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THE MOTHER OF EMMANUEL (Is. 7:14)

To listen to *Is* 7:14 is like standing beside "the waters of Siloe." Isaia reminded his audience of those silent, mysterious waters, in the same context and in almost the same breath that he pronounced the "Emmanuel Prophecy." In chapter 8, verse 6, we read:

... These people have spurned
The waters of Siloe, that flow gently,
Yet, his outspread wings shall fill the breadth
of your land, Emmanuel (8 6-8).

The clear, fresh waters of Siloe are an overflow from the spring of Gihon,¹ in the Kidron valley, on the east side of Jerusalem. These shallow waters move so silently and so unperturbedly, that no motion can be seen, no ripple heard. Its gentle current can only be felt against the legs of someone standing within its stream. Isaia, in effect, was admitting that his prophecy of 7:14 was just as mysterious as the silent waters of Siloe, but that each contained within its gentle flow that name of salvation, *Emmanuel*, which means *God with us*. How fitting, then, that the Emmanuel prophecy reach its fulfillment when a saintly girl was alone, gently wrapped in silent prayer!

We are tempted to think that the silent whisper of God's words in *Is*. 7:14 has been shouted down by the long, loud succession of one interpretation upon another.² Holscher put it succinctly: "So viel Köpfe, so viel Meinungen!"—"as many heads, so many opinions!"³ Steinmann added his own

¹ This spring is now called, significantly enough, 'ain sitti Mariam, i.e. "The Virgin's Spring"

² It is generally recognized that the most complete bibliographies are those of J J Stamm, *La prophétie d'Emmanuel*, in *RTPk* 32 (1944) 97-100, supplemented by his *Neuere Arbeiten zum Immanuel-problem*, in *ZAW* 58 (1956) 46-53, and J Coppens, *La prophétie de la Almah* (Bruges, 1952) 3-5, reprint from *ETL* 28 (1952) 648ff.

³ *Die Propheten* (Leipzig, 1914) 229

"Amen!" when he wrote: "On the sense of each line of this celebrated text, the grandest confusion reigns among critics."⁴ A new exegete cannot restrain that discouraging lament: "Why try? My effort will simply mean another opinion to be itemized, or, worse still, another head to be lopped off!" True, no single attempt will ever satisfy everyone,⁵ but repeated efforts at least serve the purpose of keeping these gentle waters of *Is. 7:14* from running unnoticed and thus believers are introduced again and again into the presence of *Emmanuel, God with us*.

In this present study we seek to identify the Mother of Emmanuel in *Is. 7:14*. To do this, however, we must direct most of our attention to her royal son. The *Almah* (for thus she is called in the Hebrew text of *Is. 7:14*) stands silently at his side. Her entire life is absorbed into the life and work of her son, just as he before his birth had been hidden within her. To know the mother we must first become acquainted with her son, but at once we are caught in a series of circles. Each sweeps us onward to a deeper knowledge of the other.

Is. 7:14 is one of the earliest biblical texts, calling attention to the mother of the Lord's Anointed. At the same time,

⁴ J. Steinmann, *Le prophète Isaïe* (Paris, 1950) 88, note 11. G. B. Gray, *The Book of Isaiah*, in *The International Critical Commentary* (Edinburgh, 1912) 122-123, lines up some of the points on which "Modern interpreters, whether Jews or Christians, are much divided . . ." (1) Who is the mother and who is the son referred to in v. 14? (2) What is the sign given by Yahweh Himself, and what does it signify? Is it miraculous? Wherein precisely does it consist? Does it signify (a) that Judah will be delivered, or (b) that it will be destroyed, or (c) that it will be first delivered and then destroyed? The ambiguities and awkwardness of the passage are so numerous as to give little hope of reaching an interpretation that will command general assent. . . ."

⁵ E. P. Arbez, *Modern Translations of the Old Testament—English Language Translations*, in *CBQ* 17 (1955) 471, remarks about *Is. 7:14*, that "no explanation is fully satisfactory: whatever the solution adopted, there remain some obscurities." Textual and exegetical difficulties greatly reduce the apologetical value of this passage of Scripture.

as Jean Steinmann has remarked, "in this oracle there are found the essentials of all the other messianic ideas, later to be developed by Isaia."⁶ One of the safest ways, therefore, to unravel the ideas tightly entwined in the words of 7:14 is to study the main doctrinal trends woven into the sixty-six chapters of the book of Isaia

Our plan, consequently, calls first of all for an aerial view of the general lines of thought stretching through the entire expanse of the book of Isaia. After that quick survey, we will narrow our sights to chapters seven to twelve, usually called "The Book of Emmanuel." Only with this general and specific background shall we advance any opinion on God's thought behind the words of 7:14 and seek to identify the Mother of Emmanuel in the famous prophecy:

Therefore the Lord himself will give you this sign:
the maiden (*hā 'almā*) shall be with child,
and bear a son,
and name him Emmanuel.⁷

I. *Isaia, Prophet of Divine Faith*

In the Book of Emmanuel (*Is.* 7-12) there is a line addressed by Isaia to King Achaz, which haunts every sermon of the Prophet and which echoes in the words of his disciples. It provides the most important clue to the mystery of 7:14.

Unless your faith is firm,
You shall not be firm (7:9b).⁸

⁶ Cf. Steinmann, *op. cit.*, 93

⁷ This is the translation originally proposed by members of the Catholic Biblical Association of America. Cf. F. L. Moriarty, *The Emmanuel Prophecies*, in *CBQ* 19 (1957) 226, notes. In the final draft, the translation of "maiden" was changed to "virgin."

⁸ The Hebrew melody reads as follows:

kī lō' tē'āmēnū

'im lō' tē'āmēnū (cf. 28:16)

Faith was certainly the watchword of Isaia. It endowed the prophet with a vision so keenly supernatural that things were constantly being turned inside out and viewed in their deepest point of existence. Isaia was never fooled by a glitter of splendor on the outside. He searched deep to the very heart; sham appearance of greatness melted before his eyes, and he saw each man or each event in their naked truthfulness. As we read his sermons, we sometimes suspect him of marshaling a series of contrasting ideas just for literary effect. But no! Faith always acts that way. It pulls down the great and lifts up the poor, as the Mother of Emmanuel was later to sing in her *Magnificat*.

There are many examples of how Isaia's strong faith overturned earthly standards of greatness. He ridiculed King Achaz for playing the part of a manly king (3:1-12). As he watched Achaz making decisions quickly and acting independently, Isaia quipped:

My people! babes are their masters,
And women rule them (3:12).

Achaz tried to wrap his childishness in the heavy robes of royal manliness. While Isaia saw a child pretending to be a man, he took occasion to speak of a man, the "Godlike hero" and the "Father forever," who will conceal his regal might beneath the appearance of a child:

For a child is born to us,
And the government is upon his shoulder (9:6).⁹

⁹ We do not want to imply that Isaia is here predicting the birth of a child, ch 9 most probably describes the ritual of enthronement for a new king. At the moment of his coronation the king inherited the divine sonship, promised in 2 Sam 7:11-16 (cf. v. 14). Notice how Ps 2:7 ("Thou art my son . . .") is fulfilled, not at the birth of Jesus, but rather at His glorious resurrection (Acts 13:33). Nonetheless, we feel that Isaia did intend to con-

The prophet's faith was truly turning things inside out, in order that nothing be hidden beneath wrapping of pretense.

Isaia made strong demands upon the faith of Achaz, demands too strong, in fact, for the wobbling king to carry. We can cite the instance of the Syro-Ephramite war. Caught within the grip of advancing, hostile armies—from the north, the combined forces of Syria and Israel; from the west, the Philistines; and from the south, the Edomites¹⁰—Achaz was told by Isaia to do nothing, only to trust in God. What strength of supernatural character was needed simply to do nothing! Achaz, however, lacked the prophet's spirit of faith.

This supernatural faith had produced in Isaia the conviction that *God alone saves*; all that man can do is humbly to believe, staunchly to trust, silently to wait upon his Lord. The prophet expressed this message of *salvation through God alone* in many different ways. We will cite some of these examples, and in this way condition ourselves for the mysterious message of faith in 7:14.

Isaia found "Emmanuel," "God with us," not in the mighty waters of the Euphrates, that is, not in the colossal strength of Assyria, but in the gently flowing waters of Siloe, that is, in the divine promises to little Juda (8:5-8). If God alone saves, then, as Isaia warned in ch. 8:

Plan a plan, it shall come to nought;

Speak a word, it shall not stand!

Because God is with us—Emmanuel (8:10).

In ch. 9 he proclaimed that only "those who dwell in a land of deep darkness" shall see "a great light"; in ch. 11, the life of the new David is said to spring from the seeming dead root

trast the promised "child" (king), divinely strengthened by reliance upon God's promises, with King Achaz, whose strength was no more than a "child's" because he trusted in man, not in God.

¹⁰ Cf. 4 Kgs 16:5ff., 2 Par 28:1-19.

of Jesse, hidden beneath the ground. Light out of darkness, life out of death—such was his mysterious teaching of faith.

Because this call for heroic faith was rejected by his hearers, Isaia realized that his preaching was intended by God for future generations of believers. God had already given notice in the prophet's inaugural vision that the people of his times would:

Keep on hearing, but understand not;
And keep on seeing, but know not! (6:9)

In order to prepare for the future, Isaia disclosed: "I will bind up my testimony, and seal my teaching in the heart of my disciple" (8:16). One of the greatest of these disciples was a prophet of the Babylonian exile, whose sermons of golden oratory were attached to the scroll containing the preaching of his master. Those sermons now constitute chapters 40-55 and 60-62 of the present book of Isaia. Not only were his words absorbed into the book of his master, but even his name was forgotten and he is known to us as Second Isaia or Deutero-Isaia. No one can help us more in understanding the mysterious message of faith in 7:14 than this most perfect of Isaia's disciples.

