

Scriptures

**Immanuel of the Bible:
Is it a Prediction for Christ (sws)? (II)**

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2. The word ‘VIRGIN’, and the whole story about it

The author of the Gospel according to Matthew has offered this prophecy of Isaiah as a proof of the miraculous birth of Jesus Christ from VIRGIN MARY in the following words:

22. Now all this took place that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying,

23. “BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD, AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL,” which translated means, “GOD IS WITH US.”¹

The whole of the edifice of the argument here, stands on the word ‘VIRGIN’. And if it be established that the word ‘VIRGIN’ of the quotation from Isaiah recorded in the Gospel according to Matthew by its author is a mistake [it is a misinterpretation of the word “ALMAH” of the Hebrew Old Testament, which does not mean “VIRGIN”; and simply means “A WOMAN OF MARRIAGE-ABLE AGE”]; the whole edifice of the argument will be dashed to ground. Some of the authorities are given below to elaborate the theme:

Today’s English Version gives the words “a young woman” in Isaiah VII:14, whereas in Matthew I:23 it

¹ NASB - Mat. I:22-23, p.2.

translates the word as “A virgin”. It explains “a young woman” in the footnote “k” as follows:

YOUNG WOMAN: The Hebrew word here translated “young woman” is not the specific term for “virgin,” but refers to any young woman of marriageable age. The use of “virgin” in Mt 1.23 reflects a Greek translation of the Old Testament [Septuagint], made some 500 years after Isaiah.²

The New English Bible also gives the words “A young woman” in Isaiah VII:14, whereas in Matthew I:23 it translates the word as “The virgin”.³

The Reader’s Bible, in the same way, records the words “a young woman” in Isaiah VII:14, whereas in Matthew I:23 it translates the word as “a virgin”.⁴

Revised Standard Version (Catholic edition), as well, writes the words “a young woman” in Isaiah VII:14, whereas in Matthew I:23 it translates the word as “a virgin”.⁵

The New Rev. Stand. Versn. (Cath.Ed. for India), has also followed suit and has given the words “the young woman” in Isaiah VII:14, whereas in Matthew I:23 it translates the word as “the virgin”.⁶

The New Oxford Annotated Bible has also done the same. It has recorded the words “the young woman” in Isaiah VII:14, and the words “the virgin” in Matthew I:23.⁷ It has also afforded a footnote as follows: ‘*Young woman*, Hebrew “‘almah,” feminine of “‘elem,” young man (1Sam 17.56; 20.22); the word appears in Gen 24.43; Ex 2.8; Ps 68.25, and elsewhere, where it is translated

2 TEV - [footnote ‘k’ on:] Isa. VII;14, p.699.

3NEB - p.509 and p.723.

4 RB - p.372 and p.521.

5 RSV (Cath. Ed.) - p.694 and p.1(NT)

6 NRSV (Cath. Ed. for India) - p.805 and p.1(NT).

7 NOAB - p.876-OT and p.2-NT.

“young woman,” “girl,” “maiden.”⁸

The New Jerusalem Bible is of the same view. It has given the words “the young woman” in Isaiah VII:14, whereas in Matthew I:23 it translates the word as “the virgin”.⁹

It would be appreciated that in all the above versions, the original Hebrew word of the Bible “ALMAH” has faithfully been translated in the Book of Isaiah as “*a/the young woman*”. But when taken to the Gospel according to Matthew in the New Testament, each of the above translators has mistranslated and misquoted it as “VIRGIN”. It is not just a faithful rendering of the original Hebrew word “ALMAH” of the O.T. of the Bible. It is not without purpose. It is a clear evidence of the malafide approach on the part of the translators. Some of the examples as to how some of the expositors of the Bible have tried to twist and confuse this very simple matter, will be helpful to understand it:

Explaining the sign of Isaiah *in the foot-notes*, the writer of **Christian Community Bible**, has very cleverly tried to confound the reader rather than to expound the matter. Here is his exposition:

Why is the Virgin mentioned? The term used in Isaiah does not actually mean *the Virgin* but rather *the young girl* and when it was used as such, it simply referred to the young queen. [This statement should carefully be understood and kept in mind before proceeding further to experience and observe the wonderful art of the commentator to prove a thing “*an apple*”, whom he had introduced as “*a turnip*” a short while ago. (His paragraph is continuing without any break or any word being omitted.)] Here Isaiah is referring to the future mother of the King-Messiah, and we know that she was the Virgin Mary. But, even before this amazing birth of the Virgin’s son, many believing Jews suspected that the Messiah’s origin would be extraordinary. If God was constantly reproaching believers for not loving him exclusively, how could the Messiah’s mother be a woman

⁸ NOAB - p.876-OT (as footnote).

