streaming from the fatal tree  
His all atoning blood,  
Is this the Infinite?—Yes, ’tis he,  
Prometheus, and a god!  
  
Well might the sun in darkness hide,  
And veil his glories in,  
When God, the great Prometheus, died  
For man the creature’s sin.*

Christians complain that Prometheus is not “crucified” here, because “a real crucifixion is on a cross, and Prometheus is not on a cross. He is just tied to a tree, with his feet on the ground, and is is not nailed to anything.”

The word crucifixion refers nowadays to a cross, but the ancient punishment which it represents is most commonly hanging on a tree, a form that applied to several ancient gods. Most scholars, even Christian ones, recognize that the cross is a symbolic tree. In Justin Martyr, thinking he is quoting from a psalm, tells us that Jesus was considered to have been hung from a tree:

*“Let them rejoice among the nations. The Lord hath reigned from the tree.  
I Apology 41,*

Indeed the scriptural reference in *Deuteronomy* 21:22—often taken as prophetic of Jesus—is to hanging on a tree, and Peter and the apostles (*Acts* 5:30;10:39) say Jesus had been hanged on a tree. Crucifixions generally did not involve nailing but tying, and tying even when the hands or wrists were nailed to make sure the weight was carried even if flesh yielded. Ultimately, the point is that the saviour of mankind, here the Titan Prometheus, was cruelly punished, or at least had to suffer cruelly in the myth.

The story of Prometheus’s punishment, burial and resurrection was acted in Athens, in a trilogy of plays written by the great Greek playwright, Æschylus, five hundred years before Christ, showing its great antiquity. *Prometheus Bound* is the only survivor of the three plays. Zeus had decided to put an end to humanity, but the titan, Prometheus, intervenes, saving them, so Zeus punished him for it. What Prometheus had done was to make humans immortal, so that Zeus’s thunderbolts did not force them to descend in death to Hades. Besides this, when the wrath of Zeus terrified them and they knew they were about to die, Prometheus gave them hope. Now, these are the very gifts that Christians still believe Christ has exclusively conferred upon them—the hope and expectation of life after death!

Besides these gifts, though, Prometheus taught people how to be civilized. Christians also think that to be Christian is to be peculiarly civilized in outlook, despite all the historical evidence to the contrary. Some non-canonical myths of Jesus have him teaching humanity ploughing, planting the vine and so on, just as Prometheus did, and Orpheus after him too. The civilization Christians attribute to Christ is the love of others, something they like to boast about so long as they never have to put it into practice. Loving someone as strange to them as Arabs is just too much! The myth of Prometheus later made him the creator of humanity as well, moulded by him out of clay, according to Pausanias in the second century AD. The goddess, Athena, breathed life

into the clay figures to vitalize them. Non-Christians, like Lord Byron, depicted Prometheus as a kind god whose aim was to make the wretched human condition more tolerable. Christians like John Milton saw the parallel of Prometheus and Christ, Milton using Prometheus as an image of Christ, even though he preceded Christ by hundreds of years.



The modern story of this crucified God, which has him bound to a rock for thirty years, while vultures preyed upon his vitals, is a Christian fraud, inasmuch as the crucifixion aspect of the drama was omitted. Yet even in the extant translations of *Prometheus Bound* by Aeschylus, the god is plainly crucified, albeit on a rock:

*“Force: Seize his hands and master him.  
Now to your hammer. Pin him to the rocks.  
Drive stoutly now your wedge straight through his breast, the stubborn jaw of steel that  
cannot break.  
Now for his feet. Drive the nails through the flesh.*

When Prometheus is crucified in this way, Force taunts him just as Jesus was in the gospels:

*“Run hot now, you there on the rocks,  
Go steal from gods to give their goods to men  
What will they do to lift these woes from you?*

Prometheus, whose name means “forethought,” had foreseen it all, just as Jesus was supposed to have, and muses to himself in his agony that he had:

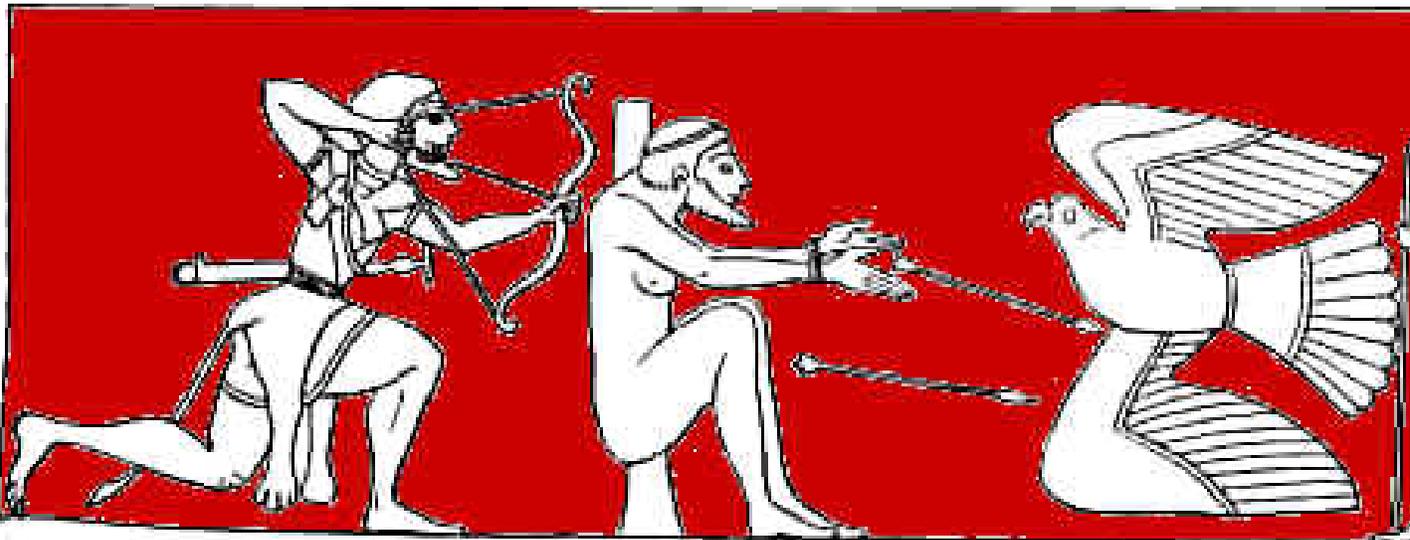
*“Nothing, no pang of pain that I did not foresee.*

A chorus of maidens lament his agony and desolation, weeping in sorrow. Soon we hear the very line that is attributed to Christ addressing Paul (*Acts 26:14*), proof enough that the author knew the play:

*“Don’t kick against the pricks,*

The version of Prometheus given by Aeschylus has Prometheus bound for eternity, because as a god, he was immortal and his liver grew again every night, but Zeus fired a thunderbolt that sent the captive to Tartarus still bound.

Zeus’s thunderbolt shook the earth, rocks were rent, the whole frame of nature became convulsed, and in a storm, which seemed to threaten the dissolution of the universe, the solemn scene closed, and Prometheus departed to the underworld in death. Tartarus is the abyss of the underworld—the equal of the Christian Hell—and to go there means death! Prometheus had told Zeus the secret he wanted to know, and Zeus, responding to his son Herakles’s pleas, allowed Herakles to kill the eagle and free the captive. Prometheus was freed from Tartarus, and later was elevated to Olympus. Confinement to Tartarus is death, liberation from Tartarus is resurrection. Christians find it impossible to understand this.



The dismissal to the underworld after the crucifixion suggests that Prometheus was crucified at the autumn equinox. He is therefore the beneficial summer sun of cool countries being sent back to Hades at the end of the summer. Prometheus is only restored to Olympus because the centaur, Cheiron agrees to lose his immortality to allow Prometheus to regain his. So here the redeemer of humanity is himself redeemed by the self-sacrifice of his personal redeemer Cheiron!

Several other benefactors of humanity—and therefore saviours—were cruelly punished by Zeus. At one time they were the gods of foreign, rebellious or defiant people and so have been punished in hell in the myths of the Greeks.

## More Saviours Punished in Hell

Tityus was another god punished by crucifixion, with vultures pecking at his liver in Tartarus, but this time he was spreadeagled and pinned on the ground, the oldest form of the punishment. This was for trying to have illicit sex with Leto—the liver was thought of as the centre of sexual power. He was a giant and a son of Gaia, so must have been a Titan, as his name might imply. Stealing a sexual pleasure from a goddess or revealing sexual indiscretions of a god seem to be euphemistic ways of hiding the revelation of divine secrets to humanity. In other words, he sounds like a disguised or older version of Prometheus.

Another suffering god was Tantalus, who was supposed to have been a king of Lydia and therefore extremely rich, blessed by his mother, the Titaness, Pluto (wealth). Tantalus, being so favoured by the gods, became immortal by dining with them on nectar and ambrosia, and one story of his punishment is that he served up to the gods in return the boiled corpse of his son Pelops. The Gods detected the nature of the meal and he was punished for it. Only Demeter anguishing over the fate of Kore, absentmindedly chewed a shoulder. The shoulders of sacrifices were always reserved for the king or the priests as they were in the Jewish religion (Lev 7:32;11:21). Those who dine with gods *are* gods, so Tantalus was really a non-native Greek god popular enough to have been once acceptable to the Greeks. Sacrifices were offered as broth, not roast, in countries influenced by the Persian religion, or perhaps in ancient Indo-European tradition.

There are other, more “tantalizing” myths however. Some place him in Corinth not Lydia, suggesting he might be associated with the legends of Sisyphus with whom he is punished in Tartarus. Like Prometheus, he stole from the gods to give to mortals. He betrayed to humanity certain divine secrets that he heard at the dinner table with them, and also stole nectar and ambrosia, the food of the gods, which confers immortality. There is a strong hint here of a eucharistic type of meal believed to confer immortality on to its partakers. When the gods found out he intended to benefit mortals he was punished for it. The Greek gods reserved immortality to themselves.



Because his secrets came from dining with the gods, he was forbidden to eat or drink, even though food and drink were tantalisingly available. This saviour of humanity was obviously crucified! He is hung on the branch of a fruit tree! It is perhaps a tree of life because it has

multiple fruits growing in it—the tree of life has twelve—and is suspended over a lake. He is depicted peering through the greenery in abject terror. The level of the lake slowly rose up to his chin such that he could bend his head for a gulp of water, but each time he did, the water level fell away to expose the muddy bottom. Each time he bent his head to bite a fruit, a gust of wind bounced it from his mouth. So, he suffered everlasting torments of hunger and thirst. Jesus was, of course, tormented with gall to drink when he thirsted.

In another myth, Tantalus is punished by having a large rock suspended above his head threatening to fall upon him at every moment, so he suffers an eternity of immediate fear. The rock, like that of Sisyphus is the solar disc, showing that Tantalus was a sun god. Scholiast on Pindar's *Odes* declares this to be the case.

A sacrificial victim to the sun god will have been put in a cage decorated with the fruit of the earth and dropped into a lake as the canonical myth suggests, or burnt on a pyre as was Tantalus's son, whence the real reason for his fear. In fact, the folk custom of the Jack in the Green (Green George) in which an effigy is first ducked and then burnt will be the relic of the custom. In Medieval times, at May Day, the victim was encased in a wooden cage decorated with holly, ivy, spring flowers and fluttering ribbons. The tradition was maintained by chimney sweeps which suggests the fate of the original victim. The fearful image of the green man sprouting leaves will be the same. The man was not originally sprouting leaves but looking through them in terror.



Yet another benefactor of humanity punished in hell was Sisyphus, who was condemned to rolling a large stone up a hill in Tartarus, but each time it rolled back again. Sisyphus who is supposed to have founded Corinth and the Isthmian games, revealed one of Zeus's amorous affairs, but this will be another derogation of the original in which he aimed to pass divine secrets to mortals. Zeus sent Thanatos (death) to embrace him. Sisyphus however, tricked and overpowered Thanatos, and chained him up, so that he could not embrace people, and human beings became immortal like gods. Here again is a strong hint of the god promising eternal life to his devotees. Mars, who had a vested interest in people killing each other, set Thanatos free again and despatched Sisyphus to Tartarus, probably signifying that the religion was forcibly suppressed. A saviour of the human race, actually saving them from death, is punished by a jealous patriarchal god. Sisyphus was read by the Greeks as including the word "sophos," "wisdom," and they took it to mean "crafty," in the sense of "cunning" but originally will have meant "clever" or "thoughtful" like Prometheus. Curiously Jesus is often identified with Wisdom, though Wisdom was a goddess, Sophia.

The punishment of Sisyphus reflects his original nature as a sun god, presumably of Corinth, where there was a temple to Helios. The time spent by Paul at Corinth might not have been purely fortuitous. The cult was based upon the Hittite sun god, Tesup, and will have been brought into Corinth by traders from Rhodes where Tesup was worshipped. The boulder Sisyphus rolls up the hill stands for the disc of the sun, and Sisyphus was the god who rolled the solar disc across the vault of the heavens, having to begin his endless task anew each morning because overnight the sun has returned to the east. Sisyphus and Ixion (another, sun god—see below) were put next to each other in Hades, suggesting an association.

In his myth, Sisyphus was a cattle owner, another characteristic of some sun gods, who were often represented as bulls (compare Mithras). He is the parallel of Laban in *Genesis* (29-30) from whom Jacob tricked cattle. Laban means white, a colour associated with the sun.

The end of the story of Sisyphus is even more revealing. Being so wise, he tells his wife not to bury his body when he dies. This is a mythical explanation of the corpses of crucified victims being left to hang. Arriving in Hades, he complains to Persephone, the queen of the underworld, that he had suffered an injustice by not being buried and asked for a three days respite to correct it. Persephone agreed but Sisyphus had no intention of keeping his three day promise. It could not work. Omniscient gods could not be tricked so simply, and Hermes was quickly sent to inflict permanent death on Sisyphus. Paul addresses the Greeks (*Acts* 17:2-34) referring to an altar inscribed “To an Unknown God.” Luke puts this speech in the Areopagus in Athens immediately before Paul departs to Corinth. Perhaps Luke was misinformed or has used poetic license and the altar was to Sisyphus, whose name was unmentionable and whose tomb was unknown—in Corinth.

What is interesting is the reversal of myths like that of Jesus where the god dies for three days. Here the god is reprieved from death for three days. It might be simply an expression of the ancient belief that the soul does not finally leave the corpse until after three days, or it might be part of the denigration of the Corinthian god by inverting what was a resurrection after three days. The Hellenes will have denigrated the Corinthian god for racial reasons, they disliked the importation of a foreign god into the heart of the Greek peninsula, and so had him punished by their own gods.

The Greeks eventually accepted foreign gods—including gods who died for three days—and some aspired to Olympus, but these sinning gods punished by Zeus in Tartarus were pre-Olympian, or gods of rebellious nations seen as rivals to the Olympians, or perhaps the Greeks were suppressing mysteries except their favoured ones of Eleusis, and a few other privileged places. Only Tantalus and Ixion of these saviours of humanity are still seen as crucified, but the common themes among them imply that it, and a communion meal conferring immortality, are likely to have been in the original myths, now suppressed. Aesculapius was a sun god as his parents prove. He was born of Apollo and Coronis. Zeus raised Aesculapius from the dead and restored him as a god. Before that Zeus slew him with a bolt lest the whole race of mortals should escape death. Aesculapius had raised so many from the dead that Pluto thought he would have no dead people to rule. Here is the same myth of immortality, first suppressed then admitted as legitimate.

## Alcestis

A less usual atoning god was Alcestis, who was female, the only example of a feminine god atoning for the sins of the world by self-sacrifice, unless the Danaids are considered in the same light. Her husband, Admetus, who wins her in marriage by riding a chariot pulled by a lion and a boar, forgets to sacrifice to Artemis on his wedding day and, entering the bedchamber, sees a coil of snakes. This will be a polite way of saying snakes copulating, which is considered a bad omen in India still, and plainly relates to the bridal chamber.

It signifies his early death, but the sun god Apollo, whom he had done a favour for, arranges for him to escape death if someone would die in his place. His elderly parents refuse telling him to accept his fate, and only Alcestis is willing to die for him. She takes poison in the canonical myth, and dies but Persephone in Hades refuses to accept her because of her devotion and sends her back. So the saviour goddess dies and is resurrected.

The chariot of Admetus pulled by a boar and a lion suggests the full year, since these are the symbols of the two half years. The implication is that Admetus was another sun god, whose chariot was the half year of winter represented by a boar and the summer represented by a lion. The sun often is depicted as riding a chariot or as a charioteer. Admetus has the same form as Prometheus and Epimetheus, so might stand for the full year.

Mithras of Persia atoned for mankind, and prepared for the salvation of mankind through slaying the primaeval bull—the first sacrifice. He was born on the twenty-fifth day of December, and his celebrations at the spring and autumn equinoxes were associated with crucifixion on a tree. These were the Persian New Year festivities described in the scriptural book of Esther, and involved the crucifixion of the old year, considered wicked, so that a new and uncorrupted year could take its place. This was seen as an annual rehearsal of the eschaton when the wicked world is finally replaced by the purity of the original creation of Ahuramazda. Christian writers, like Tertullian, imply that Mithras was slain, and yet do not say how. It has been suppressed. The Romans saw a great deal in common between Mithras and Christ, probably because they both originated in Persian mythology.

## Ixion



Ixion, a mythical king of Thessaly, was crucified on a wheel, the rim representing the world, and the spokes constituting the cross. Ancient kings were often the god of the tribe, because unsophisticated people saw themselves as ruled by the god, not by the man who acted for him on earth. He is said to have carried the burden of the world on his back while suspended on the cross. He was therefore called the crucified spirit of the world. Ixion was another sun god, a Thessalian sun god.

He was married to Dia, meaning the sky, but had intercourse with a cloud, but the cloud was the wife of the sky god, Zeus, who therefore punished the headstrong sun god. This signifies a victory of the Greeks (God = Zeus) over the Thessalians (God = Ixion). The sky God Zeus condemned him to be crucified on the solar wheel as it traversed the sky forever. A man tied to a wheel is crucified because his body forms a cross. This myth seems to be a Hellenic version of a non-Hellenic sun god where the god is considered ignoble for ravaging the wife of Zeus, and so is punished.

Like most ancient myths, there are competing versions. In one version the punishment was an eternal crucifixion in Tartarus but in another the eternal crucifixion was in the sky. The latter was probably the original one, but the Greeks would not allow such a glorious crucifixion and placed it in the pits of hell. The cause of the punishment might have been historic—an ambush of Ionians (Eioneus) who were trapped and burnt in a fiery pit—but even this might have been part of a solar myth, the victims being sacrificed to the sun.

It is curious that Christian writers will recount a long list of miracles and remarkable incidents in the life of Apollonius of Tyana, the Cappadocian saviour, forming a parallel to those of the Christian saviour, yet say not a word about his crucifixion, even though they can—and *do* when forced to consider it—attribute it to syncretism to Christianity.

Christian writers find it necessary to omit the crucifixion of these saviours fearing the telling would lessen the spiritual force of the crucifixion of Christ, which has to be unique. They thus exalted the tradition of the crucifixion into the most important dogma of the Christian faith. Hence, their efforts to conceal from the public the fact that it is of pagan origin. They had full control and power over publishing for a millennium, a much longer time than was needed to expunge all referemnces to the crucifixion of earlier gods. Even icons were destroyed and the few that remain can and are always questioned by Christians, either as not authentic or misinterpreted.

Justin Martyr admits that the cross was already a well known and used symbol to the Romans. Addressing the Roman emperor Antoninus Pius, he wrote:

*“And the power of this form (the cross) is shown by your own symbols on what are called “vexilla” (standards) and trophies, with which all your state possessions are made, using these as the insignia of your power and government, even though you do so unwittingly. And with this form you consecrate the images of your emperors when they die, and you name them gods by inscriptions.*”



Justin was pleading for his life but was so inept that he repeatedly insulted the emperor and the Romans. That is why he is now called “Martyr.” Minucius Felix, one of the most popular Christian writers of the second century, confirms this not long afterwards, charging Pagan Romans with displaying “gilded and adorned crosses” sometimes hung with the image of a man, but denied that crosses were significant to Christians. Addressing the people of Rome, he says:

Crosses, moreover, we neither worship nor wish for. You, indeed, who consecrate gods of wood, adore wooden crosses perhaps as parts of your gods. For your very standards, as well as your banners and flags of your camp, what else are they but crosses gilded and adorned? Your victorious trophies not only imitate the appearance of a simple cross, but also that of a man affixed to it.

And this man Christians denoted a god. Mackey’s *Lexicon of Freemasonry* says that Freemasons secretly taught that the doctrine of the crucifixion, atonement and resurrection preceded the Christian era, and that similar doctrines were taught in all the ancient mysteries. These coincidences are evidence that the tradition of the crucifixion of gods has been long prevalent among Pagans.

To those who say the ancient crucifixions of gods were mere myths or fables, having no foundation in fact, but added to their histories as mere romance, the reply is that there is the same ground for suspecting it as being true of Jesus Christ. Many of the early Christians and contemporary Jews and gentiles doubted it, and some openly disputed its ever having taken place. Others bestowed upon it a mere spiritual significance, and not a few considered it symbolical of a holy life.

## **Quirinus (Romulus) of Rome**

The association of the crucifixion of Christ with a violent convulsion of nature, and the resurrection of the long-buried saints, events not supported by anyone in contemporary history, can only discredit the whole story. To appeal to Romans, Jesus was partly given a parallel history to Romulus (Quirinus). The death of this Roman saviour is remarkable for the parallel features to that of the Judaeen saviour, not only in the circumstances of his crucifixion, but also in much of his antecedent life.

- Romulus and Remus were of royal blood, their mother, Rhea Silvia, being of kingly descent from Aeneas,
- Romulus and Remus were conceived and born of a virgin because Rhea Silvia was made a Vestal Virgin by the usurping king Amulius, so that she could not bear a son,
- Romulus and Remus were sought by the reigning king, Amulius, to be put to death, but were saved in the fashion of Moses and Sargon of Assyria by being floated down a river (another ancient legend),
- Romulus and Remus were watched over by shepherds as children,
- Remus was put to death by his brother, perhaps crucified,
- Romulus was put to death by wicked hands, and the whole earth was covered in darkness,
- Romulus finally was resurrected, and ascended to heaven.

In the canonical narrative, Romulus dies as an old man by disappearing during a thunder storm whereupon he was deified, but there are many variations in which he is murdered. Romulus was supposed to be favoured by Jupiter (Zeus), the sky god, to whom he dedicated a temple in his myth, and Rome was founded at the spring equinox.

In the myth, the twin who dies is Remus, killed by Romulus, and the reason is that he stepped across the boundary of Rome before the wall was built, an obvious parallel of the sun crossing the celestial equator. But it is Romulus who goes on to ascend to the godhead as Quirinus. Remus is the Roman Haman, who dies to permit the city of the sun to rise. The two brothers, Romulus and Remus, have echoes of Prometheus and Epimetheus, and could be distant variants of them. Mitra had his dark twin Varuna (perhaps evolved into Ahuramazda in Persia). Krishna had his twin Balarama. And sure enough, we find in the Christian myth that Jesus was a twin too, his brother being “doubting” Thomas Didymus (the twin)—not that we hear anything of it in the birth narratives!

### **The Virgin Birth of Romulus and Remus**

**Retold © 1998 by Frank E Smitha from *The Ancient World Online***

Fire awed the early Romans, as it did the Greeks and others. The Romans believed in a goddess of fire called Vesta, and they had a sacred temple of fire tended by four females—the Vestal Virgins—who were selected while they were children and were expected to serve thirty years. During their service they were expected to remain virgins, for the Romans believed that to please the gods, women who were unmarried and not trying to bear children should remain chaste.

A Vestal Virgin was part of the greatest legend among the Romans—the legend about Rome's origins. The legend begins with a Vestal Virgin giving birth to twin boys and claiming that the boys had been fathered miraculously by the god Mars—a god of fertility and later also of war. The Vestal Virgin was the sister of a king. The king believed his sister was lying and that she had violated a sacred law. To put things right with the gods the king had his sister imprisoned, and he had her twins put afloat in a basket on the Tiber River. The two boys, called Romulus and Remus, were expected to drown, but the river receded and the basket carrying the boys came to rest on the river's bank, where a shepherd found them.

Around the time of Jesus Christ, when this legend was still popular among Romans, a Roman historian named Livy tried looking back centuries to determine whether the legend was true. The earliest version that Livy found described the wife of the shepherd who rescued Romulus and Remus. It described her as a she-wolf (a bitch) because of her alleged loose morals. Legends evolve, and by Livy's time the legend held that the boys had been rescued by a real female wolf—a notion that was put into the famous Roman sculpture a wolf nursing the two boys.

According to the legend that Livy studied, Romulus and Remus grew into manhood, and they killed their uncle, the king, in revenge for his having imprisoned their mother and for his having unjustly usurped power from their grandfather. The boys restored their grandfather to the throne, and they founded Rome where they had emerged from the river.

Then Romulus and Remus quarreled—as had Cain and Abel. Romulus killed Remus, and he became Rome's first king. To populate his city, Romulus gathered people from other countries. And, to give his subjects wives, he abducted young unmarried women from a nearby tribe called the Sabines—an incident to be known as “The Abduction of the Sabine Women.” The fathers of the women were outraged, and the Sabines retaliated by attacking the Romans. The abducted Sabine women, now apparently contented wives, intervened in the fighting and brought peace between their husbands and their fathers. The legend ends with Romulus, after a long reign, vanishing into a thunderstorm. He became a god. Then he reappeared, descending from the sky, declaring to those listening that it is the will of heaven that Rome be the capital of the world, that Romans cherish the art of war and that others realize that they cannot resist the strength of Roman arms.

## Jesus as a Sun God



The idea of a Son of God is amongst the oldest cults of the patriarchal god worshippers. The sun is the son of heaven in all primitive faiths. The firmament is personified as the Father on High and the sun becomes the Son of God. Then, because no wrongdoing is missed by the sun in its travels around the heavens, it becomes the Son of Righteousness. The sun in its annual course around the zodiac and its regular daily periodicity typified the ever present, everlasting, ever faithful qualities that reassured people.

For Christian clergy who are always scared that one of these days their flocks will catch on and be outraged at the confidence trick they have been subject to, the Jesus of the *New Testament* bears an uncomfortable resemblance to other mythical figures. Many of the patriarchs, prophets, priests and kings of the bible are sun gods allegorized as men by ancient poets. They can be recognized because there is negligible historical evidence for them. Many scholars agree that the patriarchs of the bible and even Saul, David, Solomon and Samson are ancient gods whose myths have been ludicrously accepted as history even by the most scholarly of men.

The ancients saw in the sun's annual course round the heavens an image of human experience—conception, birth, growth, victory, death and resurrection. In the dramas of the mystery religions the central character was the initiate in the role of the sun god.

Christians have confounded pre-Christian Persian and Hellenistic cosmic principles with Jesus, a historical human being, a national hero of the Jewish nation fighting repression. The Jesus of the gospels was given the characteristics of a solar god. The Jews too then connived in the deception by rejecting their hero as a Pagan sun god and nothing more!



When the cruel summer sun of the ancient near east died at the autumn equinox, by a miracle the sun rose in the constellation of Virgo—the sun was born of a Virgin. When the bounteous winter sun was crucified at the spring equinox, the sun rose in the constellation of the lamb, and the crucified god was the sacrificed lamb of god. Light imagery is widespread in descriptions of Jesus. He is the “Light of the World” (*Jn* 8:12) but the only proper “Light of the World” is the sun.

*“Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.*

***Revelation 1:7***

is a description of the sun as the god, Tammuz. The sun, in the form of its reflexion as it rises and sets, walks on water. Jesus is the saviour of mankind, but truly the proper saviour of mankind and all life on earth is the sun—without it we should be unable to survive.



The sun's corona is traditionally depicted by a halo, a sunburst or a crown of thorns, and indeed the halo can be taken as an indication of a sun god in pre-Christian art. Sun gods such as Horus, Buddha and Krishna are shown with haloes before it became a Christian convention. Often Jesus is depicted surrounded by a sunburst of rays. The horns of the older deities and the rays of light radiating from the heads of Hindu and Pagan gods show that gods were often given the attributes of the sun. The halo, that originally indicated a solar god, was transferred to other divine people in Christian art. The halo became the symbol of a god and then a holy person because it is a characteristic of the holy sun.

