

10. Was It A Virgin Birth?

One of the key assumptions of the Atheistic Canon, best represented by their philosopher priest, A C Grayling, is that the Christians copied the Greeks in their rendition of the Virgin Birth.

A C Grayling writes in "To Set Prometheus Free Essays on Religion, Reason and Humanity Oberon Masters 2009

Likewise, the fact that mythologies antedating Christianity are full of stories of gods impregnating mortal maids who give birth to heroic figures, not a few of whom go down into the underworld and return – think of Zeus and his dalliances with at least 27 recorded mortal women, among them Alcemene, Antiope, Callisto, Danae, Electra, Europa, Io, Lamia, Leda, Niobe, Olympias and Semele, producing Hercules, Castor and Pollux, Helen of Troy, Alexander of Macedon, Lacedaemon, Minos, Rhadamanthus, Dardanus, and a number of other egregious figures of legend and history – makes it puzzling why anyone should think that the God-Mary-Jesus story is out of the ordinary, instead of what it is: merely an obvious borrowing and adaptation.

Zeus visited Alceme disguised as Amphitryon, he spends 3 nights with her and produces Hercules. Zeus seduced by the beauty of Antiope, takes the form of a Satyr and impregnates her. Zeus disguises himself as another God, in fact the Goddess Atrimis, to approach the virgin nymph Callisto, so he/she could physically impregnate her. Zeus came to Danae as golden rain to impregnate her in a living tomb her father has imprisoned her in. Zeus took a fancy to Electra and impregnated her and her offspring by Zeus becomes the founder of Troy. With Europa, Zeus took his fancy and comes as a bull to impregnate her. Io was impregnated after being disguised as a bull by Zeus. Lamia was a mistress of Zeus who was always being impregnated. Zeus' wife Hera gets the mother of all bad tempers and changes Lamia into a child eating mother. Leda is raped by Zeus the swan this time and simultaneously gives birth to her demi God children and that of her husband. Zeus and Niobe produce Argos. Olympias, the Mother of Alexander the Great, claimed Zeus as his father. Semele, no virgin, was a priestess of Zeus who impregnates her visiting as an eagle descending upon her in disguise, Dionysus is the by

product of this union. Nothing sounds like the sinless Virgin Birth of a lowly righteous lady, who is not physically impregnated, but impregnated by that immaterial God, a Jewish revelation itself, to be contrasted with the physical gods fornicating away, of Greek Myth.

Again, we have a great rhetorical blast from A C Grayling. As usual it sounds so convincing. However, if the difference between the Virgin Birth and those mythical events described above does not hit you in the face, you will read later in this chapter, the very different nature of this birth and the fact that we have recorded witness testimony for it from two people.

With none of the Greek legends do we have witness testimony. With none of the Greek legends do we have the Holy Spirit impregnating a Virgin, but a God taking a physical form and doing the impregnating. The Greek legends can't seriously be compared with the Virgin Birth story. On a superficial level maybe, but when you really think about it, they are remarkably different. One helped inspire the largest section of mankind ever to convert to a new religion, the other are told as myths. The reason for the miracle of conversion of at first, the Western World and later large parts of the rest of the world, to Christianity, was because of the evidence for one and the lack of evidence for the other. This is part of what convinced people of the Virgin Birth over the Greek Myths.

The Virgin Birth was predicted by King David, 1,000 odd years before the event in two Psalms.

Psalm 85:11

Truth shall spring out of the earth, And righteousness shall look down from heaven.

The Truth is always Jesus and begotten not by a man

Psalm 110:3

Your people shall be volunteers In the day of Your power; In the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning, You have the dew of Your youth.

The Lord is whom this Psalm is referring to and the euphemism "from the womb of the

morning” of the Virgin Birth, is used to set up this expectation.

Failing this, the Atheists then fall back on the Virgin Birth story as a great mistranslation. That said, I have attempted to remove the smoke and mirrors of mistranslation - allegations that bedevil scholarship and, in particular, Internet chatter regarding this element of the Bible, in order to challenge such misunderstandings.