⁹NJB - p.1200 and p.1610.

of many loves?

Besides, according to an expression in their language, they used to say the *Virgin of Israel* or the *Virgin daughter of Zion* to refer to the people and to the holy city (Is 37:22). And so to them, the verse: *the Virgin will give birth* sounded like: the believing community will give birth to the Messiah. Mary had to be a virgin, and she also represented all the believers who had hoped for the Saviour with a virgin heart (see Lk 1:31). It is worth noting that, even before Jesus, the Greek translation of the Bible had already substituted the virgin for the original term *young girl*.

It may surprise us to have Isaiah announce this liberation of God's people as an answer from God to Ahaz, or, *as something that would happen within a few years* [stress added. It may be noted that the simple interpretation of the italicized clause can be nothing else than: "The sign is to come into force *within a few years of its utterance* by Isaiah. It is not meant to be fulfilled more than c. 734 years later, through the birth of Jesus Christ.']. But Isaiah was speaking as a prophet who combines in one vision events of the same nature, although occurring at different times [Here again, it is to be noted that the commentator is arbitrarily attributing the theme of '*double application*' to the plain and unequivocal prophecy of Isaiah without a slightest hint to that effect by the prophet]. In some sense, those gloomy years were announcing future crisis, misfortunes and sins which formed one whole with the tragedies that would precede the coming of the kingdom of God.

Isaiah gives sign to King Ahaz, to his heirs, *David's descendants* (1:13), and to all who live in a world devastated by sin, and this sign points to Christ. Just as in the lost earthly Paradise, we have the image of a woman, or of the *son of a woman* who will crush the serpent's head, here we have another image, that of the virgin with her son, *God-with-us*. Immanuel suffers for his brothers' and sisters' sins, and that is why he can reconcile us with God. [If it be the interpretation, then what a distortion would be!]

Isaiah's contemporaries, obviously, did not understand all of this. It is only with time that the many meanings of this 'sign' will be understood. The word *sign* as used by Isaiah, can also be translated as *a marvelous event*.¹⁰

The New American Bible has afforded in its foot-note to the relevant verse a somewhat similar interpretation but in a moderate manner:

The *sign* proposed by Isaiah was concerned with the preservation of Judah in the midst of distress (cf 7, 15.17), but more especially with the fulfillment of God's earlier promise to David (2 Sm 7, 12-16) in the coming of Immanuel (meaning, "With us is God") as the ideal king (cf 9, 5-6; 11,1-5). The Church has always followed St. Matthew in seeing the transcendent fulfillment of this verse in Christ and his Virgin Mother. The prophet need not have known the full force latent in his own words; and some Catholic writers have sought a preliminary and partial fulfillment in the conception and birth of the future king Hezekiah, whose mother, at the time Isaiah spoke, would have been a young, unmarried woman (Hebrew *almah*). The Holy Spirit was preparing, however, for another Nativity which alone could fulfill the divinely given terms of Immanuel's mission, and in which the perpetual virginity of the Mother of God was to fulfill also the words of this prophecy in the integral sense intended by the divine wisdom.¹¹

The writer of *The Living Bible* (*'The Way'*), in his foot-note to the verse, provides the strange excuse for using the word 'VIRGIN' in his translation of the verse:

The controversial Hebrew word used here sometimes means "virgin" and sometimes "young woman." Its immediate use here refers to Isaiah's young wife and her

10 CCB - foot-note on Isa. VII:14, p.523f.

11 NAB - foot-note on Isa. VII:14, p.788.

newborn son (Isaiah 8:1-4). This, of course, was not a virgin birth. God's sign was that before this child was old enough to talk (verse 4) the two invading kings would be destroyed. However, the Gospel of Matthew (1:23) tells us that there was a further fulfillment of this prophecy, in that a virgin (Mary) conceived and bore a son, Immanuel, the Christ. *We have therefore properly used this higher meaning, "virgin," in verse 14, as otherwise the Matthew account loses its significance* [stress added without any further comment, as it speaks of its intent of itself].¹²

The writer of the *foot-notes* to the **Contemporary English Version** has adopted a more wise and modest view-point:

In this context the difficult Hebrew word did not imply a virgin birth. However, in the Greek translation made about 200 B.C. and used by the early Christians, the word *parthenos* had a double meaning. While the translator took it to mean "young woman," *Matthew understood it to mean "virgin" and quoted the passage (Matthew 1.23) because it was the appropriate description of Mary, the mother of Jesus* [stress added. What a prejudiced approach to forge the meanings of the 'sign' in favour of one's whims!].¹³

The writer of the *foot-notes* of the **New Testament; Standard Edition** clarifies the theme a little more:

