

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY RAWLINGS SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

DIVINE PHYSIOLOGY: DEITY REVEALED WITHIN THE CONCEPTION OF
JESUS CHRIST

A Thesis Project Submitted to
Liberty University Rawlings School of Divinity
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

by

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LIBERTY UNIVERSITY RAWLINGS SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

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ABSTRACT

DIVINE PHYSIOLOGY: DEITY REVEALED WITHIN THE CONCEPTION OF JESUS CHRIST

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This thesis project will develop an educational instrument linking science to faith supporting the deity of Jesus Christ, specifically as it relates to his conception. This information will be used by this author's church to understand the identity of Jesus. This thesis project will employ analytical, theoretical, and scientific research methods as applies to a study of medical and theological information, as well as interviews with medical professionals, and religious leaders.

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DEFINITIONS

Alma—Lexicon: Strong's H5959 - `almah -'almâh, al-maw'; feminine of H5958; a lass (as veiled or private):—damsel, maid, virgin.¹

Artificial insemination—the introduction of semen into the vagina other than by coitus.²

Betulah—Lexicon: Strong's H1330 – *běthuwlah*, b^ethûwlâh, beth-oo-law'; feminine passive participle of an unused root meaning to separate; a virgin (from her privacy); sometimes (by continuation) a bride; also (figuratively) a city or state:—maid, virgin.³

Birth—a coming into being; act or process of being born. ⁴

Blastocyte—an undifferentiated embryonic cell.⁵

Cloning—making an identical copy. Clones are organisms that are exact genetic copies. Every single bit of their DNA is identical.⁶

Conception—the beginning of pregnancy in normal human reproduction; includes the three phases of ovulation, fertilization, and implantation.⁷ Formation of a viable zygote by the union of the male sperm and female ovum; fertilization.⁸

Copulation—the act of engaging in sexual intercourse.⁹

¹ *Blue Letter Bible*. Strong's "H5959" - `almah -'almâh, al-maw'; feminine of H5958. Accessed March 11, 2016, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?t=kjv&strongs=h5959>,

² *Farlex Partner Medical Dictionary*. s.v. "artificial insemination." Accessed May 23, 2015, <https://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/artificial+insemination>.

³ *Blue Letter Bible*. "H1330 - *běthuwlah* - Strong's Hebrew Lexicon (NKJV)." Accessed April 30, 2017, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongs=h1330&t=kjv>.

⁴ *Dorland's Medical Dictionary for Health Consumers*, (2007). "birth." Accessed May 23, 2015, <https://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/birth+process>.

⁵ *Miller-Keane Encyclopedia and Dictionary of Medicine, Nursing, and Allied Health, Seventh Edition*. s.v. "blastocyte." Accessed May 23, 2015, <https://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/blastocyte>.

⁶ Genetic Science Learning Center. "Cloning." *Learn Genetics*. July 10, 2014. Accessed April 29, 2017, [http://learn.genetics.utah.edu/content/cloning/whatiscloning/..](http://learn.genetics.utah.edu/content/cloning/whatiscloning/)

⁷ There is a lack of consistency in medical references regarding the definition of conception; therefore, this author, in accordance with her training as a Registered Nurse, defines conception, collectively, as the three phases of ovulation, fertilization, and implantation.

⁸ *Dorland's Medical Dictionary for Health Consumers*. s.v. "conception." Accessed May 23, 2015, <https://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/conception>.

⁹ *Segen's Medical Dictionary*. s.v. "copulation." Accessed May 23, 2015, <https://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/copulation>.

Deity—the creator and Supreme Being in a monotheistic religion such as Christianity.¹⁰

Deoxyribonucleic Acid (DNA)—a self-replicating material which is present in nearly all living organisms as the main constituent of chromosomes. It is the carrier of genetic information.¹¹

Dermoid Cyst—a tumor of developmental origin consisting of a fibrous wall lined with stratified epithelium and containing hair follicles, sweat glands, sebaceous glands, nerve elements, and teeth; a teratoma. When these cysts occur in the ovary, they may present no symptoms, but their long pedicles may cause twisting, resulting in acute abdominal pain. Treatment is surgical removal.¹²

Divine Virgin Conception (Virgin Birth)—Mary’s conceiving of Jesus Christ, by divine intervention of the power of the Holy Spirit, absent the intervention of a human father.¹³ Historically, the Christian belief that Jesus was miraculously conceived through the power of the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary without sexual union with man (Matt 1:18-25, Luke 1:34-35).¹⁴

Divinity—a divine being, God.¹⁵

Embryonic—relating to an embryo; in a rudimentary stage with potential for further development.¹⁶

Endometrium—the mucous membrane lining the uterus.¹⁷

¹⁰ *Oxford Dictionary 2nd Edition*. s.v. “deity.” Accessed April 23, 2017, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/deity>.

¹¹ *English Oxford Dictionaries*. s.v. “deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA).” Accessed April 15, 2016, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/dna>.

¹² *Miller-Keane Encyclopedia and Dictionary of Medicine, Nursing, and Allied Health, Seventh Edition*. S.v. “dermoid.” Accessed April 15, 2016, <https://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/dermoid>

¹³ “Divine Virgin Conception/Definition.” There is a lack of differentiation in scholarly resources regarding the definition of the divine virgin conception, apart from the virgin birth. This author asserts there is a difference in these definitions; therefore, this author has provided the reader with a foundational definition.

¹⁴ *Bakers Evangelical Dictionary*. s.v. “divine virgin conception, virgin birth.” Accessed April 27, 2017, <https://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/bakers-evangelical-dictionary/virgin-birth.html>

¹⁵ *Random House Kernerman Webster’s College Dictionary*. S.v. “divinity.” Accessed April 27, 2017, <https://www.thefreedictionary.com/divinity>

¹⁶ *Oxford Dictionary 2nd Edition*. s.v. “embryonic”. Accessed April 27, 2017, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/embryonic>.

¹⁷ *Miller-Keane Encyclopedia and Dictionary of Medicine, Nursing, and Allied Health, Seventh Edition*. S.v. “Uterine lining.” Accessed May 23, 2015, <https://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/Uterine+lining>

Fallopian tube— a slender tube extending laterally from the uterus toward the ovary, one on each side, allowing passage of ova to the cavity of the uterus and of spermatozoa in the opposite direction. Called also uterine tube and oviduct.¹⁸

Fertilization—in human reproduction, the process by which the male's sperm unites with the female's oocyte, creating a new life. The sex and other biologic traits of the new individual are determined by the combined genes and chromosomes that exist in the sperm and oocyte.¹⁹

Gestational Carrier—a woman who is pregnant with an implanted embryo that she carries for another person or couple.²⁰

Immaculate Conception—this refers not to the conception of Jesus but to that of Mary his mother who, according to the dogma of the Roman Catholic Church as defined in 1854, was born in the normal fashion of a human but without the taint of sin.²¹

Implantation— Attachment of the blastocyst to the endometrium, and its subsequent embedding in the compact layer, occurring 6-7 days after fertilization of the oocyte in humans.²²

Incarnation—refers to the choices and acts of a pre-existent divine being, namely the Son of God, that the Son took in order to become a human being. He took on flesh, and became fully, truly human without ceasing to be fully, truly divine.²³

Menarche—the onset of menstruation which occurs at puberty.²⁴

Overshadow—1982. *episkiazō* *ep-ee-skee-ad'-zo* from 1909 and a derivative of 4639; to cast a shade upon, i.e. (by analogy) to envelop in a haze of brilliancy; figuratively, to invest with preternatural influence:--overshadow.²⁵

¹⁸ *Miller-Keane Encyclopedia and Dictionary of Medicine, Nursing, and Allied Health, Seventh Edition.* s.v. "fallopian tube." Accessed May 23, 2015, from <https://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/fallopian+tube>.

¹⁹ *Miller-Keane Encyclopedia and Dictionary of Medicine, Nursing, and Allied Health, Seventh Edition.* s.v. "fertilization." Accessed May 9 2017, <https://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/fertilization>.

²⁰ *The American Heritage® Medical Dictionary.* s.v. "gestational carrier." Accessed May 9 2018, <https://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/gestational+carrier>.

²¹ *The Doctrine of the Immaculate Conception Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 490-492. Accessed June 2, 2013, http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p122a3p2.htm.

²² *Farlex Partner Medical Dictionary.* s.v. "implantation." Accessed May 9 2018, <https://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/implantation>.

²³ Ben Witherington, "The Meaning of Incarnation" *Patheos*, December 23, 2012. Accessed May 6, 2018, <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/bibleandculture/2012/12/23/the-meaning-of-incarnation/>.

²⁴ *Collins Dictionary of Biology, 3rd ed.* s.v. "menarche." Accessed May 9 2018, <https://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/menarche>.

Ovulation—the release of eggs or egg cells from the ovary in female animals, regulated in mammals by hormones of the pituitary gland. In humans and most other primates, ovulation usually occurs midway through the menstrual cycle.²⁶

Ovum— an unfertilized female gamete; egg cell.²⁷

Parthenogenesis—human conception without fertilization by a male; virgin birth.²⁸

Parthenos—Lexicon: Strong's G3933 – *parthenos*, παρθένος parthénos, par-then'-os; of unknown origin; a maiden; by implication, an unmarried daughter:—virgin.²⁹

Placenta—the sac-shaped organ that attaches the embryo or fetus to the uterus during pregnancy in most mammals. It supplies the fetus with oxygen and nutrients and is expelled after birth.³⁰

Pregnancy—the period from conception to childbirth.³¹

Seed—identical to sperm, *sperma*, *spermatozoa*, STRONGS Lexicon H2232 זרע zera', zeh'-rah; figuratively, fruit, plant, sowing-time, posterity:—× carnally, child, fruitful, seed(-time), sowing-time. STRONGS Lexicon G5088. τίκτω, to beget, bring forth. STRONGS Lexicon G4690: σπέρμα, sperma, the product of this semen, seed, children, offspring, progeny, the seed from which anything springs.^{32 33 34}

²⁵ *Bible Hub*, Strong's' Hebrew :5526a. sakak --to overshadow, screen, cover 5526, 5526a. sakak or sakak. 5526b . to overshadow, screen, cover. Short Definition: covered. Accessed May 5, 2017, <http://biblehub.com/topical/o/overshadow.htm>.

²⁶ *The American Heritage® Dictionary of Student Science, Second Edition*. s.v. "ovulation." Accessed May 9, 2018, <https://www.thefreedictionary.com/ovulation>.

²⁷ *Collins English Dictionary – Complete and Unabridged, 12th Edition 2014*. s.v. "ovum." Accessed May 9, 2018, <https://www.thefreedictionary.com/ovum>.

²⁸ *Collins English Dictionary – Complete and Unabridged, 12th Edition 2014*. s.v. "parthenogenesis." Accessed May 9, 2018, <https://www.thefreedictionary.com/parthenogenesis>.

²⁹ *Blue Letter Bible*, “G3933 - Parthenos- Strong's Greek Lexicon (NKJV).” Accessed April 30, 2017. <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongsg=G3933&t=NASB>.

³⁰ *The American Heritage® Dictionary of Student Science, Second Edition*. s.v. "placenta." Accessed May 9, 2018, <https://www.thefreedictionary.com/placenta>

³¹ *Collins English Dictionary – Complete and Unabridged, 12th Edition 2014*. s.v. "pregnancy." Accessed May 9, 2018, <https://www.thefreedictionary.com/pregnancy>

³² *Blue Letter Bible*, “H2232 – Seed – Strong's Hebrew Lexicon (NKJV).” Accessed April 30, 2017. <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongsg=H2233&t=NKJV>

³³ *Blue Letter Bible*, “G5088 – Sperm – Strong's Greek Lexicon (NKJV).” Accessed April 30, 2017. <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongsg=G5088&t=NKJV>

³⁴ *Blue Letter Bible*, “G4690—Sperma – Strong's Greek Lexicon (NKJV).” Accessed April 30, 2017. <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongsg=G4690&t=NKJV>

Virgin Birth— the doctrine that Jesus Christ had no human father but was conceived solely by the direct intervention of the Holy Spirit so that Mary remained miraculously a virgin during and after his birth.³⁵

Womb—the nontechnical name for uterus.³⁶

Zygote—the cell resulting from the union of an ovum and a spermatozoon.³⁷

³⁵ *Collins English Dictionary – Complete and Unabridged, 12th Edition 2014*. S.v. "Virgin Birth." Accessed May 9, 2018, <https://www.thefreedictionary.com/virgin+birth>.

³⁶ *Collins English Dictionary – Complete and Unabridged, 12th Edition 2014*. s.v. "womb." Accessed May 9, 2018, <https://www.thefreedictionary.com/womb>.

³⁷ *Collins English Dictionary – Complete and Unabridged, 12th Edition 2014*. s.v. "zygote." Accessed May 9, 2018, <https://www.thefreedictionary.com/zygote>.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Who is Jesus Christ? Is he merely a Jewish Rabbi, a good man, a great teacher in first-century Galilee, a political revolutionary, a social reformer, a zealot, a cynic philosopher, or is he something more? Many believe Jesus Christ is only a myth, a contrived story blown out of proportion. Some purport he is the center of the differences between Muslims and Christians, an apocalyptic prophet, a holy prophet equal to Muhammad. Whispers of illegitimacy plagued his ministry, while others simultaneously called him the Son of God, the Son of Man, the Messiah, the Lord God Almighty, King of the Jews, a product of a supernatural conception resulting in a virgin birth, and God himself cloaked in a robe of human flesh. Jesus himself, knowing his identity to be an enigma, posed the question “But who do you say that I am?” (Matt 16:15, NKJV).³⁸ When he made his Passover entry into the city of Jerusalem, people asked: “Who is this?” (Matt 21:10).

Amazingly, there exists only a limited amount of written, confirmed, first-person, eyewitness accounts of the life of this individual from Nazareth of Galilee in scripture (2 Pet 1:16). A plethora of extra-biblical evidence supports the existence of Jesus, yet no extant image of him was preserved, no recording of his voice subsists. Jesus Christ did exist, as evidenced by Christian as well as classical (*Greco-Roman*)³⁹ and Jewish^{40 41} writings. Condemned for political treason against the state of Rome, Jesus unceremoniously humiliated, tortured, and

³⁸ Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the *New King James Version*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Inc., 1994.

³⁹ Lawrence Mykytiuk, “Did Jesus Exist? Searching for Evidence Beyond the Bible” *Biblical Archaeology Review*, January/February 2015, Accessed August 8, 2017. <https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/people-cultures-in-the-bible/jesus-historical-jesus/did-jesus-exist/>. Tacitus—formally known as Caius/Gaius (or *Publius*), Cornelius Tacitus (55/56-c 118 C.E.) was a Roman senator, orator, ethnographer and one of the best Roman historians. His writings, specifically those collections in the *Tacitus, Opera Quae Exstant* translated by Justus

crucified, rose from the dead. The passage of time is referenced by his point of death, before Christ (BC) and after his death, Anno Domino (AD), Latin for the year of the Lord. Humanity embraces a long established annual tradition of celebrating his birth at Christmas and his resurrection at Easter. His words, actions, conception, birth, life, death, and resurrection have thus had a profound effect on history. From his existence emerged a major world religion; the world's largest religion Christianity, with Jesus as the central figure. Notwithstanding all of these facts and startling evidence that has emerged to support the existence of Jesus Christ and the gospel story, individuals still ponder the meaning of his identity almost two-thousand years after his Incarnation. Jesus was part of history; therefore, the inquiry "Who is Jesus Christ?" matters to all individuals and is one of the most historically significant questions any individual could ask.

This ongoing debate regarding the identity of Jesus Christ has resulted in a paradigm shift in the questions asked about him, and his true distinctiveness is no longer a matter of solely theological inquiry. The query, "Who is Jesus Christ?" remains divisive, fraught with controversy, presenting a challenge where the identity of Jesus remains one of the greatest

Lipsius (Antwerp, Belgium: Ex Officina Plantiniana, apud Joannem Moretum, 1600), and his last major work *Annales*, addresses "Christus" who was ordered to be executed by Pontius Pilate. His reference corroborates the historical data included in the New Testament.

⁴⁰ Lawrence Mykytiuk "Did Jesus Exist? Searching for Evidence Beyond the Bible" *Biblical Archaeology Review*, January/February 2015, Accessed August 8, 2017. <https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/people-cultures-in-the-bible/jesus-historical-jesus/did-jesus-exist/>.

⁴¹ Josephus Flavius, *Famous and Memorable Works of Josephus*, translated by Thomas Lodge (London; J.L. for Andrew Hebb, 1640). Jewish Priest in first-century Palestine Josephus, later known as Josephus Flavius, wrote a collection of works which were published under the title of *Famous and Memorable Works of Josephus*, translated by Thomas Lodge. In some of these works Josephus Flavius refers to James, the brother of Jesus-who-is-called-Messiah, in *Jewish Antiquities*. This reference affirms the existence of the historical Jesus.

question marks in all history. This enigmatic individual called Jesus Christ has impacted all of humankind; therefore, to both believers and nonbelievers alike, Jesus Christ remains relevant.

Statement of the Problem

Several events accentuate the need for research and discussion of the findings regarding the identity of Jesus Christ. First, visitors to this author's home church during a Youth Christmas Program in 2012 questioned the supernatural conception, the viability of virgin birth and the sheer existence and purpose of Jesus Christ. Youth congregants, including seven children of parents mocking the Christmas program, were visibly challenged to respond to the poignant comments and questions set forth by these skeptical guests and family members. The only defense the youth congregants offered was one of faith and Scripture; a response that was, without doubt, inadequate to these critics.

Second, there appears to be an assault on these same children to undermine faith and a belief in God by their school systems. The public schools these children are required to attend have implemented curriculums such as Common Core Standards, defined as "robust and relevant to the real world,"⁴² but lacking instruction in morals, principles, and values. Schools have relabeled Darwin's Theory of Evolution as "modern evolutionary synthesis"⁴³ and seek to draw young minds away from a foundational belief in God by eliminating instruction on Creationism.⁴⁴ Modern culture is aggressively and successfully, through regulatory methods,

⁴² "Common Core Standards Mission Statement," Accessed October 17, 2013, http://www.uwosh.edu/coehs/cmajproject/common_core/documents/CC_Standards_Myths.pdf

⁴³ Ker Than, "What is Darwin's Theory of Evolution?" *Life Science*, (February 26, 2018), Accessed March 26, 2018). <https://www.livescience.com/474-controversy-evolution-works.html>.

⁴⁴ *Kitzmiller v. Dover: Intelligent Design on Trial*. Accessed October 22, 2013, <http://ncse.com/book/export/html/11798>.

attempting to exclude the beliefs of the Christian faith from public schools. Silence and failure by Christians to address these issues of assault upon vulnerable children is not an option; therefore, it is incumbent upon believers to respond, be vocal, take action, return catechism to American Christian children as well as children all over the world, and radiate the foundational concepts of biblical principles, morals, ethics and belief in the one, true, eternal, almighty God.

Third polls show “A whopping 84% of Americans believe Jesus was God or the Son of God;”⁴⁵ however, only “42% believe Jesus was God in the form of a man.”⁴⁶ In a 2012 National Survey conducted by Rasmussen Reports, only 64% of Americans believed in the God in the Bible.⁴⁷ A Harris Interactive Poll conducted in 2009 shows a mere 61% of Americans believed in the Virgin Birth of Jesus.⁴⁸ The Barna Group, based on a survey conducted in 2009, indicates there are diverse, contradictory, and inconsistent beliefs even among Christians.⁴⁹ These results are disturbing and troublesome indicating a need for evangelicals to grasp the true identity of Jesus Christ and to fulfill the Great Commission (Matt 28:16-20).

⁴⁵ Thomas C. Reeves, “Not So Christian America.” October 1996. This article is excerpted from *The Empty Church: The Suicide of Liberal Christianity*, published this month by Free Press, a division of Simon & Schuster, Inc. Copyright 1996. Accessed June 1, 2013. <https://www.firstthings.com/article/1996/10/001-not-so-christian-america>.

⁴⁶ Kenneth Briggs, “Gallup Poll Finds The Image of Jesus to be Somewhat Murky,” New York Times. April 3, 1983, on Page 1001015 of the National Edition Accessed Jun 1, 2013. <https://www.nytimes.com/1983/04/03/us/gallup-poll-finds-the-image-of-jesus-to-be-somewhat-murky.html>

⁴⁷ Rasmussen Report, *Belief In God*, National Survey of 1,000 Adults conducted December 17-20, 2012. Accessed September 10, 2013, http://www.rasmussenreports.com/public_content/politics/questions/national_survey_toplines/december_2012/questions_belief_in_god_december_17_20_2012,

⁴⁸ Harris Poll® #140, *What People Do and Do Not Believe in*, Conducted, December 15, 2009. Accessed September 10, 2013, http://www.harrisinteractive.com/vault/Harris_Poll_2009_12_15.pdf,

⁴⁹ Barna Group, *Most American Christians Do Not Believe that Satan or the Holy Spirit Exist*, Accessed July 23, 2013, <https://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/12-faithspirituality/260-most-american-christians-do-not-believe-that-satan-or-the-holy-spirit-exist#.UfFMAMEo7rc>,

Fourth, there appears to be apostasy by some prominent, influential, religious leaders of so-called Christian denominations. Some pastors spew pejorative comments regarding biblical standards, compromise teaching, create complacency in their congregants, and stir contempt for sound doctrinal and theological guidance that potentially contributes to the statistical values of dissonance among believers as evidence, and in the polls and surveys of Gallup, Rasmussen, Harris and Barna. These pastors seek to sooth the conscience of the congregation and fail miserably in preaching the Word of God which condemns sinful behavior and leads to repentance and salvation.

Fifth, when considering a topic for this thesis project, this author made several general inquiries regarding available books on the events of the life of Jesus. General conversation between this author and several staff at a prominent Christian book-store, “one of the world's largest providers of Christian products and services”⁵⁰ and whose staff are required to be active church goers, revealed that even believers fail to differentiate the conception of Jesus from the virgin birth of Jesus. Comments such as “We have lots of books on the birth of Christ,” or “The Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary and it just happened,” and “How could anyone write an entire book solely on the conception of Jesus?” underscore emphasis on the nativity story, explicitly the birth of Jesus. The weight and magnitude of the virgin conception of Jesus is not recognized. Consequently, individuals live on a precarious edge of uncertainty, not fully understanding who Jesus truly is or the provision made possible through the saving work of Jesus Christ while he was here on earth, being made possible only through a differentiated conception.

⁵⁰ Lifeway Christian Resources, “About Lifeway”. Accessed August 28, 2013, www.lifeway.com/Article/About-Us

Sixth, the world is pluralistic; thus Christians encounter, on a daily basis, those with other belief systems. Sadly, many Christians have been isolated or sheltered by denominations or personal beliefs, and are ill-prepared to deal with and respond to the divergent religious beliefs and differences of the modern day; specifically, the differences which differentiate and substantiate the one true God apart from all other false gods. Additionally, many individuals attempt to re-interpret the biblical message, deliver minimalistic news or endeavor to make the Bible politically correct. Christians must bear in mind the accountability which will be required of them for their inactions (Ezek 33:1-6, 2 Cor 5:10). There can be no compromise of God's Word. There must be no undermining of Scripture. There can be no reference to the Bible as an archaic, ancient, religious book, whom some call "outdated, demonstrably untrue, and often, in their various manifestations, deleterious to individuals and to society."⁵¹ Christians cannot rest in naivety; they must understand what the gospel defines as sin, be brave enough and outspoken enough to call it for what it is, and through love, direct individuals to the transformation which is possible only by atonement through the blood of Jesus Christ (Heb 9:21-22).

Seventh, this author, seeking a response to these challenges and concerns, understand that an explanation to the question, "Who is Jesus?" in this modern age, may require more than a faith or theological response based on Scripture as the sole point of reference. One must know and understand the identity of an individual to establish a relationship beyond mere acquaintance; however, kinship with God should never be based on a fortuitous encounter or a pragmatist agenda which permeates modern cultures. A relationship with God is not based on a

⁵¹ Templeton, Charles Bradley, *Farewell To God: My Reasons for Rejecting the Christian Faith*, Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1999. Pg vii.

simplistic knowledge of God, leaning on the faith of others, or adhering to family or denominational standards or general traditions; individuals are required to confess Jesus as *Lord* (Rom10:9)—in other words, to become a bonds slave or bondservant of God (Rom 1:1).

Christians must, therefore, be prepared to boldly step forth in their witness never ceasing in their labors to which God has commanded Christians to spread the good news (Mark 16:15). This can occur only when individuals are armed with knowledge which contributes to and complements the faith message of the biblical account of Jesus Christ.

The purpose of this thesis project is, therefore, multi-faceted, comprised of a fundamental, primary inquiry regarding the identity of Jesus Christ, in response to an issue at this author's home church, analyzing the specific event of his conception, from both a theological and physiological perspective. The research will balance an alliance of religion and science, resulting in erudition that can be utilized by Christians with clear, compelling conviction and certainty.

