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I.

TERTULLIAN AND THE BEGINNINGS OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY.

FIRST ARTICLE.

IT is exceedingly impressive to see Christian Latin literature Athena-like spring at once into being fully armed in the person of an eminently representative man, in whom seem summed up the promise and potency of all that it was yet to be. This is what occurred in Tertullian, whose advent and career provide a remarkable illustration of the providential provision of the right man for the right place. Seldom has one been called to a great work who was better fitted for it by disposition and talents as well as by long and strenuous preparation. Ardent in temperament, endowed with an intelligence as subtle and original as it was aggressive and audacious, he added to his natural gifts a profound erudition, which far from impeding only gave weight to the movements of his alert and robust mind. A jurist of note, he had joined to the study of law not only that of letters, but also that of medicine; born and brought up in the camp he had imbibed from infancy no little knowledge of the military art; and his insatiable curiosity had carried him into the depths of every form of learning accessible to his time and circumstances, not even excepting the occult literature of the day. When he gave himself in his mature manhood to the service of Christianity, he brought in his hands all the spoils of antique culture, smelted into a molten mass by an almost incredible passion.

The moment when he appeared on the scene was one well calcu-

VI.

THE NEW TESTAMENT ACCOUNT OF THE BIRTH OF JESUS.

FIRST ARTICLE.

EVERY narrative, of whatever kind, is itself a phenomenon of history, and as such in an age of science requires an explanation. In the case of a narrative which claims to be historical, either one of two general lines of explanation may be followed. In the first place, the narrative may be regarded as really based upon facts; so that the genesis of the narrative is to be explained chiefly through the facts. Or, in the second place, the narrative may be regarded as false; in which case the genesis of the false ideas must be explained. If the supposed facts are difficult of explanation, whereas it is easy to see how the false ideas could have been developed and embodied in the narrative, then we pronounce the narrative untrustworthy. But if, on the other hand, the facts are easy to explain, whereas it is difficult to see how the ideas, if false, ever could have been developed and embodied in the narrative, then we pronounce the narrative trustworthy. So in order to determine whether any particular historical narrative is trustworthy or untrustworthy, we must balance the difficulty of explaining the facts and their transmission against the difficulty of explaining the origin of the ideas if they were not determined by facts.

It is evident that the New Testament account of the birth of Jesus professes to be a narrative of fact. Nor is there, so far as means of transmission are concerned, any improbability in supposing that the claim is a just one. In the narrative of Luke, there are certain indications that point toward Mary as the channel of communication. She it is to whom special revelations are made, she it is whose inmost thoughts are described, and she it is who could have had the best possible knowledge of the events. She would also have had abundant opportunity to communicate the story to the early disciples, either directly or through the company of women described in the latter course of the Gospels. In the case of Matthew's account, Joseph seems rather to be indicated as the channel of communication—at any rate he could have been such a channel.

So if the facts are real, the explanation of the rise of the narratives is, in general, if not in detail, an easy task.

Therefore, we may examine, first, the hypothesis that the narrative is to be regarded as a copy of the facts, reserving the alternative hypothesis for subsequent discussion. Is the narrative near enough to the facts to be a copy of them, and if so, can the facts themselves be reasonably explained? If the facts are extremely unlikely, then only enormous difficulty in explaining the narrative without reference to the facts could force us to this explanation of the narrative through the facts.

1. The external attestation.

The New Testament account of the birth of Jesus and of related events is contained in Luke i. 5-ii (with Luke iii. 23-38) and in Matt. i, ii. This account is therefore contained in two of the New Testament books, whose attestation is so strong as to make it practically impossible that they were written after the close of the first century, and exceedingly probable that they were written very much earlier. Nor is there any external evidence really worth considering to show that these Gospels did not originally contain the accounts of the birth. These accounts appear in all the Greek manuscripts, in all the ancient versions and in the *Diatessaron* of Tatian (omitting the genealogies). It is true that Cerinthus and Carpocrates and a class of Jewish Christians did not believe in the virgin birth, and did not accept those portions of the Gospels which supported that doctrine; but it is pretty evident that their action was motivated by dogmatic rather than historical considerations. Even if it is held that heresy in the early Church was, in most cases, a tenacious holding to the ancient simplicity in the face of the developing theology of the Church, yet this does not affect the narrower textual question now under discussion. It may be perfectly true, for example, that a certain class of Ebionites were not mistaken in regarding the natural birth of Christ as the correct and original belief; yet it is evident that their omission of the opening chapters of Matthew and Luke was not textually justified. Perhaps the Ebionites were right in refusing to assert that the virgin birth was a fact; in any case, there is no good reason to suppose that they were right in omitting the account of that supposed fact from their copies of the first and third Gospels.* Marcion's rejection of the first two

* Usener (*Religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen*, I, 92f., 98f., etc.) is of a different opinion. He maintains that the ancient heretics, who belonged to a time when the Gospels were not yet fixed, bear witness by their doctrines to the state of the Gospel tradition at the time when they wrote. Thus, for example,

chapters of Luke shares in the low estimate which is to be attached to his other numerous alterations of the text of the New Testament books.* As Harnack says, Marcion felt himself to be a reformer, and so the principle† that heretics become heretical only because they faithfully maintain conditions beyond which the main body of the Church has since the separation advanced, is certainly, in his case at least, not to be applied.‡

One other supposed testimony to an original form of Luke's Gospel which did not contain the first two chapters must be mentioned for the sake of completeness. In 1902, Conybeare§ called attention to the fragments added to the two manuscripts (both from the year 1195) of the Armenian translation of Ephraem's *Commentary on the Diatessaron*. These manuscripts, which, Conybeare believes, represent widely separated texts, both add to the *Commentary* various fragments, which are attributed to Ephraem. One of them—a brief account of the manner of writing of the Gospels—contains a notice about Luke, which Conybeare translates as follows: *Lucas autem initium fecit a baptismo Ioannis, sicut primum de carnalitate eius locutus est et de regno quod a Davide, et deinde quidem a Abrahamo incepit*. This notice, Conybeare supposes, was found by Ephraem at the end of the *Diatessaron*, and, since it follows the more ancient tradition in various particulars, is very old. The text and the interpretation of the latter part of the notice about Luke are exceedingly uncertain, and this might seem to suggest the notion that the text is corrupt in the first clause; but Conybeare insists that the reading "baptism" could never have arisen if the reading "birth" had been original. With regard to this point we should certainly not be too positive, but it does not seem altogether impossible that a scribe

if Carpocrates did not hold the doctrine of the virgin birth, it was not because he mutilated the Gospels, but because the Gospels that he knew contained no account of the virgin birth. But Usener has failed to take account of the evidence in its entirety—for example, he seems to have ignored Aristides and Ignatius. As witnesses with regard to textual questions, they are of far more value than those heretical thinkers who, from all that we can judge, would presumably be more influenced by the requirements of their systems. As Harnack remarks, Usener, in his zealous investigation of the Gnostics, seems almost to forget that there was in the second century such a thing as a Catholic Church. Why should we look to the Gnostics to establish by indirect means the literary development of the Gospel tradition, when we can establish it directly through the writings of the Catholic Church?

* For a very different estimate, see Usener's section on the Gospels of Marcion and Luke, *op. cit.*, 80f.

† Usener, *op. cit.*, I, 14.

‡ Harnack's criticism of Usener, *Theolog. Literaturzeitung*, 1889, 205f.

§ *Zeitschrift f. d. neut. Wissenschaft*, 1902, 192f.

might have been confused by the notice about Mark which immediately precedes, and thus might have been led to change the unusual phrase "birth of John" to the more usual one "baptism of John." It must be borne in mind that Ephraem's copy of the *Diatessaron*, without the slightest doubt, contained the first two chapters of Luke, so that if Ephraem appended the note in question to his *Commentary*, or left it as he found it at the close of the *Diatessaron*, he must have done so without observing its real meaning. It seems more probable to suppose that the corruption of the text of the notice extends further than Conybeare thinks; but if not, it is possible that the note was written by one of those heretics who, as we have already observed, did not accept the first two chapters of Luke. In any case, it cannot be said that this notice, existing only in manuscripts of the year 1195 and there attached to a work of the fourth century, carries us back to the fact of an addition to the third Gospel, which, if made at all, was made early in the second century; especially since we can point to circles where such an idea about the Gospel arose at a later time from dogmatic considerations, and whence the notice in question might have come. We conclude, then, that there is no external evidence of any account to show that the Gospel of Luke ever existed without the first two chapters.

But our proof of the early date of the accounts of the birth is not indirect and negative merely. We are not forced to rely solely on the argument that the chapters under discussion are firmly fixed in the first and third Gospels, that these Gospels have early attestation, and that therefore the chapters are early. On the contrary, there is the strongest kind of evidence for the early use, not only of the first and third Gospels in general, but of those very parts of the Gospels which contain an account of the birth.

For the virgin birth—the most remarkable thing narrated in the chapters under discussion—was part of the firmly fixed Christian belief at a very early time. In the first place, it formed part of the original "Apostles' Creed" (though expressed in slightly different words from those we use to-day), which arose, according to Harnack, about 150 A.D., according to Zahn, certainly not later than 120. And even aside from the question as to the origin of the Creed as a whole, more or less fixed and creed-like statements of the virgin birth—statements pointing to what Harnack calls "an Eastern Christological $\mu\acute{\alpha}\theta\eta\mu\alpha$ "—can be detected in early writers.*

* The evidence for the early knowledge of the virgin birth has been admirably collected in convenient form by Gore in *Dissertations on Subjects Connected with the Incarnation*, 41f.

It is beyond dispute that Irenæus gave to the virgin birth a place in the rule of faith, at least in so far as he had any definite rule of faith at all. As to Justin Martyr, Hillmann* has raised objections, not, indeed, to the fact of Justin's testimony, but to the manner of it. He says that Justin is evidently a pioneer in the support of the virgin birth, because he regards as Christians (*ἀπὸ τοῦ ἡμετέρου γένους*) those who deny the doctrine (*Dial.*, 48). But how else would you expect him to speak of those who accepted Christ as the Messiah, though holding a peculiar view of the manifestation of His Sonship? In other words, how else could he express the idea of "heretic" as opposed to "unbeliever"? And to hold that Justin regarded the virgin birth as something uncertain or unimportant is to run counter to the large number of passages (both in the *Dialogue* and in the *Apology*) where it is mentioned as one of the fundamental facts about Christ.

That Aristides believed in the virgin birth is attested by the Syriac and Armenian versions as well as by what remains of the original Greek,† and it is probable that the phrase "born of the Virgin Mary" found a place in his creed.‡

In regard to Ignatius, it would seem that the two passages, *Eph.* xix. 1, *καὶ ἔλαθεν τὸν ἄρχοντα τοῦ αἰῶνος τοῦτου ἢ παρθενία Μαρίας καὶ ὁ τοσετὸς ἀντῆς ὁμοίως καὶ ὁ θάνατος τοῦ κυρίου· τρία μυστήρια κραυγῆς, ἅτινα ἐν ἡσυχία θεοῦ ἐπράχθη*, and *Smyrn.* i. 1, *ἀληθῶς ὄντα ἐκ γένους Δαβὶδ κατὰ σάρκα, υἱὸν θεοῦ κατὰ θέλημα καὶ δύναμιν θεοῦ γεγενημένον ἀληθῶς ἐκ παρθένου*, were sufficient. Hillmann, however, by a process of reasoning, arrives at the conclusion that the author did not know Luke i. 34, 35, iii. 23. The author, he says, in *Eph.* xviii. 2, xx. 2, and *Smyrn.* i. 1, regards Jesus as begotten (1) *ἐκ σπέρματος μὲν Δαβὶδ*, (2) *πνεύματος δὲ ἁγίου*. This can be explained only on the Adoptionist view, for the generation from the seed of David cannot be regarded as coming through Mary, since in the first passage it is parallel with *πνεύματος δὲ ἁγίου*, and since in *Trall.* ix. 1 *ἐκ γένους Δαβὶδ* is regarded as distinct from *ἐκ Μαρίας*. Now, even if we admit that Ignatius regarded Mary as not of the tribe of Judah (which does not seem to me to be clearly proved by the passages cited above), it does not follow that because he then derived Jesus' Davidic descent through Joseph, he did not know Luke i. 34, 35, iii. 23. For if those passages stood where they stand to-day, the very same supposed contradiction was present in the first part of the third Gospel as is present in

* *Jahrb. f. protest. Theol.*, 1891, 255f.

† J. Rendel Harris, *The Apology of Aristides*, 78.

‡ Harris, *op. cit.*, 25. Cf. Swete, *The Apostles' Creed*, 44ff.

Ignatius. Ignatius simply took over the two sides of the account in Luke without reflection. That this view of the matter is correct is made perfectly evident by the fact that Ignatius in the two passages quoted above distinctly states the virginity of Mary—a fact which nullifies the inferences of Hillmann. Without sufficient reason, Hillmann regards the phrase *γενενημενον εκ παρθενου* (*Smyrn.* i. 1) as an interpolation; *Eph.* xix. 1 (which Swete calls the classical passage) he does not mention at all. Swete calls attention to the fact that the testimony of Ignatius is made more valuable by the nature of his argument. He is arguing with Docetics, and is urging against them the reality of the birth of Jesus. It would, therefore, have suited his purpose to point to the natural birth; but instead of this he says in effect that, though of course supernatural, the birth was yet real. So there is nothing against the statement of Harnack that “Ignatius has freely reproduced a ‘kerugma’ of Christ which seems, in essentials, to be of a fairly definite historical character, and which contained, *inter alia*, the Virgin Birth, Pontius Pilate, and the *ἀπέθανεν*.”*

We have thus traced a firm and well-formulated belief in the virgin birth back to the beginning of the second century. The question at once arises whether the accounts of Matthew and Luke were the sources of that belief. Some kind of an argument might be derived from the manner of statement of the doctrine in the early patristic writers, but this would not be absolutely convincing, for example, in the case of Ignatius. However, the decision is made very probable by the following considerations. It is just this virgin birth which is most urged as necessitating a late date for Luke i, ii; Matt. i, ii, or certain portions of those chapters—indeed, if it were not for the virgin birth, probably those chapters would, in view of the great weight of manuscript attestation, have passed unchallenged as original parts of the Gospels. But it is just this virgin birth which we have shown to have been accepted as a fundamental fact so early as the days of the Apostolic Fathers. At the beginning of the second century, then, the first and third Gospels were used, and the virgin birth was accepted. According to a great weight of manuscript evidence, the virgin birth found a place in those Gospels. The conclusion is at least a natural one that the Christians of that time derived their belief in the virgin birth from the account of that birth which is so firmly fixed in the Gospels, or at any rate that they derived the belief partly from those Gospels. If, as seems to be

* Herzog, *Realencyclopädie*, 3. A., I. 751. *The Apostles' Creed*, E. T., 59f.

possible, for example in Justin, an extra-canonical source was also used, any argument for the trustworthiness of our canonical accounts is rather increased than otherwise, since another testimony is added to the two that we already possess. If the extra-canonical source was itself the source of our two accounts, then by it we are carried still further back. Our accounts are demonstrably old; if a still older account containing the virgin birth was used along with them at the beginning of the second century, then we have worked back very near to the time of the supposed facts. If the early writers enumerated above used only some account different from our account, then it is still significant that just that element in our accounts which has met with most objections was a firmly fixed part of the Christian belief at the beginning of the second century. But there is practically conclusive evidence that these early writers did know our accounts, and this fact, coupled with the evidence of the manuscripts and versions, leads to the conclusion that Matt. i, ii, and Luke i, ii, were parts of the original Gospels, and were therefore written in all probability before 80 A.D. This conclusion may be shaken by internal considerations, but they must be considerations of great weight if they are to overcome such an array of external evidence.

2. Thus far we have exhibited the external evidence which goes to show that the New Testament account of the birth of Jesus was written at a time when authentic tradition as to the facts might still have been available. We now turn to the internal evidence bearing upon the trustworthiness of the account.

In the first place, it may be well to see if the account itself gives us any evidence which will enable us to penetrate beyond it. The most obvious fact in this connection is that we have two narratives of the birth of Jesus. What is the relation between them? The hypotheses that one is a source of the other, and that they have a common source, might seem to be out of the question, if we did not, as a matter of fact, have before us attempts to prove them.

Pfleiderer,* choosing the former position, believed at one time that Matthew used Luke's poetical composition and presupposed a knowledge of it on the part of his readers; and that Matthew was therefore able to take for granted the acceptance of the virgin birth, which Luke had been obliged laboriously to introduce and support; but that he changed Luke's material to suit his own purpose: thus, for example, the account of the Magi is a story invented to typify Luke ii. 31 ("a light for revelation to the Gen-

* *Urchristentum*, I. A. 480f.

tiles"), the star especially being a sensible counterpart of Luke's indefinite "light." This whole theory is beset with such obvious difficulties that it is not at all surprising that Pfeiderer has himself abandoned it.*

Recently there have been several attempts to indicate a common source for the infancy narratives. One of these—that of Conrady—we need not consider at this point; for Conrady undertakes to show that both our accounts are derived from the so-called *Protevan-gelium of James*, which he thinks is a work of pure invention. His treatise, therefore, is an attempt to explain our narratives without the help of the facts, and so belongs to the second part of our discussion. At present we shall confine our discussion to an examination and criticism of the view that the narratives are what they are, only because the facts were what they were. When we come to the other view of the narratives, we shall criticise that as well.†

The other attempt to exhibit a common source for the birth narratives of our Gospels is that of Resch.‡ He thinks that this common source was a סֵפֶר הַלְּוִדוֹת יֵשׁוּעַ הַמָּשִׁיחַ, written originally in Hebrew after the plan of the Book of Ruth (and so provided with a genealogy), and translated afterward into Greek; that from this family history, the first Evangelist took those portions which suited his purpose of exhibiting events as the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy; that afterwards the third Evangelist made use of the rest of the book, but was pressed for space (owing to the exigencies of ancient book-making), and so was obliged to omit what had already been narrated by the author of Matthew, as well as to condense what he was actually able to relate. The differences to be observed in Justin are due, in Resch's opinion, to Justin's use of a different recension of the source, while the pro-

* Pfeiderer, *Urchristentum*, 2. A. II, 550f., now accepts the suggestion of Hillmann and others that Luke i. 34, 35, is an interpolation. So even if Matthew did know Luke, the earlier Gospel (about which point Pfeiderer is no longer at all certain), it does not follow that he acquired from it the idea of the virgin birth. In general, Pfeiderer abandons the theory that Matthew's infancy narrative is in any way dependent upon that of Luke. There is something suggestive in Pfeiderer's change of view. If the new interpolation theory about i. 34, 35, could be proven false, would Pfeiderer, on the supposition that the virgin birth was not a fact, be forced back again into the insecure position we have just been discussing? However, there are, of course, many other things besides the interpolation theory which have led Pfeiderer to shift his ground. All this would belong, properly, to the second part of our discussion.

† The less fully developed theory of Reitzenstein may best be treated in connection with that of Conrady.

‡ *Das Kindheitsevangelium*. Gebhardt-Harnack, *Texte und Untersuchungen*, X, 5.

logue to the fourth Gospel, as well as even the apocryphal Gospels, are thought to preserve for us certain isolated readings of the original writing which but for them would be lost. In support of this theory Resch urges the following considerations:

(1) The title at the beginning of Matthew's account, *βίβλος γενέσεως, Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*. A brief narrative of forty-two verses could not be called a "book," whereas if we put Luke i, ii, and Matt. i, ii, together we have a writing about the size of the Book of Ruth.

This argument ignores the very probable view that *βίβλος* refers merely to the genealogy—a view which the parallels in Genesis seem at least to suggest, even though, according to the usage there, this would be called the book of the generations of Abraham, rather than of Jesus. The noun in the genitive indicates the main purpose of the genealogy, hence, perhaps, the change in usage. In any case, it is extravagant to claim that we can say just how large a *βίβλος* had to be. Furthermore, even though we could show that the title stood originally at the head of a larger work, it does not follow that the rest of that work was occupied by the narrative at present contained in Luke.

(2) The character of the extra-canonical recensions.

To criticise the details of this argument would be too great a task for the present occasion, since Resch has amassed a great number of interesting citations from the early patristic literature and the apocryphal gospels; but in general it may be said that, in the first place, he attributes too much importance to variations which might well be due to careless citation, and in the second place, he has not shown with sufficient clearness why the phenomena must be due to just the particular cause which he assigns. It may be true, for example, that Justin used some extra-canonical source; but it has not been proved that that source was a recension of the hypothetical *Book of the Generations of Jesus Christ*.

(3) The points of contact, with regard to matter, between the two accounts. But these, so far as they go, might be explained by the basis of the two narratives in a common series of facts.

