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THAT JESUS CHRIST WAS BORN A JEW

Luther’s tract was written in 1523, a year after he translated the New Testament into German. He was motivated, first of all, to defend himself against accusations by some Catholics that he denied the virgin birth of Christ. In the second place, he wanted to reprimand his Catholic foes by asserting that if scripture were properly preached, the Jews, whose own religion is anchored in the Bible, would convert. But if Christians treat Jews with malice (and Luther felt himself to be a victim of Christian cruelty), how can they then be drawn to Christ? In response to the messianism of his times, Luther hoped to convince the Jews that the Messiah they longed for had indeed already come in the person of Jesus. He determined to prove that the Old Testament is fulfilled in the Christ of the New Testament. He saw an eschatological alignment between the conversion of the Jews and the Second Coming of Jesus. As the years went by, Luther was to become obsessed with their conversion, and his fury against them built, along with their resistance, until it reached titanic proportions. The whole of scripture, the subject of Luther’s entire life work, spoke to him of Christ. In his view, for the Jews to reject Christ was to reject their very flesh and blood. In the end, they became scapegoats for Luther’s wrath toward all who resisted him and the theology he preached.

A new lie about me is being circulated. I am supposed to have preached and written that Mary, the mother of God, was not a virgin either before or after the birth of Christ, but that she conceived Christ through Joseph and had more children after that. Above and beyond all this, I am supposed to have preached a new heresy, namely, that Christ was [through Joseph] the seed of Abraham. How these lies tickle my good friends the papists! Indeed, because they condemn the gospel, it serves them right that they should have to satisfy and feed their heart's delight and joy with lies. I would venture to wager my neck that none of those very liars who allege such great things in honor of the mother of God believes in his heart a single one of these articles. Yet with their lies they pretend that they are greatly concerned about the Christian faith.

But after all, it is such a poor miserable lie that I despise it and
would rather not reply to it. In these past three years I have grown quite accustomed to hearing lies, even from our nearest neighbors. And they in turn have grown accustomed to the noble virtue of neither blushing nor feeling ashamed when they are publicly convicted of lying. They let themselves be chided as liars, yet continue their lying. Still they are the best Christians, striving with all that they have and are to devour the Turk and to extirpate all heresy.

Since for the sake of others, however, I am compelled to answer these lies, I thought I would also write something useful in addition, so that I do not vainly steal the reader’s time with such dirty rotten business. Therefore, I will cite from scripture the reasons that move me to believe that Christ was a Jew born of a virgin, that I might perhaps also win some Jews to the Christian faith. Our fools, the popes, bishops, sophists, and monks—the crude asses’ heads—have hitherto so treated the Jews that anyone who wished to be a good Christian would almost have had to become a Jew. If I had been a Jew and had seen such dolts and blockheads govern and teach the Christian faith, I would sooner have become a hog than a Christian.

They have dealt with the Jews as if they were dogs rather than human beings; they have done little else than deride them and seize their property. When they baptize them they show them nothing of Christian doctrine or life, but only subject them to popishness and monkery. When the Jews then see that Judaism has such strong support in scripture, and that Christianity has become a mere babble without reliance on scripture, how can they possibly compose themselves and become right good Christians? I have myself heard from pious baptized Jews that if they had not in our day heard the gospel they would have remained Jews under the cloak of Christianity for the rest of their days. For they acknowledge that they have never yet heard anything about Christ from those who baptized and taught them.