The Septuagint, or ‘LXX’, was the translation by 70 (or 72) rabbis of their Hebrew Bible into Greek around 250 years before the birth of Christ. They did it for Alexandrian Jews, who were, in the main, Greek speakers. There is no complete source document, but there are fragments from the second century B.C. and some whole scrolls. In the Letter of Aristeas,¹ who was a member of Ptolemy II Philadelphus’ court, we learn how Ptolemy II (285-247 BC) requests that the High Priests of Jerusalem send 6 x 12 (as in the 12 tribes of Israel, or 70, hence ‘LXX’) to translate the Hebrew Bible into Greek.

There is controversy over the provenance of the letter and whether it has been interfered with by scribes for their own partisan purposes, so we may never know the true story behind its creation. Gamaliel I, the grandson of Hillel, the most famous rabbi of all, is reported in Sota 49b:

For Rabbi said: Why use the Syrian language in the land of Israel? Either use the holy tongue or Greek!

Similarly they permitted the household of Rabban Gamaliel to study Greek wisdom because they had close associations with the Government.

Rabbi Simeon (Ben Gamaliel II)² was President of the Great Sanhedrin after the Bar Kobar revolt (AD 132 – AD 136). So we are well into the period of the development of Christian doctrine, and over 300 years after the introduction of the Bible in Greek.

We know from this that in the worst case, by the time of Christ, the Greek Old Testament was a faithfully rendered translation carrying the same authority as the

¹ <http://www.ccel.org/c/charles/otpseudepig/aristeas.htm>

² A direct descendant of King David, great, great grandson of the foremost, respected Liberal Rabbi, Hillel, whose grandson, was St Paul’s own teacher, the Gamaliel I mentioned above.

Hebrew one. At best, however, we know from 200 years before Christ that it was as authoritative as the Hebrew Bible; there is no evidence to suggest anyone disagreed with it. We also know that well into the second century AD the most senior rabbi was attesting to its validity. We know that Matthew quoted extensively from it, and we know for sure that Paul did as well, both of them using it as an authority to inform their testimonies and teachings.

I am going to look at the Septuagint³ and compare how these first books of the Bible use the word 'virgin' – bearing in mind that it has been completely removed in most modern Christian Bible translations concerning the Virgin Birth, despite all translations' having been made from the Greek.

The Hebrew words 'ha almah' (הַאֲלֹמָה Almah), or 'young maiden', were translated by rabbis into the Greek using the Greek word 'parthenos' (παρθένο or παρθένος), meaning 'The Virgin'⁴. It would seem that before the Greek translation, circa 200 BC, it must have been common understanding that 'young maiden' did mean virgin, as it is freely translated as such, and there does not seem to be any issue with this until several hundred years after the death of Christ, when Jews who became Christians had latched onto this prophetic virgin translation and applied it literally to the circumstances of the birth of Christ. The Jews seem then to move away from accepting the translation into the Greek, suggesting that the 'young maiden' could not be used to imply 'virgin' unequivocally, but rather could mean someone already in a married state. As we will see, the word 'bethulah', the unequivocal Hebrew word for virgin, is sometimes qualified to underscore the *virgin nature* with the word we read in Isaiah, 'almah'. This suggests its use was not as clear cut as is now claimed by Jewish authorities, whose translating rabbis of the day thought otherwise.

³ *The Apostolic Polygot Bible*, First Edition, Apostolic Press 2006, Prepared by Charles Van der Pool, also at www.apostolicbible.com.

⁴ I note also that some Tanakh translations I have read render many of the phrases 'Virgin: unmarried state', as suggested above, with the qualifying 'almah' added, as in the Genesis quote above. 'Almah' is only used unequivocally (according to any of the translations I have seen) in Genesis 24:43, Song of Solomon 6:8, and Isaiah 7:14. So whilst the Septuagint is clear cut on the matter and has the authority of the 70 Rabbis who translated the current Greek Septuagint, it seems the Tanakh is consistent with the Septuagint on the core Isaiah passage of the Virgin Birth, but can be variable on the other uses. Young (Young R., 1963) helpfully lists all the Hebrew and the Greek renditions to clearly show the divergences.

