

PENRALLT BAPTIST CHURCH, BANGOR

THE VIRGIN BIRTH OF CHRIST

(Notes for Theology students)

WHY BOTHER WITH THE VIRGIN BIRTH?

When I naively announced some time ago that I intended to preach a sermon series on the Virgin Birth I had no idea what I was about to let myself in for. Systematic Theology is an area which I avoid because its cold logic-chopping formulae seem to be a million miles away from the meandering, paradoxical, interlocking, stimulating challenges of Biblical Studies. I love the Bible with a passion, hate dogmatic assertions with a vengeance. But I had always kind of “assumed” the Virgin Birth into my belief system out of apathy. I couldn’t be bothered to examine why I believed it, apart from the fact that it is announced in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Good enough reason for Christians to believe it, of course, but sometimes you just find yourself asking questions like “Why” and “How”. Acting like a theologian, in other words.

I supposed that I would be able to walk into the library and find rows of erudite literature explaining the intricacies of the doctrine. Wrong. It is generally discounted by modern theologians, rarely defended, and hardly ever discussed at length. Even turning to the New Testament is little help. The Virgin Birth is not one of the pillars that sustains the Biblical faith in Christ. The Big Story is the Incarnation, God being in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself. Yet, as Moltmann so accurately observes, “neither in Luke nor in Matthew nor anywhere else in the New Testament is there any link between the story of the Virgin Birth and the idea of the incarnation or the pre-existence of the son of God.”ⁱ One of the few modern defenders of the doctrine to write extensively on the subject, Raymond E Brown, admits that the virginal conception “would have become the subject of preaching (and therefore likely to be included in the kind of writing we find in the New Testament) only when its Christological significance was seen.”ⁱⁱ He also observes that the primary theological doctrine associated with the virginal conception (that Christ was not tainted by original sin because of it) was first cited only by Augustine. - who probably misunderstood what Paul said anyway. Therefore, as its Christological significance was not appreciated in the first century, it was not included in the New Testament outside of Matthew and Luke.

You could argue that we need not discuss it, because the doctrine was enshrined in the Creeds. And so it was:
"I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, his only son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried..."

- Apostles' Creed

"I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ...[who] for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary and was made man..."

- The Nicene Creed, 325 AD.

"...we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and man; God of the substance of the father, begotten before the worlds; and man of the substance of his mother, born in the world."

- Athanasian Creed 450 AD.

"...we all with one accord teach men to acknowledge one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ...begotten, for us men and for our salvation, of Mary the Virgin, the God-bearer;..."

- The Chalcedonian Definition, 451 AD.

But we have to acknowledge that the Virgin Birth is not explained in these statements. Indeed it is only mentioned at all as a support for the more pressing (at the time) definitions of the Humanity, Divinity and Nature of Jesus the Christ the Son of God, and whether Mary was the God-bearer or the Christ-bearer or both. “The incarnation rarely inspired a theology of the cross and resurrection.” says Weinandy.ⁱⁱⁱ True enough, but that doesn’t mean we cannot say anything meaningful about it.

As usual John Macquarrie sheds more light than heat on the discussion: “I think we have to look at this dogma very critically and ask whether it makes any worthwhile contribution to Christology. Would the belief that Jesus was born of one human parent alone in any way enhance his status in our eyes or his authority as one sent by God or the claim that he is the paradigm of humanity?” But if it really doesn’t matter, then the Virgin Birth doctrine risks turning Jesus into a wonder worker, separated from the rest of us, and therefore irrelevant: “an unintelligible anomaly, thrust into the middle of history.”^{iv}

Bonhoeffer says simply: “How?” . . . the question remains open, just as and just because it is already open in the Bible.”^v True enough. The question “how?” will remain open, but I conclude that it does matter whether Jesus was born of a Virgin or not, and I will be attempting to argue my case in these sermons. However, I must admit that my case is largely based on theological reflection rather than Biblical support. So let us look at what the Scriptures say.

WHAT IS THE SCRIPTURAL SUPPORT?

Matthew and Luke both state unequivocally that Mary was a virgin when she conceived her child. For many Christians, no more needs to be said. Is Brown correct to affirm that the authors of the two Gospels would have included the stories because they saw the theological significance of the miracle? Or did they just include them because they happened to be true? We do not know for sure, but one assumes that the stories formed part of early Christian sermon material, and were, therefore, applied to the Incarnation in some way. But how did they apply it?

