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## THE GOSPEL WITNESS TO MARY'S "ANTE PARTUM" VIRGINITY

"Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things which have been accomplished among us . . . it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for you. . . ." <sup>1</sup> Luke's prologue exemplifies the goal of every exegete, viz., to carefully study the original text and its antecedent strata, to objectively and ruthlessly assess the attempts of his colleagues, and finally to present an organized whole for the sake of theology. While admitting all this as an ideal, the following paper notes some of the difficulties which plague the pursuit of the ideal from the outset. The literature on the subject of the infancy narratives and, in particular, the Virgin Birth is so enormous that only the major works and articles can be reasonably consulted here <sup>2</sup> Secondly, biblical scholarship has not reached a consensus on several points, e.g., the use of sources in Luke 1 & 2 <sup>3</sup> Finally, the uniqueness of the infancy narratives themselves does not admit of any cross-examination like that possible in the parallel passages of the Synoptics.

With such formidable restrictions, however, we propose to discuss the Gospel witness to Mary's "ante partum" virginity, i.e., the testimony reflected in the first chapter of both Matthew and Luke. Consequently we omit any biblical discussion of the "in partu" and "post partum" virginity. (Regarding the latter, Mt. 1:25 neither affirms nor denies, since the question does not

<sup>1</sup> Lk 1:1-3

<sup>2</sup> The following works contain references to most of the pertinent literature: T. Boslooper, *The Virgin Birth* (Phil., 1962), R. Laurentin, *Structure et théologie de Luc I-II (Ét. bibl.)*, 4th ed., Paris, 1964), O. da Spinetoli, *Introduzione ai Vangeli dell' Infanzia* (Brescia, 1967), J. F. Craghan, *Mary, the Virginal Wife and the Married Virgin* (Rome, 1967); A. Paul, *L'Evangile de l'Enfance selon saint Matthieu (Lire la Bible)*, Paris, 1968); G. Graystone, *Virgin of All Virgins* (Rome, 1968).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. infra, #98-99.

enter the author's zone of consideration.)<sup>4</sup> The methodology is simply to let the text speak for itself. We wish to uncover the biblical message in the way the sacred author presented it. Hence we wish to inquire according to the categories which he has chosen to employ. With certain reservations the words of Alexander Jones hold here: "All too often the private exegete is expected to demonstrate with arguments sought from syntax and context the elaborated doctrine of the twentieth century, as if the inspired writers had not used the idiom of their own time"<sup>5</sup>

### *Some Recent Trends in Gospel Study*<sup>6</sup>

The first two chapters of both Matthew and Luke have been prey to every type of exegetical fancy. The extremes have been strict modern historiography and strict modern myth.<sup>7</sup> The Virgin Birth was particularly assailed at the beginning of this century.<sup>8</sup> For example, W. Bousset called it a crass obstacle and

<sup>4</sup> Cf. K. Beyer, *Semitische Syntax im Neuen Testament*, 1 (Göttingen, 1962) Teil 1, 132, A 1; A. Vogtle, *Die Genealogie Mt 1, 2-16 und die matthäische Kindheitsgeschichte*, in *BZ (NF)* 8 (1964) 246, A 66; idem *Mt. 1, 25 und die "Virginitas B.M. Virginis post partum"*, in *Maria in Sacra Scriptura*, 4 (Rome, 1967) 433-443. A good treatment of the "post partum" virginity may be found in J. Blinzler, *Die Brüder und Schwestern Jesu (SBS)*, 2nd ed., Stuttgart, 1967). H. von Campenhausen's criticism of Blinzler's conclusions reveals a certain naïveté since Blinzler did not stick to "the simplest and most obvious explanation" (*The Virgin Birth in the Theology of the Ancient Church (SHT)*, Naperville, 1964) 29, #8). For another similar, non-exegetical rejection of the "post partum" virginity cf. J. R. Gray, *Was Our Lord an Only Child—Luke 11. 43-46*, in *ET* 71 (1959-60) 53.

<sup>5</sup> A. Jones, *Reflections on a Recent Dispute*, in *Sept* 8 (1965) 20.

<sup>6</sup> A brief, yet good study of trends with regards to the Infancy Gospels may be found in Vogtle's. *Die Genealogie...*, in *BZ (NF)* 9 (1965) 48-54. Cf. also the lengthy and most recent study by E. Peretto, *Ricerche su Mt. 1-2*, in *Mm* 31 (1969) 140-247.

<sup>7</sup> In modern parlance, myth is generally associated with the imaginative and the legendary. However, it has a much more positive and unobjectionable meaning which will be discussed below. Cf. *infra*, #152.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. da Spinetoli, *op cit.*, 19-20.

maintained that the Son of God idea had been transplanted from the Hellenistic myths.<sup>9</sup> In much the same manner J. Usener held that the redactor effected a compromise with the legend found in Matthew by interpolating this alien and irreconcilable addition into Luke's work.<sup>10</sup> At the other end of the exegetical pendulum there is the "Protokollschule," i.e., those who seek and apparently find a detailed list of minutes of the events surrounding Jesus' birth and childhood.

To a certain extent the criticism of the myth school reflected the uniqueness of the Infancy Gospels.<sup>11</sup> The primitive kerygma began at the Jordan, not in Bethlehem or Nazareth. John's preaching, as faithfully preserved in Mark and reiterated in Acts, coincided with the beginning of the Gospel message.<sup>12</sup> "They (the infancy narratives) are, in content and in style, utterly unlike anything else in the gospel tradition, and a critical reader may well wonder whether they are to be taken as history in the same sense as the narratives of the public life."<sup>13</sup>

Within the last few years the entire climate has changed. The first two chapters of Matthew and Luke are now considered essential parts of the entire theological message of these two authors. Often they are viewed as proleptic; they announce beforehand the entire outcome of the Gospel action. They are a "prooimion," as J.-P. Audet would have it. Their literary function is to prepare the reader to understand the main con-

<sup>9</sup> Cf. W. Bousset, *Kyrios Christos* (2nd ed., Göttingen, 1921) 268.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. J. Usener, *Nativity*, in *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, 3 (eds. T. K. Cheyne & J. S. Black, London, 1902) 3350. The interpolation theory is still held; cf., e.g., W. L. Knox, *The Sources of the Synoptic Gospels*, 2 (ed. H. Chadwick, Cambridge, 1957) 42.

<sup>11</sup> P. Minear wrote a very penetrating essay almost twenty years ago in which he successfully described the origin of the infancy narratives in the Christian community. He divides the life-situations into "Sitz im Leben, Sitz im Glauben, Sitz im Loben." Cf. *The Interpreter and the Birth Narratives* (*Symbolae Biblicae Upsalenses*; Uppsala, 1950).

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *Mk.* 1:1; *Acts* 1:22, 10:37. See also C. H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching* (N.Y., 1964) 52.

<sup>13</sup> X. Léon-Dufour, *The Gospels and the Jesus of History* (N.Y., 1968) 214.

tent of the writing. In Luke, for example, the accounts of the infancy of Jesus and John presage the proclamation of the Good News.<sup>14</sup> The correct understanding of the first two chapters of Matthew and Luke, therefore, is the key to the interpretation of the remaining chapters. These later "intrusions" into the primitive message have now been baptized as Gospel.

A second trend is a corollary of the first, viz., redaction criticism (*Redaktionsgeschichte*). The evangelists are not the scissors and paste men that the earlier form critics imagined them to be.<sup>15</sup> Far from merely linking pericopes together, they exercised their own literary talent, shaping the traditions of Jesus and the community, and impressing on them their own theological convictions.<sup>16</sup> Homogeneity of interests, recurring stylistic features, and repetition of stereotyped vocabulary link Mt 1 & 2 and Lk. 1 & 2 with their subsequent Gospel messages. As

<sup>14</sup> With regard to Luke cf. J-P Audet, *Announce à Marie*, in *RB* 63 (1956) 347, idem, *Autour de la théologie de Luc I-II*, in *SEc* 11 (1959) 412-413. In his famous book, *The Theology of St. Luke* (London, 1961) 118, H. Conzelmann considered the first two chapters of Luke as irrelevant to Luke's overall purpose. P. Minear and H. H. Oliver have clearly demonstrated the shallowness of Conzelmann's view. For the former, cf. *Luke's Use of the Birth Stories*, in *Studies in Luke-Acts* (Fs P. Schubert; eds L. E. Keck & J. L. Martyn, Nashville, 1966) 111-130, for the latter, cf. *The Lucan Birth Stories and the Purpose of Luke-Acts*, in *NTS* 10 (1963-64) 202-226. Regarding the relevance of the infancy narratives in Matthew, cf. H. Milton, *The Structure of the Prologue to St. Matthew's Gospel*, in *JBL* 81 (1962) 178-179, J. Racette, *Notes d'Écriture Sainte: L'évangile de l'enfance selon saint Matthieu*, in *SEc* 9 (1957) 77, Minear, *The Interpreter*... 16.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. C. H. Dodd, *The Framework of the Gospel Narrative*, in *ET* 43 (1931-32) 396-400.

<sup>16</sup> Samples of works stressing redaction criticism are the following: (Matthew) W. Trilling, *Das wahre Israel* (*StANT*; 3rd ed., Munich, 1964); G. Bornkamm, G. Barth, H. J. Held, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* (*NTL*; Phil., 1963); R. Hummel, *Die Auseinandersetzung zwischen Kirche und Judentum im Matthäusevangelium* (Munich, 1966); G. Strecker, *Der Weg der Gerechtigkeit* (*FRLANT*; Göttingen, 1966); (Mark) W. Marxsen, *Mark the Evangelist* (Nashville, 1969); (Luke) cf. Conzelmann, *op.cit.*

a result, both Matthew and Luke added their own insights to the traditions which they have preserved.

The effort to separate the Matthean or Lukan contribution presents difficulties. One must take into account the whole Gospel structure, the particular vocabulary of both Matthew and Luke, as well as other inconsistencies in the text.<sup>17</sup> Though it involves painstaking work, redaction criticism has yielded new dimensions to Gospel study. Its continued and judicious use will undoubtedly enhance the theological message articulated by Matthew and Luke in their opening chapters.

The third trend regarding the infancy narratives is the classification of their literary genre.<sup>18</sup> Once the genres of objective history and legend had been eliminated, the term "midrash" became acceptable in many corners.<sup>19</sup> For many, the term evoked association with the unhistorical or conjured up thoughts of pious homiletic reverie. Thanks to the work of such scholars as R. Bloch and A. G. Wright, the genre of midrash has been restored to honor in biblical circles.<sup>20</sup>

Midrash (and here "haggadic" or narrative midrash) takes Scripture as its point of departure, interprets it in view of the needs of the time and place, so that the original passage becomes relevant and useful. In this process haggadic midrash

<sup>17</sup> Cf. A. Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Luke* (ICC; 5th ed., Edinburgh, 1922) 41-70; R. Morgenthauer, *Die lukanische Geschichtsschreibung als Zeugnis*, 1 (Zürich, 1949) 18-19, 20, 22-29; 30-31; 42; 48; 70, 97-98, 142; 154-155; 167-168 179-180 idem, *Statistik des neutestamentlichen Wortschatzes* (Zürich, 1958) 62-63 187.