Margaret Barker provides the most convincing explanation as to why the Rabbis translated from the Hebrew to the Greek in such a way as to give us the word 'virgin'. The Father of the Davidic King was 'the Lord' in the Hebrew tradition. The Mother, therefore, was 'The Queen'. Isaiah introduces the mother as 'Queen of Heaven' and the child a special King. One hundred years later Jeremiah rejects this 'Mother Queen' worship. This name could be simultaneously applied to 'Wisdom'. In fact, the reforming Kings Hezekiah and Josiah abolished this type of worship. 1 Enoch 93:8 points out that the use of the books of Wisdom was abandoned at this point, prior to the destruction of the First Temple. More importantly for us, after the establishment of the Second Temple the true worship of Wisdom was re-established, putting both Wisdom and the Queen of Heaven back centre stage. There is some archaeological evidence to support this from Cave 1 of the Qumran Scrolls, where the first Isaiah Scroll does say, "Ask a sign of the mother of the Lord."

She makes another appearance in the book of Micah, in the famous 5:2-4 prophetic prediction of the birth of Christ by the lady at En Rogel, a very short distance from Bethlehem.

But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.' Therefore Israel will be abandoned until the time when she who is in labor bears a son, and the rest of his brothers return to join the Israelites. He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God And they will live securely, for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth.

The significance of this is also explored in Isaiah 7:6, where the King is told to go to En Rogel to listen to Isaiah. En Rogel is significant, as this is where Adonijah had sacrificed and claimed his Royal throne. Two of the key prophets were now pointing to this place as a significant location for the Virgin Birth. The later books of the Old Testament – Apocrypha, Wisdom and Sirach – continue this tradition of Wisdom and the Queen of Heaven. The New Testament nails its colours to the Virgin Birth, as we know, culminating in Revelation 11:19-12:6, where she fabulously appears as Queen of Heaven, radiating Wisdom, giving birth to the Messiah. She is pictured emerging from the Temple to give birth, just as Wisdom re-emerged from the re-built Second Temple. This is the Virgin of Isaiah, the Ha'almah, or hidden one (as it can also be translated). Yes, Isaiah liked some word play here: Queen of Heaven is equated with Wisdom itself. This perhaps helps us understand why the rabbis did translate as 'virgin', and it was not seen to be

controversial until many centuries following the death of Christ, when Christianity was firmly establishing its roots.

Back to the Septuagint, then: when I search 'A virgin; an unmarried State' for a young woman or young maiden I discover that it is mentioned on all the 31 occasions listed below. Certainly, the young woman or women referred to can only be viewed as virgin, meaning they had not yet engaged in sexual relations.

Genesis 24: 14, 16, 43

In 14, Rebekah's servant is extra helpful in not only offering drink to the guest but also to his animal, showing her extra kindness and purity. In 16, she is confirmed as a virgin, and also that no-one had touched her. Verses 43 and 55 also confirm she was a virgin.

Referring to Genesis 24:43, Young (Young, 1992) says that Rebekah is specifically called a 'bethulah', the unequivocal Hebrew word for virgin, but 'almah' is added to specifically underline her virginity. If it was so unequivocal at the time, as Jewish scholars advocate, it would suggest no need to qualify with 'almah' in order to make readers understand that an untouched young woman is being referred to. We know languages change and evolve over time, and it would appear that this is one of those instances.

Joel 1:8

'Mourn like a virgin in sackcloth grieving for the betrothed of her youth'. Here 'bethulah' is used to refer to a married woman, allegorically of Israel as the wife who is unfaithful, the husband being God. Again, this supports the contention that the use of 'bethulah' is not as clear cut as some suggest.

Genesis 34:3

Dinah, the daughter of Leah and Jacob, is described as a virgin, then Shechem the son of Hamor violates her purity, causing anger in Jacob's eyes and his sons'.

Exodus 22:16,17

Verse 16 says that if you lie with an unbetrothed virgin then you must marry her. Verse 17 qualifies this, allowing the father to prevent it and take money in compensation.

Leviticus 21:3, 13, 14

Verse 3 states that if you are a priest and your sister was a virgin and is now deceased, you can attend to her corpse and make appropriate arrangements.

Verses 13 and 14 say that members of the priestly cast must always and only take a virgin for a wife.

Deuteronomy 22:19, 23, 28

If a man doubted the virginity of his bride to be, and her parents gave evidence she was a virgin, he was to pay a fine and was not allowed to divorce her. On the other hand, if she was guilty, she was to be killed. Verse 23 states that both parties will be stoned if one of them was a betrothed virgin before an adulterous relationship was established. Verse 28 says that if the virgin was unbetrothed, then the man must pay a fine to the father and marry her.