Paul makes no theological statement about the Virgin Birth. Indeed, many theologians argue that as he was writing at an early date he had not even heard the story. Matthew and Luke are detailing a later doctrinal invention. I would argue against this because, firstly, we do not actually know when Matthew's Gospel was written. The current fashion among theologians to attribute a late date to it is precarious. One piece of ancient parchment dug out of the archaeology of Israel could lead to a scurry of revision, placing Matthew's Gospel at the chronological beginning of the New Testament. Secondly, there are theologians who say that Paul did know of the Virgin Birth. Wenham^{vi} argues that Paul knew about it because:

- a) Gal 4:4 (born of a woman, born under the Law) and Rom 1:3 (Davidic Sonship from the flesh Divine Sonship from the resurrection) suggest that he knows of the tradition;
- b) He only mentions the mother of Jesus, not the father;
- c) Jesus is referred to as "God's Son" suggesting a unique origin;
- d) Jesus' sinlessness would suggest some sort of a break from the Adamic line;
- e) In Gal 4:4, Rom 1:3 and hil *ginotai* means "come to exist" and is used instead of *gemao* "to be begotten." This analysis of the Greek is hotly disputed and I am not expert enough to offer an opinion.

Further documentation is scarce. Isaiah's prophecy that a "virgin will conceive and bring forth a child (7:14)" is much argued about. That Matthew derived his version from the LXX, seems to me to be assured, and that the word found there "parthenos" usually means virgin, I have no reason to dispute. But it did have other meanings in ancient Greek, and, frankly, I would never have associated the Isaiah passage to the birth of Christ were it not for Matthew's use of the text. I think that Schillebeeckx' description of it as "reflection-citation . . . scriptural proof applied in retrospect to an already available Christian tradition."^{vii} must be allowed to stand. In any scenario this text helps us very little, although it will still be thrown around as a proof-text by both sides in the prophecy-foretells-Jesus/no-it-doesn't apologetics debate. The Epistle to the Hebrews majors firmly on Jesus' solidarity with the human race, but does not explicitly mention the Virgin Birth. Peter's epistles link Jesus with us in death, rather than in birth.

In my sermons I will be looking in some detail at how Matthew and Luke treat the subject, so will not waste space repeating my ideas here. I will be pointing out the relevance of the choice of women in Matthew's genealogy and their links to Mary (scandalous women whose sexuality had to be extensively overshadowed by their pious spirituality in the traditions of the rabbis). I will argue that the scandal associated with Mary, the supposed illegitimacy of her child, is countermanded by Matthew's telling of the Virgin Birth which places her among the great, radical heroes of Old Testament heroines. Luke, meanwhile, chooses to major on her celibate, prophetic character.^{viii}

DO WE NEED THE VIRGIN BIRTH?

J. Ratzinger argues that "according to the faith of the Church the Sonship of Jesus does not rest on the fact that Jesus had no human father: the doctrine of the Jesus's divinity would not be affected if Jesus had been the product of a normal marriage. For the Sonship of which faith speaks is not a biological but an ontological fact, an event not in time but in God's eternity."^{ix} John Hick can ignore the Virgin Birth because ". . . the idea of divine incarnation is better understood as metaphorical than as literal- Jesus embodied, or incarnated, the ideal of human life lived in faithful response to God, so that God was able to act through him, and he accordingly embodied a love which is a human reflection of the divine love."^x Most modern theologians seem comfortable with the thought that as the Early Church did not make much theological mileage from it, the Virgin Birth can easily be ignored as of no great significance.

REASONS USED AGAINST THE VIRGIN BIRTH

A) Modern Genetic Discoveries.

