

PRACTICAL APPLICATION FOR CHAPTER SIX

1. All of the illustrations in this section about the importance of the question of miracles for biblical criticism and the science/religion dialogue are epitomized in James D. G. Dunn's treatment of the virgin birth of Jesus in his *Remembering Jesus* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2003), p. 347. Dunn suggests that belief in Jesus' virginal conception was a theological elaboration of the basic affirmation that Jesus' birth was from the Holy Spirit (which need not imply a virginal conception). He admonishes the reader that "Here we also need to be aware of the biological and theological corollaries of insisting that the virginal conception/birth was a historical fact" and cites approvingly Arthur Peacocke's assertion that "any theology for a scientific age" has to start with the assumption that in order to be fully human Jesus had to have a human father.

This is nonsense. In order to be a fully human male, Jesus had to have both X and Y chromosomes. But he had to get them from a human father only if miracles are impossible. The presumption that he had to get them from a human father is a corollary of Peacocke's naturalism. By contrast, the biological corollary of the historicity of the virginal conception is that at least some of Jesus' genetic material was supernaturally created. The theological corollary is that God can create a fully human being out of nothing should He so choose (*cf.* the cases of Adam and Eve on creationist views of origins). We see here how a gifted biblical scholar can be led astray through his philosophical naiveté.

Can you point to other examples of this problem?