<sup>18</sup> For a good study of literary genre cf. I. Alonso-Schökel, *Literary Genres, Biblical*, in NCE 8, 803-809. Some falsely assume that a literary genre is merely extrinsic dress, cf. in this regard da Spinetoli, op cit., 13.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. R. Bloch, *Midrash*, in SDBI 5, 1279, Laurentin, op cit., 93-98, 116-117; R. Dillon, *St. Luke's Infancy Account*, in *Dunwoodie Review* 1 (1961) 23-24, S. Muñoz Iglesias, *El género literario del Evangelio de la Infancia en San Mateo*, in *EstB* 17 (1958) 243-273.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Bloch, art. cit., 1263-1281, A. G. Wright, *The Literary Genre Midrash*, in CBQ 28 (1966) 105-138; 317-457.

embellishes the account, adding legendary details to suit its didactic purpose.

Many have proposed the genre of haggadic midrash for the infancy narratives, although not without nuances.<sup>21</sup> In the light of Wright's study, the term "midrash" cannot be applied "stricto sensu" to these narratives since they do not actualize biblical texts. His own conclusions appears to be more accurate. "Perhaps the best classification of our material is simply *infancy narrative*, for these chapters seem to have been written in the tradition of infancy stories, biblical and extra-biblical, sharing with them many of their motifs."<sup>22</sup>

The important features in this third trend of literary genre designation is that this discussion has highlighted the Jewish background of the accounts. It has forced interpreters to carefully investigate the gamut of Jewish traditions, to ferret out their views on various biblical figures, and then to inquire into relevance to the Christian message of the Matthean and Lukan accounts.<sup>23</sup> In Jewish circles the text was never transmitted alone; it was always handed on with an interpretation.<sup>24</sup> Hence

<sup>21</sup> Cf. G. H. Box, *The Gospel Narratives of the Nativity and the Alleged Influence of Heathen Ideas*, in ZNW 6 (1905) 81; Muñoz Iglesias, *El Evangelio de la Infancia en S. Mateo*, in *Sacra Pagina*, 2 (eds J. Coppens, A. Descamps, E. Massaux, Paris, 1959) 148; H. Schurmann, *Aufbau, Eigenart, und Geschichtswert der Vorgeschichte von Lukas 1-2*, in BK 21 (1966) 109; Laurentin, op cit., 117-119; M. Bourke, *The Literary Genus of Matthew 1-2*, in CBQ 22 (1960) 174-175; idem, *Infancy Gospel*, in NCE 7, 499-500; Vogtle, *Das Schicksal des Messiaskindes—Zur Auslegung und Theologie von Mt. 2*, in *Bibel und Leben* 6 (1965) 267-271; idem, *Kindheitsgeschichte Jesu*, in LTK 6, 162-163; Alonso-Schökel, *Form Criticism, Biblical*, in NCE 5, 1020; Léon-Dufour, op cit., 214; M. D. Goulder & M. L. Sanderson, *St. Luke's Genesis*, in JTS 8 (1957) 12.

<sup>22</sup> Art. cit., 456. Schurmann seems to be thinking of the same approach; cf. art cit., 110.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. D. Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (London, 1956); idem, *The Earliest Structure of the Gospels*, in NTS 5 (1958-59) 174-187; C. H. Cave, *St. Matthew's Infancy Narrative*, NTS 9 (1962-63) 382-390; R. Le Déaut, *Liturgie juive et Nouveau Testament* (Rome, 1965).

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Le Déaut, op cit., 8-9.

allusions, motifs, etc., become paramount because they reflect the stock interpretations or aspirations which the NT authors found verified in Jesus<sup>25</sup>

### *Matthew and Luke Compared*<sup>26</sup>

It is generally accepted that Matthew and Luke are independent of each other in their infancy narratives<sup>27</sup>. It is clear that the circles which transmitted these traditions had different interests and viewpoints<sup>28</sup>. In Matthew, for instance, the action progresses and develops from Joseph's vantage point, and dreams are the vehicle of revelation<sup>29</sup>. Throughout the first two chapters of Matthew, Joseph is the one who initiates the action, whether of moving to Egypt or departing from there. While Joseph receives God's directives from the angel in the foreground, Mary stands in the wings. Moreover Matthew labors to emphasize the point that Joseph named the child and thus entered Jesus in the Davidic family (Mt. 1:21<sup>a</sup>, 25<sup>b</sup>).

In Luke, on the other hand, the roles are switched. Joseph is introduced only where it seems necessary, and Mary assumes the leading part. For example Luke develops in thirteen verses (Lk.

<sup>25</sup> For the relevance of such interpretations, especially as found in the targumic literature, to the New Testament, cf. M. McNamara, *The New Testament and the Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch* (AB, Rome, 1966).

<sup>26</sup> For a good summary of the comparisons, cf. Vogtle, *Die Genealogie*, . 54-58.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. H. E. W. Turner, *The Virgin Birth*, in *ET* 68 (1956-57) 15. Nevertheless P. J. Thompson holds that a comparison of Matthew and Luke suggests that Luke is working with Matthew in view; cf. *The Infancy Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke Compared*, in *TuU* 73 (1959) 217-222. Note also von Campenhausen's criticism of Thompson's article, cf. *op cit.*, 25 #2. Another interesting, though highly improbable, view is that suggested by F. W. Goodman. The latter argues that Matthew and Luke had for their sources different parts of the same manuscript. Cf. *Sources of First Two Chapters in Matthew and Luke*, in *CQR* 162 (1961) 136-143.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. K. Stendahl, *Quis et Unde?*, in *Judentum, Urchristentum, Kirche* (Fs. J. Jeremias, ed. W. Eltester, Berlin, 1964) 95-96.



1:26-38) Mary's confrontation with Gabriel, her acceptance of maternity, and the suggestion that the conception took place then and there. Matthew, however, baldly states the fact of the conception in passing (Mt 1:18<sup>b</sup>). Moreover, in the transition from Nazareth to the hill country of Judea, Mary apparently takes the initiative, she, not Joseph, pondered the meaning of the events (Lk. 2:19, 51<sup>b</sup>). Finally, Mary (Lk. 1:31) was commissioned to name the Child, not Joseph.<sup>20</sup>

Another difference is a geographical one. According to Matthew, Mary and Joseph appear to have their home in Bethlehem and are directed to go to Nazareth only because of the danger of the Child's life. On the other hand, Luke introduces Mary and Joseph as inhabitants of Nazareth who travel to Bethlehem merely because of the census. Furthermore, Matthew knows of no annunciation to Zechariah, no visitation, no special concentration on John the Baptist. The shepherds, Anna and Simeon, as well as the presentation and loss in the Temple are likewise wanting. Similarly in Luke the visit by the Magi, the evil Herod, the slaughter of the Innocents, the flight to Egypt and the return, as well as the continued flight to Galilee are not so much as alluded to. In the literary order Luke has nothing to match Matthew's formula quotations. Clearly, the traditions concerning Jesus's infancy are independent.

In view of the above contradictions and omissions, agreement on essentials is most striking and it is precisely such agreement<sup>21</sup> which should be urged when the "ante partum" virginity of Mary is discussed.<sup>22</sup> Despite disparate transmission, both the Matthaean and Lukan infancy narratives stem from a source which affirmed the following points. First of all, the Child was conceived at a time when Mary and Joseph were

<sup>20</sup> Cf. S. Cavaletti, *I sogni di San Giuseppe*, in *BO* 2 (1960) 149-151.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Laurentin, *op. cit.*, 103-104.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. C. K. Barrett, *The Holy Spirit and the Gospel Tradition* (London, 1966) 5; O. A. Piper, *The Virgin Birth—The Meaning of the Gospel Account* in *Int* 18 (1964) 138.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Schurmann, *art. cit.*, 111.

engaged, therefore, at a time when they did not enjoy common life.<sup>33</sup> Second, Joseph did not father the Child; He was conceived through the intervention of the Spirit.<sup>34</sup> Third, the Child's name was Jesus and, fourth, He was born in Bethlehem and grew up in Nazareth.<sup>35</sup> Fifth, Jesus belongs to the Davidic line. Both traditions, therefore, faithfully preserved these facts; varying theological interests shaped the rest of the tradition and led to the conflicting accounts about the other facets of Jesus' infancy.

### *Matthew's Account*

For certain OT scholars the most interesting component of the First Gospel would be the list of Jesus' progenitors, in the legal sense, which is to be found in his opening chapter. The ordinary reader, however, is prone to skim the list of odd sounding names in order to consider the more relevant matter of Joseph's dilemma in Mt. 1:18-25. In recent years scholars have learned to protest such an approach, urging that the genealogy, although based on pre-Matthean sources, has been thoroughly elaborated and reshaped by Matthew to make a theological pronouncement about the identity of Jesus.<sup>36</sup> To

<sup>33</sup> For a discussion of Jewish marriage customs, cf. M. Grunwald, *Marriage Ceremonies*, in *JE* 8, 340-347; J. H. Greenstone, *Marriage Laws*, *ibid.*, 347-349; R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel* (N.Y., 1961) 26-36; Craghan, *op cit.*, 28-32; Graystone, *op cit.*, 37-40.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Laurentin, *op cit.*, 113.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Léon-Dufour, *op cit.*, 217; Laurentin, *op cit.*, 101.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Stendahl, *art cit.*, 100-102; Milton, *art cit.*, 176-177; Vogtle, *Genealogie(n)*, in *LTK* 4, 661; E. Krentz, *The Extent of Matthew's Prologue—Toward the Structure of the First Gospel*, in *JBL* 83 (1964) 409-414; O. J. F. Seitz, *Gospel Prologues: A Common Pattern?*, in *JBL* 83 (1964) 262-268; R. Pesch, *Der Gottessohn im matthäischen Evangelienprolog (Mt. 1-2)*, in *Bib* 148 (1967) 395; R. Bloch, *Juda engendra Pharis et Zara de Thamar (Mt. 1, 3)*, in *Mélanges bibliques rédigés en l'honneur de André Robert* (Paris, 1957) 381-389.

consider this prologue to the Gospel as trivial is to refuse to understand Matthew's message<sup>37</sup>

The very first verse of chapter 1 provides the key to the correct interpretation: "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham" By a threefold arrangement of fourteen,<sup>38</sup> each punctuated with a critical event (the ascendancy of David, the Babylonian captivity, and the Christ event), Matthew presents a schematized view of salvation history<sup>39</sup> He is laboring, stammering to say that the dream of Abraham and the hope of David have finally been fulfilled But it is the last point which is underlined, viz., Jesus the Christ, i e, the Anointed (Messiah), who is the Son of David In v 16 David's line reaches Joseph, the son of Jacob, "the husband of Mary, of whom (Mary) was born Jesus who is called the "Christ." This v 16 is clearly linked with v 1 (note how "Christ" is repeated in the summation of v. 17), but a difficulty arises which Matthew must come to grips with.