I hope that if one deals in a kindly way with the Jews and instructs them carefully from holy scripture, many of them will become genuine Christians and turn again to the faith of their

52 This is probably an allusion to Duke George of Saxony, a consistent opponent of Luther.
fathers, the prophets and patriarchs.\textsuperscript{53} They will only be frightened further away from it if their Judaism is so utterly rejected that nothing is allowed to remain and they are treated only with arrogance and scorn. If the apostles, who also were Jews, had dealt with us gentiles as we gentiles deal with the Jews, there would never have been a Christian among the gentiles. Since they dealt with us gentiles in such brotherly fashion, we in our turn ought to treat the Jews in a brotherly manner in order that we might convert some of them.\textsuperscript{54} For even we ourselves are not yet all very far along, not to speak of having arrived.\textsuperscript{55}

When we are inclined to boast of our position we should remember that we are but gentiles, while the Jews are of the lineage of Christ. We are aliens and in-laws; they are blood relatives, cousins, and brothers of our Lord. Therefore, if one is to boast of flesh and blood, the Jews are actually nearer to Christ than we are, as St. Paul says in Rom. 9 [15]. God has also demonstrated this by His acts, for to no nation among the gentiles has He granted so high an honor as He has to the Jews. For from among the gentiles there have been raised up no patriarchs, no apostles, no prophets, indeed, very few genuine Christians either. And although the gospel has been proclaimed to all the world, yet He committed the holy scriptures, that is, the law and the prophets, to no nation except the Jews, as Paul says in Rom. 3 [2] and Psalm 147 [19–20], “He declares His word to Jacob, His statues and ordinances to Israel. He has not dealt thus with any other nation; nor revealed His ordinances to them.”

Accordingly, I beg my dear papists, should they be growing weary of denouncing me as a heretic, to seize the opportunity of denouncing me as a Jew. Perhaps I may yet turn out to be also a Turk, or whatever else my fine gentlemen may wish.

Christ is promised for the first time soon after Adam’s fall, when God said to the serpent, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall crush your head, and you shall bruise his heel” [Gen. 3:15]. Here I defer

\textsuperscript{53}Luther invariably refers to the righteous believers of the Old Testament as Christians.

\textsuperscript{54}Cf. 1 Cor. 9:19–22.

\textsuperscript{55}Cf. Phil. 3:12–14.
demonstrating that the serpent spoke possessed of the devil, for no dumb beast is so clever that it can utter or comprehend human speech, much less speak or inquire about such exalted matters as the commandment of God, as the serpent does here. Therefore, it must certainly have been a rational, highly intelligent, and mighty spirit which was able to utter human speech, deal so masterfully with God’s commandments, and seize and employ human reason.

Since it is certain that a spirit is something higher than a man, it is also certain that this is an evil spirit and an enemy of God, for it breaks God’s commandment and acts contrary to His will. Therefore, it is undoubtedly the devil. And so the Word of God which speaks of crushing the head must refer also to the devil’s head; though not to the exclusion of the natural head of the serpent, for with a single word He speaks of both devil and serpent as of one thing. Therefore, He means both heads. But the devil’s head is that power by which the devil rules, that is, sin and death, by means of which he has brought Adam and all Adam’s descendants under his control.

This seed of the woman, therefore, because He is to crush the devil’s power, that is, sin and death, must not be an ordinary man, since all men have been brought under the devil through sin and death. So He must certainly be without sin. Now human nature does not produce such seed or fruit, as has been said, for with their sin they are all under the devil. How, then, can this be? The seed must be the natural child of a woman; otherwise it could not be or be called the seed of the woman. On the other hand, as has been pointed out, human nature and birth does not produce such seed. Therefore, the solution must ultimately be that this seed is a true natural son of the woman; derived from the woman, however, not in the normal way but through a special act of God, in order that the scripture might stand, that He is the seed only of a woman and not of a man. For the text [Gen. 3:15] clearly states that He will be the seed of woman.

This is thus the first passage in which the mother of this child is described as a virgin. She is His true natural mother; yet she is to conceive and bear supernaturally, by God, without a man, in order that her child may be a distinctive man, without sin, yet having ordinary flesh and blood like other men. This could not have been the case had He been begotten by a man like other men because the
flesh is consumed and corrupted by evil lust, so that its natural act of procreation cannot occur without sin. Whatever conceives and bears through an act of the flesh produces also a carnal and sinful fruit. This is why St. Paul says in Eph. 1 [2:3] that we are all by nature children of wrath.