Pulsating energetically within the message of Second Isaia is the power of faith to turn things inside out. Because there is nothing impulsive about his way of speaking—actually, he uses the tools of language most adroitly—his words are all the more forceful. He exclaimed on one occasion:

Bring forth the people who are blind, yet have eyes,
And are deaf, yet have ears (43:8)

In one sense, God's servants are blind, because they have no eyes to behold despairingly the bleak picture of Palestine, devastated and abandoned, or the oppressive scene of the

exiles, scattered in the work areas of Babylon. But God's children, though blind, have eyes of faith by which they can look deep into the *meaning* of sorrow and suffering. They must be blind and deaf to human ways of happiness, if they are to see the redemptive purpose of God and to hear His call of salvation. Again, light shines within darkness, life bursts from death.

Second Isaia enunciated his message of faith in a figure of speech which is of special help in understanding 7:14. He pictured Israel, no longer a driven victim of foreign oppression, no longer widowed and deprived of children. Israel, instead, appeared as a joyful mother, looking with amazement at the fullness of her messianic glory. With arms outstretched she cries with astonishment:

Who can have borne me these [children]?
I am bereaved and barren, exiled and banished,
So these—who can have reared them?
See! I have been left alone,
So these—whence can they have come? (49:21)

The same faith which gave sight to the blind now enabled the barren and the lonely to produce life. That the Jewish commonwealth could be re-created out of the broken, charred and scattered pieces of the Babylonian exiles intrigued Second Isaia and absorbed his thought. From the prospects of such a renewal he constructed his theology of creation.¹¹ He reasoned that if God can create Israel out of the chaos of the exile, then he must have been powerful enough to create the universe "in the beginning." In each case the doctrinal theme of his master and namesake comes clearly to the surface: *only God can save*, and he does so in the most secret of ways.

On many occasions Second Isaia became ecstatic at the

¹¹ Cf. C. Stuhlmueller, *The Theology of Creation in Second Isaiah*, in *CBQ* 21 (1959) 429-467.

thought of Israel's re-creation. And here we notice a concatenation of ideas with 7:14. Especially at the beginning of ch. 54 he described the new birth of Israel with ideas drawn from the marvelous births of sacred history, from Isaac, Samson and Samuel, who were born of barren women:

Sing, O barren one, you who have borne no children;
Break into singing, and cry aloud, you who have not travailed!
For more are the children of her that is desolate
Than the children of her that is married (54:1).¹²

No virgin birth is predicted in ch. 54. In fact, Second Isaia seems to be moving in the traditions of Osee and Jeremia, which portrayed Israel as the spouse of God. In that same ch. 54 Israel is addressed: "Your husband is your Maker" (54:5). But added to the note of personal love, so evident in the Yahweh-Spouse theme of Osee and Jeremia, is the Isaian emphasis upon a new family of children created by God alone. This stress is but a repetition of the familiar doctrine: *only God saves*, and to convince man of this doctrine, God will save in the most undreamed-of ways, almost as if he were creating children out of nothing.

Here, then, is the general Isaian background for appreciating 7:14. Isaia's entire message of salvation can be summarized in the statement: only God saves, and to prove it, he saves in the most baffling and in the most marvelous of ways. To teach that the rebirth of the Jewish commonwealth will be due, not to human merit, but solely to God's powerful love, Second Isaia used the biblical metaphor of a barren woman's giving birth to a large family. The same notion of a woman's giving birth is found in the mysterious text of 7:14. Again it has the same general connotation: God alone saves, in the most marvelous of ways. Second Isaia takes us no further.

¹² Is. 56 3-5 and 66 7-11 repeat the same idea. These texts were composed after Second Isaia, with adaptation to postexilic conditions.

Whether or not the earlier prophet, "First Isaia," had already taken the step of proposing a "virgin-birth" awaits further investigation. But he certainly proposes a message of salvation which rests upon faith.

Unless your faith is firm,
You shall not be firm (7:9b).

Isaia, like Moses, rejoiced to see the messianic day, because nowhere will he find this surrender faith more heroically present than in the future Emmanuel and in his holy Mother.

II. *The Doctrine of Faith in the Book of Emmanuel*

An accurate exegesis of 7:14 requires something more than the general background of Isaia and Second Isaia. The theme of salvation through God alone, the call for faith, the penchant for literary contrast—these Isaian characteristics will show up in a *very specific* way in the Book of Emmanuel (ch. 7-12). This book is one of the earliest collections of the prophet's preaching; it must now be examined more closely, if we are to identify the Mother of Emmanuel.

The Book of Emmanuel, with its message of faith, is intricately involved in the politics of the year 736 B.C. The secretary or redactor, who prepared the biographical sketch of ch. 7, sensed the need of some kind of historical introduction. He opened the section, therefore, with ideas borrowed from the Fourth Book of Kings (16:5-9). It was the time of the Syro-Ephramite league, when a coalition had been formed against Assyria by Phacee, King of Israel (737-732), and Rasin, King of Damascus (740-732). Juda, at first under King Jotham (740-736) and soon afterward under the young, twenty-year-old King Achaz (736-716), chose neutrality (4 Kgs. 15:37; 16:5f). As Phacee and Rasin braced themselves

for the inevitable Assyrian invasion from the north, they wanted no neutral, and perhaps hostile power to the south. They decided to whip Judah into line with them. In their war against Judah, they burned cities, slaughtered inhabitants, deported naked men and women (cf. 2 Par. 28). Once they captured Jerusalem, they were determined to place an Israelite landowner from Transjordan upon the Davidic throne.

Jerusalem was tightening her defenses for the siege. Everyone was fearful; "the heart of the people," as Isaiah remarked, "shook as the trees of the forest shake before the wind" (7:2). As the king darted from one part of the city to another, the prophet Isaiah was told by God: "Go out now to meet Achaz." Isaiah found the king "on the highway to the fuller's field," inspecting the water-supply of the capital.¹³ The prophet was accompanied by a very young son, Shear Yashub (= "a remnant will return").¹⁴ Isaiah tried to reassure the frightened king. It was unreasonable, the prophet said, to panic and to "be afraid . . . because of these two tails of smoking fire-brands" (7:4). These words of Isaiah likened the kings of Israel and Damascus to flaming torches which have almost destroyed themselves. The prophet offered a miraculous "sign" that God would preserve the Davidic dynasty and save His people. But before Achaz could ever detect the hand of God in such a sign, the king had need of faith. The prophet, therefore, addressed the king very solemnly:

Unless your faith be firm,
You shall not be firm (*Is.* 7:9b).

¹³ The exact location of this water supply is not known. J. Simon, *Jerusalem in the Old Testament* (Leiden, 1952) 334-337, places it at the north wall. H. Vincent-A-M. Steve, *Jérusalem de l'Ancien Testament* (Paris, 1954) 295, locates it in the Kedron Valley, very near Gihon and the Waters of Siloe.

¹⁴ Isaiah developed two doctrinal themes of the prophet Amos: the remnant and the day of the Lord. Amos foresees a remnant purified by suffering (3:12, 5:3) on the Day of the Lord which will be "darkness, not light."

Achaz, on his part, had already abandoned his faith. He was determined not to entrust the security of his throne to Yahweh. He had, in fact, openly apostasized, by sacrificing his first-born infant son to the Canaanite gods (4 Kgs. 16:3; 2 Par. 28:3). By killing and burning the heir-apparent, Achaz had entreated the god Moloch for the continuity of his dynasty. An apostate from the God of the Chosen People, Achaz had nowhere to turn, except to the King of Assyria.¹⁵

The king replied to Isaia, however, with pompous religiosity. Choosing his words from the sacred scroll of Deuteronomy, he announced: "I will not test the Lord by asking" for a sign (*Is.* 7:12, cf. *Deut.* 6:16). Isaia replied with the Emmanuel prophecy of 7:14.

We will sidestep the Emmanuel prophecy and examine another idea, already hinted at, which is basic for understanding this prophecy and for recognizing the mother of Emmanuel. Put simply, it is this: Achaz, in repudiating faith in Yahweh, tore to shreds his only title to the throne. The mother of Emmanuel, who will return that title to the true Son of David, by contrast with Achaz, must be a maiden of heroic faith.

A legitimate title to the Judean throne had to be traced not only through blood descent to King David, but also through divine promise back to God. The *divine* right to the throne derived from the oracle of the prophet Nathan, in which God had said to David and to all his descendants:

I will be a father to him,
and he a son to me,
If he acts wickedly I will chastise him

¹⁵ M. Noth, *The History of Israel* (New York, 1959) 257, note 3, gives some evidence from Assyrian documents that Juda may have already paid tribute to Assyria under King Ozia. But this tribute, if paid, was very nominal. It was Achaz' blunder to put Juda thoroughly within the Assyrian orbit of states.

with the rod men use,
 with blows the sons of men give.
 But my covenant-love shall not be taken from him. . . .
 your throne is set firm forever (2 Sam. 7:14-16) ¹⁶

Achaz, abandoning faith, cast off his divine "sonship"; he no longer occupied the privileged place of being God's special representative over the Chosen People. He was no longer king! Just as the vocation of the Israelite nation was a call to faith in Yahweh's promise to redeem, likewise, the Davidic royalty rested on the same faith. Only one detail was added: the king would have a prominent place in this divine work of salvation. In appealing to Assyria rather than accept Isaia's advice of trust in Yahweh, Achaz was destroying himself. Isaia, whose eyes pierced to the inner truth of things, saw the end of Davidic rule. In the verses following 7:14, the prophet described the royal dynasty, covered with darkness and oblivion.