How can Jesus be called "son of David" if he has no human father? Would it be valid to include him in David's line if no one of that line fathered him? "Mt is now to explain the details of this last point of the genealogy, a point where the nature of the case has caused a rather complicated formulation. He says: But as for this last link in the genealogy 'Jesus Christ,' his origin was this wise. Thus already the syntactical form of v. 18<sup>a</sup> indicates that vv. 18-25 are the enlarged footnote to the crucial point in the genealogy"<sup>40</sup> In this footnote Matthew ex-

<sup>37</sup> Cf M D Johnson, *The Purpose of the Biblical Genealogies* (Cambridge, 1969) 255. Johnson's work shows that the biblical genealogies are not mere appendices to the narrative, but play an important role in the theology of the author

<sup>38</sup> Some authors maintain that the number fourteen was reached by gematria, i e, the sum of the numerical value of the letters in the Hebrew name "David" Cf Box, art cit, 84-85, Stendahl, art.cit, 101; Vogtle, *Die Genealogie* . . , 36. Johnson (op cit, 192-193) has certain reservations

<sup>39</sup> Concerning the problem of the fourteen in the third column, cf Johnson, op cit, 182-184, Vogtle, *Die Genealogie* . . . , 42-45.

plains that Joseph was perplexed, but that at the revelation of the angel he agreed to accept legal paternity. Matthew stresses this when he describes Joseph in v. 20 as "Joseph, son of David" and enjoins the command to give the name of Jesus. It is precisely this naming, this demonstration of legal paternity, which will include Jesus in the Davidic line. The final verse, v. 25, is, therefore, the culmination of the enlarged footnote and the solution to the vexing problem: "and he called His name Jesus"<sup>41</sup>

The importance of this insight into the text of Matthew lies in the fact that it demonstrates that Matthew was fully aware of the tradition concerning the Virgin Birth. If he had not accepted it as true, he certainly would not have labored or gone to such extremes to solve the problem which this tradition involved for Jesus as the Son of David. Furthermore, Matthew does not discuss the theological issues of the Virgin Birth in terms of, for example, Christology or soteriology. It is simply a fact preserved in the tradition accessible to him which is stated

<sup>40</sup> Stendahl, art. cit., 101-102. Cf. also Pesch, art. cit., 417, Vogtle, *Die Genealogie* . . . , 242.

<sup>41</sup> M. Kramer has written extensively on Mt. 1:18-25. His basic contention is that in this chapter we have a Greek translation (or rather mistranslation at times) of Matthew's original Aramaic. In the enigmatic v. 25 the Aramaic "ad di" was falsely translated into Greek as "heōs hou" meaning "until." However, the original Aramaic participle introduces a main clause rather than the ineptly construed Greek subordinate clause. In fact, the whole force of the Aramaic participle is to emphasize the point of the passage. Accordingly Mt. 1:25 should be translated, "And although he had not known her, still she gave birth to a son." Cf. *Die Menschwerdung Jesu nach Matthäus (Mt. 1)*, in *Bibl* 45 (1964) 1-50; idem, *Zwei Probleme aus Mt. 1, 18-25*, in *Slm* 26 (1964) 303-333. The underlying weakness of Kramer's argumentation is the elusive Aramaic document underlying the present Greek text. The Gospel does not read in whole or in part as a translation from the Aramaic. It would seem, therefore, that the Greek text is in possession until the contrary is evident. Cf. Kurzinger, *Das Papiaszeugnis und die Erstgestalt des Matthäusevangeliums*, in *BZ (NF)* 4 (1960) 19-38, A. Wikenhauser, *New Testament Introduction* (London, 1957) 191-195, W. Barclay, *The First Three Gospels* (London, 1966) 200.

and not expounded. In this regard many have contended that Matthew (hence, on the redactional level) proposed to overcome in a very succinct fashion slanderous remarks about Jesus' origin and, consequently, that he envisioned some form of apologia here.<sup>42</sup> It should be remarked, however, that such a defensive attitude does not necessarily flow from the text *within the present Matthean framework*. W. D. Davies' attitude towards the birth narratives in general is much to the point here. "...it is well not to overemphasize the strictly apologetic or polemic motifs in the birth narratives. They are probably, not to the world, but to the Church; they aim not at meeting calumnies and producing an impression upon the pagan world but at expounding the mystery of Christ, through his birth, to the Church itself."<sup>43</sup>

At this point a significant contact between the OT and Matthew's Gospel is the use of the phrase "biblos geneseōs" in Mt. 1:1. The same expression (*hautē hē biblos geneseōs*) is used only twice in the LXX, viz., in Gen. 2:4<sup>a</sup> & 5:1<sup>a</sup>. "genesis" means "genealogy" especially when it is employed in the plural and when followed by a list of descendants, not forefathers.<sup>44</sup> These observations have led W. D. Davies and others to suspect that Matthew is here alluding to either the generation of the universe itself (Gen. 2:4<sup>a</sup>), or to the creation or genesis of the first Adam (Gen. 5:1<sup>a</sup>), or both.<sup>45</sup>

The evangelist has consciously begun his Gospel with a phrase intended to suggest a parallel between Jesus and the first Adam, and, even more, with the very creation of the universe. . . The significance of the prologue is to suggest that the birth can be compared adequately only with the creation of the

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Stendahl, art. cit., 103; he sees no real apologia here.

<sup>43</sup> W. D. Davies, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Cambridge, 1966) 12, cf. idem, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount* (Cambridge, 1964) 66.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Davies, *The Setting* . . . , 67-68.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Davies, *The Sermon* . . . , 12-13; idem, *The Setting* . . . , 68-72; J. Daniélou, *The Infancy Narratives* (N.Y., 1968) 12-13, Paul, op. cit., 38-48.

universe itself."<sup>46</sup> The obvious point of contact, therefore, is the role of the Spirit. Just as the Spirit of God moved over inanimate matter in Gen 1:2, so now that same Spirit reposes on Mary in the work of a new creation analogous with the first.<sup>47</sup> Of itself, the expression "biblos geneeseōs" is sufficiently plastic to admit both interpretations, viz, *history of the origin* corresponding to Gen 2:4<sup>a</sup> and the creation of the world, and *genealogy* referring to Gen 5:1 and Adam's descendants. Mt. 1:18<sup>a</sup> would then elaborate Jesus' origin (with the role of the Spirit) whereby He is fitted into the Davidic genealogy. However, caution should be observed here. The connexion between the Spirit in Genesis and the Spirit in Matthew is hardly apodictic, yet by the same token it cannot be summarily dismissed.

Unlike Luke,<sup>48</sup> Matthew mentions four women in his genealogy, i.e., Tamar (v. 3<sup>a</sup>), Rahab (v. 5<sup>a</sup>), Ruth (v. 5<sup>b</sup>), and Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah (v. 6<sup>b</sup>).<sup>49</sup> Even a passing acquaintance with the OT would indicate that the first, second, and fourth of these women shared rather unique backgrounds and careers. In Gen 38, Tamar, presumably a Canaanite, plays the part of a harlot with her father-in-law Judah, and enters the Davidic line as the mother of Perez. In Josh 2, Rahab, presumably a Canaanite, is described as a prostitute, yet she goes on to help the invading Israelites and eventually becomes the mother of Boaz. In the book named after her, Ruth is depicted as the poor Moabite widow who attains fame by becoming the great-grandmother of David. Finally, 2 Sam. 11 unabashedly relates how Bathsheba, perhaps a Hittite also like her husband Uriah, committed adultery with King David, but nevertheless became the queen mother of King Solomon. K. Stendahl is

<sup>46</sup> Davis, *The Sermon*, 13.

<sup>47</sup> Regarding the meaning of "biblos geneeseōs" cf. P. Bonnard, *L'Évangile selon saint Matthieu* (Neuchâtel, 1963) 15-16, W. F. Arndt & F. W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago, 1957) 154.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Plummer, *op cit*, 101-105.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Paul, *op cit*, 30-37; Johnson, *op.cit.*, 152-179.

correct when he notes, "The common denominator of these four women is found in that they all represent an 'irregularity' in the Davidic line. . . ." <sup>50</sup> A further question arises, however, i.e., how did contemporary Jewish thought regard these blemishes in the Davidic line and why, therefore, does Matthew introduce them into his genealogy? <sup>51</sup>

Regarding the incident of Gen. 38, Jewish tradition tended to place most of the blame on Judah and exculpate Tamar. Of the latter one text reads: "It was the Holy Spirit who led Tamar to act in this way" <sup>52</sup> According to Rabbinic tradition, Joshua married Rahab and she became the mother of prophets and priests. But more importantly, "the Holy Spirit reposed on her before the Israelites arrived in the Promised Land." <sup>53</sup> Although a Moabitess, Ruth remained faithful to her vocation as ancestress of the Messiah because of the aid supplied by Yahweh. <sup>54</sup> As for Bathsheba, some Rabbinic literature tends to exonerate her, whereas some other traditions continue to blame her. <sup>55</sup>

In view of the various traditions concerning the four women of Matthew's genealogy, what conclusion can we draw? An obvious one is that Mary, too, has a unique position in the list of those who prepared for the coming of the Messiah. But Matthew appears to go beyond that by selecting such unique company: two prostitutes, an adulteress, and a widow. He seems to be underlining the paradox of the divine plan; he implies that God's actions are not to be measured by man's

<sup>50</sup> Art. cit., 101; cf. also Johnson, op. cit., 153; A. R. C. Leaney, *The Birth Narratives in St. Luke and St. Matthew*, in *NTS* 8 (1961-62) 165.

<sup>51</sup> An important source here is: Bloch, *Juda engendra*.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 387.

<sup>53</sup> H. L. Strack-P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, 1 (Munich, 1922) 21.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. A. Sperber, *The Bible in Aramaic*, 4 A (Leiden, 1968) 123. Paul (op. cit., 34) assumes that the Holy Spirit (the prophetic power) is implied in the Targum of the Book of Ruth. However, as he correctly translates, only Yahweh, and not the Holy Spirit, is mentioned in the text.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Johnson, op. cit., 170-175.

norms<sup>56</sup> If God could choose prostitutes, an adulteress, and a widow to realize His plan for the Davidic line, could He not intervene in a more striking way to realize His plan for the Davidic son par excellence Mary thus joins this elite corps of Davidic mothers as a virgin<sup>57</sup>

Another conclusion is that Mary shares with Tamar and Rahab this unique status because of the role of the Spirit, and with Ruth because of the help given by Yahweh. Just as the Spirit reposed on Rahab when the Israelites entered the Promised Land, so too the Spirit reposes on Mary when the Messiah enters the Promised Land. It should be noted that Matthew suggests these conclusions; he says so much by implication, aware undoubtedly this his audience will detect the nuances of his composition<sup>58</sup>

Other recent studies have continued to accentuate the Jewish background and the Jewish understanding of Matthew 1 & 2 in

<sup>56</sup>Cf. Vogtle, *Die Genealogie* . . , 40

<sup>57</sup> G. Kittel rejects the view that these four women were introduced into the genealogy in order to prepare the ground for the extraordinary nature of the last in the series. Cf. *Thamar*, in *TDNT* 3, 2 His view is one-sided in that he considers illegitimate conception to be the only basis for comparison

<sup>58</sup> Johnson holds the following view regarding the role of the four women and Mary in the genealogy ". those who consider the role of the women to be related to polemics are right, but not in tracing the polemic to Jewish calumnies against the idea of the virgin birth *The polemic took place within Judaism itself*" (op cit, 176) In Johnson's view the polemic centered about either a Davidic or Levitical Messiah. By opting for the position of the predominant Jewish group, the Pharisees, and hence for the Davidic Messiah, Matthew was able to show his Jewish-Christian audience that "in every respect the Pharisaic expectation of the Messiah had been fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth, who was the son of David and therefore a descendant of the four women" (ibid, 178). In his presentation Johnson establishes a dialectic of Davidic Messiah polemic versus Virgin Birth polemic However, there seems to be no reason why a third position cannot be entertained, viz, that Matthew could link the role of the four women with that of Mary on the score that God's actions are not to be measured by man's norms Admittedly, this approach is close to the Virgin Birth polemic, but only inasmuch as it suggests the underlying theological principle



another direction, viz, the typology involved.<sup>59</sup> Although the basic typology is that of Jacob (Israel)—Jesus,<sup>60</sup> still the Moses—Jesus typology is not thereby eliminated.<sup>61</sup> In the midrashic writings the proclamation of the birth of Israel's deliverer plays an important role. When Pharaoh learns of this birth, he as well as the other Egyptians are frightened. Pharaoh next consults wise men, orders the death of the Hebrew boys, but providentially Moses escapes.<sup>62</sup> The typology between the magi account with its slaughter of the infants and the midrashic material is enhanced by the citation of Ex. 4:19 in Mt 2:20.<sup>63</sup> Here Matthew employs the plural ("... those who sought the child's life are dead") rather than the singular which would have only limited reference to Herod.

