

# **THE BIRTH OF JESUS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649360406

The birth of Jesus by Henry A. Miles

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**HENRY A. MILES**

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OF JESUS**





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# BIRTH OF JESUS.

BY

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AUTHOR OF "ORIGIN AND TRANSMISSION OF THE GOSPELS," "TRACES OF  
PICTURE-WRITING IN THE BIBLE."

*"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."*  
*St. Paul to the Colossians ii. 8.*

BOSTON:

LOCKWOOD, BROOKS, AND COMPANY.

381 WASHINGTON STREET.

1878.

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RIVERSIDE PRESS, CAMBRIDGE:  
STEREOTYPED AND PRINTED BY  
H. O. HOUGHTON AND COMPANY.

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# THE BIRTH OF JESUS.



## CHAPTER I.

### INTRODUCTION.

IT is the object of this book to examine those parts of the gospel narratives which relate to the birth of Jesus, in order to understand, if possible, what they intended to record.

A few words may explain the motives that lead to this investigation, and the spirit in which it is conducted.

If there be in the English language a monograph on this subject, it is not known to the writer of this book. Various commentaries on the Gospels offer brief explanations; but, perhaps, no critical reader has looked into them without disappointment. To discuss this point fully in such works would require disproportionate space, and it is generally dismissed in a few words.

The inquirer may next turn to Treatises on the Evidences of Christianity. In modern works of this kind the miraculous birth of Jesus is frequently not even alluded to. Scholars know what a prominent place this point held a few hundred years ago. The recent silence betrays doubts, and still further baffles the inquirer.

He finds a like silence on this subject in modern creeds. The ninth chapter of this book will describe the steps of the formation, in the fourth century, of what is commonly called *The Apostles' Creed*. Subsequent creeds often followed the style of that symbol of faith. But a marked change in their contents is now seen in nearly all Protestant creeds. The old clauses relating to the supernatural birth of Jesus are now omitted. The Christian consciousness of our age recognizes the difficulties and doubts connected with this subject, and makes concession to them. With good sense and propriety creeds are now usually limited to the expression, in some form, of a belief that Jesus was a divine manifestation in the flesh. Details are left to individual judgments, which, if they have ever carefully considered this subject, have doubtless reached diverse conclusions.

Two opposite poles of thought are sufficiently obvious. On the one hand is the lately proclaimed, but long believed, dogma of the "Immaculate Conception," which affirms that the Virgin Mary gave birth to God by the power of the Holy Ghost, without human intervention. On the other hand, to many minds there seems mingled with the records of the birth of Jesus such a mass of incredible interpretations that it has none of the aspects of a real event. The whole history is pushed aside with much the same feeling as is the fable of the birth of Minerva from the brain of Jupiter.

Between these extremes the minds of thoughtful teachers of religion often waver. Once in each year they read from the sacred desk the stories of the birth of Jesus, and can feel, as they think, a sincere faith in them. They are sustained by the hallowed memories that cluster around that season in which Jesus "came to visit us in great humility," and which, amid all the kindly feelings and beautiful customs of Christmas, draw every one into a believing mood. But even then, as we suppose, most ministers would prefer not to be questioned closely as to what the traditions relating to the first Christmas really mean.