The Hebrew word *almah* means a young woman of marriageable age (masculine, *elem*). The reason for the choice of *parthenos*, 'virgin' in the LXX is not known (cf. Acts 17:2). Later Greek versions read *neanis* 'a young person'. Is.7:14 does not refer to a birth by a virgin. The LXX even uses *parthenos* for one who is not a virgin (cf. Gen 34:3). Traditionally virginity before the marriage was highly valued. Education and counselling were given systematically to young to ensure that they appreciated the need to avoid pre-marital sex. Those who broke their

12 LB - foot-note on Isa. VII:14, p.574.

13 CEV - foot-note on Isa. VII:14, p.815.

virginity before marriage were heavily penalized by their age sets, and lost their reputation and chances of finding a marriage partner of their choice. In some tribes both the girl and the boy were killed. Conception prior to marriage without a male partner (Mat 1:20; Lk 1:31) renders Mary different in a unique way. Matthew and Luke emphasize Mary's partial independence from ancestral control and her direct relationship to God. The insertion of references to four women (Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba) along with Mary in the Genealogy of Jesus (Mt 1:3-6) could also serve the same purpose.¹⁴

A Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels has tried to understand the theme in a more realistic and reasonable way:

It may now be taken for granted that the word *ALMAH* translated 'virgin' in the EV should be more correctly rendered 'young woman.' The proper Hebrew term for 'virgin' is *BETULAH*, though even this is used in JI 1⁸ for 'young widow.' All that can with certainty be said of the word used by Isaiah is that it indicates a young woman of marriageable age, but says nothing whether she is married or not. Accordingly the terms of the prophecy do not warrant us in interpreting the sign as the prodigy of a virgin conception. (...).

(...). It is clear, in the first place, that the prophet is referring to something in the near future, otherwise the sign could have conveyed no message to the king, all the more that his difficulty was urgent. (...).

The question accordingly arises: In what form precisely did the sign consist? The stress may either lie on the *ALMAH*, or the son, or the name given to him, or a combination of these. *The traditional interpretation has, of course, thrown the stress on the first of these; for it the sign lay in the virgin-conception. But when the true sense of ALMAH is understood, this interpretation becomes impossible* [stress

¹⁴ NTSE - foot-note on Mt. I:23, p.27.

added]. (...) the name Immanuel expresses the mother's conviction that God is with His people. The sign is no prodigy in this case. For against the king's unbelief and his obstinate refusal to accept a sign there arises the mother's impressive faith, which confronted danger without dismay, and uttered her conviction of God's presence with His people in the name she gave her son. The personality of the mother is equally with that of the son of no importance for the sign; that consists in the mother's faith and the son's name. Accordingly it is better to translate 'a young woman' instead of 'the young woman.' Isaiah, however, does not mean precisely that any young woman, who is shortly about to conceive and give birth to a son, may call his name Immanuel. While he has no definite woman in his mind, he predicts that some young woman will, in the future, conceive and bear a son, to whom she will give the name Immanuel. His language is not that of hypothesis but of prediction.

The way is now clear to discuss St. Matthew's use of the passage. (...). *It is quite plain that this interpretation was in general very little controlled by the original sense of the OT passage quoted. It was of a largely polemical character, since it was necessary, against the cavilling¹⁵ of the Jews, to prove the Messiahship of Jesus from the OT. Accordingly the Hebrew scriptures were ransacked¹⁶ to find parallels with the life of Christ [stress added]; and it is not unlikely that, at a quite early period, collections of these passages were drawn up for controversial use [stress added].¹⁷*

A New Commentary on Holy Scripture explains the word virgin as follows:

15 Cavil = to find fault without sufficient reason; make trifling objections.

16 Ransack = search thoroughly; plunder.

17 A Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels, Ed. by James Hastings, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1908, pp. 782f.

The Hebrew word (*‘almah*) means ‘a young woman,’ and if emphasis on virginity had been required[,] another word (*bethulah*) would have been used. LXX renders *parthenos*, which does mean *virgin*, but there is no evidence that any significance was attached to it before our Lord’s birth. This is an important point, since hostile critics hold that the Christian doctrine of the Virgin Birth was suggested by this amongst other passages. The exact contrary seems to be true: our Lord was born of a Virgin, and in consequence the passage applied to Him. The Jewish commentators were undecided as to whether the prophet is referring to his own wife or the wife of Ahaz.¹⁸

Peake’s Commentary adopts “a young woman” for granted and does not even mention the word “virgin”:

Indicating *a young woman* [stress added], possibly among the company present, certainly known to them, he declares that she is pregnant and will soon bear a son who will be named Immanuel (‘God is with us’). Probably *the young woman* [stress added] was one of the wives of the king. If so, Isaiah’s words are an announcement of the birth of a royal son (...).¹⁹