The point to be noted here is the Jewish commentary on Ex 1:13 which is used as background material and perhaps as an allusion to the Virgin Birth. In view of the massacre of the Israelite male children, Amram, Moses' father, a just man, repudiated his wife Jechobed, urging the inanity of begetting any more children who would only be killed. At this point Miriam,<sup>64</sup> a prophetess, reproved her father and persuaded him to take his wife back again, saying, "My mother shall give birth

<sup>59</sup> Cf. supra, #21, 23.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Vogtle, *Die Genealogie...*, 255; idem, *Das Schicksal...*, 274; Bourke, *The Literary Genus...*, 167-173; Cave, art. cit., 288. Muñoz Iglesias appears to emphasize the Moses-Jesus typology; cf. *El Evangelio...*, 145.

<sup>61</sup> Bourke calls the Moses-Jesus typology "subordinate." Cf. *Infancy Gospel*, 499.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Muñoz Iglesias, *El Evangelio...*, 147.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Vogtle, *Das Schicksal...*, 269-270, J. Jeremias, *Mōysēs*, in *TDNT* 4, 870-871.

<sup>64</sup> For a good treatment of the prominence and Jewish discussion of Miriam, cf. Le Déaut, *Miryam, sœur de Moïse, et Marie, mère du Messie*, in *Bibl* 45 (1964) 198-219. However, one should use his observations with tact and precision "pour ne pas aboutir à une élaboration artificielle dépassant les intentions conscientes des auteurs sacrés" (ibid., 219). See also F. Zorell, *Maria, soror Moysi, et Maria, Mater Dei*, in *VD* 6 (1926) 257-263.

to a son who shall save Israel from bondage"<sup>65</sup> "It is hardly necessary to indicate the parallels between the early Midrashic material on Exodus and the Matthaean narrative. Joseph refrained from, and would repudiate, Mary, as did Amram with Jochebed. Amram was rebuked by the Holy Spirit who told him of the child's destiny."<sup>66</sup> The reference to Moses' parents would obviously not concern a virgin birth, but "it would be close enough to be of interest"<sup>67</sup>

The above Jewish "Kolorit" of Matthew 1 & 2 suggests an ambient where the life and work of Jesus were interpreted against a background of Jewish hopes, aspirations, and thought processes. But how does Matthew fit into this framework? Is he merely transmitting the tradition as he found it, or is he moulding and shaping this tradition in view of his own theological purposes, although preserving much of the tradition in the process? In other words, can we detect in Matthew's text traces of "Redaktionsgeschichte"? Since parallel passages are wanting for Mt 1:18-25, an examination will have to proceed along the lines of a somewhat detailed analysis of its vocabulary and style in an effort to determine how far these are Matthean or not.<sup>68</sup>

At first glance Mt 1:18-25 appears to evince a dream narrative structure like that in Mt 2:13-15 where Joseph is commanded to flee into Egypt. The underlying structure would include: a) an introductory genitive absolute and "idou" (Mt

<sup>65</sup> Cave, art. cit., 385, for another interesting parallel to Joseph's abstinence, cf. Muñoz Iglesias, *El Evangelio...*, 147, #7.

<sup>66</sup> Cave, art. cit., 385.

<sup>67</sup> Davies, *The Setting...*, 81.

<sup>68</sup> I wish to express my gratitude to the Rev. G. M. Soares, S.J., for all the insights into the redaction criticism of Mt. 1 & 2 which were made possible by the generous offer of parts of his doctoral dissertation. The latter is entitled: *The Formula Quotations in the Infancy Narrative of Matthew. A Contribution to the Source Analysis of Mt. 1-2*. The thesis was submitted for the doctorate in theology to the theological faculty of Lyon-Fourvière, May, 1969. Any shortcomings or misrepresentations are entirely my own; the exegetical acumen is the author's.

1:20<sup>a</sup>; 2:13<sup>a</sup>); b) a stereotyped description of the dream event (Mt. 1:20<sup>b</sup>, 2:13<sup>a</sup>); c) a message containing a command followed by an explanation ("gar") of the command (Mt. 1:20<sup>b</sup>; 2:13<sup>b</sup>); d) an account of the execution of the command, followed (in Mt. 1:18-25 preceded) by a formula quotation (Mt. 1:24, 22-23; 2:14, 15).<sup>69</sup> But as Krämer and Strecker have observed,<sup>70</sup> the only part of the message in Mt. 1:20-21 which is essential to a dream narrative is simply: "Do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit" (Mt 1:20<sup>b</sup>). The prediction of the birth of a son and the assignment of a name are, strictly speaking, superfluous.<sup>71</sup>

More probably, therefore, Matthew in 1:18-25 has expanded a primitive dream narrative, which he found in his source (18<sup>b</sup>-20, 24 but with redactional insertions), into an annunciation story through the tradition of a birth oracle (v. 21). The latter has been adapted to the formula quotation (vv. 22-23=Is 7:14). In order to show the execution of the command given to Joseph, Matthew has added v. 25 which points up the fact that *despite* the fact that he did not know her, she bore a son and he fulfilled his mission by naming Him Jesus.<sup>72</sup> "It is the second alternative (expansion of the dream narrative into an annunciation story) that seems the more likely, not only because it conforms to Matthew's normal practice of modifying his sources in function of the formula quotations introduced into them, but because the role of Mt 1, 18-25 in the overall redactional pattern of the Infancy Narrative is not that of rebutting calumnies about the birth of Jesus, but that of explaining the riddle of the origin of Jesus presented by the aberrant endings of the Genealogy."<sup>73</sup>

<sup>69</sup> Cf Coares, op. cit., 217-222

<sup>70</sup> Cf Kramer, *Die Menschwerdung*, 4, Strecker, op. cit., 54.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Soares, op cit., 217-222

<sup>72</sup> Cf Krämer, *Die Menschwerdung* ., 21-22, 30-40

<sup>73</sup> Soares, op cit., 226

Assuming the rather simple, direct, and concrete stories which make up the Infancy Gospel traditions and noting a relatively large number of unusual words for Matthew, one may suggest that the pre-redactional core of Mt. 1:18-19 is: "When his mother Mary was engaged to Joseph, before they took up common life, she was found to be pregnant. But Joseph, being just, wanted to divorce her."<sup>74</sup> This rather adequate and intelligible setting for the dream narrative has been expanded by Matthew, bringing to the narrative psychological subtleties which interrupt its rather smooth flow. But it is precisely in these precisions that Matthew's mind and attitude are made clear

V. 18<sup>a</sup> ("But the 'genesis' of Jesus Christ was in this way"), as mentioned above, is almost certainly Matthew's redactional device, the beginning of his footnote, to explain the "Einpflanzung Jesu in das Geschlecht Davids"<sup>75</sup> despite the Virgin Birth. For the most part, v. 18<sup>b</sup> with its awkward genitive absolute does not betray any unique Matthean stylistic device, neither is its vocabulary typically Matthean. The presence of technical terms like "mnēsteuō" and "synerchomai"<sup>76</sup> is due to the very nature of the original dream narrative, i.e., to present the situation.<sup>77</sup>

However, the final expression of v. 18 ("ek pneumatōs hagiou") has the earmarks of being redactional. It is superfluous since this is the very core of the message given by the angel in v. 20<sup>b</sup>. Moreover, it offsets the tension of the rather

<sup>74</sup> Cf. Soares, *op. cit.*, 236-238

<sup>75</sup> A. Schlatter, *Der Evangelist Matthäus*, (5th ed., Stuttgart 1959) 7

<sup>76</sup> "synerchomai" has two meanings: 1) to have sexual intercourse, 2) to cohabit. The whole context suggests that the second meaning is to be preferred here. However, on the basis of the Aramaic Vorlage, Kramer construes the phrase concessively with the first meaning, i.e., "although they had not had sexual intercourse." Cf. Craghan, *op. cit.*, 29 #67; J. Schneider, *synerchomai*, in *TDNT* 2, 684; Kramer, *Die Menschwerdung*, 27-28; R. Stoll, *Her Firstborn Son*, in *AER* 108 (1943) 3

<sup>77</sup> "prin ē" in Mt. 1:18<sup>b</sup> is not Matthew's redactional preference, it is simply "prin." Cf. Soares, *op. cit.*, 227-288

objective style of the Infancy Gospel itself. Here Matthew has intruded, or better, here Matthew has preferred to tell the story momentarily from his own viewpoint rather than from that of Joseph. "Such a sudden shift of perspective strongly suggests that 'ek pneumatōs hagiou' is a redactional gloss, which anticipates the reassurance to be given in 1,20 in order to forestall the scandal which might have been caused to pious ears by the bald assertion that Mary, betrothed to Joseph, was found with child before they came together."<sup>78</sup> Hence v. 18<sup>b</sup> except for the concluding phrase ("ek pneumatōs hagiou") represents the tradition available to Matthew.

V. 19 offers more evidence of Matthew's redactional hand. The description of Joseph as "her husband" ("anēr autēs") departs somewhat from Matthew's usage.<sup>79</sup> Moreover its usage here is clearly superfluous since v. 18 has already designated Joseph as Mary's betrothed. Matthew seems to be employing this term to emphasize Joseph's role as the true husband of Mary so that the virginally conceived Child belongs to the Davidic line. The "anēr" of v. 19 is Matthew's reference to v. 16 ("Iōsēph ton andra Marias").

"dikaioi," although a very frequent word in Matthew's theology, lacks the precision generally found in the Gospel as a whole.<sup>80</sup> For Matthew, the just are those who form the long line from Abel to Jesus, who have suffered oppression at the hands of Israel, but in so doing represent the true Israel.<sup>81</sup> Here "dikaioi" is understood in the same normal ethical sense as the just Elizabeth and Zechariah (Lk. 1:6) as well as the just Simeon (Lk. 2:25). The word "dikaioi," therefore, belongs to the pre-redactional core.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 229

<sup>79</sup> Cf. Soares, op. cit., 230-231

<sup>80</sup> For a discussion of the word "dikaioi", as understood especially by a first century Jew, cf. C. Spicq, "*Joseph, son mari, étant juste,*" in *RB* 71 (1964) 206-214

<sup>81</sup> Note the title of W. Trilling's book—"Das wahre Israel"

<sup>82</sup> Cf. Soares, op. cit., 231-232

Of itself, the word "thelōn" in the expression "kai mē thelōn deigmatisai autēn" (1:19<sup>a</sup>) represents good Hellenistic Greek rather than Matthew's favorite vocabulary.<sup>83</sup> But its connexion with "deigmatisai" arouses suspicion.<sup>84</sup> On the other hand, since it is a terminus technicus to describe the putting away of a woman, it need not be necessarily Matthean.