The sun has 12 aspects being the 12 signs of the zodiac or constellations, through which it must pass in its yearly journey. It is born in the sign of the goat, the Augean stable of the Greeks, then has an adventure as it enters each different sign during the course of a year. Finally it dies and is reborn or resurrected after three days on the twenty-fifth of December in the same sign of the celestial goat. From ancient times the year was partitioned into the 12 segments based on the constellation that the sun was in at the time, and from this the sun itself was given the aspects of the imagined signs in the heavens or friends or foes were given these imagined characteristics.

The magic number 12 is usually derived from this source and so it is with the twelve Labours of Hercules and the tribes of Israel. The rationalisation of the number twelve of the apostles is that they were to rule over the twelve tribes, but the origin of the twelve is then still solar. In fact, there were not twelve tribes and the number is only chosen to meet the requirements of a sun god.

People in agrarian societies appreciated the importance of the sun in agriculture. Farmers noted that the sun descended in altitude in the sky as it moved southwards until 21 or 22 December, the winter solstice, when it stopped declining for three days and thereafter started to ascend and move north again. The sun seemed to die for three days on 22 December when it ceased its heavenly motion and was born again on December 25th, when it resumes its heavenly motion. The punter worried that the sun might really die and not begin its annual ascent again, just as primitive peoples worried that the night might not end when the sun had set.

Ancient astronomer-priests knew of the annual cycles of the sun and told the punters that they could influence it in its journeys—if they were rewarded for their skills. Priests always were frauds—modern ones are no different in claiming they can help people get eternal life—and pretended they had rituals to revive the sun each winter. Each year on 25 December, when it was born again, people celebrated its birthday. Sons of god are born on December 25th because the sun is. Jesus has no known birthdate but he was given the birthdate of the Unconquerable Sun because he was perceived by the Romans and the Greeks as a sun god.

Early Christians, like Minucius Felix, repudiated the cross because it was Pagan. The first images of Jesus show him as an androgynous youth, the Good Shepherd, carrying a lamb. The original occupant of the cross was this lamb. A man was not shown hanging on a cross until long after the invasions of the barbarian whose traditional sun symbol was the cross.



That Christians worship on Sunday shows the origins of their god. The sun has been viewed consistently throughout history as the saviour of mankind for reasons that are obvious. Without the sun, life on the planet would die. The Eucharistic host, meant to be the body of Christ is kept and displayed for worship in a monstrance, having the shape of a radiating sun!

The ancients had no “only-begotten” son of the Christian type because the term they used was in Greek “monogenes,” and in Latin “unigenitus,” and did not mean “only-begotten,” but “that which was begotten of one parent,” the father, alone. The ancients meant by the term to designate the projection into matter by God of the force of life, not the sole and unique product of the union of spirit and matter, or a male god and a female human.

What can the Christian honestly make of the story of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ? It is a stolen legend. The Indian chief Red Jacket is reported to have replied to the Christian missionaries:

*“Brethren, if you white men murdered the son of the Great Spirit, we Indians have nothing to do with it, and it is none of our affair. If he had come among us, we would not have killed him. We would have treated him well. You must make amends for that crime yourselves.”*



This view of the crucifixion, from the viewpoint of a people regarded as savage, is more sensible and rational than that of Christians, who make it meritorious and a moral necessity. If the act were a moral necessity then Judas as well as Jesus was a saviour, because, without him in the Christian story, the act which saved the world could not have happened. If it was necessary for Christ to suffer death upon the cross as an atonement for sin, then the act of crucifixion was right, and a monument should be erected to the memory of Judas for bringing it about. Only Christian logic can find a flaw in this argument. They say that even though it was God's fore-ordained plan, Judas could only have played his part because he was wicked! So the Christians finish up believing that the means justify the end, because their own Father would use a wicked man to achieve the salvation of the world. It is hardly any surprise that the Christian world remains so wicked despite being saved.

If the inhabitants of this planet required the murderous death of a god as an atonement, we must presume that all other inhabited worlds need a divine atonement. If there are millions of world inhabited by intelligent beings in the universe then they all need a saviour. Presumably, there is only one Most High and it is He who has to be incarnated in each case. He begins to look a bit like a fetishist getting a kick out of slumming it in the worlds of the mortals. Or rather, it begins to make the whole concept look ludicrous.

The idea of gods coming down from heaven, being born of virgins and dying a violent death for the moral blunders of the people originated in an age of the world when mankind was savage and blood was the requisition for every offence. In those days no one had any idea of other possible worlds besides our own and the realms of the gods themselves. So the idea of the supreme god playing his tricks seemed reasonable. Today it does not, to anyone with a remaining brain cell.

## **Sixteen Crucified Saviours**

Kersey Graves, in a well known book written over a century ago, gives examples of sixteen crucified gods or saviours. Most are very ancient and the evidence he presents arguable, depending upon the interpretation of pictures or sculptures, since no original written sources now exist, often victims of Christians determined to preserve the memory of only one crucified god.

Some have already been considered. Others are doubtful. Any evidence of these doubtful cases—or indeed others—particularly pictures would be welcomed.

Kersey Graves cites the god Wittoba of the Telingonesic (500 BC), worshipped apparently in the Travancore and other southern states of India in the region of Madura, who is depicted with nail-holes in his hands and the soles of his feet. Nails, hammers and pincers are constantly seen represented on his crucifixes and are objects of adoration among his followers, just as the iron crown of Lombardy has within it a nail claimed to be of *his true original cross*, and is much admired and venerated for that reason. The chance of Christian syncretism has to be discounted, but references to Wittoba are impossible to find in accessible books.

He also cites Bali of Orissa 725 BC. In Orissa, in India, they have the story of a crucified God, known by several names, including the above, all of which, we are told, signify “Lord Second,” his being the second person or second member of the trinity. Most of the crucified gods occupied that position in a trinity of gods, the Son, in all cases, being the atoning offering. This God Bali was also called Baliu, and sometimes Bel. Monuments of this crucified God, bearing great age, may be found amid the ruins of the magnificent city of Mahabalipore, partially buried amongst the figures of the temple.

Graves says Indra of Tibet is shown nailed to the cross and that the antiquity of the story is beyond dispute. There are five wounds, representing the nail-holes and the piercing of the side. Marvellous stories are told of the birth of this Divine Redeemer. His mother was a virgin of black complexion, and hence his complexion was of the ebony hue, as in the case of Christ and some other sin-atoning saviours. He descended from heaven on a mission of benevolence, and ascended back to the heavenly mansion after his crucifixion. He led a life of strict celibacy, which, he taught, was essential to true holiness. He inculcated great tenderness toward all living beings. He could walk upon the water or upon the air and he could foretell future events with great accuracy. He practised the most devout contemplation, severe discipline of the body and mind, and completely subdued his passions. He was worshiped as a god who had existed as a spirit from all eternity, and his followers were called Heavenly Teachers.



The Celtic Druids depict their god Esus (Hesus) of Gaul as having been crucified with a lamb on one side and an elephant on the other, and that this occurred long before the Christian era. The elephant, being the largest animal known, was chosen to represent the magnitude of the sins of the world, while the lamb, from its proverbial innocent nature, was chosen to represent the innocence of the victim, the god offered as a propitiatory sacrifice. We have the Lamb of God taking away the sins of the world. The Lamb of God could therefore have been borrowed from the Druids. This legend was found in Gaul long before Jesus Christ was known to history.

Graves claims the historical basis of the crucifixion of the Mexican god Quezalcoatl is explicit, unequivocal, tangible, and ineffaceable, "being indelibly engraven upon metal plates." One of these plates shows him as having been crucified on a mountain. Another shows him as having been crucified in the heavens, as S Justin tells us Christ was. Sometimes he is shown as having been nailed to a cross, sometimes with two thieves hanging with him, and sometimes as hanging with a cross in his hand. If these are unquestionably pictures of Quezalcoatl, the question has to be asked whether they are Christian syncretisms and therefore later than Cortez.



Today, Quetzalcoatl is said to have departed to the east saying he would one day return, but his manner of doing this seems to have been by throwing himself on to a funeral pyre, being cremated and then resurrected as the planet Venus. The ancient sun gods demanded human sacrifice to start the solar year and often rather than crucifixion, this was burning on a pyre, or in Europe in a wicker basket. Another myth is that he burnt in the heat of the sun. Birds flew out of his ashes which carried his heart up to the sky to become the planet Venus.

Quetzalcoatl again has characteristics of a sun god. The Aztecs seem to have been sun worshippers and Venus is the planet that heralds the sun. A picture that purports to illustrate the legend of Quetzalcoatl rising as Venus, shows a sun figure emerging from a fire with outstretched arms! There seems to be no heart or birds or planet Venus. Elsewhere in Aztec legend, Nanahuatzin self-immolates on a pyre to create the fifth sun. Are these myths being properly distinguished?

Iao of Nepal in 600 BC was crucified on a tree. The name of this incarnate god and oriental saviour occurs frequently in the holy bibles and sacred books of other countries. Some suppose that Iao is the root of the name of the Jewish God, Yehouah (Jehovah), often abbreviated to Yeho. Christian (Nestorian) influence must be discounted for several of these, to our mind, remote gods to be accepted as original. Devatat of Siam, and Apollonius of Tyana in Cappadocia are also reported to have died on the cross.

***Before you go, think about this...***

Some of the witticisms of John Wilkes, the English liberal and supporter of US independence, have become everyday expressions. Hearing a clergyman expounding on the virtues of believing his Lord, Wilkes commented, when he had the chance, "If God is so good, Sir, why need you lay it on with a trowel?" Thousands of US children were later named after him.

# Examining the Bible Objectively

*When theories no longer belong to individuals but to a group, vested interests are served by cleaving to it and ridiculing alternatives.*

*Who Lies Sleeping?*

## 2. Birth Narratives I

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### Abstract

*The Virgin Birth is unknown to Paul. The earliest Christian writings, Paul's Epistles, do not mention it. Jesus was of the seed of David according to the flesh (Rom 1:3), and Jesus was born of a woman under the law (Gal 4:4). By any natural standard, Jesus was illegitimate—her husband did not impregnate Mary so Jesus was not the son of her husband. He was therefore not a son of David as the genealogies seek to show. Nor was Jesus a son of David because he himself, according to the synoptic gospels, denied it. If Paul was right in saying, “Christ was descended from David according to the flesh”, Christians have to conclude he meant Mary’s flesh so as not deny the miraculous birth. Then the genealogies of Joseph are spurious and superfluous. Joseph is unnecessary to the story, and Mark did not mention him at all. But Christians like the idea of a Davidic descent of Jesus, and believe it, even though God as the Son denied it.*

### The Myth of the Virgin Birth

Mankind will not emulate extraordinary leaders but instead fall to their knees, adore and worship them. Rather than follow a difficult example it is easier to deify the exemplar thus providing an excuse for not emulating him—“How can mere men do what gods can do?” This inclination to worship Jesus as a god rather than follow him as a man stems from the earliest days of Christianity. Christians take the belief that Jesus was “son of God” to mean he was divine. Proof is his Virgin Birth, a myth found from end to end of the Hellenistic world. Divine heroes were not the product of human fathers. Their mothers were impregnated as virgins by the god in some supernatural way.

If our ideas about the dates of the gospels are correct, within 60 years of the crucifixion, Jesus's adoring followers had created the myth of the conception of Jesus by the Holy Ghost making him at least half a god from the start. He thus became an impossible role model for merely mortal men. Yet even the half of him that was human passed on by his mother was too much for the adorers—they wanted a fully fledged god. After centuries as a tolerated heresy, in 1854 the doctrine of “The Immaculate Conception of the Mother of God” was adopted by the Roman Church. It made Mother Mary into another perfect being, free of original sin, like Jesus. From her own birth date she was incapable of sin throughout her life. She was defined as a sinless mate for God Almighty to conceive a divine son. Jesus as a fine example of principled and dedicated manhood had been usurped by the adorers and worshippers.

Nothing certain is known about Jesus's birth, childhood and early manhood. Indeed, few doctrines of the Christian faith are so slight in their foundations as that of the Virgin Birth of Jesus. The virgin birth was not attested early in Christianity. Mark, John and Paul never mention a special birth, Paul even denying it explicitly, as if he had heard the rumour and wanted it scotching. The earliest Christian writings are Paul's epistles, and no mention is made of the Virgin Birth in them. Paul could not be more explicit in recording that Jesus was “of the seed of David according to the flesh” (*Rom* 1:3) as if he were refuting the suggestion. He insists that Jesus was “born of a woman under the law” (*Gal* 4:4) but he does not know, or apparently care, who she was and he knows of no miracle in the conception. For Paul, Jesus was the Son of God through the “Spirit of Holiness” which did not require a supernatural conception.

*Mark* and the last gospel, *John*, have no narratives of Jesus's birth and upbringing. The gospel of Mark is the next writing chronologically after the epistles. We have no proof it existed within forty years of the death of Christ yet it is ignorant of the tremendous miracle of the Virgin Birth. Both *Mark* and *John* begin the history with Jesus heralded and baptized by John the Baptist at the age of thirty. The original *Mark* was a description of the active career and death of a Jewish leader, appointed by John in his early manhood.

The implication of the omission of the birth stories from the final gospel might be that its author did not accept them. Since they were also omitted from the first gospel, either Mark did not know about them or he also did not accept them. These observations alone seem sufficient to treat them with distrust.

The wonderful story of the birth of Jesus does not publicly appear until at least a century after the event. What would an historian make of a legend about the birth of Napoleon which did not appear until a hundred years after he was born? Indeed, no church father cites the birth narratives as we now know them until Irenaeus in 177 AD. The early church could not consider the mother of God having a sexual relationship with any man lest doubt be cast upon Jesus's title as Son of God. So it suited the church fathers to compose the birth narratives and justify them from the “prophecy” they found in *Isaiah*.

## Joseph and Mary

Mark and Paul never mention Joseph, and nor does Matthew when the birth narrative is excluded. Contrast *Mark* 6:1-3 with the parallel *Matthew* 13:53-55, written about 25 years later.

In *Mark*, Jesus is the carpenter, and his father is not mentioned. In *Matthew*, Jesus is the son of the carpenter. *Mark* has nothing certain to suggest the nuclear family of the birth narratives. The Jewish custom was to associate a son with his father's name not his mother's. Joshua ben Miriam is absurd and insulting, implying precisely what early critics claimed—Jesus was illegitimately born. To speak of someone as the son of Mary is to imply he has no father.

Elsewhere in the *New Testament*, Jesus is the son of Joseph, a contradiction of the birth narratives, unless Jesus was adopted. More likely is that Jesus was a son of Judas, meaning Judas of Galilee. Jesus might have been a natural son of Judas, but he could have been called a son of Judas in the sense that he was a follower—he was a member of the Galilean bandits founded by Judas. This tradition would have had to be dropped like a hot cake, as soon as it began to emerge, and evidently it was too hot to mention in the earliest gospel, *Mark*, though no alternative had been substituted. To get rid of the accusations that Jesus was a son of Judas of Galilee, later gospels made Jesus the son of Joseph, and Judas was the name given to Jesus's "betrayers" to complete the revision.

Joseph is therefore fictional. In *Matthew* 1:19, Joseph is called a "just man" which is code for an Essene. Joseph was chosen as the name of the father of Jesus as a sop to the Samaritans who were amongst the first Nazarene converts. Samaritans lived in what was the Northern Kingdom of the two Jewish kingdoms where the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, descended from the Joseph of the Torah, had settled in legend. Samaritans thought of themselves as "sons of Joseph". Jesus was therefore given a father with the name Joseph so that the messiah was a "son of Joseph" in line with their expectations. Further proof is that *Matthew* tells us Joseph's father is Jacob, just as the father of the scriptural Joseph was Jacob.

Mary the Virgin is central to the gospel narrative only in the birth stories in the early chapters of *Matthew* and *Luke*. Elsewhere, she travelled to Jerusalem when Jesus was twelve (*Lk* 2:41-52), she urges Jesus to change water into wine at a mysterious wedding at Cana (*Jn* 2:1-12), she is snubbed by Jesus (*Mk* 3:31-35; *Mt* 12:46-50; *Lk* 18:19-20; 11:27-29), her neighbours at Nazareth have little respect for him (*Mk* 6:1-6; *Mt* 13:53-58), she is present at the crucifixion where Jesus entrusts her well being to John, according to John (*Jn* 19:25-27), and finally she appears, in *Acts* 1:14, at prayer with the apostles.

It is not a lot to build a historical picture of her, especially when she is unique in history if not in mythology, as parthenogenesis has never been attested in human beings, or even vertebrates, yet miraculous births were common in the classical myths for both gods and outstanding men.

Mary was certainly called "The Virgin" from the time of *Matthew* and *Luke*, around the end of the first century, and Mary could really have been a virgin. If she were a sister in the women's branch of the Essene sect, akin to the female Therapeutae, she would have been chaste by choice, just as the male Essenes were, and many a pious Christian nun. She could not then have been a natural mother, but she could still have been a ritual mother. Catholic priests call themselves "Father" and nuns still call themselves "mother", even though they are lifelong virgins.

Christians automatically reject any notion that their superstition did not begin with the man described in the gospels, even though much of the terminology seems to have been already established before Christ. Mary was a type of nun. She officiated as a ritual mother at a rebirth ritual, part of the rights of passage of any Essene, but being a ritual mother did not relieve her of her virginity! The apologists will say that this is hypothetical, and so it is, but it is a better hypothesis than one that actually requires a virgin to give birth to a natural son while still remaining a virgin.

In the two gospels with the birth stories, Joseph was betrothed to Mary. The implication is that she was too young to marry, yet Joseph is her husband (*Mt* 1:19, although the words “to be” are inserted in some texts), and they seem married too in *Luke* 2:5. Apologists, like Geoffrey Ashe, once a devotee of Mary (*The Virgin*), claim betrothal was like marriage in practice—when the man took the girl into his house they were effectively married and sexual relations could begin. It is unlikely, and, though it doubtless happened, it was not proper.

Even so, it was not true of Joseph for Mary was already pregnant when he supposedly took her for his wife (*Mt* 1:20), meant to denote when she joined his household. He found she was pregnant and decided to divorce her, but the angel appeared and persuaded him otherwise. Apart from the angel, which solves the problem for believers but for no one else, Joseph had found his virgin bride to be pregnant when he took her in. There is only one honest interpretation of this. Mary had allowed herself to be seduced as a minor. The fourth century Jewish work, *Toledot Yeshu*, the *History of Jesus*, explains that this was the case, though it is too late to be good evidence. What is closer to the events is that the same allegation was considered by Origen as a widespread rumour in the second century.

That Christians had two quite different traditions of Mary and Joseph at the birth of Jesus gives us no confidence in the historicity of either. In the story that Jesus was illegitimate are three possibilities, and the absence of the story in several of the sources suggests other possibilities—Jesus had an utterly unremarkable birth, or he was an orphan brought up by a home for destitute boys and girls. The Essenes took in such children.

The Essenes in the *Scrolls* called themselves the Poor or the Ebionim, and early forms of Jewish Christianity had the same name. The more Jewish of the Ebionite sects of the second century rejected Paul, and the miraculous birth stories. They saw Jesus as a prophet who would return in glory, but had been born as a normal man. Apologists say they were just anti-Paul but Paul advocated no miraculous birth either. Paul’s epistles prove that the first Christian missionary made no use of the supposed miraculous birth of Christ! So, it seems no far-fetched inference that these Ebionim were in the tradition of the Jerusalem Church of James the Just. Their fathers were the first Jewish Christians.

They were said to have used a Hebrew version of *Matthew*. Geoffrey Ashe, one who considers himself a careful historian, calls the Ebionite gospel “a censored text of *Matthew* in Hebrew”, inferring from it that the Ebionites were a breakaway group of Christians rather than the original ones. Like most biblicists and pseudo-historians, he is careful to fill his book with footnotes, but gives no authority for this statement and the conclusion from it. It is simply his own assumption derived from his own belief in Christianity. It is more likely that the Hebrew *Matthew* was a

Syriac sayings document, perhaps the one known to scholars as “Q”, a variation of which seems to have appeared as the *Gospel of Thomas*. The Christian *Matthew* was the Greek recension of this book amalgamated with *Mark*, the editor retaining the original authorship of the sayings work, *Matthew*.

When the same procedure was followed elsewhere, the book was given a new name, whether the name of the editor or not, *Luke*. If this is so, then it confirms the hypothesis of the Ebionites as the earliest Christians, and enjoys the characteristic of plausibility, to use a favourite Christian criterion of truth. Ashe is as bogus a scholar when it comes to his beliefs as most other Christians. A reason he offers for disregarding the Ebionite evidence is that it is from outside the Church, an excellent reason for accepting it, the Church never having been noted for its honesty. Moreover, the Ebionites were outside the Church because Rome had expelled them as heretics.

## Bethlehem and Nazareth



*Matthew* and *Luke* both have birth narratives but each has a different story. *Matthew*, the next gospel after *Mark*, seems in its original form to have known nothing unusual about the birth of Jesus. The first two chapters are an afterthought. The gospel really begins, at the third chapter, in the same place as that of *Mark*. Then someone prefaced it with one of the two genealogies of Jesus that were in circulation (1:1-17). Next—the new beginning is quite clear—somebody added a short account of how Jesus was born (1:18-25). Lastly some other hand added the legends of Chapter 2. The Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem as the *Old Testament* is interpreted as saying:

But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

*Micah* 5:2

*Matthew* renders this citation as:

*“And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.*

***Mt 2:6***

Not much difference, you might think, but Ephrathah has been omitted and the prophecy has otherwise failed unless Jesus became, at some stage, the ruler of Israel.

The significance of dropping “Ephrathah” is that, with it included, it is much clearer that a legendary son of Judah, Bethlehem Ephrathah (*1 Chr* 4:4), 123 of whose children supposedly returned with Zerubabel from exile (*Neh* 7:26), is meant and not a town. In the quotation from *Micah*, “thousands” is more accurately translated as “houses” or “clans” as it is in the RSV, and *Matthew* actually gets it correct in referring to Bethlehem as a prince! Confirmation that the reference is to an aristocratic “father” and not a place is that the pronouns and adjectives applied to Bethlehem are masculine, whereas towns are uniformly feminine in Hebrew grammar. Since Jesus does not seem to be a member of the House of Bethlehem, Matthew has to pretend that the Bethlehem meant was the town. So, in *Matthew*, Jesus’s parents came from Bethlehem in Judæa but on returning from Egypt they settled in Nazareth in Galilee. Jesus was born at home in a house in Bethlehem. In *Mark*, Jesus is simply of Nazareth and Bethlehem is not mentioned.

In *Luke*, the Holy Family lived in Nazareth and went to Bethlehem to be taxed, where Jesus was born in a stable. The Emperor Augustus decreed that “all the world should be taxed”, and each man was to go, with his family, to the city of his fathers. This meant a journey of eighty miles for the poor carpenter and his pregnant wife, and since every family in Judæa had to get to the city of his ancestor of a thousand years earlier, Judæa must have presented a highly interesting spectacle. The most practical government of ancient times, the Roman, is supposed to have ordered this piece of lunacy, through the Governor Cyrenius (Quirinius). But we learn from the historian Josephus that what Cyrenius really did was a much smaller matter, and that it was done in the year 6 AD, or ten years after the death of Herod. Moreover, northern Palestine was not under Cyrenius, but under the independent prince Herod Antipas and the Jews had so little in the way of tax-registers that in the year 66 AD they had to calculate the population from the number of paschal lambs.

A papyrus discovered in Egypt in 1905 AD and now kept in the British Museum is an edict dated 104 AD of the Prefect of Egypt, Gaius Vibius Maximus, declaring that a census by households had begun and that everyone away from their normal administrative district had to return to their own “hearths” to register, unless they had a sound reason for registering in a town because they had some essential function. Dishonest apologists tell us that this is the same as moving to the district of their ancestors, just as it was supposed to have been in the bible narratives. The whole sense of it was that people who were working away from home had to return home to be counted unless they had some duty that could not be left unattended, when they could register their presence locally. In the bible, Joseph’s “hearth” was supposedly established in Nazareth and he had no reason to go to Bethlehem, some notional ancestral region.

The birth arrived, and it was romantic, in the manger of a stable, usually depicted as a cave. The cave at Bethlehem said to be the birthplace of Jesus was, the Christian father Jerome tells us, actually a rock shrine to the god Tammuz (Adonis—Lord) whose symbol was a cross. The Christians took over a Pagan sacred site as they did many times over, and adopted the cave, a common symbol of Pagan religions. Apollo, Cybele, Demeter, Hercules, Hermes, Ion, Mithras and Poseidon were all adored in caves. Hermes and Dionysos were wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in mangers.

By introducing the village of Bethlehem, *Luke* and *Matthew* connect Jesus as messiah with David the warrior king whose home town this was. There is nothing else in the gospels to associate Jesus with Bethlehem. In *Luke* 1:26 Nazareth is a city! But Nazareth was probably not even a village—it did not exist until Christianity became the official religion of the Empire in the fourth century AD when Helena, the mother of Constantine, on pilgrimage to the Holy Land, was horrified to find Nazareth did not exist. She named an obscure site in a suitable location Nazareth to fit the story.

Neither *Luke* nor *Matthew* refer to the birth story again and indeed it contradicts the main story. Presumably his family or at least his mother would have been aware of all that feting by kings and shepherds, and glory in the heavens, and the reason for it all. Yet later they are continually puzzled and disappointed by Jesus's behaviour. And why bother trying to establish a divine conception when both refer to Joseph in the main narrative as the father of Jesus. The Ebionites accepted Joseph as the natural father.

Jesus himself never claimed to have been born miraculously. He did not once allude to it, though it is hard to see why he should not have done to prove his divinity if, as Christians claim, he was divine. The Virgin Birth was tacked on to *Luke* and *Matthew*, years after the event, to prove Jesus's divinity. and to hype up the new god. Yet now most Christians are outraged if its truth is questioned.

The mystical *Book of the Revelation of John the Divine* does not mention it, though it would be perfect for inclusion in such an allegorical piece. None of the Jewish patriarchs were born of virgins and, though older women beyond the menopause had their wombs "opened" to conceive Isaac, Jacob and Samuel, no divine impregnation was suggested.

## Line of David

Saviours had to have royal blood to give them dignity, but they had to have a humble birth to allow them to be identified with the struggling masses. Their unpretentious births in poverty in stables or caves were intended to make a virtue of abject conditions. The genealogy of saviours is not always given in their myths but certainly some other saviours besides Christ were descended from kings and began their life in humble circumstances to suggest the benefits of poverty and humility.

Buddha is directly traced through a royal pedigree. His mother was betrothed to a rajah, and her son belonged to the same royal caste as Krishna. The Prophet of Islam, Mohammed, began life humbly and, like Christ, had nowhere to lay his head. A cloak spread on the ground served him for a bed, and a skin filled with date leaves was his pillow. The genealogy of the God Yu of China is traced through a line of princes to a very remote origin, though Yu only became the most prominent Chinese God in popular culture from about 600 AD. His whole life was a lesson of practical humility, and he proclaimed at every step the mantra of Christianity:

*This is the way. Walk ye in it.*

The dubious birth narratives of *Matthew* and *Luke* each include a genealogy that shows Joseph as the father of Jesus, and trace his lineage back to David, Abraham, and even Adam. The Jewish messiah was to be a son, meaning a descendent, of David. The *Old Testament* predicted that the messiah was to be of “the seed of David” as the Pharisees are made to remind Jesus in the gospels. So the evangelists made Davidic genealogies—which seems to have been unknown to Jesus when the Pharisees wanted his pedigree—for Joseph. Joseph was the father of Jesus except in one sense—he had not impregnated his wife!

The virgin birth narratives kick both these genealogies into touch. The birth stories in the two gospels come from different sources and differ widely but both contradict their central thesis that Jesus’s mother was a virgin by giving a genealogy to show that Joseph was descended from David, an irrelevancy if Joseph had not impregnated his wife. The original idea was obviously to trace Jesus’s lineage through Joseph to David to fulfil messianic prophecy. Then the idea of making Jesus more divine through a virgin birth arose and was tacked on spoiling the object of the genealogy. Then they could no longer serve their purpose of showing Jesus as descended from David. That is no problem to Christians, keen to find the most ingenious ways of upholding what they call the “Truth”, and simultaneously proving that, for God, all things are possible.