There is no doubt that contemporary understanding of human reproduction influences how we approach the Virgin Birth. Today we want to ask where the Y-chromosome came from to create the foetus, and indeed, whether the X-chromosomes came from Mary. "Biologically, either Mary provided the ovum for impregnation by the Holy Ghost and so contributed to her son's genetic inheritance, or she was simply a vessel containing and nourishing the divinely

implanted seed, that is, a surrogate mother.”^{xi} The more we understand the formation of human life the more we are drawn into explaining a miracle which had always been mysterious. It is ironic that the early church turned to the Virgin Birth as proof that Jesus was genuinely born and, therefore, human, while the modern church shies away from it for fear of a Jesus who is not genuinely human, genetically unlinked to us and our human ancestors. If he is not DNA of our DNA then he cannot be human. And if the foetus which grew inside Mary was “ a ‘special creation’ *de novo* of exactly the type the so-called ‘creationists’ argue for” it produced an entity resembling a human being but not actually sharing in our evolved humanity.”^{xii}

Yet we are still left with the fact that “the Son of God has become man without ceasing to be the God He ever was, and that after the Incarnation He is at work within space and time in a way that He never was before.”^{xiii} How God can become part of the world at such a space/time point while still being God in heaven/eternity challenges our philosophical view of the physical just as much as the Virgin birth challenges our physiological view.

B) Modern Feminist Doubts.

We should, it is argued, be careful because the Virgin Birth led, in church dogma, to an unscriptural adulation of virginity, and from being a religious sign to a moral doctrine incumbent on all. In history this led to female subjection and unhelpful asceticism.^{xiv} I would hardly dare to disagree, although its misuse should not be used to judge its veracity. It has also been argued that the Virgin Birth devalues the sex act itself, something which God himself created for us to enjoy.^{xv} And finally, it mythologizes a real mother with her every-day problems: “what does the Madonna with the child Jesus in her arms – “the Goddess and her hero” – have to do with the Jewish mother Miriam and her independent, self-willed son Jesus, who dissociated himself from her?”^{xvi} Modern feminism is more likely to stress her suffering than her conceiving: “the suffering mother theme is archetypal of all human suffering.”^{xvii} Reason enough to diminish the importance of the Virgin Birth, but not enough to discount it.

C) The Virgin Birth as Pagan Myth.

This is still the most commonly put forward objection to the doctrine and argues that many pagan stories about the birth of gods and great men shrouded their birth in the mystique of Virgin Birth, as are other deities in world religions. Among them are : Romulus and Remus, fathered by Mars with Silvia, a Vestal Virgin; Buddha, born of the virgin Maya after the Holy Ghost descended upon her; the Egyptian God Horus born of the virgin Isis; Attis born of the virgin Nama; Adonis born of the virgin Myrrha; in India, the god Krishna born of the virgin Devaki; in Tibet Indra, in Persia, the god Mithra and Zoroaster all allegedly born of virgins. In fact a closer examination eliminates all of these because although the women involved may well have been virgins (but not all were: for example Buddha’s mother was recorded as being married, but childless), they conceived by having sex, usually with the god in disguise. The list is large and the arguments pretty tedious.^{xviii}

Finally, it is worth pointing out that among others Origen, J. H. Newman, and Hugo Rahner turned the argument on its head by claiming that “God prepared the world for the greatest mystery of all, the Incarnation of his son, with a sequence of beliefs and creeds and symbols that foreshadowed it and thus made its acceptance easier.”^{xix}

D) It is impossible

Discounting the pointless arguments about turkeys, sharks and other animals allegedly producing offspring by parthenogenesis, you end up with the argument that Virgin Birth requires a miracle, miracles do not happen, so the Virgin Birth did not happen. You can add a large number of Episcopalian Bishops to this list, as, for example, J.S. Spong, Episcopal Bishop of Newark, who wrote: "In time, the virgin birth account will join Adam and Eve and the story of the cosmic ascension as clearly recognized mythological elements in our faith tradition whose purpose was not to describe a literal event but to capture the transcendent dimensions of God in the earthbound words and concepts of first-century human beings."^{xx} Obviously, if miracles cannot happen then neither can the Virgin Birth. (Can the universe happen without a miracle? Discuss.)

We must, however, challenge the assumption that it is only the modern mind which cannot accept the miracles. In this instance, Joseph’s credulity was stretched beyond breaking point too. As C. S. Lewis puts it: “If St. Joseph had lacked faith to trust God or humility to perceive the holiness of his spouse, he could have disbelieved in the miraculous origin of her son as easily as any modern man; and any modern man who believes in God can accept the miracle as easily as Saint Joseph did.”^{xxi}

E) It is unnecessary.