Isaia predicted the dreadful invasion of Judean territory by Assyria, the colossal power in which Achaz trusted. Assyria's policy, like that of Communist Russia today, was calculated to inject agonizing fear and trembling weakness into every nation. When Tiglath-Pileser III conquered Syria in 732 and thus ended the Syro-Ephramite threat, the buildings of Damascus were looted and demolished, the chief men were executed and their heads collected for war trophies, the populace terrorized before being bundled together for deportation, the king burned alive on a funeral pyre before the temporary throne of the Assyrian monarch.

Isaia saw this same force trampling into Juda. He said sternly about Achaz and the house of David:

¹⁶ This translation is proposed by the editor of the *CBQ* 19 (1957) 25, note 3

Behold! the Lord is bringing against them
The waters of the River, mighty and many,
Even the king of Assyria. . . .
It shall rise over all its channels, . . .
And shall sweep on through Juda, in an overwhelming flood
(Is. 8.7-8a).

Isaia concluded this prophecy with the words:

Yet his outspread wings shall fill the breath
of your land, *Emmanuel* (8:8b).

Again, we meet the mystery of Isaia's preaching. In the midst of such devastation there would be the presence of *Emmanuel*, *God with us*. Emmanuel in this case seems to be Ezechia, the son and heir of Achaz, during whose reign Juda was swept with the roaring waters of destruction (cf. Is. 10:5ff) but in the end miraculously delivered (cf. Is. 36-37). Emmanuel, however, is not only the name of the royal heir; it is also a symbolic message of faith. Out of this destruction will come salvation.

At his birth and during his lifetime Emmanuel would look out upon cities, smashed and deserted, upon farmlands, running wild with weeds. The surviving inhabitants would be forced to follow an austere, pastoral existence. Their food, according to Isaia, would be "thick milk and honey," that is, the natural products of an uncultivated land, the food of wandering nomads.¹⁷ Very soon after his birth—or, to use

¹⁷ We sidestep the controversial question: what exactly did Isaia mean by "curds (thick milk) and honey" (7:15, 22)? In Ugaritic Literature "thick milk and honey" are sometimes the food of the gods. With this in mind, some scholars interpret Isaia to mean either a divine nourishment for the god-like child or at least the delicious food of people living in a paradise of plenty. Thick milk and honey thus become a symbol of abundance. Another group of scholars take an opposite point of view. They explain the Ugaritic myths as though gods were marvelously provided for during their desert existence.

the language of Isaia, "before the child knows how to refuse the bad and to choose the good" (7:16)¹⁸—the two kingdoms of the north would be wasteland. Eventually, that same flood of destruction would sweep into Juda. Again, to quote Isaia:

Thick milk and honey will be the food of everyone
Who is left in the midst of the land (7:22)

Within all this murky darkness, however, light would shine.

His outspread wings shall fill
The breadth of your land, Emmanuel (8:8b).

At this point, Isaia passed from the contemporary scene around him and peered into the distant future. Up till this time, as Coppens has remarked, "messianism had been a program for the incumbent king"¹⁹. At each coronation, the oracle of Nathan to King David was chanted. The people

In Isaia, therefore, "thick milk and honey" would symbolize the "desert existence" of God's people. The literature on this one point is mammoth! P. G. Duncker, *'Ut sciat reprobare malum et eligere bonum' Is, VII, 15B*, in *Sacra Pagina*, 1 (Paris, 1959) 408-412, and A. B. Davidson, *Immanuel*, in Hastings' *A Dictionary of the Bible*, 2 (New York, 1911) 154-5, argue that v. 15B is a purpose clause i.e., "curds and honey will be his food in order that he may know how to refuse the bad . . ." "Curds and honey" symbolize the hard life by which the future Davidic king would be prepared for his task of salvation. Surrounded by "desert" darkness, he thus became the light of salvation. We ourselves feel that the context of ch. 7-12 is too somber with forebodings of Assyrian invasion and of consequent destruction, for "thick milk and honey" to mean anything else here than a period of sorrow.

¹⁸ We interpret "to know how to refuse the bad and to choose the good" not as attaining the use of reason, but as arriving at puberty. *Deut* 1:39 distinguishes three age groups: "little ones" or infants, "children" who have come to the use of reason, those who have grown to sexual maturity and "know good from bad." Cf. L. F. Hartman, *Sin in Paradise*, in *CBQ* 20 (1958) 37, who discusses the phrase "to know good and evil" and makes the application to *Is* 7:15f and to other biblical texts.

¹⁹ Coppens, *op cit*, 31.

sang enthronization hymns like *Pss.* 2 and 110, which repeated God's promise first spoken by Nathan.²⁰ Little did the assembly know, but that *this new* king may be the chosen one to achieve the divine promises of a prosperous God-fearing nation. Now, in the preaching of *Isaia*, God made it clear that the nation must wait through a long stretch of darkness (cf. *Is.* 30:15). During this period of trial, the country was to be engulfed in a chaos of tribulation (*Is.* 9:8—10:34). The root of David was to remain buried and forgotten. But in the time to come, as formerly at the creation of the universe, the spirit of God would rest upon the land and would create light and beauty. At the same time this same divine spirit would bring new life from the root of Jesse; the small, tender sprout, the son of David, would be born of a mother, hidden and unknown. From such an obscure origin the child would rise to power over a paradise of idyllic peace (*Is.* 11:1-9).²¹

A similar transition from dense darkness to beaming light, from death to life, appears in *Is.* 9:1-7. Heraldng the glorious era of prosperity and justice is the coronation of a Davidic King, who will be endowed with "the wisdom of Solomon, the bravery of David, the religious virtues of Moses and of

²⁰ Cf. J. L. McKenzie, *Royal Messianism*, in *CBQ* 19 (1957) 31-43.

²¹ *Micah* 5 1-5a follows the same line of thought as *Is.* 7-11. Micah sees a new Davidic heir, born in obscurity. Yet, this child is the fulfillment of God's most ancient promises (thus we explain "whose origins are from of old") and will inaugurate a new era of peace. To rise so quickly from oblivion to glory means that "God is with us" ("Emmanuel") in this promise child. If *Micah* 5 1 (= 4 14 in Hebrew text) refers to the destruction of affluent Jerusalem ("Beth Gader" is probably a symbolic name for Jerusalem), then the parallelism to *Isaia* is all the more striking. The incumbent Davidic king must be swept aside in order that God may raise up a new scion of David in the distant future. We will return later to Micah's reference to the woman who is with child. Cf. A. George, *Micah (Le Livre de)*, in *DBI* (Suppl.) 5 (Paris, 1957) 1254. The connection of *Micah* 5 1-5a with *Is.* 7 14 is recognized also by A. Weiser, *Das Buch der Zwölf kleinen Propheten in Das alte Testament Deutsch*, 24 (Göttingen, 1959) 272-3.

the Patriarchs."²² Although many phases of this section were borrowed by Isaia from the Hebrew ritual for the coronation of a king, still the general context sweeps us far off into the future messianic age, beyond the darkness of the moment to the dawn of new light.

Isaia, in the Book of Emmanuel, has silently slipped from the contemporary scene into the remote future. No longer seeing the figures of Achaz' son and the boy's mother, he was looking at the future Emmanuel and His Mother.²³ The most prominent feature of the Messiah and His Queen-Mother was to be their spirit of total surrender to God's will. In them the Israelite would find his most perfect model, and yet this very fact would make King and Mother very unique. Never will any of God's people have shown such unselfish and sinless consecration to God.

As the *perfect* representative of all God's people, they will rise above everyone. Theirs will be a pre-eminent spirit of faith.²⁴ This spirit might be called the "spirit of virginity"—a strong, devoted, single-minded consecration to God. In

²² P. Auvray et J. Steinmann, *Isaïe*, in *La Sainte Bible de Jérusalem* (Paris, 1951) 52, note "a". These symbolic names no more teach the divinity of the future Davidic king than does the name "Emmanuel." The fact that the Bible never applies these titles to a Davidic king indicates a divine mystery involved in the Davidic revival.

²³ Many complain that Ezechia is a poor reminder of the Messiah, so that it would be difficult for Isaia to pass from Ezechia to the future Deliverer. Yet 4 Kgs. 18:7 and 2 Par. 32:8 praise Ezechia highly. 4 Kgs. 18:7 states that "Yahweh was with him"—*Yahweh 'immo*, almost *'immanu 'el*, 2 Par. 32:8 states "with us is the Lord our God"—*'immanu Yahweh 'elohenu*, again, almost *'immanu 'el*. While such combinations as "with you is the Lord" or "with us is the Lord" are too common in the Bible to prove any direct reference to 7:14, still, the phrases establish Ezechia's high reputation among the people. Ezechia, as a Davidic king, is a type of the future Messiah. We ourselves prefer to explain the messianic content of *Is* 7:14, not in any typical sense, but in a literal sense.

²⁴ Faith is here understood in the primary Old Testament notion of the word *'emet*—strong, devoted service of Yahweh. In a person of such faith, God's *'emet* (redemptive plans) reaches fulfillment.

the Book of Emmanuel as in the entire book of Isaia, we find enunciated not a virgin-birth but rather this virginal spirit of faith. Seeing such holiness in Emmanuel and in His Mother, people will spontaneously exclaim: *God is with us*.