(4) The Johannine Prologue shows evidence of being a philosophical reflection on the original source, which was, however, used in an extra-canonical recension.

An examination of the supposed parallels (pp. 243ff.) will show the insufficiency of this argument. One of the most striking parallels is obtained only by means of the at least doubtful reading in John i. 13, *ὅς . . . ἐγεννήθη*.

(5) The habits of the two authors account for their choice of

matter. But the purpose of Luke to give only what was left, and to give it as briefly as possible, will hardly account for the particular wording of ii. 39.

(6) The two narratives exhibit linguistic affinities, and the differences may be accounted for by supposing that the first Evangelist broke in upon the original form of the source more than did the third Evangelist.

But an examination of the linguistic parallels on pp. 26, 27, leads to the opposite result from that sought by Resch, for the parallels consist merely of commonplaces; and where anything more than a commonplace is observable the difference is far more noticeable than the similarity. In general, it may be said that the difference in character between the two narratives is enough to destroy Resch's hypothesis. Matthew is terse and prosaic in form even where the subject would naturally lead to a more elevated style, *e.g.*, the story of the Magi. Luke, on the other hand, moves in a region of simple and fresh, but exalted poetry. It will not do to say that the original book was simple and dignified in the narrative portions, and flowing and poetical where poetry was demanded; for there are narrative portions in Luke's account, which yet exhibit the same contrast in style as against Matthew, as may be seen even in the Magnificat. On the whole, in view of the audacity of the attempt to reconstruct the original Hebrew of the source, and in view of the enormous weight of evidence which would be required to prove the contention, it is not at all surprising that Resch has remained the sole defender of his Hebrew *Book of the Generations of Jesus Christ*.

It seems, therefore, reasonably clear, on the hypothesis that the narratives are based upon historical traditions, that there was no common written source of the two widely diverging accounts. But we are not altogether debarred from attempting to trace a little further back the history of the ideas presented in our narratives. Zahn* makes such an attempt, on the basis of Luke and Matthew taken separately. He says, in the first place, that Luke, writing to assist the faith of the Gentile Theophilus, would include in his Gospel only those things which were generally held throughout the Christian congregations—an argument which perhaps takes too much for granted for our present purpose. Zahn's argument with regard to Matthew† is much more remarkable, although at the same time much more doubtful. He says it is clear that, as Mat-

* *Das apostolische Symbolum*, 58f.

† Cf. J. Weiss, *Theologische Rundschau*, 1901, 159, and Wernle, *Syn. Frage*, 189, 190.

thew's purpose throughout his Gospel is distinctly apologetic and polemic (see especially Matt. xxviii. 11-15), so it is polemic also in this first section—polemic against the Jewish slander to the effect that Jesus was a son of dishonor, silencing the slander, first, by the citation of prophecy to show that what had given offense is really a holy work of God, and, secondly, by the fact that Joseph had openly recognized Mary as his wife before she bore her eldest son. The polemic character of these first two chapters appears, also, Zahn says, in the genealogy. The women so singularly mentioned have all something shameful about them, at least to a Jew, even Ruth being a Moabitess. Matthew's argument, therefore, according to Zahn, is that if the Jews did not take offense at these dark spots in the history of the house of David (admittedly the bearer of the promises), neither ought they to take offense at the stain upon the birth of Jesus, even admitting it to be a fact; Jesus might still be the Messiah. Now this polemic, Zahn argues, proves that the opposing view was widely spread among the Jews at the time when Matthew wrote; and as every one [except Haeckel] admits, that Jewish view was a caricature of the original Christian report about the supernatural conception, the view that the two opinions stood in the reverse relation being clearly excluded. But in order that there may be a caricature, the thing caricatured must be well known; therefore, in order to allow time for all this, the belief in the virgin birth must have been widely current long before our Matthew was written.

The argument is perhaps ingenious rather than sound. In the first place, it is very doubtful whether the author who had chosen the lofty way of refutation represented in i. 18-25 would ever have descended to admit, even for a moment, and for the sake of argument, that the mother of the Lord might have shared in the disgrace connected in the popular mind with such names as Tamar and Rahab. And then, it is very doubtful whether the women mentioned in the genealogy are mentioned because of the disgrace connected with them, rather than simply because their names called up something remarkable in the line of descent. Finally, and most important, it may be objected that Zahn's theory must always remain a mere supposition. For, according to Hilgenfeld, we have no mention of that Jewish slander against Christ supposed to be combated in Matthew until the year 130, and the reference there is extremely doubtful. Indeed, the story is not mentioned even in Justin Martyr, as we should certainly expect (with Hilgenfeld) if Justin knew of it, and becomes prominent only in Celsus about

180 A.D.* It seems, therefore, extremely unlikely that the slander arose in the period between the crucifixion and the composition of Matthew, especially since the doctrine of the virgin birth does not seem to have been part of the earliest Christian preaching and therefore could not have been caricatured so early by the Jews. We therefore reject the attempt of Zahn to show by this particular line of argument the existence of a general Christian belief in the virgin birth long before the composition of Matthew. But we do not therefore by any means weaken our opinion that the doctrine of the virgin birth must have originated at a very early date. For the very independence of the two narratives, coupled with their agreement in the essential fact, shows that the two lines of tradition—so far as we can judge from objective considerations—must have begun to diverge at a very early time. Indeed, the suggestion is not an unnatural one that the lines began to diverge at the facts themselves—the two narratives being based upon the accounts of different eye-witnesses.

Thus far we have tried to trace back the accounts of the birth as far as possible, and then, merely from general considerations, to penetrate behind them to the tradition upon which they rest.† But we have pursued the investigation just as we should in the case of any historical narrative—we have taken no account of difficulties arising from the peculiar content of the particular narrative now under discussion. We must now examine the narratives themselves more in detail. What objections are to be opposed to the external evidence already considered?

The first thing to be noticed is, naturally, the miraculous character of many of the events narrated—indeed, the very sum and substance of the whole account is a miracle. Now, of course, for probably the majority of those who deny the essential truth of the narratives, the presence of miracle settles the matter at the outset. A miracle cannot be true; the narratives are suffused with the miraculous; therefore the narratives are false, be the origin of the falsification easy or difficult to explain. Such a position we cannot now attempt to refute. For we freely admit that in order to prove that miracles are possible and have actually occurred the virgin birth is not the place to begin. We are thoroughly in agreement with Peter and Paul, who began rather with what could be supported by direct and ample testimony—the Resurrection. The miraculous, further-

* Hilgenfeld, *Zeitschrift f. wissenschaftliche Theologie*, 1900, 271f.

† To this latter discussion we shall return, from another point of view, in the second article.

more, must be supported by an argument which far exceeds the limit of bare testimony. For there is a presumption against every miracle which hardly any testimony will overcome. One might not believe a hundred men of the highest character and intellect if they told him that a man had arisen from the dead. But it is different if they tell him that Christ has arisen from the dead. He knows he is a sinner; he knows there is a righteous God; he knows he needs a tremendous event to save him, for a tremendous cure is needed for a tremendous ill; Christ is offered as the Saviour. That He should rise from the dead seems to be not impossible, for great as is the event, there is an adequate occasion for it. Our investigator is thus favorably disposed in this case for the reception of the direct testimony. It is only with men who at least see the force of some such reasoning that we now argue—men who are ready to accept a miracle, if the occasion and the testimony are sufficient, but who have some particular difficulties about the particular miracles contained in the accounts of the birth of Jesus.

These particular objections to the miracles of our narratives may be classified as occasioned either (1) by the angelic appearances or (2) by the virgin birth.*

(1) Against the angelic appearances it is urged that they exceed the limits which even supernatural revelation may allow itself. The extended conversations and especially the name "Gabriel" are objected to. Two lines of defense may be pursued. In the first place, we may say with B. Weiss that the form of the revelations is supplied by the author, who preserves, however, the essential truth. Or (with more reason as it seems to me) we may point to the conditions under which the revelations were made. It is perfectly true that angelic appearances in the twentieth century would be eminently out of place, and so, contradictory to the grave, unsensational spirit of revelation. But if we suppose, as is not unlikely, the existence in Israel just before the time of Christ of a circle of pious *πρωχοί* who were not contaminated by the prevailing formalism and corruption, but kept their faces turned steadily toward heaven in simple, childlike faith that Jehovah would yet fulfil His ancient promises; if there were really in Israel shepherds like the shepherds of Luke and saints like Symeon and Anna (and their existence seems presupposed by the later history), then the angels do not seem so unworthy of a God who adapts His revelations to the needs and capacities of His creatures.

Connected with the objection to the angels is the objection to

* Resch, *op. cit.*, 325.

the narrative of Luke because it is poetical. The fact we freely admit—indeed, even Conybeare credits the author with “a very pretty fancy”[!][—]but we refuse to draw any derogatory inference. The narrative may well be both true and poetical—especially if, as we have just tried to show, the poetry is largely in the facts themselves. Indeed, Prof. Briggs, for example,* suggests that the sources of the narratives were actually poems, and yet attributes to these sources a high degree of historic value.†

(2) The virgin birth is objected to (*a*) because it is not adequately attested, and (*b*) because, so far from there being any adequate occasion for it, it is positively detrimental to Christian doctrine.

To the second of these objections (referring to the occasion for the miracle) we cannot attribute so much weight as is sometimes done. True, the principle is a correct one, that the reality or non-reality of a miracle must be determined very largely by the occasion. But we must distinguish between the importance of the event and our understanding of its importance. If we admit that Christ was a supernatural person, we do not have to be able to explain the special reason for every one of His miracles in order to believe that the miracles really happened. The virgin birth, being connected with Christ, has an adequate occasion. The fact may well be enormously important—in view of our profound ignorance as to the origin of every human soul, to say nothing of the Incarnation of the Son of God—even though the futile physiological and psychological speculations with regard to its exact meaning have not brought us any nearer to the truth. Surely the Incarnation, if it was real, was an event stupendous enough to give rise to even the greatest of miracles.

Yet the question cannot be dismissed without a few words, even in a purely historical discussion. For if it be shown that the Church has made a mistake in including the virgin birth in the Creed; if it be shown that the doctrine of the virgin birth is not one of the fundamental facts of Christianity, so that without it the Christian religion could exist unimpaired; then one argument for the doctrine has been removed. For there is a great weight of evidence from Christian experience which goes to show that Christianity is essentially true. The question is whether we have to run counter to all this evidence if we deny the fact of the miraculous conception. You cannot quite get rid of the theological question, therefore, even in discussing the question of history.

In order to show a proper occasion for the virgin birth, it is not

* *New Light on the Life of Jesus*, 161ff.

† Cf. Box, *Zeitschrift f. d. neut. Wissenschaft.*, 1905, 95f.

necessary, as is so often assumed, to prove that this miracle was necessary to the divine Sonship of Christ in any sense that confuses His eternal Sonship with the conception by the Holy Ghost, or that it was necessary to His sinlessness. Indeed, the derivation of the sinlessness of Christ from the virgin birth is, as has often been pointed out, inconsistent. For if the law of heredity could not be suspended by the Spirit of God, then the only logical result would have been the immediate creation of the human body of Christ independent of both parents; for if sin is necessarily handed down by the ordinary course of generation, then the human motherhood of Mary is enough to carry on the taint. Yet the virgin birth is a great doctrine for all that, its importance being exhibited by history from the second century on into the twentieth. For the account of the virgin birth is the great testimony to the absolute miraculousness of Jesus throughout His whole life. If the virgin birth is a fact, then Christ did not grow up into His divinity—He is divine in a far higher sense than that. This doctrine is therefore the great obstacle in the way of the Adoptionists of all ages and of all shades of opinion; it is something to be gotten rid of not only by Cerinthus but also by all his modern followers. Perhaps we cannot see but that Christ *might* have been a miraculous person even if He had been born outwardly in the ordinary way; but if He was born in the way described in Matthew and Luke, then He *must* have been a miraculous person.*

We have tried to show that, rightly considered, the virgin birth is of enormous importance to Christian faith, so that there is ample occasion for the miracle. It is next in order to consider the actual testimony, which we shall most conveniently do in connection with the general question of the trustworthiness of the whole account.

Since, however, we desire to be as fair-minded as possible in conducting the inquiry, it may be well, by way of preface, to make a few remarks in exposition of what we conceive fair-mindedness to be. For, strange as it may seem, there is apparently a good deal of confusion afloat with regard to the matter. For example, we object most strenuously to the identification—widely prevalent in some quarters—of “apologetic” with “unscientific” or even “dishonest,” especially with regard to questions of harmony. If you have judged beforehand that any defense of a thing must necessarily be false, then the only truly scientific and impartial attitude would be to deny everything. If, however, you listen patiently to the

* For some suggestive remarks on this subject, see *Church Quarterly Review*, October, 1904, 207ff.

defense of theories which destroy the trustworthiness of a narrative but stigmatize as necessarily untrue any defense of "harmony" or of what may be called the "conservative" position, then you have been anything but fair-minded. Again, fair-mindedness does not require or even permit us to regard our accounts of the birth as fallen from the air, to be judged solely according to the inherent likelihood or unlikelihood of the events narrated—a principle which is apparently ignored by Soltau,* who seems to think he has made an important utterance when he says that "The murder of the infants at Bethlehem, . . . as well as the strange appearance of the Magi on the scene, would certainly not have been believed if it had not been the Evangelical recorder who related them." Of course they would not, but then, as a matter of fact, it was the Evangelical recorder who related them, and his testimony is worth more (on any critical view) than the testimony of a man, for example, who wrote ten centuries later. True impartiality does not consist in deciding every question in entire disregard of everything else. In order to judge impartially the narratives of the birth, we must keep in mind the results of related investigations. It is fully as great an offense against scientific method to refuse to hold presuppositions founded upon proven fact as it is to insist upon holding presuppositions founded upon fancy. Therefore, in discussing the trustworthiness of the accounts of the birth, we must remember that they are firmly united from an early time to two very ancient books which admittedly possess very considerable historical value. On such testimony we ought to be inclined to admit as historical many things which we should reject if the testimony were not so strong. This much we regard as justifiable presupposition. On the other hand we must regard as a false presupposition, based on theory rather than fact, the statement of Soltau that all records in the first and third Evangelists which are not derived from the "two definitely established sources are of eminently slighter trustworthiness." For (aside from the question of the truth or falsehood of the two-document hypothesis) it would be necessary for Soltau to demonstrate the unity of those portions of the gospels not derived from the two sources in order to involve the accounts of the birth in any supposed untrustworthiness attaching to the other fragments. On Soltau's theory, the Evangelists used some trustworthy documents as well as some untrustworthy ones. We ought not to connect the accounts of the

* *Die Geburtsgeschichte Jesu Christi*, E. T., 6, 7.

birth with the latter class, rather than with the former, until we have carefully examined the accounts themselves.

After these preliminary remarks, we proceed to examine the special objections which have been urged against the trustworthiness of our narratives. These objections may conveniently be classified as follows: (1) inconsistency with well-attested history; (2) inconsistency with the other New Testament literature; (3) inconsistency within the birth narratives themselves.

1. Under the first head some objection has been made to the slaughter of the innocents at Bethlehem, on account of the silence of Josephus; but the argument from silence is not conclusive, and it has been pointed out that the massacre is quite in accord with the character of Herod during his later years. A far more serious objection is that against the census of Luke (Luke ii. 1ff), a discussion of which would be beyond the scope of the present paper as well as beyond the ability of the writer. We refrain from this intricate chronological question with the better conscience because we do not believe that it has such a vital connection with our subject as is sometimes assumed. If, indeed, it can be proved that the whole census passage is an invention in order to change the place of birth to Bethlehem, then, indeed, the trustworthiness of the narrative will be seriously impaired. But it is just this that has not been proved. On the contrary, it seems unlikely that the author should have put all this imperial machinery in motion, and thus exposed himself to easy refutation, in order to accomplish what might have been easily accomplished by a simpler expedient and one which would perhaps have been less ignominious to the Messianic king.* Nor is the census passage to be explained as an invention of the author by appealing to the tendency of Luke to bring the facts of Christianity into connection with events of the Roman empire, for that very purpose could not have been attained unless the events related about the empire were authentic and could thus command general recognition. There are thus grave objections against regarding the census as a mere invention of the author or redactor. If, on the other hand, the note about the census is conceived of as the result of a mere blunder, we need not necessarily give up the general trustworthiness of the account. It all depends upon the nature of the blunder. If there never was and never could have been any census which might have brought Joseph and Mary down to Bethlehem, or rather which might have been one motive for their journey, then the attack upon the narrative at this point is a serious one. But in view of the ten-

* Gore, *op. cit.*, 20.

acity with which the Jews held to their real or supposed family trees, it does not seem impossible that an enrolment based upon genealogical principles might have been held; and the narrative does not preclude the supposition that the actual execution of the decree was carried out in Judæa under Jewish auspices. If, however, Luke has merely made some blunder such as placing the first governorship of Quirinius a few years too far back (*i.e.*, at a time when Saturninus was really governor), it does not seem reasonable to draw any very serious conclusions about the trustworthiness of the whole infancy narrative—especially if, as is very probable, the chronological note is an addition made by the author or redactor of the whole Gospel. In general, it may be said that the archæological researches of Ramsay and others have at least made it clear that our knowledge about the official history of the Augustan age has not been (and probably is not yet) so complete as to warrant us in using too confidently the argument from silence. It will not be worth while to notice here the various specific attempts to solve the difficulty—some of them are not at all unlikely, though no single one of them can be firmly established as correct. At any rate, these attempts have shown that the difficulty might not be insoluble if we had more information. Meanwhile, it does not seem unfair to regard the census passage as neutral with regard to the question of the trustworthiness of the account—at any rate, as affording no decisive evidence on the negative side. The question must be settled on the basis of other considerations.

2. It is objected further that the infancy narratives are in disagreement with all the rest of the New Testament literature, in which not only are the minuter incidents of our narrative not referred to, but even the virgin birth and the birth in Bethlehem are not mentioned. From all that we could learn from the rest of the New Testament, it is argued, Jesus was born at Nazareth, of Joseph and Mary; while some passages seem even to exclude the virgin birth.

In the Gospel of Mark, and in Matthew and Luke outside of the first two chapters and the genealogies, there is probably no allusion to the virgin birth; indeed, in Mark vi. 1, Nazareth is evidently referred to as the *πατρις* of Jesus; in Mark vi. 3 His brothers and sisters are mentioned—all of which, however, is not inconsistent with the infancy narratives. That the Spirit should be said to be the source of Jesus' miraculous power (Matt. xii. 28) is inconsistent with His activity in Luke i. 35 only on a very mechanical view of the Spirit and of His activities. Furthermore, Holtzmann's objection at

this point is based upon a false view of the meaning of the descent of the Spirit at the baptism. More serious, perhaps, is the argument from Mark iii. 21, 31ff. where Jesus' kinsfolk are represented as thinking Him mad, and His mother is included among them, if ver. 31 is to be connected with ver. 21. The latter point is not certain, but even if it be granted, the mother might have been overpersuaded by the brethren, as Swete suggests. Or, more probably, we should have to think of another case of her failure to understand. She might have had the announcement from the angel, and thus been led to expect a great career for her Son—yet His actual conduct must have seemed strangely inconsistent with what she had expected of the Messiah (compare the doubts of John the Baptist). The objection that Christ would not have spoken about His mother as He does in iii. 31ff. if she had been so highly favored of God as is implied in the fact of the virgin birth is, of course, frivolous. It is remarkable that Mark has *ὁ τέκτων* in vi. 3, as against *ὁ τοῦ τέκτονος υἱός* in Matthew xiii. 55 (cf. Luke iv. 22, *ὄχι υἱός ἐστιν Ἰωσήφ οὗτος*); If there is any reference here to the virgin birth,* then there can be no question but that the form of the statement in Matthew is the original one, for of course the scoffers did not know of the miracle. The form in Mark would rather be a correction made by the Evangelist to prevent misunderstanding from the absence of an account of the birth in his Gospel. But it is, after all, far more likely that the form in Mark is due to the fact that Joseph had died.†

In the fourth Gospel, Jesus is called the son of Joseph not only by the Jews (vi. 42), but also by Philip (i. 45); He is regarded as coming from Nazareth (vii. 41); His brothers did not believe on Him (vii. 5). Yet in no case is a suitable occasion indicated for correcting these opinions, supposing them to be false, for that Jesus should describe the manner of His birth in opposition to false ideas would be out of all harmony with His established methods, and furthermore, could give rise only to suspicion, not to faith. Beyschlag lays stress upon the objection that the statement in John i. 31, 33, *καὶ γὰρ οὐκ ᾔδειν αὐτόν* is inconsistent with the intimacy of Mary and Elisabeth as described in Luke i; but the objection is not necessarily fatal. If John was in the desert until the time of his public appearance, he may well have never seen Jesus the Galilean, and exactly what he would have been told is merely surmise. The view of Soltau that "throughout

* As Hilgenfeld, *Zeitschrift f. wissenschaftliche Theologie*, 1901, 317, and A. Wright, *Synopsis*, Introd., xli, xlii, suppose.

