

great love of God in forgiveness, an earthly reflection of which He had thus been enabled to bestow.

To develop the moral and spiritual uses to which the passage thus interpreted may be applied, belongs rather to the office of the preacher than to that of the exegete. Still it may be allowed to the writer very briefly to point out how much is gained, by such an interpretation of our Lord's words as he has advocated, in power to raise the common charities and benevolences of life on to a definitely spiritual ground, and to link the daily ministries of Christian love to the great work which our Lord came to earth to accomplish. A clue is here given whereby can be discerned the great plea of the forgiveness of sins twined into every thread of the entire texture of the Gospel life and teaching, and the love which Christ enjoined to his followers is set forth as a manifestation not only in word but in deed, not only in form but in fact, of the love wherewith God has loved us; so that the exercise of the earthly forgiveness of sins, by us, on behalf of God, may not only enhance the attractions of his kingdom, but render ourselves daily more and more the "children of our Father in heaven."

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THE TWO ACCOUNTS OF OUR LORD'S INFANCY.

THE difference between the two accounts of our Lord's birth and infancy, given in the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke, must strike even the most careless reader of the New Testament with surprise; and it is no wonder that to many it has proved a serious stumbling block, so serious as to lead them to reject one or other of the accounts as legendary or mythical, or to set down both narratives as the various traditions current in different parts of the Church, each

perhaps containing a certain amount of truth, but shewing by their discrepancies and variations that it is impossible to accept either of them as a veracious record of the events related therein.

If we set the narratives side by side the full amount of variation will be seen at once:—

ST. MATTHEW'S ACCOUNT.

(1) Mary is suddenly found to be with child, and Joseph proposes to put her away secretly.

(2) Appearance of an angel in a dream to Joseph, announcing that that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost, and charge to him to name the child Jesus.

(3) Birth of Jesus at Bethlehem in the days of Herod the king.

(4) Visit of the Magi.

(5) Joseph is warned in a dream to flee into Egypt, and obeys the command.

(6) The massacre of the Innocents.

(7) After Herod's death Joseph is bidden by an angel in a dream to return to Palestine.

(8) Warned of God in a dream, he turns aside to Nazareth and dwells there.

ST. LUKE'S ACCOUNT.

(1) Annunciation by the angel Gabriel at Nazareth to the Virgin, of her approaching conception, and charge to her to name the child Jesus.

(2) Mary's visit to Elizabeth in the hill country of Judea; and the Magnificat.

(3) The "enrolment" brings Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem, where the child is born and laid in manger.

(4) Visit of the Shepherds.

(5) The Circumcision and naming of the child.

(6) The Purification and Presentation in the Temple.

(7) They return to Nazareth and dwell there.

Thus it will be seen that, with the exception of the miraculous birth at Bethlehem, the name given to the Holy Child, and the return to Nazareth, there is hardly a single fact related by both Evangelists. This, of course, shews that the narratives are *incomplete*. It forbids our appealing to either of them as if it gave a full account of all the cir-

cumstances. But can it do more than this? Does it shew that they are unreliable for what they do relate? Does it forbid our appealing to them as credible witnesses for the facts contained in them? That it does so is the contention of the negative critics: but it is a contention which requires proof, and needs something more than mere assertion to support it. Facts, it should be remembered, may easily be looked at from different points of view; and in any case where we have two independent narratives of the same event, we may be sure that we shall not only have the facts presented to us in different lights, but that the details preserved will vary more or less, according as the position of the narrators varied. Each of our informants will describe what fell under his personal observation, if he be an eyewitness; or if he is handing on the narrative of another, will single out those details which specially struck him, and which fitted in with the peculiar character and bent of his own mind. One fact has an attraction for one class of mind which, to another, is uninteresting. Details are significant to some men, which are meaningless to others. That which one man thinks of the highest importance is summarily dismissed by another as trivial and of no consequence. And so we may feel sure that two independent narratives of the same event will vary considerably from one another; and a skilful critic, recognizing this, will not hastily set down either of them as false because they are different, nor even because they seem to contradict each other on some points (for he will remember how different an appearance many things present when approached from opposite sides); but, knowing that both his accounts are incomplete, he will endeavour to weave them together, and out of them both to form a fuller narrative, and take a more comprehensive survey of the whole event. Thus, with the two accounts before us, we must start by fully and frankly recognizing the fact that they are only *partial* accounts; and, it may