III. *Emmanuel and Almah of Is. 7:14*

We have seen that there are two great themes threading their way through the entire book of Isaia: God alone saves; man receives salvation by humble faith. When we narrowed our sights to ch. 7-12, it was found that Achaz had thrust aside this faith when he had decided to find salvation through an appeal to Assyria. Because of this apostasy, a sentence of doom was leveled upon him and upon the House of David. Mysteriously enough, Emmanuel was to be present in the midst of this destruction. But again, only faith could assure anyone that destruction and lowliness held within themselves *Emmanuel, God with us*, the Giver of life and peace.

These conclusions are quite certain, and in the light of them we now endeavor to study more closely the text of 7:14. We have already insinuated the interpretation which, we think, best agrees with the total context. Stated very briefly it is this. The Emmanuel of 7:14 is an heir to the Davidic throne to be born to Achaz, most probably the future King Ezechia. The *Almah* is Achaz' new bride. Later as Queen-Mother, she would exercise a strong influence over state policies. Ezechia and his mother, Abia, however, seemed to fade away and upon their faces there appeared the likenesses of the future Son of David and of His Mother. In the *literal sense*, accordingly, there are present by *prophetic compenetration* both Ezechia and his mother, as well as Jesus and His saintly Mother Mary.²⁵ The sign to Achaz does not consist

²⁵ We are not dealing with a typical sense, but with a literal sense. The important element of Isaia's words is a message, not a description of a man

so much in the birth of the Davidic heir as in other events associated with the child.²⁶ These other events were a sign to Achaz that *only God saves*. How marvelously will this sign of *salvation through God alone* reappear in Jesus and His Mother! From the Isaian point of view, this sign will be manifested in them through their humble trust in God and through their total surrender to God's will. From the New Testament viewpoint, this sign will show up even more wondrously in the virgin-birth.

No single interpretation of 7:14 will ever satisfy everyone, and this for many reasons. First, we must keep in mind that exegesis begins with a damaged text. Almost every line of the Hebrew text needs correction, and the poor condition of the ancient Greek Septuagint provides little assistance. Second, chapter 7 did not come directly from Isaia. It is the work of a redactor or collector who reshuffled oracles and events to accord with his own private plan.²⁷ Notice the repeated introductions, always a mark that we are dealing not with a continuous narrative but with an assembly of parts: "*once more the Lord spoke*" (7:10), "*Then said the Lord*" (8:1); "*Once more the Lord spoke*" (8:5); "*Thus spoke the Lord*" (8:11).

In order to regain Isaia's point of view, some interpreters

or an event. The typical sense rests immediately in the external event (as known through the words), while the literal sense immediately explains the words of a passage. In our exegesis we prefer to remain aloof from the very controverted "fuller sense" or "sensus plenior."

²⁶ We follow Coppens, *op cit*, 20, and many others, that the sign proposed in the second instance (7:14) need not be a miraculous prodigy. It could be some secret future event of the natural order. Others, like Eric May, *Mary in the Old Testament*, in *Mariology*, 1 (ed by Juniper B. Carol; Milwaukee, 1955) 63, speak of "the promise of an extraordinary sign" and proceed to the necessity of a virgin-birth sign.

²⁷ P. Cruveilhier, *Emmanuel*, in *DBI* (Suppl.) 2 (Paris, 1934) 1042, admits that ch. 7-12 contain many different prophecies with different objects and different dates.

rearrange the order of verses; Feuillet, for instance, places the first part of 7:14 at the very end of the chapter.²⁸ Such manipulations always risk being subjective. After all, it is our present Bible which is the inspired document, and therefore we must give serious consideration to the redactor's point of view.

The redactor has not made our job easy. Unwittingly he has strewn difficulties in our way. He has mixed plural and singular verbs.²⁹ He was not consistent in naming the sign: first, it is *Emmanuel*, but toward the end of ch. 8, *Isaiah's children* are called "signs and symbols."³⁰ In 7:14 and 8:8 he used the word *Emmanuel* of a person; in 8:10, of God's power to save.³¹ The literary and textual links in the chain of thought are so weak, that no explanation will be strong enough to hold the consent of all.

We have said that *Emmanuel* and the *Almah* of 7:14 refer directly and immediately to Ezechia and his mother Abia.³² Because 7:14 is such a battleground of controversy, this opinion must be defended!

²⁸ A. Feuillet, *Le Signe proposé à Achaz et l'Emmanuel (Isaïe, 7, 10-25)*, in *RSR* 28 (1940) 129-151.

²⁹ 7:13, "Hear now, O House of David" is plural, while "you" of v. 16f is singular.

³⁰ Because of this text, and also because Isaiah's wife is called by the title "prophetess" (8:3), many identify *Emmanuel* as a child of Isaiah. Miriam, sister of Moses, is called both an "almah" and a "prophetess" (*Ex* 2:8, 15:20). One of the strongest cases presented in favor of this opinion is that by N. K. Gottwald, *Immanuel as the Prophet's Son*, in *VT* 8 (1958) 36-47.

³¹ The Septuagint simply transliterates "Emmanuel" in 7:14 and 8:8, but in 8:10 it translates the word "*meth' hēmōn ho Theos*"—"with us God."

³² Because "Emmanuel" is a symbolic name, it is not correct to conclude that Ezechia cannot be this "Emmanuel," on the grounds that neither Achaz nor his wife called him by the name of "Emmanuel." We note this against R. Tournay, *L'Emmanuel et sa Vierge-Mère*, in *RT* 55 (1955) 249-258, who indicates that this is a strong argument against the *Emmanuel-Ezechia* identification. Isaiah also applied symbolic names to "Jerusalem" (1:26). For that matter, neither did Mary call Jesus by the name "Emmanuel."

(A) The first reason, already developed in the preceding section, is the setting of *Is.* 7-12. Unless it can be proven otherwise, each verse of these chapters must be considered integral parts of the general thought-progression. In the Book of Emmanuel the principal plot portrays Achaz frantic about the security of his throne. All Jerusalem, we are told, is trembling "as the trees of the forest shake before the wind" (7:2). We know from the Books of Kings that Achaz has even proceeded to the frightful excess of sacrificing his first-born infant son to Moloch, god of fertility.³³ So tense was the atmosphere of 7:14.

Isaia not only solemnly promised an heir to Achaz, but also declared that this young son would be a *sign* to the apostate king that he should have trusted only in Yahweh. The sign, therefore, consisted not just in the birth of a royal successor. Circumstances attending the boy's life would feature even more largely in the sign.³⁴ The child would witness the hectic foolishness of Achaz' policy. The Syro-Ephramite league would crumble very soon under Assyrian attack (734-732) and not long afterward, before the child reached full maturity, Samaria would be leveled to the ground (722-721 B.C.) This same child would even live to see an Assyrian expedition launched against Juda. This Assyrian invasion during Ezechia's reign is actually described in the book of Emmanuel (10:5-19, 24-34).³⁵

Achaz' appeal to Assyria was thus proven to be wholly

³³ Steinmann, *op cit*, 89, and J. Chaine, *God's Herald*, tr. by Brendan McGrath (New York, 1955) 52, are among those exegetes who make a strong argument of Achaz' act of child sacrifice.

³⁴ Very emphatic on this point is E. J. Kissane, *The Book of Isaiah*, 1 (Dublin, 1941) 88.

³⁵ The interruption (*Is.* 10:20-23) refers to Isaia's son, Shear Yashub, this fact weakens the contact between Emmanuel and the Assyrian invasion, and seems to favor an identification of Emmanuel with Isaia's child. Cf. *supra*, note 30.

unnecessary, even deadly. But the flood waters of Assyria, sweeping irresistibly into Juda, would also wash the country clean and thus prepare for the golden Messianic age of *God with us*.

The general context of ch. 7-12 gives to 7:14 an urgent concern over royal succession along with the answer that security was to be achieved by faith in God's power to save.

(B) Still another argument that Emmanuel is a future son of Achaz, and "Almah" a new bride of the king, is the *stylistic formula* employed in 7:14. If Isaia created the language for this one occasion, then there would be better reason to press a special meaning from each word and possibly to arrive at a virgin birth prophecy. If, on the other hand, he makes use of a familiar, set formula, which like a proverb can fit many different occasions, then his words are not to be searched so literally for each and every shade of meaning.

The Hebrew formulary of *Is.* 7:14 occurs elsewhere in the Bible. In fact, it is identical with the angelic words announcing the birth of Ismael. The angel said to Agar, one of Abraham's secondary wives:

Behold, you have conceived (Hebrew *hārâ*)
and you shall bear a son;
You shall call his name Ismael (*Gen.* 16:11).³⁶

Twice in the Samson story does the first part of the same formula occur:

Behold, you will conceive (Hebrew: *hārâ*)
and you shall bear a son (*Judg.* 13.5, 7).

³⁶ From *Gen* 16 11, it should be evident that no argument for virgin-birth can be based upon the mother's naming the child. Agar conceived her child through Abraham, but it is herself who named the boy.

After Samson's birth the stylistic phrase is slightly modified to fit the laws of Hebrew prose, and we read:

And the woman bore a son,
and she called his name Samson (*Judg.* 13:24).³⁷

This same formula reappears in the Annunciation scenes of St. Luke's gospel.³⁸

Isaia adds to the common biblical formula the words *Almah* and *Emmanuel*. *Emmanuel* rings symbolically like the name Ismael, given to Agar's son. Both names end with *El*, the Hebrew word for God.³⁹ Isaia chose a name symbolic of his doctrinal theme and proceeded in ch. 8 to explain its meaning (8:8, 10). *God is with us* in the devastating events accompanying the child's life.