In NT Greek the verb "boulomai" is practically synonymous with "thelō,"<sup>85</sup> but the use of two different verbs in the same verse evokes some doubt. The reason for doubting is that we are given two reasons for Joseph's action: 1) he is just because he puts Mary away, divorces her ("apolysai autēn"—v. 19<sup>b</sup>); 2) because he does not wish to expose her to ridicule, he is just in that he decides to divorce her privately.<sup>86</sup>

<sup>83</sup> Cf. F. Blass—A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament* (rev. by R. Funk, Chicago, 1961) section 101, 52.

<sup>84</sup> Kramer maintains that in Mt 1:19 the Greek translator has again misunderstood Aramaic Matthew. The original Vorlage should be understood as follows: "But since Joseph, her husband, was God-fearing, he wished to dissolve the engagement. But precisely because he was God-fearing, he did not wish to bring her to public attention." Cf. *Die Menschwerdung* . . . 29-33.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. Arndt-Gingrich, *op. cit.*, 145.

<sup>86</sup> Léon-Dufour has treated this question quite extensively. The basis for both the fear and the suspicion hypotheses is the belief that the virginal conception was first made known by the angel's message in Mt 1:20. However, by a rather ingenious translation of the particle "gar" Léon-Dufour ends up with the following translation which indicates that Joseph had already been informed of the conception: "Joseph, son of David, fear not to take Mary thy wife, for (though what is born of her is of the Holy Spirit, yet) she shall bear a son . . ." Cf. M. Zerwick, *Biblical Greek* (adapted by J. Smith, Rome, 1963) 160. For Léon-Dufour's own argumentation, cf. *L'annonce à Joseph*, in *Mélanges bibliques rédigés en l'honneur de André Robert*, 390-397, idem, *Etudes d'Évangile* (Paris, 1965) 73; idem, *Le juste Joseph*, in *NRT* 81 (1959) 225-321. As indicated above, Kramer holds that the "fear hypothesis" is the meaning originally intended by Matthew whereas the "suspicion hypothesis" is the result of the translator's faulty understanding of Matthew's Aramaic. ". . . the Greek translator mistook the proper purpose of Matthew and consequently misunderstood the true meaning of the text and allowed his translation to say something other than what his Vorlage wished to say" (*Die Menschwerdung* . . . 44-45).

It is indeed quite plausible to maintain that the explanations are distinct, representing two different stages of Gospel transmission. The first, i.e., Joseph's justice in the plan to divorce Mary, represents the pre-redactional core, the situation which is to be solved by the dream narrative. Joseph, therefore appears to doubt Mary's virtue, but is summarily informed by the angel that he has no grounds to doubt, for the Child is of the Holy Spirit (v. 20<sup>b</sup>). This pre-redactional core envisioned an apologetical scope, that of refuting beforehand all possible slanders against the Virgin Birth.<sup>87</sup>

The second stage of Gospel transmission here, the redactional work of Matthew himself, grappled with another problem, viz., Jesus' membership in the Davidic line despite the Virgin Birth.<sup>88</sup> Here Matthew has recast the dream narrative into a birth narrative and concentrated on the Davidic lineage of Jesus owing to Joseph's legal paternity. In this effort Matthew has mitigated Joseph's doubts by his redactional additions. Here Joseph does not appear to doubt; rather he stands in awe of the mystery effected by the Spirit in his wife. Because he is a just man, he does not wish to expose her to public shame; because of his reverence for the mystery realized by the Spirit he decides to put her away secretly.<sup>89</sup>

At this point Matthew's use of Is. 7:14 must be considered

<sup>87</sup> R. Ruether writes: "the virgin birth, although relatively primitive, is secondary, and the tradition of Joseph's paternity is earlier and probably closer to historical truth." (*The Collision of History and Doctrine: the Brothers of Jesus and the Virginity of Mary*, in *Continuum* 7 (1969) 103. It goes without saying that any discussion of primary or secondary must take into account the pre-redactional core here which concerns the Virgin Birth. This study, i.e., the article by Ruether, suggests too simple an approach to a rather complicated issue of text and redaction.

<sup>88</sup> The purpose of Mt. 1:18-25 is not to tell us of the Virgin Birth or explain the marriage of Joseph and Mary. "The most essential thing is to explain how Jesus is the son of Joseph and therefore of David, in spite of the virgin birth." (Daniélou, op. cit., 45, the italics are the author's.)

<sup>89</sup> Albeit for different reasons, Krämer (*Die Menschwerdung* . . ., 29) seems to sense the problem.

Whatever be the original meaning of the OT passage,<sup>90</sup> Matthew has reshaped the text to suit his own theological purposes.<sup>91</sup> He has taken over the text from the LXX with one modification. He has thus read "parthenos" and not the "almâ" of the TM and has employed it as a prediction of the Virgin Birth. "Matthew and the LXX agree in the translation of 'parthenos' for 'almâ,' a translation which the early church fought a bitter struggle to defend against Jewish scholars, although they had taken over the reading from the synagogue."<sup>92</sup>

The one modification introduced by Matthew is the change from the second person singular ("kaleseis") to the impersonal third person plural ("kalesousin"). The change was necessitated by the fact that the Child was not called Emmanuel during His earthly life.<sup>93</sup> Hence, it is to be rendered. "... they (i.e., one) shall call him ..."<sup>94</sup> This particular use of Is. 7:14 is but one example of the actualizing tendency of Matthew's formula quotation.<sup>95</sup> His theologoumenon clearly reflects not only his acceptance of the Virgin Birth but also its profound significance.

### *Luke's Account*

The world of Luke in the first two chapters of his Gospel (1:1-4 excepted) is profoundly Jewish. The presence of the Temple, the priest Zechariah the holy city of Jerusalem, pious

<sup>90</sup> For a study of the meaning of "almâ", cf. M. Rehm, *Das Wort "almah" in Is. 7, 14*, in *BZ (NF)* 8 (1964) 89-101. For a good survey of the "almâ" riddle of Is. 7:14, cf. J. Coppens, *L'interprétation de Is., VII, 14 à la lumière des études les plus récentes*, in *Lex tua Veritas* (Fs. H. Junker, Trier, 1961) 31-46.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. Paul, *op. cit.*, 53.

<sup>92</sup> Stendahl, *The School of St. Matthew* (Uppsala, 1954) 98.

<sup>93</sup> Cf. Kramer, *Die Menschwerdung* . . ., 16-17.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. Stendahl, *op. cit.*, 98, *idem*, *art. cit.*, 103, Soares, *op. cit.*, 210-211; Vogtle, *Das Schicksal* . . ., 273, A. 71.

<sup>95</sup> For a valuable study of the uniqueness of the formula quotations in Mt. 1:22 and 2:15 and their articulation of the Son of God theme, cf. R. Pesch, *art. cit.*, 395-420.



customs, equally pious persons breathe an atmosphere which is deeply Semitic in tone. The language to no small extent seems almost borrowed from the LXX.<sup>96</sup> The climate, moreover, is not that of a troubled Matthew; it is the more serene world of Luke. The joy and religious fear of these passages reflect, not the didactic Scripture school of Matthew,<sup>97</sup> but the more vibrant personality of the man named Luke.

To discuss Luke's attitude toward the "ante partum" virginity of Mary immediately involves the rather complex problem of sources in Luke 1 & 2. Many propose that Luke made use of written Hebrew sources,<sup>98</sup> while noting that Luke did not slavishly reproduced the documents in Greek, but imposed on them his own literary structure and techniques. On the other hand, some recent studies have tended to emphasize greater literary freedom on the part of Luke. According to this view, he would have woven this information into his own literary composition which borrowed heavily from the style and vocabulary of the LXX.<sup>99</sup> The presence of key Lukan theological concepts as well as typically Lukan vocabulary in both the Infancy Gospel and the rest of Luke-Acts also points in this direction. At least it demonstrates that Luke could not have been handicapped by his sources.<sup>100</sup>

The following remarks about Luke and the Virgin Birth assume this avenue of approach, i.e., that Luke, whatever the sources available, has recast the material in view of his own

<sup>96</sup> Cf. Plummer, *op. cit.*, xlix.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. Stendahl, *op. cit.*, 30.

<sup>98</sup> For a good survey of this problem, cf. Laurentin, *op. cit.*, 12-13; idem, *Traces d'allusions étymologiques en Lc 1-2*, in *Bibl* 37 (1956) 435-456; 38 (1957) 1-23, Oliver, *art. cit.*, 205-214, R. McL. Wilson, *Some Recent Studies in the Lukan Infancy Narratives*, in *TuU* 73 (1959) 235-253.

<sup>99</sup> Cf. P. Benoit, *L'enfance de Jean-Baptiste selon Luc I*, in *NTS* 3 (1956-57) 175.

<sup>100</sup> Cf. *supra*, #17; Benoit, *art. cit.*, 170-171.

theological goals, so that the resultant composition reflects his literary mastery and theological orientation<sup>101</sup>

The Annunciation pericope (Lk. 1:26-38) has suffered greatly at the hands of artists and writers. While Mary and Gabriel have been highlighted, Luke has had to retreat to the background. A principle of sound exegesis demands that we view Mary through the eyes of Luke's composition. Any attempt to evaluate the doctrinal content must scrupulously shun psychologizing tendencies and be firmly committed to the categories imposed by the author himself.

Although some have been reluctant to accept,<sup>102</sup> there has developed a growing consensus that the literary genre of Lk 1:26-38 is that of an annunciation<sup>103</sup>. This literary genre has many OT antecedents,<sup>104</sup> follows a more or less standard procédé, and is aimed at overcoming some particular problem or difficulty which impedes the realization of God's salvific plan. Though authors have analyzed different OT annunciation accounts,<sup>105</sup> a comparison between the Gideon account (Judg. 6:14-24) and the Marian parallel is quite striking<sup>106</sup>

After the messenger (a) is introduced (11<sup>a</sup>; 26<sup>a</sup>), the situation of the recipient (b) is described. Because of the Midianite oppression, Gideon has to beat out his wheat in the wine press (11<sup>b</sup>); Mary, on the other hand, is simply depicted as an engaged virgin who was still awaiting the final marriage ceremony with her husband, Joseph the Davidite (27). The recipient is then greeted (c) (12<sup>b1</sup>; 28<sup>b</sup>) and given a new title (d)

<sup>101</sup> Cf Dillon, art cit, 13.

<sup>102</sup> Cf Graystone, op cit, 68-77, M Zerwick, *. quoniam virum non cognosco* (Lc 1, 34), in VD 37 (1959) 277-278

<sup>103</sup> For a summary of the advances made here, cf E Maly, *Virginity in the New Testament*, in MS 13 (1962) 44-48

<sup>104</sup> Cf Muñoz Iglesias, *El Evangelio de la Infancia en S. Lucas y las infancias de los héroes bíblicos*, in EstB 16 (1957) 335-349.

<sup>105</sup> Cf da Spinetoli, op cit, 77-79

<sup>106</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, the first citation following each of the members of the annunciation literary genre will be from Judg 6, the second from Lk 1.