Now this passage [Gen. 3:15] was the very first gospel message on earth. For when Adam and Eve, seduced by the devil, had fallen and were summoned for judgment before God, Gen. 3 [:9], they were in peril of death and the anguish of hell, for they saw that God was against them and condemned them; they would gladly have fled from Him, but could not. Had God let them remain in their anguish, they would soon have despaired and perished. But when, after their terrible punishment, He let them hear His comforting promise to raise up from the woman’s seed one who would tread upon the serpent’s head, their spirits were quickened again. From that promise they drew comfort, believing firmly in that blessed seed of the woman which would come and crush the serpent’s head, that is, sin and death, by which they had been crushed and corrupted.

The fathers, from Adam on, preached and inculcated this gospel, through which they acknowledged the promised seed of this woman and believed in Him. And so they were sustained through faith in Christ just as we are; they were true Christians like ourselves. Only, in their day this gospel was not proclaimed publicly throughout the world, as it would be after the coming of Christ, but remained solely in the possession of the holy fathers and their descendants down to the time of Abraham.

The second promise of Christ was to Abraham, Gen. 22 [:18], where God said, “In your seed shall all the gentiles be blessed.” If all the gentiles are to be blessed, then it is certain that otherwise, apart from this seed of Abraham, they were all unblesseed and under a curse. From this it follows that human nature has nothing but cursed seed and bears nothing but unblesseed fruit; otherwise, there would be no need for all of them to be blessed through this seed of Abraham. Whoever says “all” excludes no one; therefore, apart from Christ, all who are born of man must be under the devil, cursed in sin and death.

Here again the Mother of God is proven to be a pure virgin. For since God cannot lie, it was inevitable that Christ should be the
seed of Abraham, that is, his natural flesh and blood, like all of Abraham's descendants. On the other hand, because He was to be the blessed seed which should bless all others, He could not be begotten by man, since such children, as has been said, cannot be conceived without sin because of the corrupt and tainted flesh, which cannot perform its function without taint and sin.

Thus the word by which God promises that Christ will be the seed of Abraham requires that Christ be born of a woman and be her natural child. He does not come from the earth like Adam [Gen. 2:7]; neither is He from Adam's rib, like Eve [Gen. 2:21–22]. He comes rather like any woman's child, from her seed. The earth was not the natural seed for Adam's body; neither was Adam's rib the natural seed for Eve's body. But the virgin's flesh and blood, from which children come in the case of all other women, was the natural seed of Christ's body. And she too was of the seed of Abraham.⁵⁶

On the other hand, this word by which God promises His blessing upon all gentiles in Christ requires that Christ may not come from a man, or by the act of a man; for work of the flesh (which is cursed) is incompatible with that which is blessed and is pure blessing. Therefore, this blessed fruit had to be the fruit of a woman's body only, not of a man, even though that very woman's body came from man, indeed, even from Abraham and Adam. So this mother is a virgin, and yet a true natural mother; not, however, by natural capacity or power, but solely through the Holy Spirit and divine power.

Now this passage [Gen. 22:18] was the gospel from the time of Abraham down to the time of David, even to the time of Christ. It is a short saying, to be sure, but a rich gospel, subsequently inculcated and used in marvelous fashion by the fathers both in writing and in preaching. Many thousands of sermons have been preached from this passage, and countless souls saved. For it is the living Word of God, in which Abraham and his descendants believed and by which they were redeemed and preserved from sin and death and the power of the devil. However, it too was not yet pro-

⁵⁶In his 1543 Vom Schem Hamphoros und vom Geschlecht Christi, Luther dealt at length with the problem of the New Testament genealogies which seem to trace Jesus’ lineage through Joseph rather than Mary.
claimed publicly to all the world, as happened after the coming of Christ, but remained solely in the possession of the fathers and their descendants.