Could an illegitimate Jesus still be the Son of God? This I think, goes to the heart of the question and is the only objection worth discussing at length. Paul and the New Testament turn to the miracles of Jesus and his resurrection to demonstrate the Son of God. Why they do not use the Virgin Birth as similar, explicit evidence is not clear. Given the comparatively private narrative of the Virgin Birth against the very public miracles and resurrection, there is no question that the latter would have been more powerful arguments in their day. It is also possible to argue

that they did not use the Virgin Birth argument because it was too like the miraculous birth narratives of the pagan gods, although I shall reject this argument in the next section.

Some of the most stimulating discussion in the literature is based around the action of the Holy Spirit in the conception of Jesus. It is “not a question of gynaecology; it is a theme of Christian pneumatology.”^{xxii} Historically, we are given two choices for the action of the Spirit:

- a) the patriarchal succession is broken off for the sake of the history of the promise (God is the father, the Holy Spirit offers the male seed and Mary is the mother) or
- b) “The motherly office of the Holy Spirit” in which God is the father, the Holy Spirit is the mother.

Origen, Jerome and the author of the *Gospel According to the Hebrews* are three of the early Christian writings which took this line, and an heretical group appeared which held a trinity of Father, Son and Holy Virgin. Modern day proponents would suggest that the Virgin offers only a symbolic embodiment, and therefore the Virgin Birth can safely be described as mythical. It is the Holy Spirit who is the “great, virginal, life-engendering mother of the living.”^{xxiii}

There is no doubt that we have tended to stress the role of Mary almost to the exclusion of the Holy Spirit. Moltmann is correct to state that the Holy Spirit is the source of life, not Mary, but I beg to differ from his conclusion. For the Holy Spirit to have adopted the (illegitimately) fertilised ovum of Mary and Joseph hardly makes him to be the source of life. It seems to me that this is sailing dangerously close to the wind of adoptionism and, ultimately, diminishes the role of the Holy Spirit. I agree with Schillebeeckx when he states that “Jesus owes his human existence *in toto*, his very being as man, to the Holy Spirit.”^{xxiv} However, I cannot agree with his deduction that we can, as a result, reject the historical truth of the Virgin Birth.

WHY ADHERE TO TRADITION?

In a sense it is irrelevant to ask the question. If it happened, it happened. But the doctrine does smooth the way for other more important insights.

A) A Biblical Event.

The obvious inspiration for the Virgin Birth narratives are not some pagan myth, but the Old Testament angelic visitation narratives. Examples would be the promise to Abraham, the call of Moses, the call of Gideon, the birth of Samson. They are marked by:

- a) appearance of an angel
- b) reaction of fear
- c) announcement of miracle to occur
- d) human objection
- e) a sign is given^{xxv}

Both Gospel authors have adopted this formula, thus placing the Virgin Birth firmly in the category of redemptive history. This is the way God intervenes when he is saving his people. The Virgin Birth’s main theological significance, then, is not Christological but Salvific. For Matthew and Luke, the importance of the miracle is that it demonstrates continuity with the Old Testament, and places Jesus as the Messiah at the heart of God’s ongoing dealing with his people. This does not mean that they did not perceive any Christological significance in the event, but rather that it did not fit the purpose of their Gospel accounts to mention it. Paul’s Galatians 4:4 statement about the Messiah being born of a woman under the Law functions in the same way. Irenaeus was the first church father to take the doctrine up and reflect on it. Significantly, he points out the antithesis that just as through Eve’s succumbing to the wiles of the devil, sin entered the world, so too through Mary’s yes to the divine invitation salvation came to dwell among us. Again we find the event wrapped in Old Testament clothes.

B) A Divine-Human Union

In His book, *God was in Christ*, D. M. Baillie asks why did the Incarnation happen when it did? He answers that it could only have happened with a man sufficiently receptive to allow it.^{xxvi} This fits well his basic Christological proposition that the Paradox of Grace is at the heart of the miracle. It is all of God yet, depends on our response to mercy: “if the life of our Lord is to be conceived as a truly human life subject to the hazards of all human life on earth, we must indeed say that the Incarnation of the Divine Word in Him was conditioned by His continual response.” It is a Paradox of Grace: all of God, dependent on our reception of Mercy. Strangely, he does not pursue the Virgin Birth in the same light, although it would seem to fit his hypothesis well. The Incarnation occurred when it did because God used a devout young woman, whose response was essential, although the miracle was all by Grace. Mary’s response to God mirrors that of her son. It celebrates our own dual nature – created an earthly animal and yet also in the likeness of God. It is this human cooperation with prevenient Grace which is the hope of our world and for which Creation groans awaiting a new order.