The editors of both gospels see the problem and try to avoid it. For Christians, the line of Mary was sufficient for the Davidic descent, so that both Joseph and Mary were in the line of David. QED! To establish this, though, a cacophany of unlikely things have to be yelled out, and direct evidence such as the Syriac *Matthew* found in 1892 has to be ignored. This work, confirmed by an ancient citation of it, states unequivocally that “Joseph begat Jesus who is called Christ”, though Mary is mentioned as the betrothed of Joseph. Thomas Boslooper (*The Virgin Birth*) notes that another Syriac text, describing the appearance of the angel to Joseph, has it announcing, “She shall bear to thee a son”.

In *Luke*, it was done by inserting “as people thought” to show Jesus was not really Joseph’s son and in *Matthew* by slyly separating Joseph from his son by inserting, after Joseph, “the husband of Mary, of whom was begotten Jesus”. The genealogies of Joseph in *Matthew* and *Luke* (*Matthew* 1:2-17 and *Luke* 3:23-38) give Joseph different fathers. Did the gospel writers intend to show that Jesus was so remarkable that, not only was God his father but he had two mortal fathers as well, because the two Josephs must have been different men having, in the male line, different grandfathers?

Christian commentators try to suggest the two genealogies are not both of Joseph. That in *Luke* is really Mary's, even though Luke says it is Joseph's (*Luke* 3:23), and Jesus was of the house of David through his mother's lineage. But if the intention was to imply that Mary was begetting Jesus then the person inserting the story was either ignorant or depended on the ignorance of his readers, for only men could beget according to Jewish convention. In the Syriac Matthew, "Joseph begat Jesus".

Fertilisation of the ovum by the sperm was only discovered in the nineteenth century. Though *Genesis* 3:15 refers to the seed of the woman, implying that the Jews knew about eggs carried by women. Perhaps some did, but not average people. Jews, like the Greeks, thought the whole human being was present in miniature in the male sperm. The woman was simply the soil for the seed to grow. They wrote of a woman who had no children as a spent field, as infertile or barren. This idea was carried into Christian Europe and held until the Middle ages. Christians had no idea that women had their own seed. This is why Mary nor any other woman could participate in a genealogy. Matthew's inclusion of four women in his genealogies was for other reasons and their presence would have highlighted them to an educated Jew.

The reason Christians believe Jesus was in the line of David has little to do with any evidence that he really was the heir to the throne. Though the Jews were assiduous keepers of genealogical tables to enable them to prove their nobility, we have to believe that they kept these records accurately for over a thousand years, through the disruptions of multiple conquests, loss of the leading classes in exile and so on. The habit probably stems, as most things Jewish really do, from the "return" from "exile". The colonists were keen to establish themselves as the true Israel, and quite different from the locals. They therefore set up their right to the priesthood on hereditary grounds and, at some stage claimed descent from Aaron and Zadok who had become legendary. Thereafter, they freely altered the record to according to the political circumstances.

In 1000 years at a reproductive rate of a generation every 25 years there could have been a million million descendants of David, even if each family had only two surviving children. In a small country, these descendants were interbreeding considerably, implying that everyone in Palestine, except for the most recent immigrants, must have had some of the blood of David coursing in their veins. Almost everyone could have traced their lineage to David, given the genealogical tables. Jesus must have had some Davidic blood, had his great ancestor existed, but it is most unlikely that he could have proved he was heir to the throne. He was a waif taken in by the Essenes according to their custom. An excellent reason for him to have been left with them by his mother is that he was illegitimate.

Jesus could not have been first in line to the throne of David, even if the order of precedence was known. Christians admit that by any *natural* standard, Jesus was illegitimate—her husband did not impregnate Mary and Jesus was not the son of her husband. He was therefore not a son of David whether he was the son of God or the common bastard of a Roman soldier. It is certain that Jesus was not a son of David because Jesus himself, according to the synoptic gospels denies it. In *Mark* 12:35-37 and parallel passages at *Matthew* 22:42 and *Luke* 20:41, Jesus pointedly explains that the messiah could not be the son of David.

Jesus's proof that the messiah was not a son or of the line of king David satisfied the attendant crowd. They accepted that a son of David was a man in the mould of David and not necessarily of his stock. The only reason he could have had for making such a reply was that everyone knew he could not fulfil the Davidic criterion of messiahship. Jesus was not a claimant to the throne of Israel by lineage. He was a star, a man whose destiny it was. Son of David was a position to be attained or granted by God not one that came by birth.

Mark can have had no reason for including any passage in which Jesus seems to deny what the church already accepted unless it was genuine tradition and he felt obliged to put it in this particular spot, and the authors of both *Matthew* and *Luke* felt obliged to copy it. Since in *Mark*, Jesus refutes the idea that he is the son of David, he had no need to provide genealogies that contradicted this teaching of the Christian Christ. The authors of *Matthew* and *Luke* reproduced the same refutation of Jesus's descent from David without noticing that they had done their best to prove it earlier. It is that Hopeless Ghost asleep on the job again. So, though the genealogies were unnecessary from Jesus's own teaching and from the imposition of God as the actual father, they remained in the gospels. The Davidic descent was a myth the Christians liked.

Ask any Christian whether Jesus was a son of David, meaning a descendant of the ancient Jewish king, and they will readily assent that he was. Ignatius (c 100 AD) writing respectively to the Ephesians and to the Trallians that Jesus Christ was conceived by Mary of the seed of David and of the spirit of God and was truly born. Either Mary was of the seed of David or the Holy Ghost was but Joseph was not involved. The apocryphal gospels and Justin Martyr had the same view.

How is the view of these early Christians compatible with Jesus's own refutation of it in the synoptic gospels. Nobody denies that Mark's gospel at least must have been written by the time of Ignatius, and *Matthew* and *Mark* were also in circulation by the time of Justin. So, it seems that the correct tradition in *Mark* was overlaid by the romantic necessity of having a messiah with proper Davidic credentials. These were provided by the genealogies in the early editions of *Matthew* and *Luke* but then the birth narratives were added. The truth that Jesus was illegitimate therefore is rejected in the genealogies then re-admitted in the birth narratives in the Greek convention of having a demi-god conceived by a God.

Why then do Christians think that Jesus was the son of David. Since both *Matthew* and *Luke* refute their own assertion that Jesus was the son of David by putting in birth stories that show he was not, the idea that Jesus was the son of David must have been an early misconception. It is not surprising. It was the messianic preconception that the messiah was the son of David, and it was the old tradition rather than the truth which prevailed.

In *Mark*, Jesus refuted the idea and, in this gospel, it only reappeared when blind Bartimaeus addressed Jesus as the Nazarenes were leaving Jericho. Luke accepted these as the only two instances but nevertheless included a genealogy which purported to prove that Jesus was a son of David. Matthew did the same, and although he mentioned "son of David" ten times, it is mainly as the title chosen by unclean spirits or the blind in addressing Jesus. Jesus did not want to be seen as a messiah in case the authorities should get to know, so his disciples had instructions to silence anyone addressing Jesus with a messianic title.

Once Jesus was accepted as the Messiah, he was given messianic features whether he had them in reality or not. The acceptance of Jesus as a son of David by the church was one of the first pious sins of omission of the bishops. Not the apostles, though. *Revelation* and *Acts* do not state that Jesus was a son of David. Nor, interestingly enough does *John* which otherwise was keen on building up the legendary aspects of Jesus Christ. Indeed in *John* 7:41-44 the dispute among the multitude about the messiah coming from Galilee instead of Bethlehem and of the seed of David refutes both the Davidic origin of Jesus and the myth created by Matthew that he was born in Bethlehem.

The only epistles of the apostles to speak of it are *Romans* 1:3 and *2 Timothy* 2:8 where Paul pointedly admits it was *his* gospel not *the* gospel. Paul of course, knew of no miraculous births categorically saying in *Galatians* 4:4 as if to refute any contrary suggestion that Jesus was “born of a woman under the law” (in short, legitimately). Paul, knowing nothing else, was ready to accept messianic convention—the messiah was the son of David. We must conclude that Paul, who knew hardly anything of the real circumstances of the life of Jesus, spread his own gospel that Jesus was of the line of David.

## The Genealogies

Christians are even able to hold to the truth of both genealogies and the virgin birth, yet quite apart from the difficulties with believing a virgin birth, the gospel genealogies differ widely with each other and contradict the *Old Testament*. If Paul was right in saying, “Christ was descended from David according to the flesh”, Christians have to conclude he meant Mary’s flesh so as not deny the miraculous birth. If Jews allowed a descent via the mother, then the genealogies of Joseph are spurious and superfluous. Joseph is unnecessary to the story, and Mark did not mention him at all.

Luke, in his gospel, names forty-one generations from David, to Joseph, though he had previously represented it as being forty-two. Matthew says that from Abraham to David are fourteen generations, but according to his own list there are only thirteen. Then he tells us there are fourteen generations from David to the exile but, according to *1 Chronicles* 3, there were eighteen. And the names in the lists of *Matthew* and *Luke* are so widely different from that found in *Chronicles* as to defy all logic. From David to Joseph, the two lists only agree twice, the names of Salathiel and Zerubabel alone agree in both lists.

Matthew tells us that the son of David, from whom Joseph descended, was Solomon, but Luke says it was Nathan. The next name in Matthew’s list is that of Rehoboam, but the corresponding name in Luke’s list is Mattatha. Matthew’s next name is Abijah, which *Luke* gives as Menna, while *Chronicles* supports *Matthew* and gives it as Abijah. Matthew says Joram begat Uzziah, but *Chronicles* virtually declares Joram had no such son, although he had a great-great-grandson Uzziah. But Luke says, in effect, there was no such person in the genealogical tree, or family line, as either Joram or Uzziah.

Matthew says Josiah begat Jechoniah and his brethren, about the time they were carried away to Babylon. But *Chronicles* declares that Jechoniah was Jehoiakim's son, and not Josiah's, and that Josiah had no such son. We also learn, from *2 Kings* 13, that Josiah was killed eleven years before the exile to Babylon, and could not well beget a son after he had been dead a decade.

Matthew, after naming twenty-four generations as filling out the line, and making it complete between David and Jacob, concludes with his and "Jacob begat Joseph, the husband of Mary". Luke, besides making his list fourteen generations more than Matthew's, declares that Joseph was the son of Heli. So that Joseph either had two fathers, Jacob and Heli, or *Matthew* or *Luke*, or both, were glaringly wrong, with all their inspiration by the Holy Ghost. One Christian answer—their excuse for the ineptitude of the Holy Ghost—is that Joseph's mother married twice, and one line is through Joseph's natural father, Jacob, while the other is through his stepfather, Heli. We have to believe, therefore, that a stepfather can "beget" a stepson, and Christians assure us he can. What is true of Joseph is true of Jesus, so that Joseph, merely Jesus's stepfather, could beget Jesus.

Again, *Luke* says that Salathiel was the son of Neri, but *Chronicles* says he was the son of Jechoniah. And after *Chronicles* had registered Zerubabel as the son of Penniah, *Matthew* and *Luke* both declare that he was the son of Salathiel. They agree here in contradicting *Chronicles*, which is the only instance but one of their agreement in the whole list of progenitors from David to Joseph. With this exception they contradict each other all the way through, and in many instances that of *Chronicles*, too. Such is the harmony in the words of divine inspiration which Christians admire so much. Pious liars need gullible believers.

Because Christians liked the idea of a Davidic descent, they had to try to explain it in the light of the Virgin Birth, and for long they argued that *Luke's* was the genealogy of Mary, Heli being her father, Joseph being Heli's son-in-law, not his son. We must accept that Jews saw no need to distinguish a son from a son-in-law since Heli is described as begetting Joseph, not Mary. The author of the genealogy was conscious that Jewish women did not beget, and to make her seem to do so would have declared Jesus as fatherless—a bastard.

Luke's genealogy appears in an odd place (*Lk* 3:23), when Jesus begins his ministry at 30 years of age not at his birth, but the birth narrative of the first two chapters of *Luke* is in a style and language distinctive from the rest of *Luke*. It is Greek with a strong flavour of Hebrew as opposed to the normal Greek of the rest. It is as if someone today deliberately wrote in biblical English. Theologians claim it is a deliberate stylistic device to give continuity with the *Old Testament*.

However, the elaborate dating given in *Luke* at the start of Jesus's ministry (*Lk* 3:1) suggests that the original gospel started here and the birth narrative in its peculiar style was added. The genealogy therefore originally came near the start of the gospel, where it would be expected, but associated with Jesus's baptism on his thirtieth birthday. It shows that Jesus was a king after the fashion of the Pharaohs who were reborn at their thirtieth birthday and, indeed, Essene practice was to consider people mature only at their thirtieth birthday. The *Damascus Rule* says that the Essenes kept lists of the "Sons of Zadok, the elect of Israel, according to their generations". These lists will have offered a source for the genealogies of *Matthew* and *Luke*.

Luke's genealogy gives Adam as "the son of God" making all men sons or descendants of God, though he missed out the word "son" in each case except the first, as if to suggest they were not literally "sons of". Adam was made of the dust of the earth, and the gospels recognise that God had the power to raise sons from stones. Why then did God have to make his redeeming son by impregnating a human woman supernaturally, like the Greek gods? Christians might respond that the saviour had to have a human mother to be human but the Virgin is now a goddess, herself immaculately conceived, so how is she human? The gradual accumulation of pious lies has led in Christianity to absurd contradictions like these, yet Christian punters are never deterred by the irrational.

## Mary



In *Luke*, Mary and Elizabeth and Zacharias had remarkable experiences but kept them such a dead secret that Paul and Mark never heard of them! Pious liars always come up with plausible explanations of these anomalies and satisfy the alarm of some of the faithful who were beginning to look a little askance. Now, Christianity is such a tissue of lies from end to end, believers believe it because it looks so implausible!

A priest named Zacharias had a barren wife, and "an angel of the Lord" appeared and told him that his wife would have a son. This son is to be "great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink", and then the angel went and said much the same to Mary, except that her son was to be fatherless.

Now, clerics avoid bringing to the notice of their readers another passage of the bible, referring to the birth of Samson:

*And there was a certain man of Zorah... and his wife was barren and bare not. And the angel of the Lord appeared unto the woman, and said unto her: Behold, now thou art barren, and bearest not, but thou shalt conceive and bear a son. Now, therefore, beware, I pray thee, and drink not wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing; For, lo, thou shalt conceive and bear a son, and no razor shall come on his head, for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb.*

***Judges 13:2-6***

Familiar?

The angel tells Mary that she will conceive. As she is engaged to be married, this should not be a startling announcement but Mary is troubled and expostulates that she “knows no man”. Mary might have been a little deaf or simple, and misunderstood him to say that she had already conceived, but the oldest Latin manuscript of *Luke* has not the words, “How can this be? I know no man”. Has somebody, later, interpolated the words? An apocryphal gospel of the second century, considered below, describes Mary as vowed to virginity for life, not engaged to Joseph, and such virgins sometimes observe their vows. It would suggest that the virgin Mary was a type of nun, a female Nazarite consecrated to God, and had a ritual role as a mother.

There were more miracles and “these things were noised abroad through all the hill country of Judæa”, by the shepherds as you would expect, and created an enormous sensation, but everybody forgot in a few years. The incarnate God submitted to the delicate operation known as circumcision and there were more miracles. Yet, when this wonderful being, at the age of twelve, showed signs of precocious wisdom, his father and mother “were amazed” (2:48) and apparently as irritated as parents of any naughty boy would be.

The story in *Luke* of the boy Jesus remaining in the temple when his parents spent three days looking for him contains no elements of Nazarene tradition, except that Jesus might have been intensively coached by the Essene priesthood. No Jewish boy would have been so rude to his parents as to say: “Why are you looking for me? You ought to know I’d be about God’s business!” Such lack of respect for parents, then or now, is quite un-Jewish. Since Mary and Joseph did not understand this reply, the circus of the nativity must have been nonsense. The composition of this brief episode preceded the nativity as the use of the word “parents” shows.

So, despite kings, gifts, shepherds, heavenly hosts, precocious intellect and what have you, Jesus’s mother later on did not know her son had been designated a king. An editor of *Luke* in 2:19 and 2:51 acknowledges the problem, pretending that Mary kept it to herself. Apparently everybody else forgot all about it all too, and the secret was only let out a hundred years later. Matthew goes so far as to make Mary and her sons think of putting Jesus under restraint as a madman! So Mary definitely had forgotten it all for the duration of the rest of the gospel stories.

The final verse (*Lk* 2:52) of this section indicates that Jesus was himself a Nazarite—he was “in favour with God”, a scribal formula meaning he had been consecrated to God, which was why he was being coached by sages.

*Before you go, think about this...*

Volcanoes and asteroid impacts do not have to be invoked to explain the environmental problems we are experiencing, or the mass extinction of species currently taking place. Similar things are happening today to events at the end of the Cretaceous.

*Who Lies Sleeping?*

# Finding History in the Bible

*Successful embryological development is the first stage of natural selection.*

*Who Lies Sleeping?*

## 3. Birth Narratives II

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### Abstract

*The virgin birth narratives spoiled the purpose of the genealogies, so must have been needed. It was because Jesus had been called Ben Pandera, Son of the Panther, a black man. A virgin (Greek, parthenos) birth explained the rumour that Jesus was a bastard. Pandera was a slur on the word parthenos, Christians said. But Pagan demi-gods were often sons of virgins, so the pun is an unlikely invention of Pagans, though not the opposite. Even normal birth by the impure route was too ignominious for the Christian Son. It had to be spotless, or immaculate, and the mother had to remain a virgin. So, Christians quickly took Mary to be as intact as a pious nun, a perpetual virgin like Pagan goddesses, even after Jesus had been born. Yet Luke describes Jesus as Mary's first-born, and all the gospels mention brothers of Jesus and sisters too.*

### Prophecy of a Virgin

An attempt was made, in *Matthew* 1:22-23, to justify the virgin birth story by referring to *Isaiah* 7:14 where is written:

*“Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel.*

Though Matthew interprets this as a messianic prophecy it is not—it is part of a warning *Isaiah* is giving regarding events of that time—and indeed it is absurd even in the gospel because Matthew's angel has just directed Joseph to call the child “Jesus”, not “Immanuel!” Nevertheless, Matthew's reading of it as a messianic prophecy is the sort of thing that Essene pesharists did. *Matthew* even uses the pesharist's formula, “which being interpreted is”. In their books of commentaries, Essenes would take parts of the scriptures and reinterpret them in ways

that suited them. That Christians freely did the same indicates their common roots—and they still happily call Jesus “Immanuel” though that was never his name.

The word translated “virgin” employed in the Greek version of the Jewish scriptures was “*parthenos*”, but a reference to the original Hebrew yields the word “*almah*”. Both “*parthenos*” and “*almah*” did not necessarily mean a virgin as we understand it, a woman who had never had intercourse. In Greek, it could mean youth, the state of unmarried, or even a person who is first married. In Hebrew, it could mean, beside the usual meaning, an immature girl who could not conceive because she had not yet started to menstruate. The Hebrew word for “virgin” is “*bethulah*” and would surely have been used in *Isaiah* if “virgin” was the meaning the author intended.

Young girls were betrothed to their future husbands until they could legally marry at the age of twelve and a half—menstruation usually started later. A married virgin could therefore conceive—in *Joel* 1:8 a virgin’s husband is mentioned. Mary was described as betrothed to Joseph implying that she was a minor under the age of twelve and a half—Joseph might have broken the law by having sex with a minor, and pretended he was surprised at the outcome to protect himself. *Matthew* 1:25 is at pains to refute any such thought by stating that Joseph “knew her not” till she brought forth her first born son—the euphemism “knowing her” meaning having sex with her. In any event, the virgin Mary could have given birth with no miracle involved.

The idea of a virgin as a premenstrual girl allows her to have children and still be a virgin. If she were to conceive from her very first ovulation, she would not have menstruated but would be a mother and still a virgin. If she conceived at the first ovulation after the birth, she could be a virgin mother of two children of different ages. Since Jewish girls often married before menstruation, “virgin” mothers were not unusual, explaining the case in *Joel* 1:8. Mary was a minor who could become Joseph’s wife when she reached the age of twelve and a half. Thus the “virgin” Mary could have given birth.

If she did, the truth was misunderstood in the gentile world of the Roman Empire, and indeed beyond, where it was *de rigueur* not only for gods but also great men to be born of virgins. Ra, Hatshepsut, Amenophis III, Cyrus the Great, Julius Caesar, Pythagoras, Alexander, Augustus and others, were thought to have been born miraculously. Plato was born of Paretonia, begotten of Apollo, not Ariston, his father, according to one authority. Perseus, Apollonius of Tyana, Fu-Hsi, Lao Kium, Zoroaster and Attis all came of virgin mothers according to their believers.

## **Pantheras**

The earliest gospel written, *Mark*, has nothing to say about Jesus’s father. Though Jesus is described as a carpenter, his father is nowhere mentioned either as the carpenter or as Joseph. This suggests that, in the earliest tradition, Jesus was a waif or a foundling. The earliest refutation of Jesus is that he was the illegitimate son of a Roman soldier called Pantheras. The name Pantheras was found among Roman soldiers.

## Was Christ Black?

Several saviours are sometimes shown as being black, including Jesus Christ. There is more common sense evidence that the Christian saviour was black or dark skinned, than there is of his being the son of a virgin. Though the gospel writers say nothing about Jesus's appearance, his earliest disciples obviously knew. In the pictures and portraits of Jesus by the early Christians, his complexion is black, but care is taken to show his lips as red, suggesting realism rather than an odd convention. Solomon's declaration in the Song of Songs, "I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem" (*Song* 1:5), has always been taken to mean Christ, a curious belief unless it stems from a very ancient tradition perhaps going back to Jesus himself.

If the belief of the Christians were to come true and Jesus were to return at his second coming as a black man, how would he be received by negro-hating Christians? Would they bow their knee to a black god, asking forgiveness for the grave error of their racialist ways? Or would they decide that he was an imposter and crucify him afresh?

According to Origen (185-254 AD) in *Contra Celsum*, the Pagan philosopher Celsus, who was famous for his arguments against Christianity, claimed in 178 AD that he had heard from a Jew that Jesus's mother, Mary, had been divorced by her husband, a carpenter, after it had been proved that she was an adultress. She wandered about in shame and bore Jesus in secret. His real father was a soldier named Pantheras, possibly a Moor to judge by the name. Tertullian, in 198 AD, quoted the *Toldot Yeshu*, where Jesus is several times called Ben Pandera to the same effect. So, Jesus was the son of the Panther, ben Pandera, and so he was known from an early time by the Jews. In the Jewish material, besides Ben Pandera, Jesus is called Ben Stada. In one story, this is a besmirching name of Mary, from a pun on "stada" as meaning a woman who has rejected her husband. Interestingly, this Mary is called a braider or hairdresser, implying a meaning of "magdalene".

Christians always argue that this is an attempt to denigrate (oops) Jesus because "son of a virgin" is "huios parthenou", in Greek, and "huios pantherou" (son of a panther) is a plain enough pun on it. The presence of the name, Ben Pandera, in the Jewish writings shows that the rumour probably began in Palestine, yet Pandera is not a pun on the Hebrew or Aramaic words for a virgin, so it arose among Greek speakers. If the excuse is true, some Greek speaking Jews must have been laughing at the Christian birth story by punning on the word "parthenou" to get the name "Pandera".

Equally, however, the stories of the virgin birth could be a way of trying to explain that Jesus was called Ben Pandera. There was nothing unusual in Paganism about demi-gods being born of virgins, so there seems no obvious reason why the pun should have been invented by Pagans, but that it should have been used by gentile Christians to defend their new god against a true but undesirable rumour seems quite likely. Which is the chicken and which the egg is not evident, but since Matthew all but admits the truth writing about 100 AD, it is rather more likely that the virgin birth narratives were invented to dispel the rumour that Jesus was the bastard son of one Pantheras than that Pantheras was invented to denigrate the birth stories. There must have been a pressing need for them because they spoiled the purpose of the genealogies. With a convenient interpretation of *Isaiah* 7:14 as a messianic text, though it plainly is not, Matthew was able to justify his invention. Luke's version is also aimed at refuting the same rumour, so that when an

angel appears to Mary to say she will conceive, she immediately replies, with no thought of Joseph to whom she was betrothed:

*How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?*

**Luke 1:34**

The gentile bishops came up with the ruse of changing the Greek name “Pantheros” to “parthenos”, the Greek word for virgin, to explain the defaming story of “the panther”. It is not a mistake that is easy to explain accidentally in Greek. Not only do the “n” and “r” interchange, but also the vowel “e” in Pantheros and Parthenos differ in the Greek. One is epsilon and the other eta. The bishops pretended the misunderstanding was in Hebrew, the name “Pandera” being a Hebrew attempt at pronouncing—“parthenos”—but problems remain, and the change still looks deliberate rather than accidental.

Since the birth stories are accepted as late additions to the gospels, Jesus did not have the title, “Son of the Virgin”, until late in the second century of Christianity, and the Pagan pun on the title could not have arisen before, unless it was not a pun but a genuine tradition. The tombstone of a soldier was found in Bingerbrück, Germany, inscribed:

Tiberius Julius Abdes Pantera of Sidon, aged 62, a soldier of 40 years’ service, of the first cohort of archers, lies here.

The first two names are the obligatory Roman names he took when he was granted Roman citizenship. “Abdes” is his own Semitic birth name. “Pantera” is the personal or nick name his friends knew him as.

Eventually, in typical fashion, the Christian bishops incorporated a Panthera into the holy family, as the father of Joseph, to have an excuse for the name. “Pantheras” (Greek, “panther”, “leopard”, whence “hunter”) was popular as a personal name of Macedonian soldiers in the armies of the Seleucids. Epiphanius (320-403 AD), with no evidence he was willing to quote, cites Origen as saying that “Panther” was the nickname for Jacob (James) the father of Joseph. He took the name as an epithet giving him some dignity, thus explaining the name “Pandera”, but in that case, it implied that Jesus’s ancestry was not Jewish but Macedonian. He was fair and red-headed, after all!

Now you have to question the motives or efficiency of God, or the Holy Ghost, one of whose tasks was to ensure the inspiration of the Holy Word. Why was all of this necessary? Why did God make the twelve year old Mary pregnant before she even got married? Or why did the Holy Ghost have to tell the story as if she had been impregnated as a minor, causing all the questions and doubt. She could have married Joseph normally, and God could then have seen that the “Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee”, making her respectably pregnant by the Holy Ghost without any knowledge of Joseph or any impropriety to the outside world. It is not a question that Christians are supposed to think about, but the need for it from the plain fact that the girl was illegally pregnant is obvious.

The silence of the gospels over Mary's condition cannot dispel the doubts about it any thinking person must have. The easy acceptance of the miracle does not gel with the harsh treatment the Jews meted out to promiscuous women, indeed, even victims of male lust. It tells against the Christian myth that this was a family. A Jewish husband would have been outraged, and notionally the adulterous woman could have been stoned to death. Had the girl been raped, then the rapist could have been stoned, but, as today, the suspicion fell upon the victim as encouraging the act.

In practice, stoning under the Roman Peace was probably itself illegal, but the social attitude behind it must have remained strong, and it happened as a mob action. Where stoning was impossible, social rejection must have been the usual response. The Essenes had systems of fines and penances, leading to ultimate expulsion from the community, so their attitude might have been more like that of Jesus in the instance in *John*, where he invited the guiltless to throw the first stone. The crime was dire and frowned upon, but could be dealt with less harshly than death. So, if the scandal is to be accepted as real, then the seduction of the maiden looks more compelling within an Essene community than in Judaism at large. The Essenes famously maintained their numbers by taking in those troubled by the vicissitudes of life, and what could have been more of a vicissitude than being born in scandalous circumstances?

Since the perpetual virginity of mother Mary is absurd, what could have suggested it other than the need to hide a scandal. Apologists like Geoffrey Ashe (*The Virgin*) think this is "inadequate to inspire such a doctrine or secure general assent". The story was invented a minimum of half a century later, among gentiles not Jews, in a country distant from Palestine, and among bishops who had already secured themselves a following among Godfearing gentiles and Hellenised Jews. Are we to imagine that believers, even then, would accept the scandalous truth when the bishops had a well prepared explanation? These believers, as they are today, are not called sheep for nothing.