The second purpose, which is equally important, is the development of an educational instrument regarding the conception of Jesus that prepares this author's home church youth group in particular, as well as other believers in general, to respond to arduous inquiries regarding the conception and identity of Jesus. The goal is to analyze potential biological mechanisms of the conception of Jesus allowing the reader to understand the Gospel and the deity of Jesus sans the sacrifice of intellect for the sake of belief, while simultaneously bolstering faith through plausibility of possibility.

From the research of the primary inquiry regarding the conception and identity of Jesus Christ and subsequent development of an educational instrument, a potential third purpose emerges creating a new ministerial resource which will focus on the correlation of theology and

science. This resource will be made available to others beyond the four walls of this author's home church and the Liberty University Rawlings School of Divinity, allowing the relevance from a biblical and historical perspective, coupled with evidence of modern day science, creating an expanded global reach of evangelical Christians.

Special Terminology

Special terms, specifically medical terminology, are used throughout this thesis project. These terms are numerous and can be used with variable meanings depending on references and context. This author refers the reader to the definitions page which follows the Contents in this thesis project for proper perspective and interpretation.

Statement of Limitations

There are some concepts, arguments, and issues interrelated to this topic regarding the identity of Jesus and the event of his conception. Investigating, researching, and presenting such aspects would detract from the intent of this research. Accordingly, this thesis project is conferred with the following limitations:

First, this research is not a presentation from an apologetics posture. This author, who self-identifies as an Evangelical New Testament Christian, opines from the position the divine origin and authority of biblical scriptures is complete; thus, the scripture is inspired by God, penned by men as instruments of God, and is an inexhaustible fountain of truth; therefore, no discussion of scripture is required nor will a defense be provided throughout this thesis project.

Second, this research is not a presentation regarding the nature, identity, or explanation of the divine Godhead. The relationship of Jesus Christ to God the Father and the Holy Spirit is extraordinarily intertwined. Scripture itself acknowledges the Godhead as a “mystery” (Col 2:2, 9); therefore, this author does not attempt to fathom this sacred mystery but focuses specifically on the event of the conception of Jesus Christ from a scriptural and scientific stance.

Third, this author understands that doctrines such as the Hypostatic Union and *communication idiomatum*, speak of a dual nature of Jesus Christ, while Eutychianism, Nestorianism, and Monophysitism are theological errors that seek to dispute or discredit these doctrines. This thesis project is not a presentation or defense of these orthodox doctrines about the nature of Jesus Christ or an explanation or refutation of the pertinent theological errors.

Fourth, this thesis project does not seek to attack or defend pedagogical dogma of the institutions, practices or traditions affiliated with the various religions worldwide. This research is undertaken in an adjunct posture, allowing the reader to form his/her own independent opinions regarding religious doctrines. These opinions can only be formulated through the process of conceptualizing associated rationally understood belief based on truth. While the process may be uncomfortable for readers with a differing belief system, the intent is to present facts while allowing the relevance to be exemplified in both theological and scientific sources.

Fifth, this thesis project does not focus on the status or veneration of Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ. This author acknowledges the existence of well-known arguments regarding whether the Hebrew and Greek words teach that the Messiah was born of a “virgin” or a “young maiden” and the debates regarding the perpetual virginity of Mary. The emphasis of this thesis project discussion focuses on the potential manner of the conception of Jesus based on scientific

relevance with limited discussion of any debates which focus on the status of the mother of Jesus.

Sixth, this author recognizes various biblical translations proffer variable meanings. While Hebrew and Greek languages will be utilized in the analysis of scriptural references, this author limits the use of biblical scripture to the New King James Version (NKJV), thus different biblical translations will not be consulted, and variable meanings will not be included in this thesis project.

Seventh, the work of this thesis project does not intend to contribute to liberal Christianity. While this thesis project will explore and reference scientific and rational application to the event of the conception of Jesus Christ, it does not discredit miracles and other divine intervention; it cross-references science in support of versus the exclusion of the divine.

Eighth, while this author is aware of the concept of the universal and eternal priesthood of Jesus Christ, the research for this thesis project will not focus on the topic of sacerdotalism. This author is not purporting this topic should be ignored as there is overlap with the conception and deity of Jesus Christ. There simply is not sufficient space to address the sacerdotal aspects of Jesus Christ within this thesis project.

Ninth, this author acknowledges there are various arguments for the existence of God including Pascal's Wager, the Ontological Argument, the Cosmological Argument (first cause argument), the Teleological Argument (the argument from design), the Moral Argument, Religious Experience, and the Argument from Miracles. This thesis project is not a presentation, defense, endorsement or explanation regarding any of these well-known arguments.

Tenth, there exist many views regarding the nature of God such as Apollinarianism, Arianism, Atheism, Deism, Docetism, Gnosticism, Modalistic Monarchianism, Mormonism, Nestorianism, Pantheism, Sabellianism, and UPC Modalism. This thesis project is not a presentation or discussion regarding these various views and is not an explanation regarding God's nature.

Eleventh, this thesis project is not an expanded interpretation from a hermeneutics position or an exegesis of scripture. No presentation or discussion will be proffered, except limited comments. This thesis project will use science to complement and support biblical scriptures about the conception of Jesus Christ and will seek to determine the plausibility of a divine conception based on modern day scientific evidence.

Twelfth, this thesis project is not a discussion regarding feminist, gender-based or social justice arguments related to women in general or specifically to Mary, the mother of Jesus. The focus of this thesis project remains on the plausibility of Mary's virginal conception of Jesus, supported by scientific inquiry.

Thirteenth, this thesis project does not purport to substitute science in place of faith. Scripture is clear that believers have a measure of faith as it relates to his/her assigned role in the body of Christ (Rom 12:3), and that Christ is the author and perfecter of faith (Heb 12:2). Individuals can experience salvation by grace through faith, which is itself a gift of God (Eph 2:8-9). Sadly, individuals suffer from little faith (cf. Math 6:30, 8:26, and 16:8) or a wavering faith (Mark 9:24); therefore, this thesis project seeks to present information which may serve as a catalyst that can assist individuals in the encouragement and growth of their faith and belief in God.

Fourteenth, this thesis project is not a discussion of the incarnation of Jesus Christ; it is a discussion on the virginal conception of Jesus Christ which is the means or gateway as to how the incarnation occurred.

Finally, this research deals with realities about the divine, and the interaction of the divine with humankind, for which there are no clear definitions, and thus cannot be definitively grasped. Inferences, suggestions, and conclusions will invariably arise from this thesis project that lacks absolute proof, at least at this point. This author may proffer hypotheses based on proven scientific fact, and readers will be challenged to ascertain possibilities juxtaposed against theological truths. Ultimately, readers may be left with questions for which only God has the answers.

The Theoretical Basis for the Thesis Project

Several factors stimulated this topic selection. First, some religious scholars, citing an absence of hard data, have been reticent to broach subjects that “cannot be proven.” In his lecture titled “Embryology in the Qur’an” given May 8, 1990, at the University of Illinois in Chicago, noted Christian embryologist Dr. Keith Moore stated, “If you cannot prove it, do not discuss it.” Many scholars appear to have embraced Dr. Moore’s stance of silence on controversial topics. There appears to be limited data on certain aspects of the events surrounding Jesus and his life, specifically the conception. The Gospel narrators themselves provide limited snippets of information on this topic with the prophecy of this event foretold in Genesis (Gen 3:15), Micah (Mic 5:4), and Isaiah (Isa 7:14, 9:6-7, 53) and the fulfillment

revealed, in detail, only in the Gospels of Matthew (Matt 1:18-21) and Luke (Luke 2:1-20). Additionally, Matthew and Luke provide different narratives with Matthew focused on Joseph, the adoptive father of Jesus, while Luke centers his discussion on Mary, the mother of Jesus. The “Quran accepts the virginal conception of Jesus as a historical event.”⁵² Other religions had miraculous births, but nothing which compares to the conception of Jesus in the womb of the Virgin Mary.

Given the present state of scientific advancement, including assisted reproductive technology (ART), there is no question that virgin births are possible, and there now exists the ability to scientifically analyze and question if the prophecies of the Old Testament and their fulfillment as recorded in the New Testament deserves additional merit in contributing to the understanding of the identity of Jesus Christ. In summary, this author asserts the possibility of scientific discoveries and technology that suggest tangible proof of Jesus as Deity.

Second, many papers, books, journals, documents, and articles that have been written regarding the conception do not accurately differentiate the virginal conception from the virginal birth. Others contain errors. For example, Sandra Tanner, a Christian since October of 1959 and the great-great-granddaughter of Brigham Young, the second president of the Mormon Church,⁵³ writes:

While Mormon leaders assert that they believe in the virgin birth they have changed the definition. The Latter Day Saint Church (LDS) teaches that God the Father has a physical, tangible, resurrected body and that God literally sired Jesus in the same physical sense that any other man begets a child. Consequently the virgin birth is redefined

⁵²Gerald O’Collins, *Christology: A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013): 287.

⁵³ Sandra Tanner, “About Sandra Tanner,” *Good News for LDS*, <http://www.goodnewsforlds.com/bios/sandra-tanner.html> (Accessed August 28, 2013).

to mean Mary had intercourse with a god, not a mortal, in order to literally conceive the baby Jesus.⁵⁴

This position of the LDS Church is, of course, inconsistent with Scripture. This author thus recognizes an opportunity to analyze the possible physiological conception of Jesus while simultaneously comparing the events with theology. This allows one to arrive at a correct scientific and theological application of the conception of Jesus that provides additional insights to the identity and deity of Jesus Christ.

Third, this author's observations regarding liberal Christianity, the secular world's attack on Christianity, and simultaneous regulatory constraints inflicted on religious freedoms because of political correctness drives a sense of urgency to address the apostasy of the church, (Matt 24:10-12). A falling away from correct theological doctrine and understanding creates a heightened sense of urgency to research, write, and offer additional insight and education regarding the identity of Jesus Christ.

Finally, this author's professional career and experience as a registered nurse, coupled with the time spent as a student at the Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University, has contributed to compelling driving interest in personal ministerial aspirations. This creates opportunity not only for the youth and adult congregants at this author's home church but also allows the results of this research to contribute to current and future students at Liberty University, and Christians in general, as an overall resource, hopefully creating, and contributing

⁵⁴ Sandra Tanner, *LDS Leaders Define Their Concept of Jesus Christ, Literal Son of God*, <http://utlm.org/onlineresources/ldsleadersconceptofjesus>. (Accessed August 28, 2013).

to a catalyst for a dynamic ministerial impact of evangelicals on a local, national, and international basis.

The Statement of Methodology

This author's endeavor to answer the question, "Who is Jesus Christ?" as it pertains to his conception, will include a primary approach of both analytical and theological research. This research will be specifically gleaned from theological and medical resources. Several areas will be researched, including the views on this subject that are held by the three major monotheistic religions, the basic biblical accounts of the conception of Jesus, the critical views of the conception of Jesus, the theological significance of the virginal conception, and the evidence/testimony of science regarding conception from normal human reproduction contrasted with the conception of Jesus Christ. Accordingly, research will be obtained from available information on the topic of the conception the Bible, using the New King James Version cross-referenced with Old Testament Hebrew and New Testament Greek Lexicons. Other resources include the Catholic Apostolic Constitution *Ineffabilis Deus*, the Quran, and other books of Judaism including the Talmud.

Secondary reviews include ancient works by Josephus Flavius, Augustine, Ignatius, Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Irenaeus, Cyprian, Arnobius, Origen, and Tertullian; as well as works by modern authors such as Michael Brown, Ravi Zacharias, Gary Habermas, John Lennox, Alister McGrath, and Nabeel Qureshi. Information is sought not from a pure apologetics view but for links to concepts that will relate to the specific event upon which this project is focused.

The additional primary research will also be conducted, exploring medical and scientific books, journals, papers, articles, and clinical trials, past and present. Research topics will include the normal human biology of conception and reproduction. In addition to literature, there exist lectures with associated conference papers from prominent researchers and apologists that address the topics to which this thesis project speaks.

Finally, interviews will be conducted with medical professionals, specifically physicians and other professionals who may have contributed scientifically accepted, scholarly written works in their respective field of study, allowing this author to ascertain a correlation of the specific event of the conception of Jesus Christ. Additional interviews will be sought with apologists and religious leaders of various faiths, specifically Islam, Judaism, and Christianity including Catholicism, with the intent of discovering commonality among the interviewees regarding the identity of Jesus within his unique conception.

There will be two instruments for personal interviews. Interviews related to religious aspects of the project will have limited questions. For example, a question may ask “Does your religion embrace the virgin conception of Jesus? If not, why and what is your perspective of this event according to your specific religion?” For medical interviews, the interview questions will be specific to the topic, such as, “What does each human parent contribute to the genetic makeup of their offspring?” This author is looking for verbal confirmation and explanation of medical processes and other medical issues related to human reproduction, specifically conception, that have been scientifically substantiated. No patients will be interviewed during the interview phase of this thesis project.

All information, from the various resources, will be analyzed for similarity as well as differences. Additionally, the medical data will be cross-referenced with the biblical accounts of

the conception. This author anticipates the postulation of scientific evidence to support faith-based theological beliefs.

Literature Review

A broad literature review related to the specific event of the conception of Jesus Christ based on a theological and physiological perspective reveals a plethora of books, articles, and journals, with the majority, focused on theological aspects and arguments merged with the Virgin Birth. Interestingly, this author finds limited information which discusses or correlates specific scientific plausibility to the Divine Virgin Conception of Jesus Christ; therefore, this author anticipates this thesis project will postulate newly developed material and concepts which juxtaposes theology with science regarding this topic.

The Conception of Jesus Christ, as previously stated, is a topic which has been omitted from discussions, or treated as an inevitable action which preceded the Virgin Birth. Many of the resources which exist are written from the Catholic Perspective. Some of the available material on this topic is dated, reflecting an interest in this topic years ago. Absent modern day scientific technologies, the authors of these older articles were unable to link theology with science, which may contribute to the lack of available information on this topic.

This author will begin by listing the scriptural references that are apropos to this topic. Biblical references are taken from *The Holy Bible, New King James Version*, Nashville, Thomas Nelson Inc., (1994). The Old Testament prophecy is presented first, followed by the New Testament fulfillment.

Genesis 3:15, is the prophecy that the Messiah would be born of a woman and is the first hint of a virginal conception, as the one who will crush the head of the serpent is called the

“seed of the woman.” This stands in stark contrast of the normal biblical format of referring first to the father versus the mother of a child and contrasts with the customary biblical usage of “seed” to refer to that which contributes to the process of conception (cf Lev 15:32) and, by application, to the offspring it produces.

In Genesis 12:1-4, this is the prophecy which tells that the Messiah will be a descendant of Abraham. Fulfillment of this prophecy is recognized in Matthew 1:1, 17, 20, where a virgin brings forth a child, and in Galatians 4:4 where Paul writes that “God sent his Son, made of a woman.” This is a most intriguing scripture from a scientific standpoint and gives this author a renewed interest in the creation of a hypothesis regarding the actual effect of the Holy Spirit upon Mary at the time of conception.

Isaiah 7:14 predicts that the Messiah will be born of a virgin. This prophecy is fulfilled in Matthew 1:22-23 and Luke 1:26-33. Isaiah 9:6-7 also states, “For unto us a child is born.” Fulfillment is also realized in Luke 1:26-38, where the angel tells Mary she will bring forth a son and is to call him Jesus.

Luke 1:45-55 references the promise of God to Mary, a simple, ordinary, Jewish girl with an extraordinary character. Despite the cost of public shame and loss of personal goals, Mary exemplified her obedience in yielding her body to the Creator regarding the Christ Child.

Pertinent Old Testament scriptures explicitly referenced in the Gospel narratives regarding the birth of Christ include Psalm 45:6-7 and Daniel 2:44. These scriptures speak of Messiah’s throne being anointed as well as eternal and unchanging. These scriptures require inferences to be made regarding Jesus’ identity; specifically that he was the Messiah. Fulfillment of these prophecies is found in Luke 1:33 as well as Hebrews 1:8-12.

Isaiah 7:14 foretells that Messiah would be called “Emmanuel – God with us!” This is fulfilled with the birth of Jesus Christ as reflected in Matthew 1:2 and in John 1:1-5, 14 where Scripture states “the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.” This Scripture is of paramount importance as one begins to grasp the enormity of the unique gift which God gave to the world. Colossians 1:15-18 expounds on this concept when readers understand that Jesus is the “image of the invisible God.”

Isaiah 53:3 and Psalm 69:8 foretell the rejection of the Messiah by his own people, and in this author’s opinion is two of the most amazing scriptures as it sets the tone for the in-grafting of the Gentile people, showing Jesus as Messiah for all peoples, not just to the chosen people of the Jewish nation. Fulfillment is found in John 1:11 and John 7:5.

Other scriptures include Deuteronomy 18:15 which state the Messiah would be a prophet like Moses. Peter proclaims that this is fulfilled by Jesus in Acts 3:20-22. Psalm 2:6-9 states the Messiah would be declared “the Son of God.” Fulfillment is recognized in Matthew 3:16-17.

One of the greatest prophecies in the Bible is found in Isaiah 53:5-12, teaching that Messiah would die as a “sacrifice for sin.” This fulfilment of this prophecy by the death of Jesus is seen in such passages as 1 Peter 2:22-25 and is the reason for every born-again Christian to celebrate, and to have a hope for an eternal life with God himself.

There are references from books, articles, and journals that deal with the theological issues and physiological issues associated with the conception of Jesus Christ although limited in the contrasting effect. The literature has been divided into sections based on the contents of this project. The following is a review of literature.

Theological Material

Dr. Robert James Berry is the author of “The Virgin Birth of Christ,” published in *Science & Christian Belief*. Dr. Berry examines the need for such a miracle of a Virgin Birth that links Jesus to humankind in a distinct way as divine yet human; a necessary component of Christian faith.⁵⁵

Father Raymond Edward Brown wrote *The Virginal Conception and Bodily Resurrection of Jesus*. In this book, Brown deals with two areas, the virgin conception and the resurrection of Jesus. Brown presents both events from the Roman Catholic perspective but suggests there are two different views, a literal view and a symbolic view which he attributes to translation issues from the Hebrew text.⁵⁶

Dr. William Lane Craig wrote the book *Rediscovering the Historical Jesus: The Evidence for Jesus*. In this book, Craig addresses the historicity of Jesus’ life including his miracles, trial, crucifixion, resurrection and his bodacious proclamation that he was the Son of God.⁵⁷

Dr. Daniel Doriani penned *The Deity of Christ in the Synoptic Gospels*. In this journal, Dr. Doriani launches into a diatribe on the failure of conservative theologians and evangelicals to assert and acknowledge Jesus’ self-awareness of his identity –that of deity.⁵⁸

Recent Perspectives on the Reliability of the Gospels, was written by prominent apologetics author Dr. Gary R. Habermas. In this journal article, Habermas discusses the

⁵⁵ Robert James Berry. “The Virgin Birth of Christ,” *Science & Christian Belief*, vol 8, no. 2 (1996): 1010-110.

⁵⁶ Raymond E. Brown. *The Virginal Conception and Bodily Resurrection of Jesus*. (New York: Paulist Press, 1972):1-5.

⁵⁷ William Lane Craig, “Rediscovering the Historical Jesus: The Evidence for Jesus,” *Faith and Mission* 15 (1998): 16-26.

⁵⁸ Daniel Doriani. “The Deity of Christ in the Synoptic Gospels” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, vol. JETS 37:3 (Sept 1994): 333-350.

trustworthiness of the New Testament, addressing critical arguments. His discussion includes ways that critical scholars analyze the Gospel texts and judge their reliability.⁵⁹

Dr. David Albert Jones wrote, *The Soul of the Embryo: An Enquiry into the Status of the Human Embryo in the Christian Tradition*. In this book, Jones presents the Judeo-Christian view of the embryo from the Old Testament. Jones applies Christian insights to scenarios outlining how response to the treatment of human embryos deviates from or embraces tradition. This provides this author with information regarding how Jesus and his conception would be viewed from a Jewish perspective.⁶⁰

J. Gresham Machen's book, *Virgin Birth of Christ*, was written in 1930. Professor of New Testament at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, Machen questions the virgin birth of Jesus. This book is written from both a scholarly compendium of information as well as an apologetic.⁶¹

Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology, edited by John M. Walter Elwell, published in 2001, addresses the topic of the virgin birth of Jesus. Elwell asks if it is possible to be saved without believing in the virgin birth. Elwell postulates that to reject the virgin birth is to reject God's Word and that this is disobedience that leads to a compromise in other areas of doctrine.⁶²

⁵⁹ Gary R. Habermas, "Recent Perspectives on the Reliability of the Gospels," *Christian Research Journal*/vol. 28, no. 1 (2005): 16-26

⁶⁰ David Albert Jones, *The Soul of the Embryo: An Enquiry into the Status of the Human Embryo in the Christian Tradition*. (London: Continuum, 2004), 6-13.

⁶¹ J. Gresham Machen, *Virgin Birth of Christ*, (London: James Clarke & Co; 3rd Edition, 1987), 210.

⁶² Walter Elwell, "Virgin Birth of Jesus," *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*. Baker Academic; 2 edition (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2001), 1143-45.

Jesus Revealed: Know Him Better to Love Him Better, written by Dr. Mark D. Roberts, deals with the topic of the various, yet complex, the character of Christ, including both his divine and human qualities. Roberts explores the many facets of Jesus and his identity and provides the reader with a greater understanding of the claims Jesus personally made about his own identity.⁶³

Edited by Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall SJ, and Gerald O'Collins SJ, *The Incarnation: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Incarnation of the Son of God*, is a book which is a compilation of presentations and interdisciplinary studies by 24 different scholars at the Incarnation Summit. The primary discussion presents several provocative arguments on the Incarnation of the Son of God.⁶⁴

The Historical Jesus: Ancient Evidence for the Life of Christ, written by Dr. Gary Habermas, uses artifactual, inscriptional, and literary evidence supported by ordinary canons of historical research to prove that Jesus was a real person who lived in Palestine in the first century.⁶⁵

Can We Trust the Gospels? Investigating the Reliability of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John was written by Mark Roberts. The author examines and refutes some of the most common criticisms of the Gospels and explains why individuals can trust the Gospels two millennia after they were penned.⁶⁶

⁶³ Mark D. Roberts, *Jesus Revealed: Know Him Better To Love Him Better*. (Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook Press, 2002), 82-83.

⁶⁴ Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O'Collins. *The Incarnation: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Incarnation of the Son of God*. (Oxford England, Oxford University Press., 2009), 62-64, 292-293, 303.

⁶⁵ Gary R. Habermas, *The Historical Jesus: Ancient Evidence for the Life of Christ*. (Joplin, MO: College Press Publishing Company, 1996), 29-37.

⁶⁶ Mark Roberts, *Can We Trust the Gospels? Investigating the Reliability of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John*. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007), 39-50.

Raymond E. Brown wrote *The Birth of the Messiah*. In this classic study of the nature and message of the infancy narratives, the author elaborates on the virginity of Mary the Mother of Jesus. Brown also ties the symbolism of Mary's willingness to carry the Christ Child to obedience to perform the will of God as exemplified by the first disciples. From this foundation, Brown expounds on the incarnation and its importance.⁶⁷

The Gospel According to Luke: New Testament (New Collegeville Bible Commentary. New Testament) is a three-volume commentary written by Michael Patella and Daniel Durken. In these books, the authors explain main literary themes by reviewing the story line in Luke. The authors masterfully deal with events in the life of Jesus based on first-hand knowledge from archaeological sites.⁶⁸

Writer Kyung Joon Kim wrote *Is Jesus Divine? Compelling Evidences of Jesus' Deity*. In this book, Kim examines objective evidence for Jesus' claims of divinity. This baseline information assists this author in analyzing the deity of Christ from the Jewish perspective.⁶⁹

The book *Christology: A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus* by Gerald O'Collins, deal with dogmatic criticism of the questions of systematic Christology. O'Collins questions the presentation of Jesus by the orthodox faith. He asks questions such as, "Is Jesus the universal Saviour?" and "How is this stance reconciled with other major world religions?" O'Collins also provides an in-depth analysis of some of the more famous biblical and historical

⁶⁷ Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke*. (New York: Anchor Bible Reference Library, 1993), 124-127.

⁶⁸ Michael Patella, *The Gospel According to Luke: New Testament* vol 3 of the New Collegeville Bible Commentary. (Collegeville, MN, Liturgical Press, 2016), 25-38.

⁶⁹ Joon Kyung Kim, *Is Jesus Divine?: Compelling Evidences of Jesus' Deity* (Sisters, Oregon: Deep River Books, 2010), 35-43.

scholarship. This author has found this work to be extremely valuable for attaining a clear and balanced perspective of the deity of Jesus.⁷⁰

Scientific Material

S. Balfour-Lynn, in his 1956 article entitled, “Parthenogenesis in Human Beings,” discusses parthenogenesis in humans that are defined as asexual reproduction in that growth and development of embryos occur without fertilization. This article provides valuable insight into the viability of a virgin birth as it has been proven since the publication of Balfour-Lynn’s article asexual reproduction naturally occurs only in invertebrates as opposed to mammals (humans). This article also provides speculation as to the development of the Christ Child in the womb after the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit.⁷¹

Dr. M.R. DeHaan who was both a physician and theologian wrote *The Chemistry of the Blood*. In this older yet most interesting book, DeHaan correlates the scripture to science specifically as it applies to the chemical composition of human blood and the possible differences in the blood of Jesus Christ. This book provides this author foundational research from both a scientific and theological perspective.⁷²

⁷⁰ Gerald O’Collins, *Christology: A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 21-24.