In 32:25, a virgin (untouched woman) is mentioned in the Song of Moses.

Judges 19:24

Immorality is widespread in Gibeah, we are given to understand. Virgin (untouched) daughters of priests are offered up by weaker residents to stop the systematic male gang rape of themselves and other men.

In 21:12, four hundred virgins (untouched) are found as wives for the Benjaminites.

2 Samuel 13:2, 18

In verse 2, Tamar, an unmarried daughter of David's, was kept away from men. However, one of her close relatives, Amnon, developed a lust for her. In verse 18, she wore the virgin's robe to signify her pure, untouched status.

1 Kings 1:2

A young virgin is sent to keep the elderly king warm at night, in keeping with ancient medical practice of the time. It is clear from the text that she is untouched and there is no sexual connotation associated with this practice.

2 Kings 19:21

The virgin daughter of Israel is evoked in a prophecy.

2 Chronicles 36:17

Jerusalem falls, and virgins (untouched, pure young maids) are not spared.

Esther 2:17

Esther is granted the highest status by the king, above all virgins (the untouched ladies who were kept in the palace).

Job 31:1

Job speaks here of his pure intentions towards pure virgin women.

Psalm 45:14

The virgin is clothed in colourful robes, once more signifying her purity.

Psalm 78:63

Israel was being rebellious and no favours were being granted for its virgins, even though they were untouched, pure and innocent.

Psalm 148:12

The virgins are also required to praise God, even though they are the purest representation of humankind.

Isaiah 7:14

With reference to the arrival of the Messiah, we learn that a virgin shall conceive a son and he shall be called Emanuel. This seems to be a direct reference to, and prediction of, what has been called the Virgin Birth.

Isaiah 23:4

The Proclamation against Tyre says their virgins will be barren.

Isaiah 37:22

Jerusalem is depicted as a helpless city and compared to a helpless virgin.

Isaiah 47:1

The city of Babylon is portrayed as a virgin city i.e., never having been taken captive.

Isaiah 62:5

With Zion's salvation, all the virgins will marry and there will be much rejoicing.

Jeremiah 2:32

Here, a virgin is not a virgin if she forgets her ornaments/robes, yet the people of Israel, observant in matters such as dress, forget God.

The following, more in-depth section has been particularly influenced by Edward Young's work on a three-volume exegesis of the Book of Isaiah, and his exposition of the prophet's prediction of the Virgin Birth (Young, 1992). Young was fluent in 30 languages and makes his own translation of the Hebrew here, providing us with some context as to the Virgin Birth prediction (or non-prediction, depending on one's point of view).

Isaiah 7:14:

'Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel'. The historical backdrop to this passage is that King Ahaz refuses to take up God's offer of a sign to reaffirm that he will not let the Davidic line down, urging him to stand firm in the face of military adversity. After not choosing a sign himself, or not to rely on God Himself, God sends His sign anyway as asserted in the above passage, indicating a virgin birth. Ahaz's actions of non-belief in God's divine protection proved weary to God, who demonstrated disbelief in 1 Kings 8:25: 'there shall not fail thee a man in my sight to sit on the throne of Israel'. Isaiah uses the word 'adon' and not 'Yahweh', the covenant name of God, to stress His absolute, sovereign omnipotence. Isaiah then adds 'you'; thus he ceases to address the king, as the king lacked sufficient faith, but the whole of the nation instead.

There are three other notable birth announcements in the Old Testament:

Genesis 16:11

‘The angel of the Lord also said to her: Behold, you are now pregnant and you will give birth to a son. You shall name him Ishmael, for the Lord has heard of your misery’. (The ‘her’ in this example is Hagar, concubine of Abraham.)

Genesis 17:19-20

And God said, ‘Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him. And as for Ishmael, I have heard you. Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall beget twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation’.

The injunction ‘behold’ is used to herald these very important births, as it was with the Virgin Birth.

And:

Judges 13:3

And the angel of the Lord appeared unto the woman, and said unto her, ‘now, thou art barren, and bearest not: but thou shalt conceive, and bear a son’.