† See Meyer-Weiss on the passage in Mark.

the Johannine writing there prevails what might be described as a polemical attitude toward those who will only believe in Jesus on condition that He is a son of David and a native of Bethlehem" is without a shadow of evidence.

In general we may conclude that the virgin birth was, according to the Gospels, not generally known during the lifetime of Jesus; indeed, was not known even within the circle of His neighbors and kinsfolk. On the other hand, there is no satisfactory evidence to show positively that Jesus Himself or His mother did not know it; for even if they had known it, they could not be expected to correct the current impression. It was not the habit of Christ to reveal sacred mysteries to those whose hearts were hardened.

As to the Evangelists themselves, we should not expect that Mark would mention the virgin birth even if he knew it, since he is concerned to give only the events of the public ministry of Jesus—things which formed the basis of the earliest preaching. Luke and Matthew would not need to express themselves again on the matter if they included in their Gospels the infancy narratives giving a full account of the event. But how is it with John? The Prologue might be interpreted in three ways: as presupposing the virgin birth (Zahn), as containing a polemic argument against it, or as saying nothing about it one way or the other. The verse especially referred to is i. 13. It has been suggested that the author urges against the view that Jesus was born in a peculiar way the consideration that all Christians may be said to be born "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Schmiedel* has suggested this view of the matter only to reject it, for, he says, the meaning of the verse is simply that in the case of the elect it is not their human birth that matters so much as their election. We are thus led to the view of Zahn that ver. 13 presupposes the virgin birth.† According to Zahn, John means to say in vers. 13, 14, that what is true of the new birth of the children of God is true of the real birth of Christ. Thus the reading of Irenæus and Tertullian and of some Latin authorities, $\delta\varsigma . . . \epsilon\gamma\epsilon\upsilon\upsilon\eta\theta\eta$, though not original [as Resch supposes], yet exhibits a proper sense of what is the true meaning of the juxtaposition of ver. 13 and ver. 14a. Such an interpretation, however, attributes to the Evangelist a confusion between the spiritual and physical spheres, or rather an elaborate parallel between them, which, if intended, would have to be more clearly indicated. Furthermore, there is a good connection between

* *Encyclopædia Biblica*, Art. *Mary*, ¶ 10.

† *Op. cit.*, 62f.

ver. 13 and ver. 14a other than that suggested by Zahn. In ver. 13 the two spheres—the heavenly and the earthly sphere—are contrasted, and this leads the author to speak in ver. 14a of the descent of the Logos from the heavenly to the earthly. Ver. 14 describes the connection formed between the two spheres, by means of which the new birth described in ver. 13 is made possible. We must conclude, therefore, that, although the interpretation of Zahn is possible, it is not proved. On the other hand, the objection that the pre-existence of the Logos excludes the virgin birth is even more unprovable. In the Prologue, then, John does not clearly imply the virgin birth, though his exalted doctrine of the Incarnation seems rather to favor some such event than to exclude it. How explain his silence? It should be noticed that some of those who deny the early date and historicity of the birth narratives in Matthew and Luke yet feel constrained to put the fourth Gospel still later, so that the temporal relation between the two is the same as upon the most “conservative” view. For these critics, therefore, the silence of John is a problem as well as for those who accept the virgin birth, and they can only say with A. Sabatier* that, whereas the other Evangelists did not mention the virgin birth because they did not know of it, John did not mention it because he had something better, *i.e.*, the doctrine of the Logos. Now if the two doctrines were exclusive of each other, then we should have here what Schmiedel calls a “tacit rejection” of the virgin birth by the fourth Gospel. But if the two doctrines cannot be shown to be inconsistent, then there is a sense in which we can heartily accept Sabatier’s statement of the matter. John omitted in his Gospel what had already been related in the others. Accordingly, he omitted the account of the birth, and went on to speak of what had not been touched upon by his predecessors, *i.e.*, the preëxistence of Christ. It is therefore true that he omitted the virgin birth, if not because he had something better, at least because he had something more. Again, if the purpose of his Gospel was to bring forth testimony (xx. 31), it is natural that he should not mention the virgin birth, for from the very nature of the case it never could and never can be a proof that Jesus is the Son of God. In the Apocalypse, chap. xii seems to show a knowledge of Matt. ii, but the matter is not at all certain, and the relation has even been reversed.

In Acts, the speeches of Peter and Paul would indicate that the virgin birth was no part of the earliest missionary preaching; but to regard these speeches before hostile or uninstructed audiences

* *Enc. des Sciences Religieuses*, Art. *Jésus Christ*, vii, 363.

as fine opportunities for mentioning the virgin birth is to stifle the historical sense.*

In Paul, Rom. i. 3 and Gal. iv. 4 are the *loci classici*, and have been claimed with equal futility as involving the virgin birth and as excluding it. In Rom. i. 3, 4 (τοῦ γενομένου ἐκ σπέρματος Δαυιδ κατὰ σάρκα, τοῦ ὀρισθέντος υἱοῦ θεοῦ ἐν δυνάμει κατὰ πνεῦμα ἁγιοσύνης ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν), it is claimed that since Paul is contrasting the earthly physical life of Jesus with His heavenly life after the resurrection, if he believed in the virgin birth, it would not have been true to say that Christ was born of the seed of David according to the flesh. The Spirit would have had a part even in His physical life. But is this not an over-refinement? Paul is simply saying that Christ took upon Himself the form of a man—that is just as true on the theory of the virgin birth as on the opposite theory—and that in so far as He was a man, He was of the seed of David. In Gal. iv. 4 (γενόμενον ἐκ γυναικός, γενόμενον ὑπὸ νόμον), it is absurd to expect Paul to say γενόμενον ἐκ παρθένου, since the matter in hand is the likeness of Christ to men, not His difference from them.† On the other hand, Zahn is claiming too much when he argues that if Paul had not known the virgin birth, it would have served his purpose far better, according to Jewish ideas, to have mentioned not the mother but the father. For “born of a woman” is just a paraphrase for “human,” as the commentators prove, especially from Matt. xi. 11.

As to Paul's doctrine, it can hardly be used one way or the other with any degree of certainty. How preëxistence is incompatible with the virgin birth it is difficult to see. If anything, it rather favors the doctrine. The comparison of Christ with the second Adam might seem to suggest something in the nature of a creative act to correspond with the creation of Adam.‡ In general it may be said that while Paul's doctrine agrees better with the virgin birth than with a birth from Joseph and Mary, yet he does not say anything definite one way or the other. With regard to his silence, it is of great importance to notice that, in general, “his epistles are almost exclusively occupied in contending for Christian principles, not in recalling facts of our Lord's life.” Where Paul does relate facts of Christ's life (1 Cor. ix. 23ff., xv. 3ff.), he does it in so purely incidental a way as to suggest that he actually knew a great deal more than he tells in his Epistles.§

* Against Hillmann, *op. cit.*

† Zahn, *op. cit.*, 64.

‡ Gore, *op. cit.*, 11.

§ Gore, *op. cit.*, 10ff.

The net results of our examination, therefore, are the two propositions: (1) that the New Testament, outside of the infancy narratives, does not affirm the fact of the virgin birth, and (2) that it does not deny it. In order rightly to understand the significance of this we must ask the question whether the spread of the report about the virgin birth might have taken place in a way consistent with this silence. If the virgin birth were true, must it have been mentioned in any place where as a matter of fact it is not mentioned?

Let us suppose the narratives of Matt. i, ii, and Luke i, ii, to be substantially correct, and ask ourselves what we should expect the course of development to be. According to those narratives, there were only two persons who at first knew of the virgin birth—Joseph and Mary—nor is there any record that they confided in any one else. The report of the shepherds (Luke ii. 20) and of Anna (Luke ii. 38) need not have reached a very wide circle, and like the visit of the Magi (in which case there were special reasons for silence), took place in Judæa, far from Nazareth, the subsequent home of the family, and several years before their return. It has been further suggested by Ramsay that fear of Antipas may have been a special reason for silence after the return.* Probably Joseph died before Jesus reached maturity, in which case Mary was left as the sole keeper of the secret. True, this "secret" is denounced as an apologetic expedient, but a little exercise of the historical imagination will remove the odium. One great fault of the treatment of this subject is that too little account has been taken of the personal equation. For it seems hardly in accord with the character of Mary, as it is painted in such distinct colors in the infancy narrative of Luke (the truth of which we are assuming for the sake of the argument), that, after she had undergone experiences of the most mysterious kind and had submitted to a command which ran counter to every instinct of her soul, she should proceed to engage in idle gossip about the matter, thereby subjecting herself to the blackest slander. Some women might have done so; the Mary who "kept all these sayings pondering them in her heart" certainly would not. There is every reason to suppose that she would keep the secret even from her younger children—or, rather, most carefully of all from them. So the years went by, and He who was to rule over the house of Jacob forever continued to labor at a carpenter's bench until the time of His majority had come and gone. Must not the miraculous events of

* *Was Christ Born at Bethlehem?* 76.

thirty years ago have come to be to Mary like a wonderful dream? Must not her faith have undergone a terrible trial? And then when her Son did come before the nation, how different was His coming from what she had pictured to herself! It does not seem at all surprising that, like John the Baptist, she should have been puzzled, and should have begun to wonder whether she had interpreted those far-off mysteries aright. But she learned like the rest, and after Pentecost had come, and the little company of Christians were praying together, comforted by the Spirit whom Jesus had sent, she must have continued to ponder over all those things, though in a far different spirit. Then, at last, within the little circle of believing and sympathetic women or near friends, she may have been led to breathe things too sacred and mysterious to be spoken to mortal ears before. These things were, of course, not reported at once to the official governors of the little Church, like the progress of the daily collections. Still less were they included in missionary sermons, where the great effort was to adduce facts which could be testified to by all, and where the humble woman's mystery would have brought forth nothing but scorn and slander. And so, perhaps supplemented by a long-hidden family register, the marvelous tale of the Mother of the Lord found its way gradually into the Gospel tradition and Creeds of the Church, and into the inmost hearts of Christians of all centuries.*

Like Beyschlag (with regard to his own very different theory), we do not say that it was thus; we only say that so it might have been. If the infancy narratives were true, the silence about them in the Gospels and in the Acts does not involve any psychological impossibility. The silence of the other books has already been explained.

3. Lastly, it has been suggested that inconsistencies in the birth narratives themselves destroy any belief in their trustworthiness.

We shall examine for a moment, first, the alleged inconsistencies between the two accounts. We may safely pass over without much discussion such objections as those of Usener, that "the divinity[?] of Christ is attested in Luke by the angel's words to the shepherds and the song of the heavenly host, in Matthew by the appearance of the star in the East; the new-born Messiah receives his first adoration in Luke from the shepherds, in Matthew from the Magi."† The obvious answer in the former case is that there might be more than one attestation of the divinity of Christ; in the latter case,

* See Ramsay, *op. cit.*, 73ff.; Sanday, *Hastings' Bible Dictionary*, Art. *Jesus Christ*, II, 644; Gore, *op. cit.*, 12ff.

† Usener, *Encyclopædia Biblica*, Art. *Nativity*, § 4.

after the word "first" (for which there is no warrant in the accounts) has been removed, a similar answer might be made. It is objected with more show of reason that "Joseph's home in Matthew is Bethlehem, in Luke Nazareth." But it should be noticed that Matthew does not expressly say that Joseph's home was Bethlehem before the birth of Jesus; indeed, the mention of Bethlehem in ii. 1 rather than in i. 18 might possibly suggest that the facts were otherwise. Very likely, however, it suggests nothing at all. For the story about the Magi (Matt. ii), the place (Judæa) and the time (while Herod was alive) were of vital importance. Hence what look like local and chronological data about the birth of Christ (Matt. ii. 1) are probably only incidents in the narrative of the wise men. Not very serious is the objection of Beyschlag that if Mary had had such a revelation as is recorded in Luke i. 30ff. she would have repeated it to Joseph; so that he would not have been ignorant of the true cause of Mary's pregnancy, as is implied in Matt. i. 19. On any adequate view of the character of Mary, she might be expected to do anything rather than speak of the mystery to her betrothed husband.

Most formidable, perhaps, is the objection that, according to Luke, the family returned to Nazareth forty days after the birth (Luke ii. 39); whereas in Matthew they are represented as still in Bethlehem a considerable time (perhaps two years) after the birth, and as then obliged to flee into Egypt. In answer we first suggest the order of events which seems to do most justice to the narratives, and then ask whether the narratives cannot be harmonized on the basis of such an order. The order we suggest is (1) Birth, (2) Adoration of the shepherds, (3) Presentation, Circumcision, etc., (4) [Return to Bethlehem], (5) Adoration of the Magi, (6) Flight to Egypt, (7) Return to Nazareth. Now it is perfectly evident that neither one of our evangelists or of their sources knew of such an order of events (Luke ii. 39, Matt. ii. 23). One explanation is, that each writer had only limited material at his command, being left ignorant of much that the other relates and of still more of which we have no record at all. Are the narratives such as to preclude the view that each author used his sources faithfully in the main, though, here and there, in working up the narrative, he may have used terms of expression which he would not have used if he had known more? We believe that they are not. For example, suppose the author of the chapters in Luke had in his sources the account of the birth, the shepherds, the presentation, etc., and then in addition merely the notice of the life in Nazareth. In working this material up into a narrative, what more natural than that

he should join two parts together by the use of the sentence in ii. 39? Even in a modern work, unless, perhaps, of the most strictly scientific character, such a mere copula would hardly be objected to as going beyond the established data. Similarly, suppose Matthew did not have any note that the former life of Joseph and Mary had been in Nazareth, but only the account of Joseph's suspicions, etc., without mention of the place, and then the notice of the place of birth. Under such circumstances, Nazareth in ii. 23 would be new to the reader, and so would naturally be mentioned merely as "a city." As for the cause assigned in Matthew for withdrawing to Galilee, the supposition that Joseph and Mary had settled in Bethlehem after the birth is by no means worthy of the contempt with which it is treated. Of course, it is only a suggestion, to show that perhaps some of the difficulties may be due to our lack of knowledge.

We conclude, then, that the alleged contradictions between the two accounts, being really only contradictions between the statement of one account and the silence of the other, destroy a belief in the trustworthiness of the accounts only if you maintain that in order to be trustworthy the accounts must form a complete and orderly life of Christ. Such a copula as Luke ii. 39, even if many events came in between, is quite in accord with the methods of arrangement prevalent all through the Gospels.

Now if this is a correct view of the matter, we have not only answered objections but also adduced positive evidence for the trustworthiness of the narratives. For we have clearly shown that the accounts, though not seriously contradictory, are absolutely independent of each other, so that they furnish a double witness for those things (and they are not unimportant) which are common to both.* It has even been argued with a good deal of plausibility that in various little ways the narratives actually explain and supplement each other. For example, on the basis of Luke's narrative alone, it is difficult to see how Mary could accompany Joseph to Bethlehem when she was only betrothed to him; so that ἐμνηστευμένη, the correct reading in Luke ii. 5, is explained by Matt. i. 24, 25. It may, however, be objected that if, as we have suggested, the accounts in Matthew and Luke go back to eye-witnesses, the eye-witnesses could only have been members of the same family, so that the very difference in the things chosen for narration (to say nothing of actual contradictions) is proof of the untrustworthiness of the

* See Resch, *op. cit.*, 18.

accounts.* To this we reply that the difference may have arisen not so much from the source as from the destination and purpose of the stories. The family of Jesus may well have been led, for example, to tell the things relating to the early persecution to one set of hearers who happened to be interested in that, and the things of a more private character to another set. And perhaps the matter was a little more complicated in the course of a brief line of transmission.

We come now to the alleged inconsistencies within each narrative taken separately. It is urged, in the first place, that Mary could not have failed to understand the adoration of the shepherds (Luke ii. 19), or of Symeon (Luke ii. 33, *θαυμάζοντες ἐπὶ τοῖς λελοομένοις περὶ αὐτοῦ*), or the answer of the boy Jesus (Luke ii. 50), if she had already received the revelation recorded in Luke i. 30ff. and undergone the experience there prophesied. Here we reiterate what we have already said about the character of Mary. It is preposterous to argue that Mary may have found nothing puzzling and mysterious about the events in the life of her remarkable child; about the strange words of the shepherds and of Symeon, and about the yet stranger answer of the quietly obedient child. A modern scientific mind might have had the whole thing reasoned out beforehand on the basis of the data already given; but the people of those days were not scientific. If we are going to enter into the realm of psychology at all (and we do so only to repel objections), all we can say is that it is perfectly in accord with the mental habits of the time, and especially with a quiet, incommunicative, simple character such as Mary's is represented to be, that she should keep "all these sayings, pondering them in her heart"; that she should marvel at "the things which were spoken concerning him"; and that she should not understand "the saying which he spake unto them."

A much more important objection is that Jesus is, in the infancy narrative of Luke itself, as well as elsewhere (see Acts ii. 30), regarded as the son of Joseph (*e.g.*, *γονεῖς*, ii. 27, ii. 41; *πατήρ*, ii. 33).† These expressions are, indeed, perfectly natural as indicating merely the adoptive relation, especially as Jesus was actually born in Joseph's house and was at once acknowledged as his son. But more serious is the consideration that in Luke i. 27 and in the genealogies (*cf.* Luke i. 32) the Davidic descent of Jesus seems to be traced through Joseph. This has been denied, so far as the Lukan genealogy

* See Beyschlag, *Leben Jesu*, I, 150.

† *πατήρ*, in ii. 48, is not in the same category, being the word used by the mother to the boy Jesus.

and Luke i. 27 and Luke i. 33 are concerned, by B. Weiss, but his view is maintained only by a very questionable exegesis of Luke i. 27 as well as of the genealogy. It may be held as a private and pious opinion that Mary was also of the house of David (such an opinion is not excluded by the fact that she was a kinswoman of the Levite Elizabeth, Luke i. 36), and for this a good deal may be adduced, but it can never be proved from the narratives themselves. We see, then, two propositions lying side by side in the accounts of the birth: (1) Jesus is heir of the Davidic promises because He was the son of Joseph, (2) Jesus was not begotten by Joseph but of the Holy Ghost. It is hardly to be doubted that in the early Church these two propositions were both held by the same persons, viz., by the authors or redactors of the genealogies, who wrote Matt. i. 16 and Luke iii. 23 in their present form. Unless, therefore, the infancy narratives have suffered interpolation (which requires special proof), the most natural supposition is that the writers of those narratives, like the writers or redactors of the genealogies, held to both propositions—the supernatural conception and the Davidic descent through Joseph. Now if it be discovered that the two propositions are in point of fact contradictory, though the authors did not see it, then, of course, one or the other must be false, so that the narratives are not, as they stand, trustworthy. But if the two propositions are not actually contradictory, but only very difficult to harmonize (and the testimony of the writers themselves is very valuable in favor of this view of the matter, since they were better acquainted than we with ancient conditions), then the fact that the writers have made no attempt to harmonize, but have simply set down the two sides of the truth as they were handed down to them, is the best possible indication of their trustworthiness. Are the two propositions absolutely contradictory?

In attempting to answer this question, we do not for a moment try to slur over the difficulty. Indeed, we freely acknowledge that just at this point we lay our finger upon the really fundamental objection to the virgin birth, for it must be admitted that according to modern ideas, if Jesus was not the actual son of Joseph and if Mary was not of Davidic descent, then Jesus did not fulfil the conditions of the Messiah. Be it remembered, however, that the promises were made not to modern persons, but to Jews, and the promise is fulfilled if the fulfilment corresponds to the expectations of those to whom the promise was made. So in the first place, it ought to be noticed that, according to Jewish ideas, the line of descent had to be traced through the male side; this would explain why, even

if Mary had been of the house of David, still the Davidic origin of Joseph would, to Jews, have been of vital interest. Furthermore, there is evidence that among the Jews "ideas of genealogy were," as Gore expresses it, "largely *putative*," as is shown, for example, by Levirate marriage. Jesus, born of Mary and acknowledged by Joseph her husband, was Joseph's heir, and hence heir to the throne of David. But I venture to think we can go still further. E. P. Badham* has advanced the theory that the apparent contradictions in the birth narratives are explicable only on the view that the writers supposed Jesus to have been actually begotten of Joseph, but without his conscious instrumentality and in a supernatural way by the divine agency (*ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος ἁγίου*). We, of course, concur in the general rejection of this bizarre theory, yet we venture to believe that there is an element of truth in it which has been often neglected. Too often the conception from the Holy Ghost has been treated exactly like an ordinary conception, so that it is at once assumed that the relation between Joseph and Jesus was adoptive pure and simple. Rather ought we to consider that the conception of the Holy Ghost lifts the whole matter into the realm of the extraordinary and miraculous and mysterious, where rash affirmations should be avoided. I am not at all sure that we can say with certainty that Jesus was not, by the miraculous power of God, the son of Joseph and of David, in some sense far more profound than at first appears. At any rate, we must remember that the relation of Jesus to Joseph was in any case far closer than that of an ordinary adopted child, in that Joseph was more truly an earthly father of Jesus than any other human being.