⁷¹ Stanley Balfour-Lynn, “Parthenogenesis in Human Beings,” *The Lancet*, vol267/iss6931 (1956):1071 – 1072. Accessed October 8, 2013, [http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(56\)90846-7/fulltext](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(56)90846-7/fulltext)

⁷² M.R. DeHaan, *The Chemistry of the Blood*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1943), 14-17.

Translated by Dr. A. G. Krishna Warriar and written by Adhyatma Upanishad, *Chennaiis*, is primarily a Hindu religious article. This short article provides an ancient Hindu view of embryology to be compared with the Jewish view of embryology.⁷³

Parthenogenesis in Human Beings is a second book on the subject written by J.W. Nicholas, and H. Spurway. The process is detailed and the absence of the complement of the XY chromosomes is explained, laying the foundation for a hypothesis regarding the maturation of the embryonic Christ as fetus.⁷⁴

Robert George and Christopher Tollefsen penned the book entitled *Embryo: A Defense of Human Life*. In this book, the authors eschew the religious perspective and argue that a fetus, at the moment of conception, based purely from a scientific and physiological perspective, is a human being. This book explores the rights of the unborn and other issues such as stem-cell research, in-vitro fertilization, and abortion, and provides detailed information from a scientific perspective on conception.⁷⁵

Written by Catholic priest Father Norman M. Ford, *The Prenatal Person: Ethics from Conception to Birth* is a book which focuses on ethical issues related to reproductive technology. Penned, from a Catholic perspective, the book walks the reader through the ethical issues of

⁷³ Adhyatma Upanishad, Translated by Dr. A. G. Krishna Warriar. Chennaiis,(The Theosophical Publishing House: Chennaiis, 2006), Accessed May 2014, <http://cincinnatiemple.com/downloads/Upanishad-Complete.pdf>; 1-5

⁷⁴ J.W. Nicholas and H. Spurway, "Parthenogenesis In Human Beings," *The Lancet*, vol 268, issue 6932, (July 7, 1956), 7-48.

⁷⁵ Robert P. George and Christopher Tollefsen. *Embryo: A Defense of Human Life*. (New York: Doubleday, 2008), 8-16.

modern infertility treatment. For this author, this creates an interest in the plausibility that the conception of Christ may follow the laws of nature as well as being representative of a miracle.⁷⁶

Penned by Nigel M. de S. Cameron, *The New Medicine: Life and Death after Hippocrates* addresses the Hippocratic Oath, and embedded ethical standards within the oath realized in the practice of medicine. The writer expounds on the topics of euthanasia, abortion, and concepts associated with the relief of suffering. The writer makes it clear that modern medicine has deviated from the original vision for the practice of medicine and that a return to the original oath is apropos to approval by Muslims, Jews and Christians alike.⁷⁷

The second book by Father Norman M. Ford, *When Did I Begin? Conception of the Human Individual in History* investigates the theoretical, moral, and biological issues surrounding the debate over the beginning of human life. While this thesis project does not discuss abortion, the beginning of the life of Christ as an embryo, or fetus, in the womb of Mary the mother of Jesus merits consideration as it relates to life as defined in Leviticus. Additionally, this lays the framework for additional writings by this author on the topic of abortion at a future date.⁷⁸

Neil Gude, Claire Roberts, Bill Kaliois, and Roger King, collectively wrote *Growth and Function of the Normal Human Placenta*. In this book, medical professionals discuss the normal growth and development of the human placenta in support of the embryo/fetus. This book

⁷⁶ Norman M. Ford, *The Prenatal Person: Ethics from Conception to Birth*, (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2002), 28-30.

⁷⁷ Nigel M. de S. Cameron, "The New Medicine: Life and Death After Hippocrates." (Chicago: Bioethics Press, 2001): 15, Accessed June 5, 2016, <https://philpapers.org/rec/NIGCTN>.

⁷⁸ Norman M. Ford, *When Did I Begin?: Conception of the Human Individual in History, Philosophy and Science*. (Cambridge: University Press, 1989), 35-45. Accessed August 15, 2013, <https://philpapers.org/rec/FORWDI>

provides wonderful insight from a physiological perspective as to how the blood of Jesus Christ remained pure based on the biologic makeup of the female reproductive system allowing a holy sacrifice for the sins of the world.⁷⁹

Chapter Conclusion

Each of the sources listed above contributes to the research portion of this thesis project and is a sample of the available literature that pertains, at least in part, to this topic; however, none of these address the initial inquiry of juxtaposition of theology to scientific evidence regarding the conception of Jesus Christ and his deity in the manner sought by this author. Accordingly, this thesis will extrapolate the pertinent information from the respective sources and use it to construct a requisite foundational basis for this author's approach regarding hypotheses in application to the conception of Jesus Christ. Ultimately, individuals will develop an appreciation for who Jesus is by understanding the mystery and magnitude of his conception.

CHAPTER TWO

Research

There is no singular way to conduct research and no universally defined method proven superior for research. In some scenarios, combinations of different research methodologies are employed to triangulate findings especially when those findings are underpinned by various methodologies. Depending on the type of inquiry, some research methods may be more apropos than other research types. Such is the case as it applies to the inquiry of this thesis

⁷⁹Neil Gude, and Clair Roberts and Bill Kaliois and Roger King, "Growth and Function of the Normal Human Placenta," *Elsevier Thrombosis Research*, (2004): 114, 397-407.

project; therefore, this work employs more than one type of research method. The following describes the rationale for the selection of the thesis project research design, the research design utilized within this thesis project, the selection of subjects who participated in this research, including information regarding the rationale for those who declined or refused to participate in this research, the research approach, and the findings.

Rationale for Research Design

In the Statement of Limitations of this thesis project located in the Introduction, this author stated:

This research deals with realities about the divine and the human side for which there is no clear definition, and thus cannot be definitively grasped. Inferences, suggestions, and conclusions will invariably arise from this thesis project that lacks absolute proof, at least at this point.

One may, therefore, postulate the question; what is the point of researching and studying something for which there may be limited or questionable evidence or for which there may not be a definitive answer or proof? The answer to this question can be found within the statement itself, specifically the last half of the last sentence, “at least at this point.”

In this author’s opinion, a topic, thought, word, deed or item becomes tangible and relevant, at least to human beings, at the point in time of discovery, when it has an application or when additional information and understanding is gained of the intricate nuances of a generalized topic. “In the narrowest sense, the term “discovery” refers to the purported eureka moment of having a new insight.⁸⁰ The relevance of the discovery is not minimized or lost if it

⁸⁰ Jutta Schickore, "Scientific Discovery", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), Accessed June 14, 2015, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/scientific-discovery/>.

remains unrealized or unprovable. Why? The existence or discovery of something is not impacted based on its discoverability alone. Additionally, the relevance is not impacted if one is unable to understand, in its entirety, the subject in question. There are many noted and prominent mathematicians, physicists, and philosophers as well as modern-day experts and professionals who have attempted to provide their opinions and theories regarding this position.

Scottish philosopher and atheist David Hume explored this concept in the 1700s when he stated “you cannot derive ought from is” in his third book, part one; section one, *A Treatise of Human Nature*.⁸¹ In this *is-ought* theory, otherwise referred to as Hume’s Law or Hume’s Guillotine, Hume speaks of caution in using inferences when no explanation can be found which links an *ought* statement to an *is* statement. Hume’s premise is that when something is questionable, it should be identified as *ought* to be as opposed to something which *is* or known. This is problematic in any religion but specifically in the Christian religion for Hebrews 11:1 states, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Hume’s theory created a central question regarding ethical theory. “Religious critics have argued that the *is-ought* distinction threatens the validity of secular ethics, by rendering secular ethical systems subjective and arbitrary,”⁸² a viewpoint which this author does not agree as it is apparent, from a Christian theological perspective; the sheer presence of faith is and of itself evidence. “For by it (faith) the elders obtained a *good* testimony. By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible” (Heb 11:2-3).

⁸¹ David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (London: John Noon, 1739), 335.

⁸² Robin Craig, "Good Without God," in *The Australian Book of Atheism*. Warren Bonett (Melbourne, Vic: Scribe, 2010), 349–361.

Kurt Gödel in 1931, a well-known renowned Austrian mathematician responded to a generalized assertion in the early 1900s that logic can prove anything which is true. Gödel developed a set of incompleteness theorems which showed a plethora of mathematical truths which are true yet they could not be proven.⁸³ The ontological proof in Gödel's mathematical theorems was esoteric and convoluted, yet the foundation of the argument purported the existence of God. Interesting, in 2013, approximately 39 years after Gödel's death, two scientists, Christoph Benz Müller from Berlin's Free University and Bruno Woltzenlogel Paleo of the Technical University in Vienna were able to show Gödel's proof was correct.⁸⁴

The self-proclaimed atheist, and theoretical physicist, the late Dr. Stephen Hawking extended Gödel's mathematical truths to the discipline of physics. Hawking concluded truths exist regarding the cosmos which no scientific theory, regardless of how advanced, can be proven.⁸⁵ This author finds it ironic that Hawking could accept this truth regarding the cosmos but remained staunch in his atheism about the one who made the cosmos.

Much excitement is being generated by a relatively recent announcement by Montana State University regarding Albert Einstein's theory of relativity.⁸⁶ Einstein first put forth his theory in 1916. Now 100 years later there exists recent proof that the theory was correct; however, one must remember, it has taken a decade to confirm what originated as merely a theory. Bin Chen a researcher at Florida State University stated: "To be able to test general

⁸³ Douglas R. Hofstadter. *Gödel, Escher Bach; An Eternal Golden Braid*. (New York: Basic Books, 2006) 266-275.

⁸⁴ David Knight, "Computer Scientists 'Prove' God Exists". *Spiegel* (2013). Accessed August 8, 2016, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/scientists-use-computer-to-mathematically-prove-goedel-god-theorem-a-928668.html>

⁸⁵ *Principia* 15, no. 3 (2011) :453-59.

⁸⁶ Arutz Sheva Staff, "Scientists to Unveil Proof Of Einstein's Theory Of Relativity." *Israel Nations News* (2016). Accessed November 15, 2016, <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/207867#.VsKjN5v2aP8>,

relativity is of crucial importance to physicists and astronomers.”⁸⁷ How much more crucial for believers to have faith, to at least make an attempt to understand the identity of Jesus Christ, especially as it relates to his conception?

Other individuals from different sectors have also recognized and commented on the topic of a lack of a definitive answer or proof. Donald H. Rumsfeld, who served as the Secretary of Defense from 2001 to 2006 under President George W. Bush made this statement in response to a question during a U.S. Department of Defense news briefing in Washington D.C. on February 12, 2002:

Reports that say that something hasn't happened are always interesting to me, because as we know, there are known knowns; there are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns — the ones we don't know we don't know.⁸⁸

At first blush Rumsfeld appears to have delivered a complex, confusing statement; however, he is reiterating the simple fact there remains information that exists, yet remains unknown simply because it has not yet been discovered. Things, situations, and concepts exist, yet no one has turned their attention to it. As a consequence the things and concepts are real yet they remain unrealized as a known. It is an unknown unknown. The fact there exist unknown unknowns does not minimize the importance of that unknown, a position consistent with that of this author, specifically as it pertains to the topic of this thesis project.

⁸⁷ Florida State University, “More Proof Of Einstein's General Theory Of Relativity.” *Science News*, (2016). Accessed February 15, 2016, <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2015/11/151117145055.htm>.

⁸⁸ Donald Rumsfeld, “Department of Defense News Briefing” *United States Government*, (2002) <http://archive.defense.gov/Transcripts/Transcript.aspx?TranscriptID=2636>. Accessed August 6, 2014.

During one of this author's interviews for this thesis project, a prominent, self-professed Christian, obstetrician gynecologist,⁸⁹ in Nashville, Tennessee, who has been publically threatened for his positions regarding pro-life, echoed Donald Rumsfeld's opinion when stating:

“Sometimes one should shine the light on a topic which has always existed yet has never been examined or discussed. You are not changing anything or creating something new when you speak of the conception of Jesus Christ. You are simply shining the light to an area which has existed but has remained in the corner of darkness.”⁹⁰

These individuals as well as this author have all separately arrived at a consensus; there indeed are things which are true, however they cannot be proven, at least at this point. Despite that fact, that reason alone should not deter one from examining or discrediting an inquiry based on the supposition an item or issue cannot be proven as factual. The statement by this author that things may not be known “at this point” echoes the sentiments of these individuals. This writer believes there is definitive value in seeking God's truth, uncovering ‘unknown unknowns,’ shining a light on a topic which has been in darkness, examining scientific facts and biblical statements in an attempt to determine if there is a greater relevance and or application to those unknowns in the current life of humankind. The intent is to ask the question and discover if an unknown can become a known.

While this author has addressed the rationale for studying something for which there is no definitive answer, at this point, there are other types of inquiries for which one must be cognizant when examining this particular topic of the conception of Jesus Christ; those known as scriptural and logical scientific inquiries. Scripture states “Test all things; hold fast that which is good” (1

⁸⁹ Interview with anonymous Christian physician, Obstetrician/Gynecologist, Nashville, TN., June 10, 2015.

⁹⁰ Interview with anonymous Christian physician, Obstetrician/Gynecologist, Nashville, TN., June 10, 2015.

Thess 5:21). To test or prove a subject, the details surrounding that event must first be examined from scripture and not limited to only one scripture or a handful of verses in isolation. It is imperative to understand scripture in its proper context which includes, according to Dr. Roy Zuck, ⁹¹ former senior professor emeritus of Bible Exposition at Dallas Theological Seminary and editor of *Bibliotheca Sacra* the use of the following four principles:

Literal meaning (what it says), historical setting (the events of the story, to whom it is addressed, and how it was understood at that time), grammar (the immediate sentence and paragraph within which a word or phrase is found) and synthesis (comparing it with other parts of Scripture for a fuller meaning).

This author agrees with Dr. Zuck's principles, as they are espoused by other theologians, seminary professors, and Christians. Accordingly, this author follows this format when reading or researching scripture on a generalized or personal basis. This method has been applied to this thesis project and contributes greatly to the research design of this thesis project.

Dr. John Lennox, Professor of Mathematics at Oxford University, Fellow in Mathematics and the Philosophy of Science at Green Templeton College, Oxford and renowned Christian Apologist, during a presentation on February 22, 2001, at the Irvine Auditorium of the University of Pennsylvania campus stated that some people are "interested in the logical analysis of argument," a concept which has to be considered in the research design and writing of this thesis project as well as any research project. In considering logical analysis of the argument during the application of research one should consider the formation of theory from fact based on "inductive reasoning because a generalization is made on a limited number of observations,"⁹² as

⁹¹ Roy B. Zuck. *Basic Bible Interpretation: A Practical Guide to Discovering Biblical Truth*. (Colorado Springs, Co: Victor Books, 1991):127.

⁹² Kris E, Berg, and Richard Wayne Latin. *Essentials of Research Methods in Health, Physical Education, Exercise Science, and Recreation*. (Philadelphia: Wolters Kluwer, 2008):9.

well as deductive reasoning which is the opposite of inductive reasoning as it “proceeds from the general to the specific.”⁹³ One cannot conclude until, in this author’s opinion, resources are exhaustively examined regarding the research topic, and both inductive and deductive reasoning is applied. Accordingly, the examination of the conception of Jesus Christ must be considered from both an Old Testament and New Testament perspective; however, the analysis must also include logical evidence, from a scientific position, which contributes to its overall understanding.

The Holy Scripture is “God’s Word” (John 1:1), literally “God-breathed” (2 Tim 3:16), therefore the findings are neither arrogantly conceived nor superficial; rather the content of the scripture shows God’s counsel and His wisdom. Noted Christian, and apologist Dr. Ravi Zacharias, well known for debates with unbelievers such as Christopher Hitchens, Richard Dawkins and Stephen Hawking, posed this question on September 16, 2015 at Christ Community Chapel, Hudson, Ohio, “will our knowledge of science eventually become so great that we won’t have any need for a God?” This author finds this statement very poignant. If one elects to ignore scripture and reverts merely to other sources, including using science as the foundation and starting point of inquiry, the results will be skewed and possibly unattainable, a principle which has proven to be valid as exemplified by those prominent individuals such as Hume, and Hawking. When scripture is properly researched and studied and the Holy Spirit inspires the reader (1 Cor 2:14), one will find, in this author’s opinion, science follows God’s word and undergirds the scripture. The logic to the argument is revealed. Thus this process results in clear, informed, understanding from both spiritual and logical perspectives. This

⁹³ Kris E, Berg, and Richard Wayne Latin. *Essentials of Research Methods in Health, Physical Education, Exercise Science, and Recreation*. (Philadelphia: Wolters Kluwer, 2008):9.

author, therefore, follows a specific sequence in examination of this thesis project topic beginning with scripture as the foundational starting point followed by the application of scientific evidence.

Attempting to answer the question if the conception of Jesus Christ can be proven by modern science in support of his identity and deity according to the scenarios present in scripture may seem futile to some. It is a question which cannot be isolated by committed believers who encase their opinions in pure theological text. It is a question which cannot be justified by those who rely solely on scientific evidence. It is a unique question which requires focused research and the contrast of theology with science. This author purports it is a topic which has not yet been studied in the manner which is proposed by this author; specifically the juxtaposition of theology with science. While science is not the only arbiter of truth, the significance of the implications may not yet be understood and the importance of this topic cannot be ignored, underestimated, or minimized, especially for anyone who purports to self-identify as a Christian. For this author, this question must be answered as the youth and adult congregants of this authors' home church must be able to articulate a convincing argument when next faced with unbelievers at the numerous Christmas programs which will follow in years to come.

Research Design

The original issue regarding this topic arose within this author's home church. This resulted in many discussions among the local senior and assistant pastors, deacons, and this author regarding the necessity for a reply and structure of such a response to the original issue of visitors dismissing the nativity, questioning the sheer existence of Jesus Christ and the conundrum experienced by the youth in attempting to formulate a response to those of no faith

with a response which was purely faith-based. The incident was shared by the local senior pastor with the associated regional district churches and associated leadership. It became apparent the challenge of the issue required a response at this author's home church, however, there was the desire to simultaneously make this material available to any sister church or other religious institution that wished to utilize it for educational purposes.

At the heart of the discussion remained the quest to identify the type of inquiry which was required to be able to conduct valid research resulting in the subsequent development of an educational instrument on this topic. All recognized the significance and potential implication of this work providing input as to how the research might be conducted and the manner in which this information needed to be presented to the various congregations and respective congregants. Consequently and most importantly, this author's thesis project Mentor at the time, Dr. Charles Davidson, was instrumental in providing guidance as to the type of research design that would be required to answer the original inquiry while simultaneously adhering to the requirements as stipulated in the Doctor of Ministry thesis project Manual of Liberty University Rawlings School of Divinity.

A preliminary search on the topic revealed minimal material dedicated strictly to the conception of Jesus Christ; however, there was a plethora of material related to the incarnation, birth, and deity of Christ with snippets of conception information embedded within the broader context of the topic. Adding to the complexity of the research was an oversight or misunderstanding of terms which have randomly and haphazardly been utilized synonymously for centuries when in fact they are vastly different. This author is referring to the implicit use of the phrase conception of Jesus juxtaposed with the phrase incarnation of Jesus as equivalent terms in theology. Conception and incarnation do not mean the same thing. They are not

synonymous terms and should not be used interchangeably. The conception of Jesus is the mechanism or gateway as to “how” the incarnation occurred and it is vastly different from normal human conception as will be discussed in detail in Chapter IV. The incarnation is the physical act of fulfillment of taking on flesh “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1), “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14).

Further fueling this misunderstanding is the lack of consistency among medical sources and the readily available access individuals have to incorrect and inconsistent information. For example, MedicineNet.com, a source available to anyone with internet access, defines conception as “The union between the sperm and ovum. Synonymous with fertilization. The onset of pregnancy, marked by implantation of the blastocyst into the endometrium.”⁹⁴ These definitions by MedicineNet.com are incongruent with the science of human reproduction in that conception is not the same as fertilization and fertilization is not the same as implantation. One can begin to understand how medical science itself contributes to misinformation as it applies to human conception, and creating confusion as it applies to the supernatural conception of Jesus Christ. Additional discussion on the differences in these terms will be discussed in Chapter IV of this thesis project.

Understanding that both theology and science must be examined in the research of this thesis project, it was determined that several research methods would be utilized. First, this author employed a method of analytical and theoretical research, meaning a significant portion, and in fact, the majority of research is literature based. The research would be coupled with

⁹⁴ MedicineNet, “medical definition of conception.” Accessed October 16, 2015, <https://www.medicinenet.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=31242> ,

interviews by specific individuals with various areas of expertise. This method included selection and discussion of the theoretical and descriptive material. This would be examined in context with a comparison of the varying theories of the three major monotheistic views on the topic of the conception of Jesus Christ. The various monotheistic views would be evaluated for applicability and similarity. This method of research provided information regarding concepts and theories, including differences and similarities allowing for individual judgments and differing opinions.

The analytical research method would utilize the scientific method which is a proven fact based process to determine reliable knowledge with a process to answer questions and solve problems. The use of the analytical research method with the scientific method allowed this author to make inferences and generalized statements regarding the feasibility that science might or might not support the conception of Jesus Christ. The analytical research method incorporating the scientific method allowed this author to address the question if the conception of Jesus Christ is a natural phenomenon, a supernatural phenomenon, or a combination of both. As such, it was imperative that the participants in this research be experts in their respective fields. A detailed description of the research participants follows.

Research Participants

Initially, this author felt compelled to conduct a survey of the congregant members of this author's home church regarding the topic as this church was the place of origination of the initial issue. Consideration was given to conduct a survey of the congregants within the local church as well as the congregants of the sister churches within the district or the entire sister districts within the United States. Contemplation was given to convene a focus group, for the

sake of convenience, from the community of various church leaders of different denominations. This author deliberated if a survey would be sufficient which included those students involved in Liberty University Rawlings School of Divinity Programs.

Following meetings and discussions with the local senior pastor, assistant pastors, as well as the deacons, it was determined the opinions of the congregants were valuable.

Unfortunately, the congregants did not possess the requisite expertise to proffer variable opinions as to the resolution of this inquiry, as a portion of this inquiry was categorically scientifically based. Focus groups would have been convenient, yet it was determined every church would not have the same dilemma as was experienced by this authors' local church, and any survey going to Liberty University Rawlings School of Divinity Programs would render opinions as opposed to solutions regarding the issue.

After careful deliberation regarding all aspects of the problem, it was determined this author would be creative in ascertaining who could best provide the information required to construct a response to the issue. It was determined this author would reach out to those with expertise who could provide information and direction regarding answering the difficult questions relative to the conception and identity of Jesus, and help guide the development of an educational instrument which could be utilized by any church regardless of location or affiliation. It was suggested by this author's senior pastor that any educational instrument being developed for use within the local congregation include possible objections and criticism of the topic as well as factual and scientific support. As a result, two distinct groups of primary participants were identified as germane to the research for this thesis project; the first group identified as religious leaders or faith groups. This author's original thesis project Mentor, Dr. Davidson, also provided significant input, and direction to include individuals from the three

major monotheistic religions, specifically Judaism, Islam and Christianity. Catholicism was included as a sub-category of Christianity.

The virgin birth is a foundational concept in the Christian faith, within all three primary branches including the Roman Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox Church and Protestantism. Accordingly, the conception preceding the birth is assumed to also be a foundational belief of Christianity although often overlooked, ignored, relegated to a forgone conclusion, thus not discussed. Because this belief is a foundational tenant of Christianity, this author decided to reach out to a local non-denominational Christian faith leader of one of the largest congregations located in Nashville, Tennessee. This author, along with then mentor Dr. Davidson, did not deem it necessary to include individual denominations for purposes of sampling. Accordingly, no attempt was made to seek out opinions of leaders of the various individual denominations, (Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Apostolic, Church of God, Nazarene, Wesleyan, Episcopal and Pentecostals, etc.), within the Christian faith other than Catholics, during the research portion of this thesis project.

The core tenets of Judaism, which has been called an ethical monotheism, are embodied within the codes found in the first five books of the Bible otherwise known as the Torah. The Torah is embraced by the different branches of Judaism as a foundational reference in much the same way Christians embrace the Bible. This author contacted several Rabbis at local synagogues. No attempt was made to reach out to the leaders of the various Jewish movements such as Orthodox, Modern, Conservative and Reformed Judaism as the Torah is utilized within the different movements and it was thus determined by this author and the original mentor, Dr. Davidson, the various movements would not express different opinions for the purposes of

sampling. It should be noted, the Messianic Judaism group is treated as exception to this inquiry because the Messianic Judaic beliefs embrace those of Christianity.