So the woman came and told her husband, saying, ‘A Man of God came to me, and His countenance was like the countenance of the Angel of God, very awesome; but I did not ask Him where He was from, and He did not tell me His name. And He said to me, “Behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. Now drink no wine or similar drink, nor eat anything unclean, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb to the day of his death”’.

The word ‘behold’ was the way a highly important and significant event was typically introduced; more so than these important births, what it signified was a *special* birth. ‘Behold’ is in the Ugarit text, announcing an event of particular significance. Ugarit

pagans had used this word to introduce their gods.

Isaiah chooses his words very precisely, indicating to Ahaz the true significance of this event by adopting this very affirmative eastern (Ugarit) meaning of 'behold'. This is not any child – rather, it is a special child.

The word was chosen so that the unbelieving monarch would pay some attention to this announcement, an event which would in the fullness of time demonstrate God's protection of the nation. It was to be a birth that would ultimately provide the salvation for all of God's people.

A native Hebrew speaker has pointed out to me that 'ha-almah' may simply mean 'the young woman' (though I did not think this was disputed); and that 'harah' is the Hebrew past perfect tense for 'conceived', which, in Hebrew, represents a past or a completed action. So the passage, although never translated like this in the Hebrew Bible itself, could actually be read as follows: 'Behold, the young woman has conceived [i.e. is with child] and bears a son and calls his name Immanuel'.

This might negate the whole of this prophecy as meaningless, suggesting that the sign God was sending to Ahaz was the simple announcement of a lady's being already pregnant, and who now gives birth to a child, who will just happen to save the nation. Some spectacular announcement! But it was never translated that way, and no one came to save the nation at that time. What a prophecy! Also, this does not sit with the announcement inherent in the word 'behold', which suggests a future setting, nor does it address the specific choice of the child's name, and this, very unusually, appears to have been uniquely the mother's choice on this occasion. The male always chose the name in those times. A woman's choosing would have been highly controversial.

The name 'Immanuel', meaning 'God is present with us', also signifies that this baby would possess the presence of God, or be with God in some way, unlike some mere offspring of a young maiden, whether virgin or not. The child is referred to as 'el', and Isaiah uses this in 9:6 solely to signify deity, as he does in 7:14. He chooses his words very carefully to *only* mean God's being present in the child as God *with* and *for* the people of Israel. This name is used nowhere else in the Bible, Christian or Jewish, other than here and in the naming of Jesus Himself.

Young has also written that the Hebrew word used for virgin is 'almah'. The etymology can point to a mature unmarried woman as well. However, in all these parts of scripture mentioned above its use is definitive and uncontested: it signifies an

untouched woman. The 70 Rabbis thought the same when they wrote the Greek Bible; therefore I suggest they might have tightened up the word to be 'virgin', which it could only signify. Young provides us with more examples of the word 'almah' from the Hebrew Bible beyond the Septuagint. These are as follows:

Song of Solomon 6:8

'There are sixty queens and eighty concubines, and virgins without number'. This carefully distinguishes who is married or engaged in sexual relations and who is not.

Psalms 68:25

'The singers went before, the players on instruments followed after; among them were the maidens playing timbrels'. These were never old maids, but young, nubile women.

Exodus 2:8

'And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Go". And the maid went and called the child's mother.'

Proverbs 30:19

'The way of an eagle in the air, The way of a serpent on a rock, The way of a ship in the midst of the sea, And the way of a man with a virgin'. After 'the way of a man' this young maiden, who is a virgin, will no longer be one.

It would seem that in the Hebrew Bible, 'almah' is most certainly used to signify a virgin, or virginity in the sense of being a young maid, pure and untouched by any man. There is only one other place in the Old Testament when the birth of a saviour is predicted with no mention of 'maid', 'young maid' or 'virgin'.

Micah 5:3

'Therefore He shall give them up, until the time that she who is in labour has given birth; then the remnant of His brethren shall return to the children of Israel'.

As mentioned above, this 'she' is the Queen of Heaven or Wisdom personified in

the post-restoration period of the Temple tradition. In reality, we can conclude with great confidence that the word 'almah' is never used specifically to depict a married woman who is not a virgin.