Dummelow’s Commentary records also the same views and takes the translation “virgin” as **incorrect**. It notes:

It may candidly be admitted that the miraculous conception of Jesus has not the same evidence for it as the other miracles, (...).In the Heb. it is *‘almah*, i.e. ‘a young woman,’ not necessarily a virgin. The LXX, however, renders it *parthenos*, i.e. ‘virgin,’ and *hence many have incorrectly supposed that Isaiah prophesied the Virgin*

18 A New Commentary on Holy Scripture, ed. Charles Gore, London, Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, Northumberland Avenue, W.C.2,1928, p.439.

19 Peake’ Commentary, op.cit., p.495.

Birth [stress added].²⁰

The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary has afforded a useful discussion on the theme:

Hebrew lexicographers are agreed that *‘almah* is from the root *‘alam*, “to be [sexually] mature,” and that the word *‘almah* denotes a “young woman,” implying ability to bear children. Both *‘almah* and *‘elem*, the masculine form of the word, clearly denote physical maturity, but there is no absolute evidence as to whether they imply virginity or indicate marital status. It may be noted, however, that in S. of Sol. 6:8,9 “virgins,” *‘alamoth* (plural of *‘almah*), are classed with “queens” and “concubines” in contrast with an “undefiled” young woman. According to the Hebrew the *‘almah* of Isa. 7:14 may already have conceived (see below, “Shall conceive), and if she were yet a virgin when Isaiah spoke we would then be confronted with another miraculous birth similar to that of Jesus, which would create a profound theological problem.

The Hebrew term specifically descriptive of virginity is *bethulah*, which means strictly “virgin” and nothing else in the 50 instances where it appears in the OT. In Bible usage a *bethulah* was, by definition, a marriageable woman, whether young or old, though probably young; who had remained separate from men. Not once is the word *‘almah* used with reference to virginity as *bethulah* and its derivative forms are used. *Bethulah* has no cognate masculine equivalent, but is often coupled with *bachur*, “choice young man,” or “excellent young man.” *Bachur* and *bethulah* depict the highest Hebrew ideals of young manhood and young woman-hood, as *‘elem* and *‘almah* denote physical maturity. Without a single exception, where moral integrity and virginity are clearly referred to, *bachur* and *bethulah* are used; *‘elem* and *‘almah* are never so used.

(...).Isaiah uses *bethulah* altogether five times (chs. 23:4,

²⁰ Dummelow’s Commentary, p.624f, 626.

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12; 37:22; 47:1; 62:5), and had he intended the “young woman” of ch. 7:14 to be understood as a “virgin” in the strict sense of the word, he might logically be expected to use *bethulah* here as well.²¹

Similarly, *The Broadman Bible Commentary* has also discussed the theme in detail:

The Hebrew word has been translated “a virgin” in the KJV and *a young woman* in the RSV. This noun is derived from a verbal root meaning “to be ripe.” Therefore it denotes a young girl who has passed the age of puberty and is presumably capable of bearing children.

The word ‘*almah* neither affirms nor denies virginity on the part of the one to whom it refers. The technically Hebrew term for virgin is *bethula*, a term which is used elsewhere in Isaiah, but not in this passage (...).

The suggestion, therefore, that the young woman referred to by Isaiah was a virgin arose not from the Hebrew Bible, but from the Greek [translation of the Bible: Septuagint or LXX]. In all but two places the Septuagint translators rendered ‘*almah* by the noncommittal *neanis* (young woman). The two exceptions were Genesis 24:43 and Isaiah 7:14, where *parthenos* (virgin) was used. The translator’s decision to call Rebecca a *parthenos* was doubtless due to the very explicit statement regarding her virginity in Genesis 24:16. Why the mother in Isaiah 7:14 also was described as a *parthenos* has never been satisfactorily explained. It was, of course, the Greek version of this verse which was quoted by Matthew.²²

Similar explanation has been given by most of the authorities regarding the word “VIRGIN”. The names of some of them are given below:

²¹ The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, Vol.4, p.134f.

²² The Broadman B. Commentary, Vol.5, p.215.