be added, that neither of them professes to be complete. Recognizing this, we shall hesitate in rejecting them because they are not identical, and be slow to accuse them of contradicting each other because they move in different circles, and present to our view different series of events. Dean Alford's words will commend themselves to us as sound and sober:—"Being persuaded of the historic reality of these narratives of Matthew and Luke, we shall find no difficulty in also believing that *were we acquainted with all the events as they happened, their reconciliation would be an easy matter*; whereas now, the two independent accounts, from not being aware of, seem to exclude one another. This will often be the case in ordinary life; *e.g.*, in the giving of evidence. And nothing can more satisfactorily shew the veracity and independence of the narrators, where their testimony to the main facts, as in the present case, is consistent."

But must we rest content with this confession of difference between the two narratives? Can we not go at least one step further, and, allowing that we are not acquainted with all the events as they happened, and that therefore difficulties occur in harmonizing the two accounts—can we not shew *why the two writers have presented the facts from such different points of view*? Can we not discern some adequate reason why the one Gospel has preserved certain details, and the other others? If we can thus, in some measure, discover the points of view of the narrators, we are at least a step nearer to harmonizing the narratives and establishing their credibility. Let us, then, examine the records themselves and see whether we can find in the position of the narrators anything that will serve to account for the special facts and details selected by them for narration. The central point round which the histories are grouped is the birth of the Saviour at Bethlehem; everything else is subordinate to this, and leads up to or flows from it. Now

there was one person present then living, and one only, who would be in possession of full and complete knowledge of all the surrounding circumstances, namely, the Virgin Mother herself. But there was one other whose knowledge would be very great, and who would stand next to her in intimate acquaintance with the facts and their bearings — her husband, Joseph, the reputed father of the child. From either of these, and from these only, could the details have come in the first instance. And yet we may be sure that their accounts would have been in many points different from each other. Even in the account of the birth and infancy of an ordinary child, how differently would the father and mother relate the events; how would the mother linger over details and love to dwell on thoughts and sayings which she had treasured up, and of which the father knew nothing, or which to him had not the same importance and significance? What a much more *external* account his would be? Each would relate the events from his or her point of view, and the result would be widely differing narratives, both of them perfectly true so far as they went. Bearing this in mind, let us turn to the Gospel of St. Matthew and see whether the details there preserved shew from which point of view, from Mary's or from Joseph's, the narrative is written. A very slight examination will convince us that we have here what we may fairly call an *external* account, such an one as would have been handed down by Joseph rather than by Mary. We are told just those things of which the husband would have known most, which he would have been likely to remark, and which would have had an especial interest for him, as he was the principal figure in them. Thus we are told of the discovery of his espoused wife's pregnancy, and of the way in which *Joseph* planned the secret divorce; we read how the angel appeared to *Joseph* in a dream; how *Joseph* did as the angel commanded him; how, after the departure

of the Magi, an angel again appeared to *Joseph* and bade him take the young child and his mother and flee into Egypt, and how he obeyed the heavenly voice. Again, after Herod's death, it is to *Joseph* that the angel appears once more, bidding him return to Palestine; and it is *Joseph* who is warned of God to turn aside to Galilee. Can anything be clearer than the fact that the whole narrative is written from *Joseph's* point of view; and that, however many hands it may have passed through before it reached St. Matthew, *Joseph* was at any rate the narrator in the first instance?