The lie was perfectly acceptable in a society that expected miraculous conceptions and births of gods and demi-gods. Believers were happy that the new Christian demi-god, Jesus Christ, conformed. Ashe concedes "the logic of the son of God concept" was enough. The miraculous nature of the relationship between the god, his son and the chosen virgin was sufficient. These early believers noticed the parallels with the previous gods and demi-gods, and virgins that had given birth and remained virgins because they received the same titles and epithets as their illustrious predecessors. What right has a poor Jewish girl to the title Queen of Heaven? The simple fact is that Mary was not the first Queen of Heaven, nor was Jesus the first son of God. These honours were transferred from classical precedents.

Ashe accepts that religious fiction was indeed written, but he cannot bring himself to believe that it was written from the outset over the basic events of Christian and Marian belief. But the ultimate truth could uphold the origin of the mythology as not being utter fiction, though at another cost.

A suggestion on these pages is that the Essenes had various rituals that have not come fully to light, but can be hazily seen in the *New Testament* and Christian practices. One was a rebirth ceremony, one a ritual wedding and one a ritual feeding, the precursor of the Eucharist. We

know there were women Essenes, because some Essenes married and the strictness of their practices would demand that they married wives of the same beliefs. We do not know that there were female celibates to match the male ones, but the graves of women have been found at Qumran, and the closely similar Therapeuts, described by Philo, had female celibates in the order. Moreover, women as well as men could be consecrated to God as Nazarites. It seems most unlikely that there were no female Essenes, and to judge from the gospel ceremonies they served ritual roles.

Mother Mary was one of these celibate nuns and she served as the ritual mother of Jesus at his rebirth ceremony, a ritual probably associated with Baptism, as it still is. This Mary, therefore had an important relationship of a ceremonial kind with Jesus in the order, but she was not his natural mother, indeed could not have been because she was a chaste nun, but was his ritual mother. As a ritual mother, she could remain utterly virginal forever, while having a son. Equally, Jesus could have this ritual mother, but have no recognisable earthly father, but consider himself reborn of God. It is likely that all the Essenes considered themselves reborn as angels, at least from the age of thirty, and therefore directly sons of God. Barabbas was the ritual name of these born-again men.

## Virgin Mothers

Thomas Boslooper, considering the assertion of many Christian critics that other religions had precedents for the miraculous birth of gods and demi-gods, is quoted by Ashe as saying:

*“It is difficult to find a statement in all the literature of biblical criticism which is more misleading.”*

There is no example so clear of the Christian technique of argument. Come out with the devastating criticism whether it is true or not, and every Christian will automatically believe you. It is the Christian big-lie technique. This “devastating” assertion is true only in the sense that no other miraculous birth precisely matches that of Christ. Few of them are known in more detail than a sentence or two, or a short account at best, so it is easy to claim—with Boslooper—that there are actually no precedents at all. It is a popular Christian apologetic ploy. What does not match in every detail does not match at all! What does match does not match in meaning or interpretation!

The central point is that conception in classical mythology was often unusual. The details are irrelevant so long as the character has an unusual introduction to the world that marks him out as special. The degree of restraint or flamboyance in the telling is a cultural matter with no bearing on the peculiarity of the conception. Christianity began opposing sexuality as sinful, so no sexually prurient detail entered into the story, whereas the classical religions were more sexually honest. Christians now, after two millennia of indoctrination over sexuality, think the “tastefulness” of the Christian stories proves them. No justification could be more circular!

A man, even if he were thought of as a god, had to be born of a woman, and this could not be concealed, but paternal parentage is never so obvious, being known only to the mother, if anyone. The ancients felt that an offspring of a god, a son of god, should have a purer maternal

origin than mortals, and this was evidence of his supernatural or divine origin. So, the purity of his maternal parentage required the saviour to be born of a pure woman—a maiden. Hence, saviours often were born of virgins. Pure, holy and chaste virgins, just like Mary, mother of Jesus, gave birth to gods, sons of god and saviours, but often long before her.

The Christ had to be a man, so had to be born like a man, but with a father who was God. The age old magical conception was the best that could be invented given the constraints, but *Luke* is suggestive:

*The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee.*

**Luke 2:35**

Today people would rightly not believe a woman, however virtuous, giving birth to a child and saying she had not had sexual intercourse. In an age of miracles and ignorance of natural law, she was believed with credulity and many maidens claimed that gods fathered their sons. At one time it became so common in Greece that a decree made death the punishment of any woman insulting a god by charging him with fathering her child.

The idea of miraculous birth goes back to ancient myths that preceded any direct knowledge of how people were conceived. Birth seemed arbitrary, and primitive ideas of why conception happened involved natural phenomena like wind, sunlight, eating things, and seeing things, and it could be by touch, through the ear, the navel and the eyes. Moreover, in societies of extended families, the identity of the father was not known until taboos, even in primitive societies meant that people sought partners outside the extended family.

Another source of the myth was the practice of priests of deflowering virgins, or curing the barrenness of infertile matrons (often the impotence of their husbands) by allowing the woman to sleep in a temple when a god might impregnate her. Details came from the woman's dreams, because when the ploy was successful, the clues were in dreams, just as they were in the biblical stories. Like Freudian psychoanalysis, to dream of a snake or a swan was to dream of phallic symbols, and the child would be that of any god symbolised in the dream. Olympia, the wife of Philip of Macedon, conceived Alexander while she was sleeping in the temple of Apollo, where she was impregnated by Zeus in the form of a snake. How can a woman be impregnated by a snake or a swan, unless she too is in that form? Ultimately, these are psychological matters, but careless young girls found them useful excuses for the consequences of their adolescent adventures. Christians might smile, but how is Mary different? A man, according to *Luke*, pretended to be an angel called Gabriel. He was charming and persuasive, and the young girl was naïve and innocent because she was only twelve. What is so impossible about this that Christians deny it, substituting something utterly unbelievable, that they then say is proof it is divine?

In remote time, the virgin mother of Osiris claimed her son was begotten by the father of all gods. The likeness of this virgin mother, with the divine child in her arms, is commonly shown in old temples in Egypt. Scholars have said that the worship of this virgin mother, with her God-begotten child, prevailed everywhere. Her son of God was shown in effigy, lying in a manger,

just as the infant Jesus was afterward at Bethlehem. The worship of this virgin mother and her god is of ancient date as is proved by ancient sculptured figures.

In their myths, virgin births were familiar to every Greek. Christians will complain that these virgin births were utterly unnatural, forgetting that *all* virgin births are! Herakles had a virgin birth. His mother Alcmene (Alcmena) was married, but had vowed to remain chaste until the death of her brothers had been avenged. Zeus had selected her as the mother of a mortal hero he needed to help him win a battle against the giants. Alcmene was still a virgin [\[Comment\]](#) when Zeus impregnated her. Zeus's heavenly spouse, Hera, was against the child and opposed him in every way she could. Eventually she promised Zeus that she would desist if the young demi-god would achieve twelve great works. In the end, the wife of Herakles poisoned him, and he made a funeral pyre and got a shepherd to ignite it. A cloud came down from heaven, and the disciples of Herakles saw him rise from the summit of the pyre physically in the cloud to heaven. Hundreds of years later, the virgin-born Saviour from Nazareth was "taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight" from the summit of a hill (*Acts* 1:9).

According to Chinese mythology there were two beings—Tien-Chu and Shang-Ti—worshipped in that country as gods (Lords of Heaven) in the Chou dynasty more than twenty five hundred years ago, born of virgins who knew no man. Shang-Ti also was the father of the first emperor of the Chou dynasty, impregnating the mortal woman when she stepped on his footprint. Maia, mother of Buddha, Semele, mother of Dionysos, and Persephone, mother of Zagreus, Shing-Moo, mother of Fu-Hsi all had miraculous confinements and births, as did Io, called in *Æschylus*, the chaste virgin, whose son was the son of god.

The Latin inscription "*Partura Virginis*", "the virgin about to bring forth", has been found on Pagan temples in Celtic countries. Mayence was, it is said, the virgin-mother of the god-sired Esus of the Druids. In images more than two thousand years old, she is depicted enveloped in light, with a crown of twelve stars upon her head, exactly the same as the apocalyptic figure of the Christian *Book of Revelation*. She is also shown with her foot on the head of a serpent.

Apologists say that the classical stories are not virgin births like Mary's. Ashe declaims that "male sexuality is always present" in Pagan birth narratives. He *knows* it was not in the Christian case. Why? Because he *believes* it was not! That's faith for you!

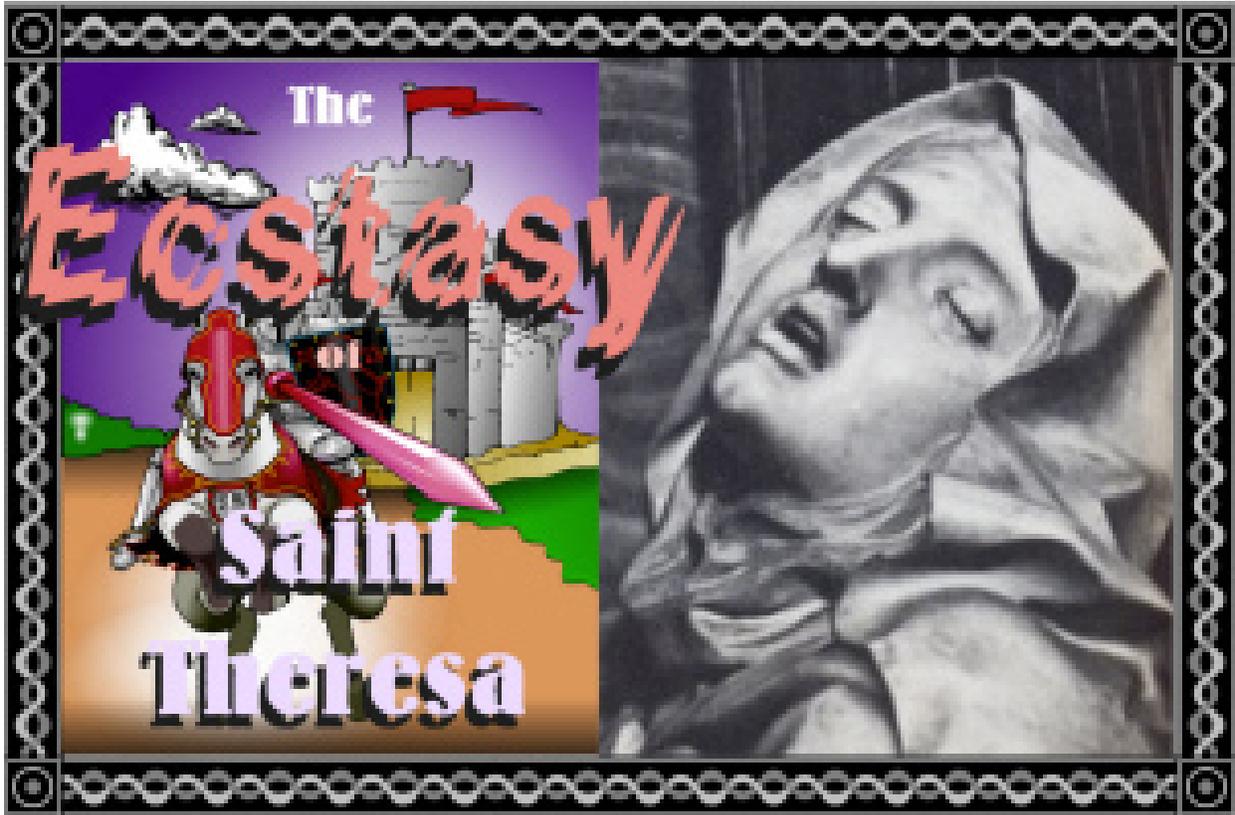
The Virgin Birth of Christ was without sex, without physical agony.

But why is he so certain Mary's was? The original Pagan idea was that the mortal girl should have been a virgin before she conceived, like Alcmene, not that she remained a virgin after she had given birth! Besides normal conception ordinary birth was also too ignominious for a god. It had to be spotless, or immaculate. Jesus Christ in an apocryphal gospel, like Krishna was born through his mother's side, rather than the impure route. Though not in the canonical works, some of the Christian fathers endorsed this story. And, in some cases, the mother, like the mother of Krishna, was still held to be a virgin, even after she had given birth to other children—a greater miracle than the biblical version, though deprecated by Christians. Yet even this parallels Mary, who remained a virgin even though she had given birth to Jesus and his brothers and sisters.

Christians, for no good reason, believe that Mary was perpetually a virgin, but again this is just like important Pagan goddesses. However, what goddesses can do, human women cannot. No woman can physically give birth while remaining a virgin—her hymen remaining intact—even if she had managed to conceive somehow while remaining one. Even if a fatherless conception is possible, a birth in which the woman remains a virgin is not, unless we are to admit Caesarian sections, like Krishna's, into the reckoning. If they are admitted, then it is another miracle that Mary survived what was possible but dangerous until recently, but such a birth was not miraculous. Because of the danger to the mother, the Romans usually permitted it only on dead women, to save the foetus in the last four weeks of a pregnancy.

None of this is available for discussion among Christians. They know Mary was a perpetual virgin, and Pallas Athene was not, despite her myth. Many ancient goddesses were perpetual virgins such as Athene, Isis and Cybele. Apologists claim these are only myths or metaphors! when Philo speaks of “God-begotten children” and “virgin mothers”, apologists dismiss it too as metaphor. Could the whole of the Christian gospels be just metaphor? Askance looks of hatred and incomprehension. Ashe concedes that the ancient goddesses were indeed virgins and mothers, but that is to “leave humanity behind”, meaning they are myths about supernatural beings! There is some subtle difference between a Catholic praying to Mary and a Canaanite praying to Anath, so at least Christians think, though what it is is impossible for the outside observer to see. In fact, it is different for no other reason than that they *believe* it is.

The doctrine of immaculate conception is ancient but the manner of the holy conception was different in different countries. Fu-Hsi (Fo-hi), the legendary founder of China, was conceived when his mother ate a flower she found while bathing. His gestation period was twelve years. His successor was also miraculously conceived. Christians will bleat that being conceived by eating a flower is not the same as being overshadowed by the Holy Ghost. Quite so! It is utterly different in the detail, but the detail is not what is important in these stories. It is the theme of a miraculous—particularly fatherless—conception that is the same. It is without sex and without physical agony despite the enormous brain Fu-Hsi must have developed while twelve years in the womb.



The ecstasy of S Theresa of Avila

No Christian can admit it as equivalent, though, to the Christian birth stories. It is actually too miraculous. When Luke says “the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee”, there is a broad hint of sexuality. Something “kind of” sexual happened! But a flower? Don’t be silly! When pushed on this “overshadowing”, the Christian apologist can retreat again. Whatever it implies, a spirit cannot enjoy normal sex with a material woman. But then neither can a flower. If these stories were meant to be true in any sense, it could only have been that the desperate mother made some such excuse for her condition. Mary was penetrated in her excuse by the Holy Spirit, or the archangel Gabriel, if he is different. Gabriel is the messenger of God, so he equates with Hermes, the messenger of the Greek gods but who was also a phallic god. Gabriel therefore brought more than messages to Mary. Perhaps, like saintly Christian nuns, she had fantasised it in her adolescent dreams. S Theresa of Avila dreamed she was penetrated by Christ. The mother of Fu-Hsi dreamed she had eaten a water lily. In reality, such stories meant she had dallied with a human seducer but was too young to understand what he was up to, what she had done, or what the risks were.

Zoroaster was immaculately conceived by a ray from the Divine Reason or Word. Herodotus also explained that such conceptions occurred by way of a ray of light and according to Plutarch’s book on Isis and Osiris it entered through the ear. Tertullian confirms it was a ray of light. Thus medieval pictures of Mary at the moment of conception show a ray of light entering her ear. But the idea of being “overshadowed by the Holy Ghost” seems to have been most current. God, the father of a god was believed to “overshadow” the mother of a god, to

impregnate her. In 550 BC, Pythias, the mother of Pythagoras, conceived by a spectre or ghost of the god Apollo, the sun god. Does the ghost of the sun god differ in principle from the Christian Holy Ghost?

A Chinese sect worshiped a saviour known as Xaca, who was conceived of his mother, Maia, by a white elephant, which she saw in her sleep, and for greater purity, she brought him forth from one of her sides. Tamerlane's mother conceived having had sexual intercourse with the god of Day. The mother of Ghengis Khan, being too modest to claim that she was the mother of the son of God, said only that he was the son of the sun.

Juno of Rome also grew pregnant at the touch of a flower to give birth to Mars. No impregnation could have been purer. So the most immaculate conception of all was that of the god of War! If it sounds absurd, how is it more senseless than conception by a ghost? Botany has shown that, at least, a flower can fertilise other flowers but no science has yet investigated the virility of ghosts.

The Greek Juno, Hera, was immaculately impregnated by the wind to give birth to Vulcan. Here is a close parallel indeed for the word habitually translated as spirit or ghost in the scriptures and continued into the Greek of the *New Testament* really means breath or wind! So literally the virgin Mary was impregnated by the wind just like Hera. Regarding the observations of G Higgins on Juno, Andreas Arduus writes by email to correct the citation, and offer the suggestions which follow:

*“The Goddess Februa, or Februat Juno, became the Purificata Virgo Maria. The old Romans celebrated this festival in precisely the same way as the moderns—by processions with wax lights, and so on, and on the same day, 2 February. The author of the Perennial Calendar observes, that it is a remarkable coincidence that the festival of the miraculous conception of Juno Jugalis, the blessed Virgin, the Queen of Heaven, should fall on the very same day the modern Romans have fixed the festival of the conception of the blessed Virgin Mary. Being merely a continuation of an ancient festival, there is nothing remarkable in it.*

**G Higgins, *Anacalypsis***

Andreas Arduus also notes:

*“This festival of the Purification of the Virgin corresponds with the old Roman festival of Juno Februat (purified) which was held in the last month (February) of the Roman year, and which included a candle procession of Ceres searching for Proserpine.*

**Edward Carpenter, *Pagan and Christian Creeds—their Origin and Meaning***

Oskar Seyffert says Juno was known under many names as the goddess of nuptials, and the name Iuga (Yoke) is one of them. He gives no feast day for her but he says the calends were a bad day for marriage, one reason perhaps why the festival was on 2 February, another being that the first was devoted to Juno Sospita, the national goddess. 2 February is actually the date of the “Presentation of the Lord” in the Catholic Calendar, celebrating when the infant Jesus was presented in the temple, and Mary was purified (*Lk 2:22*). This seems to be the real link between Juno and Mary, Godfrey Higgins was suggesting. It was not the conception but the purification

of the virgin that was celebrated on this date. William Woods (*A History of the Devil*) confirms that 2 February was the Roman day of purification. Since the Church adopted 25 December as the birth date of Christ, in Mosaic law, 41 days later would have been Mary's date of purification, 4 February. It fell so close to the official Roman festival on 2 February, that was the day chosen.

The second century Stoic, Aelianus, in *De Natura Animalium*, describes what seems to have been a version of the virgin birth of Christ. He says in Herod's reign a Judaeen maid had made love to a serpent, become pregnant and fathered the son of a god. At the time, Asklepios of Epidauros was well known as fathering many a demi-god to matrons who made the appropriate sacrifices and slept overnight in the sanctuary. She would dream that Asklepios appeared to her as a serpent, and if she later had a child, she was sure it was the offspring of the god. Augustus was called "*Divus*", it is said, because his mother conceived him in the temple of Apollo, the god appearing to her as a serpent. Julius Caesar too was immaculately conceived, being the son of the beautiful virgin Cronis Celestine and begotten by the Father of all Gods, Jupiter.

Both Buddha and Krishna, of India, were immaculately conceived. The mother of Krishna was overshadowed by the supreme God, Brahma, and the Holy Ghost was Naraan. Krishna's mother had given birth seven times previously but remained a virgin. Philostratus, the biographer of Apollonius of Cappadocia cites his source Damis as saying the virgin mother of Apollonius—the contemporary and rival saviour of Jesus Christ—gave him birth by being overshadowed by the god, Proteus.

Several of the virgin mothers of gods and great men go ten months between conception and delivery.

The tradition of the miraculous conceptions of gods, sons of gods, saviours and messiahs was prevalent in the world from ancient times on, beginning long before the mother of Jesus was overshadowed by the ghostly representative of the Most High. The belief in immaculate conception extended to every nation in the world. The furtive pregnancy of young women by a god is a recurring theme in Greek mythology.

Dishonest Christians will insist their own fantasy is unique, but it is no more unique than any other. Both the prevalence and antiquity of the idea of divine conception among the heathen is conceded by earlier Christian writers in their arguments from precedents of the divinity of Christ. St Augustine, Origen and Lactanius tried to persuade us of the immaculate virginity of the mother of Jesus Christ by the example of similar Pagan events. They conceded that the doctrine of divine conception was long anterior to Christ and not unique in his case.

In *Luke*, the birth of John the Baptist is no less miraculous than that of Jesus. John's mother is an old woman, Elizabeth, and his father is an old priest, Zachariah, who complains that he is past it! Yet John is conceived and born six months before Jesus, according to Christians. So, an impotent old man and a barren old woman have a son. Are we to assume that this was old Zachariah suddenly became a stud again, once his old dear had turned into Liz Hurley? Objectively, this is a better miracle because the factors of age and impotency preclude pregnancy utterly.

Presumably Elizabeth was not a virgin, so this was not a virgin birth, but that is often not the point—it is the miraculous conception.

## Perpetual Virginity and the Holy Family

From as early as the second century, Christians took Mary to be, like the Pagan goddesses, a perpetual virgin, and so, rejecting any other of Mary's possible confinements as supernatural ones, she must have remained as chaste as a pious nun, once Jesus had been born. St Jerome insisted on this article of dogma. Curious, then, that the leader of the Jerusalem Church was James the Just, described by Josephus as "the brother of Christ". *Matthew* 1:24-25 implies that Joseph had sexual relations with Mary once she had given birth to Jesus. In *Luke* 2:7, Jesus is described as Mary's "first-born", implying she had others. All four gospels speak of brothers of Jesus, and two mention sisters. The direct and simple interpretation is that Jesus had a large family of brothers and sisters, children of his own mother, Mary, and the Christians in the first century accepted it as so.

Catholics, who still believe the perpetual virginity tale, say the "brothers and sisters" of Jesus were really cousins, indicating more incompetence by the Holy Guardian of the Word, and that the Jews were indifferent to proper family relations. Christians delight in finding excuses for the lapses of the Holy Ghost, but the frequency of the need for it illustrates the immense credulity of the believer. Why is God, or His spiritual agent, so incompetent at putting over the message of salvation? The most cunning excuse invented by professional Christians is that God made it hard to believe to test the believer's faith! Thus faith becomes synonymous with foolishness.

Joseph could have been an elderly man who had married before and had several children by earlier wives. Thus, the brothers and sisters of Jesus were his half brothers and half sisters. The word used for brother is "*adelphos*" usually meaning a blood brother, but the *Septuagint* uses "*adelphos*" for other relationships like that of Lot and Abraham (*Gen* 14:14,16), Jacob and Laban (*Gen* 29:12,15) and *1 Chronicles* 23:22 where it means cousin. Moreover, the assignment of Mary to the care of John (*Jn* 19:25-27) suggests that Mary had no other family.

The brothers of Christ in *Mark* are James, Joseph, Jude and Simon, but none of his sisters are named, perhaps because they were all called Mary! The Jude who supposedly wrote the epistle called himself the brother of James but "a slave of Jesus Christ". He does not sound like a brother of Jesus Christ, even though he is a brother of James. The Essenes were a brotherhood but they had ranks, and the lower ranks were servants, or slaves, of the higher ones, explaining this usage. Jesus was of the highest rank among the Essenes, but had, in the view of his followers gone on to an even higher status in opening the gates of God's kingdom. Everyone therefore was a slave to him. Followers of deities were their slaves from the earliest times in Sumer. Jude ranked himself below Jesus but level with James. In fact, Jude's letter is a later pseudepigraph, but shows that the Essene terminology was still in use over a hundred years after the crucifixion, and continued in use into modern Christianity. It is again something that Christians have to deny since it shows that Jesus did not bring an original revelation. He was a part of the Essene brotherhood.

# Mary, Joseph and the Holy Family

Two men, James and Joses, appear in *Mark 15:40* with a Mary:

*And also women were watching from a distance, among whom also was Mary Magdalene, also Mary the mother of James the less, and of Joses, and Salome.*

**Mark 15:40**

Are these part of Jesus's family, or is she the "other Mary"?

*And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre.*

**Matthew 27:61**

*In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre.*

**Matthew 28:1**

And is she the Mary described as "mother of Joses" or "the mother of James" or "of James"?

*And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses beheld where he was laid.*

**Mark 15:47**

*And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him.*

**Mark 16:1**

*Among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children.*

**Matthew 27:56**

*It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary of James, and other women that were with them, which told these things unto the apostles.*

**Luke 24:10**

And who is who in this passage in John?

*Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.*

**John 19:25**

Is this four women or three? Is Mary of Cleophas (or Clopas) the sister of Mary his mother? Here “the wife” is inserted by pious translators before “of Cleophas”, whereas in the previous cases above, “the mother” is inserted before “of James”. So, the natural reading of it becomes that Mary the mother of Christ had a sister, also called Mary, who was the wife of Cleophas. If this sister of the Virgin Mary were the mother of James and so on, then they were Jesus’s cousins, as the Catholics always maintained.

But could Mary the Virgin have had a blood sister also called Mary? It has to be accepted as possible, but God’s agent is again doing a terrible job of arranging the story to be understandable because it seems so unlikely. If the Inept Ghost arranges for brothers-in-law to be called brothers, then sisters-in-law can be called sisters, and then this Mary would be the sister-in-law of the Virgin, and Cleophas is possibly her brother—who married another Mary (the other Mary)—and Heli was their father. If Joseph joined this family as an apprentice, he would have been taken as an adopted son of Heli, so he too could have been listed as a son of Heli. Geoffrey Ashe surmises that Joseph eventually married a Mary, one of Heli’s daughters. When Heli died, his son, Cleophas, became the head of the family, continuing to employ Joseph. The brood of children of Cleophas grew up with the solitary son of Joseph and Mary, so that they all seemed to be brothers and sisters to their friends and neighbours. So it is that Ashe ingeniously explains away the extended family of Jesus in the gospel accounts, but Joseph remains a cipher, less significant than Cleophas in this scheme.

Since we are speculating as hard as we can, the “other Mary” could have been Joseph’s sister and still been the sister-in-law of Mary. Cleophas was therefore married to Joseph’s sister, or perhaps Cleophas was Joseph’s blood brother, taking in the young widow when Joseph died young. These reconstructions might be plausible, the main criterion of Christian “history”, and it seems *more* plausible in Judaism that a brother would take into his family his brother’s widow and child than that a brother-in-law would, but the figure of Joseph never gets any clearer. He has to die young leaving the young girl a widow, or unmentionable is that he was feckless and had only one son by Mary because he left her destitute, perhaps before they were even married, being only betrothed, the girl being a minor. Mary the Virgin then depended on her sister’s husband or Joseph’s brother to support her. Christians do not want to hear that.

Another excuse could be that Joseph was an elderly man with several children including a daughter, Mary, the “other Mary”. Perhaps this old man took in the poor naïve girl who had been ravaged by a Roman soldier called Pantherus—a Moor from north Africa. Joseph legitimised the “adoption” by betrothing the girl, and she and her son were brought up in this old man’s large family. When he died many years later, his own son, Jacob (James), grandson of Joseph’s father, Jacob, according to one of the genealogies, it being a social custom to name eldest sons after their grandfather, became head of the family. Jesus hated Romans for the treatment meted out to himself and his mother, becoming a leader of a rebel band and dying on the cross. Fine for Christians except for the end of it.

Ashe boasts that even if the virgin birth doctrine is nonsense his reconstruction of Mary’s family relations is an “unsuspected answer”, “implicit in the record”. Yet to get the unsuspected answer the “Mary of Cleophas” has to have “wife” supplied by the reader for it to mean anything. Why then do we not have a “Mary *wife* of James”, supplying “wife” in these cases instead of

“mother”? The words are missing but reconstructions depend on them. Arbitrary insertions become gospel truth, and then “history” is rewritten by pious liars on their basis. Whether Ashe’s reconstruction is valid or not, the great historian convinces himself that it is, and so is blind to its omissions. There is something about the myth of Christ that taints otherwise honest people, turning them into liars and confidence tricksters.