We have been answering objections. Let us now, before we leave this part of the discussion, pause for a moment to emphasize one or two of the positive considerations which make for the trustworthiness of the narratives. In the first place, the restraint of the narratives is very remarkable, in contrast, for example, with the apocryphal gospels where fancy had free play. In the second place, the character of Mary would have been exceedingly difficult to invent and, in general, the picture of the circle of pious *πρωχοί* among whom the events take place is finely suited to the later development, in exhibiting a starting-point for Christ's work.† In the third place, the delicate personal touches, pointing to Mary as the source of Luke's account and perhaps to Joseph in Matthew's account, could never have been produced artificially.‡ Finally,

* *Academy*, November 17, 1894.

† Resch, *op. cit.*, 321f.

‡ C. J. H. Ropes, *Andover Review*, XIX, 698.

the purely Old Testament character of the whole narrative could never have been invented in the later period. Especially would no later writer ever have invented prophecies like the prophecies of the Messianic King, Luke i. 30ff., which did not seem to have been fulfilled, or at any rate were not fulfilled in the sense originally understood.* And then the very difficulties of the account, especially those connected with such expressions as *γενεῖς* and *πατῆρ* in view of the virgin birth, are an evidence that the author has followed fixed sources rather than allowed his invention free play, for in the latter case he could have smoothed out the rough places.

We have now arrived at the close of the first part of our discussion, namely, the examination of the hypothesis that the narratives are a true record of fact. Of course, we have not here demanded absolute verbal accuracy in the narratives, but rather have classed under this first head all opinions which explain the chief ideas in the accounts—notably the virgin birth—as due, not to myth or to invention, but to fact. If we keep in mind the strong external evidence and are unprejudiced with regard to the miraculous, we shall conclude that the objections against the trustworthiness of the accounts are not unanswerable. But it is, after all, useless to deny that there are difficulties, and grave difficulties. What we shall next have to consider, therefore, is the question whether there are not still graver difficulties against any view which explains the chief ideas in the narratives in some other way than as produced by the facts. Explanation there must be of one sort or the other.

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* Gore, *op. cit.*, 16ff.

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I.

TERTULLIAN AND THE BEGINNINGS OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY.

SECOND ARTICLE.

IN the last number of this REVIEW* it was pointed out that any approach which Tertullian may have made toward formulating a doctrine of a really immanent Trinity will be revealed by attending to the responses he makes to five questions. These questions are: (1) Whether he intends a real distinction of persons, in the philosophical sense of the term, by the distinction he makes between the divine "persons"; (2) Whether he supposes this distinction of persons to belong to the essential mode of the divine existence, or to have been constituted by those prolations of the Logos and Spirit which, according to his teaching, took place in order to the creation and government of the world; (3) Whether he preserves successfully the unity of God in the distinction of persons which he teaches; (4) Whether he conceives deity in Christ to be all that it is in the Father; and (5) Whether he accords to the Holy Spirit also both absolute deity and eternal distinctness of personality. We shall endeavor now to obtain Tertullian's responses to these questions.

(1) The interest with which we seek Tertullian's answer to the

* THE PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL REVIEW, October, 1905, pp. 529-557.

II.

THE NEW TESTAMENT ACCOUNT OF THE BIRTH OF JESUS.

SECOND ARTICLE.

HAVING discussed the hypothesis that the New Testament narratives of the birth of Jesus are to be explained as dependent upon facts, we turn now to the alternative hypothesis that the narratives arose in some other way.

Let us begin by mentioning two theories which may be distinguished from the others as being predominantly legendary rather than predominantly mythical.

Haeckel* has recently revived, with apparent seriousness, the second-century Jewish Pandera story as calling forth, in defense of the Christians, the story of the virgin birth. Haeckel's defense of his view is an even better refutation of it than the refutations by Loofs† and Hilgenfeld‡. We need pause only to observe that the universal rejection of the Pandera story in modern times is due not to its revolting nature, but to the overwhelming mass of historical evidence which is arrayed against it.

Beyschlag§ deserves somewhat more careful attention. According to him, at the time when Matthew wrote or Luke gathered his sources, any free invention of the birth story would, on Palestinian ground, have met with contradiction from the family of Jesus. Rather should we suppose that the idea, legend-like, wound itself around the fast-disappearing tradition, as an ivy about a crumbling wall, yet not so completely as to prevent our being able to discern here and there bits of the real facts. Such credible elements are the name Jesus, the stall, the census (as a cause for the crowded house, though not for the journey), the birth in Bethlehem, Symeon and Anna, the Davidic descent, the membership of Joseph and Mary in the circle of humble and pious Israelites. The course of events may have been somewhat as follows: Joseph, being a descendant of

* *Welträthsel*, neue Aufl., 375f.; E. T., 375ff.

† *Christliche Welt*, 1899, 1069f.

‡ *Zeitschrift f. wissenschaftliche Theologie*, 1900, 265f.

§ *Leben Jesu*, 3te Aufl., I, 159f.

David, and Mary, his bride, belonging also to those who were waiting quietly for the consolation of Israel, had high hopes that they themselves might be blessed with the son who should rule Israel. They therefore moved their home to Bethlehem in order that the prophecy of Micah might be literally fulfilled, but on account of some Jewish census could find no shelter except in the stable. The pious hopes for the expected child were not concealed from sympathetic pious Israelites; hence the shepherds at the manger, who had interpreted their inward joy as the song of a heavenly host. The joyful news spread to the pious in the neighboring capital; hence the greetings of Symeon and Anna. Indeed, even heathen astrologers at Herod's court heard of the child and the hopes clustering around him, and interpreted Kepler's constellation as announcing the coming of the expected Jewish world-ruler. Hence the rage of Herod and his command to kill the male infants in Bethlehem of David's race. The story of Elisabeth and John the Baptist grew up out of a carrying back of the later intimate relation between Jesus and His forerunner. The belief in the virgin birth arose solely on Jewish-Christian ground from the belief in Christ as a fresh start in humanity, determined as to form by the tradition of such children of promise as Isaac and John, and assisted by the Septuagint translation of Isaiah vii. 14.

This derivation of the doctrine of the miraculous conception is by no means peculiar to Beyschlag, and will be more conveniently considered further on; but Beyschlag's proposed account of the real events of the birth is all his own. It will hardly be necessary, I think, to refute the theory in detail, beyond merely calling attention to its artificiality—a defect which is concealed only by the ingenuity of the conception and the real beauty of the language in which it is clothed. To take only the most striking point of the whole account of Beyschlag—the reason for the journey to Bethlehem—we can at once point out its unnaturalness. For, if Joseph and Mary belonged to that circle of humble faithful folk which Beyschlag so charmingly describes, it would have been a psychological impossibility for them to hope that out of their lowly home was actually to spring the ruler of Israel. And if, as Beyschlag argues, a stable would never have been represented by the Church as the birthplace of Christ, still less would it have been the centre of Messianic hopes of Jews, whose ideas of the Messianic kingdom must, after all, have been far more external than those of Christians. Beyschlag has done a great service in pointing out the reasons why a number of the elements in the birth narratives can only be his-

torical, but he has not succeeded in showing how the other elements could have been evolved from these. Until at least some conceivable account of that evolution has been afforded us—Bey-schlag himself does not maintain that his account is in detail necessarily the correct one—we may well be skeptical as to the legendary explanation of the narratives.

Perhaps we shall find more satisfaction in a more thorough-going theory. Such a theory we certainly have in the work of Conrady.* According to him, the source of the infancy narratives of Matthew and Luke was the so-called *Protevangelium of James*, an heretical but important writing which was the first to enter the field of the early life of Jesus. Matthew performed the double function, on the one hand, of preserving and defending, and, on the other hand, of epitomizing and implicitly correcting this *Protevangelium*. Since this first attempt at using the source did not prove sufficient, Luke undertook by more radical measures so to work over the *Protevangelium* (especially in the interests of anti-docetism as against the docetism of the source), as to make subservient to the dogmatic interests of the Church a field previously fertile only for heresy. The *Protevangelium*, according to Conrady, was originally written in Hebrew, but breathes a heathen spirit, and is a poetical composition adapted from the Egyptian Osiris-Isis myth. These three writings—the *Protevangelium* and the two derivative narratives of Matthew and Luke—were the only sources current in the Church for the infancy of Jesus.

In this theory we have an extreme instance of the difficulty connected with all arguments from literary dependence. It is usually easy to discover that there is a connection between the works in question; but this connection almost always admits of reversal. It would seem, however, that in the present instance we have a case where the order is perfectly plain, though it is the reverse order from the one advocated by Conrady. No one who reads the *Protevangelium* can avoid the almost irresistible impression that the judgment of all scholars, except Conrady, is correct when they declare the *Protevangelium* to be based upon Matthew and Luke rather than *vice versa*. Everything points to a more advanced stage in the development, notably the carrying back of the miraculous element to the birth of Mary. Indeed, in the *Protevangelium* the miraculous begins to run riot, as in the later apocryphal gospels. Compare, for instance, the simple, grave account of the birth in Luke with the morbid and sensational details² of the *Protevangelium*.

* *Die Quelle der kanonischen Kindheitsgeschichte Jesus*'.

It would have required a wonderful genius to invent the account of Luke; it would have required absolutely superhuman genius to evolve it out of the *Protevangelium*. Nor is our impression of the matter much weakened by Conrady's argument* for the original character of the *Protevangelium*. The *Protevangelium* is thought to possess a marked unity, and yet to exhibit such a lordly disregard for little contradictions and difficulties as is quite in accord with the freshness and freedom of an original production. But those difficulties, notably the unexplained dumbness of the priest,† look too unmistakably like bits taken from Matthew or Luke. As for the derivation of the ideas of the *Protevangelium* from Egypt, we may well refrain from going so far afield until we have proved the simpler derivation through Matthew and Luke to be impossible. Conrady's whole complicated theory requires labored proof at every point (e.g., as to the possibility that a purely Gentile writing would be written in Hebrew), and practically every point depends upon Conrady's conclusion about what has gone before; so that the chances that the final result is correct are very slight. It is not likely that Conrady will ever change what he confesses is the universal opinion of scholars.‡

Somewhat related to the theory of Conrady is that of Reitzenstein,§ who, like Conrady, supposes that there was a common source at the basis of our two narratives and, like Conrady, looks to Egypt for important elements in his scheme. Reitzenstein's theory is founded largely upon a poorly preserved Egyptian fragment of about the sixth century, which contains in the first part the dialogue between the angel and Mary in a different form from the one given by Luke. The Egyptian fragment, Reitzenstein argues, cannot be derived from the narrative of Luke, for on that theory the differences cannot well be explained, whereas Luke's narrative is in itself incomprehensible and clearly secondary. Rather the fragment was derived from a gospel other than the one we now possess. A notable difference from Luke is the omission of *συλλήμψη ἐν γαστρὶ* in the promise of the angel. These words being omitted, Mary would naturally, in accordance with ancient usage, understand *κεχαριτωμένη, εὔρης χάριν παρὰ τῶ θεῶ*

* *Op. cit.*, 207f.

† See Hilgenfeld, *Zeitschrift f. wissenschaftliche Theologie*, 1901, 196.

‡ In criticism of Conrady, see Hilgenfeld, *op. cit.*, 186f. and elsewhere in the course of the article; T. Allan Hoben, *Am. J. Theol.*, VI, 476ff.; J. Weiss, *Theologische Rundschau*, 1898, 158, 159; cf. Holtzmann, *Theolog. Literaturzeitung*, 1901, 135f.

§ *Zwei religionsgeschichtliche Fragen nach ungedruckten griechischen Texten der Strassburger Bibliothek*, 112f.

and $\tau\acute{\epsilon}\xi\eta$ $\nu\acute{\iota}\acute{\omicron}\nu$ to mean that she was already pregnant. Her question, therefore (appearing in the form $\pi\acute{\omicron}\theta\epsilon\nu$ $\mu\omicron\iota$ $\tau\omicron\upsilon\delta\tau\omicron$ $\gamma\epsilon$ [$\nu\acute{\eta}\sigma\epsilon\tau\alpha\iota$, $\acute{\epsilon}\pi\epsilon\iota$ $\acute{\alpha}\nu\delta\rho\alpha$ $\omicron\delta$ $\gamma\iota\nu\acute{\omega}\sigma\tau\omega$],) becomes perfectly natural, whereas in the narrative of Luke, where the conception is put in the indefinite future, the question is meaningless.* This representation that the narrative of the annunciation is itself a narrative of the conception—a representation which appears in Origen, in those early Christian documents which speak of a conception from the Logos, and notably in a prayer discovered at Gizeh†—Reitzenstein brings into connection with that contemporary religious idea according to which one God produces another through his speech.‡ Starting with this religious idea, Reitzenstein says, the writer of the gospel from which the fragment is derived constructed the first account of the conception; his account, however, was often misunderstood, and two examples of such misunderstanding appear in our canonical narratives. In Matthew the miracle is announced only after it has happened, whereas in the original account it was in indissoluble connection with the annunciation itself. In Luke the miracle is announced beforehand, to bring it into parallel with the case of John the Baptist. In both cases the original significance of the annunciation is lost.

To this theory one obvious objection is the late date of Reitzenstein's fragment, as compared with our canonical Gospels. Even Reitzenstein himself seems to be unable to trace back the gospel upon which the fragment is based to a date earlier than the last part of the second century,§ and our canonical Gospels certainly cannot be put so late. Nor does the fragment, as interpreted by Reitzenstein, bear such indisputable internal evidence of its primary character as Reitzenstein seems to attribute to it. For example, Mary understands the words of the angel to mean that she is already pregnant, yet the angel takes care to inform her that the wonder is dependent upon her consent; in which rather intricate progress of the narrative the steps are by no means clearly marked.|| In general, we must say that entirely too much is built upon a meagre foundation for the theory ever to attain the solidity of proved fact. The fragment in question is itself very badly preserved, so that, even from the outset, much has to be left to conjecture. For example, the

* Cf. below, 57.

† Jacoby, *Ein neues Evangelienfragment*.

‡ Reitzenstein, *op. cit.*, 124, 83.

§ *Op. cit.*, 126.

|| See Anrich, *Theolog. Litteraturzeitung*, 1902, 304, 305.

most fundamental thing of all is that the fragment does not contain the words *συλλήγμψῆ ἐν γαστροί*; yet there is a gap at the proper place. The gap is thought not to be large enough—very probably it is not large enough. But the fact remains that, even in such a fundamental point, we are not dealing with definite certainty. Or suppose (as indeed seems probable) that the words *συλλήγμψῆ*, etc., were omitted. Even then, it is by no means even certain that the author had any different view of the annunciation from that of Luke, for the omission might well have arisen merely from loose quoting. Indeed *συλλήγμψῆ* in connection with *τέξῆ* may have almost seemed like unnecessary fulness of expression, so that one of the phrases may easily have been omitted. If we find reasons for doubt at the very basis, how much more in the remoter conclusions—for example, that Matthew as well as Luke represents a weakening of the original account. However interesting Reitzenstein's fragment may be, it has accomplished nothing toward solving the vexed problem of the sources of our canonical infancy narratives. From this it follows that it has accomplished nothing toward explaining the origin of those narratives. For they in themselves contain no hint of that religious idea of creation by the Word; therefore we have no reason to regard them as attempts to embody that idea in narrative form.

We have mentioned first the theories of Beyschlag, Conrady, and Reitzenstein, because they are, after all, sporadic and peculiar, and may best be put aside before we begin to investigate more widely accepted theories which may be said to constitute the general trend of recent investigation. To this more serious task we now address ourselves.

We have attempted to show that the accounts whose mythical or legendary origin is to be explained are, so far as external evidence can show, parts of two very early Christian writings, the first and third Gospels. Now, since this fact, by making more probable an early date for the infancy narratives, greatly increases the difficulty of explaining the evolution of their ideas, it is natural to expect that recent criticism should here, as elsewhere, have recourse to divisive hypotheses, in order to weaken the force of the external evidence. Nor is the expectation without fulfilment. To the development of these divisive hypotheses several logical motives have contributed.

In the first place, as we have just hinted, if the virgin birth cannot be a fact, then the origin of a belief in it can be better explained if we put the first witness of such a belief at a late date. But against

such a late date is the external testimony to the Gospels. The mythical explanation is therefore much easier if it can be shown that the account of the virgin birth was no part of the original Gospels.

In the second place, as we have already seen, one of the chief arguments against the virgin birth is that it is contradicted by the rest of the New Testament, which traces the Davidic descent through Joseph. But the remarkable fact is that this supposed contradiction appears every whit as strong within the first and third Gospels themselves, as between those Gospels and the rest of the New Testament. So if those Gospels were each written throughout by the same men, then plainly these authors, at least, did not regard the thing as a contradiction at all; so that we cannot say that by emphasizing the Davidic sonship or calling Joseph the father of Jesus those other writers meant to exclude the virgin birth, any more than Matthew and Luke meant to exclude it by doing the selfsame thing. So if the "contradiction" is to be used as an argument against the virgin birth, it is very desirable to show that the writers of those portions of the first and third Gospels which recount the virgin birth were not the same as the writers who trace the Davidic descent through Joseph and call Joseph the father of Jesus.

In the third place, the task of those scholars who deny the fact of the virgin birth is not merely to show that the belief may have arisen somewhere or other in the world of those days, but specifically to show that it could have been accepted by the particular authors who actually record it, or by their sources. If, therefore, it is desired, for example, to regard the belief as of Gentile origin, though it is actually recorded in distinctly Jewish narratives, the easiest way out of the difficulty would be to show that the record of it is no original part of those narratives, but is an interpolation.

It is also very advantageous, in the fourth place, for those who deny the fact of the virgin birth to show that its attestation is not really twofold, as it seems to be. But in view of the manifest independence of the infancy narratives, this can be done only by showing that the notice about the virgin birth is, in at least one of the narratives, an interpolation.

These four considerations, we believe, represent the four chief logical motives for the rise of recent theories of interpolation with regard to the birth narratives. But we do not for a moment mean to imply that these are the chief or the only grounds by which those theories have been supported. True, some recent writers have taken liberties with the text merely on the ground of preconceived views about the whole course of mythical development. But

others, more cautious, have attempted to ground their theories in arguments which, while devoid of external support, are yet ostensibly, at least, definitely based upon a fair and minute examination of the text itself. It is this latter kind of argument which we should first examine.

In the Gospel of Luke, i. 5-ii. 52 seems to form a section in itself, and is prefixed to the account of Christ's public ministry, which begins in Luke as in the other Synoptists with the baptism. It is therefore not surprising that critics have seized upon this whole section as a later addition to the Gospel. In this case, however, no argument for regarding the section as an interpolation can be drawn from the account of the virgin birth in itself, as contradicting the rest of the Gospel, which traces the Davidic descent through Joseph. For that contradiction, if it be a contradiction, appears in some respects in an even more striking form within the birth narrative itself than between the birth narrative and the rest of the Gospel.* But certain other arguments have been offered:

1. Hilgenfeld argues that the prologue of the third Gospel, so far from pointing to the section i. 5-ii. 52 (*ἄνωθεν* ver. 3), actually excludes it, for the things "fulfilled among us" (*i.e.*, in Christianity), the things which had been related by eye-witnesses, could begin only with the baptism of Jesus, since before that time there was no Christianity nor was there any chance for eye-witnessing.

Hilgenfeld is right that *ἄνωθεν* does not strictly require that Luke should begin his narrative further back than at the point where the "many" others (ver. 1) had taken up the story, for the *ἄνωθεν* may simply be taken with *καθεξῆς* to express the one thought of orderliness or historical method. Yet it is too much to say that the birth narrative is excluded. For, in the first place, as Zimmermann has hinted,† it is altogether arbitrary to limit the *ἐν ἡμῖν* to things done after the baptism. *Τῶν πεπληροφορημένων ἐν ἡμῖν πραγμάτων* cannot be interpreted in a narrower sense than "Christian facts" (if even that much be admitted), and among "Christian facts" it is very natural to include everything that could possibly be learned about the life of the founder, to whose very person, and not merely to whose work, was attributed such supreme importance by the writer of the Gospel—especially if that writer was a Paulinist as Hilgenfeld so vigorously insists. Further, we cannot admit that *ἄνωθεν* is even merely neutral; for *ἄνωθεν* and *καθεξῆς* and the whole sense of the prologue indicate an historical purpose, a desire to

* See Luke i. 27, 32; ii. 4, 33, 41, 43.