Let us advance a step further, and shew how probable it was that *Joseph's* narrative should be preserved in St. Matthew's Gospel rather than in any of the others. Internal and external evidence both agree in pointing steadily to the fact, that the first Gospel was written for the Hebrew Christians of Palestine. Indeed Papias (A.D. 120-140) tells us that it was written *in Hebrew*; and Eusebius is simply representing the consistent testimony of antiquity when he writes that "Matthew, having first proclaimed the Gospel to the Hebrews, when on the point of going to other nations, committed it to writing in his native tongue, and thus supplied the want of his presence to them by his writings" (*H. E.*, III., xxiv.). Can we, then, trace any special connexion between *Joseph* and the Church of Palestine, which might account for the presence of his narrative of our Lord's infancy in the Gospel that was written primarily for this Church? The answer seems to be that we can. We know, from the Acts of the Apostles and St. Paul's Epistles, that the most prominent person in the Church of Jerusalem—president or bishop, or whatever we call him—was "James the brother of the Lord" (Acts xii. 17, xv. 13, 19, xxi. 18 *sq.*; Gal. ii. 9, 12). What may be the precise relationship thus described is of course a *veraxa quæstio* in New Testament criticism; but Bishop Lightfoot,

in his masterly and exhaustive Dissertation on "the Brethren of the Lord," in his Commentary on Galatians, has shewn the view that the "brethren" were sons of Joseph by a former wife "to have the highest claims to the sanction of tradition," and that "this solution seems especially to represent the Palestinian view." If this view be correct, James the *son of Joseph* was the first bishop of the Church of Jerusalem. This, of itself, establishes a connexion between that Church and the family of Joseph: does the connexion end here? Hegesippus (A.D. 160), himself a Hebrew Christian of Palestine, tells us that "after the martyrdom of James the Just on the same charge as the Lord, *his paternal uncle's child*, Symeon the son of Clopas, is next made bishop, who was put forward by all as the second in succession, being cousin of the Lord" (Hegesippus ap. Euseb. *H. E.*, IV., xxii.). And Eusebius himself elsewhere (III., xi.) says, that "Hegesippus relates that Clopas was the brother of Joseph." Thus the *nephew of Joseph* was the second bishop of the Church. And it would seem that others of the same family were also living there towards the close of the first century; for the same Hegesippus has preserved a touching story of the way in which "the grandsons of Jude, called the brother of the Lord according to the flesh," were brought before the Emperor Domitian, and accused of being of the family of David. The story is well known, and there is no need to repeat it here, only let us mark its conclusion: "Thus delivered, they ruled the Churches, both as witnesses, and relatives of the Lord" (Euseb., *H. E.*, III., xx.). These facts, taken together, seem quite sufficient to establish the close connexion of the family of Joseph with the Church of Jerusalem. Our Lord's "brethren" and kinsmen clearly took a prominent position there. Is it not natural, then, that, in the Gospel which was written primarily for the use of this Church, the account of our Lord's infancy should be

written (as we have seen that it is) from Joseph's point of view? Joseph probably died even before our Lord's ministry began. But he must often have told the wondrous story to his children and nephews; and it is only what we might reasonably expect, that the narrative, which came in the first instance from his lips, should have been preserved in the Church presided over by his descendants, and so have been committed to writing by that Evangelist who wrote for the Hebrew Christians of Palestine.

If we now turn to the Gospel of St. Luke, a very slight inspection will be sufficient to convince us that the story of the birth and infancy of Jesus is written *from Mary's point of view*. It is in this Gospel alone that the appearance of the angel Gabriel to *Mary* is recorded. Here only we read of *Mary's* visit to her cousin Elizabeth, and of *Mary's* Song, the Magnificat; in this Gospel alone are the details of the birth of the Child preserved.