Similar to Christianity and Judaism, Islam also models its faith on foundational teachings from a book. This book of Islam teachings is found in the Quran. Identical with the process of the other faiths in terms of sampling, this author made no attempt to reach out to members of the individual branches of Islam, such as Sunni, Shia, Quranists, etc., for purposes of interviews during the research portion of this thesis project as it was deemed redundant.

All faith based interviews were sought based on geographic region within Davidson County, Nashville, Tennessee, in order to allow for face to face meetings between the author and the interviewees. Of the three monotheistic faith groups, only one group, specifically those of the Christian faith, consented to be interviewed for this thesis project. Based on their respective theological understanding regarding the advent of the conception of Jesus Christ, this group supplied detailed information, perceptions and personal opinions regarding this event in history. Interestingly the opinions were based solely on the biblical text without consideration for any other supporting evidence including scientific evidence.

The secretary to the parish priest contacted at a local Catholic Church initially responded to a request for an interview and an appointment was established for a face-to-face interview. As time approached to the established date of the interview, and after forwarding the required IRB consent form in advance, this author received several phone calls requesting additional information on the inquiry. Upon further communication and questioning prior to the scheduled appointment, the interviews were cancelled by the secretary to the parish priest who was to be interviewed. This author was referred to a reference written by Father Raymond

Brown,⁹⁵ a well-known Catholic theologian. Brown's writings are held in the *Ecole Biblique Library* in Jerusalem and have been accepted as the de facto opinion on the conception of Jesus Christ by the Vatican since December 10, 1995.⁹⁶

The Jewish Rabbis and their respective congregations, while responsive and extremely respectful to an invitation for interviews, declined to be interviewed stating they “had nothing to offer to this author’s research”⁹⁷ or stated they would be “guilty of blasphemy and heresy for which there was no repentance.”⁹⁸ Consequently no interviews were completed from the Jewish faith, the exception being a physician in the secondary participant group who was of the Jewish faith but who did not specifically address the theological issues. Research which applies to Judaism is thus literature based.

The Islam groups did not respond to multiple inquires for interviews requested via email or by telephone. A personal friend to this author from the medical community, who is of the Islam faith and who requested to remain anonymous, explained that to speak of anyone, including Jesus Christ, or worship anything other than Allah would be considered “shirk.” Shirk is essentially holding something or someone equal to Allah which is “considered practicing idolatry.”⁹⁹ Accordingly, like the Jewish faith individuals, no interviews were completed from Islam groups. As a result of failure to secure an interview with members of this faith based group, the research which speaks of Islamic tradition and beliefs are also

⁹⁵ Raymond E. Brown, *The Virginal Conception & Bodily Resurrection of Jesus*, (Paulist Press, New York, Reprint 1973).

⁹⁶ Lawrence Kelemen, “The Catholic Church’s Response to Our Critique of Christian Credibility.” *Simple to Remember.com online Judaism*. Accessed August 14, 2014, https://www.simpletoremember.com/vitals/Christian_Credibility.htm

⁹⁷ Anonymous Rabbi, Jewish Congregation in Nashville, TN. Email correspondence June 2, 2015.

⁹⁸ Anonymous, Rabbi, Jewish Congregations, Nashville, TN. Telephone conversation June 3, 2015.

⁹⁹ Conversation with anonymous physician of Islamic Faith, September 12, 2014.

literature based. Fortunately, this author has included literature from individuals who were of the Islamic faith thus this author believes the belief systems of Islam is adequately reflected within this thesis project.

The secondary group of primary participants identified as germane to the research for this thesis project were medical and healthcare professionals and professors, specifically those individuals who could provide descriptions and confirmation of proven scientific data regarding normal human reproduction and assistive reproductive technologies. This author, who spent many years in the healthcare field as a registered nurse and performing healthcare consulting is personally acquainted with individuals considered experts in their field; many of these individuals affiliated with the prestigious Vanderbilt University or Vanderbilt University Hospital located in this author's hometown of Nashville, Tennessee.

Accordingly, this author made an effort to communicate with the foremost experts in human reproduction, in Nashville, including those familiar with the most current surgical techniques utilized to assist infertile couples in conception. In depth discussion of this interaction is more fully discussed in chapter IV of this thesis project. Overall, the secondary group directly contributed to the theological implications of this study in a manner which was not previously possible as some of the surgical techniques, specifically invitro fertilization (IVF) was unavailable prior to the late seventies. This author purports it is through the application of these scientific advancements that contribute most to the understanding of the theological implications of the conception of Jesus Christ.

Research Approach

This author, following the direction by the original doctoral thesis project mentor, Dr Charles Davidson and after lengthy discussion with the leaders of this author's home church, decided to examine this concept from two perspectives; theologically and scientifically based on interviews and literature research. The three major monotheistic faith groups of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam were included as the primary theological group. Healthcare professionals and professors were considered the secondary scientific group. The approach to data gathering during interviews for this thesis project employed the same process for both primary and secondary groups which is described as follows.

All potential interview participants were initially contacted using the letter of introduction as approved through the Institutional Review Board (IRB) process. Once an interview had been established, the IRB consent form requiring signature was sent in advance of scheduled interviews, for informational purposes, via email or U.S. mail depending on the preference of this individual scheduled to be interviewed. Upon arrival for the pre-scheduled interview this author presented the IRB consent form for signature, allowed the interviewees to ask questions before signing the consent form and before the actual interviews began. Any potential participants who did not respond to the initial contact from the letter of introduction received a follow-up phone call by this author. This author ceased all attempts to interview participants upon a response of refusal, cancellation or after three attempts to contact and no response was forthcoming.

Interviews, for primary group participants were conducted using an open-ended structure to ascertain the interviewees' perception on the topic of the conception of Jesus Christ. The theoretical research method was utilized to gain information for those faith groups which

would not consent to an interview. This allowed this author to develop a qualitative analysis of common and differing characteristics on this topic.

Interviews, for the secondary group participants were also conducted using an open-ended structure, but the topics were specific to the interviewees providing explanations on the most recent scientifically proven infertility surgical procedures and research related to advancements in Maternal-Fetal Medicine and other medical advancements as it relates to human reproduction. This information was utilized to ascertain if the conception of Jesus Christ could have occurred by any of the proven scientific methods as described by the secondary group participants. These methods are dissected and fully explored in chapter IV of this thesis project.

It should be noted that post interview of medical professionals who had previously given their consent to use their names in this thesis project, political tensions arose within the city of Nashville regarding the rights of individuals to selectively terminate pregnancies. Some of the medical professionals interviewed for this thesis project were publically vocal in their pro-life stance and were threatened with physical violence because of their position. This author received requests to ensure anonymity of these individuals for this thesis project following the threats of physical violence against some of the participants. As a result, medical professionals are treated anonymously in accordance with their requests for this thesis project and in accordance with the IRB governing rules.

Research Findings

This author was very disappointed in the ability to secure interviews with leaders from the Catholic, Islam and Judaic faith based groups. At a minimum this author anticipated that all

faith groups would be excited to share about their respective faith. Despite that challenge the research findings for this study have been most interesting from both a theological and scientific perspective as the literature search provides ample information for this author to arrive at a generalized understanding of the topic from the Catholic, Islamic and Judaic faiths.

Christianity, including Catholicism, supports the divine conception of Jesus Christ along with the subsequent virgin birth. Catholics place an overriding emphasis on the Immaculate Conception of Mary, the Mother of Jesus. Christianity is dogmatic as to the events surrounding the birth of Christ but fails to expound on the significance and details of the conception.

Surprisingly, this author learned both Christianity and Islam embrace the fact that Jesus was conceived by divine intervention and experienced a virgin birth. It is interesting that the accounts of this event differ, with Christians embracing the Bible as the source of this information while Islam uses the Quran and considers the Injil¹⁰⁰ a foundational doctrine regarding this event. The vast chasm between Christianity and Islam ultimately results from the varying views of God and much of that hinges on worldviews.

Christianity and Judaism are not in agreement regarding the events of the conception and virgin birth of Jesus Christ. This is profound since both the Jewish and Christian faiths use the same Old Testament as foundational tenets of their respective faiths referencing descendants of Abraham. The Jewish faith refers to differences in the identity of the expected Messiah and disparity between mistranslations as two of the primary reasons for this difference in opinions, a topic which will be discussed in detail later in this thesis project.

¹⁰⁰ Injil - The Injil (Arabic إنجيل , also transcribed Injeel) is one of the four Scriptures that the Qur'an records as revealed by Allah—the others being the Zabur, Tawrat, and Qur'an. Accessed November 25, 2015, <http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Injil>.

The scientific research for this study provided updated information for the various types of currently utilized reproduction techniques which are employed to assist couples who are unable to conceive in a normal fashion. Clearly, there is a parallel in the fact that humans sometime require intervention in order to conceive just as Mary the mother of Jesus experienced a divine intervention in order for her to conceive. The major difference between the two is the fact that human reproduction still requires the uniting of male sperm and female egg. Such is not the case in the conception of Jesus as has been espoused by many Christians when they state the Holy Spirit united with an ovum of Mary resulting in the conception of Jesus Christ. This author believes there was no such fertilization of a human ovum by the Holy Spirit resulting in the conception of Jesus Christ. This author is aware this is a very controversial position but one which this author believes to be truth as evidenced by both scripture and scientific proof. A detailed analysis of this position will be explained in greater detail later in this thesis project.

Chapter Conclusion

The information and data provided by the various group participants has proved to be invaluable as this author creates a link between the biblical accounts of the conception of Jesus Christ and scientific probability. The interviews coupled with the literature review have assisted this author in the creation of a foundational starting point for additional discussion and inquiry. It has also challenged this author to think outside the box, beyond mere tradition, beyond all the previous teachings on this topic and to arrive at a conclusion in a eureka moment whereby the data points to certain correlations between what the bible presents as factual and how science might support this position that the conception of Jesus Christ supports his deity. The things and concepts are real but instead of being obscured in darkness and misunderstanding, they will now

be realized as a known. Accordingly this forms the basis for the Findings in Chapter III, the Testimony of Science in Chapter IV and the Conclusion in Chapter V.

CHAPTER THREE

Findings

Three Major Monotheistic Faith Views of the Conception of Jesus Christ

A plethora of beliefs envisage a universe with the worship of a myriad of deities otherwise known as polytheism. In the Greco-Roman world there is mention of Apollonius of Tiana, Proetus, Ovid, Jupiter and Mercury, Zeus and Hermes, Baucis and Philemon. The Apostle Paul himself acknowledged the existence and belief systems in various gods, including the aforementioned entities that supposedly function in an overlap as gods in human realms; however, Paul also addresses one true God, when he wrote these words in 1 Corinthians 8:5-6;

For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many gods and many lords), yet for us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live.

These supposed gods perform variable functions and possess differing types and levels of power; however, history suggests there are limitations and perceived limitations on these gods, and the respective belief systems which worship and sacrifice unto these entities. This leads one to question their reality and ponder if there is indeed one true extant god as the Apostle Paul postulates. If this one true god is tangible, what then is the identity and personality of this deity? Can humans “experience him (God) as an objective fact that could be discovered by the ordinary

process of rational thought?”¹⁰¹ Does one view this God from afar without any tangible interaction? Is it possible to express, experience, enjoy, and “live through” this God as Paul has suggested?

The answer for many individuals, including this author through the following findings, can be found in the monotheistic religions where the belief in one god is the source of all reality and truth. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are not the only monotheistic religions which exist, however they are the three major monotheistic religions which have captivated the world and to which 54.9% of the world’s population ascribe as personal religions.¹⁰² Interestingly, these three monotheistic religions possess commonality in the fact they all originated in the Middle East. These three faith groups share several patriarchs such as Abraham and Moses and thus all three ascribe to a common heritage. Accordingly, these three monotheistic religions are the only religions which will be discussed in this chapter of the thesis project, with a broad spectrum introduction to each accompanied by their specific views as it pertains to the conception of Jesus Christ.

Judaism

Judaism, the oldest of these three religious groups, originated nearly “four thousand years, rooted in the ancient near eastern region of Canaan (which is now Israel and Palestinian territories).”¹⁰³ Dr. Isaiah M. Gafni in his article, *What is Judaism* inferred there is much more to

¹⁰¹ Karen Armstrong, *A History of God*, (New York: Ballantine Books, 1993), XX.

¹⁰² Pew Research Center “Global Religious Diversity.” *Demographic Study*, Accessed March 12, 2016, <http://www.pewforum.org/2014/04/04/global-religious-diversity/>.. This demographic study provides the following percentages: .2% of the world population is Jewish, 31.7% is Christian, and 23.2% is Muslim.

¹⁰³ Pathos, “Religion Library: Judaism.” Accessed March 12, 2016. <http://www.patheos.com/Library/Judaism>.

Judaism than a religion. He suggested there are ethics, national, and geographic components to Judaism, all based on history. One must understand the history in order to understand the religion.¹⁰⁴ During the Second Century BCE, in the Hellenistic period, the phrase Judaism, *Ioudaismos* in Greek,¹⁰⁵ appears for the first time in the Book of Maccabees.^{106 107} The term itself is reflective of a greater expanse than mere religion, however it becomes important to recognize the Jewish people are identified “uniquely among nations, God’s chosen people.”¹⁰⁸ It is incumbent that anyone seeking to understand the Jewish Rabbi Jesus Christ of the New Testament must first understand the Jewish culture in which the promise of a Messiah was given and the manner in which that promise would be fulfilled. This failure to observe Jewish culture is where, in this author’s opinion, Christians fail, creating loss of true perspective concerning Jesus.

While Judaism tends to adhere to a specific grouping or system of beliefs and practices of laws, rituals, and customs, one finds the foundation of the Jewish faith rooted in the central text called the Torah, referred to as the Law, the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible, which were revealed to the first prophet Moses.¹⁰⁹ This is further explained through written interpretation and instruction in the Talmud, a collected commentary of the Torah which was

¹⁰⁴ Isaiah Gafni, “God and Man: Man and Community.” *The Great World Religions: Judaism. What is Judaism?* no. 8 (2003) Hebrew University, Jerusalem Israel: 4.

¹⁰⁵ Ioudaismos – Judaism, The NAS New Testament Greek Lexicon, Accessed March 10, 2016. <http://biblehub.com/greek/2454.htm>.

¹⁰⁶ Isaiah Gafni, “God and Man: Man and Community.” *The Great World Religions: Judaism. What is Judaism?* no. 8 (2003) Hebrew University, Jerusalem Israel: 13.

¹⁰⁷ Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, *The Book of Machabees*, Accessed March 10, 2106, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/The-Books-of-the-Maccabees>. The Book of Machabees -four books, none of which is in the Hebrew Bible but all of which appear in some manuscripts of the Septuagint. The first two books only are part of canonical scripture in the Septuagint and the Vulgate (hence are canonical to Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy) and are included in the Protestant Apocrypha.

¹⁰⁸ David Stern, *Messianic Judaism: A Modern Movement With A Ancient Past*. Clarksville, Maryland: Lederer Books, 2007, II.

¹⁰⁹ ABC Religion, “Judaism Key Beliefs.” Accessed April 6, 2018, <http://www.abc.net.au/religion/stories/s796551.htm>

finalized in the fifth-century BC.^{110 111 112} “The fundamental Jewish confession of faith, called the Shema, is taken from Deuteronomy 6:4. As traditionally understood, it reads “Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God, The Lord is one,”¹¹³ and continues to be recited several times a day. Moses ben Maimon (1135-1204), commonly referred to as Maimonides (Rambam), a twelfth century Jewish sage credited as being the first person to write a systematic code of all Jewish law, the *Mishneh Torah*, made the following statement, “Christianity had significantly assisted in perfecting the world and facilitating the religious worship of God on the part of the earth’s inhabitants.”¹¹⁴

According to author and Orthodox Rabbi Shmuley Boteach, former Rabbi of Oxford University and founder of the university's Jewish outreach organization, the L'Chaim Society, “the Jews gave the world the idea of the one God known as JHWH or Yahweh,”¹¹⁵ and the Jewish faith “gave rise to Christianity.”¹¹⁶ Boteach continues that “Christianity had filled the world with the concept of a messianic redemption and with god’s laws...”¹¹⁷ “Belief in the eventual coming of the *mashiach*, the anointed one, as opposed to the Christian expectation of a

¹¹⁰ ABC Religion, “Judaism Key Beliefs.” Accessed April 6, 2018, <http://www.abc.net.au/religion/stories/s796551.htm>

¹¹¹ *Merriam-Webster*, “Talmud,” The authoritative body of Jewish tradition comprising the Mishnah and Gemara. Accessed March 10, 2016. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/talmud>.

¹¹² Unless otherwise noted, references for the purposes of dating utilize Before Christ (BC) and Anno Domini in the year of our Lord (AD) throughout this thesis project.

¹¹³ Michael Brown, *Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus*, Vol. 2, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 4.

¹¹⁴ Shmuley Boteach, *Judaism for Everyone: Renewing Your Life Through the Vibrant Lessons of the Jewish Faith*. (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2002), 400.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 399.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 400.

Saviour, is a basic and fundamental part of traditional Judaism. It is part of Rambam's *13 Principles of Faith*, the minimum requirements of Jewish belief.”¹¹⁸ Rambam’s *13 Principles of Faith* were eventually included in the Jewish prayer book and became the basis for the popular Yigdal hymn which continues to be sung in synagogues in modern day. Rambam was not without controversy however as the 13 Principles of Faith were opposed around 1500 by Rabbi Isaac Abravanel who maintained that “principles in the Torah suggested different levels of sanctity within the bible which encouraged a type of heresy.”¹¹⁹ Despite the conflict between leaders within the Jewish Religion the acceptance of a future Messiah is anticipated. Dr. Randall Price, in his paper *The Concept of the Messiah in the Old Testament*¹²⁰ summarizes that expectation when he stated the following;

The record of messianic fulfillment that appears in the New Testament presumes a prior revelation of prediction in the Old Testament. In like manner, the use of the term “Messiah” (as well as the concept of the Messiah) reflects the development of the messianic idea expressed in seminal form in the Torah and Writings and expanded in the Prophets in accord with the hermeneutical principle of progressive revelation.

Why then is there such a disparity between the two religions of Judaism and Christianity when both religions are based on a single foundation and both seek a messiah?

At the crux of the disparity is the Jewish belief that “no man could ever be God.”¹²¹ This generalized position is congruent with Maimonides formulation where he has stated God has no

¹¹⁸ Tracey R. Rich, “Judaism 101,” *Mashiach, The Messiah: The Messianic Idea in Judaism*. Accessed February 17, 2016, <http://www.jewfaq.org/mashiach.htm>.

¹¹⁹ Isaiah Gafni, “God and Man: Man and Community.” *The Great World Religions: Judaism. What is Judaism?* no. 8 (2003) Hebrew University, Jerusalem Israel: 15

¹²⁰ Randall Price, “The Concept of the Messiah in the Old Testament”, *World of the Bible*, Accessed February 16, 2016, <http://worldofthebible.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/The-Concept-of-the-Messiah-in-the-Old-Testament.pdf>

¹²¹ Shmuley Boteach, *Judaism for Everyone*, (New York, NY: Basic Books 2002).401.

form of any kind,¹²² a position which this author believes is incongruent with other scripture contained even within the Torah.¹²³ Boteach continues to expound upon this principle stating “In Judaism, the meaning of holiness is separateness. When something is treated in a distinct and separate fashion, it is holy by virtue of its being different.”¹²⁴ This author concurs in part with Boteach in this statement and proffers the position that the conception of Jesus Christ, exactly as described in Luke 1:45, is indeed different and separate from any other conception known to humankind, for the infant, Jesus, is indeed called Holy!

The position that God has no form does not minimize other objections of Judaism as to why Jesus could not possibly be the messiah, it is however a primary issue in this thesis project as the conception and subsequent birth of Jesus Christ clearly indicates that God came to earth in the form of a human named Jesus Christ. This author infers there is a significant distinction between the phrases, *being in human form*, as opposed to, *being human in totality*, a concept which is questioned in Greco-Roman mythology therefore a concept with which the population in the times of Jesus’s birth would be well acquainted. Perhaps there exists confusion between these descriptive phrases. This could contribute to the disparity in the various beliefs and thus contributes to the core analysis in examining the Old Testament in the manner of predictions, prophecies, and foreshadowing as opposed to a direct reference to the Messiah found in the New Testament.

¹²² Marc B Shapiro., *The Limits of Orthodox Theology: Maimonides’ Thirteen Principles Reappraised*, (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2004), 45-70.

¹²³ David Sedley, “God has no Physical Body,” *Scribd*. Accessed May 01, 2017, <https://www.scribd.com/document/274892002/God-Does-Not-Have-a-Physical-Body>. The Torah indicates Moses saw the form –*temunah*– of YHWH in Numbers 12:8, and David speaks of seeing God’s *temunah* after death in Psalms 17;15. This author believes both biblical scriptures contradict Maimonides statement that God has no form.

¹²⁴ Shmuley Boteach, *Judaism for Everyone*, (New York, NY: Basic Books 2002), 389.

Noted Messianic Jewish apologist, Dr. Michael Brown states, “Jewish scholars have increasingly recognized that Jesus and his followers were faithful Jews,”¹²⁵ yet there are “more than 150 Jewish objections to the messiahship of Jesus.”¹²⁶ Brown divides these objections into six categories: general, historical, theological, objections based on messianic prophecies, objections to the New Testament, and objections based on traditional Judaism.¹²⁷ Brown suggests religious Jewish scholars objections point to two specific passages in the Old Testament regarding the birth of the Messiah, specifically 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,” (literally meaning God with us), and Micah 5:2, “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.” While both of these passages provide a prophecy with very specific and significant details, the Jewish faith suggests the reference in Isaiah 7:14 refers to the promised Son of Ahaz as opposed to Jesus Christ, and the prophecy in Micah is problematic due to translation issues from Hebrew to English. This author purports the earliest indication of a coming Messiah is actually found much earlier in the Torah and is in fact congruent with the passages in Isaiah 7:14 and Micah 5:2 as well as Isaiah 9:6 which reads;

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us and the government will rest on his shoulders, and his name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of his

xxi. ¹²⁵ Michael Brown, *Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus*, Vol. 2, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000),

xvii. ¹²⁶ Michael Brown, *Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus*, Vol. 2, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000),

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, xvii-xix.

government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forever more.

Genesis 3:15 states, “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.” This scripture, interspersed in the middle of the curse in the disobedience of Adam and Eve to God, the subsequent fall of man which allows sin, evil, pain, suffering, and ultimately death for all humans both physically and spiritually, provides the first primeval prophecy; the first promise of deliverance from a Messiah. Referred to as the *protevangelion*, meaning the earliest mention of the Gospel in the Bible by the early church writers, it is apparent this scripture provides a hint to a virginal conception. Its location in scripture is immensely significant for the Messiah, the Saviour for humankind’s sin, is indeed identified very early in the Old Testament!

It is important to note the reference to the term “her seed,” a term which is defined as “the beginning of something which continues to develop or grow,”¹²⁸ as opposed to the creation of something new which would occur in normal human reproduction during conception when the egg of a female is fertilized with the seed (sperm) of a male; an issue with which this author’s writing addresses in great detail in Chapter IV of this thesis project. This passage in Genesis, using the language regarding the seed of woman, when combined with the Isaiah and Micah passages, have just established what Boteach is suggesting yet has failed to recognize; the conception of Jesus Christ is different, it is separate, it is Holy, it is in fact the first illumination of both the paternal and maternal lineage of the Messiah, whose identity is ultimately revealed in Luke!

¹²⁸ *Blue Letter Bible*, “H2232 – “Seed: – Strong’s Hebrew Lexicon (NKJV).” Accessed April 30, 2017, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongs=H2233&t=NKJV>

In discussion of the Genesis passage as previously referenced, some have suggested the “seed” is indeed the Messiah, including the Jewish Targums;¹²⁹ however, the prophecies themselves do not suggest the mention of a virgin birth. A significant debate has arisen over the last twenty centuries and remains ongoing regarding the use of the Hebrew terms *betulah*¹³⁰ meaning virgin occurring in the New Testament as opposed to the Hebrew term *alma*,¹³¹ young maiden, which occurs in the Old Testament. The misinterpretation or misunderstanding of these two terms undermines a key tenet of Christianity and has the potential to literally collapse Christendom because Matthew, through his use of the word *betulah*, would be viewed as having misquoted Isaiah rendering Christianity untenable. When the seventy-two elders of Israel wrote the Septuagint,¹³² they found no Greek equivalent for the Hebrew word for *alma*. The elders utilized the word *parthenos*¹³³ which can mean either young maiden or virgin. In this author’s opinion the Septuagint translation allows the New Testament accounts of the conception and birth of Jesus to technically remain correct; however the New Testament term of *parthenos* is condign, but not as accurately descriptive as the term and correlative meaning found in the Old Testament’s use of the term *alma*.

¹²⁹ Bruce M. Metzger, “The Jewish Targums”, are interpretive renderings of the books of the Hebrew Scriptures (with the exception of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Daniel) into Aramaic. Accessed April 3, 2016, <http://www.bible-researcher.com/aramaic4.html>.