Now just take a look at the perverse lauders of the mother of God. If you ask them why they hold so strongly to the virginity of Mary, they truly could not say. These stupid idolators do nothing more than to glorify only the mother of God; they extol her for her virginity and practically make a false deity of her. But scripture does not praise this virginity at all for the sake of the mother; neither was she saved on account of her virginity. Indeed, cursed be this and every other virginity if it exists for its own sake, and accomplishes nothing better than its own profit and praise.

The Spirit extols this virginity, however, because it was needful for the conceiving and bearing of this blessed fruit. Because of the corruption of our flesh, such blessed fruit could not come, except through a virgin. Thus this tender virginity existed in the service of others to the glory of God, not to its own glory. If it had been possible for Him to have come from a [married] woman, He would not have selected a virgin for this, since virginity is contrary to the physical nature within us, was condemned of old in the law, and is extolled here solely because the flesh is tainted and its built-in physical nature cannot bestow her fruit except by means of an accursed act.

Hence we see that St. Paul nowhere calls the mother of God a virgin, but only a woman, as he says in Gal. 3 [4:4], “The Son of God was born of a woman.” He did not mean to say she was not a virgin, but to extol her virginity to the highest with the praise that is proper to it, as much as to say: In this birth none but a woman was involved, no man participated; that is, everything connected with it was reserved to the woman; the conceiving, bearing, suckling, and nourishing of the child were functions no man can perform. It is therefore the child of a woman only; hence, she must certainly be a virgin. But a virgin may also be a man; a mother can be none other than a woman.

For this reason, too, scripture does not quibble or speak about the virginity of Mary after the birth of Christ, a matter about which the hypocrites are greatly concerned, as if it were something

57Cf., e.g., Isa. 4:1; Judg. 11:37–38.
of the utmost importance, on which our whole salvation depended. Actually we should be satisfied simply to hold that she remained a virgin after the birth of Christ because scripture does not state or indicate that she later lost her virginity. We certainly need not be so terribly afraid that someone will demonstrate, out of his own head apart from scripture, that she did not remain a virgin. But the scripture stops with this, that she was a virgin before and at the birth of Christ; for up to this point God had need of her virginity in order to give us the promised blessed seed without sin.

The third passage is addressed to David, 2 Samuel 7 [:12–14], “When your days are fulfilled, and you sleep with your fathers, I will raise up your seed after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom forever. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of His kingdom forever. I will be His father, and He shall be My Son.” These words cannot have been spoken of Solomon, for Solomon was not a posthumous son of David raised up after his death. Neither did God after Solomon (who during David’s lifetime was born and became king) ever designate anyone as His son, give Him an everlasting kingdom, or have Him build such a house. Consequently, the whole passage must refer to Christ. We will let this passage go for the present because it is too broad and requires so much in the way of exegesis; for one would have to show here that Christ accordingly had to be the son of a woman only in order to be called here God’s child, who neither should nor could come out of an accursed act.

The fourth passage is Isaiah 7 [:14], “God Himself will give you a sign. Behold, a virgin is with child, and shall bear a son.” This could not have been said of a virgin who was about to be married. For what sort of a marvelous sign would that be if someone who is presently a virgin should bear a child within a year? Such is the ordinary course of nature, occurring daily before our eyes. If it is to be a sign from God, therefore, it must be something remarkable and marvelous not given by the ordinary course of nature, as is commonly the case with all God’s signs.

It is of no help for the Jews either to try to evade the issue here and come up with this way of getting around it, namely: the sign consists in the fact that Isaiah says flatly that the child shall be a son and not a daughter. By such an interpretation the sign would have
nothing to do with the virgin but only with the prophet Isaiah, as
the one who had divined so precisely that it would not be a daugh-
ter. The text would then have to speak of Isaiah thus, “Behold,
God Himself will give you a sign, namely, that I, Isaiah, will
divine that a young woman is carrying a son, and not a daughter.”
Such an interpretation is disgraceful and childish.