12<sup>b2</sup>; 28<sup>b1</sup>). The greeting bestowed on Mary ("chaire")<sup>107</sup> identifies her as the Daughter of Sion; it evokes the whole atmosphere of messianic joy. Her designation as "Privileged One" ("kecharitōmenē")<sup>108</sup> suggests a significant role in salvation history. Owing to either the messengers' presence (6:22<sup>b</sup>) or words (1:29<sup>a</sup>) the recipient becomes fearful (e). For Mary, this fear springs not from modesty in the presence of an angel,<sup>109</sup> but from the implications of the greeting and title

The messenger next proceeds to overcome the fear (f) (23<sup>b1</sup>; 30<sup>a2</sup>), assuring the recipient of favor (g) with God (17<sup>a2</sup>; 30<sup>b</sup>). The following step is the message itself (h), for Gideon the command to conquer the Midianites (14<sup>a</sup>), for Mary the revelation of a birth (31). Because of the nature of the command, the recipient poses a difficulty (i). Gideon urges that he is the youngest of the weakest clan in Manasseh (15<sup>b</sup>); Mary advances the fact that she does not know man (34). Thereupon the messenger provides the solution (j), for Gideon that God will fight for and with him (16), for Mary that the conception will result from the overshadowing of the Spirit (35<sup>a</sup>). A sign is then asked (k) as a confirmation (17<sup>b</sup>) which, in the case of Gideon, is granted (l) (21<sup>a2</sup> b<sup>1</sup>) and likewise in that of Mary (36<sup>a</sup>), but in the latter it was not first asked. Finally the messenger departs (m) (21<sup>b2</sup>; 38<sup>b</sup>)

The messianic context in the Lukan composition is all too clear; 2 Sam 7, Dan 7:14, and Is. 9:6 are referred to by the author. However, Luke's use of the Emmanuel prophecy of Is 7:14 is not that obvious. The author of the Third Gospel certainly does not use the LXX Is. 7:14 after the manner of Matthew. For the latter the slightly rephrased LXX Is. 7:14 is his own theologoumenon, a proof text that the Virgin Birth is the fulfillment of Scripture. Although it cannot be proved that

<sup>107</sup> Cf S. Lyonnet, "Chaire Kecharitōmenē", in *Bibl* 20 (1939) 131-141.

<sup>108</sup> Cf Craghan, op. cit., 34-35; F. Bourassa, "KEXARITOMENH (Lc. 1, 28)", in *SEc* 9 (1957) 313-316.

<sup>109</sup> Cf *Expositio Evangelii secundum Lucam*, 2, 8, in *CSEL* 32, 4, 45.

Luke has consciously cited Is. 7.14 of the LXX, still there are some indications that his text is colored by it<sup>110</sup> "In Lk. 1.31, the language is coloured by Is. 7.14, but the explicit reference to the virgin is not given and Luke merges the O.T. command to name the child Immanuel with the order in the N.T. to name Him Jesus."<sup>111</sup> In the last analysis, whatever be the Lukan usage, it is clear that Matthew and Luke represent two different schools of Scriptural usage. Yet even in their distinct methodologies they have both faithfully preserved the tradition regarding the Virgin.<sup>112</sup>

These four apparently harmless words "epei andra ou ginōskō" ("since I do not know man") have provoked volumes of discussion,<sup>113</sup> and it is unlikely that the whole question will quickly abate. As is rather well known, there are at present three standard interpretations: the vow, the "mere present," and the elliptical "epei."<sup>114</sup>

<sup>110</sup> Note that "parthenos" is mentioned twice in Lk. 1.27. A variant reading for "en gastrī hexei" in Mt. 1.23 is "le(m)psetai." Cf. J. Ziegler *Septuaginta Vetus Testamentum Graece, auctoritate Societatis Litterarum Göttingensis editum*, 14 (Göttingen, 1939) 147.

<sup>111</sup> Stendahl, *op. cit.*, 98; cf. also Schurmann, *art. cit.*, 109.

<sup>112</sup> P. Minear is certainly noted for his objective handling of the infancy narratives. Yet while striving to avoid the Scylla of fundamentalism, he appears to crash into the Charybdis of negativism. He writes: "If we are to introduce the dubious category of the miraculous (into the Lukan infancy narrative), we should witness to the marvelous response of God to the covenant promise and prayer of Israel, a response which is announced by angels and which releases the Holy Spirit to do its predestined work" (*Luke's Use*, 129). Perhaps the indirect testimony to the Virgin Birth should be emphasized here. Both Matthew and Luke do not belabor the point, it is not the miraculous for the sake of the miraculous, but simply the tradition in the different circles which they knew.

<sup>113</sup> For a brief statement of some doctoral dissertations pertaining to Lk. 1.34, cf. E. R. Carroll, *A Survey of Recent Mariology*, in *MS* 20 (1969) 148.

<sup>114</sup> The opinion espoused by S. Landersdorfer has been abandoned. For his exposition of the problem, cf. *Bemerkungen zu Lk. 1, 26-28*, in *BZ* 7 (1909) 30-48.

The vow or the traditional interpretation which views Mary's question as referring to the future ("since I will not know man") maintains that Mary had either vowed virginity or made a firm resolution. The reasons for rejecting this hypothesis have been treated elsewhere.<sup>115</sup> Although its linguistic usage (the futuristic present) is valid and a vow is not *a priori* impossible, the question nevertheless arises: "is this the mind of Luke which is so lucidly present in the entire Annunciation account?"<sup>116</sup>

The "mere present" hypothesis sees in Mary's question a conflict, not of virginal consecration but of current marriage practices. While merely engaged, Mary could not licitly conceive a child since only the final marriage permitted common life. Furthermore, the messenger's command seemed to involve the immediate future. Mary's question, therefore, amounts to "How can this be, since I cannot know man now?" A shift of perspectives, i.e., from Mary's psychological state to Luke's literary presentation removes hazards to an objective exegesis. The question to be asked, therefore, is not: "How did Mary react?" but rather "What is the function of this interconnecting question and solution in this Lukan annunciation?"<sup>117</sup>

Two exegetes, S. Muñoz Iglesias and J. Gewiess, have answered the above mentioned question. They maintain that Luke has placed this question on Mary's lips to bring out the theological import of the account.<sup>118</sup> An examination of the question parallel in annunciation accounts reveals that the answer determines the question. "Its (the question's) *raison d'être* is to emphasize the central theologoumenon of the passage."<sup>119</sup>

<sup>115</sup> Cf. Craghan, *op. cit.*, 42-48.

<sup>116</sup> Cf. J. DeVault, *The Concept of Virginity in Judaism*, in *MS* 13 (1962) 40.

<sup>117</sup> Cf. B. Schwank, *Tagung der Neutestamentlichen Exegeten in Beuron*, in *Erbe und Auftrag* 36 (1961) 239-240.

<sup>118</sup> The article by Muñoz Iglesias in this regard is the one cited in #104, viz., *El Evangelio de la Infancia en S. Lucas...*, the article by J. Gewiess is *Die Marienfrage Lk. 1, 34*, in *BZ (NF)* 5 (1961) 221-254.

<sup>119</sup> Muñoz Iglesias, *El Evangelio de la Infancia en S. Lucas...*, 360.

The question, consequently, functions as a means; the answer is the end. In the Lukan annunciation account the question serves to emphasize that the conception will be effected by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit (1.35).<sup>120</sup>

J. Gewiess has also noted that Luke employs this literary device of question elsewhere in Luke-Acts.<sup>121</sup> For example, the question of Lk. 13.23 ("Lord, will those who are saved be few?") is framed to provoke the answer that one should strive to enter by the narrow door. Turning to the exegesis of Lk. 1.34, Gewiess points out that the question is the evangelist's literary means to make it unmistakably clear to his audience that the Holy Spirit has intervened and hence that Mary actually gave birth to the Messiah as a virgin.<sup>122</sup> The answer determines the question.

The interpretation proposed by J.-P. Audet (elliptical "epei") has, admittedly, not received great support.<sup>123</sup> By and large his exegesis follows the same method employed by Muñoz Iglesias and Gewiess. However, he does add a significant nuance. For him the whole solution to the problem of Mary's question lies in the proper understanding of the conjunction "epei" in Mary's question ("epei audra ou ginōskō"). It is here used elliptically, i.e., it collapses the entire development of the account. "How shall this be, since in the situation just described I need not know man?"<sup>124</sup> "It ('epei') refers to the line of thought treated in the discourse or writing. It sums up, therefore, the point at issue and becomes subordinate to the matter to be taken up as a result of that point."<sup>125</sup> Accordingly, Luke has so construed Mary's question that it reflects the Christian interpretation of the LXX Is. 7.14 and thus underlies the intervention of

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 362

<sup>121</sup> Cf. Lk. 16:5, 7, 17:37, 3:10-13, 12:57, 12:51; Acts 8:30-31, 10:14, 16:30

<sup>122</sup> Cf. Gewiess, art. cit., 252

<sup>123</sup> Cf. Craghan, op. cit., 82-90

<sup>124</sup> Cf. Audet, *Annonce à Marie*, 369

<sup>125</sup> Craghan, op. cit., 86

the Spirit in the following verse. Although this use of "epēi" is, at first sight, a bit startling, it should not be dismissed out of hand.

The studies just mentioned which accentuate the question only in terms of the answer to be given have been confirmed by a valuable piece of redaction criticism by L. Legrand.<sup>127</sup> The author rightly contends that in evaluating Luke's Infancy Gospel one must consider not only the OT background but the NT one as well. Certainly the primitive kerygma and more developed catechesis preceded the Infancy Gospels, but it is precisely the function of the latter to preview and penetrate the total Christian message. This is especially true, if, as some hold, Luke composed his infancy narrative only after having finished the rest of the Gospel.<sup>128</sup>

Notwithstanding the time of composition of the infancy narrative, Luke has especially highlighted the role of the Spirit and the power of God in his two volume work.<sup>129</sup> Lk. 1:35 emphasizes the fact that Jesus is penetrated with this Power and Spirit to the very depths of His being. The vocabulary of this verse is sufficient to establish this point: "pneuma," "eperchomai," "dynamis," and "episkiazō"<sup>130</sup> Of particular interest is the verb "episkiazō" which is a terminus technicus to designate God's presence in the desert tabernacle.<sup>131</sup> LXX Ex 40:34-35 reads: "And the cloud hid the tent of testimony and the tent was filled with the glory of the Lord. And Moses was unable to enter the tent of testimony because the cloud overshadowed it ("epeskiazēn ep' autēn") and the tent was filled with the

<sup>127</sup> Cf. L. Legrand, *L'arrière-plan néo-testamentaire de Lc, I 35*, in *RB* 70 (1963) 161-192.

<sup>128</sup> Cf. Benoit, art. cit., 176.

<sup>129</sup> Cf. W. Grundmann, *dynamis*, in *TDNT* 2, 300-302, Conzelmann, op. cit., 179-184, G. W. H. Lampe, *The Holy Spirit in the Writings of St. Luke*, in *Studies in the Gospel, Essays in Memory of R. H. Lightfoot* (Oxford, 1955) 159-200.

<sup>130</sup> Both Matthew and Luke point back to Jesus' being born of the Spirit: "to gennēthen" (Mt 1:20), "to gennōmenon" (Lk 1:35).