¹³⁰ *Betulah* - Lexicon :: Strong's H1330 – *bēthuwlah*, b^othûwlâh, beth-oo-law'; feminine passive participle of an unused root meaning to separate; a virgin (from her privacy); sometimes (by continuation) a bride; also (figuratively) a city or state:—maid, virgin. <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?t=kjv&strongs=h1330>, (Accessed March 11, 2016).

¹³¹ *Alma* - Lexicon :: Strong's H5959 - *almah* - 'almâh, al-maw'; feminine of H5958; a lass (as veiled or private):—damsel, maid, virgin. <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?t=kjv&strongs=h5959>, (Accessed March 11, 2016).

¹³² *Septuagint* – a Greek version of the Jewish Scriptures redacted in the third and second centuries B.C. by Jewish scholars and adopted by Greek-speaking Christians. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/septuagint>, Accessed March 11, 2016

¹³³ *Parthenos* - “G3933 - Parthenos- Strong's Greek Lexicon (NKJV).” Accessed April 30, 2017. <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong=G3933&t=NASB>.

This author's position is this; the Jewish term *alma*, young maiden, as written by Isaiah, was and remains far more depictive and veridical than the term *betulah*, virgin. Why? "The Hebrew term more often used for virgin *betulah*, appears elsewhere in Isaiah (23:4; 23:12; 37:22; 47:1;62:5), but not in chapter seven. The Hebrew participle describing the woman's condition could be translated either will conceive or is pregnant."¹³⁴ This differentiation is further confirmed in Isaiah 9:6, where one finds the Prophet deviating from the rules of Hebrew grammar and spelling in order to accurately, with meticulous precision, describe this child, as prophesied in Isaiah 7:14, which would be born; using a closed mem, (the equivalent to the English M), inside the word *alma* as opposed to the final letter of a word.^{135 136 137} Mem is the thirteenth letter of the Hebrew alphabet and only five letters have a final form. Why is this significant? The Jewish Rabbis associated mem with a closed womb as opposed to an open womb. Isaiah was, with utmost precision, describing the conception of Jesus which was not due to a sexual union by Mary and a human male or by the Holy Spirit combining with the egg of Mary. The conception of the Messiah was closed, in secret, supporting the supernatural aspect and substantiating the prophetic foretelling of the birth of Jesus Christ.

Remembering Dr. Gafni's inclusion of ethic, national and geographical components to understand the Jewish religion, one must consider the culture and marriage customs during the

¹³⁴ Amy-Jill Levine, *The Misunderstood Jew: The Church and The Scandal Of The Jewish Jesus*. (New York: Harper Collins, 2006), 192.

¹³⁵ Daniel Botkin, *The Mystery of the Closed Mem*, http://jewishroots.net/library/prophecy/isaiah/isaiah-9-6/the_mystery_of_the_closed_mem_2.pdf, (Accessed 3-12-2016).

¹³⁶ John J. Parsons, "The Letter Mem," *Hebrew For Christians*. Accessed 3-12-2016, http://www.hebrew4christians.com/Grammar/Unit_One/Aleph-Bet/Mem/mem.html.

¹³⁷ Aaron Raskin, "Mem- Metamorphosis," *Chabad.org*. Accessed 3-12-2016. https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/137085/jewish/Mem-Metamorphosis.htm

time of Mary and Joseph, and the age Mary might have been at her betrothal; typically one year or more prior to the actual time a couple consummates a marriage. Mary was probably around 12 years of age at the time of her betrothal as suggested by apocryphal documents,¹³⁸ and “before they lived together, *m. Ketub.* 1.2;5.2, note the betrothal period prior to the marriage. *B. Yebam.* 62b suggests betrothal took place around the age of twelve (see also *m. Ned.* 10.5; *Gen. Rab.* 95).”¹³⁹ Sexual chastity was considered an important part of her betrothal as any young girl was assumed to be a virgin at such a young age. The term *alma* is “primarily related to adolescence, not sexual chastity,”¹⁴⁰ therefore virginity is inferred in the term *alma*.

The bride price (dowry) would have been negotiated between Mary’s father and Joseph, confirmed by two witnesses, based on the fact that Mary was sexually pure as the chastity of the young maiden impacted the amount of the dowry. More importantly Mary may very well have been so young she had not yet entered puberty and therefore was not biologically mature enough for ovulation to occur. In other words Mary, due to her biological immaturity, would not be capable of releasing an ovum during a monthly cycle, thus she would not have been able to contribute an ovum for fertilization as is required in normal human reproduction to become pregnant. This is consistent with the scripture in Genesis that the Messiah originates from the “seed” of a woman, not as part of a complement of ovum and sperm united from two human parents, or from the uniting of the ovum of one human parent and the Holy Spirit. Clearly one can begin to grasp the hints provided in Genesis as well as Isaiah and Micah that the coming

¹³⁸ Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler, *The Jewish Annotated New Testament: New Revised Standard Version Bible Translation*, (Oxford: University Press, 2011), 4.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Michael Brown, *Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus*, Vol. 3, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 20.

Messiah would be vastly different from any other child born into the world. The paternal and maternal lines were unique as this child already existed, as indicated in Micah 5:2, before his actual birth! Consequently, there is no need for a child already in existence to be created by the union of the Holy Spirit with the ovum of the human mother, Mary and this is further confirmed by the Jewish prophet Isaiah.

Other objections exist within the Jewish religion regarding Jesus as the Messiah. This includes the requirement of a Davidic lineage and the curse of Jeconiah from Jeremiah 22:24-30. There appears to be a discrepancy between the genealogy narratives of Matthew and Luke; issues which this author believes are partially attributed to the genealogy of Mary in Luke while Joseph's lineage is addressed in Matthew. It is alleged there are supposed gaps within these genealogies and the absolute prohibition that no descendant of Jeconiah could ever sit on the throne of David. Many scholars will attribute these variances to the rules of Jewish ancestry where it was tradition that the mother may not be mentioned or relatives could be omitted from the mother's side of the family. In reality, there is a much deeper reason for these limitations found in Matthew and Luke which is germane to the topic of this thesis project.

In this author's opinion, the Jewish requirement that the Messiah descend from the line of King David as reflected in Jeremiah 23:5 and Ezekiel 34:23-24 is somewhat obscure in the New Testament passages; however, Matthew uses an interpretive method to understand the prophecy of the birth of a future Messiah and describe its fulfillment. The actual stipulation in the Jeconiah link which prohibits "no descendant of Jeconiah would have the right to the throne of David,"¹⁴¹ is further proof that Joseph, the step-father of Jesus could not be the biological father

¹⁴¹ Arnold Fruchtenbaum, "The Genealogy of the Messiah," *Jews for Jesus*, issues 05:06, (2016), <https://jewsforjesus.org/issues-v05-n06/the-genealogy-of-the-messiah>. (Accessed 12-16-2017).

to Jesus. Joseph, the adopted father of Jesus (Matt 1:18-23) clearly descended from Jeconiah (Jeremiah 22:30; 36:30). Accordingly, Joseph is unequivocally excluded as the biological father of Jesus. This exclusion of Joseph creates the question if the genealogy of Mary fulfills the requirement that Messiah be a descendant of David especially since Numbers 1:18 and Ezra 2:59 speak to the requirement that tribal affiliation occurs via the father, not the mother.

“The Jerusalem Talmud recognized this genealogy to be that of Miriam (Mary) and not Joseph and refers to Miriam as the daughter of Heli (Hagigah 2:2)”,¹⁴² who “was a member of the house of David apart from Jeconiah.” Since “Jesus was Miriam’s son, he too was a member of the house of David, apart from Jeconiah,”¹⁴³ confirming the biblical requirement for kingship. This is problematic however as there were other descendants in addition to Jesus who could claim a right to the throne of David. Additionally, the genealogy of Jesus Christ through Mary as found in Luke occurs via King David’s son Nathan as opposed to King David’s son Solomon. In Luke 3:27 Mary’s genealogy includes the descendants of Jeconiah including Shealtiel and Zerubbabel causing her to also be disqualified as the biological progenitor of the Messiah in the same manner as Joseph. One may surmise that Jesus assumed his priesthood by adoption given the now obvious biological exclusion of both Joseph and Mary. In the entire book of Numbers one recognizes priesthood comes only from a biological link; therefore, a priest could never confer priesthood by adoption.

There was something which set Jesus apart from other contenders. One finds the answer throughout the Bible, confirmed by science. In Genesis 3:15 one finds the seed of the woman and understands exactly that the seed is the Word of God. Prophesied in Isaiah 7:14 that Messiah

¹⁴² Arnold Fruchtenbaum, “The Genealogy of the Messiah,” *Jews for Jesus*, issues 05:06, (2016), <https://jewsforjesus.org/issues-v05-n06/the-genealogy-of-the-messiah>. (Accessed 12-16-2017).

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

would be born of a young maiden who was a virgin and fulfilled in Luke 1:30-33 which states “The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David.” This wondrous act was by divine appointment, via a unique conception of Jesus Christ while simultaneously fulfilling the Davidic lineage. Through these events Jesus proclaims his divine physiology of both deity and humanity stating, “I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star,” (Rev 22:16). A bodacious claim of being both parent and progeny becomes apparent in its fulfillment. It is therefore appropriate to review the New Testament scriptures, and the resultant new faith of Christianity, regarding the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies.

Christianity

Christianity, the second oldest of the monotheistic faiths founded in the 1st century AD, stems from Judaism. Like Judaism, the Christian religion with its two-thousand year history, embraces a “way of life organized around experiences and convictions concerning ultimate power,”¹⁴⁴ therefore there is no segmentation of religion apart from daily living. It is the foundation for the way life is conducted and has become the foundation for many social rules and laws, extending even to modern day.

Christianity as a whole, typically embraces the belief that Jesus was miraculously conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, physically born of the Virgin Mary, absent the contribution of a human father or sexual union, casting the event as a miracle. Individuals, when

¹⁴⁴ Luke Johnson, Christianity Among the World Religions. The Great Courses, Lecture 1, Great World Christianity, Video Lectures Series, course 6101.

referencing this event, typically cite the prophetic scripture of the Old Testament in Genesis, Micah, and (Isa 7:3-14) previously discussed in the Judaism section of this thesis project and the associated prophetic fulfilling narratives in the New Testament found in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke respectively;

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. 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. 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. 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, (Matt 1:18-25).

Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And coming in, he said to her, Greetings, favored one! The Lord *is* with you. But she was very perplexed at *this* statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this was. The angel said to her, Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end. Mary said to the angel, how can this be, since I am a virgin? The angel answered and said to her, The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God. And behold, even your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age; and she who was called barren is now in her sixth month. For nothing will be impossible with God. And Mary said, Behold, the bondservant of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word. And the angel departed from her, (Luke 1:26-38, 46-56, 2:1-7).

This embracement of the Christian tradition in the belief of a divine virgin conception¹⁴⁵ and subsequent virgin birth¹⁴⁶ can be attributed not only to ancient witnesses who lived at the time of the conception and birth of Jesus, but also to those who recorded the narratives in the Gospels, and the early church fathers that aver this event. Comments made by individuals professing the Christian faith who were interviewed for this thesis project provided concomitant information which corroborates this synopsis as the generally accepted beliefs of Christians.

Christianity includes three distinct branches including Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy and Protestantism with numerous offshoots from the three branches resulting in hundreds of subsets and groups typically referred to as denominations. This faith further developed into the Christian statement of faith that recognize the veracity of the Virgin Birth of Jesus and was avowed by the early church fathers.

In addition to his belief in the reality of the humanity of Christ, Ignatius of Antioch was one of the earliest authors aside from the New Testament writers to represent Jesus Christ as individuals know him under modern day Christian philosophy. In his own letters to the Ephesians, Ignatius writes, "There is only one physician, of flesh and of spirit, generate and ingenerate, God in man, true life in death, son of Mary and son of God, first passible and then impassible."¹⁴⁷ Ignatius also addressed the virgin birth of Jesus Christ, citing its importance; "Hidden from the prince of this world were the virginity of Mary and her child-bearing and

¹⁴⁵ *Evangelical Dictionary*. s.v. "divine virgin conception, virgin birth." Accessed April 27, 2017, <https://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/bakers-evangelical-dictionary/virgin-birth.html>

¹⁴⁶ *Collins English Dictionary – Complete and Unabridged, 12th Edition 2014*. S.v. "Virgin Birth." Accessed May 9, 2018, <https://www.thefreedictionary.com/virgin+birth>.

¹⁴⁷ Ignatius to the Ephesians, Chapter XVI.-The Fate of False Teachers, Accessed September 11, 2014, <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/ignatius-ephesians-longer.html>

likewise also the death of the Lord, three mysteries to be cried aloud, the which were wrought in the silence of God."¹⁴⁸

In the First Apology of Justin Martyr (c. 100 – c. 165), he, like Ignatius, addresses the sonship of Jesus Christ when he writes, “And when we say also that the Word, who is the first-birth of God, was produced without sexual union, and that He, Jesus Christ, our Teacher, was crucified and died, and rose again, and ascended into heaven, we propound nothing different from what you believe regarding those whom you esteem sons of Jupiter.”¹⁴⁹ Martyr affirms his understanding there is something “peculiar” about the conception and birth of Jesus and affirms “He was born of a virgin.”¹⁵⁰

Irenaeus of Lyons (c. 130 – c. 200), throughout his numerous books, repeatedly affirms the deity of Jesus Christ and His virgin birth. In *Fragment of his Lost Writings*, Irenaeus stated, “The sacred books acknowledge with regard to Christ, that as He is the Son of man, so is the same Being not a [mere] man; and as He is flesh, so is He also spirit, and the Word of God, and First-begotten of every creature...”¹⁵¹ The theme is repeated in section LIII when he writes;

With regard to Christ, the law and the prophets and the evangelists have proclaimed that He was born of a virgin, that He suffered upon a beam of wood, and that He appeared from the dead; that He also ascended to the heavens, and was glorified by the Father, and is the Eternal King; that He is the perfect Intelligence, the Word of God, who was begotten before the light; that He was the

¹⁴⁸ Ignatius to the Ephesians, Chapter XVIII.-The Glory of the Cross. Accessed September 11, 2014, <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/ignatius-ephesians-longer.html>,

¹⁴⁹ Justin Martyr, First Apology, CHAPTER XXI – Analogies to the history of Christ, Accessed September 11, 2014, <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/justinmartyr-firstapology.html>

¹⁵⁰ Justin Martyr, First Apology, CHAPTER XXII – Analogies to the sonship of Christ. Accessed September 11, 2014, <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/justinmartyr-firstapology.html>

¹⁵¹ Irenaeus, Fragments from the Lost Writings of Irenaeus, LII., Chapters ANF01. The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus Chapter XXI.—Analogies to the History of Christ. Accessed September 11, 2014, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.viii.ii.xxi.html>

Founder of the universe, along with it (light), and the Maker of man; that He is All in all...¹⁵²

Other writings by Irenaeus including Book 3¹⁵³ reference the prophecy of the virgin birth and expounds in detail upon the incarnation of Jesus in flesh in Book 5 "...the Holy Ghost came upon Mary, and the power of the Most High did overshadow her: wherefore also what was generated is a holy thing, and the Son of the Most High God the Father of all, who effected the incarnation of this being, and showed forth a new [kind of] generation..."¹⁵⁴

Congruent with Ignatius, Martyr, and Irenaeus, Origen of Alexandria upheld the same Christian philosophy regarding the virgin birth and incarnation of Jesus Christ in his writings. In his *Contra Celsus*, Origen acknowledges the pagan myth that Mary the mother of Jesus had an affair with a soldier named Panthera.¹⁵⁵ Origen firmly discredits this mythology by calling it a falsehood when he writes,

Jesus was born of no ordinary human marriage. It was to be expected, indeed, that those who would not believe the miraculous birth of Jesus would invent some falsehood. And their not doing this in a credible manner, but (their) preserving the fact that it was not by Joseph that the Virgin conceived Jesus, rendered the falsehood very palpable to those who can understand and detect such inventions.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵² Irenaeus, Fragments from the Lost Writings of Irenaeus, LIII., Accessed September 11, 2014, <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/irenaeus-fragments.html>

¹⁵³ Irenaeus, Against Heresies. Accessed September 11, 2014, <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/irenaeus-book3>, <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/irenaeus-book5>.

¹⁵⁴ Irenaeus, Book 5, Accessed September 11, 2014, <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/irenaeus-book5.html>.

¹⁵⁵ Origen, Contra Celsus, Book I, Chapter XXXII, Accessed September 1, 2014, <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/origen161.html>.

¹⁵⁶ Origen, Contra Celsus, Book I, Chapter XXXII, Accessed September 11, 2014, <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/origen161.html>.

Other notable Christian leaders including Augustine (c. 0354- c. 0430), Clement of Alexandria (c.0150 – c.0215), Cyprian (c.200 – c. 258), Arnobius (c.unknown – c.330), Tertullian(c. 150 – c. 212), and the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus (c. 0037 – c. 0100), all embraced and affirmed the validity to the biblical description of the conception of Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit and subsequent virgin birth with various but subtle differences contributing to even some controversy over this issue even among Christians. Eventually, the Council of Nicene in 325 embraced the scriptural version of the Incarnation of Jesus. This was affirmed by the Council of Ephesus in 43 and again by the Council of Chalcedon in 45. These councils declared that Jesus was both fully God: begotten from but not created by the Father; and fully man: taking his flesh and human nature from the Virgin Mary. Despite these affirmations, Christianity is not monolithic thus there exist several additional objections even within Christianity regarding the conception and virgin birth. The Catholic Church supports the virgin conception and subsequent birth, yet it tends to focus on the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of Mary the Mother of Jesus, referred to as the Catholic *Apostolic Constitution Ineffabilis Deus*, which is the doctrine that Mary was born without sin (*macula* or *labes*, which is Latin for stain); a doctrine which was finalized on December 8, 1854 in Rome by Pope Pius IX.¹⁵⁷ This author finds this doctrine to be absent in scripture as Mary herself conceded the need for a personal Savior in Luke 2:21-24 and followed the Jewish custom of bringing a sin offering to the Temple as found in Luke 2:21-24. For others, the belief that the in-uterine child Jesus was conceived without sexual relations between Mary and God the Father is considered a supernatural miracle. Noted atheist Richard Dawkins spoke in a derogatory manner of miracles when he stated;

¹⁵⁷ *New Advent Catholic Encyclopedia*, “Immaculate Conception”, Accessed March 26, 2016, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07674d.htm>,

The nineteenth century is the last time when it was possible for an educated person to admit to believing in miracles like the virgin birth without embarrassment. When pressed, many educated Christians are too loyal to deny the virgin birth and the resurrection. But it embarrasses them because their rational minds know that it is absurd, so they would much rather not be asked.¹⁵⁸

Many individuals embrace Dawkin's opinion, and purport miracles do not occur, although scripture is full of incidences of miracles performed by Jesus and his followers. According to John Simpson, the actual physiology of the incarnation is unknown, yet one understands Mary became pregnant through the Holy Spirit.¹⁵⁹ In this author's opinion, the actual physiology is known by the fact God utilized the laws of science in the conception and pregnancy of Mary. With the advent of in-vitro fertilization, it is no longer inconceivable to recognize pregnancy can occur without copulation. The difference, which is often glossed over, is the fact Mary conceived in her womb which deviates from normal human reproduction. The "Holy thing" conceived in her was no ordinary child! In fact, Jesus himself confirms the identity of the "seed" (Luke 8:11) as previously foretold in Genesis 3:15. The "seed" is the Word of God!

Identical to the Old Testament prophecies and the profound hidden meaning buried in the writings itself by use of such terms as *alma* and the Prophet Isaiah's use of a closed mem Hebrew character within the term, one recognizes the New Testament holds adumbrations as to the uniqueness of this conception and subsequent birth. This author found most Christians are unaware of the hints of this unique conception when they refer only to the two conception narratives found in Matthew 1:18-21 and Luke 1:26-38. During this author's interviews, there were many variations of explanations and interpretations of how this conception occurred. Some individuals felt Mary contributed an egg, identical to normal human conception. Many

¹⁵⁸ Dawkins, Richard, *The God Delusion*, (New York: Mariner Books, 2008), 65.

¹⁵⁹ Alexander, David, and Pat Alexander, ed. *Zondervan Handbook to the Bible*. 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1999), 596-597.

individuals voiced a resounding opinion the conception could never really be understood. This author digresses from these opinions as in both scenarios, Mary is overshadowed (enveloped)¹⁶⁰ by the Holy Spirit, yet Luke's (a physician) narrative confirms a conception different from any other. The conception occurs within Mary's womb, making this conception more than ordinary, an issue to be discussed in detail in Chapter IV of this thesis project.

Extrapolating other evidence to support this claim, one finds symbolism in the fact the Annunciation occurred in Nazareth, (Luke 1:26). Nathaniel when learning the Messiah would be from Nazareth stated, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46). Clearly, Nathaniel felt this agricultural Galilee city Nazareth was unremarkable, yet recent archeological finds in Nazareth substantiate the fact Mary, the mother of Jesus, was a descendant of a priest as follows:¹⁶¹

Writing in the third century, Hippolytus records that Mary's mother was a daughter of a priest named Matthan. Mary's father was the Horite shepherd-priest Yaochim (Joachim). Therefore, Mary was of the Horite ruler-priest lines that can be traced back to Abraham's Nilo-Saharan ancestors. Even those who hated Mary acknowledged her ruler status, as it is written in the Talmud: "She who was the descendant of princes and governors played the harlot with carpenters." (Sanhedrin 106a) According to 1 Chronicles 24:15, Nazareth was the home of the eighteenth priestly division, hapiTSETS (Happizzez). The name is related to the ancient Egyptian word for the life-sustaining Nile which was called Hapi. Again we have evidence that Jesus of Nazareth was of the Horite ruler-priest lines that can be traced back to the Nile Valley.

Mary the mother of Jesus, like Jesus himself, endured ostensible hatred. This animus probably originated from her claims she was the mother of God and may have been one of the reasons the

¹⁶⁰ *Bible Hub*, Strong's' Hebrew :5526a. sakak --to overshadow, screen, cover 5526, 5526a. sakak or sakak. 5526b . to overshadow, screen, cover. Short Definition: covered. Accessed May 5, 2017, <http://biblehub.com/topical/o/overshadow.htm>.

¹⁶¹ Linsley, Alice "The Priests of Nazareth." *Biblical Anthropology*. Oct 24, 2013. Accessed march 26, 2016, <http://biblicalanthropology.blogspot.com/2013/10/the-priests-of-nazareth.html>.

conception and birth narrative appear limited in the New Testament to only two books. While this limitation has been voiced as an objection to the authenticity of the conception and birth narrative, this author believes the Apostle Paul did not need to go into detail regarding the conception and birth of Jesus Christ. It would have been common knowledge hence the derogatory comments to Mary in the Talmud. The details of the conception and birth of Jesus Christ were inferred otherwise John could not have written these words in John 1:1-4,

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

In Judaism "it is Torah edicts that only on the basis of two, or more, witnesses can a matter be established."¹⁶² A matter as significant as the conception of the Savior of the world would never have been left to chance thus this author believes the action of the Holy Spirit overshadowing Mary required two witnesses. Those witnesses would have been Mary, the Angel Gabriel, and the Holy Spirit himself. Additionally, just as there was a host of heavenly angels at the birth of Jesus, this author believes there is much in the spirit realm that humans cannot see; therefore it is not outside the realm of possibility that a host of heavenly angels also witnessed the conception of Jesus Christ. When Mary assented to the Angel Gabriel to carry the Christ child and serve as his earthly mother, there was no delay as the conception was immediate within her womb.

¹⁶² Eliav Shochetman. "The Polygraph In Jewish Law" Reprinted with permission from "Crossroads: Halacha and the Modern World, Vol. III," Zomet Institute (Alon Shvut-Gush Etzion, Israel). Accessed March 27, 2016. <http://jlaw.com/Articles/polygraph.html>

Dr. Bart Ehrman in his lecture series *How Jesus Became God* states, “If Jesus had not become God, (meaning the followers of Jesus understood Jesus’ claim of deity), the Christian religion would have remained a part of Judaism. The Christian religion would never have started.”¹⁶³ Isaiah predicted this conception as vastly different. The apostles and followers of Jesus understood these differences, and through their writings in the New Testament, contribute to one’s understanding of the identity of Jesus Christ.

This author proposes the narratives found in the Old Testament was fulfilled in Matthew and Luke contributes to the evidence that the occurrence of events regarding the conception and birth of Jesus Christ is avowed as factual; yet these passages are not the only information upon which an individual might rely on a cognitive process to understand the true identity of Jesus Christ. One must examine the simplicity of the biblical narrative, not be complacent in its understanding and examine other evidence which might support, or disprove, this claim of a divine virgin conception and subsequent virgin birth. Surprisingly, other evidence to support this unique claim is found in other documents including the Quran. It is therefore now appropriate to review the Islam faith.

