

THE RIDDLE OF THE UNIVERSE

Naturally, these historical details are carefully avoided by the official theologian, but they assort badly with the traditional myth, and lift the veil from its mystery in a very simple and natural fashion. That makes it the more incumbent on impartial research and pure reason to make a critical examination of these statements. It must be admitted that they have much more title to credence than all the other statements about the birth of Christ. When, on familiar principles of science, we put aside the notion of supernatural conception through an "overshadowing of the Most High" as a pure myth, there only remains the widely accepted version of modern rational theology—that Joseph, the Jewish carpenter, was the true father of Christ. But this assumption is explicitly contradicted by many texts of the gospels; Christ himself was convinced that he was a "Son of God," and he never recognized his foster-father, Joseph, as his real parent. Joseph, indeed, wanted to leave his betrothed when he found her pregnant without his interference. He gave up this idea when an angel appeared to him in a dream and pacified him. As it is expressly stated in the first chapter of Matthew (vv. 24, 25), there was no sexual intercourse between Joseph and Mary until after Jesus was born.

The statement of the apocryphal gospels, that the Roman officer, Pandera, was the true father of Christ, seems all the more credible when we make a careful anthropological study of the personality of Christ. He is generally regarded as purely Jewish. Yet the characteristics which distinguish his high and noble personality, and which give a distinct impress to his religion, are certainly not Semitical; they are rather features of the higher Arian race, and especially of its noblest branch, the Hellenes. Now, the name of Christ's real