## A Brotherhood?

It is an entertaining game, reconstructing the bits of the story the Holy Ghost forgot to clarify, but where does it get us? Such reconstructions are meaningless when there is nothing to distinguish them. All are plausible but desperate attempts to keep the idea of a Holy Family, maintaining as much as possible of the gospels’ persistence that Jesus had brothers and sisters, yet had to be an only child if the virginity of Mary was perpetual. The criterion of parsimony demands the simplest explanation of the central historical facts set in the proper historical context.

All of it is better explained by rejecting the invisible holy family as a construction of the early Church, and accepting that Jesus was a member of an apocalyptic fraternity with an associated sorority, and one that has undoubted and extensive similarities with Christianity. The James the Less, son of Mary (*Mk* 15:40) is listed as an apostle. The epithet will signify rank in the brotherhood. Another James had a higher rank. If it is James the son of Zebedee, then James the Less became the leader of the Jerusalem Church. The last shall be first! James the Less also seems to be the son of Alphaeus, a problem solved by equating Alphaeus with Cleophas, both being different Greek attempts to translate Halpai or Chalpai, according to the degree of gutturality of the “h”. Chalpai is a form of the name Caleb (Chalubai), who was, with Joshua, the only two of twelve spies, each standing for a tribe, sent into Canaan to bring good news back about the prospects. Caleb stood for the tribe of Judah. God, therefore, allowed only these two to cross into the Promised Land. Jesus identifies with Joshua, so Chalpai/Cleopas seems to be another title in the Essene setup, their idea of entry into God’s kingdom being modelled on the original entry into the Promised Land. If the ceremony of inauguration of an Essene required a rebirth, then each Essene had a ritual mother. It begins to look as if these ritual mothers were called Mary.

The *Book of James*, later called the *Protevangelium*, written in the second century but showing signs of an Essene original, offers yet another plot. It says Mary was the daughter of a wealthy but previously childless couple. Told by an angel she would give birth, the woman, Anna, resolved to consecrate the child to god. It is a copy of the mother of Samuel, also called Hannah, doing the same (*1 Sam* 1). The child was therefore a Nazarite! The story says Mary became a temple maiden, living in the temple precinct, and ministered to by angels. The High Priest, Zachariah, eventually entrusted the adolescent Mary to the guardianship of Joseph, an elderly carpenter, who already had sons. Mary remained in the service of the temple and was spinning thread (suggesting the word “magdalene” meaning braider!) when the angel Gabriel brought her his news. Joseph the guardian was suspected of illegal seduction, but the accusation passed by and Mary thereafter remained a virgin. Here, then, is yet another version of Jesus’s brothers, but Mary’s father is named as Joachim, not Heli.

The great historian and apologist, Geoffrey Ashe, tells us “it is not history” and has “little genuine tradition” behind it. He *knows* the author was ignorant of the setting, but for no other reason that he *believes* the gospel accounts rather than this one. That is not good historical methodology. The people in the *Protevangelium* were members of a village community of “Israel”, in which they were all close neighbours. Moreover, the Jerusalem temple did not employ young virgins! Ashe thinks it comical to imagine the small girl skipping about the feet of the armies of workmen employed by Herod who was rebuilding the temple at this time. So, the author was ignorant. Unless, that is, it is Christian apologists who are ignorant.

Ashe knew about the *Dead Sea Scrolls*, though it did not dent his prejudices. The Essenes called themselves “Israel”, as opposed to Jews generally who were “All Israel”. The distinction between them was righteousness. Only the Essenes were, and that is why they alone were the true Israel. So, James, if he was the author of the *Protevangelium*, was quite plainly and characteristically describing an Essene community. They, above all Jews, kept themselves apart from All Israel when they could, although they were practical enough to have a book of rules, the *Damascus Document*, for those who had no choice but to meet the impure and unrighteous in their everyday business. They preferred to live, like the modern day Amish, in their own “camps” or villages separated from the villages of other Jews, and those who lived in cities, like Jerusalem, had their own houses in their own Essene quarter, where intercourse with their impious neighbours would be minimized. Thus they were clearly identifiable with the community described in the *Protevangelium*.

What Ashe thinks utterly proves the author’s ignorance is that Mary was a temple maiden. Essenes rejected the built temple, but considered their own congregation as a living temple. They themselves were in transit between heaven and earth and so were embryonic angels. Anyone not aware of the Essenes, or not wanting to admit it if they were, would have read the references to the temple and angels as being actual, and not the product of a particular understanding. Gentile Christians quickly wanted their belief to seem to be a unique revelation, and so they expunged everything obvious about the Essenes. They never appeared in the *New Testament* for example, and here Mary was depicted as a maiden brought up in the Jerusalem temple. It rather convincingly shows that the community were indeed Essenes because of the way they thought of themselves as a living temple.

The prejudices of the great historian and Christian apologists in general are inexcusable. They believe the gospels are God-given, with no proof other than what they have always been led to understand, and that therefore suffices. It does not suffice for anyone who is properly scholarly. Christians cannot be scholarly and simply believe their childish fairy stories with no conclusive proof they should have the respect they give them. It does not matter that their parents believed it and so do millions of their friends. They all suffer from the same lack of discernment. They just believe what they are told. No historian could make such cavalier assessments of competing texts. The fact that the texts they prefer are religious texts is an excellent reason for treating them with suspicion. People will give them excessive credence simply because they have been accepted as authoritative in the past, irrespective of their validity. Once the canon of acceptable books had been decided by the Church, other books that were historically more valid, were forgotten, or even deliberately destroyed in the Church’s timeless war against unorthodoxy and

heresy. So it is that a book like the *Protevangelium*, long ignored, might contain genuine tradition quite contrary to the beliefs of the dogmatized.

In this book, Joseph is not the husband of Mary but her guardian. The reason is given—she has been devoted to God as a life long Nazarite vowed to perpetual virginity, and could not marry, just as modern Catholic nuns cannot without breaking their vows. She was seduced by a charmer pretending to be Gabriel, or by her own guardian, betraying his trust, or by one of his sons, or by a Roman soldier called Pantherus, to consider the various options open, and gave birth to an illicit child. It might well have been that he too was consecrated to God as a Nazarite and an Essene, becoming a great but unrecognized Jewish martyr, and gentile god.

Gabriel is not described as appearing to the girl at Nazareth, but contrary to the views of the apologists, that is a point in its favour, for Nazareth seems to be another Christian fiction. She is, though, described as would a Nazarite, a much more likely origin of the description Nazarene than Nazareth is. That Mary was vowed to chastity also explains her question to the angel, “How shall this be?” It is typical of apologists that Ashe asks, “How is it that she married if she had a vow of virginity?” When Christ enters, all reason departs. The different story offered simply does not register in their consciousness. The evidence mounts up that the girl was seduced contrary to her vow of chastity. Mysteriously getting pregnant was itself a scandal, as it generally has been ever since, and the Church found it convenient for more reasons than one to hide it as a miraculous conception. The putative marriage was to legitimise what seemed illegitimate in fact. But the truth might be the idea offered here, that the girl was a ritual mother, and no scandal occurred, merely a misunderstanding that could not be righted without the Church having to admit it had emerged from an older Church—the *yahad* or congregation of the Essenes.

In summary, Joseph is a cipher. His son is homeless and owns nothing but a coat. His wife had to be left to someone else’s care when the son died, yet Jesus had brothers. This is not a description of a family. The Essenes owned nothing except their clothes. Yet everyone had a means of support from the communal purse, and everyone had somewhere to stay in the communal houses. *Acts* is utterly clear that the first Christians lived in the same way, and it was a crime to violate the rules of poverty. The Holy Family was a brotherhood!

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## From Schmuel

Could you supply the source for the account of Hercules... And as close as possible any dating information.

## From Mike

Homer was regarded as sacred or almost sacred. Just as people take inspiration from the bible, the Greek poets and playwrights took their inspiration from him. Nowadays, Greek myths are collected from everywhere and all are included in the corpus. It would be like including the story of every biblical novel and epic film in the corpus of biblical mythology. So, there are often

different versions because they came from different authors each of whom had their own purpose in changing the story, and from different regions because people were always glad to claim a god or demi-god as their own just as Christians claim various saints.

Anyway, that really is not your problem, it is just that your source is pretty narrow in its scope. If you go to any library or good bookshop, you should find a book about Greek myths that will give you the story. I have for example a book called, in the UK, *Who's Who in Classical Mythology*, by M Grant and J Hazel which is a *Teach Yourself* book published in the US by David McKay and Co Inc, 750 Third Avenue NY. It explains that Alcmena refused to sleep with Amphitryon until he had avenged her brothers. When this had been accomplished Zeus appeared to the beautiful and wise Alcmena looking like her husband and impregnated her. Soon after, Amphitryon himself arrived and was disappointed by his tired reception, whereupon his wife explained why she was cool about his seeming vigour. Told what had happened by his wife, he sought the explanation from the prophet Tiresias, who said Zeus had cuckolded him, because he had chosen Alcmena as the mother of the valiant mortal who would save the gods the bother of fighting the Giants. Amphitryon, fearful of divine jealousy, resolved never to have intercourse again with his wife, who went on then to have the twins from her only two occasions of sexual dalliance.

*The Greek Myths* by Robert Graves is another good source. Have several sources, to get some variants. In one variant, Amphitryon tried to burn Alcmena to death for her infidelity, but Zeus saved her with a rainstorm. It is all ultimately solar mythology. Alcmena is the moon, Zeus the sky and Heracles the sun. According to Hesiod, the single night that Zeus slept with Alcmena the God gave the length of three by having Helios unyoke the chariot of the sun and rest for a day! So the period of conception of the sun is three nights!

#### *Before you go, think about this...*

A minister's wife overheard her husband on the telephone answering a call. "I can't say. Why not ask the Port Authority... the USAF... or a Meteorological office? Failing them the TV corporations." Her curiosity was aroused and she asked who had made the call. "Some guy who wanted to know if the coast was clear."

## The Secret Histories of the Bible

In the begining there was nothing, and God said, 'Let there be light...' and there was still nothing, but now you could see it.

### 4. Birth Narratives III

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## Abstract

*Why were Jesus's family assessed for tax by the Romans when Quirinius taxed Judæa. Galilee, where they lived, was not ruled by the Romans but by the puppet king Herod Antipas? Roman custom was to register people for a census at their place of residence not at their place of birth which imposed absurd burdens on people. If Matthew was written in Alexandria in Egypt, its birth narrative humours the large Jewish population there—the Jewish Son of God was sheltered in Egypt. Matthew exalted Jesus to the equal of Moses by giving him an equal history. No historian mentions Herod's massacre. Even Luke, reputed a good historian by theologians, does not mention it. In Matthew, Magi saw the "star" and rejoiced with great joy. Soon they fell down worshipping Jesus. An interpolation disguises the rejoicing being over the prophesied man of destiny. The "star" is human. Essenes had twelve leaders and three priests, these latter were probably the three wise men.*

## The Magi and the Star of Bethlehem

As soon as god-begotten saviours were born, they were often visited by wise men—called in the apocryphal Christian gospels Magi, Persian priests. Magi, magic and magician are derivations from the same root, all suggesting a wisdom handed down by the gods. When the fame of Pythagoras (600 BC) reached Miletas and neighboring cities, their wise men came to visit him. In the *Anacalypsis*, Magi came from the East to offer gifts at Socrates' birth, bringing gold, frankincense and myrrh, the very same offerings given to Christ. Gold, frankincense and myrrh were traditionally offered as gifts to the sun in Persia more than two and a half thousand years ago, and in Arabia about the same time. Zoroaster of Persia (700 BC), says he also was visited by Magi at his earthly advent.

*Matthew* tells us of a miraculous star bringing from the east to Judæa three wise men bearing gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

*"We have seen his star in the east, and have come to worship him.*

***Mt 2:1***

Details of now well known gospel traditions given by early writers in respect of the birth narratives show that they were not known in the same way as they emerged. This Christian Star story makes its first appearance about the year 119 AD in Rome and, curiously enough, three wise men had in 66 AD been brought to Rome from the east to worship the emperor! Moreover, a precursor of the story of Matthew's travelling star occurs in Virgil (60 BC) where a star guides Æneas westward from Troy. Ignatius of Antioch in a letter of about 110 AD describes the star which appeared at the birth of Jesus:

A star shone in heaven brighter than all the stars. Its light was indescribable and its novelty caused amazement. The rest of the stars, along with the sun and the moon, formed a ring around it, yet it outshone them all.

This description sounds like a possible supernova, and the description in *Revelation* 12, if that is the same event, sounds more like a spectacular comet sweeping across the sky towards the sun rising in Virgo. Supposed astronomers have made a publishing industry latterly out of identifying the star of Bethlehem without arriving at anything conclusive. Though they call themselves scientists, all they really have is their own speculation to offer irrespective of the historical evidence that they seem uninterested in, depending simply on the gospels alone. Really most of them are Christian apologists trying again to get bogus historical evidence for the gospel events. Apologists have stupidly suggested that the star was a meteorite, even though they move at huge speed and burn out in seconds.

For hundreds of years, astrology and meteorology had been used for predicting the future in Babylon and Persia, and even quite trivial celestial events had meaning, including the sound of thunder. Conjunctions of stars, and their relations to the moon, and the zodiac were common enough events, and the supposed star need not have been a supernova, or any complex meeting of the stars in the sky, even if the star described meant anything like this at all. It was a misunderstanding or deliberate dramatisation of the messianic title, “The Star”!



These wise men, led by a star, which nobody sees but themselves and which moves in such a way as to guide them across country, arrive at Jerusalem and lose the scent. The divine guidance then acts in a way which certainly perplexes the mere human mind. The sages go and tell King Herod that a new “King of the Jews” has been born somewhere and Herod, in a fury, and believing the statement with childish credulity, orders the murder of all the children in Bethlehem and the entire region under the age of two and a half years.

The little Almighty is taken, presumably on donkey-back, hundreds of miles across the desert, to get out of the way, and let the innocents suffer murder. Miracles and apparitions crowd the narrative but the simple miracle of changing the king’s heart and sparing the children does not occur to God, or his chroniclers.

An apparent absurdity in Matthew's story, is that the wise men followed the star in the east, when they were coming from the east. Unless they circumnavigated the world or walked backwards so that they pretended they were travelling east because that was the way they faced, they must have been travelling westward, which would place the star to their backs. The tale of the Magi reads like fairy tale but note, Matthew does not say the wise men followed the star but simply that they had "seen his star in the east". He writes it was *his* star not just a star or even *the* star, suggesting a astrological or prophetic meaning—it could still contain genuine Nazarene tradition.

The stars have a clear role at the births of several of the saviours and to mark important events in their subsequent history. The ancients thought the arrival of gods and great people would be announced by a star. A star figured either before or at the birth of Abraham, Caesar, Pythagoras, Yu and Krishna. Zoroaster, about 1000 BC, prophetically announced to "the wise men" of that country that a saviour would be born, "attended by a star at noonday". Similarly when Nared had examined the stars, having heard of Krishna's fame, he declared him to be from God—the Son of God. The Roman Calcidius speaks of a wonderful star, presaging the descent of a God amongst men. A star foretold of the birth of the Roman Julius Caesar. The Chinese God Yu was not only heralded by a star, but conceived and brought to mortal birth by a star.

All nations once believed that the planetary bodies or their inhabitants controlled the affairs of men, and even their births. That is astrology which still holds sway over many gullible people. Early people thought a star was alive, because it appeared to move, and acted as though controlled by a living spirit. In *Job* 38:9, the morning stars join in a chorus and sing together. Pliny in his *Natural History* records that the people of Rome fancied they saw a man they took for a god in a star or comet. The apocryphal book of Seth relates that a star descended from heaven and lighted on a mountain, in the midst of which a divine child was seen bearing a cross. Jews, Pagans and Christian could have had no idea that stars were immensely bigger than the earth and even the nearest was untold millions of miles away and could hardly hop hither and thither as international guides.

The practice of calculating destinies by the stars had long been popular in the East at the time of Christ's birth and, indeed, the Essenes were adept at it, as the astrological texts of the scrolls indicate. An astrological interpretation of the star of Bethlehem makes more sense than the notion of a star leaving the firmament and travelling untold light years to stand over the young child Jesus, as he lay amongst the oxen and asses in a stable (*Mt* 2:7). To those who like to see God grossly violating his own laws of nature, they might as well believe, since it would have been much easier, even for God, that the star was a large electric light bulb suspended on a wire from heaven.

Using Chris A Marritt's *SkyMap Pro* to look at the movements of the planets from Jerusalem, 5.00am on 21 September 11 BC proves to be a likely time for ancient astrologers to think that a great king had been born. It was the autumn equinox. Mercury, the messenger of the gods, had risen at 4.02. Venus had risen at 4.34. The sun was to rise at 5.25 and Mars at 7.38 followed by Jupiter at 8.37. Most important however was that the constellation of the Virgin with her infant Spica rose at the very time that the sun itself rose. Thus Spica, the infant, seemed to be the sun

on this occasion, and had been preceded by the planet Venus and the messenger only shortly before.

The heliacal rising of Spica was not itself unusual, so the portents depended on the planets coming into conjunction with it. Moreover, within a few days the four planets Jupiter, Venus, Mars and Mercury were in the same part of the sky as the sun, the new born infant, and so were eclipsed by it. On 6 November 11 BC, all five heavenly bodies set together in Scorpio. It might well have been seen as an eschatological omen by Persian and Babylonian astrologers, and soon would be seen as an omen of a great victory over the eagles, the Romans, Scorpio being also considered the eagle by the ancients.

It seems odd that the divine Father chose to reveal the birth of his son, Jesus, to heathen idolaters hundreds of miles distant in Persia. And why should a skill in astrology give them the privilege of seeing the world saviour at birth while people of God's own election—His Chosen—were denied the honour? Indeed they were denounced as fools and a vipers, despite their having put up with countless troubles at His behest, in attempting to stave off the pressures of mightier surrounding nations with their heathen gods in favour of Him, Yehouah, the ungrateful god.

Matthew mentions the word east three times in nine verses, and curiously it is the same word translated “dayspring” in *Luke* 1:78 which also means a branch! Now this might seem coincidental since a title of Jesus was “the Branch” but “the star” referred to is a metaphorical use of the messianic scriptural citation *Numbers* 24:17. Since the reference to “a branch” is also messianic, the coincidence is beginning not to look accidental. Matthew records:

*When they saw the star they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.*  
**Matthew 2:10**

This verse makes much more sense if in “the star” they recognize a man of destiny rather than a twinkle in the sky. The first part of *Matthew* 2:11 has been inserted, for without it the wise men rejoice with exceeding great joy then fall down and worship him—all very natural if “the star” is human. Essenes were organized such that there were twelve leaders and three priests. It seems from the clues remaining that the three wise men are really three Zadokite priests, the leadership of the Essenes. In reality they were present to participate in the crowning ceremony, the baptism in the gospels, but have been moved back thirty years in *Matthew* to appear at the actual birth rather than the ritual rebirth of the baptism. It seems then that a call on the lines of, “Where is he that is born prince of Israel? for he is the star, and he is the branch”, was part of the coronation ceremony.

Matthew immediately records that Herod heard of this and was troubled. Herod was the paranoid Idumaeen king of the Jews who murdered half of his sons, young princes he suspected of plotting against him. When Augustus Caesar heard of Herod condemning his son Antipater, he remarked: “It is better to be Herod's pig (*hus*) than his son (*huios*)”. If Herod had discovered that part of an Essene ritual involved crowning a prince, he would have been outraged. Now Josephus says that Herod and the Essenes were on good terms but that seems belied by the fact that the Essene centre at Qumran was deserted during most of Herod's reign. If *Matthew* 2:1-18 is anything to go by, Herod did not get on with the Essenes.

## Shepherds and Angels

In many mythologies, as soon as god-begotten saviours were born into the world they were adored by shepherds. Instead of wise men *Luke 2:8-21* has lowly shepherds, who had been “watching their flock”, coming a-visiting, notified by angels of the birth of God. Sometimes the visitors *were* angels, leaving the splendid perfection of heaven to adore the new born saviour of this wicked world. Christian imagery usually has both!

Angels and wise men appeared to Confucius who was born in 598 BC. Five wise men came from afar to the house where the infant lay to present their offerings to him. Celestial music was heard in the skies, and angels attended the scene. The only difference in the Christian story is the number of wise men. Matthew (*Mt 2:1*) does not give the number, but popularly it is three. Luke speaks of a multitude of the heavenly host praising God (*Lk 2:13*). Popularly the heavenly host was singing its praises so we have another way of saying that celestial music was heard. How complete the parallel!

It goes further. Confucius, like Christ, had twelve chosen disciples. He was descended from a royal house of princes, as Christ from the royal house of David, and like Christ was born poor. He had a disagreement with a monarch and retired for a long period from society into religious contemplative seclusion. He taught the same *Golden Rule* of doing to others as we desire them to do toward us, and other moral maxims equal in importance to anything in the Christian scriptures.

In *Luke*, an angel saluted Mary:

*Hail, thou that art highly favoured; the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women.*  
*Lk 1:28*

In the next chapter the angel joins with the heavenly host in praising God. The same is found in the Ramayana, when Brahma and Siva, with a host of attending spirits, came to the mother of Krishna, the eighth avatar of India (1200 BC), and sang:

*In thy delivery, O favoured among women, all nations shall have cause to exult.*

When Krishna was born, he was inundated in flowers by the gods, the equivalent of Christian angels. Pipes and drums were played in the heavens, trees blossomed and pools were filled with clear water. The room was illuminated by his light, and the countenance of his father and mother shone with its brightness and glory. They had an image of him as a king and, realising he was the preserver of the world, they began to worship him, but like the virgin Mary quickly forgot all this and soon regarded him as an ordinary infant!

The ninth avatar of India, Buddha (600 BC), is similar. On a silver plate in a cave in India is an inscription stating that a saint in the woods, at the time of the advent of Buddha, learned by inspiration that an avatar had appeared in the house of Rajah of Lailas. He flew through the air to the place beheld the new-born saviour. He declared him to be the great avatar destined to establish a new religion.

The metaphor of a shepherd is one of those that the Essenes were fond of—which is why it appears so often in Christianity. The Essenes, among many other things, called themselves “the watchers for the kingdom”. Thus the Master in the *Community Rule* is commanded to watch always for the judgement of God. We have noted that the *Damascus Document* interprets *Zechariah* 13:7—a very important passage for Essenes and Christians—by applying the metaphors the “humble of the flock” and “those who watch for him” to the Essenes themselves. Luke has used the same metaphor of the watchers and their flock, the children of Israel, and dramatized it into the birth story. One scroll fragment, discussing the expected visitation, even uses the same terms as *Luke*—“the holy spirit”, “the meek”, “glad tidings”, “the messiah shepherds the holy ones” and “commands the heavens and the earth including the heavenly host”.

The heavenly host in *Luke* 2:14 are calling for the kingdom of God when they sing:

*Glory to God in the highest; on earth peace, good will towards men.*

Though a desirable sentiment the offer of goodwill to *all* men is not meant. The proper translation of the best manuscripts is given as:

*“on earth peace to men in whom He is well pleased.*

The men in whom God is well pleased are the Essenes, His righteous, to whom glory and peace come in His kingdom, because those who...

*...walk by the spirit of truth shall receive abundance of peace and everlasting joy in a life without end.*

Next *Luke* 2:22-38 has Mary and Joseph—described as the parents thus acknowledging Joseph as the father (in short, a passage preceding the invention of the Virgin Birth)—present at the temple for Mary’s ritual purification after childbirth. There an unknown man described as “just” and “devout”, “waiting for the consolation of Israel”, and “having the holy spirit upon him” chants his *Nunc Dimittis* before Jesus. These words denote him as an Essene.

The word translated “devout” is peculiar to *Luke* and might be his translation of “Nazarite”. The clergy have always denied any connection with the Nazarites, perhaps because they did not like others besides Jesus in the story consecrated to God, and because the word is remarkably similar to Nazarene, suggesting that the latter might have had nothing to do with Nazareth. So Luke or an editor avoids it. “Waiting for the consolation of Israel” meant he was waiting for the messiah and therefore the kingdom.

The word “Lord” beginning the song in *Luke* 2:29 is a mistranslation—it should be “Master”, immediately showing its Essene origins and that it is the departing Master recognizing the new Master. The song is litany from the coronation or transference ceremony of the Nasi. Luke being a gentile has altered verse 2:32. Originally, following *Isaiah* 9:2, it will have read, “a light to lighten the darkness”, meaning the sins of the people, but Luke had a good knowledge of the scriptures and knew that Israel was “the light of the gentiles” (*Isa* 49:6) and merely substituted

this here. Anna the prophetess is one of Luke's female additions to placate the church's female congregations.

## The Massacre of the Infants

*Matthew 2:13-18* says Joseph learnt in a dream that Herod would kill the baby and so took off to Egypt just in time to miss the massacre of the innocents of Bethlehem by Herod, who sure enough decreed the murder of all children under two years old. Joseph heeded the divine warning, and fled as directed, only returning after Herod had died.

Such a massacre and hiding of a child of great promise from the wrath of a king is one of the oldest themes in mythology. Many of the infant saviours were threatened with death and yet were miraculously preserved—the saviour saved! The tyrant king or ruler of the country usually feared the young god, by his superior power and goodness, would prove a rival king, and so took measures to destroy him. It has already happened in the Christian bible:

*And the King of Egypt spake to the Hebrew midwives... And he said, When ye do the office of a midwife to the Hebrew women, and see them upon the stools, if it be a son, then ye shall kill him.*

**Exodus 1:15-22**

And so Moses was, like Sargon of Babylon a thousand years before, hidden in an ark of bulrushes on the river. Herodotus, the Greek historian, tells us that King Cyrus of Persia had similarly to be hidden away at birth from a jealous king, and every Jew knew the story of Cyrus. Suetonius, the Roman historian, gives a similar legend about the birth of the Emperor Augustus. The wholesale "massacre" alone is peculiar to the Jesus story and that horrible detail is enough of itself to damn it. No Roman or Jewish writer ever heard of the horror.

Not one writer of that age, or of any nation, makes any mention of Herod's massacre even when they are listing crimes. Even the Rabbinical writers who detail his wicked life so minutely, fail to record such an atrocious act, which must have been published far and wide. Josephus, a Jew contemporaneous with Matthew, who records all the crimes of Herod, does not mention this atrocity (about fourteen thousand in number) in Judæa. Roman historians who give us any account of Herod's character do not say anything about any such deed. Nor does Luke, who has a reputation among theologians as a good historian. Nevertheless the story places the nativity in the reign of Herod the Great, 37 to 4 BC, and so Jesus was born sometime before 4 AD.

Dionysos Exiguus, a sixth century monk, calculated the year of Herod's death and assumed it was also the year of Jesus's birth. Unfortunately his calculation was four years out and so our calendar has been ever since. Herod's death is now recorded as 4 BC rather than 1 AD as it would have been if the monk were correct.



In any case was he right to assume Jesus was born in the same year that Herod died? For it to be true, Jesus must have been born before Christians think he was. Herod died in 4 BC when the holy family was already hiding in Egypt where they had fled to escape him, according to *Matthew*. When they fled, Jesus was no longer a new born child, because Herod had been looking for boys up to the age of two. The implications are that Jesus was born before 4 BC and possibly even before 6 BC to allow time for fleeing, the infant to be up to two years old and an indeterminate number of years abroad.

Since Herod was an old man when he heard the news of the birth of his rival—not less than sixty-eight according to Josephus—he could hardly have been worried about an infant rival. By the time the infant was adult Herod would have been dead. Nor can it be argued that he worried for the sovereignty of his children, who he treated abysmally, if he allowed them to survive at all.

The elements of truth in the story of Herod are that he was an ogre and that at this time Herod suppressed the Essenes. He literally did murder thousands of children but they were the same Children as those of the gospels. They were not infants but the Children or Sons of Israel, meaning the Jews. And he certainly was paranoid because the children he could correctly be accused of murdering were his own children—some of his own sons who he feared as rivals—but they were adults when murdered.