Now the text forcefully refers the sign to the woman, and states
clearly that it shall be a sign when a woman bears a son. Now it
certainly is no sign when a woman who is no longer virgin bears a
child, be it the mother of Hezekiah or whatever woman the Jews
may point to.\(^{58}\) The sign must be something new and different, a
marvelous and unique work of God, that this woman is with
child; her pregnancy is to be the sign. Now I do not deem any Jew
so dense that he would not grant God sufficient power to create a
child from a virgin, since they are compelled to acknowledge that
He created Adam from the earth [Gen. 2:7] and Eve from Adam
[Gen. 2:21–22], acts which require no less power.

But then they contend that the Hebrew text does not read, “A
virgin is with child,” but, “Behold, an \textit{almah} is with child.” \textit{Almah},
they say, does not denote a virgin; the word for virgin is \textit{bethulah},
while \textit{almah} is the term for young damsel. Presumably, a young
damsel might very well have had intercourse and be the mother of
a child.

Christians can readily answer this from St. Matthew and St.
Luke, both of whom apply the passage from Isaiah [7:14] to Mary,
and translate the word \textit{almah} as “virgin.”\(^{59}\) They are more to be
believed than the whole world, let alone the Jews. Even though an
angel from heaven [Gal. 1:8] were to say that \textit{almah} does not mean
virgin, we should not believe it. For God the Holy Spirit speaks
through St. Matthew and St. Luke; we can be sure that He under-
stands Hebrew speech and expressions perfectly well.

But because the Jews do not accept the evangelists, we must
confront them with other evidence. In the first place, we can say, as

\(^{58}\) The Jews interpreted the text to mean, “Behold, a young woman shall conceive
and bear a son.” The “woman” was frequently taken to be Abijah, mother of
Hezekiah (2 Kings 18:1–2; 2 Chron. 28:27–29:1), and the prophecy thus to refer to
the birth of Ahaz’s successor on the throne of Judah.

\(^{59}\) Matt. 1:23 and Luke 1:27, in referring to Mary, both use the Greek term
\textit{parthenos}, with which the Septuagint had rendered \textit{almah} in Isa. 7:14.
above, that there is no marvel or sign in the fact that a young woman conceives, otherwise, we would have a perfect right to sneer at the prophet Isaiah, and say, “What women would you expect to conceive if not the young ones? Are you drunk? Or is it in your experience a rare event for a young woman to bear a son?” For this reason that strained and far-fetched answer of the Jews is just a vain and feeble excuse for not keeping silent altogether.

In the second place, grant that *bethulah* means virgin and not *almah*, and that Isaiah here uses *almah*, not *bethulah*. All this too is still nothing but a poor excuse. For they act as if they did not know that in all of scripture *almah* nowhere designates a woman who has had intercourse (a fact of which they are perfectly well aware). On the contrary, in every instance* almah* signifies a young damsel who has never known a man carnally or had intercourse. Such a person is always called a virgin, just as St. Matthew and St. Luke here translate Isaiah.

Now since they are such literalists and like to argue about semantics, we will concede that *bethulah* is not the same word as *almah*. But the only point they have established thereby is that this young woman is not designated by the term “virgin.” However, she is designated by another term which also means a young woman who has never had intercourse; call her by whatever term you please, in her person she is still a virgin. It is childish and disgraceful to take recourse to words when the meaning is one and the same.