Although *Emmanuel* is found nowhere in the Hebrew Bible outside of Isaia, *Almah* occurs possibly eight times⁴⁰

³⁷ A comparison of the Hebrew formulae reveals more than accidental similarity, there is almost identity. For the sake of anyone unacquainted with the Hebrew language, we reverse the Hebrew style and write left to right in the following schema

<i>Is</i> 7:14	<i>hinnēh hā 'almā hārā w'yōledet ben w'qārā't š'mō 'immanū 'ēl</i>
<i>Gen</i> 16:11	<i>hinnāk hārā w'yōladt ben w'qārā't š'mō yismā'ēl</i>
<i>Jdg</i> 13:5, 7	<i>hinnāk hārā w'yōladt ben ..</i>
<i>Jdg</i> 13:25	<i>wattēled ben wattiqrā' 'el š'mō šimšon</i>
<i>Ugaritic</i> 77:7	<i>hl . gīmt id bn (note in Ugaritic, gīmt is the equivalent for 'almā).</i>

³⁸ *Lk* 1:31 follows the Greek text of *Is* 7:14 very carefully, *Lk* 1:13 uses the Old Testament formula only in the second part

<i>Is</i> 7:14 (LXX)	<i>idoū 'ē parthénos en gastrī tēmpsetai</i>
<i>Lk</i> 1:31	<i>kai idoū sullēmpse en gastrī</i>
<i>Lk</i> 1:13	<i>ka . 'ē gunē sou Elisabet .</i>
<i>Is</i> 7:14 (LXX)	<i>kai tēxetai 'uion kai kalēseis tō ónoma autoū 'Emmanuēl</i>
<i>Lk</i> 1:31	<i>kai tēxē 'uion kai kalēseis tō ónoma autoū 'Iēsous</i>
<i>Lk</i> 1:13	<i>gunēseis 'uion soi kai kalēseis tō ónoma autoū 'Iōnnēn</i>

³⁹ "Emmanuel," therefore, no more than Ismael or any of the many other theophoric names in the Bible, necessarily designates a divine person

⁴⁰ Cf. One of the fullest and most balanced studies of *almā* in Coppens, *op cit*, although his conclusions differ from our own

Almah would not be a difficult word to explain, had it not been for the Septuagint and the Christian interpretations of *Is.* 7:14.⁴¹ It is generally agreed that the Hebrew word *almā* designates a maiden of marriageable age. Even though the technical word for virgin is *betûlâ*, nonetheless, an *almah* is a maiden not yet married, and therefore presumably (but not necessarily) a virgin. But the word *almah* says nothing directly about virginity. Its whole meaning centers on a girl who is attractive to young men and ready for marriage (cf. *Prov.* 30:19).⁴² In some ways, we might compare *almah* to the modern word "young lady"—a girl mature enough for marriage, presumably a virgin, but virginity remains beyond the thought-range of the word.

It is likely that Ugaritic (Canaanite) literature influenced Isaiah to insert *almah* into the biblical formula for birth-announcements.⁴³ The annunciation formula plus *almah* has been found in the Ugaritic text, "The Wedding of Nikkal and the Moon god." The verse reads:

⁴¹ We will consider later the force of the Septuagint interpretation-translation, *parthénos*, in Greek the technical word for virgin.

⁴² Arbez, *art cit.*, 472 "It cannot be said that of itself it [*almah*] implies virginity" Cf. Coppens, *op cit.*, 19f, 31

⁴³ W. F. Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity* (ed. 2, Garden City, N. Y., 1957) 318f, writes about the "veritable flood of allusions to Canaanite (Phoenician) literature in Hebrew works composed between the seventh and the third century B.C." He notes that the influence is noteworthy in Second Isaiah (*Is.* 40-55, 60-62). The prophet Isaiah lived a century before this revival of Canaanite literature among the Jews. It is possible that the tendency began in his time when the Kingdom of Judah was becoming increasingly involved in international affairs. The seventh century practice of archaic writing is noted by J. Bright, *A History of Israel* (Philadelphia, 1959) 298. Coppens, *op. cit.*, 30, sees in 7:14 "un vocabulaire de couleur mythologique." S. Mowinckel, *He That Cometh* (Oxford, 1956) 102-110 interprets *Is.* 7:14 in the light of Egyptian mythology.

Behold, an *almah* shall bear a son.⁴⁴

Also very noticeable in Ugaritic myths, like the Danel cycle, is another feature observable in *Is. 7*: anxious concern over dynastic succession.⁴⁵ Without discussing the Ugaritic material at length, we will note in passing: the words of the annunciation formula were most probably a *liturgical*, and certainly a *set* phrase at Ugarit,⁴⁶ there is not the least hint of a virgin birth.⁴⁷

In fact, we fully agree with Gerhard Delling that the idea of a virgin birth would never have been borrowed by *Isaia* from pagan sources.⁴⁸ The idea, no matter what its origin, would have been repellent to *Isaia*. Because of pagan theologies of his time, a virgin conceiving by the power of Yahweh could have meant nothing else to *Isaia* than carnal union between Yahweh and a divine goddess. The Israelites borrowed words and stories from their neighbors, but they violently rejected pagan myths about God.

Both within and without the Bible the stylistic formula of 7:14 presages a birth of special religious significance, but not at all a virgin birth.⁴⁹ Neither Agar nor Manue (the mothers

⁴⁴ *Glmt* is the Ugaritic equivalent for the Hebrew *almah*. An English translation is found in C. H. Gordon, *Ugaritic Literature* (Rome, 1949) 63-65. Israel freely adopted religious ideas from others but only on condition that her own religion suffered no harm. Therefore, to say with E. Hamershamb, in *The Immanuel Sign*, in *STh* 3 (1949) 124-142, that Israel also accepted the Ugaritic practice of ritual marriages of the king with temple goddesses (= the *almah* of 7:14) is unjustifiable.

⁴⁵ Cf. A. Gelin, *Messianisme*, in *DBI* (Suppl.) 5 (Paris, 1957) 1180f.

⁴⁶ Cf. Runggren, in *ZAW* 64 (1952) 131, 136.

⁴⁷ A helpful study on this text is that of Bruce Vawter, *The Ugaritic Use of GLMT*, in *CBQ* 14 (1952) 319-322.

⁴⁸ Cf. G. Delling, *Parthenos*, in *TWNT* 5 (Stuttgart, 1954) 830.

⁴⁹ It is being generally admitted that no argument from 7:14 alone can conclude to the doctrine of a virgin birth. A. Penna, *Isaia*, in *La Sacra Bibbia* (ed. Garofalo e Rinaldi, Rome, 1958) argues persistently for the literal meaning of virginal birth in 7:14, but he concedes "Crediamo che una risposta senz'altro affermativa limitandosi solo al contesto immediato, non si impone".

of Ismael and Samson) conceived virginally, but their children were to perform a special role in God's plan of salvation. Neither does the phrase, "almah conceiving," in any way imply a virgin-birth. Rebecca is called an *almah* before her marriage. Isaac could have said of her before their marriage what Isaia spoke in *Is.* 7:14: "Behold the almah will conceive and she will bear a son." Finally, the statement that the *almah* will name the child in no way even hints that the boy is without a human father and therefore divine. We are dealing with a stylistic formula. Both Agar and Manue are said to have named their child. Furthermore, the Hebrew reading of 7:14, "*she* shall name him," reads differently in the Greek version (manuscripts B, A) and in the Isaia scroll found at Qumran (1Q *Is.*⁴).

The stylistic formula of 7:14, therefore, was too commonly used, for it to throw any mystic aura around the prophecy or for it to lift the prophecy out of the general context. Knowing as we do the plot and the actors of the Book of Emmanuel, we must conclude that this child is a son and heir of King Achaz and that the *almah* is Achaz' new wife. There is, indeed, a messianic role given to Emmanuel and the *Almah*, but not because of the language used in 7:14.

(C) Besides the argument of stylistic formula, there is still another reason why Isaia would refer to the mother of the next king. This reason has been greatly responsible for originating the formula here employed by Isaia. We are referring to the honor paid by the royal court of Jerusalem to the queen-mother, called the *g'birâ*.⁵⁰ This subject has been

(p. 98). J. E. Steimmueller, *Etymology and Biblical Usage of 'Almah*, in *CBQ* 2 (1940) 28-43, argues very strongly that *Is.* 7:14 must teach virginal conception of the Messiah, even without recourse to the context.

⁵⁰ The term is never used of the royal family in the northern kingdom of Israel. In the southern kingdom the queen-mother is mentioned in 3 *Kgs.* 15:13, 4 *Kgs.* 10:13, 24:15, 2 *Par.* 16:15, *Jer.* 13:18, 29:2 (In 3 *Kgs.* 11:19 *g'birâ* refers to the wife of the Egyptian Pharaoh.) These are the only oc-

handled at length in another paper of this symposium,⁵¹ and so we will omit many historical details on the origin and development of this office of Queen-Mother.

The Mosaic religion, as we well know, tolerated a royal harem.⁵² Even David, as he rose in importance, took many wives to himself.⁵³ These wives were often just ornamental signs of dignity and affluence. Even though the king surrounded himself with a large number of wives, he could, of course, have only *one* mother, who became the *g'birâ* of the court. The king's wives, even his favorites, remained within the enclosure of the harem and seldom swayed policies of state; the queen-mother was liberated from the strict seclusion of the harem and appeared publicly at royal functions.

