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# Mary and the Divine Deception

by Dr Alan Branford (© 19 October 2021)

## Prologue

The Nativity of Jesus tale is known to a considerable proportion of the world's inhabitants, from varying Christian sects, non-Christian religions and even agnostics and atheists. The story of the Divine Conception and the Virgin Birth are a controversial component of this tale.

The Gospels of Mark and John begin with the adult Jesus at the time of his baptism by John the Baptist and the start of his ministry. Of the four canonical gospels, only Matthew and Luke deal with aspect of the life of Jesus before this point in time.

## The Divine Conception and the Virgin Birth

One of the best-known dogmas of the Christian Church related to the birth of Jesus is that of his **Divine Conception** and **Virgin Birth**. The short summary of the dogma is that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was **impregnated by the Holy Spirit** (as opposed to **sexual intercourse with a man**), and that she was **a virgin at the time of the birth of Jesus**.

As stated earlier, only the Gospels of Matthew and Luke raise the issues of Jesus' conception and of Mary's virginity.

The account in Matthew is as follows.

### Matthew 1:18-25

<sup>18</sup> This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. <sup>19</sup> Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

<sup>20</sup> But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup> She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

<sup>22</sup> All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: <sup>23</sup> "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us").

<sup>24</sup> When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. <sup>25</sup> But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

*(Matthew 1:18-25, New International Version)*

Note that Mary and Joseph both already knew that Mary was pregnant. Mary must have been puzzled as to how this could be, given her virginity, but this is not addressed in the account. Joseph had been informed of the facts by means of an angel appearing to him in a dream. Presumably, he passed this information on to Mary after he awoke, although the passage does not explicitly say so.

Verse 22 above refers to **Isaiah 7:14**:

<sup>14</sup> Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

*(Isaiah 7:14, New International Version)*

Luke's account is similar to Matthew's.

### **Luke 1:26-38**

<sup>26</sup> In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, <sup>27</sup> to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. <sup>28</sup> The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

<sup>29</sup> Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. <sup>30</sup> But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. <sup>31</sup> You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus.

<sup>32</sup> He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, <sup>33</sup> and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

<sup>34</sup> "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

<sup>35</sup> The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.

<sup>36</sup> Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. <sup>37</sup> For no word from God will ever fail."

<sup>38</sup> "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her.

*(Luke 1:26-38, New International Version)*

In this account, it is Mary who is told of the situation by an angel, rather than Joseph, and not in a dream. Moreover, the impregnation at the time of the angel's visit was yet to occur. But the two stories are for all intents and purposes the same.

Now let us consider the following tale.

Mary is a young maiden employed in the mailroom of a large corporation. Mary is engaged to be married to a young man named Joseph. One day, as Mary sits alone working in the mailroom, the Personal Assistant (PA) of the corporation's CEO enters the room.

Mary is informed that the CEO wishes to sire a son, who will in the fullness of time take over the corporation. Mary is to be escorted the following day to an Obstetrics Clinic, where several of her eggs will be extracted. These eggs will be fertilized by sperm from the CEO. At a later date, from the embryos thus produced, the healthiest

male embryo will be implanted into Mary's womb so that she may then bear the CEO's son.

The PA goes on to reassure Mary that she should simply explain the situation to Joseph and to proceed forthwith to marry him. She and Joseph will be expected to raise the son as their own until such time as the CEO is ready to claim him. The couple and the child will of course be adequately provided for.

Mary, still somewhat taken aback by all of this, assures the PA that, since she is a loyal servant of the corporation, she will follow the instructions that the CEO has given.

Do you believe that there is any moral problem with this last tale?

If you do not find any moral problem with the third story, then I suggest you have subscribed to the wrong religion. Perhaps you should consider one of the pagan Greco-Roman cults, where gods regularly sired demigods with earthly women without their consent.

But that third story does sound an awful lot like the tale from the Gospel of Luke we read earlier. Oh dear! It is no use saying that morality was different back in the times of the Roman occupation of Judea. Luke's story has the actual father being none other than the Holy Spirit, a person in the holy and indivisible Trinity. He would be well aware that this level of morality is an absolute and that this sequence of events is immoral.

Matthew's tale is likewise repugnant.

We are left with no other choice but to strike out Matthew 1:18-25 and Luke 1:26-38. **'The Divine Conception and the Virgin Birth' story must be a fantasy and has no basis in fact.**

The Nicene Creed, first adopted at the Council of Nicaea in AD 325 by a gathering of bishops, states many things that Christians should believe about Jesus, including him being **"begotten, not made"**. I cannot see how the Divine Conception and the Virgin Birth story is consistent with this. How many other people can you think of who were conceived and born in such a manner?

But if Divine Conception and Virgin Birth are really your thing, there are plenty of other religions through the ages who have had the odd one or two. **Just not Christianity!**

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