According to Young, Vischer, in "Die Immanuel Botschaft im Rahmem des koniglichen Zionsfestes" (1955) maintains that the Protestant leader Martin Luther pledged to pay a hundred pieces of gold to the scholar who could show any passage in the Old Testament where 'almah' referred to a married woman: 'So far, to my knowledge, no one has collected on the pledge'.

To recap, Isaiah used 'almah' to signify an unmarried, and therefore untouched, woman. It was the only Hebrew word at the time which was used in the Hebrew Bible to unequivocally signify an unmarried woman. It is also interesting to note that the *mother* will name the child. This would have been very controversial because during the 8th to 7th Century BC, in this part of the world, it was specifically the duty of a male to name the child. This also implies that the mother was not married; Isaiah specifically chooses his words to mean an unmarried and virgin young maid.

It is quite common to read that the word 'virgin' can be compared to how we nowadays use the word 'maid' or 'maiden'. This leads people to dismiss this accurate prophecy as nothing but imprecise wording rendered precise when it should have remained loose. But such a viewpoint is based on casual scholarship. Dawkins is therefore not quite right in his section on scripture in *The God Delusion* when he writes:

A. N. Wilson, in his biography of Jesus, casts doubt on the story that Joseph was a carpenter at all. The Greek word tekton does indeed mean carpenter, but it was translated from the Aramaic word naggar, which could mean craftsman or learned man. This is one of several constructive mistranslations that bedevil the Bible, the most famous being the mistranslation of Isaiah's Hebrew for young woman (almah) into the Greek for virgin (parthenos). An easy mistake to make (think of the English words 'maid' and 'maiden' to see how it might have happened), this one translator's slip was to be wildly inflated and give rise to the whole preposterous legend of Jesus' mother being a virgin! The only competitor for the title of champion constructive mistranslation of all time also concerns virgins. Ibn Warraq has hilariously argued that in the famous promise of seventy-two virgins to every Muslim martyr, 'virgins' is a mistranslation of 'white raisins of crystal clarity'. Now, if only that had been more widely known, how many innocent victims of suicide missions might have been saved?

My reply is that maybe, if translations were in fact made and understood correctly, we

may have more of a consensus concerning the prophetic nature of Isaiah. I cannot comment on the Islamic use of the concept, except to note that Dawkins thinks this rivals the 'mistranslation of all time' in Isaiah, about which I suggest he is very wrong .

Could it really just be luck that Isaiah (and Micah regarding the birth place as well) gets one prophecy right? Why would he be so specific about this 700 years before the birth of Christ? If it were wrong, why was it meticulously recorded at the time, copied in all translations and not disputed by the Jews? There is no suggestion or evidence that this is a Christian add-on inserted 700-800 years later, when the Christian Bible was being formulated. No, it remains astoundingly prophetic and positively mysterious.

We must not forget that St Matthew, who must have known his own mother tongue, Hebrew, at the time of writing his Gospel, would have been familiar with both the Hebrew and Greek texts and would have understood nothing but 'virgin' if the text saw fit to use the word. So did the 70 rabbis who translated it into Greek some 250 years or so before this. In the absence of any calls to change in his Gospel, in 1:22-23 Matthew writes:

So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: 'Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel', which is translated, 'God with us'.

He is referencing, for his Jewish audience, *their* prophecy. St Luke, who could also write in Greek, records in his Gospel the following (1:26-35):

Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And having come in, the angel said to her, 'Rejoice, highly favoured one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!' But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. Then the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end'.

Then Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I do not know a man?'

And the angel answered and said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be

born will be called the Son of God'.

Laying the translation controversy aside, if you deny the Virgin Birth because you think that it is impossible for such a thing to happen in nature, all theologians would agree with you. But it happens to Mary *supernaturally*. You may reject the Virgin birth if you just don't believe in supernatural occurrences, but you cannot reject it on grounds that Isaiah's prediction 700 years previously did not relate to it.

Nor can you reject it on the grounds that Matthew and Luke, one a native Jew, mistranslated their own mother tongue or a language with which they were familiar in order to present us with the Virgin Birth. There was simply nothing in it for them to say these things, and in fact many disincentives *not* to say them, as I have already pointed out. I therefore hold that the prophecy was translated correctly, and was believed by the Jews at the time and during Christ's lifetime to be correct.