But a closer examination of the narrative will go far to shew that it is not merely written from *Mary's* point of view, but that *it was actually taken down from her lips, or came from her pen*. The two narratives stand on a somewhat different footing in this respect. There is no sort of reason for supposing that the first two chapters of St. Matthew come from a different documentary source from the rest of the Gospel. They simply represent the tradition which had come in the first instance from Joseph, and which may have passed through many hands before it was finally committed to writing by the Evangelist. But with the first two chapters of St. Luke the case is different. To pass from the preface (Chap. i. 1-4) to the account of the Infancy (Chaps. i. 5-ii. 52) is like going from one country to another: it is to pass from Greece to Palestine, from the cultivated speech of a classical author to the simple style of the ancient Hebrew Scriptures, which we find nowhere else in St. Luke's writings. To give but one example: by

a Hebrew the days were reckoned from evening to morning; and he therefore spoke of "night and day." A Greek would use the order more familiar to us, and speak of "day and night." St. Luke, who was a Gentile, naturally uses this last expression in his narrative (Luke xviii. 7; Acts ix. 24), but in Acts xx. 31, xxvi. 7, in speeches of St. Paul (who always uses the Jewish order in his Epistles), and in Chapter ii. 37 of the Gospel we find "night and day." In this last mentioned passage it occurs not in a speech but in the simple narrative; and the natural inference is that the narrator is not St. Luke himself, but that he is faithfully incorporating in his own work the recital or the manuscript of another, and that other a Hebrew Christian. He tells us in his Preface that he has "traced out all things accurately from the first;" and it is not unnatural to suppose that in the course of his researches he became possessed of some document containing an account of the Nativity which he perhaps translated, and thus preserved for us in his Gospel.

That the Virgin Mother herself was the author of this account is the point that I would now try to establish. There is no need to repeat what has been already said, as to the story being written from her point of view; but attention must be drawn to the fact that many of the details can only have come from her in the first instance. She alone was in a position to relate the account of the Annunciation, as she alone was then present, and heard the salutation of the angel; and who but she could tell of that hasty visit into the hill country to her cousin Elizabeth, and of that wondrous salutation, "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come unto me? For behold, when the voice of thy salutation came into mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy." She would naturally know, as few others

would, all the circumstances connected with the birth of her cousin's child, the Baptist, the account of which is found in this Gospel only : and who but she would linger so fondly over the details of the birth of her own child, and describe how "the days were accomplished that she should be delivered," and how "she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn" ?

Even when others than herself were present, there is more than one indication that the details of the story sank into the heart of Mary as into no others ; and that it is to her that St. Luke owes his account of them,—*e.g.*, Chapter ii. 18, 19 : "And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds ; *but Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart ;*" Chapter ii. 51 : "And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them ; *but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart.*" The words of M. Godet on the former of these passages are striking, and worth quoting in this connexion : "The oftener we read the 19th verse (Chap. ii.), the more we feel assured that Mary was the first and real author of this whole narrative. This fine, simple, and private history was composed by her, and preserved for a certain time in an oral form, until some one committed it to writing, whose work fell into the hands of Luke, and was reproduced by him in Greek."

There is another fact which, so far as I am aware, has not hitherto been noticed as an argument in favour of the view that these chapters are the work of the Virgin Mary. It is the remarkable similarity between them and the narrative in 1 Samuel i. and ii., a similarity sometimes extending to the very words used : *e.g.*, the statement of Luke ii. 40, with regard to the infant Jesus, that "the

child grew . . . and the grace of God was upon him," reminds us of the description in 1 Samuel iii. 19, "And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him;" while Luke ii. 52, "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men," is really a direct reference to 1 Samuel ii. 26, "And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the Lord and also with men," and accordingly it is rightly printed in uncial type by Professors Westcott and Hort in their edition of the Greek Testament. Thus it is clear both from the general similarity of the compositions and also from these special verbal coincidences, that the author of St. Luke's first two chapters was so thoroughly familiar with the early history of Samuel that it moulded the language and shaped the phraseology in which the new record was cast. And—not to lay stress on the fact that Mary, whose circumstances were so similar to Hannah's, would naturally love to dwell on her story, and read it again and again till she knew it almost by heart,—it must not be forgotten that the Magnificat supplies us with direct and positive evidence of her complete familiarity with this part of the ancient Scriptures. Everybody knows that the one hymn is really framed on the model of the other; it may, however, be worth while to set some passages from them side by side, to make the comparison easier.