† *Theologische Studien und Kritiken*, 1903, 264.

search out all that could be learned; and such a spirit of investigation would never be satisfied with beginning the narrative abruptly at Jesus' thirtieth year, if there were any who could tell from personal experience or through eye-witnesses what had gone before. It seems to me that this is rather confirmed than otherwise by the words *οἱ ἀπ' ἀρχῆς αὐτόπται καὶ ὑπηρέται γενόμενοι τοῦ λόγου*. It seems to have been the author's fixed purpose to obtain his information not merely from eye-witnesses, but from eye-witnesses whose testimony extended as far back as possible.

2. Hilgenfeld's argument that the chronological data in i. 5, ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις Ἡρώδου βασιλέως, and in iii. 1, 23 are contradictory shatters upon the little word ὡσεὶ in iii. 23. If Jesus was *about* thirty years old, He may well have been a year or so older than that round number indicates.*

3. Hilgenfeld argues† that John the Baptist is introduced in Luke iii. 2 as if for the first time (cf. Luke v. 10), because he is defined by the name of his father. The reader of Luke i, says Hilgenfeld, would have no need to be told which John was meant.

If anything, the argument may be turned around, for it would be just the reader of Luke i, who would be interested in the name of the father, and to whom just that detail rather than the baptizing activity of John (Matthew, Mark) could be assumed as known; and it would be just the writer of Luke i, who would be able to supply the father's name. Furthermore, the fact that John was in the desert is introduced incidentally, in a way which seems to imply acquaintance with Luke i. 80.‡

4. According to Corsen,§ the Logos in Luke's prologue is the personal Logos, and his appearance upon the earth (the "beginning" of the Word) was the baptism, when God said to His Son, "This day have I begotten thee." With this agrees the absolute ἀρχόμενος in iii. 23 and Acts i. 21, 22. ὡσεὶ (i. 23) is to be taken in a strictly comparative sense: the Logos appeared in the form of a man of thirty years.

The difficulties connected with this view are of course apparent. In the first place, it rests upon the more than doubtful reading of the Western text in iii. 22, "This day have I begotten thee." In the second place, to interpret ὡσεὶ as comparative is here impossible, because it comes in close conjunction with a numeral, where no one would think of any other meaning than the common meaning,

* See Zimmermann, *op. cit.*, 264, 265.

† *Zeitschrift f. wiss. Theologie*, 1901, 466-468.

‡ Cf. Zimmermann, *op. cit.*, 265.

§ *Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen*, 1899, 310f.

“about.” The ἀρχόμενος (iii. 23) indicates “the beginning of the Word” only if we allow Corssen’s reading in iii. 22 and his interpretation of the baptism. If we interpret the baptism as the beginning of Jesus’ Messianic work, rather than as the beginning of His divine Sonship, then the ἀρχόμενος evidently refers to the same thing. So ἀρχόμενος proves nothing in itself. Nor does Acts i. 21, 22, give it any added force, for there it is a question merely of the conditions necessary for apostleship. To be an apostle a man had to have been a disciple of Jesus only from the baptism, because before that Jesus had had no disciples.

Nor does the elaborate attempt (Luke iii. 1) to fix the date of the baptism necessarily prove (even in comparison with the method of Thucydides) that that was what Luke desired to fix as the “beginning” mentioned in the prologue. Perhaps the reason he did not so elaborately fix the date of what is recorded in i. 5ff. is that he did not there happen to possess such complete information. In any case, the baptism, even if not the beginning of the whole history, was surely an event important enough to lead a historian like Luke, writing for Gentiles and Romans, to give as complete chronological details as his sources would permit.

5. In Acts i. 1, the Gospel of Luke is described as a treatise concerning all that Jesus began to do and to teach until He was taken up. In this *ποιεῖν τε καὶ διδάσκειν*, says Hilgenfeld, the narrative of Luke i. 5-ii. 52 cannot be included; therefore those first two chapters were no part of the “former treatise.”

But we must remember that Luke is at the beginning of Acts characterizing his former treatise as a whole and as contrasted (*μέγ*) with the history to follow. From such a point of view, it might well be described in general terms as an account of Jesus’ earthly activity, even though it contained some introductory matter necessary to explain that earthly life. In a modern biography, we do not think it strange to find at the beginning a description of the state of affairs at the birth of its subject, or an account of family-relations for some generations back. Furthermore, as Zimmermann points out, we cannot, even on Hilgenfeld’s theory, interpret the *ποιεῖν τε καὶ διδάσκειν* too strictly, for even the main part of the Gospel contains an account of events where Jesus was not the agent—*e.g.*, the preaching of the Baptist. Finally, if Hilgenfeld’s view is correct, it is rather remarkable that in Acts i. 1 we do not find the baptism mentioned as the *terminus a quo* as in Acts i. 22.*

* The foregoing enumeration of the objections to chaps. i, ii, is that of Zimmermann, *op. cit.*, 263f. I have also followed him to a great extent in the answers given.

Thus far we have not mentioned what at first sight seems to be the most striking indication that i. 5–ii. 52 was no part of the original Gospel—namely, the striking contrast in the style and diction of this section, both with the prologue on the one hand, and with what follows it on the other. It is one of the commonplaces of New Testament investigation that at Luke i. 4, 5, the most flowing Greek period and perhaps the most strongly Hebraistic section of the New Testament come together. Yet from this undoubted fact no conclusion can at once be drawn against the genuineness of the infancy section, for it is possible that in i. 5–ii. 52, Luke was so closely following a source that he refrained from changing its style and diction. This explanation is the more probable because the contrast between i. 5–ii. 52 and what follows is by no means so great as between that section and the prologue. It is an undoubted fact that in the admittedly original part of the Gospel, the author has allowed the style of the source to color the narrative. Therefore, he may well be carrying out the same method a little more fully in the infancy section. The difference would be one of degree, not of kind. But this is not all. Harnack* has argued that the Magnificat and the sections ii. 15–20, 41–52 (the latter two being chosen because of the difference of the subject-matter from the rest of the Gospel and Acts) exhibit specifically Lukan characteristics of style; and Harnack's investigation has been completed for the rest of the infancy section by Zimmermann,† with a similar result. Now with reference to the Magnificat, Spitta‡ has undoubtedly pointed out a serious defect in Harnack's method. Harnack has picked out the Old Testament passages upon which he supposes the Magnificat to rest, and has then extracted from the song the fourteen words which were not given by these passages. These words, he argues, are Lukan. Spitta's general criticism is that we cannot be certain enough that just Harnack's Old Testament passages and no others were consciously or unconsciously in the mind of the author of the song. So that if we find that Harnack's fourteen words are common in the Septuagint, we can scarcely draw any sure conclusion as to the Lukan authorship. But even if we allow to this objection its full weight, it does not vitiate the whole argument of Harnack and Zimmermann; for the method objected to is not carried through the other passages examined, or at any rate is not

* *Sitzungsberichte der königlich preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, 1900, 538–556.

† *Op. cit.*, 250f.

‡ *Theologische Abhandlungen für Holtzmann*, 78f.

fundamental there. Indeed, the cumulative evidence adduced for the linguistic affinity of the birth narrative with the other Lukan writings must, I think, be pronounced very convincing—far too convincing to allow us to stop short with the hypothesis of a common redactor merely. It seems highly probable that the writer of the Gospel and of Acts impressed his style upon the infancy narrative, although not so as to destroy the strongly Semitic character of the language of that section.

Of course there are several possible ways of explaining these facts. In the first place, we might say with Harnack that the Semitic coloring and Old Testament spirit of i. 5–ii. 52 are due largely to the conscious art of the writer, rather than to a close adherence to Semitic sources.* But I do not think we should by any means go so far as to suppose that Luke, in possession, on the one hand, of a certain unadorned tradition, and acquainted, on the other hand, in a general way with Jewish modes of expression, went deliberately to work artificially to mould that tradition into the language best suited to the time and place described. For example, it is highly improbable that Luke actually composed the Magnificat, as Harnack maintains. Rather should we say that in the first two chapters of the Gospel the author must be closely reproducing Palestinian tradition. It is not certain that that tradition was given to him in anything more than oral form; for it does not seem too much to expect that Luke should have had literary discernment enough to catch the charm of the beautiful Jewish stories and literary ability enough not to spoil that charm in the writing. But in view of the strongly Semitic character of the language, and the still more Semitic and strictly Jewish character of the thought, it is an impossibility to suppose that Luke was the actual composer of the stories, as Pfeiderer has contended. That would attribute to him too much historical sense and dramatic art for any historian of any time; much more for a historian possessing the characteristics of Luke and living at the time when he lived. Indeed, after all, the general effect of the section will probably always be such as to suggest to most minds that the author is using a written source, and a source which could have arisen only on Palestinian ground, and in circles where the ancient Jewish traditions and aspirations were preserved in their purest form. The linguistic data collected by Zimmermann point very strongly to the use of an Aramaic document, for how else but upon the theory of translation can we explain the distinctly Lukan character of the superficial coloring as against the yet more dis-

* Cf. Pfeiderer, *Urchristenthum*, 1te Aufl., 416f.

tinctly Jewish character of the warp and woof? This, however, we must leave undecided. The special arguments for the theory of translation as given by Zimmermann* do not prove the matter, though they may show that that theory explains very satisfactorily at least some of the facts.† However, we may regard it as proved that Luke i. 5-ii. 52 follows closely a Jewish Christian source, which, if not written in Aramaic, was yet thoroughly Palestinian in character. But the linguistic characteristics of the section rather favor than oppose the view that the source was used by the author of the rest of the Gospel.

One other argument against the genuineness of our section remains to be considered—namely, the argument of Hilgenfeld that in the first two sections certain un-Pauline ideas are emphasized, such as the obligation of the law (ii. 22, 23, 39), righteousness of works (i. 6, 15, 75, ii. 25), the throne of David and the eternal kingdom over the house of Jacob (i. 32, 33); things which could never have been added to the Gospel by the Paulinist Luke. But, in the first place, Hilgenfeld's objection rules out of court on purely *à priori* grounds the view that the author in writing his narrative may have consulted the facts or the sources as well as his own dogmatic prepossessions. It is not impossible that a Paulinist should have written i. 5-ii. 52, unless it is impossible that a Paulinist should have desired to tell the truth—and the latter proposition is not so self-evident as Hilgenfeld and others of his school seem to suppose. In the second place, Hilgenfeld supposes that the redactor who added the two songs (with certain Pauline alterations, i. 55*b*, 73*a*, 76-79), and joined the whole narrative to the Gospel, was himself a Paulinist. It is not clear why, if the second Paulinist could do that, the first one, or the writer of the Gospel, could not have done it just as well. So Hilgenfeld's theory, aside from its other defects, is hardly consistent.

The first question, then, we may regard as settled. There are no good solid reasons for regarding i. 5-ii. 52 as an interpolation. Furthermore, in settling this question, we have incidentally established the fact that the narrative in i. 5-ii. 52 is of distinctly Jewish-Christian origin‡—a fact which we shall find to be of great importance.

The attempts to separate Luke i. from Luke ii, or to separate their sources,§ may be at once dismissed as devoid of evidence.

* *Op. cit.*, 268f.

† Against the theory of translation, see Wernle, *Synoptische Frage*, 102.

‡ Cf. Feine, *Eine vorkanonische Ueberlieferung des Lukas*, 13f.

§ *E.g.*, by Schmiedel, *Encyclopadia Biblica*, art. *Mary*, § 12.

Holtzmann* argues that Nazareth, Joseph and Mary are mentioned in ii. 4 ff. as though these names were not already known from i. 26, 27; but really the manner of repetition is perfectly natural as taking up the narrative where it had been dropped. So Luke ii. 4, 5, seems, if anything, rather to presuppose a previous mention of Joseph and Mary. Joseph's Davidic descent is introduced again in order to explain the journey. Moreover, the view in question is directly contradicted by ii. 21b ("which was so called by the angel before he was conceived in the womb"), where i. 31 is referred to. So Schmiedel is obliged to regard this clause (ii. 21b) as added when the two chapters were put together—a purely artificial expedient to bolster up a baseless theory. The two chapters are closely connected so far as style and diction are concerned, and have other things in common. For example, the same character is attributed in both chapters to Mary, and in both she is given a peculiarly prominent position in the narrative.

Far more serious is the attempt to exhibit i. 34, 35, as an interpolation; indeed it is against these two verses that the chief attack of all has been directed. Among those who have argued against the original presence of the two verses in the context where they now stand may be mentioned Hillmann,† Usener, J. Weiss (with a little hesitation), Harnack, Zimmermann, Schmiedel, Pfeiderer and Conybeare, to say nothing of others who less deserve mention, because they make little attempt to ground their objections to the verses upon anything more definite than their general theories of mythical or legendary development. The integrity of the passage has been defended by Hilgenfeld and Clemen,‡ as well as by "conservative" scholars.

First, we must remind ourselves that there is no external evidence whatever for regarding vers. 34, 35, as an interpolation. Conybeare, it is true, emphasizes the reading in MS. *b* which substitutes ver. 38 for ver. 34 and omits ver 38 (εἰπερ . . . τὸ ῥήμα) from its proper place: but that may have been a mere blunder in transcription, especially as the two verses begin alike, "dixit autem Maria" (Headlam). Or perhaps the change might have been made by the scribe to save Mary from the appearance of unbelief. The testimony of John of Damascus to the omission of the phrase "seeing I know

* *Hand-Commentar*, on Luke ii. 5.

† Hillmann, *Jahrb. f. protest. Theol.*, 1891, 213f., first developed the argument for the interpolation theory, though Holtzmann (*Hand-Commentar*) seems to have made the first suggestion.

‡ Hilgenfeld, *Zeitschrift f. wiss. Theol.*, 1901, 199f., 313f.; Clemen, *Theolog. Literaturzeitung*, 1902, 299.

not a man" in some Greek codices is too late to be of great importance. Conybeare* claims the authority of Tischendorf (8th ed.) for the omission of vers. 34, 35, in the *Protevangelium of James*. But the facts are that the *Protevangelium*, though it omits ver. 34 in this context, substitutes what is rather an elaboration of that verse (*Εἰ ἐγὼ συλλήμφομαι ὡς πᾶσα γυνὴ γεννᾷ*), and actually contains the greater part of ver. 35.† That Conybeare can claim Tischendorf for his view about the *Protevangelium* seems to be due, as Headlam has pointed out, to a surprising misunderstanding of Tischendorf's notes, which arose from not looking under ver. 31 as well as under ver. 34.‡

The evidence for the interpolation theory must therefore be purely internal evidence.

In the first place, we must at once dismiss the argument§ that since the fatherhood of the Spirit of God [?] would suit very badly a purely Jewish Christian source (רוח being feminine, and the Jewish conception of God being transcendental), and since the basis of Luke i, ii, was such a source, therefore vers. 34, 35, could not have stood originally in their present place. This argument proves that a conception from the Holy Spirit, or a birth described in such terms as even to suggest the personal Holy Spirit as Father, would never have been invented on Jewish ground; but it does not prove that it may not have been recorded in a Jewish-Christian narrative if it were a fact. What we are just now trying to do is simply to lay the basis for future investigation by estimating the narrower and more solid grounds for supposing the whole or portions of the birth narratives to be interpolations—grounds which will hold firm upon any general theory of early Christian history. There are many who suppose the doctrine of the virgin birth, assuming it to be untrue, to have arisen on Jewish-Christian ground, and they may appeal, among other things, to the strongly Jewish character of the records. Against such scholars it is begging the question to say that since the doctrine of the virgin birth must be of Gentile origin, therefore it must be an interpolation where it finds a place in Jewish narratives.

It is further urged that i. 34, 35, is not merely without corroboration from the rest of the infancy narrative, but is even contradicted by it; for the whole of the first two chapters except our two verses

* *Guardian*, March 18, 1903.

† See Chap. xi.

‡ See Conybeare, *Guardian*, 1903, March 4, March 18, April 1, etc.; and against him, Headlam, *Guardian* of the same year, March 11, March 25, April 8.

§ Cf. Zimmermann, *op. cit.*, 274.

proceeds upon the supposition that Jesus was the son of Joseph and traces his Davidic descent through him. We freely admit (though in contradiction to B. Weiss) that in i. 27 ἐξ οἴκου Δαυειδ must almost certainly be taken with Ἰωσήφ rather than with παρθένου, for on any other interpretation the manner of addition of τῆς παρθένου is very hard to explain. So that when the angel (ver. 32) calls David father of the coming child, it seems most natural that his words should be understood of a descent through Joseph. The emphasis on Joseph's Davidic descent rather than on that of Mary in ii. 4, however, proves nothing, for it was the man only who would be considered as determining the place of enrolment. But if the Davidic descent of Mary is presupposed, surprisingly little emphasis is placed upon it, for, as has been observed, in the only place where anything is clearly said about her family relations (i. 36) she is called kinswoman of the Levite Elisabeth. The repeated occurrence of such words as γονεῖς, applied to Joseph and Mary; and πατήρ, applied to Joseph, has already been noticed; but these two terms do not necessarily imply anything more than that there was really an adoptive relation between Joseph and Jesus, and that Jesus before the world was regarded as an actual son. The failure to refer to i. 35 in ii. 21 proves absolutely nothing,* for any such reference would have made the sentence extremely clumsy. Nor is the phrase "their cleansing" in ii. 22 very convincing. It is quite in line with a good many things connected with the life of Christ, e.g., the baptism of a sinless man. As to the failure of Mary to understand, or her astonishment at what was said about the child by Symeon and Anna and by the boy Jesus Himself, even Zimmermann admits that this has little bearing upon the question of the original presence of i. 34, 35, in the narrative. The astonishment of the parents was due to the fact that Symeon and Anna and the boy Jesus were found to be possessed of the secret of the Messiahship. Only thus, according to Zimmermann, can the passages be explained, whether the parents knew about the supernatural conception or only about the Messiahship of their son.

In general, we can say that it is unreasonable to expect that the account of the supernatural conception should be repeated again and again. In a narrative it is enough that it should be given once, whatever might be true of a dogmatic treatise. Yet, after all, we do not desire to depreciate the force of the argument against the two verses, derived from the silence or seeming contradiction of the rest of the story; for although that argument may not prove the

* Against Zimmermann, *op. cit.*, 280.

verses to be an interpolation, it will do much to render us hospitable to other proofs. If we really find that in the rest of the first two chapters there is not the slightest hint that might point to the virgin birth, or that there is a good deal that seems almost directly to deny it, we shall be very much disposed to look with suspicion upon the only two verses that tell of such a remarkable event. As a matter of fact, however, this is not the case.

In the first place, i. 27 deserves the most careful attention. We there read in the clearest terms that Mary was a virgin when the announcement was made to her by the angel. Now, since there is no subsequent mention of a marriage to Joseph, the natural conclusion is that in i. 27 we have a preparation for i. 34, 35.* To avoid this conclusion two expedients have been adopted. In the first place, Usener suggests that the redactor has left out a statement (which originally came after ver. 38) that Joseph took Mary to wife and that she conceived by him. But that is a mere supposition. In the second place, Harnack supposes that the word *παρθένος* in i. 27 is an interpolation made by the same redactor who added vers. 34, 35. For, he says, the word *ἐμνηστευμένη* in ii. 5 can only mean "wife," so that the same author could never have written a few verses back *παρθένον ἐμνηστευμένην*. One of the words must be removed, and the most natural one to remove is, of course, *παρθένον*. But this really begs the question. For *ἐμνηστευμένη* in ii. 5 means simply "wife" only on the supposition that i. 34, 35, are to be deleted—which is exactly the thing to be proved. Nor is the removal of the mention of the virginity of Mary from i. 27 at all an easy task, for the word *παρθένος* occurs twice (*παρθένον, παρθένου*), and is indissolubly connected with the very structure of the sentence.† Whatever may be said about the ease with which the two verses, i. 34, 35, taken by themselves, may be removed; if the removal of those verses necessarily requires another deletion, which, far from being equally easy, is so harsh as to be practically impossible, then the former deletion must be seriously re-considered.

Harnack's argument has led us to the second chief reference to the two verses in question. In ii. 5 we find the phrase *τῆ ἐμνηστευμένη ἀδελφῆ ὁσση ἐν κόβω*—a phrase absolutely inexplicable unless i. 34, 35, is referred to. For, after all, if the author had meant "wife," he would certainly have said "wife"—at any rate, he certainly would

* See Hilgenfeld, *Zeitschrift f. wiss. Theol.*, 1901, 314, 315.