- a) **The new Jerome Biblical Commentary:** *Ha'alma* is not the technical term for a virgin (*betula*). This is best understood as a wife of Ahaz; the child promised will guarantee the dynasty's future (...).²³
- b) **The New Bible Commentary Revised:** (...). But the nearest English equivalent is 'girl': (...).²⁴
- c) **The New Bible Commentary:** Let it be granted that the word translated 'virgin' (Heb. *almah*) need not have that exclusive connotation, and that the prophet is thinking in the first instance of an immediate occurrence.²⁵
- d) **O.T. Translation Problems (by A.R. Hulst):** (...), since a young woman is called 'alma(h), but not every 'alma(h) is necessarily a 'virgin' in the sense of the other Hebrew noun *betula(h)*, in which virginity is stressed. For a recent thorough treatment of this text cf. The Bible Translator, Vol.9, no.3, July, 1958.²⁶
- e) **Encycl. of Biblical Prophecy (by J. Barton Payne)** although admits the "young woman" version as genuine, yet it has tried to create confusion through ambiguity: 'Terry speaks of this passage as "probably the most difficult of all the Messianic prophecies,"²⁷The standard interpretation proposed by liberal criticism is that Isaiah here refers to the son of a contemporary young woman, *not a virgin* [stress added], whose child will be named Immanuel, meaning that *God is providentially with us*, which would thus serve as a sign of the defeat of Judah's northern enemies (7:8).²⁸
- f) As far as the OT is concerned, the **Jews** more genuinely deserve to interpret and translate it. It would be relevant here to quote the meaning and view point of one of the Jewish authorities: **The Pentateuch and**

23 The New Jerome Biblical Commentary, p.235.

24 The New Bible Commentary Revised, p.596.

25 The New Bible Commentary, p.569.

26 A.R. Hulst, O. T. Translation Problems, Published for the United Bible Societies by E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1960, p.139.

27 Terry, Milton S., Biblical Hermeneutics, New York: Phillips and Hunt, 1883, p.331[as quoted by Encycl. of Biblical Prophecy].

28 J. Barton Payne, Encycl. of Biblical Prophecy, op.cit., p.291.

Haftorahs (by Dr. J.H. Hertz, Chief Rabbi of the British Empire): ‘Similarly, in connection with Isaiah VII, 14, ‘A virgin shall conceive,’ Christian scholars today admit that ‘virgin’ is a mistranslation for the Heb. word *almah*, in that verse. A ‘maid’ or unmarried woman is expressed in Hebrew by *bethulah*. The word *almah* in Isaiah VII,14 means no more than a young woman of age to be a mother, whether she be married or not.²⁹

It is remarkably strange that almost all the translators of the New Testament of the Bible, while translating this Prophecy of Isaiah quoted in Matthew I:23, use the word “VIRGIN”, although they translate it as “ ‘a’ or ‘the’ YOUNG WOMAN” at its original place (ISA.VII:14). But when Mary gave birth to Jesus, she was legitimately the wife of Joseph according to the Gospel of Matthew and Luke (the Gospels of Mark and John give no account of the birth of Jesus); and as such it cannot indisputably be claimed that she was virgin. **Matthew** records the event in the following words:

Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit, and her *husband Joseph* [stress added. The word ‘*husband*’ for Joseph indicates that his wife, Mary, was not a *maiden girl* at that time; but was a *married woman*, and naturally, nobody would like to concede to the claim of *virginity* about a *married woman*], being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take *Mary your wife* [stress added. The word “*wife*” is again very significant here. The original Greek word used in the NT is “*gune*” : meaning “*a wife*”, which has been derived from the Greek word “*ginomai*”: meaning “be married”³⁰. Obviously, nobody

29 The Pentateuch and Haftorahs, Ed. by Dr. J.H. Hertz, C.H., Second Ed., London, Soncino Press, 1979, p.202.

30 J. Strong, *A Concise Dictionary of the words in The Greek*
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would like to concede to the idea of “VIRGINITY” towards a married woman who is some-one’s wife and is going to give birth to a child.], for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: “Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel” (which means, God is with us). When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took his **wife** [stress added; the use of the word **wife** is again to be noted], but knew her not until she had born a son; and he called his name Jesus.³¹

Luke reports the event in the following words:

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled. (...). And all went to be enrolled, each to his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to be delivered. And she gave birth to her first -born son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.³²

Obviously, it could not have been revealed through a dream to everyone that “*which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit;*”. Everybody could naturally think that Jesus was a routine son of Joseph and there was no question of his

Testament supplemented to Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1984, p.20f; entry Nos.1096 and 1135.

³¹ RSV-Mt. I:18-25 [as quoted by: Synopsis of the Four Gospels, Ed. by Kurt Aland, United Bible Societies, USA., 1985, p.7f].