Josephus says the Essenes were favoured by Herod because one of them, Menehem, had accurately prophesied that Herod would be king. They were allowed not to make an oath of fealty to him unlike all other Jews except Pharisees. Essenes would not, of course, recognize any Lord but God and, short of butchering them all, Herod perhaps had no choice. Josephus relates this tale immediately before he describes Herod's reconstruction of the temple in 19 AD even though the event itself occurred twenty years before—even before Herod became king. The association of the favouring of the Essenes with the construction of the temple implies that Herod sought the Essenes' support in his project which was initially unpopular.

The help he might have needed was an army of priests trained as masons to build the sacred inner buildings, the holy of holies and its approach. Bribed with the promise that the Zadokites would be established as the accepted priesthood, it seems the Essenes agreed only later to find they had been tricked. Assembling the materials must have taken a year or so, the construction of the inner buildings took eighteen months and the outer cloisters another eight years, but the surrounding porticoes and the immense platform supporting the temple courts took many more

years to build. The Essenes might have been fobbed off with Herod's excuses for not instating them during the eight year period but surely for no longer and so they could have fallen out of favour between about 15 and 8 BC.



*Luke 2:1-7* tells us Caesar Augustus decreed a taxation and associates the birth with the necessary census. *Matthew* has no record of there being a census and no census in the reign of Augustus is known in Judæa near the supposed year of Jesus's birth, though there certainly was one about 6 or 7 AD conducted by Quirinius, Legate of Syria, putting Jesus's birth date at least ten years later than *Matthew*. Such a late date means either that Jesus was crucified at the age of 30 in the year that Pilate was recalled, or that he was younger than 30 when he died. If the length of his ministry in *John* is correct, Jesus must then have been only around 25 when he started his ministry. And, if the census was that of 6 AD it is not clear why Jesus's family had to be assessed for tax by the Romans when Quirinius taxed Judæa since they lived in Galilee and Galilee was not ruled by the Romans but by the puppet king Herod Antipas. Furthermore Roman custom was to register people for a census at their place of residence not at their place of birth which would impose absurd burdens on people who had established themselves elsewhere, and many enterprising Jews had done this even in those distant times.

Christian apologists try to explain all this by asserting without sure foundation there was another census ten or fourteen years earlier—from Augustus, Romans carried out a census every fourteen years in their dominions—and indeed Herod could have agreed to a census when the Jews were persuaded to pay tribute to Rome. This takes us again to about 8 BC by which time the Essenes had fallen out of favour with Herod, and Jesus's family was fleeing to Egypt in *Matthew*. It is also about the time that Qumran began to be reoccupied after several decades of desertion. Indeed Egypt might have been Essene code for Qumran. It all ties together but there is no evidence for the earlier census. Why, for example, doesn't *Matthew* mention it? And why was there no rebellion when the earlier taxation was imposed as there was for the later one? The Essenes would certainly have been opposed to it.

We have to admit that there is no solid evidence about when Jesus was born, though it was before 4 BC when Herod died. Christian clergymen teach the children in their charge the dates of Jesus's life as if they were certain of it. Perhaps when the children are a little older the priests admit that no one really knows, but then they say it does not really matter. For professional

Christians, truth does not matter. Only God's truth matters. What then is God's truth but pious lies?

If *Matthew* was written in Alexandria in Egypt, his birth narrative is merely a little touch to humour the large Jewish population of the city, suggesting that the Son of God was sheltered in Egypt, presumably by Egyptian Jews. An angel and a dream save the baby saviour from massacre. It was not new! The same methods had earlier rescued other heroes. The story is the same as that of Abraham who Nimrod attempted to murder by killing all the infants in the land, the Jewish first born in Egypt who were threatened by the Pharaoh to eliminate Moses, and Hadad, who fled to Egypt when Joab tried to account for him by killing all the men of Edom. Suetonius says that the Roman Senate tried to get rid of the baby Octavius, (the Emperor Augustus) in the same way. Matthew wants to show Jesus as the equal of Moses and so exalts him by giving him an equal history.

The story of the popular Hindu deity, Krishna, is strikingly similar in nearly every feature. It is so close in some details that earlier scholars thought that these were derived from an early Christian mission to India. Modern scholars reject the idea, and they wonder only if some parts of the Christ and the Krishna legend did not come from a common source, a source which some find in the legends about the Persian King Cyrus given by the Greek historian Herodotus.

The Hindu branch of the Hindu and Persian race, the eastern part of the Aryan race, lost the severity of the original religion, and developed its phallic and sensual elements. Buddhism failed and the cult of Krishna gained in popularity until it appealed more than any other of the numerous religions of India. It flourished in India two or three centuries before Christ, but no one is sure whether there is a historical person at the root of it, as in the cases of Buddhism and Jesus.

The legend of Krishna is that he was born of a married woman, Devaki, but like Maya, Buddha's mother, she was considered to have had a miraculous conception. King Kansa was warned in a vision that the son of Devaki would destroy him, and take his place, and the child had at once to be taken away out of reach of the monarch. The king had Devaki's earlier children put to death ("murder of the innocents"), and Krishna had to be saved, as King Cyrus was saved from the King of the Medes and Moses from the King of Egypt. Krishna, moreover, gave signs of his real divine origin soon after his birth and in his boyhood. In the end Krishna—who is most unchristlike in his amorous adventures among the milkmaids, which endear him to the unascetic Hindu—killed King Kansa, took his place, and wrought marvelous things for his people.



A familiar religious emblem of India was the statue of the virgin mother, Devaki and her divine son Krishna, an incarnation of the great god Vishnu. Christians say the story was taken from Christianity, but, if the Hindus were to adopt any foreign model for their own gods, they had extensive contact with Egypt and Isis and Horus would be models rather than the hero of some minute and unimportant sect of a minute and unimportant people. In fact mother and child images are age old in religion and probably go back to Mother Goddess religions.

Among features in common is the angel warning, and Krishna's angel was not only thoughtful enough to warn the parents to flee, but informed the tyrant ruler, to make sure he played his proper role. Kansa, the ruler, heard an angel voice announcing that a rival ruler had been born in his kingdom. In the Christian story it was slightly hit and miss, depending upon the Magi to inform Herod almost accidentally.

Kansa, like Herod, set about devising a way to destroy his infant rival. Herod's decree required the destruction of all infants under two years of age (*Mt 2:16*), even though he had commanded earlier that the young child should be sought diligently (*Mt 2:8*). Kansa decreed that active search be made for whatever young children there may be upon earth, that every boy in whom there may be found signs of unusual greatness be slain without remorse.

There was in a cave temple at Elephanta in India a sculpture—universally admitted to be much older than Christianity—of a king with a drawn sword, surrounded by slaughtered infants. The slaughtered infants in the cave are all boys surrounded by groups of men and women in supplication. For those with ears to hear, the story in *Matthew* is copied from the Hindu religion and was surely learnt from Sadhus in Alexandria or from Persia.

In each case:

- There was an angel warning about the impending danger
- The governor or ruler was hostile to the mission of the young saviour
- A bloody decree was issued aimed at the destruction of the infant Messiah
- The hurried flight of the parents takes place
- the *Gospel of the Infancy of Jesus*, for hundreds of years believed by Christians to be inspired by divine authority, relates that Christ and his parents sojourned for a time at a place called Matarea. One place claimed as the birth place of Krishna was Mathura.

As Krishna and his parents crossed the River Jumna in their flight, they nearly drowned but the infant Krishna noticed and with his foot parted the waters and they passed over safely, like Moses and the Israelites crossing the Red Sea. Egyptian legend has similar stories. The mother of Zoroaster had alarming dreams of evil spirits seeking to destroy her unborn child. A good spirit consoled her, saying:

*“Fear not. Ormuzd, Most High God, will protect the infant, sent as a prophet to the people and the world who are waiting for him.*

Christ and Krishna are otherwise quite different stereotypes. Yet worshippers on the plains of India saw the appearance on earth of their god much as the Christians of the first century saw theirs. Was there a common source in some of the older myths, or simply a parallel evolution of the religious imagination playing about the birth of a god? Who knows but The Jesus ideal is just one version of a legend which stretches over three thousand years of time and is found equally in Egypt and Syria, Greece and Rome.

## **Early Proof of Divinity.**

Asiatic religion had its Christs as well as the religions of nearer Asia and of Europe. The Sheng Mu (Holy Mother) of the Chinese and Japanese is commonly represented with a divine son. The God Yu, who was concealed in a manner similar to that of Moses was depicted as a babe on the knee or in her arms of his virgin. Even Kong-fu-tse, who escaped the common fate of reformers—deification—was credited with supernatural portents at birth. It is a natural urge of the devout mind to invest its hero with superhuman experiences.

Buddha's teaching, as settled by modern scholars, was so decidedly non-religious that one would not expect him ever to be adorned with a supernatural halo. He not only plainly disavowed all the gods of India, but he bade his disciples waste no time in disputing about God and personal immortality. He was an Agnostic, a humanitarian. Yet, pure Buddhism almost perished from the earth. *What is generally called Buddhism in Asia has no more relation to Buddha's teaching than Roman Catholicism has to the teaching of Jesus. It is a system of temples and statues, priests and monks, rosaries and censers, rites and vestments, heavens and bells.*

Buddha himself was degraded to the divine level. What would seem admirable and superior in Buddha and Jesus if they were men, becomes petty and trivial when one measures them by a divine standard. Christian apologists deny that there is any parallel between Buddha and Jesus because Buddha's mother, Maya, was married. The real parallel is that Buddhists were like Christians in that they could not have their god born of carnal intercourse, and so his conception was miraculous. It does not matter that a woman who is not a virgin gives birth without intercourse. The point is not that the woman had had intercourse but that she had not had intercourse on this occasion. Buddhists did not call Maya "a virgin". They believed in a "virgin birth".

Krishna, Hercules, Zoroaster, Yu, Bacchus, Romulus, Moses and Cyrus, were each threatened with death but were miraculously preserved. The case of Augustus is related by Suetonius, that of Romulus by Livy, and that of Cyrus by Herodotus. Pharaoh, like Herod, to kill the infant Moses, ordered the death of all the male infants—though Herod did not exclude female infants. And cuneiform tablets found in Mesopotamia relate the same story as that of Moses about the great semitic king Sargon of Akkadia in the third millenium BC!

Saviours generally in early childhood have the ability to conquer danger or mental superiority over their opponents in argument. Christ proved his divine nature by equalling the doctors in the temple when only about twelve years of age.

The fame of Christ went out through all the region round about, according to *Luke* 4:14. The voice of fame soon published the birth of a miraculous child—not Christ this time but Æsculapius—and the people flocked from all quarters to behold him. In China, Confucius's extensive knowledge and great wisdom soon made him known, and kings were governed by his counsels, and the people adored him wherever he went. He was rational and able from infancy. When the God Shang-ti, was questioned on the subject of government and the duties of princes while yet a child, his answers were such as to astonish the whole empire by his knowledge and wisdom.

One Grecian god killed serpents which attempted to bite him while in his cradle. The proof of Osiris's divinity was a blaze of light shining around his cradle soon after he was born. Pythagoras displayed such a remarkable character, even in youth, he attracted the attention of all who saw and heard him speak. He was never at any time angry, never laughed, never acted irrationally or behaved badly. Because of his fame people flocked in multitudes to see him.

The people were astonished at Christ's understanding and answers (*Luke* 2:47). The *Gospel of the Infancy* says that his tutor Zacheas was astonished at his learning. In the Mahabarata, the parents of the Saviour Krishna, to secure his education, sent him to a learned Brahmin, whom he astonished with his learning, and under whose tuition he mastered the sciences in a day and a night. Men, seeing the wonders performed by this child, told Nanda, his adopted father, that this could not possibly be his son.

As soon as Buddha was born, a light shone around his cradle, when he stood up and proclaimed his mission, and the River Ganges rose in a miraculous manner, but was stilled by his divine power, just as Christ stilled the tempest on the sea. He was born amidst great miracles, and soon as born, most solemnly proclaims his mission. The divine power and mission of Yu of China was very early evinced by the display of great miracles.

Moses, Solomon and Samuel showed mental superiority in early life; proving that if they were not considered by the Jews as gods, they were at least "from God", endowed by him with divine power while yet mere children.

## **The Immaculate Conception of Jesus**

The natural conception of Mary is exclusively "The Immaculate Conception" to Catholics, dirty and sinful though Christians consider sex to be, especially out of wedlock. But surely there can be no more immaculate conception than a conception by God Himself, not by the normal sinful biological appendage but by a miracle. Let us conclude with a concise summary of some puzzles and questions about Jesus's supremely "immaculate" conception and virgin birth.

- The gospels show that Christ himself did not claim to have a miraculous birth. He did not once allude to it, though as the principal evidence of his divinity, as Christians claim, he would have done so.
- His paternal genealogy, as made out by *Matthew* and *Luke*, completely confounds his Virgin Birth. They both trace his lineage through Joseph, which they could only do if Joseph was his father.
- His own disciple, Philip, declared him to be the son of Joseph, and several texts show that it was the original belief.
- The story of the Virgin Birth rests on the slender foundations of an angel and a dream. Mary got it by an angel, and Joseph by a dream, and thereby we have the whole of the story of the divinity of Jesus Christ.
- However, we have neither Joseph's nor Mary's report of these things, but only Matthew and Luke's. We do not know that either of them ever saw or spoke with Joseph or Mary on the subject.
- If Christ were a miraculously born god, would his mother have reproved him for misconduct when she found him in the temple, as she, if no one else, must have known his nature?
- If Mary conceived miraculously, why was it kept so long from Joseph? Did the concubine of God intend to deceive her lawful husband? An angel had to be sent from heaven to let him into the secret.
- Why did not God inform Joseph by "inspiration" instead of using the round about way of sending an angel to do it?
- "Mary was found with child of the Holy Ghost", but as we are told nothing more about the circumstances, does it not leave us suspicious?
- Since it all seems to have been based on dreams, was carried on through dreams, and has no better foundation than dreams, why should we give it better credit than similar stories found in heathen mythology? Or is it that Christianity is just a dreamy religion?
- In an educated and scientific age, should we accept reports of the birth of a God based on no better a foundation than dreams, angels and the legends of oriental mythology? In particular, can any scientist entertain the idea of infinite beings, themselves mere conjecture, actually impregnating human females?
- Essene belief was that sexual intercourse was sinful, procreation was impure and human children were born thus contaminated. Human beings were imperfect and any god sent into the world as a saviour had to avoid such contamination. The solution was that incarnate gods entered the world through human virgins to avoid the impurity and the slander that the saviour might have arisen in more normal ways if the mother were not a virgin. Can anyone unbiased deny that such thinking is the source of the origin of the story of Christ's Virgin Birth?
- If Christ had to come into the world avoiding the impurity of human conception and birth, why did he not descend directly from heaven in person? If he can descend on the clouds at his—still awaited—second advent, why could he not do the same at his first advent, thereby pre-empting reasons for doubt and saving far more of fallen humanity?
- Could anyone, free of religious guilt and indoctrination, presented with these stories as the truth today, willingly and joyfully accept them as proof that someone was a god? Or would they consider them to be fraudulent inventions, intended to gull the credulous?

There are so many incongruities in divine revelation that it becomes knavery to dismiss them as God's mysterious ways, as Christians and Jews do. Yet both agree that God gave us reason. So why doesn't He expect us to use it when He chooses to reveal something to us? Why are Christians so sure that they have not been hoodwinked by the Devil posing as God? As a supernatural theory of the events of the world, it makes more sense than the Christian idea.

## Christ a Powerful God

The birth of an incarnate god had been annually celebrated for ages in the ancient world, and particularly where Christianity developed. Then, according to Christians, it actually happened! It is as plausible as Superman arriving today from the planet Krypton. The early Christians obviously attributed to their Saviour the kind of birth that was ascribed to rival gods.

Admittedly, this is a deduction, not a known fact, but the late acceptance of the idea among Christians noted for their gullibility tells against it being known among the first followers of the Christ. It is plausible if later converts from Pagan religions expected that such a god would be born in the conventional way for gods, and eventually so it was.

Paul knows nothing of it. *Mark*, which on many grounds we know to be the oldest gospel, knows nothing of it. *Matthew* in its original form knows nothing of it. *Luke*, the latest of the synoptics, has a long story about it. We reach something like the third decade of the second century before the story appears, though it must unquestionably have circulated in the Churches for some time before Luke could write it.

We are invited to believe that Christ the saviour is really a powerful god merely adopting the cloak of human form so that he can save the human race. A god disguised as an infant is surely still a god with the powers of a god. Why then is it that the powers of this disguised god seem to grow as a human grows? He is vulnerable to human enemies as an infant because he has not yet grown powerful enough. As an infant this saviour of the world cannot even save himself from wicked human beings.

If that is the case why did the hugely powerful Devil, the supposedly evil god, not notice and take advantage of the baby god's weakness? Millions of human beings were later to die as devils, condemned by the professors of this loving religion, Christianity, yet the Devil was so weak or stupid that he could not succeed even when his enemy deliberately made himself helpless! If murdering innocent people is the criterion of the work of the Devil, then Christianity is the best candidate.

Christians claimed Pagan religions were devilish yet took from them. Some modern Christians think this is an unanswerable refutation of Christian "borrowing". It is not at all unanswerable or a secure position. Those that think it is, think in terms of Christianity as it is now—complete, as they see it. In the early years of its adoption into the empire, it was not complete, was extremely malleable and church Fathers often used Pagan arguments as arguments for Christianity. They were ready to say, "Our religion is just like yours in such and such a respect".

Rome, when it forced Christianity upon Europe, deliberately adopted a large amount of Paganism. Bits of ritual, altars, statues, hymns, local deities, were taken into the new religion. Does even the orthodox suppose that Jesus ordered the use of candles, incense, holy water and vestments? Yet these things were adopted by the new religion.

We have little historical knowledge of the Christians of the first century. Between the simple groups of Jesus worshippers of Paul's Epistles and Acts, and the developed Christian doctrine of the second century, lies a whole world of evolution on which we have no positive light. The reasonable view is that the influence of the Old Testament, the shape given by the Jews to the supposed messianic prophecies, the natural impulse of ascetic and Essenic believers to isolate Jesus from all sexual intercourse and the broad beliefs of the Persians, Egyptians and Greeks about the birth of their saviours, together gave shape to the traditional figure of Jesus.

The impregnation of a woman by a god was a familiar idea, and, if she had been hitherto a virgin, she was held to be a virgin mother. Most prominent of all were the greatest of Egyptian goddesses, Isis, and the greatest of Greek goddesses, Cybele. When at last the Church was forced to permit a veneration of a semi-divine mother, to compete with the most popular feature of Pagan religion, statues of and hymns to Isis and Cybele were appropriated to Mary.

If religious history is to be believed, God had many well-beloved sons, born of pious and holy virgins, besides Jesus Christ. Despite this each is his only begotten, or his first begotten, son. All are as well authenticated as the story of Jesus Christ, that is, not very!

*Before you go, think about this...*

An evangelical wrote his minister thanking him for explaining God's Law... "Now I remind liberals defending homosexuals that God, in *Leviticus* 18:22, says it is an abomination. Please advise me now I have read in *Leviticus* 11:6-8 that God says touching the skin of a dead pig makes me unclean. My wife has bought me some pigskin gloves. Thank you again for reminding us that God's word is eternal and unchanging.

## What is True History in the Bible?

*Intelligence corresponds with certain troughs in the evolutionary hyperspace, lakes in the evolutionary landscape.*

*Who Lies Sleeping?*

## 5. Christmas

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## Abstract

*Christians never think it strange that the birth date of Jesus is the birth date of many of the incarnated gods of antiquity. That Pagans venerated the birthday of Christ as the birthday of their gods is beyond coincidence. At the winter solstice, the sun seemed to stop declining in the sky for three days. Its was at crisis point. It might die! Then it began to rise on the 25 December, the sun's rebirth. Both the year and the day of Christ's birth are unknown. There is no reason to suppose that Jesus the Nazarene was born on Christmas Day. The importance of 25 December to Pagans made Christians think it must have been the birthday of their messiah. When Constantine made Jesus a god, 25 December, the birthday of the sun gods and particularly that of the chief rival to Christianity, Mithras, was selected as his birthday. By celebrating at the same time as Pagan religions, the bishops accepted Christ as a sun god, hoping to pull in Pagans worshippers. What are the origins of the various ingredients of the now traditional nativity scene?*

## Traditional Winter Festivities

Midwinter festivities are far older than Christianity and have appeared in every culture of the northern hemisphere. When Christianity, on controlling Europe, first reached England, Northern Germany, and Scandinavia, its missionaries found Pagan rites already celebrated on Christmas day. The early Christians tried to convert Pagan celebrations to Christian ones but with only partial success. In the resulting tangle, Paganism has partially held its own and many objects associated with Christmas are explicable only as deep folk memories. So, Christians incorporated many of these rites into their Church festival.

The root of midwinter rituals is the winter solstice, the shortest day which falls on or around 21 December. In the days before the solstice, rituals were devised to prevent the sun getting any weaker. When they worked, with the day getting longer after the solstice, was the time for celebration. The date of 25 December was when the sun visibly began to rise again after three days at the lowest ebb. It was the Roman festival of the “unconquered sun”, Mithras, proving by his rising again that he was again unconquered. It was chosen deliberately to Christianize this traditional celebration. In Scotland, never subject to the Romans, the main midwinter festival is still the entirely non-Christian one of Hogmanay, the New Year, although the Christmas celebration has advanced in popularity in recent years.



Besides sun worship, today’s Christmas festivities reflect a complex of other Pagan rites, many distorted from their original purpose. The two chief ones are the Roman Saturnalia and the Germanic-Nordic festivities centering around Wotan and tree worship.

The Roman Saturnalia, held on 17 to 19 December, were days of public revelry in honour of the god Saturn, with much sexual licence. During the Saturnalia all business was suspended and many distinctions of rank were forgotten. Masters sometimes waited on their slaves—a custom reflected to this day in the military custom of officers serving Christmas dinner to their men. Saturn is one of the ancestors of Father Christmas.

Evergreens, the mistletoe of the Druids, the yule logs which had been brought in every year to blaze on the open hearths, the feasting and carousing, have all come down to us, often from northern Europe in Pagan days and from Pagan sources. The side boards of the well-to-do are still often graced by the head of a boar, the successor of the beast which slew Adonis. Various modern customs show that Christmas is still a developing institution. Father Christmas is the outstanding example, and so are some carols. The words of “Good King Wenceslas”, for example, were made up by a nineteenth-century clergyman, J M Neale, to go with an old tune.

People who attack the commercialization of Christmas are missing the target. For uncountable centuries the midwinter festival has been a time for jollity in a most material way.

## **Christmas Before Christ**

The nations of the north also had their greatest festival of the year in midwinter. To these northern barbarians, shuddering in the snow laden forests beyond the Danube, the return of the sun was the most desired event of the year, and they soon learned the time—the winter solstice—when the “wheel” turned. The sun was figured as a fiery wheel, and as late as the nineteenth

century there were parts of France where a straw wheel was set on fire and rolled down a hill, to give an augury of the next harvest.

Hence “yule” (from the Teutonic word “*hoel*” or “wheel”) was the outstanding festival of the ancestors of the French and Germans, the English and Scandinavians. The sun was born, and fires (“Yule logs”, still traditionally symbols of Christmas, though usually in the form of a chocolate cake) flamed in the forest villages, the huts were decorated with holly and evergreens, Yule trees were laden with presents, and stores of solid food and strong drink were lavishly opened. This lasted until Twelfth Day, now Epiphany. The Scandinavians celebrated the 25 December as the birth day of their god Freyr, the son of their supreme god of the heavens, Odin.

Long before Christianity, as mid-winter approached, Rome was lit up with joy. It was the festival of the old vegetation-god Saturn who, as a god, died or was displaced by Jupiter, the sky-god, but had a fine temple on the Capitol. His festival lasted seven days, from 17 to 24 December, and was the most joyous time of the joyous Roman year. For the whole week, no work was done, the one law being good cheer and good nature, but the 25 December was the culmination of it all, the greatest festival in the Roman calendar—the Birthday of the Unconquered Sun...

There was great rejoicing, illuminations and public games, and all shops were closed. Presents were exchanged, and the slaves were indulged in special liberties—on this one day they were free. They donned the conical cap of the freedman—as frolickers continue at Christmas, and on other festive occasions today, to don caps of paper—and sit at table while masters wait on them.

On 25 December, crowds filled the streets and raised festive cries, and the women of Rome paraded, singing in a loud voice, “Unto us a child is born this day”. Stalls laden with presents lined the streets near the Forum, but the great present of the season was a doll, of wax or terracotta. Hundreds of thousands of these dolls were on sale on the stalls and held in the arms of passers by. Once human beings were sacrificed to Saturn, and, as human life grew more important than religion, the god or his priests had to be content with effigies of men or maids—dolls! It was a time of peace on earth, for by Roman law no war could begin during the Saturnalia, and of good-will toward all men.

The festival went back far into the mists of prehistoric times. It had been earlier a one-day festival, the feast of Saturn, an important magico-religious festival for insuring the harvest of the next year, rejoicing that the year’s work was over, and helping and propitiating the god of fecundity by generous indulgence in wine and love. The mysterious winter dying of the sun was also arrested.

The entire known world of two thousand years ago had its “Christmas without Christ”. The figure of Christ was drawn in all its chief features before a line of the gospels was written, unarguably in the details relevant to Christmas. The first symbol of the Christian religion, the manger or basket cradle of the divine child, the supposed unique exhortation to humility, was one of the most familiar religious emblems of the Pagan world. Had it been exhibited to a crowd in one of the cosmopolitan cities of the Empire, it would have been strange or new to few. One might pronounce it Horus, another Hermes, another Dionysos, but all would have shrugged their

shoulders nonchalantly at the news that it was just another divine sun child in the great family of gods. The world flowed on. The names only were changed.

The identity of these old traditions with Christmas are no longer disputed by scholars. Only ignorant fundamentalist ministers and some barmy priests of other denominations deny it. The celebrations of the birthdays of Mithras and Horus are as certain as the Saturnalia. Legends of the miraculous birth of gods, demigods, and heroes in the ancient world were as certain as that the Chaldeans knew astronomy and the Romans built tenement buildings.

Christians never think it strange that the birth date of Jesus is also the birth date of many of the incarnated gods of antiquity. They never think it curious that it was for ancient astronomers when the old sun died and was re-born and a new sun began to climb again in the heavens. At the solstice, it seemed to hover at the same altitude in the sky for three days, the critical time in the slow decline and possible death of the sun. Then it began to rise on the 25 December, the great day of the sun's rebirth. That Pagans venerated the birthday of Christ as the birthday of their gods is beyond coincidence.

## Sun Gods

Astronomically, the sun begins a new year of life at the winter solstice, and so the 25 December, or some day proximate to that date, was selected in remote antiquity for the celebration of God's birthday, when sun gods were worshipped. At the first moment after midnight of 24 December the nations of the East would rise to celebrate the arrival of 25 December, the birthday of their gods.

At midnight on the twenty-fifth of the month, Savarana, which is our December, millions of Krishna's disciples celebrated his birthday by decorating their houses with garlands and gilt paper, and giving presents to friends. The people of China also traditionally celebrated this day, closing their shops. Buddha is said to have been born on this day after the Holy Ghost had descended on his virgin mother Maya. The god of the Persians, Mithras, was born on the 25 December long before the coming of Jesus.



The Egyptians celebrated this day as the birth day of their great saviour Horus, the Egyptian god of light and son of a virgin mother, the queen of the heaven, Isis. Osiris, god of the dead and the

underworld in Egypt, another son of a holy virgin, was born on the 25 December. Adonis, revered as a dying and rising god among the Phrygians then the Greeks, was born on the 25 December. His worshippers held him a yearly festival representing his death and resurrection, in midsummer. Even the temple at Jerusalem was used to celebrate the birthday of the god Adonis in the years when Jesus might have been born, Herod being no Jew by conviction. The cave in Bethlehem which is said to have been the birth place of Jesus was also previously a place in which the birthday of Adonis was celebrated.