† Cf. Bardenhewer, *Biblische Zeitschrift*, 1905, 158, Anm. 3.

not have used ἐμνηστευμένη in conjunction with ἐκύω.* So evident is this that most of those scholars who regard i. 34, 35, as an interpolation can overcome the difficulty only by choosing the reading γυναικι instead of ἐμνηστευμένη in ii. 5. The external testimony is briefly as follows: γυναικι is omitted altogether by \aleph B C* D L Ξ , 1, 131, c, f, q**^{sax.} sah. copt. syr.^{sah.} arm. γυναικι is added after αὐτῶ by A C² Γ Δ 1, 1, q*, vg. goth. syr.^p aeth. γυναικι is read without a preceding ἐμνηστευμένη or corresponding word by the Latin manuscripts a, b, c, ff², and by syr.^{sin.} The reading with both ἐμνηστευμένη and γυναικι is evidently to be dismissed at once as a mixed reading. Now of course this leaves the overwhelming manuscript authority in favor of ἐμνηστ without γυναικι, and this authority has been followed by Tischendorf (8th ed.), WH, Baljon, etc. Some scholars, however, have argued that γυναικι represents the original reading, on the ground that γυναικι might easily have been changed into ἐμνηστ for dogmatic reasons, whereas there would have been no ground for an Ebionitic alteration of ἐμνηστ.† But it is not necessary to think of an Ebionitic alteration, since ἐμνηστ might easily have given offense on account of the difficulty of conceiving of Mary as only betrothed when she made the journey with Joseph, as well as on account of Matt. i. 24, where it is said that Joseph took Mary to wife. Also Matt. i. 20 may have had an influence.‡ Therefore, in view of the preponderance of the external testimony for the omission of γυναικι, it is almost as violent a change to insert it as it is to delete the words παρθένον and παρθένου in i. 27.

The important point to observe is that i. 27 and ii. 5 (to say nothing of passages which seem to attribute a peculiar importance to Mary rather than Joseph, and to say nothing of i. 41 where Elisabeth seems to greet Mary as already mother of the Lord) rest as dead weights upon any theory which separates i. 34, 35, from the context. The theory must have exceedingly strong independent support if it is not to break down under the strain. We now examine that independent support.

Harnack§ has enumerated as many as ten arguments for regard-

* Whether the writer actually had in mind exactly the relationship described in Matt. i. 24 remains uncertain. Here we are only interested in observing that whatever ἐμνηστευμένη meant to the author, it did not mean to him simply γυναικι. To us it means naturally "wife," in the sense of Matt. i. 24. See Weiss, *Meyer*, 9te Aufl. on Luke ii. 5.

† See Hillmann, *op. cit.*, 216f.

‡ Cf. Hilgenfeld, *Zeitschrift f. wiss. Theol.*, 1901, 314; B. Weiss, *Meyer*, 9te Aufl. on Luke ii. 5.

§ *Zeitschrift f. d. neut. Wissenschaft*, 1901, 53-57.

ing i. 34, 35, as an interpolation. Let us briefly examine them to see whether they are as formidable in quality as they are in quantity.*

1. In vers. 34, 35, we find the particles *ἐπεὶ* and *διό*, one of which, *διό*, stands a number of times in Acts, but only once in the third Gospel, while *ἐπεὶ* (according to the best text of Luke vii. 1) occurs nowhere else in the Lukan writings. Harnack concludes that i. 34, 35, betrays a non-Lukan diction, and is therefore an interpolation.

To derive any argument from *διό* is plainly to rely too much upon "the constancy of the use of particles in the Gospel of Luke," especially since we have one other case where the word occurs. As to *ἐπεὶ*, it will be enough to remark that it is rash to attribute too much weight to one word in an argument from diction, especially in view of the Lukan expressions which Zimmermann has pointed out in the two verses.† Of course, too, Harnack's argument from the non-Lukan character of *ἐπεὶ* depends on the correctness of his opinion that Luke was the *author* (rather than merely the translator or redactor) of the first two chapters. And even if Luke was the author, yet it is not unlikely that his source may have here and there exerted an influence on his diction, in particulars such as these particles where he usually followed his own habits.

2. The conversation in i. 34, 35, unduly separates *καὶ ἰδοὺ συλλήμψῃ* in ver. 31 from the corresponding *καὶ ἰδοὺ Ἐλισάβετ ἡ συγγενὴς σου καὶ ἀδελφὴ συνείληφεν* (ver. 36).

An argument of this kind cannot have much independent weight, because prose style is seldom perfectly regular.

3. Ver. 35 is a doublet of vers. 31, 32, and is in part inconsistent with those verses. In vers. 31–33 Jesus is called son of David and son of the highest; in ver. 35 He is called son of God, because He is that through His birth. If the writer had had in his mind the "son of God" of ver. 35, he would have omitted the "son of the highest" and the "David his father" of vers. 31–33.

As Hilgenfeld has pointed out, though *οὐδὲς ὕψιστος* does not require any such thing as is described in ver. 35, yet it by no means excludes it. And the mention of the "throne of his father David" simply indicates that the promise was put in Old Testament terms, though the promise of the everlasting reign perhaps points to an explanation to follow (Hilgenfeld). Even if the Davidic descent through Joseph is really incompatible with i. 34, 35, that does not prove that those two verses are an interpolation, for if the redactor

* For the criticism of Harnack's arguments, cf. Bardenhewer, *op. cit.*, 158f.

† Zimmermann, *op. cit.*, 256.

did not feel the contradiction, perhaps the original author did not. After all, the thing is largely a question of taste. Perhaps Hilgenfeld, who sees a well-conceived progress in the whole passage, is as well entitled to his opinion as is Harnack, who sees in it only a pair of clumsily joined doublets. Wernle* (with a different purpose) argues along the same lines as Hilgenfeld, pointing to Ignatius and to the readings of Syr^{sin} in Matt. i as showing that a part of the ancient Christians could think of "from the seed of David" and "from the Holy Ghost" together without offense. So perhaps the double interpretation of divine sonship would not be regarded as contradiction but as climax. It is therefore by no means necessary to follow B. Weiss in regarding ver. 35 (διδὸ καὶ . . . υἱὸς θεοῦ) as supplied by the Evangelist. Probably the meaning of υἱὸς θεοῦ in connection with what precedes should not be pressed too far. On any view, however, ver. 35 would make Jesus υἱὸς θεοῦ, even though He might also have been called that on less definite grounds.

4. The words in vers. 36, 37 (pointing to the example of Elisabeth), obtain a good sense only if no mention of a conception by the working of the Holy Spirit has gone before; for if the most wonderful thing of all has already been promised, then it is weak and not convincing to point in support to Elisabeth's conception in her old age.

This, so far from being a support for Harnack's position, is really an argument against it. There could, in the nature of the case, be no parallel for the unique miracle. But what the angel could do was to point to a miracle which was at least sufficient to illustrate the general principle that οὐκ ἄδυνατήσσει παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ πᾶν βήμα.† And it is almost necessarily required for the logic of the passage that the greater event in which the belief was solicited, should be in the same sphere with the example used. If merely vers. 31-33 had gone before, then we should expect that the angel would point rather to the promised career of John than to something miraculous in his birth, to which miracle there was to be no counterpart in the case of Jesus. Zimmermann admits the weakness of the argument drawn from vers. 36, 37, against the integrity of the passage; but I must go still further. To me it will always be a mystery how the argument ever came to be formulated from vers. 36, 37, against the integrity of the passage rather than in favor of it.‡

* *Synoptische Frage*, 103-104.

† Bardenhewer, *op. cit.*, 161.

‡ Cf. Hilgenfeld, *Zeitschrift f. wiss. Theologie*, 1901, 202-203, 316-317, and especially E. P. Badham, *Academy*, January 26, 1895. B. Weiss, in *Meyer*, 9te Aufl., on ver. 35, calls attention to the καὶ αὐτῆ of ver. 36 as pointing in the direction we have indicated.

5. The question of Mary, *πῶς ἔσται τοῦτο, ἐπεὶ ἄνδρα οὐ γινώσκω*; is open to objection in two respects:

(a) Since Mary was betrothed to Joseph, and since he was of the house of David, it would have been perfectly natural for Mary to apply the promise of the angel to the fruit of the coming marriage (*σουλλήμψη* future). So the question is a mere device of the redactor to introduce ver. 35.

Perhaps the difficulty arises in part from a too exact and mechanical interpretation of the question, for the question need be little more than the unthinking expression of the maidenly consciousness of Mary, startled as she was by the strange appearance of the angel. We may either think of the exact form of the question as due to the narrator, who, however, correctly represents the general sense of what Mary said to the angel or conveyed to him by look; or we may think of the present form of the question as given by Mary herself. In either case, there is no difficulty sufficient to justify the theory of interpolation. For the difficulty is as well explained by the natural confusion of Mary as by the clumsiness of the interpolator. An interpolator might even be expected to smooth things out. Or it is possible to take another view of the matter, and to suppose that there was something in the annunciation in its original form, or in the manner in which the words were spoken, to indicate that the conception was to be immediate or of a unique character.*

(b) This question of Mary expresses unbelief as much as does the question of Zacharias, *κατὰ τί γινώσομαι τοῦτο*; (ver. 18); yet Mary is praised as having believed (ver. 45), whereas Zacharias is punished with dumbness as having doubted.

The two questions are not quite equivalent, however sophisticated Harnack may pronounce the attempts to show a difference between them. The question of Mary may be simply the involuntary expression of surprise and perplexity; that of Zacharias must be a deliberate request for a sign. And even if we give the objection its full force, it does not prove much, for in any case the final answer of Mary was *Ἰδοὺ ἡ δούλη Κυρίου · γένοιτό μοι κατὰ τὸ ῥημά σου*.†

6. Mary is represented throughout the first two chapters as passive and silent—as keeping all these things and pondering them in her heart, as receiving blessing without reply. This picture is disturbed by the question of i. 34.

In the first place, this argument rests upon Harnack's doubtful view that the Magnificat is to be attributed to Elisabeth, and in the second place, it is merely subjective at the best.

* For a careful statement, see Allen, *Interpreter*, February, 1905, 121, 122.

† Cf. Hilgenfeld, *Zeitschrift f. wiss. Theologie*, 1901, 316.

7. After the necessary changes have been made in i. 27 and iii. 23, the Gospel of Luke knows nothing of the virgin birth, except in i. 34, 35. "After these few and easy deletions, which are *required*, as soon as we are convinced of the interpolation of vers. 34, 35, but which otherwise also obtrude themselves upon us, the narrative is smooth and nowhere presupposes the virgin birth."

As we have already shown, Harnack has no ground for saying that the removal of *παρθένος* in i. 27 has its own reasons, apart from the theory about i. 34, 35. Other objections also have already been noticed.

8. The composition of vers. 34, 35, is easily discerned. Ver. 34 prepares for ver. 35 (very clumsily it is true); ver. 35 is to be explained from Luke i. 31, 32, and Matt. i. 18-25.

It is rather suspicious that the redactor should be so clumsy in one point, and should yet exhibit positive genius in imitating (ver. 35) so admirably the style and spirit of the narratives.

9. So Matt. i. 18-25 becomes the starting-point for the representations of the virgin birth, which simplifies matters in the history of the legend.

In our judgment, however it may be in Harnack's, this is merely begging the question.

10. Whether Luke himself subsequently or an interpolator inserted the virgin birth in the Gospel cannot be decided, though the former alternative is less probable.

This does not seem to be intended as an argument at all, and so demands no answer.

Against all these minuter arguments may be balanced the important consideration of the parallelism with the annunciation to Zacharias. In vers. 11-20 we have (1) the appearance of the angel, (2) fear of Zacharias, (3) promise by the angel, (4) surprised question of Zacharias, (5) reiteration of the promise, with a sign. To these details we have in the full text of the annunciation to Mary striking parallels, and the details are there arranged in the same order. The general impression is very strong that this parallel was intended by the writer, so that it is very unlikely that vers. 34, 35, are to be removed; for without these verses the symmetry of the chapter is destroyed.*

Our conclusions may be formulated as follows:

(1) It is impossible that vers. 34, 35, should have been interpolated into the completed Gospel. That is excluded by the weight of external evidence. (Against Harnack.)

* Weinel, *Zeitschrift f. d. neut. Wissenschaft*, 1901, 37f.

(2) It is highly improbable that vers. 34, 35, are an addition made by the Evangelist to a Palestinian source that elsewhere he follows closely. On that view it is difficult to explain the peculiarly marked Semitic style and spirit which prevails in the two verses, so precisely in harmony with the rest of the narrative. (Against Zimmermann.)

(3) It is less improbable (but still far from likely) that in i. 34, 35, Luke is departing from a Palestinian source which he does not here follow closely but employs in so loose a way that we can seldom (as here) separate the source from the finished composition.* Against this view of the matter, Wernle himself notices the objection that it fails to account for the apparent contradictions and roughness caused by the insertion, but he supposes that that contradiction was not apparent to Luke in the same way as to us. So Wernle holds that the birth narrative is the work throughout (even through i. 31–35) of one author, and is as closely knit as we can expect in a time of lively productiveness and variegated religious syncretism. But how, then, can we be confident of separating between author and source in i. 31ff.? Wernle would perhaps be more consistent if he were more skeptical about this point. Perhaps, too, the same line of reasoning as that of Wernle will allow us to attribute the whole to some writer other and earlier than the writer of the Gospel. At any rate, grave objections may be raised, for example, from style and diction, against the large place which Wernle attributes to the Evangelist in the composition of chapters i, ii.†

Before passing on, we must notice a remarkable modification of the interpolation theory we have just been considering—a modification which has recently (1900) been suggested by Kattenbusch‡ and defended by Weinel.§ According to Kattenbusch, the birth from the Holy Ghost was originally thought of independently of the birth from a virgin, and it is to the former conception that Luke's narrative attaches the chief importance. Indeed, even i. 35, taken by itself, does not mean anything more than that the Spirit of God so overshadowed the mother that not merely was the child filled with the Spirit from the moment of birth, as in the case of John, but that which was begotten (*γεννώμενον*) partook from the very first of the nature of the Spirit. That verse excludes the

* Wernle, *op. cit.*, 102f.

† In defense of the integrity of the passage, see especially E. P. Badham, *Academy*, January 26, 1895.

‡ *Verbreitung und Bedeutung des Taufsymbols*, 621–622, 666f. Anm. 300.

§ *Zeitschrift f. d. neut. Wissenschaft*, 1901, 37f.

human father only when it is taken in connection with the last clause of ver. 34 (ἐπεὶ ἄνδρα οὐ γινώσκω). So that in order to remove the virgin birth from Luke's narrative and thus secure unity of representation, it is not necessary to delete the whole of vers. 34, 35, with Hillmann, but merely to remove the four words ἐπεὶ ἄνδρα οὐ γινώσκω.

The special grounds that speak in favor of this new suggestion (as they are to be gleaned partly from Kattenbusch, but particularly from Weinel, who is more confident about the literary and critical question) seem to be derived largely from the comparison with the annunciation to Zacharias. As we there find no suggestion of the agency of Zacharias, because that was regarded as a matter of course, so the agency of Joseph is in this second annunciation similarly regarded as a matter of course. In the second place, the statement of ver. 35 about the πνεῦμα ἁγίου cannot exclude the coöperation of the human father, because it is expressly correlated with the conception by Elisabeth (ver. 36). In the third place, the very giving of a sign (ver. 36) requires that a surprised or doubting question should have preceded. But this requirement is not satisfied by Hillmann's theory. And in the fourth place, the parallelism of structure between the accounts of the two annunciations, which is destroyed by Hillmann, is preserved by this new suggestion.

As to this last argument, we observe that the parallelism is not preserved by Weinel's suggestion so well as by the maintenance of the integrity of the passage. For in ver. 18 Zacharias gives the reason for his doubt, to which reason there is nothing corresponding in the case of Mary unless the words ἐπεὶ ἄνδρα οὐ γινώσκω are retained. Therefore this very argument of Weinel speaks very strongly against his own theory, as it does against the theory of Hillmann. The most attractive thing about the new theory is that it removes one difficulty about Mary's question, in that it makes her surprise centre about the greatness of her son, rather than about a hitherto unmentioned peculiarity in the manner of His birth.* Furthermore, by retaining ver. 35, it procures the great advantage over the theory of Hillmann of not obliging us to attribute to a redactor such a marvelous genius in imitating the spirit and style of the original writing. Indeed, we are almost tempted to admit that the new theory is preferable to the old; at any rate, we gladly admit that the old has received a new wound from the fresh arguments of Weinel, especially the literary argument from the parallelism with i. 11ff. But these arguments oppose the older interpolation theory

* See Weinel, *op. cit.*, 38, 39.

as much in the interests of the integrity of the whole passage as in the interests of the new theory. On the other hand, many of the arguments of Harnack, and arguments upon which the champions of the old theory were accustomed to stake their cause to no mean extent, fall to the ground if ver. 35 is retained. Furthermore, although Kattenbusch is correct in saying that ver. 35 does not require the virgin birth, yet it naturally suggests something of the kind, so that it is better in place if the clause *ἐπεὶ ἄνδρα οὐ γινώσκω* has preceded. And then one great objection to the new theory (an objection which Weinel has not altogether ignored) is the extreme cleverness of the redactor. According to the new theory the redactor is too clever, as according to the old theory he displayed too much literary genius. On the whole, the two theories are about equally improbable; for, after all, the really fundamental objections apply to both alike, while the peculiar difficulties are about equally divided.

In Matthew, Hillmann supposes the first two chapters to have been no part of the original Gospel, while Hilgenfeld regards i. 18-ii. 23 as an interpolation. It is argued that the *ἐν ταύταις ταῖς ἡμέραις* of iii. 1 would not be natural if the third chapter was originally joined to what now goes before. According to Hillmann, probably some chronological note similar to that in Luke iii. 1 was left off by the redactor who added chaps. i, ii; for the redactor was so far from the time described that he would take no offense at applying the phrase *ἐν ταύταις ταῖς ἡμέραις* to what really happened after an interval of thirty years. But this is a mere supposition. Perhaps the author of the Gospel would himself have been looking back over a long enough interval not to have objected to the phrase, especially in view of the loose way in which the incidents are coupled all through the Gospel. Nowhere is the chronological succession very clear.

Hilgenfeld supposes that the *ἐν ταύταις ταῖς ἡμέραις* refers to the close of the genealogy, for it would be perfectly natural to mean by the phrase merely "in the time of Jesus," if it is taken in connection with the many generations indicated in i. 1-16. But this seems rather unlikely, for the genealogy is the expression of one idea, and has no chronological purpose. It would, therefore, be very unnatural to separate i. 16 from the rest by applying to it the phrase *ἐν ταύταις τ. ἡμ.* That phrase requires that something in the nature of narrative should have gone before, and this requirement is not satisfied by the genealogy. Meyer argues further that iv. 13 manifestly refers to ii. 23.

As to the content of the section, Hilgenfeld* enumerates as marks of the redactor (1) the Old Testament pragmatism, (2) the friendly attitude toward the heathen, (3) the view of Christ as born Son of God. But the Old Testament pragmatism is rather a mark of the author of the whole Gospel, who is interested throughout in showing the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy. The friendly attitude toward the Gentiles proves nothing if the story of the Magi (Gentiles) is essentially true, for in the mere form of the story there is no evidence of a desire to magnify the Gentiles at the expense of the Jews. And it is not at all self-evident that the author of the rest of the Gospel should not himself have felt the contrast between the acceptance of the gospel by the Gentiles and its rejection by the Jews. Finally, why may not the idea that Christ was born Son of God have been the view of the author of the Gospel? Some one—*i.e.*, the redactor at least—held to both the Davidic sonship and the virgin birth. Why may not the author have done so?

One piece of supposed external evidence must be mentioned, even though we consider it to be of little value. Conybeare† and Hilgenfeld attribute considerable weight to a Syriac tract, extant in a sixth-century manuscript (British Museum, Add. 17,142), and published, with a translation, by Wright in the *Journal of Sacred Literature*, 1866, Vols. IX and X. The tract is attributed to Eusebius and purports to be an account of the Star and the Magi, the history having been written down in 119 A.D. According to Conybeare, "the Syriac author of this tract . . . had in his hands a pre-canonical Greek source of 119 or 120," to which belonged the colophon that gives the date. Conybeare's conclusion is that the date 119 or 120 is the *terminus a quo* of the introduction of Matt. ii. 1-15 into the canonical text. The document is interesting, but the conclusions drawn from it seem to be best described as "problematical"—a word which J. Weiss aptly applies to Conybeare's Ephraem passage about Luke. And in view of the undisputed unity of style and diction between i. 18-ii. 23 and the rest of the Gospel—a unity far too perfect to be explained as due merely to a common redactor—we may safely agree finally with J. Weiss when he declares that there never were forms of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke without the infancy narratives.‡

As to the sources of the infancy section in Matthew, nothing very definite can be said. It is mere speculation, for example, when

* *Zeitschrift f. wiss. Theologie*, 1900, 269.