Islam

Islam, the second largest and one of the fastest growing religions in the world, is the youngest of the three monotheistic faiths. This faith originated in the 7th century and is based on revelations received by the Prophet Muhammad, (570 - 632 CE), from the angel Gabriel in Saudi Arabia over a period of approximately 20 - 22 years.¹⁶⁴ These revelations, according to Dr. John

¹⁶³Bart Ehrman. *How Jesus Became God; The Exaltation of a Jewish Preacher from Galilee*, San Francisco, CA: Harper One, 2014, 64.

¹⁶⁴ Religion Facts. “Islam Fast Facts and Introduction,” Accessed March 29, 2016, <http://www.religionfacts.com/islam>.

Esposito, (Professor of Religion and International Affairs and of Islamic Studies at Georgetown University, Founding Director of the Alwaleed Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding in the Walsh School of Foreign Service), would “be collected and compiled into the Quran.”¹⁶⁵ The Quran “is believed to reflect and correct earlier revelations in the Torah and New Testament and to be the final revelation of God to humankind.”¹⁶⁶ Like Judaism and Christianity, Islam, according to Dr. John Esposito, includes a way of life which encompasses history, culture, politics, and religion. Depending on the geographic, cultural and religious factors,¹⁶⁷ one may associate Islam with a negative stereotype. In fact, Islam has often been defined as “the misunderstood religion,” probably due to its entanglement between religion and government as opposed to the separation of these entities, commonly referred to as separation of church and state.¹⁶⁸

The common denominator of Islam is a shared core belief called the Five Pillars of Islam as prescribed in the Quran. These Five Pillars of Islam, along with shared images, interpretations, and realities, link Muslims together all over the world, yet all are practiced with tremendous diversity creating differences among cultural practices. The Five Pillars include faith, prayer, fasting, pilgrimage to Mecca and alms. In addition to the Five Pillars, Muslims are expected to celebrate several holidays and rituals, including Ramadan, the “Feast of the Breaking of the Fast, called *Eid al-Fitr* and *Eid al-Adha*, the Feast of the Sacrifice.”^{169 170} The belief “the Muslim

¹⁶⁵ John Esposito, “Islam Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow,” *Great World Religions: Islam*. The Great Courses, no. 1 (2003), Georgetown University, Washington DC: 13.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 20-21.

¹⁶⁸ Danial Abidin, *Islam the Misunderstood Religion*. (San Francisco, CA: PTS Millennia, 2012).

¹⁶⁹ Religion Facts. “Islam Fast Facts and Introduction,” Accessed March 29, 2016, <http://www.religionfacts.com/islam>

community (*ummah*) is a transnational community of believers, God ordained and guided, to spread an Islamic order to create a socially just society,”¹⁷¹ leads, for some, to the creation and celebration of a sixth pillar as described as jihad.¹⁷²

In its most general meaning *jihad* refers to the obligation incumbent on all Muslims, as individuals and as a community, to exert (*jihad*) themselves to realize God’s will, to lead a virtuous life, to fulfill the universal mission of Islam, and to spread the Islamic community. More specifically, *jihad* also means the struggle for or defense of Islam, popularly referred to as “holy war.” Despite the fact that *jihad* is not supposed to include aggressive, offensive warfare, as distinct from defensive warfare, this has occurred throughout history.¹⁷³

As previously stated in the introduction of this project thesis chapter, all three monotheistic faiths of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam share a linked heritage to Abraham. While Judaism and Christianity trace the lineage through Isaac, Islam traces its lineage through Ishmael. All three faiths “believe in angels, Satan, prophets, revelation, moral accountability and responsibility, divine judgment, and eternal reward or punishment. Thus, for Muslims, Islam is the fulfillment and completion of earlier revelations, including the conception and birth of Jesus Christ.”¹⁷⁴

While there are many differences between Islam and Christianity, one finds the conception, and virgin birth of Jesus Christ as presented in the Christian Bible affirmed and

¹⁷⁰ John Esposito, “Islam Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow,” *Great World Religions: Islam*. The Great Courses, no. 1 (2003), Georgetown University, Washington DC: 10.

¹⁷¹ Religion Facts. “Islam Fast Facts and Introduction,” Accessed March 29, 2016, <http://www.religionfacts.com/islam,18>.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 20.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹⁷⁴ John Esposito, “Islam Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow,” *Great World Religions: Islam*. The Great Courses, no. 1 (2003), Georgetown University, Washington DC: 5.

unambiguous in the Quran.¹⁷⁵ There are multiple references to this topic evidenced by the detail provided in the following verse:

And make mention of Mary in the Scripture, when she had withdrawn from her people to a chamber looking east, and had chosen seclusion from them. Then We sent unto her Our spirit and it assumed for her the likeness of a perfect man. She said: Lo! I seek refuge in the Beneficent One from thee, if thou art God-fearing. He said: I am only a messenger from thy Lord, that I may bestow on thee a faultless son. She said: How can I have a son when no mortal hath touched me, neither have I been unchaste? He said: So it will be. Thy Lord saith: It is easy for Me. And it will be that We may make of him a revelation for mankind and a mercy from Us, and it is a thing ordained. And she conceived him, and she withdrew with him to a far place.¹⁷⁶

One can deduct from simple logic if Mary had been impregnated by a human man there would have been no need for the Angel Gabriel to appear to her to describe the sequence of events regarding the conception. One can ascertain, in the Quran's passages, Gabriel was sent to provide clarity to Mary, also to affirm the fact this conception was as unique as the baby she was to carry. This passage also speaks of the purpose of this child in regards to mankind and affirms the virginity of Mary at the time of the conception.

Additional support for the divine virgin conception and subsequent birth is found in Surah 4:156 of the Quran. Mary had been charged with fornication and an illegitimate conception as she was unmarried. In Surah 21:91 the conception of Jesus Christ is explained as a direct action of God. Thus Mary was cleared of these alleged charges. It is import to note the title *the son of Mary* is frequently repeated throughout the Quran to identify Jesus Christ. This stands in stark contrast to the common Semitic practice to name a son after the father, a characteristic

¹⁷⁵ Arthur J. Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted: A Translation*, (New York: Touchstone,1996), Surah 19:16-22, Surah 21:91.

¹⁷⁶ *Quran*, Surah 19:16-22.

previously recognized in both Judaism and Christianity in the earlier discussion of this thesis project. This leads one to ask the question, why is Jesus called the son of Mary, especially when there is such a conspicuous absence of women's names in the Quran? One can postulate Mary was repeatedly mentioned on a regular basis in the Quran because she held a position of prominence as a significant historical figure. The Quran teaches Mary is the only human female to give birth to a son while maintaining her virginity, thus the Quran, once again, affirms the virgin conception and birth of Jesus Christ.

Of interest is the analogy the Quran makes between the creation of Adam, who had neither human father nor human mother, and Jesus Christ who, in like manner, had no human father and in this author's opinion no earthly mother who contributed the compliment of an egg. The Quran asserts the equality of creation of both Jesus and Adam when it states: "The creation of Jesus, as far as God is concerned, is equal to the creation of Adam; God created Adam from clay, then said to him *Be* and he (meaning Adam) was."¹⁷⁷ The operative word in this passage of the Quran is the word *Be*. In the same manner, Christians believe God commanded Jesus to be conceived in the womb of his mother Mary, one finds the Quran relating the story of how God also commanded Adam to be created, without the benefit of a human father. From the Islamic perspective, God simply commanded *Be* resulting in the conception of Jesus. This description of Jesus coming into existence echoes the New Testament scripture found in 1 Corinthians 15:45 which states, "And so it is written, the first man Adam became a living being. The last Adam *became* a life-giving spirit." In this author's opinion, this scripture provides another hint regarding the identity and uniqueness of the conception and subsequent pregnancy of Mary.

¹⁷⁷ Arthur J. Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted: A Translation*, (New York: Touchstone, 1996), Surah 3:59

Additional passages in the Quran identify Jesus, son of Mary, as the Messiah and confirm a monotheistic perspective regarding the belief in one god.

The angels said, O Mary, God sends good news to you; a Word from Him, to be named the Messiah, Jesus the son of Mary. Great will be his dignity in this world, as well as in the Hereafter; he shall be one of those who are close to Me.¹⁷⁸

O followers of the scriptures, do not exceed the limits in practicing your religion, and do not attribute to God other than the truth. The Messiah, Jesus the son of Mary, is a messenger of God and His Word, which He bestowed upon Mary; a divine order from Him. Therefore, you shall believe in God and His messengers, and do not say, Trinity. You shall refrain (from such an utterance) for your own good. God is only one God; be He glorified; it is not befitting that God should beget a son. To Him belongs everything in the heavens and the earth. God suffices as protector.¹⁷⁹

Finally, The Quran provides some details on the Immaculate Conception. It tells one that Jesus, like Adam, was created with the divine breath:

Your Lord said to the angels, I am creating a human being from aged mud, like the potter's clay. Once I perfect him, and blow into him from My spirit, you shall fall prostrate before him."¹⁸⁰ "And (recall) the one who maintained her virginity, then we blew into her from our spirit. We rendered her and her son a sign for the whole world."¹⁸¹

Chapter Conclusion

Based on the review of the three major monotheistic faith groups via research and interviews, one can ascertain that the virgin conception and subsequent virgin birth of the Messiah were averred as an anticipated and expected event pre-dating antiquity. While Judaism

¹⁷⁸ *Quran*, Surah 3:45.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, Surah 4:171.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, Surah 15:28-29

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, Surah 21:91

denies Jesus was the anticipated Messiah, the Torah provides prophecy of this event and early identification of the paternal and maternal lineage, while Christianity and Islam support the fulfillment of the virgin conception and birth of Jesus Christ in the New Testament and the Quran. All three faiths purport differing opinions on the identity and purpose of Jesus Christ; however, this author's opinion suggests there is no denying the belief of the Christian position as being soundly based on both Old and New Testament scriptures, and confirmed by the Quran. Evidence supports the conception and birth of Jesus Christ were made possible by the supernatural intervention of the Holy Spirit encompassing Mary, and the pre-existent child was placed into her womb to grow and be nourished until the time of his birth. This action was confirmed and explained by angelic manifestation to both Mary and Joseph.

Some individuals argue the suggestion of the event, as documented in Matthew and Luke, is not possible or is non-repeatable. This author affirms verification and validation typically requires an event to be replicable; however, this author suggests the non-repeatable nature of the event minimizes the argument the divine virgin conception and virgin birth of Jesus Christ cannot be proven. Additionally, this author proposes as previously stated; Mary was not the only witness to the divine virginal conception as the importance and significance of the conception of Jesus Christ could never be left to speculation or uncertainty. In this author's opinion, the non-replication of the divine virgin conception and virgin birth of Jesus Christ substantiates additional evidence that this virgin conception and resultant virgin birth is unique from any other conception and birth in the history of the world qualifying Jesus Christ unparalleled from any other individual known to humankind. Jesus himself stated, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses

and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled," (Luke 24:44). To examine the uniqueness of this claim that Jesus is unparalleled from all other individuals based on his remarkable conception, and to understand the very statement spoken by Christ himself, one must now consider what, if any, scientific evidence exists to support or disprove such a claim.

CHAPTER FOUR

Testament of Science in the Conception of Jesus Christ

Before attending seminary, this author studied the physiological truths which govern the miracle of human reproduction at a university. Following completion of a first undergraduate degree, this author spent over thirty years in the medical field working as a registered nurse. This author has personally experienced pregnancies and given birth to babies both living and deceased, has attended the births of others including unviable, preterm fetuses, and babies at all stages of development up to the point of being considered full and even post-term. Additionally, this author has witnessed, firsthand, man-made intervention in the human effort to assist infertile couples in conception.

It is from this point of reference, coupled with a biblical perspective this author purports, there indeed remain some mysteries regarding human reproduction, (Eccl 11:5); however, it is an irrefutable fact that science, with the exponential explosion of medical knowledge since the Bible was written, provides absolute proof that normal human reproduction is, in and of itself, a miracle.^{182 183} The complexities of life and human reproduction are not random chance. One

¹⁸² Matt Slick, "Dictionary of Theology," *Christian Apologetics & Research Ministry*. Accessed April 1, 2017. <https://carm.org/dictionary-miracle>. Miracle – "is an out-of-the-ordinary direct and divine intervention in the world. Examples would be the parting of the Red Sea, Jesus walking on water, the resurrection of Lazarus, etc. Some hold that it is a violation of the natural order of physical laws. Others maintain that there is no such violation

need only read scriptures such as Psalm 130:13-16 which references the Almighty's knowledge of an individual before development and look at the photographic evidence in books from photographers such as Alexander Tsiaras¹⁸⁴ to begin to understand, yet not fully comprehend, God's hand in the miracle and sequence of the events of normal human reproduction. No longer is curiosity and wonderment part of the equation as portions of reproduction including the visual references of ovulation, fertilization, implantation, and various stages of fetal development and delivery have been visualized, captured and documented in still photographs and on film. This confirmed knowledge of normal human reproduction makes it essential for one to ascertain the differences in the conception of Jesus Christ.

It is a scientific fact there has been no derivation for *normal* human reproduction since Adam and Eve were instructed, by God, to be "fruitful and multiply" (Gen 1:28). Human life has been, as ordained by God, a continuous process from that point of origination, and it is through the process of a marvelous conception with the inimitable obedience of a young virgin maiden that the phenomenon of a virgin conception and birth occurs almost identical to *normal* human reproduction yet with known irregularity known to the general public as evidenced in the accusations of illegitimacy against Jesus, (John 8:41), which extended well into the second century.

upon God's part but only a natural manifestation of His work. They are also known as powers and signs (Mark 9:39, Acts 2:22, 19:11) and mighty works (John 10:25-28). They are a manifestation of the power of God over nature (Joshua 10:12-14), animals (Num. 22:28), people (Gen. 19:26), and illness (2 Kings 5:10-14). They are produced by God's power (Acts 15:12), Christ's power (Matt. 10:1), and the Holy Spirit's power (Matt. 12:28)."

¹⁸³ "Friedrich Schleiermacher, "What is a Miracle" *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*, Accessed April 1, 2017, 49, <http://www.faith-theology.com/2006/06/what-is-miracle.html>. "Miracle is merely the religious name for 'event,' every one of which, even the most natural and usual, is a miracle as soon as it adapts itself to the fact that the religious view of it can be the dominant one"

¹⁸⁴ Alexander Tsiaras, *From Conception to Birth: A Life Unfolds New*. (New York: Doubleday, 2002).

Evolutionists propose theories¹⁸⁵ in attempts to undermine the truth regarding human conception as stipulated in scripture, causing questions to arise from these theories regarding the conception of the average normal human and specifically bringing into question the plausibility regarding the conception and birth of Jesus Christ. Questions that arise include: is there evidence which supports the conception of Jesus as being identical to those of a normal human being? Does evidence support something extraordinary in the conception of Jesus? Is the conception of Jesus an issue of faith or scientific reason?

In this author's opinion, every individual who identifies as Christian is obliged to respond to these proposed questions succinctly, and without hesitation. For the members of this author's home church, an understanding of the conception of Jesus Christ is critical in order to be responsive to those non-believers and those of no faith, which stimulated the inquiry as the foundation of this thesis project, and which will undoubtedly be encountered at the various annual holiday church services in the future.

Christians must also understand that God will sometimes reveal himself and his works through something extraordinary, by an extremely minute thing such as a single cell although he may not be in that thing (I Kgs 19:11-12). God sometimes speaks in that still small voice as referenced in I Kings revealing his creation while humans, through their initiative and knowledge under the guise of assistance to others, have brazenly manipulated what has been divinely ordained. While nature has asexual reproduction called parthenogenesis, a topic to be discussed later in this chapter, the human assistance towards reproduction has led, in certain instances, to the alteration of *the process* of normal human reproduction, specifically regarding the union of

¹⁸⁵ Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species*. (New York: Bantam Dell, 1999).

the male sperm and female ovum. As a result of this human assistance, the world was introduced to a form of infertility treatment in a procedure called in-vitro fertilization (IVF) in the 1970s,¹⁸⁶ a surgical assistive technique for conception. More divisive was the man-made, genetically developed cloning of an identical copy of an entire cell, gene or entire organism which was introduced in 1996, when the world met Dolly, the Sheep.¹⁸⁷ While the world has forbidden the cloning of humans, there is speculation that humans are secretly being cloned to produce a superior human race. Despite this speculation, it is highly improbable that the assistive process of IVF or the act of human cloning were scientifically humanly possible at the time of the conception of Jesus Christ; yet, it is these very advancements in science, when contrasted with the principles of normal human reproduction and applied to the Biblical scenario regarding the conception of Jesus Christ which leads one to quickly recognize evidence which substantiates the conception of Jesus like none before or since in the world! It is therefore, apropos, that a brief, simplified review of the development of normal human conception and reproduction is provided, along with an overview of parthenogenesis, cloning and assistive reproductive technologies in contrast to the remarkable, unequalled, conception of Jesus Christ.

Normal Human Conception and Reproduction

One would assume a review of normal human reproduction would be very straightforward. This author cautions this topic is not as simplistic as it appears as there are on-going debates, as previously stated in a prior chapter of this thesis project, regarding certain definitions which, with time and pressure from groups such as stem cell harvest advocates and

¹⁸⁶ Robert G. McKinnell and Marie A. Di Berardino. "The Biology of Cloning: History and Rationale." *Bioscience* 49, no. 11 (November 1999): 875-85.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 875-85.

pro-choice groups, have been altered. The alteration of definitions has significant implications when one is trying to ascertain when conception, thus the beginning of life, the essence of a new person, begins.

When this author attended nursing school in the late 1970s conception was taught as occurring at the time of fertilization. In 1995, the term conception was redefined in Stedman's Medical Dictionary, as the "act of conceiving; or becoming pregnant, fertilization of the oocyte (ovum) by a spermatozoon (sperm) to form a viable zygote"¹⁸⁸ Stedman's definition means fertilization and conception are essentially the same. In the year 2000 this same term of conception was redefined yet again, in Stedman's 27th edition Medical Dictionary, as an "act of conceiving, the implantation of the blastocyte in the endometrium." In other words, the modern definition of conception means conception does not occur at fertilization; rather conception occurs at the time of implantation of the blastocyte in the uterus.

This author firmly believes life begins at fertilization as evidenced by scripture stating "For the life of the flesh is in the blood," (Lev 17:11), and as supported by science in that the yolk sac which encapsulates the ovum before the union of the sperm contains blood. "The so-called yolk sac is the source of the human embryo's first blood cells, and death would result without it."¹⁸⁹ In a somewhat radical departure from the more conservative pro-life advocates which believe life begins at fertilization, this author suggests the shedding of blood occurs at the moment an ovum is expelled from the ovary and therefore the question must be asked if life occurs even before fertilization, in the separate ovum and sperm. This issue is critical because

¹⁸⁸ "Conception" - Stedman's Medical Dictionary 26th Edition 1995. Accessed September 18, 2016, <http://www.stedmanonline.com/>

¹⁸⁹ Gary Parker, "Creative Design in the Human Embryo." *Creation: The Facts of Life* *Creation* 6 (3):6-9, June 1984.

the on-going abortion debate hinges on this very definition and it is also critical in understanding the differences in the conception of Jesus Christ as compared to the conception of a normal human being. This author plans to write about abortion at a later date in the same manner of this thesis project using scripture juxtaposed against science to answer the question when does life begin; however, for the current purpose of this thesis project readers should understand this author does not believe that a simply change in definitions, specifically the term conception, make it scripturally correct. These changes simply make certain procedures, such as pharmaceutical induced or elective abortions, legal for human purposes based on convenience or other factors as opposed to following a moral conscience. Readers will, therefore, be required to formulate their determination based on the scripture and scientific facts as presented by this author regarding when life begins in normal human conception and contrast it with the conception of Jesus Christ.

Normal human reproduction, in the time of Adam and Eve, and after that, required the uniting, via coitus, of male sperm, Greek term (σπέρμα) *sperma* (meaning "seed") and a female ovum (egg), to create a new human being. These biological laws, except when altered by God or modern man, have remained consistent with the passage of time. It is also factual that certain biological events must transpire in both the male and female long before the sperm and ovum unite. Accordingly, for normal human reproduction to occur, both the female and male bodies must contain reproductive systems and be physiologically mature enough to reproduce.

It is beyond the scope of this thesis project to explain in intricate detail the function of the hypothalamic-pituitary-ovarian axis within the female human body or the neuroendocrine mechanisms within the human male which physiologically creates the capacity to reproduce. This author provides a simplified explanation by stating when the female is physiologically old

enough; specific hormones will be excreted within the body that causes the female to begin a monthly cycle where an ovum (egg) matures and is released from the ovary. This process is defined as ovulation, the beginning of menarche. Female babies are born with hundreds of thousands of immature ova inside the ovaries. When ovulation begins, a mature ovum is released and travels down the fallopian tube (oviduct) toward the uterus. If the ovum remains unfertilized by a male sperm, long spiral arteries, thick columnar epithelium (uterine lining) and corkscrew endometrial glands (including the unfertilized ovum) are expelled by the female body through the vagina as a monthly discharge.¹⁹⁰ These “cyclic changes in the hypothalamic-pituitary-ovarian axis which produce gametes and a uterine environment prepared to support a pregnancy should fertilization occur,”¹⁹¹ will continue in the female from puberty till menopause, unless interrupted by pregnancy.

The reader should be aware the physiological preparation for implantation for normal human pregnancy takes time. Even with assisted reproduction techniques, the female must undergo treatment to physiologically prepare her for pregnancy. Accordingly, a deviation is recognized in the conception of Jesus as it was abrupt, with the Holy Spirit overshadowing Mary, without the normal physiological preparation which typically transpires from the time of fertilization until the time of implantation.

Physiological maturity for the male means the male is capable of producing sperm within the testes and thus capable of fathering a child. “The neuroendocrine mechanisms that regulate testicular function are fundamentally similar to those that regulate ovarian function.”¹⁹² In

¹⁹⁰ Linda J. Heffner, *Human Reproduction at a Glance*, (Indianapolis, IN: Wiley, 2001) 38-40.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 37.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 37-38.

essence, this means both the male and female are physiologically mature enough to reproduce and create a new human being. A popular embryology textbook utilized in medical schools provides a definition from a human perspective. “Although life is a continuous process, fertilization is a critical landmark because, under ordinary circumstances, a new, genetically distinct human organism is formed when the chromosomes of the male and female pronuclei blend in the oocyte.”¹⁹³ This is a critical statement in understanding the conception of Jesus Christ and how it differs from normal human reproduction as Jesus was not a new genetically distinct human formed from the coalescence of the sperm of a father and ovum of a mother. Scripture tells us Jesus origin was not of the earthly world (John 8:23), and the role of Mary the mother of Jesus limited, yet to be discussed in this thesis project.

After copulation, the “sperm movement through the uterus to the site of fertilization in the oviduct takes two to seven hours,”¹⁹⁴ resulting in the blending of the human male sperm and human female pronuclei. “Fertilization occurs in the fallopian tubes,”¹⁹⁵ which this author pointedly reminds the reader the description of such event is absent when Luke, a physician, and detailed writer, explains how the conception of Jesus occurred, (Luke 1:31). Luke states conception occurred in the womb (uterus), not in the fallopian tubes. This oft-overlooked fact indicates uniqueness vastly divergent from normal human conception, especially in first century BC, and is evidence that not only the paternal but also the maternal origin of Jesus Christ is prodigious.

¹⁹³ Rona O’ Rahilly & Fabiola Muller, *Human Embryology & Teratology*, 3rd. Ed. (New York: Wiley-Liss, 2001), 49-51.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 52.

¹⁹⁵ Gary Cunningham and Kenneth Leveno and Steven Bloom and John Hauth and Larry Gilstrap, and Katharine Wenstrom, *Williams Obstetrics 22nd Edition*, (New York, McGraw-Hill Medical Publishing Division, 2005), 52.

After fertilization occurs one cell divides into two cells and continues to divide into, four, eight, etc. as it travels back down along the fallopian tube. By the third to the fifth day the cell ball, now called a blastocyst, continues to travel down the fallopian tube and can take anywhere from nine to ten days where it arrives, literally floating into the uterus. Once in the uterus, implantation takes place into the endometrial lining of the uterus and is complete between day five to seven. Cell division continues resulting in the embryonic development of a placenta, umbilical cord, amniotic sac, embryo, and yolk sac and fluid. Fetal development then continues resulting in the formation of organs and systems and the fetus grows and gains weight until time for delivery.