C) A Christological Insight

I am on less certain ground here. Given that the New Testament does not offer such connections, we should tread carefully. Historically the church chose to argue the merits of the natures of Christ without much reference to the Virgin Birth. Admittedly, the doctrine had its detractors, else the Protogospel of James would not have told a tale of the midwife confirming the Virgin Birth, but it was not a source of great dissension. It was used in the second century as a means of combating docetism. Jesus was born of the Virgin's body, and entered the world as truly human. It is only in more recent times that it has been used to argue in favour of Jesus' divinity, fearful that we have reduced Jesus to a merely human saviour. I am not unhappy with that. Anything which gives added force to our vision of Jesus, God and Man, is welcome. If it makes it easier to accept the doctrine by concentrating on his Virgin Birth, well let us do so. My only doubt is that given modern preoccupations with genetics, surrogate mothers and test-tube babies, we are too likely to get side-tracked.

However, I do feel that there is one aspect in which a new emphasis on the doctrine will help us redress a long standing imbalance in our doctrine of Salvation. Anselm has long been criticised for introducing a too juridical view of Salvation, a view largely taken up by Aquinas and the Western church ever since, most certainly in the Evangelical wing of the church. Yet earlier theologians saw salvific value in the Incarnation for its own sake. Our present Jesus-died-on-the-cross-for-your-sins" evangelism loses out on the fuller view of God redeeming humanity by assuming our form and raising our humanity to the heights of heaven. I will deal with this in the fourth sermon/study.

Gregory of Nazianzus' famous statement "what is not assumed is not healed; what is united with God is also saved," is accentuated by Jesus' unique entry into the world. By combining Mary's DNA with DNA produced by the Holy Spirit (if that is how it happened, although it is only a guess) we have a saviour who inherits the human condition and the royal line of David, while also being uniquely prepared to function as a human being in which the fullness of God dwells. I have been impressed by Weinandy's comment: "Ultimately, our salvation is unconditionally dependent upon the Son's assuming a humanity disfigured by sin and freely acting as a Son of Adam."^{xxvii} He tries to overcome the obvious limitation of kenotic theory (if the second person of the Trinity emptied himself of all divine attributes to become human, how could he continue to sustain the universe? Who is left "looking after the shop"?) by stressing that Jesus divinity was filtered through our sin-weakened humanity: "only if Jesus became as we are, defiled by sin, could he, on our behalf, freely assume our condemnation and lovingly offer his holy and innocent life to the father in reparation for our sin".^{xxviii}

CONCLUSION

"there has emerged a new humanity, drawing its life from God rather than from the world."^{xxix}

I can find little reason to doubt the Virgin Birth in itself. Once we have admitted the Great Miracle of the Incarnation, how it happened is of secondary importance. Whether we believe that Mary's chromosomes were involved or not, is of less consequence than the belief that God performed the greatest of all miracles in a way which stood in line with thousands of years of Salvation History. The great promises and blessings of the Old Testament come to fulfilment, announced by the angel, through the life of a young prophetess by direct intervention of the Holy Spirit. By playing down the Christological element and stressing the continuity of the event with Old Testament revelation and redemption, the New Testament opens its chapter on the arrival of the kingdom of God in human life. By telling the story of the virginal conception it stresses the divine element of the episode and puts the emphasis on the Holy Spirit while still demonstrating the need for human acquiescence. I offer no killer proof text to make you believe in the miracle if you do not wish to, but I hope to show in the sermon series that it blends in seamlessly with the rest of Christian Theology, and its comfortable co-existence will probably be my strongest argument. The Virgin Birth is a buttress which helps to build the mighty temple of redemption. No more, but certainly no less.^{xxx}

