

THE SUPERNATURAL CONCEPTION OF CHRIST.

By J. R. Jackson.

A certain so-called "liberal" religious journal in New York has been repeated extolling Dr. Craps, the lately deposed Episcopal clergyman of Rochester, for his great intelligence and courage in renouncing certain statements of the Apostles' Creed. The following remarks and queries were sent to the said journal by the writer; but they were not thought suitable for the columns of a liberal religious paper.

Would you be kind enough to publish the following quotations, the first from the so-called Apostles' Creed, and the other two from the gospels as given by St. Matthew and St. Luke; also the four questions appended:

"Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary."

"Now, the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name Jesus."—Matt. 1, 18-25.

And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth. To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."—Luke 1, 26-35.

1. Do the above passages from the gospel narrative support and justify the simple statement quoted from the creed? If so, is there either sense or justice in pouring contempt and condemnation upon the innocent creed, as it is the fashion with advanced thinkers, while the scripture record, the first and greatest defender is allowed to go scot free?

2. Is there anything to indicate that the gospel writers intended their account of the conception and birth of Jesus to be understood as a parable or allegory, and not in a literal and phy-

sical sense? Is it conceivable that they thought, or meant their readers to think, that the human origin of Jesus was not different in any particular from that of any other man.

3. What fact of science, discovered in the 19th or 20th century of the Christian era, and unknown in previous times, has demonstrated clearly and conclusively that the Almighty would not, could not and did not bring his son into the world in the way described by St. Matthew and St. Luke?

The fact that such a mode of procedure is contrary to his established law of generation, was as well known in the first century as in the twentieth.

4. In order to apprehend and profit by the moral and spiritual significance of the gospel records, is it necessary in all cases to deny the literal and physical truth of their contents? For example, to derive any spiritual benefit from the incarnation, life and death of Jesus must we first of all be persuaded that no such events ever occurred, that no such being ever really existed? Is this what is meant by "the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life?"

The above questions are asked in all sincerity, and the writer would like to receive simple, straightforward answers to them.

If it has been proved that the supernatural conception of Jesus as taught in the gospels is a myth, the people ought to be apprised of it in plain unequivocal terms, and they ought of course to accept the fact and reject the fable with becoming candour. On the other hand if such has not been proved, it is little short of a crime for any clergyman to unsettle the convictions and distress the hearts of earnest followers of Christ, and cause dissensions and divisions in the church, merely to create a sensation and get a reputation for advanced thought, superior intelligence and great courage.

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A LENTEN MEDITATION.

By Ulster Pat.

Is fasting a duty obligatory upon Christians? was lately discussed by correspondents of one of your contemporaries. If the question were referred to me, I should say, "yes," and "no." Fasting in the sense of stated abstinence from food, I do not find in the New Testament. That was part of the ceremonial law observed by the early disciples, who were Jews, but which the Holy Spirit appears to have restrained them from imposing upon the church. But there is a fasting enjoined by God in both Old and New Testaments, which those most strict in the observance of Lent and other stated fasts appear too often to overlook. Those who prepared the Westminster confession of faith and that Catechism which is a part of the covenanted uniformity in religion betwixt the churches of Christ in the Kingdoms of Scotland, England and Ireland" and may we not add, in the Dominion of Canada and other parts of the Empire of Britain, as well—offer as one of the "proofs" of the duty of "religious fasting," the words found in the second chapter of Joel, "Rend your hearts and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God." This fasting will be an acceptable sacrifice in all ages.

In the fifty-eighth chapter of Isaiah, the Holy Spirit enters into a full and explicit discussion of this question, and though every reader of The Dominion Presbyterian ought to be familiar with the passage, it may be good to the use of edifying to quote it at considerable length. Notwithstanding their transgressions, the house of Jacob are declared to seek the Lord daily, and delight to know His ways. "As a nation that did righteousness and forsook not the ordinance (or judgment) of their God, they ask of me righteous ordinances, they delight to draw near unto

God. Wherefore have we parted, say they, and thou seest not, wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge."

"Shall I be deemed uncharitable if I ask these who, after "the straitest sect of our religion," observe days, and months and seasons and years, to ponder this statement of their attitude towards God? Is it not true that all their routine of will worship leaves a puzzling absence of communion with God? "We have fasted and thou seest not," "we have afflicted our soul and thou takest no knowledge." Let us consider the answer of our God to this complaint. "Behold, in the day of your fast ye find your own pleasure and exact all your labors, (or oppress all your laborers). Behold ye fast for strife and contention, and to smite with the fist of wickedness; ye shall not fast, as ye do this day to make your voice to be heard on high. Is such the fast that I have chosen? Is it to bow down his head as a rush and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Will thou call this a fast and an acceptable day to the Lord?" With what loving patience does our God plead and reason with his erring children?

Having pointed out the sad error into which they have fallen. He prepares to condemn, but appeals to their own hearts and minds as to what He had, and does, require of them. "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bonds of wickedness? to undo the bands of the yoke, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? When thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh. Then shall thy light break forth as the morning," no question of His seeing and taking knowledge will arise when we walk in the path wherein He leads—"and thy healing shall spring forth speedily; and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy rearward. Then shalt thou call and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry and He shall say, Here I am. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking wickedly; and if thou bestow on the hungry that which thy soul desireth, and satisfy the afflicted soul, then shall thy light rise in darkness, and thine obscurity be as the noonday; and the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in dry places, and make strong thy bones and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water whose waters fail not."

"This is the way; walk ye in it."

The inhabitants of Southern Chili are said to foretell the weather by means of a strange barometer. It consists of the cast-off shell of a crab. The dead shell is white in fair, dry weather; but, indicating the approach of a moist atmosphere by the appearance of small red spots, as the moisture in the air increases it becomes entirely red, and remains so throughout the rainy season.

How often do we look upon God as our last and feeble resource? We go to Him because we have nowhere else to go. And then we learn that the storms of life have driven us, not upon the rocks, but into the desired haven; that we have been compelled, as to the last remaining so to the best, the only, the central help, the causing cause of all the helps to which we had turned aside as nearer and better.—George McDonnell.

In Peru, when a man wants to break into a house, he often takes a sponge and a bucket of water, and moistens the walls, which, being covered with only a thin coating of mud, are easily dissolved upon the application of moisture.