<sup>131</sup> Cf. S. Lyonnet, *Le récit de l'Annonciation et la Maternité divine de*

glory of the Lord " However, Luke does not stop here, he sees a causal connection between the coming of the Holy Spirit, the overshadowing of the power of the Most High and the divine filiation. He writes: "And therefore ("dō kai") the child . . . will be called Son of God (1 35<sup>b</sup>)

At the Baptism Luke insists that it was the Holy Spirit who descended on Jesus<sup>132</sup> Even if the correct reading of Lk. 3:22 is the oriental reading ("You are my beloved Son; in You I am well pleased"), which seems to be the better reading, and not the occidental reading ("You are my Son, this day I have begotten You"),<sup>133</sup> Luke has nevertheless linked the role of the Spirit with Jesus' divine filiation. This link is found in the fact that, unlike Matthew and Mark, Luke collapses the various events in order to concentrate on the fact that the Holy Spirit descended and the voice proclaimed.<sup>134</sup>

At the Transfiguration (Lk 9:28-36) we have the glory ("doxa," only in Lk, v 32), the tents (v 33 + Mt. and Mk.), the overshadowing of the cloud (v. 34 + Mt. and Mk.), and the divine filiation (v. 35 + Mt and Mk) The use of "episkiazō" in Luke links the pericope with past and the future.<sup>135</sup> "The Transfiguration thus appears to be an anticipation of the glorification of Jesus through his death, while at the same time it looks back, in the words of the heavenly force, to the symbolic foreshadowing of his death and resurrection which was enacted at his baptism, and, in the use of 'episkiazein,' to the Annunciation to Mary of his divine sonship through the operation of the Holy Spirit."<sup>136</sup>

*la Ste. Vierge, in AdC 66 (1956) 43-46.*

<sup>132</sup> Mt Mt 3 16<sup>b</sup> has simply. "kai eidem pneuma theou katabainon"; Mk 1 10<sup>b</sup>, "kai to pneuma . katabainon"

<sup>133</sup> Cf J Jeremias, *pais theou*, in TDNT 5, 701, #349, Plummer, op. cit, 100

<sup>134</sup> Cf Legrand, art cit, 166

<sup>135</sup> It should be noted that only Luke (9 31) explicitly refers to the Passion

<sup>136</sup> Lampe, art cit, 182



Viewed from the Lukan theology of the Baptism, Transfiguration, Death, and Resurrection, Lk. 1:35 is nothing less than realized eschatology.<sup>137</sup> Thus the glorious manifestation of the Son of Man, in Luke's theological synthesis, had its beginning in the Annunciation.<sup>138</sup> "The transcendent qualities of the Risen Christ were indeed rooted in the flesh of the Son of the Virgin."<sup>139</sup>

In Luke's mind the doctrine of the Virgin Birth is not by and for itself. For Luke, to be conceived by the Holy Spirit and to be born of the Virgin is linked to the glorious exaltation of the Resurrection.<sup>140</sup> It is the confession of faith of the churches where he lived which has led him to adapt the dialogue between the messenger and Mary. His theology is not to be construed as an evolutionary process by which the divine filiation of Jesus was first created in the Resurrection and then successively read back into the Transfiguration, the Baptism, the Annunciation, and finally with John, the preexistence of the Logos. Rather than such a creation of divine filiation by evolutionary process, we have the acceptance in faith of the Risen Christ which then inspires and guides each step of the Church's understanding. While some were content to accept merely the Risen Christ, others chose to ponder the mystery of the Man who had shared their human condition. By the light of faith the pieces fell together, the different stages of his life: the Baptism, teaching, miracles, Transfiguration, the Cross, revealed the Son of God

<sup>137</sup> cf Legrand, art cit, 176

<sup>138</sup> Cf P Benoit, *L'Annonciation*, in *Assemblées du Seigneur* 6 (Bruges, 1962) 55

<sup>139</sup> Legrand, art cit, 187

<sup>140</sup> W B Tatum writes "But it (the absence of the Virgin Birth elsewhere in the Gospel and Acts) does suggest that outside of its function in Luke 1-11, the virgin birth is a little importance to St Luke. If it were of great importance, one would certainly expect to find it in some of the speeches in Acts" (*The Epoch of Israel Luke I-II and the Theological Plan of Luke-Acts*, in *NTS* 13 (1966-67) 192, #1) Although not explicitly formulated, the Virgin Birth can be implied in Luke's theology by his stress on the same overshadowing Spirit

"in mysterio" before he was constituted Son of God "in virtute" at the Resurrection.<sup>141</sup> "The realities manifested at the time of the Exaltation were already present in the mystery of the Virgin's womb."<sup>142</sup>

Another interesting facet of the Exodus text is that the presence of the cloud over the tent excluded the entrance of any man into the sanctuary. "Thus the coming of the Holy Spirit rendered Mary inaccessible and consecrated her virginity."<sup>143</sup> At first glance such a rationale for the Virgin Birth seems very forced. Yet in Jewish tradition contact with the Shekinah often forbade further sexual relations. For example, according to Rabbinic sources Moses abstained from further conjugal relations once he had seen Yahweh in the burning bush. It is the close, sacral relationship to Yahweh which motivates the abstinence.<sup>144</sup>

### *The Problem of Historicity*<sup>145</sup>

Around the turn of the century it was commonplace for exegetes to refute the "hypothesis" of the Virgin Birth by excising Lk 1:34 from the text. The interpolation theory was rampant then and continues to hold some sway even today. For example, R. Bultmann holds that Lk 1:34-37 are a secondary addition probably composed by Luke himself.<sup>146</sup> As for Matthew's text, the Virgin Birth was "first added in the transformation in Hellenism, where the idea of the generation of a

<sup>141</sup> Cf. Legrand, art. cit., 185-188.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 187.

<sup>143</sup> J. Coppens, *La Vierge dans l'Ancien Testament*, in *ETL* 31 (1955) 16.

<sup>144</sup> Cf. Dillon, art. cit., 33.

<sup>145</sup> I wish to acknowledge my debt of gratitude to my colleague and confere, Rev. Eugene McAlee, CSSR, for the many helpful discussions about the matter to be treated in this section. Many of the insights derive from his theological investigations, the shortcomings, however, are entirely my own.

<sup>146</sup> Cf. R. Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (Oxford, 1963) 295.

king or a hero from a virgin by the godhead was widespread."<sup>147</sup> Religionsgeschichtler still urge the Hellenistic provenance of the so-called myth.<sup>148</sup>

The argument has been as many times repeated that the whole Kolorit of the Infancy Gospels is Palestinian, not Hellenistic Judaism, written moreover with a simplicity and objectiveness that is strikingly wanting in the pagan myths. In such divine birth stories there is no particular emphasis on the virginity of the mother. "It is never implied that conception was due to anything other than the ordinary sexual act with the accompanying loss of virginity . . ."<sup>148bis</sup> Furthermore, a particular god with a precise name and characteristics is the one who effects the pregnancy. On the contrary, Matthew and Luke both speak in more impersonal terms, viz., the Spirit.

On the other hand, the findings of the religionsgeschichtliche Schule should not be conveniently disposed of in the present discussion. The question should be raised why man longs for the birth of his god from the virgin and why he wishes to have virgins associated with the most sacred functions of his religion. Evidently man recognizes something innately good in the virgin and seeks to predicate it of his god and his worship. Hence it is not without merit to suggest that God in carrying out His plan has acceded to this desire of man. His Son, unlike the pagan gods, would be born of a virgin in the strict sense. God thus replies to man's category, but at the same time (see below) establishes his independence of man.

The trend in vogue today for explaining the Virgin Birth was

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 291-292

<sup>148</sup> For a full survey of the non-Christian birth traditions, cf. Boslooper, *op cit*, *passim*, also Barrett, *op cit*, 6-17; Marxsen, *Jungfrauengeburt*, in *RGG*<sup>3</sup> 3, 1069; R. H. Fuller, *The Foundations of New Testament Christology* (N.Y., 1965) 195-196; Ruether, *art cit*, 102-103; J. Hasenfuss, *Die Jungfrauengeburt in der Religionsgeschichte*, in *Catholica* 23 (1969) 1-15; Muñoz Iglesias, *Los Evangelios de la Infancia y las infancias de los héroes*, in *EstB* 16 (1957) 5-36

<sup>148bis</sup> Barrett, *op cit*, 7.

predicted by Vincent Taylor over thirty years ago "... the New Testament evidence is so scanty and so late that increased acceptance is likely to be given as time goes by to the position held by the late Canon Sanday who accepted the Supernatural Birth of Jesus, but interpreted the Virgin Birth tradition symbolically."<sup>149</sup> We see this prediction implicitly verified in the New Dutch Catechism<sup>150</sup> and explicitly formulated in an article by R. Ruether: "Consequently, to say that a child was conceived 'by the Holy Spirit' was to point to a higher causality beyond nature that broke into history vertically from above"<sup>151</sup> In criticizing such an understanding of the doctrine, one must not overlook the fundamentally good meaning of such terms as "myth" and "symbol."<sup>152</sup> However, the question to be asked here is: "Does theological symbol or myth in the case of the Virgin Birth involve the physical?"<sup>153</sup>

<sup>149</sup> V. Taylor, *The Formation of the Gospel Tradition* (2nd ed., London, 1935) 162-163

<sup>150</sup> Cf. *A New Catechism* (N.Y., 1967) 72-82; see also P. Schoonenberg, *God concurreert niet*, in *Theologie en Zielzorg* 61 (1965) 1-10, idem, *Gods oorzakelijkheid en Christus' voortkomst*, in *Theologie en Pastoraat* 63 (1967) 42-44, for some very incisive remarks about Schoonenberg's thought regarding the Virgin Birth and especially his concept of dogma, cf. J. Ratzinger, *Einführung in das Christentum* (Munich, 1968) 229, A. 52. in English, *Introduction to Christianity* (New York, 1970) 212, n. 52. See also J. Alonso, C.M.F., *El Catecismo Holandes: el tema Mariano*, in *EphM* 19 (1969) 119-143

<sup>151</sup> Art. Cit., 103. This seems to be the view held by Hasenfuss (art. cit., 15) and Marxsen (art. cit., 1069). Note the following remark by Ruether: "... doctrine is primarily to be understood as theological symbol rather than 'historical' fact" (art. cit., 104)

<sup>152</sup> Cf. G. Stahlin, *mythos*, in *TDNT* 4, 764-769, J. L. McKenzie, *Myth and the Old Testament*, in *CBQ* 21 (1959) 265-282, M. Eliade, *Myth and Reality* (N.Y., 1963), G. W. H. Lampe (ed.), *A. Patristic Greek Lexicon*, 5 (Oxford, 1968) 1281

<sup>153</sup> K. Barth's approach to the Virgin Birth leaves little to be desired; he admirably combines the symbolical and the real "... in this way (healing of the paralytic, Mk. 2:10) the miracle of the Virgin Birth is also to be understood. What is involved is the mystery of the Incarnation as the visible form of which the miracle takes place. We should all have understood Mark 2, if we wanted so to read the passage, that the chief

The evidence for the Virgin Birth is admittedly limited. We find it expressed in two sources, but at a long remove from the event itself, i.e., some three quarters of a century. However, from the text we must necessarily maintain that Matthew and Luke firmly believe in the doctrine and that they reflected in their different approaches the Christian circles which handed on this tradition. But just who comprised these circles and who the ultimate human authority is, must remain unanswered. Many, Catholics as well as Protestants,<sup>154</sup> assert that it was Mary, the mother of Jesus, who revealed to a rather limited group the great mystery which God has wrought in her. Such an hypothesis cannot be *a priori* dismissed but neither can it be substantiated. We are not informed of any immediate or direct witnesses nor do we have medical evidence. In fact, it is pre-occupation with the latter that we find in the apocryphal infancy gospels, e.g., Salome's test of Mary's virginal state in the *Protoevangelium Jacobi*.<sup>155</sup>

If pressed by the modern historiographer to produce his type of objective evidence, we must admit our inadequacy.<sup>156</sup> In this pursuit of the historical Mary the conclusions reached by no less an authority than Vincent Taylor almost a half century ago are still valid:

"If we attempt to confine ourselves to a purely historical inquiry,

miracle was the forgiveness of sins, and the bodily healing incidental. The one thing obviously belongs of necessity to the other. And so we should have to give a warning, too, against parenthesis-ing the miracle of the *nativitas* and wanting to cling to the mystery as such. One thing may be definitely said, that every time people want to fly from this miracle, a theology is at work, which has ceased to understand and honour the mystery as well, and has rather essayed to conjure away the mystery of the unity of God and man in Jesus Christ, the mystery of God's free grace" (*Dogmatics in Outline* (London, 1960) 100).