Peter James Cousins, Bangor: November 2003

- ⁱ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Way of Christ: Christology in Messianic Dimension*, tr. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM Press, 1990). p.81.
- ⁱⁱ Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*. (New York: Image Books, 1977) p. 521.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Thomas Weinandy O.F.M.,CAP., In *The Likeness of Sinful Flesh: an essay on the Humanity of Christ*. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993).p. 150.
- ^{iv} John Macquarrie, *Jesus Christ in Modern Thought* (London: SCM Press, and Harrisburg PA: Trinity Press International, 1990) p. 393.
- ^v Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Christology*, trans. Christian Kaiser (London: William Collins & Sons; New York: Harper & Row, 1966), p. 109.
- ^{vi} David Wenham, *Paul: Follower of Jesus or Founder of Christianity?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) p. 49.
- ^{vii} Edward Schillebeeckx, *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology* (New York: Crossroad, 1991) p. 555.
- ^{viii} See Raymond E. Brown, Karl P. Donfried, Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, John Renmann (eds.) *Mary in the New Testament* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1978). Also, Todd Klutz, “The value of being virginal: Mary and Anna in the Lukan Infancy Prologue,” in George J. Brooke (ed.), *The Birth of Jesus: Biblical and Theological Reflections* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000) pp. 71-87.
- ^{ix} J. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity* (New York: Herder& Herder, 1969) p.208. Quoted in Arthur Peacocke, “DNA of our DNA” in George J. Brooke (ed.), *The Birth of Jesus: Biblical and Theological Reflections* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000) p. 59.
- ^x John Hick, *The Metaphor of God Incarnate* (London: SCM Press, 1993) p. ix.
- ^{xi} Canon Derek Stanley quoted by Peacocke p. 65.
- ^{xii} Peacocke, p.65.
- ^{xiii} Thomas F. Torrance, *Space, Time and Incarnation* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1997), p. 53.
- ^{xiv} Marina Warner, *Alone of all Her Sex: The Myth and Cult of the Virgin Mary* (London: Picador, 1976) p. 49.
- ^{xv} Brian O. McDermott, *Word Become Flesh: Dimension of Christology* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1993) p. 209. Although as C. S. Lewis points out, you might as well accuse the feeding of the 5000 of being a slur on baking.
- ^{xvi} Warner, p.79.
- ^{xvii} Mary Grey, “Who do you say I am?” in Stanley E. Porter, Michael A. Hayes, David Tombs (eds.), *Images of Christ Ancient and Modern* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997) p. 194.
- ^{xviii} I would suggest you start at the website which I have used here by James Patrick Holding: http://www.tektonics.org/JPH_CAC4.html and http://www.tektonics.org/tekton_01_04_01.html
- ^{xix} Warner p. 35.
- ^{xx} J. S. Spong, *Born of a Woman: A Bishop Rethinks the Birth of Jesus* (San Francisco: Harper, 1992), pp. 56f., 74-79.
- ^{xxi} C. S. Lewis, *Miracles: A Preliminary Study* (Glasgow: William Collins and Sons, 1947), p. 52.
- ^{xxii} Moltmann, p. 78.
- ^{xxiii} Moltmann, p. 83
- ^{xxiv} Schillebeeckx, p.556.
- ^{xxv} Brown, Donfried, Fitzmeyer, & Renmann p.113.
- ^{xxvi} D. M. Bailie, *God was in Christ: An Essay on Incarnation and Atonement* (London: Faber & Faber, 1961), p. 149.
- ^{xxvii} Weinandy, p. x.
- ^{xxviii} Weinandy, p. 70.
- ^{xxix} Macquarrie, p. 393.
- ^{xxx} Apart from Bible commentaries I have used the following:
 Brian M. Nolan, *The Royal Son of God: The Christology of Matthew 1-2 in the setting of the Gospel* (Fribourg: Éditions Universitaires; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1979).
 Edwin D Freed, *The Stories of Jesus' Birth: A Critical Introduction* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001).
 J. Schaberg, *The Illegitimacy of Jesus: A Feminist Theological Interpretation of the Infancy Narratives* (San Fransisco: Harper and Row, 1987).
 R. E. Brown, *The Virginal Conception and the Bodily Resurrection of Christ* (New York and Ramsey: Paulist, 1973).