Very well; to please the Jews we will not translate Isaiah thus: “Behold, a virgin is with child,” lest they be confused by the word “virgin,” but rather, “Behold, a maiden is with child.” Now in German the word “maid” denotes a woman who is still young, carries her crown with honor, and wears her hair loose, so that it is said of her: She is still a maiden, not a wife (although “maid” is not the same word as “virgin”). In like manner also, the Hebrew *elem* is a stripling who does not yet have a woman; and *almah* is a maiden

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60 The term *almah* occurs in the singular in Gen. 24:43, Exod. 2:8, Prov. 30:19, and Isa. 7:14; in the plural in Ps. 68:25, Song of Sol. 1:3 and 6:8. Luther’s distinction covers both groups, though he does distinguish between them in his 1543 *Vom Schem Hamphoras und vom Geschlecht Christi*.

61 The *krantz* was a decorative wreath or garland, worn on the head. Along with the flowing, unbound tresses of the hair, it was in the Middle Ages an emblem of a girl’s virginity.
who does not yet have a man, not a servant girl but one who still carries a crown. Thus the sister of Moses is called an _almah_ in Exodus 3 (2:8) as is Rebekah in Genesis 24, when they were still virgins.

Suppose I say in German, “Hans is engaged to a maiden,” and someone should comment, “Well, then he is not engaged to a virgin.” Why, everyone would laugh at him for vainly disputing about words if he thinks that “virgin” and “maiden” are not the same thing because they are different words. This is true also in the Hebrew, when the Jews argue with respect to this passage in Isaiah [7:14] and say, “Isaiah does not say _bethulah_, but _almah_.” I submit that among themselves their own conscience tells them this is so. Therefore, let them say what they please, _bethulah_ or _almah_; Isaiah means a damsel who is nubile but still wears her crown, whom in the truest German we call a maiden. Hence, the Mother of God is properly called the pure maiden, that is, the pure _almah_. And if I should have had to tell Isaiah what to speak, I would have had him say exactly what he did say, not _bethulah_, but _almah_, for _almah_ is even more appropriate here than _bethulah_. It is also more precise to say, “Behold, a maiden is with child,” than to say, “A virgin is with child.” For “virgin” is an all-embracing term which might also be applied to a woman of fifty or sixty who is no longer capable of childbearing. But “maiden” denotes specifically a young woman, nubile, capable of childbearing, but still a virgin; it includes not only the virginity but also the youthfulness and the potential for childbearing. Hence, in German too we commonly refer to young people as maidens or maidenfolk, not virginsfolk.

Therefore, the text of Isaiah [7:14] is certainly most accurately translated, “Behold, a maiden is with child.” No Jew who understands both German and Hebrew can deny that this is what is said in the Hebrew, for we Germans do not say “_concepi_, the woman has conceived”; the preachers have so rendered the Latin into German. Rather, the German would say in his mother tongue, “The woman is with child” or “is heavy with child” or “is pregnant.”

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62 The German word for a servant girl and for a young unmarried woman, as in English, is one and the same: “maid.”

63 Gen. 24:43 calles Rebekah an _almah_—rendered as _parthenos_ in the Septuagint—after she had been designated a _bethulah_ in Gen. 24:16.

64 Jerome’s Vulgate reads _concipiet_, which the Douay version renders as “shall conceive.”
But here in the Hebrew it does not say, “Behold, a maiden shall be with child,” as though she were not as yet. It says rather, “Behold, a maiden is with child,” as though she has the fruit already in her womb and nevertheless is still a maiden, in order that you will have to notice how the prophet himself is amazed that there stands before him a maiden who is with child even before she knows a man carnally. She was, of course, going to have a husband, she was physically fit and mature enough for it; but even before she gets to that she is already a mother. This is indeed a rare and marvelous thing.

This is the way St. Matthew [1:18] construes this passage when he says, “When Mary the mother of Jesus had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit,” etc. What does this mean other than that she was a young maiden who had not yet known a man although she was capable of it, but before she knew the man she was with child, and that this was an amazing thing since no maiden becomes pregnant prior to intercourse with a man? Thus, the evangelist regarded her in the same light as did the prophet, and set her forth as the sign and wonder.