³² RSV-Mt. II:1,3-7 [as quoted by: Syn. of the 4 Gospels, op.cit., p.7].

miraculous or “VIRGIN BIRTH”. As for the Evangelist’s statement, neither he himself is the eye-witness of the event; nor he records it to be reported to him by some eye-witness. It can thus be asserted that the statement of the Bible regarding the Virgin Birth of Jesus is dubious and ambiguous and it proves nothing as to the Virgin Birth in unequivocal terms. One can find only in the *Qur’ān* the pronouncement of the Virgin Birth of Jesus in unequivocal terms. But a person confessing the New Testament of the Bible cannot confidently claim a ‘Virgin Birth’ about the son of Mary, the legitimate wife of Joseph, (and not the son of a Virgin Mary). It is this dubious and ambiguous account of both of the evangelists which provides the Jews the ground to blaspheme Jesus as an illegitimate child. Now, that the Virgin Birth of Jesus has itself become doubtful according the dubious statements of the NT, there remains no genuine ground for attaching the prophecy of Isaiah to it.

It may be noted here that an intentional attempt has been made to quote a fairly considerable number of authorities of different times, different countries, different denominations and different schools of thought to show that there is a sort of sizeable consensus on the point; and so that one may not reject or discord the findings with the plea that they do not bear a representative status. Now, on the perusal of the above discussions, it can be safely concluded that:

- a) The prophecy was uttered by the Prophet Isaiah c.734 years “*Before Christ*” to deter king Ahaz of the Northern Kingdom of Judah from relinquishing the liberty of the land and people of Judah to the pagan king of Assyria, Tiglath-pileser III, to seek his support against the impending attack of the coalition of Aram (Syria) and Israel. Ahaz doesn’t seem to accept this advice.
- b) God Himself pronounced a ‘sign’ to Ahaz through the prophet Isaiah that within the period a new-born baby ‘*is old enough to know how to choose between right and wrong*’, [which has been defined by the commentators of the Bible as “*twelve years*”], ‘*the countries of the two*

*kings you fear will be destroyed.*³³ The ‘sign’ physically materialised and both the countries were devastated by the Assyrians [Syria in 732 BC and Israel in 722 BC] in exactly the predicted and stipulated period. The prophecy having once been fulfilled *in-toto* and *in letter and spirit*, there remains nothing concerning it to happen in future.

c) Isaiah did not make even a slightest hint to the effect that the ‘sign’ had or could have afforded a ‘*double application*’ and could accommodate another event to take place in as remote a future as 734 years. Moreover, there is nothing in the context either, which can allow the prediction to be extended and be made applicable to some other event in future.

d) The whole of the argument for the prophecy to be applied in favour of Jesus Christ rests on the word “**VIRGIN**”. But it is unfortunate on the part of Evangelists using the prophecy in favour of the so called “*Virgin Birth of Jesus Christ*” that Isaiah, while pronouncing the prophecy, did not use a word which could safely be applied to mean “a *Virgin*” [such as “*Bethulah*”, which has many a time been used to mean “a *Virgin*” in the OT]. He rather used the Hebrew word “**ALMAH**”, which simply means: “a *young woman of marriageable age*”, and which has nothing to do with the question whether she be a “*Virgin*” or otherwise.

e) The Evangelists using this prophecy of Isaiah in favour of the “*Virgin Birth of Jesus*” were allured to it in view of the Greek translation of the Hebrew OT called “*Septuagint*”, which was in common use in those days. They did not bother to trace and consult the original Hebrew Old Testament of the Bible to ensure the validity and accuracy of their standpoint.

f) It is only the translators of “*Septuagint*”, who are responsible for it. They were the first and the only translators who committed this blunder of far-reaching effects. As already explained a number of times Isaiah used the Hebrew word “*Almah*” in his prophecy, which

33 CEV-Isa. VII:15f, p.774.

simply means “*a young woman of marriageable age*”, and where the OT requires to convey the sense of and stress on “*Virginity*”, it uses the word “*Bethulah*”, which is the right Hebrew word for a “*Virgin*”.

g) Had Isaiah intended and used the word *Almah* of the prophecy to signify a *Virgin*, and had it really meant so, there should either have been a mention of a “*Virgin Birth*” in his times, or Ahaz had genuinely recorded an objection against the prophecy to belie the statement of Isaiah, which the Bible failed to report. But nobody would like to concede to any of such variables.

h) Had the prophecy meant for a so called “*double application*”, its results and implications should have been similar ones. If the birth of Jesus Christ be presented as a “*Virgin Birth*” in the light of the prophecy of Isaiah, the birth of “*Immanuel*” of the days of Isaiah should also be accepted as a “*Virgin Birth*”.

i) If the birth of “*Immanuel*” of the days of Isaiah be considered and accepted as a “*Virgin Birth*”, it will signify [and will have to be acknowledged as] a “*Miraculous Birth*”. But no Christian Scholar would like to accept this proposition, because it might pose serious problems for the Church, as already mentioned by some of the Christian authorities.