† See *Guardian*, April 29, 1903.

‡ *Theologische Rundschau*, 1903, 208.

Schmiedel makes i. 18-25 an addition later than chap. ii. Indeed, for all we can see, the two chapters might go back to the same source, for the failure to mention the place Bethlehem in i. 18 instead of in ii. 1 proves very little;* but, after all, the theory of merely oral sources can never be disproved. The ultimate home of the sources is far more likely to have been Palestinian than Gentile, for the section shows acquaintance with Jewish customs, and with the Hebrew text of the Old Testament; and perhaps is combatting Jewish slanders.† The story of the Magi does not oppose this view of the matter, for the Gentile coloring, so far as it exists, might be due to the Gentile subject;‡ and perhaps it is even a positive evidence for the Jewish character of the narrative, for it may represent the Jewish Messianic conception of a gathering of the heathen for worship to Mount Sion. If Matthew's Gospel is in general destined for Jews, then it is not necessary to suppose that i. 18-ii. 23 is a foreign element; or rather it is not necessary to do so until we have proved that the idea of the supernatural birth could not possibly have arisen on Jewish ground.§

As to the genealogy of Matthew, the attempt of Charles|| to prove that it is a later addition to the Gospel (about A.D. 170) is interesting only in showing how more usual critical theories can be reversed. Conybeare¶ has shown how impossible it would have been for the genealogy to have been added at that late date, when interests other than the interest in the Davidic descent were predominant; and Badham has argued with some weight against separating i. 1-17 and i. 18-ii at all. At any rate, there can be no doubt whatever that the genealogy was part of the original Gospel, or, to sum up our results, that the whole of chaps. i, ii, is genuine.

The discovery of Syr^{sin} in 1892 has made Matt. i. 16, from a textual point of view, one of the most extensively discussed verses in the New Testament, and has acted as a lively stimulus to the investigation of the genealogies in general. The bewildering mazes of the textual question** must here, for obvious reasons, remain

* See PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL REVIEW, October, 1905, 664ff.

† See W. Allen, *Interpreter*, February, 1905.

‡ Cf. *Church Quart. Rev.*, July, 1904, 389.

§ For the Jewish character of Matt. i, ii, see especially G. H. Box, *Zeitschrift f. d. neut. Wissenschaft*, 1905, 81f.

|| *Academy*, December 1, 1894.

¶ *Academy*, December 8, 1894.

** See a long controversy carried on by Conybeare, Badham, Charles, Allen, Rahlfs, Sanday, White, Skipwith, and a few others in the *Academy* from November 17, 1894, to February 23, 1895; Farrar in the *Expositor*, 1895 (Vol. I), 1ff.; J. R. Harris in *Contemp. Rev.*, LXVI, 656ff.; Conybeare in *Hibbert Journal*, I,

unexplored; nor do we need to explore them for our purpose. For after the first shock of discovery has passed away, the general consensus of scholarship seems to be leaning to the opinion that the readings of the new manuscript do not tell us as much as was at first supposed. As has been remarked, the reading at i. 16 merely intensifies difficulties already present; at any rate, it cannot prove that i. 18ff. was not a part of the original Gospel. Either one of two lines of solution seems to me to be possible. In the first place, we may say with J. Weiss* that the original form of the genealogy was "Joseph begat Jesus," though this was, of course, never the reading in the Gospel; the problem then being how to account for the variants after the change had once been made. This problem J. Weiss dismisses as insoluble. Wilkinson,† in one of the most convincing papers which I have seen upon the subject, attempts something of a solution. He decides (and correctly) that our present Greek text is the original text of the Gospel. For the narrator of i. 18ff. had two motives: (1) to assert the miraculous conception, (2) to assert that the birth took place while Mary was Joseph's wife. The latter was the narrator's way of effecting a "compromise"[?] between the virgin birth and the Davidic Messiahship. Now i. 16 in our critical text is in exact accord with this purpose, as the reading of Syr^{sin} is not, while Conybeare's reading from the *Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila* is manifestly conflate. The other readings, Wilkinson continues, were due to two causes: correction due to dogmatic sensitiveness, and corruption from the original sources (*i.e.*, from the reading of the original genealogy, "Joseph begat Jesus"). There are many attractive features about such a construction of the history of the variations, but I am not quite convinced that "Joseph begat Jesus" was the reading of the original genealogy—if there was a genealogy of this peculiar type—before the author of the Gospel made use of it. For, in the first place, the compiler who inserted the names of women throughout the genealogy would have been likely to mention the mother of Jesus; indeed, it is not impossible that he inserted the women expressly in view of the fact that there was something remarkable about Mary—*i.e.*, the virgin birth.‡ We must simply refrain from trying to make a decision.

In the case of Luke, perhaps there was an original genealogy

96ff.; J. R. Wilkinson in *Hibbert Journal*, I, 354ff.; Allen in *Interpreter*, February, 1905; Schmiedel, Art. *Mary* in *Enc. Biblica*, etc.

* *Theologische Rundschau*, 1901, 210.

† *Hibbert Journal*, I, 354ff.

‡ Cf. Allen, *Interpreter*, February, 1905, 112, 113; Box, *Zeitschrift f. d. neut. Wissenschaft*, 1905, 83f.

which made Joseph the father of Jesus without indication of anything peculiar in the relationship. At any rate, the *ὡς ἐνομιζέτο* was added at least as early as the reception of the genealogy into the Gospel, and probably earlier. Indeed, I think we should not be too certain that the words of ver. 23 were ever without the *ὡς ἐνομιζέτο*, for it is not even so evident as is sometimes supposed that no one would have gone to work to compile a genealogy who was expecting to remove (apparently, at least) the very point of it by these words. For, to emphasize what we have mentioned many times, we know that there were some who were interested to prove both Davidic descent and virgin birth. Why may not the compiler of the genealogy have been one of these? And suppose the genealogy was not first compiled at all in order to show the Davidic descent of Jesus, but was a long-prized family record which was continued from the generation to generation. If it was to be continued at all after Joseph, it could be continued only in the form in which we now have it—that is, in case the virgin birth was a fact. So there would be no question of going to work to construct a genealogy of Jesus; the genealogy already existed as a genealogy of Joseph.

It must be remembered that our discussion of divisive theories about the infancy narratives, long and tedious as it has been, is merely a means to an end. The great problem for those who deny the historicity of the birth stories is to show how the idea of the virgin birth could have arisen in such a way and at such a time and in such a place as to find a lodgment in those stories. This problem would be much simplified if certain things about the character and date of the account of the virgin birth could be established by clear internal evidence. Now the result of our examination of the supposed internal evidence, we believe, has been to show that the propositions—which we enumerated as the four logical motives for divisive theories—have not been established. In the first place, the infancy narratives are not interpolations in the Gospels; so all the evidence for the early date of the Gospels is also evidence for the early date of the infancy narratives. In the second place, those portions of the infancy narratives which tell of the virgin birth cannot so be separated from the rest as to allow us to suppose that the Davidic descent could not in the early days be maintained by the same writer that also believed in the virgin birth. So if the other New Testament writers emphasize the Davidic descent, it is no proof that they did not also believe in the virgin birth. In the third place, one of the narratives of the virgin birth—that of Luke—is pronouncedly Jewish-Christian and even Pales-

tinian in origin; while the narrative of Matthew also bears marks of Jewish-Christian origin, and at any rate is contained in a Gospel probably destined for Jews. Finally, since the account of the virgin birth is part of the fundamental structure of both narratives, and since the narratives are manifestly independent of each other, it follows that our two testimonies to the virgin birth cannot be reduced to one. The narratives being of such a character, the problem now is to show how the virgin birth, unless it were a fact, ever could have found a place in them. We must not merely show how the idea of the virgin birth might have been developed during the first century; we must further show—and this is often neglected—how this idea was ever taken up by just those narratives in which we now find it.*

↪ Since the narratives of the virgin birth are Jewish in character, it is most natural to suppose that the basis of the idea is to be found on Jewish-Christian ground.† Within the limits of Judaism itself, two starting-points have been suggested for the development of the idea of the virgin birth. In the first place, certain great heroes of old—such as Isaac—being born by a peculiar exercise of the power of God, were regarded as begotten not *κατὰ σάρκα*, but *κατὰ πνεῦμα* (cf. Gal. iv. 29); and Luke even gives an account of such a birth in the case of John the Baptist. So since Jesus was considered greater than these spiritual children, it was only a short step to exclude the human factor altogether by making the Holy Spirit, in this case, not only an important factor, but the sole factor in His conception in His mother's womb (cf. the case of John, Luke i. 15). Not only was this "greater than the prophets" to be filled with the Spirit "from his mother's womb," but the Holy Spirit was to be the very constituting element of His personality. To this short step in advance the virgin prophecy of Isa. vii. 14 would afford the necessary impetus. Of course, as Beyschlag says, all this is merely the formal factor of the representation of the virgin birth; the material factor was the belief in Jesus Christ as a new beginning in humanity, as the one who came down from above. The course of development has been fully described by Lobstein:‡ The disciples began with a profound impression of the uniqueness of Jesus' personality. This impression they interpreted at first along merely Jewish lines—they interpreted the title "Son of God" as applied to Jesus merely in a

* For the question now about to be discussed, see especially Weiss, *Leben Jesu*, E. T., I, 221f.

† So Beyschlag, Harnack, Lobstein.

‡ *Die Lehre von der übernatürlichen Geburt Christi*, 2te Aufl., E. T., 1903.

Messianic or theocratic sense. But as Christian thought began to seek for the underlying causes of what it had at first accepted without deep reflection, the simple explanation of the unique personality of Christ as rooted in His Messiahship was no longer able to suffice. Thus arose the Pauline doctrine of preëxistence, and finally, under the influence of Alexandrian philosophy, the more highly developed Logos Christology of the fourth Gospel. To the theocratic sonship was added the metaphysical sonship. But parallel with this theological development, or preceding it, a more popular development had been going on. To the popular mind—assisted by the stories of spiritual children such as Isaac, and by the prophecy of Isa. vii. 14—the most natural explanation of the unique personality of Christ was that He was not born like other men, but begotten directly by God. So we have not only the theocratic and the metaphysical sonship, but also (inferior to the latter) the physical sonship.

Such a theory has an advantage over some that we shall presently consider, in that it does not call in elements which could not possibly have been included in Jewish-Christian narratives. Even here, however, we might with some reason object that the stage of mythical development required by Lobstein's theory is too advanced to be represented in a narrative reflecting so purely as that of Luke the spirit of the Old Testament and of Palestinian thought. But we waive this point, in order to emphasize even more serious objections. In the first place, Harnack is basing his theory upon a very unsteady foundation when he makes the passage Isa. vii. 14 not only a necessary element in the development, but apparently the only determining cause for the peculiar form which the myth has assumed.* For the word used in the Hebrew, *העלמה*, would give no impulse whatever to the idea of a virgin birth; while there is no evidence that the Septuagint translation (*παρθένος*) had ever as a matter of fact given rise to the inference that the Messiah was to be born of a virgin—certainly not within the limits of pure Judaism.† In general, modern criticism has learned to be much more skeptical than formerly about the omnipotence of Old Testament prophecy in creating stories simply in order to fit the predictions. There must be something to support before Old Testament prophecy can

* Harnack, *Dogmengeschichte*, E. T. from 3d ed., I, 100, note 1.

† Cheyne rejects Isa. vii. 14, LXX, as accounting for the narrative of Matt. i; but makes an interesting attempt to explain the origin of the mistranslation itself. He supposes that *παρθένος* was a title taken over from the goddesses of certain heathen religions, who were mothers but not originally wives. Box suggests Christian influence to account for the present form of the LXX passage.

be dragged in to support it, even though the form of the prophecy may have some effect in altering details.* Nor is it true that parthenogenesis was "in the air" at the time of Christ. It is not true that, as has been said, "To the narrator the miracle is simply a more impressive instance of what God wrought in the case of Elisabeth, Rebekah and Sarah, without affecting the paternity of John the Baptist, Jacob or Isaac."† It is not true that Jewish-Christians, on account of the examples of Isaac, Samson and Samuel, etc., would already be expecting something like a virgin birth, so that the Septuagint translation of Isaiah, even though not very convincing, would still be able to supply a strong enough impulse to lead to the definite formulation of the doctrine as we find it in Matt. i. and Luke i. For the step from a birth by promise, such as that of Isaac, to a birth without human father, such as that of Jesus, is by no means an "easy step," as is often asserted, but involves practically the whole of the mystery. The conception by means of an extraordinary power given to men is quite in accord with the workings of God in Providence—though it may exceed them in degree—whereas it is just the exclusion of the human agency that gives the miracle of the virgin birth that peculiar character which is so difficult to explain. Such cases as Isaac and Samson do not really go very far in explaining the origin of the unique idea as reflected in the narratives of Matthew and Luke. To bridge the gap is especially hard upon Jewish ground. For, in the first place, the noun קִיָּוָה is feminine, so that it is hard to see how the idea could among Jews ever have found expression in just the form in which it appears in both our narratives (begotten "of the Holy Spirit"). Of course, it may be said that we should not take the phrase "Holy Spirit" as personal here, but merely as expressing the general idea of the power of God (cf. Luke's conjunction of $\piνεῦμα$ and $δύναμις$). Still the *form* of statement would naturally have been different—*e.g.*, $\epsilon\kappa\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\theta\ \lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\upsilon\varsigma\ \sigma\omicron\upsilon$, a phrase which actually occurs in this connection in early Christian literature. That the representation of the present narratives of Luke and Matthew would hardly have originated on Jewish ground is shown by the *Gospel according to the Hebrews*, which made the Holy Spirit the mother of Jesus. Furthermore, attention has often been called to the fact that the idea of the direct action of God in the way described in Matthew and Luke is not at all in harmony with the strict Jewish monotheism of that day, with its sharp sepa-

* Nestle, *Jahrbb. f. prot. Theologie*, 1892, 641, can at the very most show merely a verbal connection between Luke i. 35 and Gen. i. 2. Even that is more than doubtful.

† B. W. Bacon, *Independent*, LV, 3037.

ration of the Divine Being from the world of sense.* In order to avoid these difficulties, or rather in order to demonstrate the existence of a force capable of overcoming them, recourse has been had to that peculiar development of Judaism, the sect of the Essenes, or to the ascetic tendency prevalent in the Christian Church and observable in ascending degree in Paul and in the writer of the Apocalypse (so Hilgenfeld). But aside from all questions as to the date of our narratives, and as to the possible influence of the Essenes upon the writers of the narratives if those writers were ordinary Jews, this theory of an ascetic impulse to the doctrine of the virgin birth receives its deathblow from the entire absence of an ascetic tendency in the birth narratives themselves. (Cf. the expressions "father and mother" and "parents" in Luke.) In general, it may be mentioned as a remarkable fact—if the origin of the myth was Jewish—that it was just from Jewish-Christians (the Ebionites) that the conspicuous denial of the virgin birth in the early Church proceeded.†

It seems, therefore, reasonable to conclude that if the idea of the conception from the Holy Ghost in the womb of the virgin were to be received by the Jewish mind, there must have been some overpowering impulse to overcome the prepossessions of the current theology. The only such impulse that has been discovered is the impulse that would have been in evidence had the virgin birth been a fact; so if we are to deny the fact, we must go farther afield for the origin of the idea. It is not at all surprising, therefore, that very many recent scholars who deny the fact of the virgin birth are obliged to admit the inadequacy of the purely Jewish-Christian explanation of the origin of the myth.

The next step to take is that from primitive Jewish Christianity to Gentile Christianity, and this step was taken by Pfleiderer.‡ He supposed that the ideas which lie at the basis of the birth narratives came specifically from the theology of Paul, and only the details from the Old Testament. The Pauline dogma of "Christ Jesus declared to be the Son of God according to the spirit of holiness" led to Luke's poetical narrative of the virgin birth, while the accompanying dogma "born of the seed of David according to the flesh" led to the narrative of the journey to Bethlehem. Against this derivation of the birth stories from Pauline ideas might be urged, in the first place, the absence of any trace in Pauline writings

* See Holtzmann, *Lehrbuch der neutestamentlichen Theologie*, I, 413.

† Weiss, *op. cit.*, I, 229.

‡ *Urchristenthum*, 1te Aufl., 417f.

of the beginnings of such a development of dogmatic interest in the mode of Christ's entrance into the world.* In the second place, as we have remarked in another connection, Pfeleiderer's theory necessarily attributes to the Gentile Luke an historical imagination and a dramatic power—a power of making purely imaginary circumstances appear to be real—which is utterly foreign to the literary habits of those days (especially to dogmatically motived narratives), and which would be worthy of a Defoe. Pfeleiderer's theory therefore runs directly counter to what we have established as to the genuinely Jewish spirit of the narrative in the third Gospel.†

Being defeated on purely Jewish and Christian ground, those who deny the fact of the virgin birth betake themselves next to Alexandria, and seek to derive the idea from that mixture of Greek philosophy and Old Testament religion which we find best exemplified in the writings of Philo. So Conybeare and Völter.

The latter‡ develops his theory in connection with the narrative of Luke. He begins with the observation that it is remarkable that in a Christian writing so much space should be occupied with John, who was regarded as a mere forerunner. So the first chapter embodies a tradition about John which was not Christian, but purely Jewish, and regarded John as of independent importance. The Christian compiler was not able to do away with this tradition entirely, but used it by making John subordinate to Christ. This he did simply by inserting the middle portion (vers. 26–56) of the first chapter of Luke (in which middle portion, however, some elements of the original tradition can still be observed), without troubling the text of his Jewish source in the other portions. But this did not suffice for the second redactor, who transcended the narrow Jewish standpoint of his predecessor. So the second redactor interpreted i. 27 as referring to Mary rather than to Joseph, put Elisabeth's song into the mouth of Mary, inserted i. 34, 35, and made some changes in the song of Zacharias. The second chapter was written by Redactor I of the first chapter, and was altered at ii. 5

* Cf. Weiss, *op. cit.*, I, 230, 231.

† Pfeleiderer has since 1887 radically modified his opinion, and now has recourse to pagan elements in accounting for the origin of the idea of the virgin birth. Thus he falls in line with a number of scholars whose opinion we shall discuss presently. He no longer regards the author of the third Gospel as the originator of the idea or the first to embody it in a canonical book, but accepts the common view that Luke i. 34, 35, is an interpolation. In general, his view loses its individuality. See *Urchristentum*, 2te Aufl., I, 406f., 692f. Cf. PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL REVIEW, October, 1905, 648, footnote.

‡ *Die Apokalypse des Zacharias im Evangelium Lucas*, *Theologisch Tijdschrift*, 1896, 244–269.

and ii. 32 by Redactor II, who was probably identical with the redactor of the third Gospel. Both the original writer of the first chapter and Redactor I were Jews pure and simple, and wrote in Aramaic (or Hebrew). Redactor II interpreted Isa. vii. 14 according to the Septuagint and in other ways transcended the narrow Jewish standpoint, and therefore was no Palestinian Jew; but, on the other hand, he must have understood Aramaic in order to translate the writings of his predecessors, and so could not have been a mere Gentile. So he must have been a Hellenist. This conclusion is confirmed by his dogmatic position. For on account of the gender of the word קִי , and the current Jewish conception of God, the belief in the virgin birth could scarcely have arisen on Jewish ground. But influenced by the heathen notions of "children of God," some such conception had entered into the thought of the Hellenistic Judaism of the Dispersion, as we can show from the writings of Philo.

Of course, Völter's elaborate theory of redactors is interesting only as a curious example to show how easily theories of interpolation may run mad. Every one of the main steps in the argument is based almost entirely upon subjective reasoning, and lacks even such show of support as is possessed by arguments such as that of Harnack for regarding i. 34, 35, as an interpolation. If we have refuted even these latter arguments, then it will hardly be worth while to mention the numberless difficulties that spring up on every hand against Völter.* One criticism only may be mentioned here as being particularly in point at the present stage of our discussion. Völter mentions two grounds for supposing that the narrator of the virgin birth in Luke was a Hellenist: (1) He transcends the narrow Jewish point of view and, for example, holds to the non-Jewish conception of the virgin birth; so he can be no Jew. This argument, at least so far as it refers to the virgin birth, we gladly allow (always supposing the virgin birth not to be a fact). (2) He was able to translate an Aramaic document, and was therefore no mere Gentile. But was the document really written in Aramaic? And if so, had it not already been translated? These are questions which need much more careful examination than Völter seems to have given them. We may safely conclude that, whether or no the original spring of the doctrine of the virgin birth was, as a matter of fact, Hellenistic Judaism, Völter's reasoning has not proved it. His attempt to show by literary criticism the actual course of development going on before our eyes in the

* For some of these, see Spitta, *op. cit.*, 6f.

text itself has after all been a failure. If we look to Alexandria we must be led to do so by more general considerations—for example, by some striking similarity of thought between Alexandrian philosophy and our canonical birth narratives.