The Greeks celebrated the 25 December as the birthday of Apollo, the great sun god, and it was also the day upon which were celebrated, by their respective worshippers, the births of Adonis and of Mithras. That day was the birthday of Hercules, the son of their supreme god, Zeus, through the mortal woman Alcmene. Bacchus, the god of wine and revelry among the Romans, known among the Greeks as Dionysos, was born on this day. The 25 December was so highly regarded as a day suitable for the birthday of a god that it was selected for the apotheosis of Alexander the Great when he was first acclaimed as God in the temple of Amon (Jupiter) in 322 BC.

## Mithras

A prosperous Asiatic sun religion dwelt on the Vatican hill before the Popes commandeered it for Christianity. Mithras was an Aryan sun god, called by the Romans “the Unconquerable Sun”. The reform of the Persian religion by Zoroaster (Zarathustra) had put the ethical deity Ahuramazda so high above the old nature gods that he was practically the one god. But Mithras stole upward, as gods do, and Persian kings of the fifth century BC put him on a level with Ahuramazda. The Persians conquered and blended with Babylon, and Mithras rose to the supreme position and became an intensely ethical deity. He was, like Aten and Christ, the sun of the world. He sacrificed the pleasures of life, like Christ, but unlike Zeus.

Mithraism spread rapidly, was respected, and was strikingly like Christianity. During the third and fourth centuries AD, Mithras had become the most important solar god in the Roman Empire. Drastic asceticism and purity were demanded of his worshippers. They were baptized in blood. They practiced the most severe austerities and fasts. They had a communion supper of bread and wine. They worshiped Mithras in underground temples, artificial caves called grottos, which blazed with the light of candles and reeked with incense.

They celebrated the epiphany of this god, saviour of the world, on 25 December. Aurelian adopted the 25 December in 274 AD as the day to celebrate “*Natalis Solis Invicti*”, the birthday of Sol Invictus. As that day approached, near midnight of the 24th, Christians might see the devotees of Mithras going to their temple on the Vatican, and at midnight it would shine with joy and light. The saviour of the world was born. He had been born in a cave, like so many other sun-gods, and some of the apocryphal gospels put the birth of Christ in a cave. He had had no earthly father.

F Cumont, the great authority on Mithras, who it is now fashionable to disparage, collected for us details about the Persian religion, and more than one of the Christian Fathers refers to the similarity of the two religions. Mithras had had 25 December as his birthday for ages. He was

eternal—the unconquered and unconquerable sun—the sun god as a spiritual god, with light as his emblem and honesty his supreme command. What could the Christians do? Nothing, until Constantine. Then they took 25 December, and Mithraic garb, customs and ritual, and so zealously dissolved the Mithraic religion into Christianity that only scholars know anything about it.

## Horus

A Roman writer of the fourth century, Macrobius, in a work called *Saturnalia* (1:18) discusses the practice of representing the gods in the temples as of different ages. He says:

These differences of age refer to the sun, which seems to be a babe at the winter solstice, as the Egyptians represent him in their temples on a certain day, that being the shortest day, he is then supposed to be small and an infant.

This is confirmed and elaborated by a Christian writer, the author of the “Paschal Chronicle”, who says:

*“Jeremiah gave a sign to the Egyptian priests, saying that their idols would be destroyed by a child-saviour, born of a virgin and lying in a manger. That is why they still worship, as a goddess, a virgin-mother, and adore an infant in a manger.*

He wants to explain age old customs to which their god is indebted as imitations of their own much later god. The stories of Jesus and Horus, the god in question, are similar. Horus was a sun god of the Egyptians. In the adjustment of the rival Egyptian gods, when the tribes were amalgamated in one kingdom, about 3000 years before Jesus was born, Horus was made the son of Osiris and Isis.

In the Egyptian religion that emerged from the syncretism, Osiris, a supreme and transcendental god who had acquired the attributes of most other Egyptian gods, was the father of Horus. Among his many titles were Lord of Lords, King of Kings, God of Gods, the Resurrection and the Life, the Good Shepherd, Eternity and Everlastingness, the god who “made men and women to be born again.” He became Serapis in the Hellenistic period, a god much like the Christian concept of Yehouah. Horus and his Father, Osiris, were even interchangeable, reminding us that Jesus said:

*I and my Father are one.*

Osiris was a god who suffered at the hands of the evil Set—another Asiatic god conceived of as the brother of Osiris—died and rose again, to reign eternally over the souls of the righteous dead. He is depicted as dark in complexion, suggesting he is the sun of night or winter, the gentle sun of the ANE who is father of the sun of the horizon, the sun that daily passes from the eastern horizon to the western one. His worshippers believed that, like their god, they would inherit eternal life. Some say Osiris’s coming was announced by the “Three Kings” or the “Three Wise Men”—the three stars Mintaka, Anilam and Alnitak in the belt of Orion, which point directly to Osiris’s star in the east, Sirius (Sothis), the sign of his birth. Osiris typified the Christian idea of a

messiah, a saviour god, rather than the Jewish idea of a conquering king. His flesh was also eaten in the form of communion cakes of wheat, the plant of truth, just as Christians devour wafers which are the body of their saviour god.

In the bible, *Psalms 23* is an Egyptian appeal to Osiris. A hymn to Osiris as the Good Shepherd begs him to lead the deceased to the green pastures and still waters of Paradise, the nefer-nefer or most beautiful land, to restore the soul to the body and give protection in the valley of the shadow of death (the Tuat). Before the Lord's Prayer, an Egyptian hymn to Osiris-Amun (Amen) began, "O Amen, O Amen, who art in heaven." Amen was also invoked at the end of every prayer. It was later rationalized, in Judaism, into a nod of assent signifying "Truly" or "Verily".

Horus was born of the virgin Isis-Meri, Isis the Beloved, on 25 December. Like his father, his birth was announced by that star in the east (Sothis) and attended by the three wise men. Isis was the sister and the lover of Osiris, but whether we should speak of her as "a virgin mother" is a matter of words. In one Egyptian myth she was fecundated by Osiris in their mother's womb, in another and more popular, she was miraculously impregnated by contact with the false phallus of the dead Osiris. Virginity in goddesses is a mythical virtue not a practical one. It is as real as the eternal life that all of these speculative religions promise.

Why should Pagan beliefs have to be used to explain the Christian virgin birth myth? The *Septuagint* plainly, but in a false translation, said, "A virgin shall conceive", and this was taken to refer to the Messiah. Moreover, if Jesus despised conjugal relations, as early Christians believed, they could not accept that he, as a god, would have chosen the vile union necessary to enter the world. The early Christians in whose circles the gospel stories developed, will have seen this as an implication their God was virgin born, like the equivalent Pagan legends. It would have seemed a necessity of any god in the Hellenistic world.

The birthday of Horus was annually celebrated in the temples, about 25 December. A figure of Horus as a baby was laid in a manger, in a scenic reconstruction of a stable, and a statue of Isis was placed beside it. In the catacombs at Rome are pictures of the baby Horus being held by the virgin mother Isis—the original Madonna and Child. Horus was the rising sun, the sun of the east. He was the daily saviour of mankind, saving us from perpetual darkness. He was the light of the world. His birth festival was a Christmas without Christ.

This spectacle is still presented in every church in the world on 25 December. Catholic priests have taught their flocks to believe S Francis of Assisi invented this touching scene of the humble birth of the redeemer. Francis of Assisi will never have read the obscure "Paschal Chronicle", but some other Christian writer had seen and reproduced it, and it had come to the knowledge of S Francis. Christ's crib is an exact reproduction of the scene exhibited in Egyptian temples centuries before Christ, and the Egyptian legend itself is thousands of years older than Jeremiah. On the analogy of the Christian practice, the Egyptian legend must have described Isis as having given birth to her divine son in a stable. In Alexandria, there was a similar Greek celebration on 25 December of the birth of a divine son to Kore (the "Virgin").

And this is not the end. The Greeks had a similar celebration. The idea of a divine son being born in a cave was common, or there were actually several scenic representations of the birth of these

gods in their festivals. J M Robertson gives some in *Christianity and Mythology*. Hermes, the Logos (like Jesus in John), the messenger of the gods, son of Zeus and the virgin Maia, was born in a cave, and he performed extraordinary prodigies a few hours after birth. He was represented as a “child wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger”. Dionysos (Iacchos, Bacchus) was similarly represented. The image of him as a babe was laid in a basket cradle in the cave in which he was born.

## God’s Birthday

Why was the “only true god” born on a Pagan date—25 December?

There is no reason to suppose that Jesus the Nazarene was born on Christmas Day. The birth date of Jesus is unknown. Both the year and the day of his birth are unknown. Neither the *New Testament* nor later tradition provide reliable evidence. The Christian world had no chronology. There is no clue in the gospels as to the date when Jesus was born, except Luke’s reference to shepherds watching their flocks by night, if that can be considered as evidence. Certainly, if shepherds were out at night watching their flocks, it could not have been in mid-winter that the birth took place. Winter is the rainy season, and even in Palestine flocks are folded at that time of the year, and not roaming about in the rain and sleet accompanied by cold and damp shepherds.

Mary forgot the date of a uniquely wonderful day or forgot to mention it. Admittedly, poor and illiterate parents in undeveloped societies do not remember the dates when their children were born and often do not even remember the year—simple people are not ruled by clocks and calendars as we are. But, if, as *Acts* claims, Mary, Jesus’s mother, lived with the disciples after the crucifixion, she never told them when her son was born, and this *is* surprising even for a poor person considering the interest shown by kings, shepherds and angels at the time.

Indeed, the traditional Christmas story stands in curious isolation from the rest of the *New Testament*. Neither Jesus himself, when grown up, nor his earliest followers claimed authority on the grounds of a special form of birth. The apostle Paul, in his extensive writings, discusses in detail the nature of Jesus without once mentioning a miraculous birth. It was only on later generations that the story of a miraculous baby adored in a stable by shepherds and kings began to make an impact. To this day it inspires art, poetry and a salutary humility in the lives of many, but Mary could have experienced none of it because the gospels indicate that she had no recollection of it.

Nor had the first Christians ever heard of it. Early Christians found themselves having to tell the world of the most tremendous birth there ever was on this planet not knowing when it happened. Christian scholars of the first two centuries even differed over the year Jesus was born, some believing that he was born fully twenty years before the currently accepted date. Centuries after the event, the year of Christ’s birth was determined but was determined wrongly. Nobody now holds that Jesus was born in the year 1 AD. Our calendar, which computes years supposedly from the birth of Jesus, was drawn up by a miscalculating monk in Italy in the sixth century. The miscalculation is obvious in that, on the basis of the *New Testament* story, Jesus must have been born by 4 BC, the year when Herod died.

Considering that an omnipotent God descended from heaven and performed astounding miracles to prove that people could now be saved in everlasting life, it seems odd that no one noted the year of his birth, even though many beings from shepherds to angels knew about it. The Holy Ghost was being his usual incompetent self. This should be sufficient to banish all faith in Christianity.

No event of Christian history was marked by justifiable dates for nearly four hundred years. For these first three or four hundred years, various Churches celebrated the birthday of Jesus on different dates. The day chosen as the birthday of Christ was the day which best fitted the doctrines of that Church, not the day upon which Jesus had actually been born. No one knew what day that was, but nobody cared. What was important was to select an auspicious and a suitable date. The eastern Churches kept it on 6 January, now the Epiphany. The Basilidians celebrated Christ's birthday on the 24 or 25 April. Other Christian sects celebrated it, so Clement of Alexandria informs us, on the 25 May.

Perhaps they believed that Jesus's birth date was irrelevant—only his divine life was relevant and that began at his baptism. Sadly, they did not know the date of the baptism either and arbitrarily chose 6 January. Why? Because that date had long been associated with people bathing in blessed water. Followers of the god Osiris, the deity of the Nile, had held a festival, the “Festival of the Immersion”, on the river on 6 January from time immemorial. Christian Copts celebrate it still. The Hierophant poured holy water into the river and blessed it, then people bathed in it. The Greeks identified Dionysos with Osiris and so on 6 January the sacred waters were blessed in both the religions of Osiris and Dionysos! Epiphany is a continuation of these Pagan rites.

The Egyptian Gnostics known as Basilidians, seeing the immersion ceremonies as a symbol of the baptism of Jesus, celebrated it on 6 January and gradually Christians elsewhere adopted this date as the anniversary of the Jesus's baptism. By 386 AD the two great Christian festivals were Easter, the festival of the crucifixion, and Epiphany when rivers and springs were blessed and water was drawn and saved for baptisms throughout the year. Aristides Rhetor in about 160 AD tells us that water drawn from the Nile at the “Festival of the Immersion” is at its purest. Stored in wine jars, he says, it improves with time just like wine. And so does the myth! Two centuries later Epiphanius writes that the stored water actually changes into wine! In Dionysos worship, water turns to wine on 6 January. The miracle at Cana when Jesus turned water into wine is celebrated in the Christian calendar on 6 January!

Today the Epiphany celebration is most closely associated with the visit of the Magi at Jesus's birth and has been since the fourth century AD. Magi were Persian priests so it seems likely that the legend was introduced from Mithras worship, originally a Persian religion. The Epiphany of Mithras was observed by shepherds who brought gifts, as in the *Luke* version of Jesus's birth. Rather than merely equalling a rival, the editor who inserted the birth narrative into *Matthew* took a more positive tack. He aimed to show the superiority of Christianity over the other eastern religions—the divine baby Jesus is superior to the divine Mithras whose priests bring gifts to the new god. So the three Zadokites who officiated at Jesus's rebirth were adapted into Magi from Persia appearing at his actual birth to prove that even the priests of Mithras worshipped the Christian God.

Cassian at about the beginning of the fifth century says the Egyptian provinces regarded Epiphany as being the birth date of Jesus. This was because Jesus was thought to be exactly 30 years old on his baptism. Note also that the Persian law-giver Zoroaster was exactly thirty when the spirit of god descended on him, and the Egyptian Pharaohs held a celebration called *Sed* exactly 30 years after the day they had been chosen by their father as his successor, their spiritual birthday. As many Churches commemorated the birth and the baptism of Christ on the same day, the festivals will have originated before any birth story was known, when the gospels began, like *Mark*, with the baptism of Jesus. On the day that Jesus was baptized, Christ was born.

## Christmas

The chief mythical constituents of the life of Jesus were known all over the cosmopolitan Græco-Roman world, most particularly in the overlapping fringe of the Græco-Roman and the Persian-Egyptian worlds—the eastern coast of the Mediterranean—where the gospels were certainly composed. Whatever city we may favour as the cradle of the gospels, Alexandria or Antioch, Smyrna or Ephesus, every myth and ritual representation mentioned was familiar there. Mithraism spread from Persia to Britain. Roman soldiers prayed to Mithras in the towers in which they guarded the north of England from the marauding Scots. The religion of Isis and Horus was even more familiar round the Mediterranean. The legend and ritual of Dionysos were hardly less familiar.

Romans had celebrated this festival for centuries as Pagans. Every Roman was familiar from childhood with the great midwinter festival, and in the earliest days of the Christian era the religions of Persia and Egypt, with similar festivals, had spread over the Empire. So, from end to end of the Roman Empire, 25 December was the birthday of the unconquered sun, of the saviour Mithras, and of the divine Horus, and they and the others were represented almost exactly as the birth of Christ was described in the gospels and is depicted in Catholic churches today.

The Roman emperor, Constantine—popularly considered the embodiment or incarnation of the supreme Roman sun god—Sol Invictus—later presided over the council of Nicea (325 AD) which led to the official Christian recognition of the *Trinity* as the true nature of God. The importance of 25 December to Pagans made Christian converts think it must also be important to their newly adopted religion. They easily supposed it must have been the birthday of their messiah. Since his birth date had been forgotten, when Constantine made Jesus a god, 25 December was selected as his birthday, because it was the birthday of other gods, and particularly that of the chief rival to Christianity in the Roman Empire, Mithras. The bishops were typically opportunistic. By celebrating at the same time as Pagan religions they hoped to offer the same benefits and pull in some Pagan punters. Christmas remained the start of a new year up to the tenth century.

In 336 or 354 AD, hoping to counteract the Manichaean heresy—that Jesus was never born at all but was a phantasm—the Christians took the date of the solar birth as the birthday of Jesus. The solar celebration was so widespread and popular that the church could neither ban it, nor stop it being identified in the popular mind with Jesus's birth anyway. Almost all religions have some root in primitive sun worship, and the Christians merely acknowledged a custom which the adherents of most of the contemporary religions had carried on for many centuries before that

time. Jesus was identified with the sun by both Cyprian and Ambrose. Jesus and Mithras had become almost identical in the minds of the western populace.

Church leaders moved the date of Jesus's birth "after the flesh" from 6 January to the birthday of the Unconquerable Sun. No evidence was quoted, nor any tradition appealed to, to show that the 25 December was the actual birthday. The only attempt made to show that Jesus was actually born upon 25 December, and that the origin of Christmas Day was not Pagan, was based on the Annunciation being the 25 March. From that date—itsself selected upon doctrinal and not upon historical grounds—nine months leads to the 25 December, which would, if the Annunciation was a physiological process identical in its working with sexual conception, be the correct date for the birth. As the 25 March was itself a date inherited from Paganism, and not a date supported by evidence of any kind whatsoever, the theory has not gained acceptance even among theologians.

There was no universal agreement upon the 25 December as Christmas Day. The churches of the Eastern Empire accused the Western Church of idolatry and sun worship, and for long continued to observe Christmas Day on the 6 January. The Egyptians did the same until the year 431 AD. But even the 6 January was connected with the birthday of God. Epiphanius argued the birthday of Christ must be the 13th day after the 25 December, corresponding to days for the twelve apostles and Jesus himself, and bringing Christmas Day to the Epiphany, a day observed in Egypt as a festival of the Virgin, Kore Kosmou. 25 December was still listed as the "Birthday of the Unconquerable Sun" in the calendar of Philocalus in 336 AD, the year before Constantine died and a quarter of a century after he had supposedly made the empire Christian, and the Emperor Honorius (395 to 423) could still speak of 25 December as being a "new" festival, yet a text of about the same time says it was one of the three great Christian festivals so holy that theatres had to close by law.

Saint Augustine was one who did not approve of this particular concession to Paganism. Christians were never too keen on following the instructions of their holy texts though they usually made a great show of studying them. Had they taken notice they could not have taken these Pagan practices into the divine religion of Essenism. The scriptures warned against it quite explicitly:

*"Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before thee; and that thou inquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise.*

***Deut 12:30***

It was hard for the gentile Christian converts though. They had lately been celebrating these festivals and all their friends still were. So they thought—"What does it matter?" New religions inherit or copy the doctrines and festivals of the old. The Moslem month of Haj is celebrated at the time of the year when pre-Moslem Pagan festivals had previously been held, and the ancient Pagan rites are still carried out during the Haj celebrations. The ritual remains, the explanation of it changes. The clergy tell us the explanation is a myth in Paganism, but the revealed truth in their patriarchal religion! Christian ministers have been so flexible in the face of serious rivalry

as to be unprincipled. Yet in the face of weak or isolated rivals, it has applied the devil's own punishments as if they were the guardians of hell not heaven.

For Christians, Christ was the real sun that had risen upon the world. Why not boldly pinch the birthday of the unconquered sun? The masses could then be told they were celebrating Jesus. The ribaldry, license and fooling were contrary to Essenic, now Christian, prudery, but despite attempts to stop it all, it thankfully persists until today.

When we celebrate Christmas we continue the practice of hundreds of generations of our remote ancestors, who held festivals at that season every year for many centuries before Christianity had ever been heard of. The harmless festivities of Christmastide, and the spirit of peace and goodwill with which they are traditionally associated, are customs and feelings which it would be sad to see forgotten or eradicated. Peace and goodwill reign more easily when the followers of all the religions join together and celebrate the return of the sun and the beginning of a new year, than when theologians assemble to decry the idolatry of others and to wrangle about which of the gods were really born on the 25 December.

Christmas is not the only Christian festival which ignored the warning of *Deuteronomy*, and was stolen from ancient Paganism and adapted to the Essenism of Jesus. There is also Easter. Easter, roughly corresponding with the vernal equinox was also a time of festival for the followers of many ancient religions, but the period of the year in which Easter is celebrated *does* correspond with the biblical story, as the crucifixion is said to have taken place at the time of the Passover, the two events being theologically parallel. Yet Christians spilt torrents of each other's blood in quarrels about the fixing of the date of Easter, and accepted Christmas Day without much demur.

The Feast of S John, the Holy communion, the Annunciation of the virgin, the assumption of the virgin, and many others have their roots in ancient Pagan worship. Midsummer Day is the Feast of S John the Baptist and is dedicated also to saints Philip and James. Saints Peter, James, Andrew and Paul were given unimportant days even though we are told they were Christ's Apostles.

## Virgin Birth

How did it arise? One answer is that it was the work of an all-powerful God intervening in human affairs. For believers, in theological "logic", such a statement is impregnable, but it is insufficient for those who demand natural explanations using standard historical methods. Recent scholarship, assisted by the *Dead Sea Scrolls*, has thrown much new light on the nature of the Judaism which produced the Christian "Jesus of Nazareth". To understand the beginnings of Christianity one must first understand the Jews of the first century AD.

Little in the *New Testament* is there by accident. Most of these writings has a purpose, but the authors of the *New Testament* had habits of thought which were alien to those of the twentieth century. They considered it legitimate to describe what *ought to have happened* without bothering too much about what *did*. They accepted the Jesus was the Messiah and so messianic things *must* have happened to him!

The sources for our Christmas story are the opening chapters of *Matthew* and *Luke*. The other two gospels, *Mark* and *John*, do not mention it at all, nor does any other part of the *New Testament*.

The authors of *Matthew* and *Luke* were evidently writing from different viewpoints—*Matthew* was aimed at a Jewish readership and *Luke* at a gentile one. Their accounts of what ought to have happened are also different and inconsistent.

In *Matthew*, the story is of a virgin, Mary, betrothed to a man called Joseph. Both, apparently, are residents of Bethlehem. Mary becomes pregnant and Joseph is assured in a dream that this is the work of the Holy Ghost and so he does not put her away. The baby is born in the ordinary way—with no mention of a stable or a manger—and soon afterwards the family is visited by wise men from the east who bring gifts. King Herod hears from the wise men of the birth of a royal pretender and orders all infants in Bethlehem to be slaughtered. But Joseph gets a warning in a dream of Herod's intentions and escapes with his family to Egypt. Later, on the inspiration of another dream of Joseph's, the family settles in Nazareth.

The *Luke* account, on the other hand, has no wise men, no slaughter of the innocents, no flight to Egypt and no dreams by Joseph. Here, a virgin, Mary, is betrothed to Joseph, both of them living in Nazareth. Mary becomes pregnant after a direct revelation to her from an angel. Joseph's reaction is unrecorded. Because of a unique form of census, Joseph has to go from Nazareth to his ancestral town, Bethlehem, to be registered. There is no evidence, apart from *Luke*, that such a strange census ever took place. It would have been a chaotic affair, uncharacteristic of the Romans. In Bethlehem, Joseph and Mary find the inn full up and the baby is born in a stable. Shepherds learn of the birth from an angel and go to the stable to be the first to adore Jesus.

*Matthew* tries to relate the circumstances of the birth of Jesus to traditions associated with the births of other Jewish holy men, notably Moses. These traditions are to be found both in the *Old Testament* and among non-scriptural Jewish legends. The *Old Testament* version of Moses is that he was born at a time when Pharaoh was slaughtering Jewish male babies. His mother saved him by hiding him among reeds on the edge of the river. Non-biblical writings supplemented this account by telling how both Pharaoh and Moses's parents learnt through dreams of the future greatness of the infant. The parallel between the infancy stories is more than a coincidence.

Similarly, the star, the wise men, the placing of the birth at Bethlehem and Joseph's descent from the royal House of David are all fitted to Jewish tradition and scriptural prophecies. The reasoning of the writer and the early editors of the script appears to have been that Jesus the Nazarene by his life has shown himself to be the Lord's Messiah, so, his birth must have been in accordance with *Old Testament* prophecies. Individual *Old Testament* passages, collected together and interpreted in ways which then were normal, were picked out to form a birth story.

The *Luke* story is more consistent than that of *Matthew* and less related to Jewish requirements. It relies upon angels as messengers instead of upon dreams. It gives an active role to Mary and minimises Joseph. It also gives Joseph's genealogy but with the names, even that of his father, completely different from *Matthew*'s version. The stable and the shepherds have little theological purpose except to copy other religions. The story creaks only in the census, which is

a way of setting the birth in Bethlehem rather than Nazareth. Both the *Matthew* and *Luke* birth stories are apparently the newest part of the *New Testament*. Even after they were first written new material continued to be added.

However, the virgin birth was not to be found in Jewish tradition, but only in gentile Pagan mythology. Mainstream Jews, unlike some Pagan groups, attached no religious value to virginity, though one section of the Essene sect, described in the Dead Sea Scrolls, had introduced to Judaism the practice of celibacy. Some Jewish heroes had been born of mothers who had passed the ordinary age for child-bearing, as with Sarah and Isaac or Hannah and Samuel. There was a special divine providence to “open the womb” but no suggestion that a human father was unnecessary.

*Matthew* is far from clear on the “virgin” birth. What exactly was a “virgin” in those times? There were two definitions. The first corresponded to the modern one, that of a girl whose hymen remained intact, but a second appears in the earliest Jewish legal codes, the *Tosephta* and the *Mishnah*, both of which belong to the first two centuries AD. One rabbi quoted in the *Tosephta* is Eliezer, who was flourishing in the period 90-130 AD. Eliezer is asked: “Who is a virgin?” His answer is: “She who has never seen blood, even if she is married and has had children”. The *Mishnah*, the main rabbinical work of the same period, fits in with this. A virgin is “she that has never yet suffered a flow, even though she was married”. These statements reflect the Jewish distaste for menstruation inherited from the Persian religion. In this period, if a man touched a menstruating woman, even accidentally, he was accounted defiled.

In Jesus’s time it was possible for a woman to bear children without ever having menstruated. A girl was counted marriageable when she was 12 years old and many girls were married at that age. Many such young wives would not have reached puberty in those times when food was harder to come by and everyday life harder than today. They could have been experiencing sex with their husbands without having yet ovulated. At their first ovulation they could have conceived a child. To be “born of a virgin” in this sense might have been not uncommon, but might have marked out sons as specially holy because they had been born of a woman who had never been defiled by menstruation.

How did the non-Jewish theme of a supernatural virgin birth take root in *Matthew*? The question is especially puzzling in view of the pains taken in the opening verses, before the virgin birth is mentioned, to set out Jesus’s genealogy, the purpose of which was to prove that Jesus was Joseph’s son and an heir of the House of David. The relevant passage ends: “...Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary. Of her was born Jesus”. This, in various translations, is the accepted, orthodox text of *Matthew*. But in one very early version, discovered during the nineteenth century, the relevant passage states specifically: “Joseph, to whom was betrothed the virgin Mary, begot Jesus”.

A possible clue to why the virgin birth got into the text can be found in Matthew’s quotation from *Isaiah*: “The virgin will conceive and bear a son”. This, at first sight, would appear to bring the idea of a virgin birth within the range of Jewish prophecy, but the quotation is based on a mistranslation. In the original Hebrew, the passage refers not to a “virgin” in any sense of the word but to a “young woman”. The word “virgin” crept in by error in the Greek translation, the

*Septuagint*. The existence of this error is accepted today by all scholars, including the Roman Catholic ones who prepared the Jerusalem Bible. “Virgin” is no longer used in *Isaiah*, although necessarily it has to be retained in Matthew’s quotation of it.

But once the word “virgin” became part of the Greek version of *Matthew*, it is easy to imagine a non-Jewish person taking it literally, and erecting a theology upon it. The process would have been the more obvious because he was accustomed to myths of supernatural births. The Greek hero Hercules, to take only one example, was supposed to have been born of a union of Zeus with a mortal woman.

## **Astronomical Origin of the Virgin Birth**

The tradition of divine saviours being born of undeflowered women has an astronomical aspect. It has been said:

*“The adventures of Jesus Christ are all depicted among the stars,*

and this is why the Romans saw him as a sun god like Mithras with whom he eventually became identified.

The myth of the Star of Bethlehem comes from the prophecy of *Numbers* 24:17:

*There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Seth.*

This is a text often quoted by Christian writers as having a prophetic reference to the Christian Messiah. The same text goes on to say, “It shall destroy the children of Seth”, a prophecy which is plainly false if it is meant, like the rest of it, to apply to Jesus Christ. This prophecy is obviously a prophecy of a traditional victorious messiah of Israel, modelled on king David.