The queen-mother possessed great power and privileges, not only because she alone of all the former king's wives had given birth to the heir and successor, but also because of the peculiar nature of the Judean royalty. The two Hebrew states of Juda and Israel developed along different traditions. The northern state of Israel remained more faithful to the older idea, found in the Book of Judges. In *Judges* we find that leadership was not passed down from father to son but was a charismatic office, given immediately by God. In the northern kingdom of Israel, therefore, a national decline made the people think that the divine spirit had withdrawn from the king. Military revolts swept away the incumbent royal family in a tide of blood.

In Juda to the south, kings were assassinated, but the throne always remained within the Davidic family. The prophet Nathan had promised that through the *Davidic* king

currences of the word *g'birâ* in the Bible, not often, it is true, but significantly enough. The position of "queen-mother" is described by R. de Vaux, *Les Institutions de l'Ancien Testament*, 1 (Paris, 1958) 180-182.

⁵¹ Cf. B. M. Ahern, "Mother of the Messias"

⁵² *Deut.* 17:17

⁵³ 2 *Sam.* 3:1-5, 5:10-16

God would fulfill the promises made to the patriarchs and to Moses. Not only did the nation feel that its national well-being rested with the Davidic family, but a superstitious confidence developed whereby the people felt that, despite their sins, God's word to David made the kingdom indestructible. Juda's security for the present as well as all her hopes for the future were linked to the family of David. Each new king received these royal prerogatives through his father and queen-mother.⁵⁴

When Isaia stood before King Achaz and spoke the Emmanuel prophecy, the prophet's hopes for the future quickly passed over the apostate king and rested with the heir and the queen-mother. The wife, who would bear the royal successor, seemed much more important than Achaz! She would also later stand beside the child as queen-mother. This same child, however, would live to see Juda swallowed up in darkness. The thought of devastation induced the mind of Isaia to leap forward into the Messianic future

Since salvation must still come through the Davidic family, another Queen-Mother would give birth to another *Emmanuel*, who will be *God with us*. At one and the same time, Isaia beheld the present and the future Mother of Emmanuel.

⁵⁴ The customs at the Judean court were not altogether unique in the ancient Near East. In Egypt women of the royal family were especially honored, were given in marriage only to carefully chosen husbands, and were thought to transmit certain royal privileges. This fact explains why the Pharaohs at times included their own sisters among their wives. The transmission of royal power through the female line is found only in documents belonging to the first part of the eighteenth dynasty (1570-1345 B.C.) C. R. Sander-Hansen, *Das Gottesweib des Amun* (Copenhagen, 1940), referred to by Henri Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods* (Chicago, 1948) 44 and 354, n. 36, A. Malamat, *The Kingdom of David and Solomon in its Contact with Egypt and Aram Naharaim*, in *BA* 21 (1958) 97f., Margaret A. Murray, *The Splendour That Was Egypt* (New York, 1949) 321-325, "Marriages and Matrilineal Descent", C. J. Bleeker, *The Position of the Queen in Ancient Egypt*, in *The Sacred Kingship* (Leiden, 1959) 261-268.

This "prophetic compenetration" of the present with the future brings us to the last detail in this study of 7:14.

(D) The Messianic future has already been brought to our attention by the general context of ch. 7-12. There are two other biblical texts which help us to appreciate the full, Messianic meaning of *Is.* 7:14; two texts which likewise underline the role of the Queen-Mother. We are referring to *Mich* 5:2 and *Gen.* 3:15.

Micah, a contemporary of Isaiah, also spoke of a mother who was about to give birth to a Davidic heir.⁸⁵ Again, black clouds of destruction are to be seen lowering over the mighty city of Jerusalem (*Mich.* 4:14). In the midst of the darkness God's promises are moving toward a definitive fulfillment. Micah's vision looks both to the past and to the future, widening into an endless expanse of time. The origins of the child reach back into a past, covered with the haze of centuries, back to David some 300 years ago, to Moses over 500 years ago, to the Patriarchs at the dawn of biblical history. Time again stretches into unknown reaches as Micah looks to the future. The sorrow of the present moment will end because hidden within this sorrow is the Messianic Deliverer. The child's coming forth from the seclusion of his mother's body symbolizes the emergence of the Davidic dynasty from near extinction. Because this child will be a Davidic king, Micah spoke explicitly of his mother, the *g'bîrâ*.

The manner in which Micah quickly moved into the unknown future brings another Scriptural text to our attention, *Gen.* 3:15. We ask if the Protoevangelion, like Micah, corroborates the Isaian tradition of a queen-mother closely associated with her royal son?

⁸⁵ Unfortunately, the text of Micah, like *Is.* 7-12, has been revised by a later editor, and in the process has become uncertain in small details. It seems even likely that Micah deliberately composed 5:1-5 in an obscure style. Cf. A. George, *art. cit.*, col. 1254.

The Protoevangelion occurs in what is called the Yahwist or "J" tradition of the Pentateuch. This "J" tradition contains Mosaic narratives which circulated in the southern kingdom of Judah and which were redacted during a great religious reform. The reform of Ezechia bids high for this privilege of editing the Yahwist traditions. Henri Cazelles writes: "It is very possible that he [the Yahwist] has seen in the salvific maternity of Eve the prototype of the royal maternity."⁵⁶

From *Gen.* 3:15 and more clearly from *Mich.* 5:2 we receive corroboration that Isaia quickly passed beyond Ezechia and his mother Abia to a King and Queen-Mother of the messianic future. The point of departure, however, has been the crisis which Achaz saw endangering the Davidic dynasty and the temporary solution of this crisis during the reform of Ezechia. The king and queen-mother occupied attention and held power during these days.

Is. 7:14 originated during the dynastic crisis threatening Achaz and his successor. But the present danger merged into the future by a process which we call "prophetic compenetration."⁵⁷ All three traditions—the Isaian, the Michean and the Yahwist—expected the king and his queen-mother to govern a land of Paradise. The roaring waters of the Assyrian invasion have become the cleansing and fructifying waters of tribulation, washing the world clean, and, like the four

⁵⁶ H. Cazelles, *La Torah ou Pentateuque*, in *Introduction à la Bible*, 1 (Tournai, 1957) 354. A similar connection between *Gen.* 3:15, *Is.* 7:14 and *Mich.* 5:1-2 is recognized by B. Rigaux, *La femme et son lignage dans Genèse III, 14-15*, in *RB* 61 (1954) 347; Rigaux's article is summarized in *ThD* 6 (1958) 25-31.

⁵⁷ Prophetic compenetration overlooks time sequence, so that widely separated events merge together in one account. We view events from the vantage ground of fulfillment, as if from a mountain top from which each turn along the way can be seen. The prophets peered ahead from the lower level of the valley where distance could not be gauged.

great rivers of Paradise, transforming a devastated country into a garden land of all good things (cf. *Gen. 2, Is. 11; Mich. 2:3-4a*).

This habit of the present or the near future quickly slipping into distant, Messianic glory became ever more noticeable with biblical writers after Isaia. Second Isaia sang of the return from exile with the rapturous language of the Messianic age (*Is. 40-55*). He called Cyrus, who freed the Jews, God's Anointed (*Is. 45:1*). In the midst of another trial, two other prophets, Second Zacharia and Daniel, predicted the end of sorrow as though heralding the final "Day of the Lord!" (*Zach. 9-12; Dan. 7-12*).

Conclusion

The message of Isaia can be distilled in the few, clear words:

Unless your faith be firm,
You shall not be firm (*Is. 7:9b*).

Isaia gave a sign to Achaz to prove that the abandonment of faith was self-destruction. Yet, even in the roaring waters of divine anger, there would live *Emmanuel, God with us*. Surely, *only God can save* in such a mysterious way as that; only faith can detect the presence of God in chaotic destruction and exclaim: *Emmanuel*.

Even though Achaz haughtily rejected this first sign, Isaia gave him another. Yahweh would preserve the dynasty, despite the threat of the Syro-Ephramite forces, but Achaz' son and heir, Ezechia, would live through days of sorrow and darkness, brought on by his father's perfidious appeal to Assyria. Ezechia may have been fervent enough to instigate a reform, but he evidently could not be the fulfillment of God's promises.

If not immediately, then with time, Isaia realized that the

true *Emmanuel* of the Davidic line would be born only in the distant future. Chaos would envelop a faithless society. Yet, from a root hidden deep in the ground, a sprout would spring and the spirit rest upon it (*Is. 11*). A Davidic king would be enthroned; he would be a "Wonderful Counsellor, Godlike Hero. . . ." (*Is. 9*). This Davidic Saviour would come from obscurity and lowliness—surely a sign that *only God saves*. The figures of Ezechia and Abia have faded away, the future Emmanuel and His Mother appear in their places.

Giving birth to a royal heir and standing beside her messianic Son, would be the *g'birâ*, his Queen-Mother. Because her Son will be born in obscurity, she would be a humble, lowly handmaid of the Lord. The faith which Achaz repudiated would be her source of pre-eminent holiness. This faith would produce a virginal spirit of desiring God and His holy will even more than the honor of giving birth to the Messiah. "How will this be, since I remain a virgin?" (*Lk. 1:34*—Kleist-Lilly tr.)