j) If Immanuel of the days of Isaiah be assigned a “*Miraculous Virgin Birth*”, the “*Miraculous Virgin Birth*” of Jesus Christ will lose all its significance and singularity; and the edifice of the divinity of Jesus Christ and the doctrine of Trinity will be dashed to ground. In such a case, the evidence which is so forcefully and repeatedly offered as a proof in favour of the “*DIVINITY*” of Jesus Christ, shall categorically prove the human nature and Prophethood/Apostleship of “*LORD JESUS*”. Would some Christian authority dare to profess and pronounce the prophecy of Isaiah in favour of the “*Virgin Birth*” of his “*Lord Jesus*”; with all its implications worked out above.

k) The Evangelists have based their theme on the wrong translation of the Hebrew OT by the translators of the “*Septuagint*”. Had those translators not committed this

confounding mistake, and thus had it not been there in the Greek translation of the OT of the Bible, i.e. the “Septuagint”, there would have been no basis for the evangelists of quoting it in their Gospels, and there would have been no question of all this useless discussion; which is obviously based on a faulty proposition.

l) It is an ample proof of the carelessness, irresponsibility, incompetence and indiscretion of the Evangelists, which affords a sufficient ground for rendering their Gospels as quite unreliable.

m) It is also to be noted that Jesus Christ (sws) never referred to the prophecy of Isaiah or claimed for himself a “Virgin Birth” in any of his utterances throughout the Gospels.

As can be appreciated, the following points have clearly been established through the deliberations accomplished so far:

a) On historical basis, the prophecy in question cannot be applied to the Virgin Birth of Jesus Christ, by any stretch of meaning or any trick of interpretation.

b) On lexicographical grounds, the application of the prophecy to the Virgin Birth of Jesus Christ (sws) is utterly baseless, because the original Hebrew prophecy is totally void of any word having the absolute meaning of a Virgin.

3. The word ‘IMMANUEL’ and its significance.

Having taken up two points of the dissertation, the third and the last heading remains to be studied. Isaiah pronounces to king Ahaz of Judah, as a sign from God, that a young woman is to conceive and is going to give birth to a son (or the young woman is already pregnant and is to bear a son), whose name shall be Immanuel. Before this ‘forthcoming’ child reaches the age of accountability (that is, within almost a decade), both of his enemies (King Rezin of Syria and king Pekah of Israel) shall be destroyed. It shows that it was through the design of God that the boy was given the name “Immanuel”. The name of the boy is a key word and an integral part of the prophecy. Where there is no Immanuel, this prophecy cannot be applied there ; and if it be

tried to attach this prophecy to some new-born baby who is not given the name “Immanuel”, it is doomed to be null and void and would be signifying nothing. The word Immanuel is the pivot of Isaiah’s oracle. It is very conspicuous and meaningful. It means “God is (or shall remain) with us”. [‘Immanuel’ is a compound word of the Hebrew language, which, like its sister language, Arabic, belongs to the family of the Semetic languages. Immanuel is composed of three words: (a) Imma {Arabic - Ma`a} = with; (b) *nū* {Arabic - *nā*} = us and *ēl* {Arabic - *Ifah, Allāh*} = God; which joined together, become: “God is with us” {Arabic - ‘*Allahu ma’anā*’}]. It implies God’s presence with and support for His people and tells Ahaz not to be afraid of his enemies, because they are heading towards their early extermination and will not be able to harm him any way.

The sign was materialized within almost two years of its pronouncement in 734 BC: Syria was captured and her ruler, Rezin, was killed by the Assyrian king in 732 BC; and Pekah, king of Israel, was murdered by Hoshea in the same year. The prophecy was to be completely fulfilled before a new-born baby reaches the age of accountability, i.e. within twelve years of its pronouncement; and it is a historical fact that it was materialized in-toto accordingly. The kingdom of Israel, which was actually confined to her capital, Samaria only, was put to rout and its people were transported beyond Assyria in 722 BC, i.e. within twelve years of its announcement; by which time Immanuel must have been born and would not have reached the age of accountability (12 years) still.