The star of Jacob or Judah, both being the same, is shown on astronomical maps as prominent in the constellation Virgo, the Virgin, called by the Hebrews, Ephraim. It was known in the Syrian, Arabian and Persian Systems of astronomy as Messaeil and was considered the ruling genius of the constellation. Messaeil is “Messa El” (The Anointed or Son of God)—apparently the star, Spica. The star of Jacob was evidently a figure from astrology, in which the virgin is shown rising with an infant son of God in her arms.

The virgin, with her god-begotten child, the bright star, Spica, represented as an ear of corn (the meaning of the name of the star), was pictured in the heavens from time immemorial. They are present in the Hindu zodiac, at least three thousand years old, and in the ancient Egyptian one. Virgo commences rising at midnight, on the 25 December, with this star in the east in her arms—the star which piloted the wise men. According to Albertus Magnus, in his Book on the Universe:

*The sign of the celestial virgin rises above the horizon, at the moment we find fixed for the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Sir William Drummond adds in *Ædipus Judaicus*:

*The anointed of El, the male infant, who rises in the arms of Virgo, was called Jesus by the Hebrews... and was hailed as the anointed king or Messiah.*

Now though the sun is annually reborn on the date chosen for Christ's birth, 25 December, the midwinter solstice, for a period the sun was also born at the autumnal equinox as the infant son of God, the "bread of life". This is the time of the original Jewish New Year, Rosh ha Shanah, 1 Tishri, the religious new year as opposed to the civil new year which began on 1 Nisan. Rosh ha Shanah was designated in Jewish religious law as a festival and a time of great rejoicing. Paradoxically it was also the Day of Judgement because it was an anniversary of the creation. This is the real date of the birth of Christ, if Christians want to celebrate it.

The reason is that in the centuries ending the first millenium BC the precession of the equinoxes led to a curious celestial event. The child of the cosmic virgin, Spica, rose on the Eastern horizon at the autumnal equinox at the same time as the sun. So after the constellation of the virgin had risen just before dawn in the east, the sun rose just when the bright star Spica was expected to rise. It seemed as if the son of the virgin, the ear of corn symbolising the bread of life (Rosh ha Shanah celebrated the beginning of the agricultural year), had risen as the glorious sun. The virgin had given birth to a god.

What was even more spectacular on some of these occasions was that the morning star, Venus, the Queen of Heaven, rose in the constellation of Virgo before the sun! So the sun rises as the child of the virgin Queen of Heaven over the eastern horizon, appearing out of the sea in many countries. In Latin, sea is "mare" whence Maria or Mary. The infant god arises as the light of the East in the arms of his mother, Mary or Venus, the morning star, which rises minutes before the child.

Also interesting is the fact that the Virgin in ancient zodiacs is associated with a tree, in which case the son would be an offshoot, a shoot or a branch, all of which were messianic names, and the word Nazarene comes from the word "neser" meaning a branch. The messianic name, Shiloh, which puzzled scholars for a long time also means branch and therefore means the star, Spica. When the branch or son of the virgin appears as the light of the east in all his glory then the messiah has been born. Whence:

*We have seen his star in the east, and have come to worship him.*

**Mt 2:8**

This phenomenon occurred in 11 BC and 3 BC and either event might have been associated with Jesus, though the earlier one is the favourite. The Essenes who were astrologers trained in Babylonian exile would have seen all this. It later escaped into the empire as literal truth instead of the astrological signs it originally was.

The story of the slaughter of the innocents is also widespread because originally it was again part of the allegory of the sun's journey through the heavens. When the sun passed through the constellation of Gemini in May, he was imagined to have destroyed them. The Greek word to

destroy is “anaireo” which literally means “to pass through” or “withdraw from” as well as “to take away”. The sun takes on the characteristics of each constellation it proceeds through so here Hercules is an infant twin. In myth that is, of course, what he was, his brother being Iphicles. So Hercules was a sun god who in his journey through the heavens threatens to kill himself as an infant of the constellation, Gemini. His earthly, adopted father had to flee with him and his mother to Galem for protection from threatening danger. Herod’s name suggested a link with Hercules so he fitted appropriately into the legend. Jesus was, of course, supposed to have had a twin brother, Thomas.

Pharaoh’s slaughter of the children, Christians believe, is referred to in the bible when Rachel weeps for her children, a passage introduced by:

*In Rama, there was a voice heard.*

Note that “Rama” is the Indian and Phoenician name for the zodiac, and that Rachel had two children only—Joseph and Benjamin—equivalent to Castor and Pollux. Rachel then was the queen of heaven, Venus, because for the Assyrians and the Phoenicians she wept when the sun passed through the astronomical twins, the constellation of Gemini, doubtless fearing their destruction.

The stories of gods cohabiting with virgins, and begetting other gods, are of astronomical origin. Astronomy and religion were interwoven at an early period of time.

The *whole* story of Jesus cannot be reduced to solar mythology. Once the crucifixion legend of the historic Jesus had been carried into the Pagan empire he came to be understood as a sun god. He collected bits of sun god mythology, but some people today, strain to explain every element of the biography of Jesus in the gospels in terms of sun mythology. There is plainly a genuine story of a living human at the core of the gospels, most clearly seen unadorned in Mark’s gospel. This was its novelty—here was a sun god that had lived on earth recently! But the Christians, largely ignorant people at first, fell for the cosmic Christ completely. They believed the cosmic Christ, the sun god, had actually appeared on earth recently and sacrificed himself, like the gods of the mysteries. The Gnostics said to the Christians:

*You poor ignoramuses (idiotai), you have mistaken the mysteries of old for modern history, and accepted literally all that was only meant mystically.*

# The Trappings of Christmas

## The Star

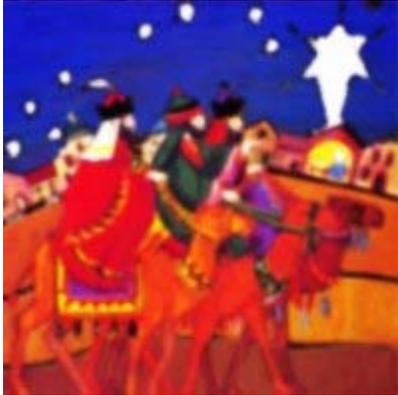


What are the origins of the various ingredients of the now traditional nativity scene? The traditional nativity scene, shown in thousands of pictures, models and plays, rests upon no single authority. It is a synthesis of different traditions brought together over the centuries. S Francis of Assisi in 1224 AD was the first to introduce a crib into church. The sources of the various elements are:

- Matthew provides the star and the wise men and also Herod's massacre of the innocents, and the flight to Egypt
- Luke provides the stable, the manger, angels and the shepherds
- Various later speculations provide the ox, the ass, the wise men shown as three kings and Joseph shown as a white bearded old man.

The star is an emblem which appears over and over again in Jewish thought of the period. It dated back to the prophecy of Balaam in the *Book of Numbers*, "A star shall come forth out of Jacob". In the *Dead Sea Scrolls*, one of the expected messiahs is called "the star" and he is to be the interpreter of the Law. The messianic Simon bar Kosiba, who led the Jews in revolt against the Romans in 132-135 AD, was nicknamed "Son of the Star" and the coins he minted showed the Jewish temple with a star.

## Wise Men



The Greek word for wise men in *Matthew* really signifies astrologers. “From the East” means from Mesopotamia or Persia, the home of the Zoroastrian faith, a religion which, with its angels, its conflict between darkness and light and its teaching on the immortality of the human soul, preceded Judaism. Heaven and hell were originally, Zoroastrian ideas.

In mainstream Christian tradition, the wise men are called kings although it has no scriptural warranty. The presumed sources were *Isaiah*: “The nations come to your light and kings to your dawning brightness” and *Psalms 72*: “The kings of Sheba and Seba will offer gifts; all kings will do him homage”. So the wise men became kings.

The ox and the ass in the stable also have no *New Testament* basis. They will have been from *Isaiah*: “The ox knows its owner and the ass its master’s crib”.

Then it is customary for Joseph to be depicted as an elderly man, again without *New Testament* warranty. But, as with so much else, this is not accidental. It arose because of the orthodox Christian theology that Mary remained perpetually a virgin. Since the *New Testament* refers plainly to Jesus’s brothers, Joseph had to have been a widower who had already had a family and that the brothers were really only half-brothers. An elderly man fits this image.

The complete development of the classic Christmas scene took many centuries. In the early Church the feast of the Epiphany, commemorating the wise men and Jesus’s baptism, was more important than Jesus’s birthday. It was not until about 330 AD that Christmas was recognised as a feast. The importance of it grew as part of a conscious policy of Christianising the Pagan midwinter rites which had already long existed. The first model crib, for placing in church, appears to have been made by S Francis of Assisi as late as 1224.

So by a rich combination of tradition, legend and interpretation there developed the Christian Christmas.

## Santa Claus



The present red-robed figure of Father Christmas is a combination of three traditions: Christian, Pagan and commercial. The latest addition to the Father Christmas legend came as recently as 1939 with “Rudolph the Red-nosed Reindeer”.

On the Christian side, Father Christmas is S Nicholas, an old man who was Bishop of Myra in Asia Minor in the fourth century. Although he was bad-tempered, he was kind-hearted and became the patron saint of children. Up to the nineteenth century, pictures showed S Nicholas distributing gifts to children wearing not a Santa Claus outfit but bishop’s vestments.

The Pagan Father Christmas was a more sinister figure, connected in southern Europe with the god Saturn and with fertility rites. There were also Nordic legends of a mysterious personality who appeared in midwinter. The Lapps had the “Yule Swain”, an 11 foot high giant who rode around on a goat on the days before Christmas.

The present stereotype of Santa Claus, a jolly gentleman with a white beard, red robe and sledge with reindeer, was a nineteenth-century American invention, the definitive pictures being drawn by the commercial artist Thomas Nast (1840-1902 AD). Around Nast’s Santa Claus gathered a sub-Christian theology that he was a universal spirit of love and goodwill. The New York *Sun* printed every Christmas for half a century the same reply to a little girl who had written in to ask if Santa Claus really existed.

Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus. He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist. I and you know that they abound and give to your life its highest beauty and joy.

According to European customs, especially in France, the Netherlands and Hungary, S Nicholas had distributed gifts to good children on his feast day, 8 December. Accompanying him on his rounds was an assistant with a birch rod. Children who had been naughty during the year got a whipping instead of presents. The new Santa Claus was transferred to Christmas Eve, and gave

presents to all children, good and bad. A quite separate tradition of Christmas gifts was that of masters rewarding their servants and other people of inferior status. The recipients carried around “boxes” into which employers were expected to drop coins. So, 26 December was called “boxing day”.

## **Snow and Stagecoach**

The modern image of a “white Christmas” sprang up during the nineteenth century, mainly for decorative reasons. The familiar Christmas card scene of a stagecoach might be a recollection of the great frost of 1847 when many coaches got stuck in drifts and Christmas mails were delayed.

## **Robin and Wren**



The wren and robin redbreast, which appear on so many Christmas cards, also reflect folk-memories. Since pre-Christian times, people have been superstitious about the wren, the tiny bird with a big voice. It was a sacred bird which flew higher than any other bird by sitting on the back of an eagle before taking off on its own, and which could be hunted only on one day, in midwinter. The ceremony of hunting the wren on 26 December lasted at least into the nineteenth century. In Wales, the dead wren was ceremonially carried in a decorated wren house.

Because of its tameness, the robin was regarded as a friend of man and it supposedly took part in church services and funerals. Stories about the robin and the wren appear to have come to Britain from the Mediterranean during the Bronze Age. They are linked together in the oldest of nursery rhymes, “The Marriage of Cock Robin and Jenny Wren”, and its better-known sequel, “Who Killed Cock Robin?” Both are adaptations of ancient traditions it is now impossible to reconstruct.

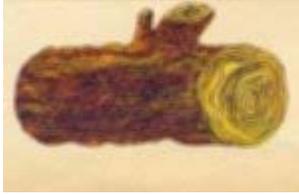
## Christmas Tree



Christmas festivals today incorporate many other Pagan customs, such as the use of holly, mistletoe, Yule logs, and wassail bowls. The custom, from Germany but of Aryan origin, of bringing an evergreen tree into the home and festooning it with lights, candies and gifts became popular in Britain in the mid-nineteenth century, partly because of the example set by Queen Victoria and the German Prince Consort, Albert. The Christmas tree is the most obvious aspect of ancient Pagan celebrations which were later incorporated into church rites. Only in the last 50 years or so has developed the cheerful custom of householders placing it in a window so it is visible in the street. Behind it is the pre-Christian cults of Germanic tribes in the forests of Prussia and Central Europe.

The Christian celebration was originally derived in part from rites held by pre-Christian Germanic and Celtic peoples to celebrate the winter solstice. The Christmas fir tree, because it keeps its green needles throughout the winter months, was believed by pre-Christian Pagans to have special powers of protection against the forces of nature and evil spirits. Particular trees and groves were accounted sacred and could be approached only by priests. The Christmas tree is derived from the so-called paradise tree, symbolizing Eden, of German mystery plays. The use of a Christmas tree began early in the seventeenth century, in Strasbourg, France, spreading from there through Germany, into northern Europe and Great Britain, and then on to the United States.

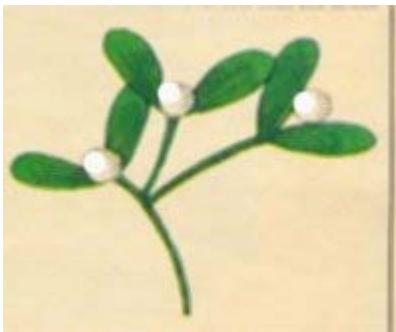
## Yule Log



The burning of the yule log, a custom which lasted into the present century and is still not entirely extinct, was a ceremonial way of producing midwinter heat and light and had sacrificial significance. To an accompaniment of jollity, the log was dragged into the house on Christmas Eve and set to burn throughout the feast. The word “Yule” is of Norse origin and refers to the midwinter festival. For many centuries it has existed in the English language as a recognised alternative to Christian terms.

The seventeenth century Puritans who, under Cromwell, tried to ban Christmas celebrations for being both Popish and Pagan, used as one motto: “Yule-tide is fool-tide”. They made it a criminal offence to eat mince pies. The word “Noel” may mean the start of the New Year, but for at least eight centuries it has been used as a musical shout of joy for the birth of Jesus.

## Mistletoe



This parasitic growth, with its white berries, is more heavily loaded with Paganism than any other Christmas emblem. As far back as history goes, it has been held in superstitions awe. Early Christians hated it and by canon law they rigorously excluded it from church decorations. To this day many orthodox Christian clergy regard it as incorrect, if not blasphemous, to place it within a church. The mistletoe has an ancient connexion with fertility rites, as the custom of kissing under the mistletoe dimly commemorates. The continuance of such kissing reflects a triumph for tradition. The ancient British Druids, according to the Roman naturalist, Pliny, used the juice as an aphrodisiac and a cure for sterility. More widely, it was used as a semi-magical cure for a variety of ailments. Even today it is used by practitioners of witchcraft as one of their staple emblems.

In the Middle Ages, Christians tried to bring it within their system by devising the legend that the mistletoe was once a proper tree—the one used by the Romans for Jesus’s cross. As a

punishment it was shrivelled up and made parasitic. The creation of this legend illustrates the deep antipathy felt towards a plant that was widely regarded as an evil growth. Yet, in spite of long centuries of censure and disapproval on the part of officialdom, mistletoe has stubbornly held its own as a midwinter decoration.

## Holly and Ivy



The custom of bringing evergreens into the home for the midwinter festival dates back to before the dawn of known history. Because Christians hated mistletoe so much, they laid stress in particular on holly, the prickles and red berries being held to be emblematic of Jesus's passion. Ivy was more simply of decorative value, another alternative to mistletoe, though the bitterness of the berries was held to allegorize the Passion. But holly is the main Christian decoration for both home and church.

## Addition by Larry Wright

The worship of the Virgin Mary is, in all relevant details, the same as the worship of all the other Goddesses that were prevalent in the ancient world. Mary is Isis, or Venus, or Aphrodite, or Semiramis, et al... She is the "Queen of Heaven" or the "Mother of God", or the "Star of the Sea", or the "Immaculate Virgin". The Mother and Child were worshipped in Babylon, as were Isis and Horus in Egypt. In Greece there was Ceres as the Great Mother with a babe at her breast, or Irene with Plutus, and even in China there was Shing Moo, also with a babe. The ancient Etruscans and Italians worshipped the goddess Nutria, who also had a son in her arms, and the Virgin mother Devaki suckled the divine Krishna. Minerva was honoured by the title "Virgin Queen", as was Juno who was called the "Virgin queen of Heaven".

The Virgin Mary, the Grecian Venus, and the Egyptian Isis et al... are all Queens of the starry heavens, for they are all personifications of Virgo, the eternal virgin of the zodiac. The constellation Virgo is a Y shaped group, which the star at the foot is the well known Spica, a star of the first magnitude. The whole resembles more a cup than the human figure, but when we remember the symbolic meaning of the "cup", that seems to be an obvious explanation of the name Virgo, which the constellation has borne since the earliest times. Virgo lies very nearly on the ecliptic, that is the imagined path of the sun.

In Egypt 3000 years ago, the birthday of the sun god was celebrated on the 25 December, the first day to noticeably lengthen after the day of the winter solstice—the 21 December. At the midnight hour on the first minutes of the 25 December the birthday of the sun was celebrated. The sun was then in the zodiacal sign of Capricorn, then known as the Stable of Augeus, so the infant sun god was said to have been born in a stable.

Brightly shining on the meridian was Sirius—the “Star from the East”, while rising in the east was Virgo the Virgin of the zodiac, with the horizon passing through the centre of the constellation. It is this astronomical fact that is the basis of the many legends of virgin born world saviours. To the right of Sirius was the constellation Orion, “The Great Hunter”, with three stars in his belt. These stars, in a straight line, point at Sirius and were anciently known as “The Three Kings”. Depicted in the Zodiac of the temple Denderah, the constellation Virgo was pictured as a woman with a spike of corn in one hand, and on the adjacent margin the Virgin was denoted by a figure of Isis with Horus in her arms. Carpenter remarks:

But it is well known as a matter of history that the worship of Isis and Horus descended in the early Christian centuries to Alexandria, where it took the form of the worship of the Virgin Mary and the infant saviour, and so passed into the European ceremonial. We have therefore the Virgin Mary connected by linear succession and descent with that remote Zodiacal cluster in the sky! A curious confirmation of the same astrological connection is afforded by the Roman Catholic Calendar. For if this be consulted, it will be found that the festival of the Assumption of the Virgin is placed on the 15 August, while the festival of the birth of the Virgin is dated the 8 September... At the present day, the Zodiacal signs—owing to the precession of the Equinoxes—have shifted some distance from the constellations of the same name. But at the time when the Zodiac was constituted and these names were given, the first date obviously would signalise the actual disappearance of the cluster Virgo in the sun’s rays, i.e. the Assumption of the Virgin into the glory of the god, while the second date would signalise the reappearance of the constellation—or the birth of the Virgin.

The Jews held that the time of the messiah’s advent was to be astrologically indicated by the conjunction of the planets Jupiter and Saturn, in the constellation of the Fishes. The prophecy related to the entrance of the vernal equinox into the zodiacal sign of Pisces the Fishes—due to the precession of the equinoxes—in approximately 255 BC. Bethlehem means the “The house of the bread corn”, in the mansions of the zodiac, Virgo is the place of the seed for sowing, and the opposite sign Pisces, is the mansion of the “Bringer forth in fruitfulness”, first set in heaven in accordance with the seasons of Egypt. The Hebrew messiah was to be born in Bethlehem, because the birthplace above was localised in the city of Judea, the land of the solar birthplace in the sign of the Fishes.

The ancient starry drama was played out yet again. At midnight on the 24th of December Virgo rose in the east and a new infant saviour was stable born. All the sins committed on earth gradually drifted down to Capricorn, hence the filthy condition of the stable, whose cleansing was one of the twelve zodiacal labours of Hercules, himself a sun god. The second-century church father Justin Martyr remarked that Christ was born when the sun had its birth in the Augean stable, Jesus coming as a second Hercules to cleanse the foul world. There is another stable in the constellation Auriga on either side of which are Taurus the bull and Ursa Major,

known in Egypt as the “Ass of Typhon”. Here we have the ox and ass of the traditional nativity scene. It is also worth noting that the stars of the Great Bear were known to the Arabians as “Martha and Mary”, and also the “Coffin of Lazarus”.

“The Three Kings”—the stars of Orion— the Magi from the east mentioned in the gospels (*Mt* 2:11), at the birth of the sun god, came to pay homage, and bring gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. The reason for presenting these particular gifts is explained by the fact that of the seven metals dedicated to the genie of the planets, gold was the one consecrated to the sun god, and frankincense and myrrh were the gums burnt in censers, at his worship.

Despite their astral origins, Christians later “discovered” the bodies of Melchior, Gaspar and Balthassar; and placed them in their new cathedral in Constantinople. From Constantinople the bones of the three kings were, as a special favour to Milan, allowed to be moved to that city. When Milan was captured by Frederick Barbarossa in 1162 AD, the Archbishop of Cologne persuaded the Emperor to transfer these relics to his cathedral; and there for the last eight centuries the bones have rested. The shrine of the “Three Kings” thereafter became one of the greatest treasures of Cologne cathedral.

The Egyptian astrological elements in the stable myth are provided by Massey:

*“The manger is the celestial, zodiacal and the actual birthplace of the messiah in Egyptian mythology. The typical birthplace was designated Apt or Aptu, whence came the name of Abydus. Ap means to manifest and expose to view, also to guide; Apt is the place or person. Apt, as person, was the most ancient genitrix who first brought forth from the waters as the fish, dragon or hippopotamus, hence Aptu is the mythical fish. Apt as place was also the pool of two truths, the piscina of the beginning, which was made zodiacal at last in the sign of Pisces. The pool, fish, uterus and crib, are all types of the birthplace named apt, and the “apt” is also a manger. The manger, apt, is a sign of the birthplace in Thebes, as in Aptu (Abydus). Thus the hieroglyphics will explain why the divine child, as Ichthyus, was born in a manger. One position of the manger can be identified by the asterism called Proesepe, in the sign of Cancer, which was at one time the place of birth of the god at summer solstice. The manger at Bethlehem had been the birthplace of the divine babe in a far earlier cult. Hieronymus describes the Syrian Adonis, extant in his time 331-420 AD and says that in the place where the redeemer cried in the manger, the lament of the women mourning for Adonis had been heard even in later times, as it assuredly had been in the pre-Christian period.*

According to the *Chronicle Of Alexandria*, the Egyptians not only consecrated the nativity of the new-born babe and the virgin mother, they had the symbolic custom of exposing a child in a crib to the adoration of the people. When Ptolemy asked why this was done, he was informed that it was an ancient mystery—the crib or Apt being identical to the manger, thus being the same babe in the manger—that was born in the Apt above.

It is clear that the worship of the virgin mother was a common practice in the ancient world. In the sixth or seventh century the Roman Pagan festival of Diana celebrated by torch light on August 13th, was adopted by the Christian cult as the “Dormition” or “Falling asleep of the

Mother of God". This later became known as the "Assumption of the Blessed Virgin", and was celebrated two days later than the Pagan festival—on August 15th.

The worship of the Virgin, the Queen of Heaven, became one of the grand features of the Christian religion. Mary the mother of Jesus, was pronounced Theotokos— "Mother of God"— by the Council of Ephesus 431 AD, and a church on the site was made sacred to her. Twenty years later in 451 AD at the council of Chalcedon Mary was further likened to the many virgin mothers that had preceded her by being pronounced a Virgin. Ephesus was chosen, because here had stood the great temple of Artemis, the great Virgin mother of Asia minor—of whom Isis was the prototype.

Artemis was to the Greeks what Diana was to the Romans (*Acts* 19:27). Her temple had been rebuilt for the fourth time under the patronage of the fabulously rich Croesus. It took 140 years to complete and was dedicated in 430 BC. It was destroyed by fire, but was rebuilt to even greater magnificence by about 356 BC, and became known as one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It was finally destroyed by an edict of the Christian Emperor Theodosius in 381 AD. Her Assumption was decreed in 813 AD, her Immaculate Conception became dogma during the pontificate of Pope Pius IX in 1854. Although the former was not made official papal dogma until the pontificate of Pius XII in 1950 AD.

Regarding the elevation of Mary, Smith remarks:

*Mary soon began to compete in popular affection with Isis, Cybele and Demeter. It required but slight and easy changes to transfer to her the stately ritual of the goddess Isis, with its shaven and tonsured priests, its matins and vespers, its tinkling music, its jewelled images of the mother of god; the ancient portrait of Isis and the child Horus was ultimately accepted not only in popular opinion, but by formal Episcopal sanction, as the portrait of the virgin and her child.*

There can be little doubt that the Virgin Mary has been modelled directly upon the Egyptian Isis, for the two are virtually indistinguishable. The qualities which so endear Mary to the Catholics are the ones which made Isis so popular in Egypt. Both goddesses, gentle mothers that they were, could intercede with the all-powerful creator and stern judge far more effectively than their sons, and accordingly both have been styled Intercessor. Other titles of Isis include saviour of Souls and Immaculate Virgin, all appropriated by her Christian counterpart. Like Isis before her, Mary is portrayed standing on a crescent moon with an arch of stars above her head.

Certain images of Isis were celebrated for their miraculous movements, or the shedding of tears, and she was even said to have appeared to her worshippers on rare but special occasion. This miraculous work of "Our Lady" was naturally continued by the Christian church which gradually took over the cult of Isis. In fourth-century Alexandria, the Temple of Isis and the Church of Saint Mary stood side by side, the devotees of the mother goddesses indifferently frequenting either. The end came in the sixth century, when the last remaining Temple of Isis, on the Nile island of Philae, became a Christian church at the point of a sword under an edict of Justinian.

In the foregoing it has been argued that Mary the virgin mother of Jesus, like her counterparts in the many saviour cults of antiquity, had their origin in the starry heavens, patterned on Virgo the celestial world virgin of the zodiac. This symbolism of the birth of a new sun god, with its attendant message of hope and redemption at the winter solstice, originated in Egypt with the infant Horus and his mother Isis, the Egyptian Madonna. The doctrine of the Mother of God was brought in along with the worship of the Madonna by Bishop Cyril, and the monks of Alexandria, in the 5th century AD. Figures of Isis nursing the infant Horus were taken from the temples to serve as the Madonna and Child. The name Madonna is no more than a contraction of “*Mater Domina*” or Great or Lady Mother—in Roman times a title of mother goddesses in general.

As we have noted, Isis was also represented like Mary standing on the crescent moon with twelve stars surrounding her head, and with the infant saviour in her arms enclosed in a framework of the flowers of the Egyptian bean or lotus. The Virgin Mary was often depicted in this manner in medieval art; and she was represented in statuary as being black or dark skinned; black Madonnas exist today in many of the cathedrals of Europe. The most ancient pictures and statues in Italy and other parts of Europe, of what are supposed to be representations of the Christian Virgin Mary and the infant Jesus are black. The infant god, is depicted in the arms of his black mother, his eyes and drapery white, but he is himself is perfectly black. The reason why these early representations of the Virgin Mary and Jesus are black, crowned, and covered with jewels, is that they are of pre-Christian origin; as Isis the Egyptian “Queen of Heaven” was worshipped in Europe for centuries before the Christian Era.

Temples and statues were erected to her at Bologna in Italy, and the church of Notre Dame in Paris is built on the original site of a Temple of Isis. On the entrance to the north cloister is figured the signs of the Zodiac, except that the sign Virgo is replaced by the figure of the Madonna and Child. Finally, in many parts of Italy can be seen pictures of the Virgin with her infant in her arms, inscribed with the words, “*Deo Soli*” (Sun God). This betrays their Pagan origin.

***Before you go, think about this...***

It is lawful, then, to him that discusses, disputes and preaches of things eternal, or to him that narrates of things temporal pertaining to religion or piety, to conceal at fitting times whatever seems fit to be concealed.

S Augustine of Hippo, *On Lying*