It is beyond the scope of this thesis project to go into the intricate details regarding embryonic development and the associated formation and function of the umbilical cord, amniotic sac and fluid, and placenta or to discuss the complex genetics of blood type genes and their associated antigens. It is however imperative that the reader understands God designed the human female body in such a way and uses a temporary organ called the placenta to support two different blood systems at the same time when a female is pregnant. “Fetal and maternal blood are not mixed...,”¹⁹⁶ This is why an expectant mother can carry a baby with a different blood type from her own as this blood separation is made possible by a microscopic thin blood barrier located within the placenta, commonly referred to as the afterbirth. The placenta is also part of the human instrument by which that “Holy Thing,” (Luke 1:35), in the womb of the Virgin Mary, the legal mother of Jesus Christ, remained untainted by the curse of human sin. Given this

¹⁹⁶ Gary Cunningham and Kenneth Leveno and Steven Bloom and John Hauth and Larry Gilstrap, and Katharine Wenstrom, *Williams Obstetrics 22nd Edition*, (New York, McGraw-Hill Medical Publishing Division, 2005), 51-21.

simplified review of normal human reproduction, and the understanding the conception occurred without fertilization, one can now ask the question, based on the Biblical recitations of the conception as found in Matthew 1:18-21 and Luke 1:26-38, was Jesus conceived in the normal human fashion? The answer to this question is no and is supported by additional following evidence.

Mary, the mother of Jesus, lived in ancient Judaism; thus, marriage was very different from today's modern concept of marriage. Young girls were betrothed around the age of twelve and boys at age eighteen or after.¹⁹⁷ These betrothals, the legal equivalent of marriage which required a bill of divorce to terminate the relationship, existed approximately one year and were formalized with a marriage contract called a ketubah. After the one year timeframe, the woman moved from the home of her father to that of her husband who assumed authority for her. One can assume Mary would have been around the age of twelve, residing with her parents, engaged to Joseph, when she was found to be pregnant.

If Mary were only twelve, there is a possibility that she was not physiologically mature enough to release an ovum for reproduction. Mary herself knew pregnancy occurred from the sexual union of male and female, but she may not have understood the specific physiology of fertilization by which a maturely released ovum uniting with sperm in the fallopian tubes would result in pregnancy. As a Jew, from the royal line of King David, Mary would have been familiar with the prophecy from Genesis 3:15, however, the promise of the *seed of a woman* and its significance eclipsed her human understanding as it does most modern-day Christians. Young

¹⁹⁷ Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler, *The Jewish Annotated New Testament New Revised Standard Translation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 4.

Mary, in speaking with the Angel Gabriel when hearing the news that she had found favor with God verbalized, like many modern Christians, a human interpretation for a supernatural event while simultaneously understanding the implication and ramifications of being unmarried and pregnant as it applied to the reality of the culture in which she lived. Mary's response to the angel Gabriel shows her willingness to be utilized by God as He saw fit, even if it meant she could be stoned to death under the Jewish law for being unmarried and pregnant.

Despite her confusion, questions, and concerns, this young maiden, willingly submitted to the will of God. Witnessed by Mary herself, the Angel Gabriel, the Holy Spirit, the Father and the Son, (John 8:16-18), and possible other angelic beings in the spirit realm for which humans cannot see, and in compliance with the Jewish Laws of Witness,¹⁹⁸ where two or more witnesses are required, the Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary and she conceived in her womb leaving no doubt as to the paternity and maternity of the child Mary would carry to term and bring forth into the world putting in place the association of the credulous with the miraculous. Jesus was divinely conceived in the womb of Mary when the young maiden was overshadowed by the Holy Spirit after she consented to be utilized for a greater purpose. The term overshadow, which means to cover with a cloud, was a term for which any Jewish girl would have been familiar. The Torah referred to this type of overshadowing by the Holy Spirit in Exodus 16:10, 19:9, 24:16, 34:5, 40:34. Additionally, one sees this same type of overshadowing in the New Testament during the transfiguration, (Matt 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:34). One should note this

¹⁹⁸ Tracy R. Rich. "List of the 613 Mitzvot Commandments," *Judaism 101*, Accessed February 17, 2016, <http://www.jewfaq.org/613.htm>. The Jewish Laws of Witness, commandment #247, part of the list of the 613 Mitzvot (Commandments) as identified by Moses Ben Maimonides, (Rambam), reflected throughout scripture in both Old and New Testament which stipulates matters of importance cannot be adjudicated on the testimony of one individual, rather two or more witnesses are required as reflected in the following: Num 35:30, Deut 17:6, 19:15, I King 21:10, 13, Matt 18:16, Matt 26:60, John 8:17, 2 Cor 13:1, 1 Tim 5:19, Heb 10:28, Rev 11:3-7.

overshadowing or cloud was a visible manifestation of God's presence, power and glory; therefore, the same power seen in the Old Testament by Moses performed a unique work in the life of a young, virgin, Jewish girl.

Many Christians have predispositions toward a particular solution relying upon human understanding, in the same manner as the very young Mary during her conversation with the Angel Gabriel. These predispositions inappropriately place limitations upon God. As a result of these predispositions and limitations, some Christians fail to recognize the difference in the conception of Jesus from that of normal human reproduction, and therefore have not grasped the implications of the information found in scripture which contains an obvious difference in the *manner* of conception of Jesus Christ. This author challenges the reader to look beyond mere human understanding and rationalism and to understand there is much more to the story of the conception and birth of Jesus. This author believes Mary was the legal mother of Jesus Christ by being his natural mother who physically gave birth to him; however, her role was limited during the conception and pregnancy, a topic to be discussed later in this chapter. Given this author's opinion, one must consider what other mechanisms, if any, are possible by which Jesus could be conceived. Parthenogenesis, cloning and assisted reproduction are all possibilities which have to be considered and will now be reviewed.

Parthenogenesis

As seen in the previous section of this chapter, there exists a confirmed deviation, both theologically and scientifically, from normal human conception regarding the conception of Jesus Christ. There are known instances where there occurs abnormal self-activation known

as parthenogenesis which is “the ability to produce offspring from unfertilized eggs.”¹⁹⁹ While this author’s opinion has already been stated regarding the lack of the contribution of an ovum from Mary the legal mother of Jesus, one must ask is it possible that parthenogenesis is the method of how Jesus came into human form.

A closer review of parthenogenesis shows asexual reproduction occurs in plants, fish, birds, amphibians, and some reptiles on a routine basis; however, the focus for the purposes of this thesis project is on human (mammal) parthenogenesis. There have been claims of human parthenogenesis as far back as the 1950s. Studies were conducted regarding these claims and found there were no parthenogenetic children.²⁰⁰ To date, this author knows of no known viable offspring in mammals which have resulted from parthenogenesis.

As has been proven in assisted reproductive techniques, a topic which remains to be discussed in this chapter, it is a scientific fact a human ovum can be stimulated to cause “an intracellular calcium rise.”²⁰¹ This in turns causes a “cortical reaction and resumption of the second meiotic cell division. If the second polar body is either not formed or not expelled, a diploid activated ovum develops. This abnormal self-activation is known as parthenogenesis and is the basis for the formation of dermoid cysts^{202 203}within the ovary.”²⁰⁴ Once the self-activation

¹⁹⁹ Casper van de Kooi and Tanja Schwander, “Parthenogenesis: Birth of a New Lineage or Reproductive Accident?” *Current Biology*, Vol 25, issue 15, R659-R661

²⁰⁰ Stanley Balfour-Lynn, “Parthenogenesis in Human Beings.” *Lancet* 1956: 1071-1072.

²⁰¹ Gary Cunningham and Kenneth Leveno and Steven Bloom and John Hauth and Larry Gilstrap, and Katharine Wenstrom, *Williams Obstetrics 22nd Edition*, (New York: McGraw-Hill Medical Publishing Division, 2005), 45.

²⁰² *Miller-Keane Encyclopedia and Dictionary of Medicine, Nursing, and Allied Health, Seventh Edition*. S.v. "dermoid." Accessed April 15, 2016, <https://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/dermoid>

²⁰³ This author has personally viewed dermoid cysts when removed from various patients during surgery. These dermoid cysts may contain bones, teeth, hair, cartilage, and skin. Most importantly, none of these dermoid cysts and their contents makes another complete human being.

has begun, “during the first few cell divisions, there is no new mRNA synthesis ²⁰⁵ occurring from the nuclear DNA in the conceptus. The embryo is developing using essentially only maternal cell components...”²⁰⁶ In short, there would be no male contribution to this type of cell thus the resultant cells would contain only mitochondrial DNA from the mother and the resultant offspring would be female.

Two secular scientists from University of Lausanne, incorrectly claiming the prophecy of Jesus is the first account of parthenogenesis, illustrate and confirm this opinion when they state the following:

The phenomenon of virgin birth has long fascinated scientists and laymen alike. The first account of parthenogenesis in the literature is the prophecy of Jesus Christ’s birth in Isaiah 7:14: “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel”. This reference to parthenogenesis is unusual in two ways: first, it is the only account of ‘natural parthenogenesis’ in a mammal. Mammals are believed to be completely unable to reproduce via parthenogenesis because of a number of developmental and genetic constraints. Second, while the “Blessed Virgin Mary” might have been able to conceive a daughter via parthenogenesis, the conception of a son is highly unlikely. As male sex in humans is determined by genes on the Y chromosome, Mary, as a woman, could not have transmitted any Y chromosomes to her offspring.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁴ Gary Cunningham and Kenneth Leveno and Steven Bloom and John Hauth and Larry Gilstrap, and Katharine Wenstrom, *Williams Obstetrics 22nd Edition*, (New York, McGraw-Hill Medical Publishing Division, 2005), 45.

²⁰⁵ Biology, Eighth Edition (Raven) “Chapter 15: Genes and How They Work,” McGraw-Hill Global Education Holdings, LLC. 2017. Accessed November 14, 2016, http://highered.mheducation.com/sites/9834092339/student_view0/chapter15/mrna_synthesis__transcription_.html,

²⁰⁶ Gary Cunningham and Kenneth Leveno and Steven Bloom and John Hauth and Larry Gilstrap, and Katharine Wenstrom, *Williams Obstetrics 22nd Edition*, (New York, McGraw-Hill Medical Publishing Division, 2005), 45.

²⁰⁷ Casper van de Kooi and Tanja Schwander, “Parthenogenesis: Birth of a New Lineage or Reproductive Accident?,” *Current Biology*, Vol 25, issue 15, R659-R661.

Both scientists, in their attempt to discredit the birth of Jesus based on parthenogenesis, have confirmed the biblical account of the conception of Jesus Christ as they have just proven pathogenesis is not possible in the conception of Jesus Christ. This author concurs. One must now consider if the conception of Jesus could occur via cloning.

Cloning

Cloning is the making of “genetically identical copies of a biological entity.”²⁰⁸ With the advent of cloning, some labs have successfully cloned mammals as with Dolly the sheep as previously mentioned in this chapter, and there remains ongoing debate regarding the making of a super human race in this manner. The concept that humans could be cloned through technology had many individuals wondering if this was the method by which Mary could give birth to Jesus Christ as a virgin. One must stop and ask if cloning is what is indicated in the Old Testament prophecy in Isaiah 7:14 “a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son.” This author does not believe cloning is supported by scripture and to understand this concept one must review some simple genetics for which the majority of individuals should be familiar having probably first learned these terms and concepts in elementary biology class around the fifth grade.

In every human being, there is a molecule called deoxyribonucleic acid, otherwise known as DNA. This material is what distinguishes individuals from each other and provides a hereditary lineage as follows:

²⁰⁸ “Cloning,” Cloning Fact Sheet. *National Human Genome Research*, Accessed April 2, 2017. <https://www.genome.gov/25520880/>.

DNA, along with the instructions it contains, is passed from adult organisms to their offspring during reproduction. DNA's unique structure enables the molecule to copy itself during cell division. When a cell prepares to divide, the DNA helix splits down the middle and becomes two single strands. These single strands serve as templates for building two new, double-stranded DNA molecules - each a replica of the original DNA molecule.²⁰⁹

In normal human reproduction, it is a well-established fact the DNA inside the nucleus of an ovum will contain 23 chromosomes, and the remaining 23 chromosomes will come from the father making a full complement of 46 chromosomes in the offspring.²¹⁰ In contrast, cloning requires that the unfertilized ovum is stripped of the original 23 chromosomes and be replaced with a complement of 46 chromosomes from a donor. As a result, the offspring would possess the DNA identical to the donor as opposed to the mother.²¹¹ This could conceivably work as a plausible explanation for the virgin birth with one exception. There is a very small segment of DNA in the mitochondria of the cells. This is always passed, undiluted by the compliment of the father, from the mother to the child. The result is obvious! If the Virgin Mary's DNA were involved in the conception of Jesus Christ in a cloning capacity, the resultant child would have been female and Mary's imperfect mitochondrial DNA which was tainted by the generational sin of Adam would have passed down to this child. Since Jesus Christ was male and called the "lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Pet 1:19), it is not theologically or scientifically feasible for Jesus to be a clone. Accordingly cloning is not an acceptable answer to the inquiry. This fact gives support to the previously stated position of this author that the conception of

²⁰⁹ "Deoxyribonucleic Acid (DNA) What is DNA?", *National Human Genome Research*. Accessed April 2, 2017, <https://www.genome.gov/25520880/>.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Ibid.

Jesus was different, the question of which will now be further examined regarding assisted techniques.

Assisted Techniques for Conception

In today's modern world, there are many assisted techniques made available to infertile couples. In Vitro Fertilization (IVF), Intracytoplasmic Sperm Injection (ICSI), Ovum and Embryo Cryopreservation, Assisted Hatching (AH), Preimplantation Genetic Testing (PGT), and Ovum Donation are all considered such techniques and they go beyond basic infertility treatment with injections and medication to increase ovum or sperm counts. In addition to these basic infertility treatments and advance assisted techniques there exists fertility preservation such as elective ovum freezing, and third party reproduction techniques which include ovum, sperm, and embryo donation and gestational carriers (surrogates). On December 4, 2017, the American Society for Reproductive Medicine (ASRM) issued a press release regarding the birth of a child following a uterus transplant.²¹² One can see the limits to human intervention in human reproduction are without boundaries, yet this author again purports it is the presence of such scientific advancement that one can understand the miraculous conception of Jesus.

“According to the American Pregnancy Association, IVF is the process of fertilization by manually combining an ovum and sperm in a laboratory dish, and then transferring the embryo to the uterus.”²¹³ This procedure of fertilization shows it is scientifically possible to take a fertilized ovum and place it in the uterus of a female to carry to term. This was proven

²¹² Christos Coutifaris, “ASRM Responds to News of Birth Following Successful Uterus Transplant,” *American Society for Reproductive Medicine Press Release*. December 4, 2017. Accessed December 20, 2017, <http://www.asrm.org/news-and-publications/news-and-research/press-releases-and-bulletins/asrm-responds-to-news-of-birth-following-successful-uterus-transplant/>.

²¹³ American Pregnancy Association, “In Vitro Fertilization: What Is it?” Accessed December 20, 2016, <http://americanpregnancy.org/infertility/in-vitro-fertilization/>.

with the birth on July 25, 1978, in Oldham, England with the birth of the world's first IVF human baby Louise Brown.²¹⁴ Great advances have been made since that first IVF baby. A female who is biologically unrelated to the sperm donor or the ovum donor the mother carrying the unborn child becomes a gestational carrier (gestational surrogate) which is defined, according to ASRM as “a woman who carries a child for another couple, but the carrier is not the biological mother of the child. Instead, the egg from the biological mother and sperm from the father are combined in a lab dish (through a process called in vitro fertilization), and then implanted into a gestational carrier.”^{215 216}

This author believes none of these techniques apply to this issue of the conception of Jesus Christ except one; the role of the gestational carrier. It is important that the reader recognize the process of fertilization has been manipulated by humans to fall outside normal human reproduction. If humans can manipulate fertilization and reproduction how much more is it possible that God can deviate from normal human reproduction, in the same or variable manner of the first Adam who was without earthly father or mother, made from the earth, “made of dust” (1 Cor 15:47)? How much more probable that God would use a human young virgin maiden as an instrument to accomplish his purpose? How necessary would it be that God calls upon a human being to accomplish a purpose which has meaning for the entire world?

²¹⁴ A&E Television Networks, “Louis Brown” *Biography*. Accessed December 2, 2014. <https://www.biography.com/people/louise-brown-9542072>.

²¹⁵ “Gestational Carrier” - *Fertility and Sterility*® Vol. 99, No. 7, June 2013 0015-0282/ , Copyright ©2013 American Society for Reproductive Medicine, Published by Elsevier Inc. Accessed December 20, 2017, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.fertnstert.2013.02.042>.

²¹⁶ American Society for Reproductive Medicine. “Consideration of the Gestational Carrier: A Committee Opinion,” *Fertility and Sterility*® Vol. 99, No. 7, 1838-41, June 2013. Accessed December 20, 2017, https://www.asrm.org/globalassets/asrm/asrm-content/news-and-publications/ethics-committee-opinions/consideration_of_the_gestational_carrier-pdfmembers.pdf

Scripture is clear Mary conceived in her womb (Matt 1:20); therefore, there was no act of fertilization within her body, specifically within a fallopian tube as occurs in normal human reproduction. The seed, which is the Word of God (Luke 8:11), which was preexistent from eternity (John 1:1; 8:58; 17:5; Rom 8:3, 2 Cor 8:9; Phil 2:6; Col 1:15; Heb 1:3), took on a fleshly bodily form (John 1:14). This was a divine body which scriptures describes its point of origination “from heaven” (1 Cor 14:47, John 6:38). This divine body which had been “prepared” (Heb 10:5), as the “only begotten son” (John 1:18; 3:16), was placed into the womb of Mary by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit. Within the womb of a Jewish virgin young maiden, Mary having not contributed biologically to the “Holy Thing” inside of her became a mere gestational carrier who would legally become the mother and caretaker, along with the step-father Joseph, of baby Jesus from an earthly perspective. Jesus, who indeed was conceived differently from any other individual before and since, by the Holy Spirit, outside ordinary human bounds while simultaneously using the laws of nature, brought about the conception and subsequent birth of a perfect, human, sacrifice who would take away the sins of the world.

At the point of this divine virgin conception, the deity and the humanity of Jesus Christ merge, neither of which can be diminished by the other. It is from this moment the earthly stage is set for the wondrous fulfillment of the Messianic prophecy from Isaiah 9:6 which require the Son of God to enter the world to share the same challenges which all humankind encounters. It is from this moment the earthly stage prepares for the birth of a special, divine child, where “God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship” (Gal 4:4-5). Jesus became fully human, with flesh and blood, humbling himself to put aside “glory and privileges” (Phil 2:6-8), in order to become a perfect sacrifice of sins with the shedding of blood for the “forgiveness of

sins” (Heb 9:22). Without the humanity of Jesus Christ in a tangible human body and the shedding of blood, the sins of the world could not be forgiven; however, only deity could orchestrate such a plan. Accordingly, Jesus Christ was equally human and equally God.

Chapter Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, this author has explored scriptures referencing the conception of Jesus Christ juxtaposed against the testimony of science concerning normal human reproduction, pathogenesis, cloning, and assisted reproductive techniques. To this author, it is abundantly obvious the process of normal human reproduction, as it applies to humans, is understood by God in every detail as reflected in these words, “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity. And in sin my mother conceived me. Behold, you desire truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part you will make me to know wisdom” (Ps 51:5-6).

The conception of Jesus, as told from the biblical perspective in both Old Testament prophecies and the New Testament narratives, is supported by science. Unique from normal human reproduction, God in his infinite wisdom created evidence, and He explains through his Word there is no excuse for humans to deny His creation (Rom 1:20). Professor John Lennox, in a presentation regarding God: Fact or Fiction, at the University of North Carolina on October 23, 2012, asks “Is there any objective reality to God or is the concept of God a construct of our human minds?” Somewhere in the midst of one’s individual reality is either unbelief or the faith in God that he exists, that he came to earth in the form of a human via a unique conception and birth, that he paid the price for the sins of the world which could be paid by no other, that he rose after death, ascended into heaven and is coming again. The problem then arises not in

understanding the existence of the evidence as it speaks for itself; rather, it is the interpretation of the evidence that becomes problematic.

Simplistic in concept yet intricately complex is the knowledge of normal human conception and reproduction. The biblical scenario of the conception of Jesus Christ is, in this author's opinion, supported by scientific evidence. This author purports the conception of Jesus Christ is a one-time occurrence, supported by the laws of nature, yet different in not only the process but also the constituent, making this event even more extraordinary than any human conception as His being "is God's initiative going beyond anything man or woman had dreamed of."²¹⁷ To further this understanding one should consider the statement by noted author of *The Doorway Papers*,²¹⁸ Dr. Arthur C. Custance when he states, "We should rather explore the evidence with a view to enlarging our sense of wonder that God in His infinite wisdom should have so designed the processes of conception and birth that He could use them without doing violence to His own created order that He might enter into our world of space and time in the likeness of ourselves."²¹⁹

When the angel Gabriel encountered the young girl Mary, there was a revelation of God's favor upon her (Luke 1:28). Mary, who was full of grace, received grace and was presented with the incredible opportunity and assignment to physically carry the fetus Jesus Christ, become his legal guardian, and physically deliver him into the world for the purpose to which he was born.

²¹⁷ Raymond Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*,(Nashville: Doubleday & Co., 1977), 314.

²¹⁸ The Doorway Papers are a ten volume set of books written between 1957 and 1972 by Dr. Arthur C. Custance on topics to bridge the gap between the scientific and a Christian worldview.

²¹⁹ Arthur Custance, The Virgin Birth and The Incarnation, Part IV, vol.5 in *The Doorway Papers Series*, Zondervan Publishing Company, 1977.

The angel Gabriel encouraged Mary when he explained “the Lord is with you” (Luke 1:28), and he reminded Mary that God’s presence would be with her during this life time experience. Mary was “blessed” (Luke 1:28), among all women, for God chose Mary in order to use her to bring the greatest gift and joy to the world with the greatest tasks all at the same time.

There was no parthenogenesis, cloning or any other type of assisted reproductive techniques in the conception of Jesus; neither was this conception identical to normal human conception. There was no fertilization occurring as evidenced in normal human reproduction. There was no ovum from Mary contributing to the creation of a new individual. Scripture specifically states Mary, the young maiden who was a virgin, conceived in her womb (Luke 1:31), at an age perhaps too young physiologically to be capable of producing an ovum, bypassing normal human reproduction of coitus and fertilization, and became pregnant with the “seed” which was described in Genesis 3:15 as prophesied in Isaiah 9:6 and Micah 5:2. “But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons” (Gal 4:4-5). That seed was the Word (Luke 8:11), and the Word was with God (John 1:1), and the Word was God himself (John 1:1), before all ages (Jude 1:25), which was contained in a perfect body of flesh which had been prepared for this distinct purpose (Heb 10:5), (Psalm 40:6), sent but not created (John 3:17, 6:38-40), Emmanuel – God with us (Matt 1:23), descended from the realms of heaven (1 Cor 15:47), free of any human genetic defect, free from the curse of man, with royal blood cursing through veins, a robe dipped in blood and his name is the Word of God (Rev 19:13), the only qualified individual to be the perfect, ultimate sacrifice for the sins of the world as a lamb without blemish or spot (1 Pet 1:19), the fullness of the Deity in bodily form

(Col 2:9), before all things (Col 1:17), in the likeness of human flesh (Rom 8:30), the image of the invisible God (Col 1:15-18), because God is spirit (John 4:24), with witnesses of His majesty (2 Pet 1:16), the one who existed before Abraham (John 8:58), before John the Baptist (John 1:15), the last Adam (1 Cor 15:35), the first and the last (Isa 44:6), for the purpose to atone for the sins of the world, with the Holy Spirit the agent to bring Deity and humanity together through the instrument of a young maiden, the Jewish girl, Mary the mother of Jesus Christ, submitting to God's will to carry the Christ child to term, giving birth to him, and providing the legal lineage as both pre-existent before and after King David as "the root and the Offspring of David" (Rev 22:16).

This was the virgin conception as the miracle took place approximately eight and a half months before the baby was born. No ultrasound was required as Mary knew the gender of this baby before he was conceived in her womb. The name of this child to be born was revealed before he was conceived. He was to be called Jesus, the Messiah and He would save the world from their sins. The Angel Gabriel continued to speak to Mary to tell her of the greatness of the child she had been chosen to carry, and spoke of his deity when he says He will be called the Son of the Highest. The Apostle Paul wrote Timothy, "and without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifested in the flesh" (1 Tim 3:16).

Never before in the history of the entire world had this type of conception occurred. God created Adam without the channel of a human father. He made Eve from the rib of man alone. He used normal human reproduction for others, performing miracles for those beyond the age of child bearing. Mary's baby would be different, begotten by the Holy Spirit. God brought Jesus into this world in this never before and never after method because there was no other way for

him to accomplish His divine purpose. This person born of Mary was a preexistent eternal person, existing before he was born. He is eternal because there never was a time when he was not and there never will be a time when he ceases to be. Had Jesus entered this world with a normal human conception he would have been just one more male child born into the world, but he was sent by an alternative route. For only a virgin conception and resultant birth can account for a God in the robe of manly flesh. In his conception he was both human and divine.