1 Samuel ii. 1. And Hannah	Luke i. 46. And Mary said :
prayed and said :	
" My heart rejoiceth in the Lord,	" My soul doth magnify the Lord,
Mine horn is exalted in the Lord,	And my spirit hath rejoiced in
	God my Saviour.
My mouth is enlarged over mine	For He that is mighty hath mag-
enemies,	nified me,
Because I rejoice in thy salvation.	And holy is his name.
There is none holy as the Lord,	He hath shewed strength with
	His arm,
The bows of the mighty men are	He hath scattered the proud in
broken,	the imagination of their hearts.

And they that stumbled are girded with strength.	He hath put down the mighty from their seats,
They that were full have hired themselves out for bread,	And hath exalted them of low degree.
And they that were hungry ceased.	He hath filled the hungry with good things,
	And the rich He hath sent empty away."
The Lord maketh poor and maketh rich,	
He bringeth low and lifteth up,	
He raiseth up the poor out of the dust,	
And lifteth the beggar from the dunghill."	

Nor are the coincidences entirely confined to the *song* of Hannah. The words of the Magnificat, "For He hath regarded the lowliness of his handmaiden," ὅτι ἐπέβλεψεν ἐπὶ τὴν ταπείνωσιν τῆς δούλης αὐτοῦ), which, it will be seen, have nothing corresponding to them in the song, are really a quotation from Hannah's *prayer*. "If thou wilt indeed look upon the affliction of thine handmaid" (LXX. ἐὰν ἐπιβλέπων ἐπιβλέψῃς ἐπὶ τὴν ταπείνωσιν τῆς δούλης σου).

The case, then, stands thus: (1) The author of Luke i. and ii. was so thoroughly familiar with 1 Samuel i.-iii. that its language and style is reflected in his (or her) own work; (2) The Magnificat shews that the Virgin Mary was so thoroughly familiar with these Chapters that her own hymn was based and modelled upon them: and (3) the inference to be drawn is that very possibly the author of the Magnificat was also the author of the remainder of these chapters of St. Luke's Gospel. The coincidence is at any rate a remarkable one; and although, if it stood alone, it would perhaps be too slight to build upon, yet, when taken in connexion with other facts which point in the same direction, it seems to be of real weight, and to have considerable value as a subsidiary argument: and this is all that is here claimed for it.

Lastly, it is perhaps worth while, just to allude to the tradition that St. Luke was a painter, and especially distinguished for his portraits of the Virgin Mary. It cannot be said that the tradition is an early one, or that it is worthy of the faintest credence; but it may perhaps have been shaped in accordance with an earlier tradition, and at least it embodies a belief in a connexion of some kind between St. Luke and the Virgin, which we have seen, from internal evidence, to be extremely probable.

And now to sum up. I have tried in this paper, *not* to harmonize the two accounts of our Lord's Nativity (to do that completely and satisfactorily is perhaps now impossible), but *to discover the points of view of the narrators*. If this has been done satisfactorily, if we are once clear on this head, and convinced that the story is really given to us from two different sides, it will lead us to expect variety, or at least to be patient of it; and it will help us to understand how the two accounts, strikingly different as they are, may nevertheless both be true, and both be the work of men who were inspired by that Spirit "who divideth to each one severally as He will."

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CHRIST AND THE ANGELS.

HEBREWS ii. Ver. 17, 18.

THE general structure of the argument of Verse 17 has been explained in a former paper; we come now to the details, and here we note (1) the function of the high priest, "to make propitiation for the sins of the people." The construction of *ἰλάσκεσθαι* with the accusative *ἁμαρτίας* is unusual, but does not present any difficulty, being in fact equivalent to *ἐξιλάσκεσθαι ἁμαρτίαν* which,