Isaia never dreamed of a holiness so exalted, of a faith so transcendent. But it was exactly this humble faith of Mary, totally surrendering her to whatever God wanted, which brought the response to her lips. "Let it be done, I pray, according to his words" (*Lk. 1:38*). "And the word was made flesh and dwelt among us" (*Jn. 1:14*). Faith in God's word brought the sign of Isaia to a fulfillment far more magnificent than the prophet ever envisaged: *only God saves*, even to the extent of a virgin conceiving and bearing the Saviour of the world.

To say that the Mother of Emmanuel is directly and immediately Abia, the mother of Ezechia, also reserves for Mary the exalted title of *g'birâ* or Queen-Mother, actively beside her royal Son in the rule of His kingdom. To deny a virgin-birth prophecy in the strictly literal sense is not to deprive *Is. 7:14* of apologetical use. *Is. 7:14* predicts a Davidic Saviour,

arising out of obscurity, ruling a kingdom of happiness and peace, associating with Himself the Queen-Mother of ancient tradition. The denial of the virginal birth in 7:14, however, shifts attention from a physical miracle to a marvel still more supernatural, Mary's *virginal spirit* of sanctity.

For Isaia, and most certainly for later generations, all hopes centered on the future, messianic age. The devout Israelite longed and prayed, sometimes with agonizing desperation, that God would send the promised Emmanuel. But first, of course, there must be the sign that God alone saves—a maiden lost in obscurity and absorbed in humble faith. *The Mother of Emmanuel in Is. 7:14*, begged of God by centuries of prayer, was the poorest and the most humble of God's handmaids: *Mary, the Virgin Mother of Jesus*.

Appendix

Difficulties from Chronology and from Tradition

An interpretation of *Is. 7:14*, identifying Emmanuel with Ezechia, runs headlong into two problems: biblical chronology and sacred Tradition.

The objection from biblical chronology is usually put this way. Comparing the figures in *4 Kgs. 16:2* on the total years of Achaz' reign with those in *4 Kgs. 18:2* on Ezechia's age at his coronation, it is discovered that when Isaia predicted the birth of Emmanuel, Ezechia was not only already born; he was a healthy boy, nine to ten years old. Before bowing to the validity of this argument, we must look into some other data provided by the *Books of Kings*. Another detail of *16:2* is the statement that "Achaz was twenty years old when he became king." Granted that Ezechia was nine to ten at his father's coronation, then Achaz was a precocious boy of ten or eleven when his son was born. Furthermore, Ezechia was not his first-born. The combination of dates in *4 Kings* can become even more ridiculous. According to *4 Kgs. 18:10*, the city of Samaria fell to the Assyrians in the sixth year of Ezechia's reign. This detail leads to the conclusion that Ezechia was already seven-

teen at the time of the Syro-Ephramite league and that Achaz fathered Ezechias at the unbelievable age of two or three!⁵⁸

Those who identify Ezechia with the Emmanuel of 7:14 level these mountains of chronological difficulty by making one slight change in the Hebrew text. They will correct 4 Kgs. 18:2 and 2 Chr. 29:1 so that Ezechia was fifteen, not twenty-five, at his accession to the throne. Such a change in numerals is much easier in Hebrew than in English. Ezechia, according to this textual emendation, would have been born in 731/730, a little after the Emmanuel prophecy and the Syro-Ephramite disturbance. Other details synchronize very well with this slight textual correction.⁵⁹

The other difficulty with the Emmanuel-Ezechia identification comes from sacred Tradition. According to very many scholars, divine tradition has always recognized in Is. 7:14 a literal prediction of Christ's virginal conception and birth. Here we face an obstacle serious enough to keep the opinion advanced in this article from being anything more than "probable." What is here defended, therefore, is subject to further investigation. Because an important dogmatic issue is involved, further clarification may come from the Holy Spirit through the teaching authority of God's Church. It will aid us, however, to follow tradition in several of its important steps through the centuries.

The first step in the "traditional" interpretation of Is. 7:14 was taken by a Greek-speaking Jew, living in Egypt around 150 B.C. His work is found in what has long been called the Septuagint. He rendered the Hebrew *almah* with the Greek *parthénos*. This Greek translation strikes our attention at once, not only because *parthénos*, like the Hebrew *b'tûlâ*, is the technical word for "virgin," but also

⁵⁸ J. Bright, *op. cit.*, 259, note 22. "The Biblical data at this point is very confusing."

⁵⁹ This suggestion has other advantages. Ezechia's own son and successor would have been born when his father was 32, a more likely age for a first-born son than the advanced age of 42. Another elaborate explanation has been worked out by Edwin R. Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings* (Chicago, 1951). Thiele's system is based upon the hypothesis of many co-regencies in the southern kingdom of Judah. The Bible, however, as de Vaux warns, mentions only two co-regencies, Solomon and Jotham (*op. cit.*, 157).

because *Is.* 7:14 is the only instance where the Septuagint thus translates *almah*.⁶⁰ In all other cases we find some form of *neánis*, meaning "maid" or "girl of marriageable age," or else the Greek *krúphos*, meaning "hidden one."

Did the Jewish translator of *Isaia* understand this text as a virgin-birth prophecy? ⁶¹ We answer by asking if in this context the Greek *parthénos* really adds anything significant to the Hebrew *almah*? *Almah* also presumes that the girl is a virgin. What was said earlier can be repeated here. Rebecca is called in one verse a virgin (*b'túld*) and in another verse a maiden (*almah*). Would Isaac, her prospective husband, imply a virgin birth if he were to say: "Behold the virgin Rebecca will conceive and will bear a son. . ."? ⁶²

It also seems unlikely that Mary at the time of the Annunciation understood *Is.* 7:14 to teach the virginal birth of the Messiah. Here is the second important step of sacred Tradition. The angel Gabriel addressed Mary in the phraseology of *Is.* 7:14 (cf. *Lk.* 1:31).⁶³ Yet, Mary immediately hesitated "How will this be, since I remain a virgin?" (*Lk.* 1:34.) Mary would not have held back, if to be mother of the Messiah did not interfere with God's will that she remain perpetually a virgin. Mary's ignorance of a virgin-birth prophecy deserves special notice,⁶⁴ because otherwise in St. Luke's infancy narrative she reveals a most extensive and a very prayerful knowledge of Sacred Scripture.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ In the Old Testament recensions of the Jews Aquila, Theodotion and Symmachus, dating from the first half of the first century A.D., the Septuagint *parthénos* was replaced by *neánis*. Anti-Christian bias, however, prompted their work.

⁶¹ A. Gélin, *art. cit.*, 1180f infers an influence of Egyptian mythology upon the Septuagint translator.

⁶² Cf. G. Dellings, *art. cit.*, 824-835, esp. 831. It must be noted that *Is.* 7:14 and *Gen.* 24:43 are the only cases where the Septuagint translates *almah* with *parthénos*.

⁶³ Cf. footnotes 23 and 24, *supra*.

⁶⁴ P. Gachter, *Maria im Erdenleben* (Innsbruck, 1953) 93, writes that Mary would hardly have answered the angel as she did, if she had clearly understood *Is.* 7:14 to mean virgin-birth.

⁶⁵ This fact is beautifully presented by René Laurentin, *Structure et Théologie de Luc I-II* (Paris, 1957).

At once, it will be objected that St. Matthew quotes *Is. 7:14* as an Old Testament text "fulfilled" in the virgin-birth of Christ. Cuthbert Lattey studied St. Matthew's use of such Old Testament texts as: "Out of Egypt I called my son" (*Os. 11:1*); "A voice was heard in Rama. . ." (*Jer. 31:15*); and the enigmatic "He shall be called a Nazarene" Lattey had this to say about St. Matthew:

He is very free in his application of the Old Testament, even to the point of being more or less rabbinical . . . *Mt. 2 15, 17-18, 23* form a kind of *crescendo*. It is hardly necessary to demonstrate that the fulfillment in the case of the first two passages can be no more than typical; but it will probably be admitted that the second indicates a more remote type than the first. The third is so remote that even now it is liable to be misunderstood. 66

The phrase of St. Matthew, "that there might be fulfilled what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet," was common enough among the Rabbis. Strack-Billerbeck has shown that the Rabbis did not always intend our idea of strict, literal fulfillment.⁶⁷ A free use of the Old Testament was also in vogue among the covenanters along the Dead Sea, as a study of the Dead Sea Scrolls has shown. These facts about Jewish exegesis caution us to be careful in explaining the New Testament's use of the Old. It is our opinion that St. Matthew does see a fulfillment of the Isaian doctrine: "God alone saves"; but he employs the Old Testament text also to teach what is a peculiarly Christian doctrine: God *alone* saves to such an extent that Mary conceived virginally through the power of the Holy Spirit.

It is often stated that the Fathers of the Church recognized the doctrine of the virgin-birth in *Is. 7:14*. We are made to believe that their voice, almost unanimous, allows us no liberty today. In reply, it can be said that the heavy weight of tradition is sometimes thrown around too lightly! Despite some fine modern studies on the Fathers, the rules of Patristic interpretation of Scripture are still not clear. The Fathers lived long before our modern age of

⁶⁶ C. Lattey, *The Term Almah in Is. 7:14*, in *CBQ* 9 (1947) 93

⁶⁷ H. L. Strack and P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrash*, 1 (Munich, 1922) 74f

footnoting and careful documentation. They quoted at times very freely; they easily passed beyond the meaning of the biblical text in the interests of theology.

In this connection it can be noted that up till the time of Peter Lombard (+ 1160), theology was not a separate science but rather was included in a commentary upon Scripture.⁶⁸ The Christian teacher without embarrassment stretched the Scripture text so as to include many extraneous items. His purpose was to teach Christian truths, not to expound a separate science of Scripture. Hence it might be more accurate to say that Scripture was absorbed by Theology!

