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CAPITAL, ONE MILLION DOLLARS.

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DOCTRINE OF DIVINE PATERNITY.

With regard to that mysterious paternity, Matthew says that Joseph, having discovered the pregnancy of his betrothed wife, and being disposed to put her away, was reassured by an angel in a dream, and commanded to take the woman, with her God-begotten child, as a special favor from heaven.

Luke says that the Angel Gabriel was sent to the Virgin Mary to announce her approaching pregnancy, Joseph being entirely ignored in the matter. Now, both these stories could not be true; they contradict each other in every particular. And, from the standpoint of human knowledge and experience, neither of them could be true.

Every year, at Christmas, this fable is dinned into the ears of the Christian world, and formerly the great majority of those who heard it may have supposed that this is the only instance on record of a supernatural birth, and, therefore, being in the Bible, it must be true.

But, nowadays, both clergy and laity must know that the same distinction has been claimed for many persons, mythical and real; that the oldest religions are based upon exactly such an origin; that the deified founders of Oriental faiths were begotten by a god and conceived by a virgin; that not only the divinities of Greece [and Rome descended frequently to earth to become fathers and mothers of fabulous demi-gods and heroes, but also historical personages famous for wisdom, or goodness, or worldly success, were popularly believed to be sons of God in a natural sense, even the reigning Roman emperor, Augustus Cæsar, the ruler of Judea at the time of the alleged birth of Jesus, being one of these favored mortals, while the same divine origin was claimed by and conceded to a long line of imperial successors.

Deification of Ruler Not Unusual.

The deification of the chief ruler is a characteristic of all early races and nations, the idea containing necessarily the suggestion of divine revelation and superhuman birth, and the tendency continued, under modified forms, to accompany the progress of civilization, until the ambitious claim to divine origin and honors on the part of the latest

Roman emperors removed the principle from religion to politics, since which time the theory has existed only in a faint and continually fading notion of the divine right of kings.

In the time of the Roman empire the deification of men was a common occurrence. Augustus, Claudius, Nero, and others received divine honors; even the mother of Nero was designated as the "Mother of God," Atia, the mother of Augustus Cæsar, was said to have conceived him in the Temple of Apollo, and there were many legends of the dangers to which the child was exposed on account of the tidings that the future ruler of the world was born; while dreams and heavenly signs gave additional proof of the supernatural powers of Augustus.

Other Miracles.

Many miracles are told also of Vespasian at Alexandria through the power of the god Serapis. A blind man was cured by anointing his eyes with spittle, and a lame man by touching his feet.

In the time of Josephus a prophecy was spread abroad of the coming of the future ruler of the world out of the imperial tent of Vespasian.

As for the Jews, their expectation of a Messiah, a victorious temporal ruler and a deliverer from the power of the Romans, was much stronger and more generally diffused during the century following the beginning of the Christian era than at the time of the supposed birth of Christ.

It is a significant fact that of the four evangelists only two make any claim to a divine paternity and a virgin maternity for Jesus: Mark speaks of him as the son of Joseph and his wife, and John regards him from the later Gnostic point of view, without reference to his earthly parentage and human birth.

Mark's gospel is now generally considered the earliest, and the story of the supernatural birth in Matthew and Luke to have been a later addition, while the writer of John did not compile his narrative until after the development of Gnosticism in the new sect.

Other Virgin-born Saviors.

Although there were so many examples of supernatural birth to serve as a pattern for the fable of Jesus, still various circumstances in the story of his

life seem to suggest particular instances as the chief sources of the imaginary details.

These instances are Krishna, Mithra, and Buddha.

Matthew asserts that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, according to prophecy, and that soon after his birth wise men from the East, led by a star, came to the place to offer homage, thereby arousing the jealousy of Herod, who ordered the massacre of all the children in that region of the same age as the new-born Savior.

The Magi belong to the story of Mithra, a deity of the ancient Persians, originally a personification of the sun.

He was said to have been born of a virgin in a cave, on the twenty-fifth of December, an allegorical representation of the emergence of the sun from the darkness of the winter solstice. At the period of the composition of the Gospels the cult of Mithra was familiar to the Western nations, and had long been established in Rome.

Indian Mythology.

The Roman catacombs contain a picture of the Virgin seated holding the infant Mithra on her lap, and before them three men in Persian dress are kneeling and offering gifts.

The Massacre of the Innocents is taken from the story of Krishna, the favorite deity of India, the eighth incarnation of Vishnu, and also a personification of the sun.

Krishna was miraculously conceived by divine agency, and his uncle, the Rajah of Madura, fearing to be supplanted in his kingdom, determined to slay the infant at its birth, but the plan being frustrated by the vigilance of Krishna's protectors, the rajah ordered the massacre of all the male children of the same age among his subjects. Such a deed might be performed under a despotic Indian ruler in ancient times, but not in a Roman province in the time of the Cæsars.

The pride and glory of the Romans was their carefully developed and rigorously executed system of law, and no Roman governor would have ventured to destroy a generation of the emperor's subjects at birth without leave and without record. If such a wholesale murder had been accomplished there