Now this refutes also the false interpretation which some have drawn from the words of Matthew, where he says, “Before they came together she was found to be with child.” They interpret this as though the evangelist meant to say, “Later she came together with Joseph like any other wife and lay with him, but before this occurred she was with child apart from Joseph,” etc. Again, when he says, “And Joseph knew her not until she brought forth her firstborn son” [Matt. 1:25], they interpret it as though the evangelist meant to say that he knew her, but not before she had brought forth her firstborn son. This was the view of Helvidius which was refuted by Jerome.

65 Helvidius, disciple of the Arian bishop of Milan, Auxentius, was living in Rome at the time of Jerome’s second sojourn there in 382–5. As a layman he wrote a treatise against the generally accepted view of Mary’s perpetual virginity, in which he attacked primarily the practical consequences drawn from the doctrine in terms of monasticism as a higher kind of Christian life.

66 The treatise of Helvidius is known only through its rebuttal by Jerome, who did not know him personally but who took up the debate at the urging of friends in order to promote and defend monasticism.
Such carnal interpretations miss the meaning and purpose of the evangelist. As we have said, the evangelist, like the prophet Isaiah, wishes to set before our eyes this mighty wonder, and point out what an unheard-of thing it is for a maiden to be with child before her husband brings her home and lies with her; and further, that he does not know her carnally until she first has a son, which she should have had after first having been known by him. Thus, the words of the evangelist do not refer to anything that occurred after the birth, but only to what took place before it. For the prophet and the evangelist, and St. Paul as well, do not treat of this virgin beyond the point where they have from her that fruit for whose sake she is a virgin and everything else. After the child is born they dismiss the mother and speak not about her, what became of her, but only about her offspring. Therefore, one cannot from these words [Matt. 1:18, 25] conclude that Mary, after the birth of Christ, became a wife in the usual sense; it is therefore neither to be asserted nor believed. All the words are merely indicative of the marvelous fact that she was with child and gave birth before she had lain with a man.

The form of expression used by Matthew is the common idiom, as if I were to say, “Pharaoh believed not Moses, until he was drowned in the Red Sea.” Here it does not follow that Pharaoh believed later, after he had drowned; on the contrary, it means that he never did believe. Similarly when Matthew [1:25] says that Joseph did not know Mary carnally until she had brought forth her son, it does not follow that he knew her subsequently; on the contrary, it means that he never did know her. Again, the Red Sea overwhelmed Pharaoh before he got across. Here too it does not follow that Pharaoh got across later, after the Red Sea had overwhelmed him, but rather that he did not get across at all. In like manner, when Matthew [1:18] says, “She was found to be with child before they came together,” it does not follow that Mary subsequently lay with Joseph, but rather that she did not lie with him.

Elsewhere in scripture the same manner of speech is employed. Psalm 110 [11], reads, “God says to my Lord: ‘Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.’” Here it does not follow that Christ does not continue to sit there after His enemies are placed beneath His feet. Again, in Genesis 28 [15], “I will not leave you until I have done all that of which I have spoken to you.”
Here God did not leave him after the fulfillment had taken place. Again, in Isaiah 42:4, “He shall not be sad, nor troublesome,” till He has established justice in the earth.” There are many more similar expressions, so that this babble of Helvidius is without justification; in addition, he has neither noticed nor paid any attention to either scripture or the common idiom.

This is enough for the present to have sufficiently proved that Mary was a pure maiden, and that Christ was a genuine Jew of Abraham’s seed. Although more scripture passages might be cited, these are the clearest. Moreover, if anyone does not believe a clear saying of His Divine Majesty, it is reasonable to assume that he would not believe either any other more obscure passages. So certainly no one can doubt that it is possible for God to cause a maiden to be with child apart from a man, since He has also created all things from nothing. Therefore, the Jews have no ground for denying this, for they acknowledge God’s omnipotence, and they have here the clear testimony of the prophet Isaiah.

67 Douay version.