The conception of Jesus Christ was a miracle in all aspects, and while mystery still surrounds this event despite the illumination by the research conducted within this thesis project, there can be no doubt the conception of Jesus Christ was unique, and his purpose divinely ordained. Because of this incarnation of God taking on human form (God with us), He was able to accomplish what no other individual could do; pay the price with his blood for the remission of the sins of the world. The testimony of science as revealed in the chapter of this thesis project confirms the possibility and plausibility of this unique conception with solid evidence. This author, therefore, encourages the reader to view the scientific evidence benchmarked against the biblical account of the conception narrative and consider the interpretation for one's understanding.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

This author, in response to the catalyst of this author's home church congregant's inability to provide visitors to a Christmas program more than faith-based responses to the inquiry of a virgin birth, the sheer existence of Jesus, and the question "who is Jesus" sought to answer these questions, based on evidence, by adopting this challenge as the theme of this thesis

project. The question “who is Jesus” is complex, broad, and the evidence illimitable; therefore, this author circumscribed the scope of the inquiry to theological and scientific evidence, specifically as it applies to the conception of Jesus Christ.

The results of this thesis project, in this author’s opinion, provided this author’s home church a foundational educational instrument based on panoply of theological and scientific evidence which impacted and continues to impact the skeptical arguments by individuals such as the visitors to this author’s home church, and highlights the extraordinary claims of deity purported by Jesus predicated on scripture sustained by scientific evidence. This information supports the deity of Jesus in his conception, assists in answering the question “Who is Jesus” and has contributed to the development of a ministerial resource for this author’s home church, specifically a class entitled Understanding the Conception of Jesus Christ. This resource has also expanded beyond the original inquiry of this author’s home church, allowing for the creation of an external source, specifically an organization with 501(c)3 designation, which is focused on this and related topics. This information will be made available to others outside this author’s home church after total completion via publication efforts by the 501(c)3 organization.

Basis Methodology Research and Design

In this thesis project, which focused on the conception of Jesus Christ, this author utilized special terminology with variable meanings, much of it scientific and variable in nature, explaining the terminology throughout this thesis project as appropriate. This author also self-imposed a plethora of limitations in an attempt to keep the inquiry focused. Recognizing minimal overlaps into the stated limitations, specifically as it deals with the incarnation, this author does not believe the limitations or occasional overlap distracted from the overall conclusion. These

small overlaps exposed an anticipated relationship, served as the catalyst to the development of associated questions and contributed to the explanation providing the opportunity for this author to evaluate these self-imposed limitations, individually or collectively, at a later date in additional writings.

The theoretical basis for the thesis project initially confronted the adage if a subject cannot be proven it must be eliminated from the discussion. Individuals such as atheist philosopher Stephen Law formulated the skeptical argument against Jesus' existence by stating: "Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence. In the absence of extraordinary evidence there's excellent reason to be skeptical about the claims."²²⁰ The late atheist Christopher Hitchens stated, "What can be asserted without evidence can be dismissed without evidence."²²¹ Richard Dawkins asserted that "God" should stand for "that which we don't understand."²²² While this author understands the objections of these prominent individuals, it became obviously clear the conception of Jesus Christ veritably, along with other topics identified by this author, solicits obligatory exploration based on evidence that is currently available, and it is necessary to be able to formulate responses to individuals who may hold the same or similar opinions expressed by unbelievers or outspoken critics such as Law, Hitches, and Dawkins. Episcopal Priest and noted author Barbara Brown Taylor stated;

There are facts and there is meaning, but the same facts do not necessarily produce the same meaning. What is to prevent us from reinterpreting the scientific creation story from

²²⁰ William Craig Lane, "Stephen Law on the Non-Existence of Jesus of Nazareth," Reasonable Faith, Accessed August 30, 2014, <https://www.reasonablefaith.org/writings/question-answer/stephen-law-on-the-non-existence-of-jesus-of-nazareth>.

²²¹ Christopher Hitchens, (20 October 2003). Mommie Dearest. Slate. Accessed May 16, 2016.

²²² Richard Dawkins, (4 October 1999). Snake Oil and Holy Water. Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason and Science. Accessed March 15, 2018, <https://www.richarddawkins.net/1999/10/snake-oil-and-holy-water/>.

a perspective of faith? It would not be science anymore, since science operates by empirically verifiable facts, but it might satisfy our need for a story that does not divide the truth in half!²²³

This author purports the use of biblical references, science and other associated references, as exhibited in this thesis project, was utilized to examine topics including the topic of the conception of Jesus Christ in a quest for truth (John 8:32, 14:6, 17:17, Matt 7:7); as truth can never be found unless it is sought, and thus becomes a known. As stipulated earlier in this thesis project, the foundation began with the Bible. Science followed the scripture and the results of this inquiry leaves one with a profound truth which is neither cut in half nor diluted by basic scientific principles; rather is inclusive of extraordinary evidence of a conception like no other. This is because the Creator uses people to accomplish his purpose on this earth as he utilized Mary the mother of Jesus, after she freely consented. As such, one should expect the basic principles of natural science to be part of events which are God-ordained while also allowing their descriptive nature to be defined simultaneously as miraculous as reflected throughout this thesis project.

The previous nursing background and experience of this author has been invaluable in assisting this author's research and analysis of this topic. In fact, this author would suggest the secular training and understanding from a scientific perspective greatly assisted this author in understanding the correlation between human reproduction and the conception of Jesus Christ; therefore, this author would never have been able to ascertain and differentiate normal human reproduction from the virgin conception and the inclusive biblical accounts of the resultant virgin

²²³ Barbara Brown Taylor, *The Luminous Web: Essays On Science And Religion* (Boston MA: Cowley Publications, 2000), 36.

birth found in Matthew and Luke as predicted in the Old Testament. Accordingly, this author would encourage others, in like manner, to utilize any expertise or to consult individuals who may proffer expertise regarding this or other topics specifically if there is limited research from which to draw information.

Due to the limited research on the singular topic of the conception of Jesus, this author utilized a methodology which is consistent with the focus of inquiry for this type of thesis project; an inquiry of analytical, theoretical and scientific research methods, as well as open-ended, interviews with theological and scientific professionals. Surprisingly all but the Christian faith groups refused to grant interviews. The reluctance and refusal of some members of the various faith groups to grant interviews led this author to seek the foundational information from literature research from both scientific and theological sources. This research included the analysis of the probability of possibility as the laws of nature were juxtaposed against Old Testament prophecies and their respective fulfillment realized in the New Testament while being supported from scientific principles.

The research design and approach was developed based on input by senior leadership from this author's home church and from this author's original thesis project mentor Dr. Charles Davidson. The research participants were also selected at the direction of senior leadership and Dr. Davidson based, in part, on the proximity of location which could afford personal face to face interaction with this author. Dr. Davidson specifically requested a comparative analysis of the three major monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, as it pertained to their specific understanding of the conception of Jesus Christ as well as interviews with respected and notable healthcare professionals. While the healthcare professionals were gracious in dedicating their time to speak with this author, public criticism of pro-life positions resulted in these

individuals asking for anonymity midway through this thesis project. Their request for anonymity was granted in accordance with Institutional Review Board (IRB) regulations.

Contribution of the Research

The research findings were initially disappointing to this author from the perspective, not all faith groups would grant personal interviews. Despite this challenge, the literature research and study of this topic more than compensated for the initial disappointment based on the adumbration of the wondrous work of God within the conception of Jesus. The work conducted within this thesis project provided the foundational material to be presented to this author's home church as well as other evangelical Christians who wish to review and utilize its contents. Additionally, this work has become the foundation upon which to build additional evidence of the deity of Jesus in his birth, crucifixion, death and resurrection.

The inquiry of the monotheistic religions began with a review of Judaism, the oldest of the three faith groups; the faith upon when Christianity was founded and part of the three monotheistic faiths which claim affiliation with the same individual, Abraham. The scope of this thesis project did not allow for evaluation of every oppositional objection whereby Judaism rejects Jesus Christ as the Messiah; however, this author spent a significant amount of time in research to ascertain that Jesus was actually found in references of the Sanhedrin 43a and as organized in the Talmud by the second-century sage, Rabbi Akiba. This author discovered the Talmud provides references to at least five of Jesus' disciples and speaks of accusations and trials regarding the respective execution of those disciples. In short, Judaism supports the

existence of Jesus Christ in its history; therefore, credibility must be given to the Old Testament prophecies concerning the coming of a Messiah and the claim of Jesus as the promised one. This author recites the primary reason that Judaism rejects Jesus Christ as the Messiah; the belief that “no man could ever be God,”²²⁴ a position this author finds incompatible with biblical evidence.

In the research and study of Judaism, this author has learned more about the history and culture of Judaism and understands that one cannot separate the Jewishness of the Rabbi Yeshua (Jesus) from the time in which his conception and birth were prophesied and his subsequent miraculous arrival. Judaism, as early as Genesis, explains precisely how and why Jesus would come to the earth, with specificity, leaving no room for doubt as to the identity of Jesus Christ in Micah and Isaiah, and the fulfillment evidenced in the New Testament.

Christianity, the largest and most wide-spread religion in the entire world, presented equal challenges in the research, but for differing reasons. Without controversy and as evidenced by the church fathers such as Ignatius of Antioch, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus of Lyons, Origen of Alexandria, Augustine, Clement of Alexandria, Cyprian, Arnobius, Tertullian and Jewish historian Flavius Josephus, Christianity embraces the foundational belief in the miraculous conception and virgin birth of Jesus. Interestingly, this author found variations and differing opinions as to how Mary, the mother of Jesus conceived. While all are in agreement the Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary the mother of Jesus, there is a lack of uniformity where it appears the majority of believers, including this author’s senior leadership, initially expressed the opinion that Mary the mother of Jesus contributed an egg during the conception; a position with which this author does not believe is consistent from both a biblical or scientific perspective. The Bible did not state Mary’s egg merged with the Spirit in the fallopian tubes as occurs in normal human

²²⁴ Shmuley Boteach, *Judaism for Everyone*, (New York, NY: Basic Books 2002), 401.

conception. The Bible specifically states the Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary and the seed, the Word, was placed in her womb. The Bible further provides information this child Mary carried was Holy, was from heaven, came in a body of flesh especially prepared for him, and came with a distinct purpose unlike any other individual on earth. Modern medicine and the advancement of fetal-maternal scientific advances in infertility provide the possible answer how the conception of Jesus Christ could have occurred, which is consistent with both the Old and New Testament creating a plausible possibility coherent with the truths about Jesus while affirming the laws of nature.

This author's research showed Christianity resounds with Judaism and bases its belief system to revere the Old Testament, yet the Christian tradition often overlooks the virgin conception focusing strictly on the virgin birth. It is the understanding of how this miraculous conception differs from normal human reproduction and the components themselves in the conception which is foretold in the Old Testament which creates the veracity of this event. Accordingly, this thesis project did not minimize the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit of Mary the mother of Jesus as a young maiden, a virgin, as the Word, the logos, the seed, which was in the likeness of man, the *Davar* or word made flesh, *Yochanan* (John 1:14), covering a body which had been created and descended from heaven, was placed into the womb of a consenting servant of God. For those Christians who remain skeptical, this author would ask one simple question. Is this Holy Spirit who overshadowed Mary and implanted the embryo Jesus directly into the uterus of a virgin not the same Holy Spirit who descends upon each individual at repentance filling them and allowing one to become the temple of the Holy Spirit? As Christians, this author would expect a resounding yes in the affirmation that each believer experiences the

infilling and indwelling of the Holy Spirit in a miraculous way which defies total human explanation, at least at this point.

Consequently, each believer should be able to testify from personal experience that the Holy Spirit can overshadow and occupy a place within earthly temples. The implantation of the seed, the Word, wrapped in a veil of flesh into the uterus of Mary the mother of Jesus cannot be denied. There may not exist a sufficient explanation to describe such experience to a non-believer; however, it does not minimize the experience in much the same way individuals experience gravity, wind, consciousness, or sleep. These things exist, are not visible to the human eye as they are unseen, yet their impact and force are felt and their existence and impact cannot be denied.

In the research, and study of Islam, this author was very surprised to learn the Quran is, like Judaism, based on history, culture, politics and religion. The Quran is supportive and affirms the biblical story of the virgin conception in numerous accounts in varying chapters; this, in stark contrast that the New Testament limits the exact description of this event to Matthew and Luke although numerous references are made elsewhere in both the Old and New Testaments. The Quran also addresses, in verses (19.27-33), the legitimacy of Jesus and provides a scenario equivalent to a question and answer session. This verse in the Quran indicates the expected human thoughts and conclusion that Joseph was the father of Jesus because of his relationship with Mary. This issue is addressed in verse (InJam. 11), when the high priest suggests a secret marriage which alluded to innocence in the accusations. Otherwise, Mary would have been subjected to stoning under the Jewish Law in Leviticus 20:10.

Ultimately, the Quran confirms the virginal conception and birth of Jesus, using the analogy of Adam, without father or mother, as compared to Jesus without natural father and

indicates he simply came to *Be*. Islam has differentiated apart from Judaism and Christianity based on the belief the Prophet Muhammad is a final revelation of God to humankind;²²⁵ however, Islam itself supports the virgin conception of Jesus Christ.

Intersection of Science with Theology

After completion of the theological research and interviews, this author conducted research and interviews from a scientific perspective. This author provided a brief and extremely over simplified review of normal human reproduction and cell division. This information was contrasted against the biblical explanation of the event of the conception as prophesized in the Old Testament with the requisite fulfillment as evidenced in the New Testament. This author also provided an explanation as to how it was possible the scientific evidenced followed the biblical narrative allowing for the virginal conception of Jesus Christ making this conception, unlike any other conception before or since.

In addition to the review of normal human reproduction contrasted with the conception of Jesus Christ, this author reviewed other mechanisms by which science supports conception absent the contribution of male sperm. These mechanisms included a review of parthenogenesis, cloning, and assisted reproductive techniques. While each mechanism of parthenogenesis and cloning were proven scientifically improbable in regard to the conception of Jesus Christ due to the resultant offspring being female, the advancement in the use of assisted reproductive techniques were key in assisting this author to understand how the virgin conception of Jesus Christ is scientifically possible in the manner as described by the Bible and arriving at the

²²⁵ John Esposito, "Islam Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow," *Great World Religions: Islam*. The Great Courses, no. 1 (2003), Georgetown University, Washington DC:13.

conclusion, based on both biblical and scientific information, there are a possibility and high probability Mary the mother of Jesus was a gestational carrier as well as the legal mother of Jesus Christ.

Practical Outcomes

Through this thesis project, this author has realized the divine physiology exhibited within the conception of Jesus Christ in support of His deity is not in isolation. This author found additional evidence, in like manner of comparative theology and science, recognized in the birth, crucifixion, death and resurrection of Jesus. Accordingly this author will take the contents of this thesis project, in addition to using it as the foundation to expand the educational offerings for this author's home church, and convert this information into the first volume of a five book series which deals with the juxtaposition of theology with science in support of the deity of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, this author will be writing on difficult topics such as addressing the question when life begins, abortion, and same-sex relationships from the same perspective of juxtaposition of science in support of the Bible as additional educational sections are developed.

As a result of this thesis project, this author incorporated a 501(c) 3 non-profit organization with the purpose to publish this and associated material. It is hopeful this will be a resource for years to come for many individuals as they seek to expand their knowledge and faith in the one Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, remembering that Jesus loves each and every individual and only through the name of Jesus can an individual experience the forgiveness and security of eternal life with God.

Final Thoughts

One of the on-going conversations which occurred between this writer and original mentor Dr. Charles Davidson was the fact it was hoped the material in this thesis project would not be a boondoggle which will sit in the archives of libraries or collect dust on the book shelves of those who encounter its contents. This thesis project resulted with the creation of an educational instrument, specifically a class, on behalf of this author's home church, which links science to faith in support of the deity of Jesus Christ and evidenced in conception. Through this process, this author has developed a personal opinion regarding what potentially could have transpired within the body of Mary the mother of Jesus at the moment of conception as supported by the Bible and the evidence of science fulfilling in the New Testament every prophecy in the Old Testament. This author is aware the personal opinion may deviate from the teachings of other faith groups, scholars, skeptics and may assail long-held theological beliefs of many Christians causing inquietude. Consequently, this author has already endured limited attacks from individuals who are aware of the contents of this thesis project and exhibited animus. These attacks were not because the opinion of this author is wrong, rather the attacks appear to stem from the fact the information contained in this thesis project is disturbing to some individuals as it challenges the individual doctrine, faith and philosophy of preconceived notions of Jesus and his deity as Messiah. This author purports one must read the biblical information from a Jewish perspective as opposed to a Western perspective, using Hebrew and Greek and placing the information in proper context. Only when that is accomplished can one recognize the plausibility of possibility to the Christian claim that the conception of Jesus Christ was unique, miraculous, a one-time event whose controversial story now over twenty centuries old filled with inaccuracies, controversy and impossibilities, was predicted by the Old Testament prophet Isaiah (Isa 11:1,

7:14, 9:6) and other ancient Jewish Prophets including, Daniel, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Zachariah. Malachi spoke of the coming ruler with everlasting dominion over the whole world. In Micha 5:2 the place of the birth was identified. Seven centuries after the prophet of Isaiah, the angel Gabriel delivered the message to Mary, with startling implications. This prophecy in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy is revealed and fulfilled in Matthew and Luke expanding the necessary version of the truth.

Christians serve a mighty God who is the same yesterday, today and forever, (Heb 13:8). Scripture tells us he changes not, (Mal 3:6); therefore, his conception had to be and was different from that of normal human conception but similar in that God used a human instrument in a young Jewish maiden, to accomplish his purpose to send a kinsman redeemer, our only Saviour and Redeemer *Yeshayahu* (Isa 49:26), into this earthly world. One quickly understands the New Testament, specifically in Matthew and Luke, is the fulfillment of this miraculous event which was prophesied in the Old Testament. The story of the conception and birth of Jesus Christ has much more meaning than a mere story of a baby being born in a stable to a young Jewish girl. Jesus is *HaShem*, Messiah and it is this author's desire that Christians will be able to understand a greater truth regarding his conception and birth and therefore be more fully equipped to spread the good news! Through this thesis project the reader has experienced a review of biblical sources and science regarding the conception of Jesus Christ as not merely a tale of fiction or a legendary event. There is a logical, plausible explanation, and the human factors are likewise identified as well as the spiritual aspects. Like the Apostle in 2 Peter 1:16 who "did not follow cleverly devised myths" when proclaiming "the power and coming" of Christ Jesus, the Apostles were "eyewitnesses of his majesty." These men saw something take place in space and time that altered the course of human history. The virgin conception, incarnation, virgin birth, ministry,

death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus are not legendary events in a fictional tale or fanciful myth. They are firm historical realities of actual events upon which the Christian faith stands or falls, giving testimony to the fact that Jesus is, supported by science specifically in his conception, the one and only Lord and Savior.

The earnest desire of this author is to reveal, through this thesis project, the fact science can and does support the theology of the miraculous conception of Jesus revealing his deity. It is the desire of this author that believers and those of non-Christian faiths can accept this information without invidious opinions. Only from that position will the reader understand the Christian message based on truth, backed by scientific evidence and allow every reader to find themselves in a relationship with the one, true Almighty God. Only then can an individual, in like manner of Mary the mother of Jesus become a servant, a bonds slave, a *doulos*, to God's will and purpose as so eloquently stated by the Apostle Paul in the first chapter of Romans!

Appendix A: Example Research Cover Letter

Consent Form

Divine Physiology: Deity Revealed In the Conception of Jesus Christ

Robbin Nelson

Liberty University

Theological Seminary

You are invited to be in a research study of the theological and scientific analysis of the conception of Jesus Christ. You were selected as a possible participant because of your expert knowledge regarding this topic from a theological or scientific perspective, your geographical location which permits an in-person interview and/or personal acquaintance with the primary investigator. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Doctoral student Robbin Nelson from Liberty University Baptist Theological Seminary.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to ascertain the probability and possibility of a supernatural conception and if the biblical narrative of the conception of Jesus Christ can be supported by modern day scientific evidence in support of the deity of Christ.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

Religious Leaders:

Be willing to participate in an interview to discuss your views and opinions on this topic. Contrast the similarities and differences between Christian and other Religious views as it relates to this topic.

Length of time for your participation is approximately 1 hour.

Be willing to allow your comments to be quoted and referenced.

Medical Professionals:

Be willing to answer specific questions related to scientific procedures regarding normal human reproduction, scientific advances in fertility procedures and other scientifically proven issues including but not limited to pregnancy, reproduction, genetics, blood typing, paternity.

Length of time for your participation is approximately 2 hours.

Be willing to allow your comments to be quoted and referenced.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:

Risks to your participation in this study are no more than what one would encounter in everyday life.

The benefits of participation include potential publicity which might be derived from contributing to this project and the knowledge that your opinion and views could be beneficial to others.

Compensation:

No compensation will be provided for your participation in this study; however, you will be recognized in the Acknowledgement Section of this project for your time and participation.

Confidentiality:

Any notes taken during an interview will be made available only to the Investigator and Academic Advisor. These notes will be kept confidential until this project is successfully defended. Once the defense is complete, any notes taken during an interview will be maintained by the Investigator and destroyed by shredding after a three (3) year period. Comments and quotes which are utilized from the interviews will be appropriately referenced and documented.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Robbin Nelson. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact her at rmelson5@liberty.edu or by phone at 615-509-5557 or the Academic Advisor, Dr. Charlie Davidson, cdavidson@liberty.edu or by phone at 434-592-5907.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 1837, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature:

Date:

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date: _____

IRB Code Numbers: 1867.050114 IRB Expiration Date: 05/31/2016

Appendix B: Understanding the Conception of Jesus Christ, Bible Center Class Outline

Understanding The Conception of Jesus Christ Bible Center Assembly

Instructor: Robbin Nelson

Introduction:

- A. Welcome – Senior Pastor and Instructor

- B. Purpose of this class:
 - a. Clarify the church’s guiding statement on the virgin conception and deity of Jesus Christ
 - b. Clarify Old Testament prophecy
 - c. Clarify New Testament fulfillment
 - d. Clarify the relationship between theology and science
 - e. Clarify the application of this information in ministry

- C. Course Outline (general)
 - a. Expectations and Limitations of this course
 - b. Introduction to Jewish Perspective on the conception
 - c. Introduction to Christian perspective on the conception
 - d. Introduction to Islam perspective on the conception
 - e. Introduction to medical perspectives on the conception
 - f. Relevance of information to ministry

- D. Course Procedure
 - a. Mandated course for all Bible Center Assembly Church staff
 - b. Course is strongly encouraged for auxiliary staff and volunteers
 - c. Advance registration required
 - d. Class size limited to 20 participants

- e. Attendees must be at least 13 years of age or higher to participate in this class
- f. Signed parental/guardian consent required for all attendees under age 18
- g. Attendance
- h. Punctuality
- i. Grading – quizzes and exams optional until/unless converted to CEU status for conference delivery
- j. Makeup of missed classes
- k. Feedback and evaluation required at the end of class by participants

E. Course Texts:

- a. Bible – the instructor will be using NKJV
- b. Strong's Concordance with Hebrew and Greek Lexicon
- c. Handouts

F. Course Requirements:

- a. Assigned readings
- b. Sermon or devotionals – individually each week to recap previous week's content
- c. Active participation in discussion, question and answer sessions for the full eight weeks

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CURRICULUM VITA

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Personal

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Educational

Doctor of Ministry - *candidate*
Liberty University Rawlings School of Divinity, Lynchburg, VA., 2018
Thesis: Divine Physiology, Deity Revealed in the Conception of Jesus Christ

Master of Divinity Chaplaincy
Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, Lynchburg, VA., 2011

Master of Business Administration
University of Phoenix, Nashville, TN, 2007
(Additional coursework was taken at Belmont University, Nashville, TN.)

Bachelor of Science
Trevecca Nazarene University, Nashville, TN., 1989

Associate of Science
Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, KY., 1980

Paralegal
Southeastern Paralegal Institute, Nashville, TN., 1986

Professional Experience

Thirty-three years as a Registered Nurse, HealthCare Consultant, Strategic Planner, Ethics Professional. Key note speaker for local, regional and national conferences.

Church Ministry Experience

Associate Minister, Bible Center Assembly, Bowling Green, KY, 2006-present
Praise and Worship Leader, Speaker, Teacher.

Recognition

Ordination to the Gospel Ministry
Apostolic World Missions and Pentecostal Churches USA
Cameron Creek Church, Visalia, CA, Sept, 2007

Professional and Research Interests

Correlation of the Physiology Events in the Life of Christ (Conception, Birth, Crucifixion, Death, and Resurrection) Juxtaposed Against Science in Support of the Deity of Jesus Christ. The development of written materials, a series of five books, which communicates, demonstrates and formulates a ministry concept and approach which can be utilized by seminary students and ministers.

Publications

The Kings Star – 2016, Nashville, TN: DPIM Publisher, co-author

References

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IRB Exemption Letter

May 1, 2014

Robbin Nelson

IRB Exemption 1867.050114: Divine Physiology: Deity Revealed within the Conception of Jesus Christ?

Dear Robbin,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and that no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under exemption category 46.101 (b)(2), which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:
(2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and that any changes to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by submitting a change in protocol form or a new application to the IRB and referencing the above IRB Exemption number.

If you have any questions about this exemption, or need assistance in determining whether possible changes to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

Fernando Garzon, Psy.D. *Professor, IRB Chair* Counseling (434) 592-4054