Such an argument has been most fully developed by Conybeare.* According to Conybeare, such of the followers of Jesus as were Aramaic-speaking Jews recognized Jesus as the Messiah, while those followers who were Greek Jews and proselytes recognized in Him the Divine Logos. "But viewed as the Logos in human form, how should his birth be represented except as from a virgin?" For these followers among the Greek Jews lived in much the same intellectual atmosphere as Philo. And Philo regarded the Logos as born of Sophia, an "ever-virgin, gifted with an incontinent and unstainable nature." In the second place, these same Hellenist disciples "believed that many of their holiest men had been born of the Holy Spirit, when God visited from on high their mothers in their solitude." "Thirdly, there was in that age a general belief that superhuman personages and great religious leaders were born of virgin mothers through divine agency."† "Fourthly, in Philo we have not a few indications of how those who held the belief that Jesus was the incarnate word would be likely to formulate the other belief which inevitably went therewith—namely, that he was born of a virgin."

As to the first of these points, Charles has shown how little weight can be attributed to it, for that Logos which was born of Sophia is not in Philo a personal conception. There are also insuperable objections of a literary and historical character against supposing that the account of the virgin birth came into the first and third Gospels only through the conception of Christ as the Logos. Conybeare's second point is not very clear, but seems to mean that, as he says in another place, "the Jews in the time of Christ deemed it possible for a child to be conceived of the Holy Spirit, and yet at the same time to be begotten in the ordinary way." "The one process gave his soul or reason, which was a gift of the Divine Spirit; the other process gave him flesh, blood and the faculties of sense." In Matthew, vers. 19, 20 of the first chapter represent a too literal in-

* *Academy* for 1894, November 17, December 8, December 22; for 1895, January 12, January 19, February 16. For criticisms, see Charles, *Academy* for 1894, December 29; for 1895, January 5, February 2. Cf. also a number of papers by Badham in the course of the same discussion.

† Here we pass over into the purely heathen sphere; so we shall defer this point till we come to speak of the next class of theories about the origin of the virgin birth. In Conybeare the point is not at all fundamental.

terpretation of such a philosophy. Afterward, Conybeare, corrected by Badham, seems to substitute for this argument the more positive one that an actual virgin birth is to be found spoken of in Philo, so that the writer in Matthew did not even have to remove the idea to a lower sphere. Conybeare's really important argument is under his fourth head. Here he brings forward Philo's treatment of Sarah, Rebeka, Leah, Zipporah. *E.g.*, Philo says—to quote Conybeare's reproduction of his words—"Moses having taken his wife findeth her with child of nothing mortal (= of the Divine Spirit)." Conybeare maintains—at any rate at first—that Philo's own idea of the marriage of virgin souls with God was wholly mystical and allegorical, but that he issued a warning against those who degraded his allegory "into the gross and fleshly meaning which it has assumed in Matt. i. 19." If this interpretation of Philo is right, then we have not found any direct parallel for Matthew. For there seems to be no evidence from the mere fact that he "warns the superstitious from the mystery he is propounding" that he is referring to those who held to a view like that of Matthew. And when Badham maintains that the correspondence between Philo's examples (Sarah, Zipporah, etc.) and Matthew's narrative is still closer than Conybeare at first believed, it is perhaps due to Badham's impossible exegesis of Matthew's account.*

Furthermore, against the whole argument may be opposed the great gulf fixed between the strict Palestinian Judaism and the Judaism of Alexandria†—a gulf which Conybeare has not really succeeded in bridging over. Again, we ought to consider the opposition of the whole spirit of the New Testament accounts to the speculations of Philo. It is impossible to see how the two things can have sprung up out of the same intellectual atmosphere, for the difference seems almost infinite; and Conybeare does not help his position by pointing out Alexandrian elements, like the conception through the ear and by rays of light, which *later* affected the form of the Christian narrative. The remarkable fact is that those elements do not appear in our canonical narratives, as we should expect they would if the Christian idea of the virgin birth arose out of Hellenistic ground. The sobriety of the canonical narratives, the absence of grotesque details, is a strong proof of their independence of Alexandrian speculations. If Luke i. 34, 35, is, as we think we have proved, no interpolation, so that Luke's narrative as well as that of Matthew comprises the virgin birth, then the argu-

* See PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL REVIEW, October, 1905, 669.

† See Charles, articles cited.

ment which we have just derived from the general spirit of our New Testament account becomes absolutely invincible. For Luke's narrative, at least, whatever may be said of Matthew, represents about as perfect an antithesis to Philo as could possibly be imagined.

The insufficiency of theories which would derive the idea of the virgin birth from Judaism is strikingly attested by the fact that so many recent critics feel obliged to have recourse to the heathen world.* But just at this point we must register a decided protest. In the first place, as Harnack has stoutly maintained against Usener, we cannot lightly break through the barrier that separates the early Church from the heathen world. "Over against all this [*i.e.*, the connections which Usener finds between heathen customs, etc., and Christian traditions]," says Harnack, "I remind the reader of the fact that the oldest Christianity strictly refrained from everything polytheistic and heathen, and that therefore every hypothesis that will explain from heathendom a piece of the original Church tradition is subject to the greatest difficulties, and demands the most careful examination. The unreasonable method of collecting from the mythology of all peoples parallels for original Church traditions, whether historical reports or legends, is valueless."† In another connection Harnack is even more explicit: "The Greek or Oriental mythology I should leave entirely out of account; for there is no occasion to suppose that the Gentile congregations in the time up to the middle of the second century adopted, in despite of their fixed principle, popular mythical representations." In the second place, if it is thus unlikely that heathen elements could up to 150 have been received even into the Gentile Church, it is even more unlikely that they could have been received into strongly Jewish Christian narratives, such as we have proved our canonical infancy narratives to be. It is therefore evident that every theory of the virgin birth which calls in heathen elements is absolutely dependent upon the doubtful view that Luke i. 34, 35 (or the essential part of those verses) is an interpolation.‡ And even if that should be granted, the weighty objection of Harnack must still be reckoned with. It is therefore not altogether unreasonable to say that when we consent to entertain any suggestion as to the heathen origin of elements in the myth of the virgin birth, we do so merely for the sake of the argument. However, since Harnack's view of the course of early Christian history and our view of the integrity of

* *E.g.*, Usener, Hillmann, Holtzmann, Soltau, Pfeleiderer.

† *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, 1889, 205.

‡ Cf. Hillmann, *op. cit.*, 231.

Matthew and Luke have both been questioned (though, we think, altogether without good cause in the latter case), it will be well to examine as fairly as possible the supposed points of contact between heathen mythology and our birth narratives. Are these points of contact so evident and so important as to break down the objections that we have mentioned against any historical connection between the two fields of thought?

It will be well to outline briefly one or two of the main theories of development, in order that we may the better judge of the likelihood that in the matter of the virgin birth heathen ideas had their place.

One of the most thorough-going representations is that of Usener.* Usener supposes that when Jesus came to be regarded as the Messiah, it followed by logical necessity that all the Old Testament attributes of the Messiah should be applied to Him. In the first place, He had to be descended from David—hence the genealogies. In the second place, he had to be born in the city of David, Bethlehem (Micah v. 1. Cf. John vii. 40, Matt. ii. 6)—hence the infancy narratives transplant the parents thither, more or less at the risk of running counter to the firmly fixed Nazareth tradition. In the third place, Jesus, as the Messiah, and hence the chosen one of God, had to be brought into closer relations with God—hence the narrative of the great event at the baptism. This narrative appears in two forms: in Matthew, Jesus merely receives divine attestation; in Luke, He is divinely generated. (Usener retains the words, "This day have I begotten thee.") But as time went on, it was felt to be impossible to postpone this consecration or adoption to the thirtieth year. Rather He "must have been God's chosen instrument from his very birth." Hence the story of the nativity. This story appears in two forms, each carrying back one of the two forms of the baptism narrative. In Luke we have divine attestation (Usener regards i. 34, 35, as a later addition); in Matthew we have divine begetting. But we have also in Matthew something entirely new, the virgin birth. "Here we unquestionably enter the circle of pagan ideas," for "the idea is quite foreign to Judaism."† "The embroidery comes from the same source as the warp and woof," for the star is paralleled by the heathen ideas of the stars

* *Religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen*, I; *Enc. Biblica*, Art. *Nativity* (this article appeared later in its original German form, as prepared for the *Encyclopædia*, in *Zeitschrift f. d. neut. Wissenschaft*, 1903, 1-21).

† For the pagan analogies, see Usener, *Religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen*, I. 69f.

that appeared at the birth of heroes, while the story of the Magi perhaps originated "in the journey of homage made by the Parthian king Tiridates to Nero in Rome." Perhaps, also, Herod is a picture of Nero.

Soltau* gives the following account. If Jesus was to be the Messiah, the first conclusion would be that his real home must have been Bethlehem. Hence the original form of the special history of Jesus' childhood is given in Luke ii. 1-7, 21-40, where Joseph always appears as the father of Jesus, but where the place of birth is changed from Nazareth to Bethlehem. In Matthew we have "a *further-developed Jewish-Christian* version of the story," to the effect that Bethlehem was the real native place of Jesus, so that the difficulty is not to explain why His parents journeyed from Nazareth to Bethlehem, but why they journeyed from Bethlehem to Nazareth. Then this Jewish-Christian tradition was altered by three additions: (1) the generation of Jesus through the Holy Spirit (in Luke, and in Matthew in a different form from that in Luke), (2) the angels' song of praise (Luke), (3) the journey of the Magi (Matthew). These three ideas were probably of purely heathen origin, though the form they have taken may have been due to Jewish-Christians. The angels' song of praise is the adaptation of rejoicings at the birth of Augustus, who was hailed as the saviour of the whole human race. In the story of the Magi, perhaps the presentation of gifts may be traced back to the Old Testament. The other details are all based on heathen mythology—the star, upon the stars seen at the birth of great men; the journey of the Magi, upon the journey of the Parthian king Tiridates to pay homage to Nero. The Christians transferred spontaneously to their Prince of Peace the homage paid "to the earthly prince of peace, Augustus"; to their Messiah, the act of adoration paid to the Antichrist Nero. The story of the virgin birth may be viewed in three aspects: (1) "*As regards form*, the whole narrative is simply a *deliberate recast* of the older Jewish fable about Simon and John." (2) "*As regards matter*, on the other hand, it is to be explained as a *transformation* of Biblical conceptions *due to misconception*." In Paul and John we have the dualistic theory that Christ is not only born of the seed of David but also Son of God. When this dualism, "*having been translated into popular language*, penetrated to the lower classes of the people, *it was almost bound to lead* to the view becoming common among Christians untrained in philosophy that Christ, in calling God His

* *Die Geburtsgeschichte Jesu Christi*, E. T. For a criticism, see Lobstein, *Theolog. Literaturzeitung*, 1902, 521f.

Father, did not merely call Him so in the sense in which all are children of God, but that he was even bodily of higher derivation, of divine origin." (3) "At the same time, those elements *drawn from heathen mythology* can be detected, which promoted the transformation of Christian ideas and the development of a wrong conception." Especially Augustus himself was said to have been begotten of a serpent (representing Apollo). So all the three insertions into the original story—song of praise, virgin birth and journey of the Magi—"referred to what had been handed down and proclaimed in honour of the Roman Emperor, especially of Augustus, to the true Saviour of the world."

Usener and Soltau have thus made two attempts to trace more or less definitely the actual course of development through which our present narratives have been produced; but in this attempt, at any rate, they can hardly be said to have attained success. For they have been obliged to rely upon hypotheses to support hypotheses. To take merely one example, Usener can establish his parallelism between the two separate forms of the baptism story (divine attestation and divine generation) and the two forms of the birth narrative (Luke and Matthew) only by choosing a doubtful reading in Luke's account of the baptism in order to differentiate that account from Matthew, and by removing i. 34, 35, from Luke's account of the infancy so that it suits that representation.* Of course, these are merely details; but one problem for those who would see in our narratives the outcome of a course of mythical or legendary development is to show how that outcome came to be represented in just the way it is expressed in Matthew and Luke. Therefore, we have accomplished something when we have recognized that it is not possible to see the details of the course of development actually crystallized in our narratives.

Perhaps, however, we can yet discern the main outlines of such a course of development. In such a more cautious way the matter is discussed by Holtzmann.† He despises none of the supposed starting-points which have been suggested by various writers for the idea of the virgin birth. He even begins with ascetic tendencies in Judaism (*e.g.*, among the Essenes), and then uses all the other arguments for the Jewish origin of the idea, as well as for the origin

* The idea seems to be that the notion of the virgin birth, after it was introduced into the third Gospel, being inconsistent with the divine generation at the baptism, led to the corruption of the original form of Luke iii. 22 into our accepted text. See Pfeiderer, *Urchristentum*, 2te Aufl., I, 694. The whole course of reasoning can never rise above the level of supposition.

† *Lehrbuch der neutestamentlichen Theologie*, I, 409f.

from the dogmas of the Pauline theology. But, he continues, the idea could never on Jewish ground have ripened into its present form; for on Jewish ground the abstract-transcendent notion of God and the Jewish doctrine of the Spirit stood effectually in the way. But when the report of the "Son of God" was spread abroad in the Gentile world,* it found an atmosphere friendly in the highest degree to the development of such a story as we have in Matthew and Luke. For in the heathen world there were many "children of God," as Justin insists. Among them may be mentioned Hermes, Esculapius, Dionysius, Hercules, etc., as well as Pythagoras, Plato, Alexander, Augustus.† These heathen representations "of the coming of the great from above needed only to strip off their coarsely sensuous forms in order to be transferred to the world-conquering Son of God from the East."

We answer that, after all, at least in the case of the mythological examples like Hercules, etc., when you have stripped off the coarsely sensuous form of the heathen representations you have changed their very essence. It is perfectly natural that the Greek gods should beget children, because they are simply enlarged men. It could not be said that the birth of demigods was regarded as a miracle; it was in the same sphere as an ordinary human birth. But there can be little doubt that in Matthew and Luke we have the narration of a miracle—and a miracle because the Hebrew notion of God is not lowered in the slightest degree. In the case of such heroes as Augustus and Alexander this objection is not quite so strong, because there it is hard to see how the human father could be definitely excluded. After all, however, the same merely anthropomorphic view of God prevails there too; so that the comparison with Matthew and Luke seems almost grotesque. At any rate, the parallel is certainly not so close as to overcome the grave objections which we mentioned against any theory of heathen influence.

We have thus far examined the theories that account for the origin of the idea of the virgin birth by means of Jewish, of Hellenistic, and of heathen elements. One possibility remains, namely, that the idea is Jewish, but that the Jews themselves received it from heathen nations. Such is the theory advocated recently by Cheyne.‡ Cheyne supposes that by means of his Babylonian, Egyptian and Persian parallels (cf. Rev. xii), he can show that "the

* Where, according to Pfeiderer (*Urchristentum*, 2te Aufl., I 695), the Jewish conception of sonship would not be readily understood.

† Cf. Usener, *Religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen*, I, 69f.

‡ *Bible Problems*, 1904.

passage in the prelude to the first gospel is a Jewish Christian transformation of a primitive story, derived ultimately, in all probability, from Babylonia, and analogous to the Jewish transformation of the Babylonian cosmogony in the opening section of Genesis." Rev. xii is derived ultimately from the same sources, and in Matthew we have certain parallels with that chapter (*e.g.*, Herod = the dragon; the flight to Egypt = the flight into the desert). Into Cheyne's learned discussions of Dusares, Tammuz, etc., we cannot now enter; but we can point out one general line of criticism. Cheyne apparently admits that by a study of the undoubtedly and narrowly Jewish writings approximately of the time of Christ, we can find no sufficient basis for the idea of the virgin birth. But there is a basis, says Cheyne, for that idea in the mythology of other Eastern peoples, and we know that the Old Testament has, as a matter of fact, been in various ways influenced by those mythologies. Therefore, concludes Cheyne, the influence may well have extended to the present case. But is not that argument rather indirect and unconvincing? Cheyne would probably not maintain that absolutely everything in the Babylonian mythology had an influence on Hebrew thought; for he recognizes the fact that the Hebrews gave a new meaning even to that which they did actually accept. So how can we be at all sure that the Babylonian *παρθένος* idea in particular had such an influence? We find no such proof of this idea in the Old Testament, as we find even of the other Babylonian ideas which Cheyne thinks were imported into Israel. It is therefore a rather doubtful proceeding to determine the content of Judaism by writings not of the Jews but of other nations.* Of course, if we do not share Cheyne's confidence that Babylonian ideas were in general easily carried into Hebrew thought, we shall be still less likely to accept his theory in the present case.

In concluding our discussion of mythical theories of the virgin birth, we call attention to the fact that such theories have by no means attained their end when they have shown that there was a logical motive leading the early Christians to look for something miraculous about Jesus' entrance into the world. If Jesus' was believed to be divine, then we freely admit that it was perfectly natural to conclude that He came into the world by a miracle. Furthermore, the conclusion is just as natural to-day as it was in A.D. 100, and it always will be natural, as long as sound reasoning

* The interpretation of Rev. xii is too problematical to be confidently adduced as an evidence that the heathen *παρθένος* idea had penetrated into Judaism. See *Expository Times*, February, 1905.

continues. So—to borrow the thought of a recent writer*—the heathen myths that we have been considering, so far from involving in suspicion anything at all similar to them, even illustrate a truth necessary to our argument. If Alexander was divine, then probably his birth was marvelous. The argument is sound, but the premise is false. If Jesus was divine, then probably His birth was marvelous. Here, too, the argument is sound, the only question being whether in this case the premise is true. Lobstein is correct in supposing that there might well have been a natural impulse in the early Church to invest Jesus' birth with the miraculous. But neither he nor any one else has shown how that impulse could have manifested itself in just the particular form in which it is now crystallized, unless in dependence upon fact. If Jesus was really divine, then we can say that probably there was something miraculous about His birth. Starting from that position, the most probable conclusion is that the canonical infancy narratives correctly inform us as to what that "something" was. For, otherwise, it is hard to see how they could have been evolved.

It is time to sum up our result. We examined, first, the hypothesis that the New Testament narratives of the birth of Jesus are to be explained as based upon facts. We showed that the narratives have very early attestation, and themselves give clear evidence that they are not pure inventions, but are based upon earlier sources. We then showed that the events narrated are not impossible unless all miracles are impossible; and that the supposed contradictions with the rest of the New Testament, and within the limits of the narratives themselves, have not been firmly established. We then examined the alternative hypothesis that the narratives are to be explained in other ways than as based upon facts. We showed that such an explanation cannot be assisted by any convincing independent proof that the narratives are composite in character; and that many theories about the origin of the idea of the virgin birth depend almost necessarily upon such unfounded interpolation theories. Finally we passed in review the various attempts to explain the origin of the account in Matt. i. 18ff., and Luke i. 34, 35, and found that the Jewish explanations fail on psychological grounds, whereas the heathen explanations must in addition face the gravest literary difficulties.

So we have found that there are grave objections both to the historical and to the mythical explanations of our narratives. What decision ought we to make? To this question we believe that

* G. A. Chadwick, *Expositor*, January, 1905, 54.

there is but one just answer, namely—that on the basis of a narrowly historical and critical examination of this one account, we can make no decision at all. The decision depends upon our point of view with regard to the miraculous in general. If, after an examination of all the other evidence, we are convinced that no miracle has occurred, then the New Testament account of the birth of Jesus can produce no sufficient reason for altering our opinion; but, if we believe that Jesus rose from the dead, then we shall avoid the greater difficulties if we accept the miracles in the first two chapters of Matthew and Luke. For there are two almost insurmountable difficulties connected with the mythical theory. In the first place, it is hard to see how the idea of the virgin birth arose unless based upon fact, and in the second place it is hard to see how the narratives could have attained such an appearance of trustworthiness unless substantially historical. The virgin birth is not one of the evidences of Christianity like the resurrection; but neither is it a stumbling-block. If Christ rose from the dead, then there is no reason to doubt that He was born of a virgin. Such, in brief, is the result of our examination. Ultimately, the decision lies in a field even more remote—namely, in the field of ethics. If we believe that there is nothing worse than imperfection in the world, then we shall be content with the ethical Christ of Lobstein or Harnack; but if we believe that there is such a thing as guilt, then we shall be predisposed to accept the miraculous Christ, who, among other things, was “conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary.”

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