Freedom of Scriptural interpretation was vindicated by St. Gregory. In the preface to his commentary on *Job* he tells us:

He that treats of sacred writ should follow the way of a river, for if a river, as it flows along its channel, meets with open valleys on its side, into these it immediately turns the course of its current.⁶⁹

The exegete, St. Gregory says, should allow his words to overflow into the adjacent valley with seasonable edification.

We can conclude that the preaching of the Fathers presents a solid argument for doctrinal orthodoxy, but we are often left uncertain about our *modern* question of the strict, literal sense of Scripture. The application to *Is* 7:14 should be very evident.

For a moment we will look at several Fathers, prominent in the Patristic argument for the virgin-birth in *Is*. 7:14. St. Jerome, as is well known, held for such a prophecy in the Isaian text, but he still recorded an opposite opinion without censure of any kind. He mentions that "some of our own" consider Emmanuel one of

⁶⁸ Very valuable here are the studies of C. Spicq, *Esquisse d'une histoire de l'exégèse latine au Moyen Age* (Paris, 1944) and B. Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (New York, 1952)

⁶⁹ Quoted from B. Smalley, *op cit*, 33

Isaias' children.⁷⁰ The *Doctor Stridonensis* would hardly record heresy or error without a deadly thrust of his sharp pen. He has nothing dogmatically to say against the opposite view. His own reasoning is confined to the level of biblical history and philology. Evidently, Jerome did not consider his own opinion unanimous nor dogmatically binding.

Another proponent of the virgin-birth prophecy is St. Justin. When St. Justin argues with the Jew Trypho about the Septuagint reading *parthénos* (virgin), he mentions other Old Testament prophecies. He says, "it is also proved [from *Jer.* 11:19] . . . that the Jews planned to crucify Christ Himself and to slay Him. . . . Furthermore, [he continues] from a verse of the ninety-fifth Psalm . . . they have changed the verse, ' . . . The Lord hath reigned from the tree,' to ' . . . The Lord hath reigned.' "⁷¹ Today, theologians do not feel obliged to follow Justin's interpretation of *Jer.* 11:19 and *Ps.* 95 as a literal prediction of the Passion. Why, then, we ask, be so demanding in Justin's explanation of *Is.* 7:14?

One last example, St. Irenaeus, can be cited. Commenting upon *Is.* 7:10-16, he writes:

We see, the Holy Ghost hath diligently signified by these sayings, His birth, that it is of the Virgin, and His substance, that He is God (for this the name of Emmanuel implies), and He declares Him to be Man by saying, *Butter and honey shall He eat*, and by terming Him an infant, and

⁷⁰ His exact words are "Quidam de nostris Isaiam Prophetam duos filios habuisse contendit, Jasub & Emmanuel et Emmanuel de Prophetissa uxore ejus esse generatum, in typum Domini Salvatoris ut prior filius *Jasub*, quod interpretatur *relictus*, sive *convertens*, Judaicum populum significet, qui relictus est, et postea reversurus Secundus autem, id est, *Emmanuel*, et *nobiscum Deus*, et gentium vocationem, postquam Verbum caro factum est, et habitavit in nobis" Without any word of disapproval, Jerome immediately proceeded with his commentary on v 15 It seems evident that after expounding at length his own view of a virgin-birth prophecy, he recorded an opposite but orthodox opinion which is held by "some of our own" Cf *S. Hieronymi Opera*, 4 (Veronae, 1735) 110-111

⁷¹ *Writings of Saint Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho*, tr by Thomas B. Falls, in *The Fathers of the Church* (New York, 1948) 262-265.

before He know good and evil, for all these are signs of a human infant. But as to His not consenting to iniquity, that He may choose the good, this properly belongs to God; that we might not understand Him to be only a mere man, by His having to eat butter and honey, nor again by the name Emmanuel, suspect Him to be God without Flesh.⁷²

Each step of Irenaeus' thinking is within the path of orthodoxy; to follow his way is to walk securely within Christian tradition. But the Catholic exegete may step outside the path of Irenaeus when he searches for the *literal* sense of Scripture, and this does not mean a plunge into heresy. In the above-quoted passage, several elements of Irenaeus' scriptural interpretation are no longer followed. Why then be so insistent upon the virgin-birth prophecy?

It seems to us that much study is still needed before the Patristic evidence can become clear enough to forge an argument of divine Tradition and so to silence further discussion.

Not only in the days of St. Jerome but also in the Medieval period and in modern times, Catholic scholars in good standing have identified the Emmanuel of 7:14 with a son of King Achaz or of the prophet Isaias before proceeding to the messianic application.⁷³ Andrew of St. Victor is said to have exerted an "influence so decisive in the history of biblical studies" that he came to be considered a "Second Jerome" in the Middle Ages.⁷⁴ He followed the common Jewish interpretation that Emmanuel is Ezechia.

Knabenbauer mentions still other scholars who did not hold for the *literal* sense of a virgin-birth prophecy: J. Corluy, Moldenhawer, Tirinus, Le Hir, and the famous Calmet.⁷⁵ To this list can

⁷² S. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, tr. by John Kéble, in *A Library of the Fathers* (London, 1872) Book III, ch. 21, p. 290.

⁷³ Io. Laur. Isenbiehl, *Novum Tentamen in Prophetiam de Emmanuel* (1779), was condemned by Pius VI for rejecting the messianic interpretation of Is. 7.14 *in toto*—"non ad verum Emmanuelem, Christum Dominum, ullo sensu sive litterali sive typico pertinere." Cf. *EB* (ed. 3, Naples, 1956) n. 74.

⁷⁴ Smalley, *op. cit.*, xvii. She devotes seventy-four pages to Andrew of St. Victor.

⁷⁵ J. Knabenbauer, *Commentarius in Isaiam Prophetam* (Paris, 1887) 183-185. Knabenbauer holds that Calmet taught the virgin-birth, but scholars agree that K. here misunderstands Calmet. Cf. Lattey, *The Emmanuel Prophecy*, in *CBQ* 8 (1946) 375.

be added the names of more recent scholars: Jacques Bossuet,⁷⁶ Louis Billot,⁷⁷ Cuthbert Lattey,⁷⁸ Henri Renard,⁷⁹ Jean Steinmann,⁸⁰ Paul Auvray,⁸¹ Albert Gélín,⁸² Eric Burrows,⁸³ Edward Kissane. The name of Kissane is especially significant. In his famous two-volume commentary on Isaiah⁸⁴ he argued for the virgin-birth prophecy, but later in 1954, while speaking at Louvain, he reversed his opinion, stating that the interpretation which identifies "Emmanuel with Hezekiah . . . may be said [to be] . . . the view which presents the least difficulty."⁸⁵

The *Bible de Jérusalem*, the most popular of Catholic French Bibles, which had issued 230,000 copies since 1956 and is now in its sixth printing,⁸⁶ reads "la jeune fille" [a young maiden]. In a footnote it offers this explanation: "the sign here proposed is the proximate birth of the future King Ezechias."⁸⁷

⁷⁶ J. Bossuet, *Explication de la prophétie d'Isaïe*; in *Oeuvres Complètes*, (3 ed. Louis Guerin, 1863) 529-538. I owe this reference to C. Lattey, *art. cit.*

⁷⁷ *Études* (June 20, 1917) 695-697. Billot has another important article in the issue of June 2, 1917. This reference also comes from Lattey, *art. cit.*

⁷⁸ Cuthbert Lattey, *art. cit.*, 369-376, *The Term Almah in Is 7 14*, in *CBQ* 9 (1947) 89-95; *Various Interpretations of Is 7 14*, in *CBQ* 9 (1947) 147-154. Lattey weaves together two opinions by "compenetration." Emmanuel is Maher-Shalal, son of Isaia, *almah* is in *literal* sense the virgin Mary.

⁷⁹ H. Renard, *Le Messianisme dans la première partie du livre d'Isaïe*, in *Sacra Pagina*, 1 (Paris, 1959) 398-407.

⁸⁰ Steinmann, *op. cit.*, 86-93.

⁸¹ Co-author with Steinmann of the translation and commentary in *La Sainte Bible de Jérusalem* (Paris, 1956).

⁸² A. Gélín, *Les Livres prophétiques postérieurs*, in *Introduction à la Bible*, 1 (Tournai, 1957) 509.

⁸³ Eric Burrows, *The Oracles of Jacob and Balaam* (London, 1938) 80-89.

⁸⁴ Kissane, *op. cit.*, 83-95.

⁸⁵ *Orientalia et Biblica Lovaniensia, I. L'ancien Testament et l'Orient, études présentées aux VI^{es} Journées Bibliques de Louvain, 11-13 Sept., 1954* (publ. at University of Louvain, 1957) 173.

⁸⁶ C. Kearns, *The Success of the Bible de Jérusalem*, in *Ang* 37 (1960) 201-211.

⁸⁷ *Op. cit.*, 996, note "e."

This much, then, should be admitted: (1) there is no unanimous voice of tradition; (2) there exists a very strong opinion among modern Catholic Scripture scholars that *Is. 7:14* is messianic but not in the literal prediction of a virgin-birth. True, others argue very forcibly for the virgin-birth prophecy. Both sides, however, must be moderate in their language, careful in their scholarship, persistent in their labors. Only thus is there a well-founded hope that God's revelation in *Is. 7:14* will be clearly known to us

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