<sup>154</sup> Cf Graystone, op cit, 52; Laurentin, op cit, 19-20.

<sup>155</sup> Cf E Hennecke, *New Testament Apocrypha*, 1 (ed W Schneemelcher, tr R McL Wilson, London, 1963) 385.

<sup>156</sup> Cf J Delorme, *A propos des Evangiles de l'Enfance*, in *AdC* 71 (1961) 760, 762, Kramer, *Die Menschwerdung...*, 20.

the verdict must be 'Not proven'. It is true, on the one hand, that the late appearance of the tradition is not an insuperable difficulty. The theory of a long-treasured secret has a logic of its own. On the other hand, by the conditions of the case, we are unable to interrogate the witnesses. We cannot demonstrate that the story they relate has the ultimate authority of Mary. All that we can reach is a primitive belief, generally accepted within New Testament times, which presumably implies an earlier private tradition. Beyond that point we cannot travel—within the limits of the evidence alone"<sup>157</sup>

To attempt to meet the demands imposed by the modern historiographical method is to afflict an injustice on the very nature of the Gospels. It is to renew the older quest for the historical Jesus<sup>158</sup>. Our documents are documents of faith; they argue from faith and they lead to faith.<sup>159</sup> To be sure, they do contain certain accurate historical date, but they were never intended as biographies. The sane critical approach is to accept their testimony within their own framework in view of their own theological purposes. If pursued in this way, the Gospel witness to the Virgin Birth is more rewarding.

We mentioned above that Matthew and Luke represent dif-

<sup>157</sup> *The Historical Evidence for the Virgin Birth* (Oxford, 1920) 128. In this book Taylor held "We ourselves believe it (criticism) can say the miracle may have transpired. But it cannot say more. The last word is with Theology." (ibid., 130). In a later work, however, Taylor reversed his position "I therefore doubt if I was justified in saying in *The Historical Evidence for the Virgin Birth* that the ultimate considerations which determine a true estimate of the Virgin Birth tradition are doctrinal", op. cit., 127." (*The Person of Christ* (London, 1958) 218, #4).

<sup>158</sup> The newer quest of the historical Jesus is exemplified by J. M. Robinson's *A New Quest of the Historical Jesus* (SBT; Naperville, 1959) and E. Fuchs' *Studies of the Historical Jesus* (SBT; Naperville, 1964).

<sup>159</sup> Cf. A. Richardson, *An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament* (NY, 1958) 170-171. "Die Erzählungen von Lk. 1-2 stehen im Dienste der Christusfrage, besser des Christusbekenntnisses, der Homologese. Wenn man theologische einen Unterschied zu der kerygmatischen Geschichtsschreibung im Corpus der Evangelien machen will, wird man sagen dürfen, dass Lk. 1-2 mehr von der Art 'homologetischer Geschichtsschreibung' hat" (Shurmann, ar. cit., 108).

ferent channels or traditions of the one doctrine; both make it unmistakably clear that Joseph did not father Jesus. This unity in diversity is good biblical evidence for the reliability of the sources they used. Another element to be stressed is the indirect, non-apologetical nature of their presentation. If the redactional study of Matthew is valid, the argument increases in favor of the Virgin Birth. The latter posed a problem for the author of the First Gospel when he undertook the task of showing that Jesus really belonged to the line of David.<sup>160</sup> Real paternity rather than legal paternity would have made the "Einpflanzung Jesu in das Geschlecht Davids" much easier.<sup>160</sup> But Matthew adapted the "obstacle" of the pre-redactional, apologetical core and by a clever literary technique retained Jesus as the son of David through Joseph but the son of Mary by the Holy Spirit.

Similarly Luke does not set out to propose a defense of Mary's virginity. In fact, according to the annunciation literary genre it is her faith, not her chastity that is extolled.<sup>161</sup> In Luke's literary masterpiece Mary does not ask for a sign, although one is given (Lk 1:36); Luke depicts her as a prototype of the believing Church. Furthermore, the overshadowing of the Spirit and the resultant divine filiation do not demand a Virgin Birth. "It is most important to recognize that both

<sup>160</sup> "Since the whole argument of Davidic descent would be vitiated if Jesus was not Joseph's son, we must assume that the Jewish Christianity from which these traditions derived knew no doctrine of virgin birth but assumed without question that Jesus was Joseph's son" (Ruether, art. cit., 101). Such argumentation fails to note the great artificiality of many Jewish genealogies. A study of the genealogies in Chronicles reveals that the author did not hesitate to insert individuals who had no claim at all to particular genealogies. Legal paternity is certainly less artificial than many of Jewish contrivances in this regard.

Romans and in view of Luke's own theology, cf F. Mussner, *Der Glaube*

<sup>161</sup> For a good study of Mary's faith in the light of the Epistle to the *Mariens im Lichte des Römerbriefs*, in *Catholica* 18 (1964) 258-268; idem *Lk 1, 48f; 11, 27f und die Anfänge der Marienverehrung in der Urkirche*, in *Catholica* 21 (1967) 287-294.

Matt. and Luke state the fact of Christ's birth of a virgin in a straightforward and unargumentative way; they offer no hints as to why it should have happened thus and they draw no conclusions from it."<sup>162</sup>

Legrand's article which outlines the development of Christology in the Church in terms of the faith-inspired and faith-directed reflection can possibly add a new dimension to the origin of the belief in the Virgin Birth. We say "possibly," for the proposal to be made below bears all the marks of a hypothesis and hence all its vicissitudes. One contribution, however, is that it stresses the reflective activity of the early Church, of that same Church from which Matthew and Luke culled their sources.

With particular regard for the question of original sin theologians and exegetes, such as K. Rahner, A.-M. Dubarle, L. Alonso-Schökel, and N. Lohfink, have discussed the relevance and scope of "historical etiology."<sup>163</sup> The latter is the indication of an earlier event as the reason for an observed state of affairs, i.e., the present state is the means by which the cause is known.<sup>164</sup> Applied to the present problem, the observed state of affairs could well be the Church's keen awareness of the uniqueness of the Man whom they now worship as their exalted Lord. As Legrand has pointed out in the Lukan redaction, under the light of faith the Church concluded to the fact that the Exaltation was also present, though "in mysterio," in the Death, Transfiguration, public life, etc. If God was acting in and through Jesus during His lifetime, He must have intervened in a unique way right at the very start.

<sup>162</sup> Richardson, *op. cit.*, 171; cf. also Kramer, *Die Menschwerdung...*, 18.

<sup>163</sup> Cf. K. Rahner, *Attiologie*, in *LTK* 1, 1011-1012; A.-M. Dubarle, *Les sages d'Israël* (Paris, 1946) 7-24; idem, *Le péché originel dans la Genèse*, in *RB* 64 (1957) 5-34; Alonso Schökel, *Motivos sapienciales y de alianza en Gen 2-3*, in *Bibl* 43 (1962) 295-316; N. Lohfink, *Gen 2f. als "geschichtliche Attiologie"*, in *sch* 38 (1963) 321-334; idem, *The Christian Meaning of the Old Testament* (Milwaukee, 1968) 52-66.

<sup>164</sup> Cf. K. Rahner, *Homimisation* (QD; N.Y., 1965) 36.



In pondering this situation and search for an explanation of the full reality of the now glorious Son of Man, the early Church would have argued back to that point in time when God acted without the aid of man, yet not without his consent. In their biblical tradition they realized that God had acted analogously in creation when the Spirit of God moved over the face of the waters. Hence in the conception of Jesus "the Messiah is, despite His connection with humanity and Israel . . . neither a 'product' of nature nor a history, but a free gift of God's grace. . . ." <sup>165</sup>

This reflective process which is guided by faith does not project a subsequent event into the past nor does it project back in allegory the aspiration of man. Instead the Church returns to the original event. Such a process might then have provoked a search for those chosen witnesses who could confirm the Church's conclusion <sup>166</sup> Such would not be required; however, the testimony of certain witnesses might have confirmed in a negative way the reality already reached by the Church. <sup>167</sup>

Whatever be the merits of such an attempt to arrive at the beginning of the tradition, the fact remains that the only biblical category applicable to the Virgin Birth is the theology of grace. Biblical faith, whether OT or NT, does not imprison God in His own eternity but admits that He can and must intervene (interfere?) at times in man's world. Admittedly this whole mystery is not something purely biological, but it is precisely in the physical that God chooses to articulate His bond with man and yet his independence of him so that what results is God's gift. "In the midst of a fruitless and hopeless humanity God has made a new beginning which is not the result of its

<sup>165</sup> Mussner, *Der Glaube Mariens* . . . , 265, A 15

<sup>166</sup> "The impulse toward this belief must have been given from without . . . it must have grown out of conviction, cherished within a limited Palestinian circle of believers, that the traditional belief among them was based on facts, of which some members of this community had been the original depositories and witnesses" (Box, art cit , 100)

<sup>167</sup> Cf Schurmann, art cit , 111, c

own history, but a gift from above. If each man is really something unspeakably new and represents more than the sum of his chromosomes and is more than the product of a particular environment, then Jesus is the truly new One who comes, not from humanity's own, but from God's Spirit."<sup>168</sup>

In some quarters the objection has been raised that to affirm the Virgin Birth is to frown upon the sacredness of sex in marriage. However, the biblical presentation does not establish this tension or dialectic; it is man's doing. To affirm the Virgin Birth is simply to acknowledge the theology of grace. The sacredness of marital relations is not involved at all.

Ultimately a study of Mary's "ante partum" virginity reveals, not primarily a personal prerogative, but God's continuity in salvation history.<sup>169</sup> Creation, Incarnation, and Parousia are intimately linked together. The Virgin Birth re-echoes the "in the beginning" of Genesis; it renews God's plan of "Let us make man to our image and likeness." In the other direction "it expresses the truth that God has set in motion the train of events which will culminate in the final judgment of the world and the salvation of his elect; it (the Virgin Birth) is as biblical and as Jewish a doctrine as any belief that can be found in the NT."<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Ratzinger, op. cit., 228

<sup>169</sup> "Taken as a whole, the Prologue presents two aspects of the coming of Jesus Christ. On the one hand, it is discontinuous with Judaism, a new action of creation, unprecedented as the creation of the universe itself. This is the import of the Virgin Birth story, which declares that his coming is the presence of God in the midst, and possibly the title, though this is less certain, in Matt. i. 1 points to the same truth. On the other hand, the coming of Christ is continuous with Judaism, the fulfilment of its Davidic and, if we may so express it, its 'Mosaic' hope." (*The Setting*, 82-83)

<sup>170</sup> Richardson, op. cit., 175