Isaiah predicted the birth of one “Immanuel” to a “young woman”; whereas the Evangelist Matthew has applied it to the “Virgin Birth” of “Jesus” to Mary. It is an undeniable fact that “Virgin Mary” did never give birth to some child who was named “Immanuel”. She gave “Virgin Birth” only to “Jesus Christ”. As recorded in the Gospel according to Matthew, the child was given the name “Jesus” by God Himself, as revealed to the husband of Mary through an angel in a dream, even before his birth:

But as he considered this [to divorce Mary quietly], behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary

your wife, for *that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; she will bear a son, and you shall* [the imperative tone of “**shall**” should especially be noted.] *call his name Jesus* [stress added], (...)” (...). When Joseph woke from sleep, *he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him* [stress added]; he took his wife, but knew her not until *she had borne a son* [stress added]; and he called his name **Jesus** [stress added].³⁴

The child to be born to Virgin Mary was given the name “**Jesus**”, even before her conception, rather even before her marriage, as emphatically commanded by God Himself to Mary, through the angel Gabriel. Matthew has recorded it as follows:

And the angel [Gabriel] said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And behold, *you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus* [stress added].(...)” And Mary said to the angel, “How shall this be, *since I have no husband* [stress added]? (..). And Mary said, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.³⁵

Consequently, this child of the “Virgin Birth” was given the name “Jesus” as already commanded by God to the father and the mother of the child individually. On the other hand, in Isaiah’s prophecy as well, it was God Himself, Who gave the name “Immanuel”, to the ‘child of the sign’. It will be appreciated that the evidence of the Gospels testifies that Jesus has never been called with the name of “Immanuel” by anyone, anywhere in the Bible. Jesus also did never use the name “Immanuel” for himself in the whole of the NT. Jesus neither claimed that Isaiah’s Immanuel prophecy of the OT was in his favour, nor he claimed anywhere in the NT of the Bible that people

34 RSV (II Ed., 1971)-Mt. I:19-21,24 [as quoted by: Syn. of the 4 Gospels, op.cit., p.7f].

35 RSV (II Ed., 1971)-Mt. I:30f, 34, 38 [as quoted by: Syn. of the 4 Gospels, op.cit., p.3].

should call him with the name of “Immanuel”. It is again interesting to note that even the writer of the “Gospel according to Matthew” has neither himself used the name “Immanuel” for Jesus, nor he has quoted anybody else calling Jesus with the name “Immanuel” anywhere in the whole of the Bible.

One child (the child of the ‘sign’ to Ahaz, as pronounced through Isaiah) had been given the name “Immanuel” by God in the year c.734 BC in the OT of the Bible. The other child (the son of ‘Virgin Mary’) was given the name “Jesus”, also by God Himself, as recorded in the “Gospel according to Matthew” of the NT, c.734 years later. Now, these are two different names, having different meanings (Jesus = Saviour; Immanuel = God is with us), relating to two different children, in different situations, at different stages of history and having different aims and implications. If both these names related to one and the same child, God might have pronounced it clearly in unequivocal terms, leaving no room for undue speculations and confusions. But the contents and the context of the prophecy clearly denote that it relates only to one child – the child of the “Sign” addressed to Ahaz by Isaiah, i.e. “Immanuel”--, and it has nothing to do with Jesus Christ. The application of the prophecy of Isaiah to the “Virgin Birth” of Jesus Christ purports as if:

Either God did not know how to convey a theme in suitable and explicit words,

- a) Or He intentionally wanted to misguide and confuse the people,
- b) Or, by the lapse of 734 years, God forgot that He had previously ordered that the child be given the name “Immanuel” and thus mistakenly ordered the “Child of the Virgin Birth” to be named as “Jesus”.

Nobody can imagine to assign any of these variables to God. Taken from another angle, it can be asserted that:

- a) Jesus never claimed for himself that he was “Immanuel”

of Isaiah's prophecy or that it was his name, given to him by his parents as ordered to them by the Lord.

b) Isaiah also did not indicate in this prophecy or in any other one that the people or the parents of the child of the prophecy would call this "Immanuel" with the name of "Jesus"; and that the "Jesus" would, as a matter of fact, be "Immanuel" and none else.

c) God Himself, as well, did nowhere give "Jesus" the name "Immanuel" or called him as such.

d) No one of the Evangelists used "Immanuel" as the name of "Jesus" anywhere in their Gospels. Even in the passages claiming "Immanuel" to be applied to "Jesus", they used "Jesus" as his name; and did not mention him with the name of "Immanuel".

Now, it is the case of everybody on earth to consider as to by what trick of interpretation one could apply Isaiah's prophecy regarding "Immanuel" to "Jesus".

All the above discussions on the subject categorically prove that "Isaiah's Immanuel Prophecy" can by no way be applied to the "Virgin Birth" of "Jesus Christ". Even then the Christian authorities, quite baselessly and arbitrarily present it as a proof for the "Virgin Birth" of "Jesus". On the other hand, the prophecies of the Bible regarding the advent of the era of the Prophet of Islam are so explicit, self-explanatory and exact, that it requires a great deal of obstinacy not to consider them worth an objective appraisal. It would be desirable that the principles of objective research be adhered to and the double standard approach be discarded.