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Lowering the Standards of Indoctrination.

P. E. KRETZMANN, St. Louis, Mo.

There can be no question with regard to the importance of the topic which is here given, for the Bible itself makes it a point to show just what the Lord expects of the members of His Church. Among the very last words of our Savior we have His great commission to His disciples until the end of time: "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, *teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.*" Matt. 28, 19, 20. While for child-membership in the Church it is sufficient for such a child to be baptized, since by Baptism it receives the grace of God, we begin the special teaching of children at a very early age, in fact, as soon as they are able to pronounce the first words. We encourage the mothers to teach their little children appropriate prayers and also small verses from the Bible. We provide material in the form of pictures and simple Bible stories. We emphasize some of the fundamental doctrines of the Bible, such as the truth concerning Jesus Christ, the God-man, the Savior of the world. We also establish various institutions for the training of the young. Before we receive children into adult membership, we give them a special course of instruction in the fundamental doctrines of the Bible, so that they may be able to examine themselves before going to Holy Communion. 1 Cor. 11, 28.

That this course pursued by us, which is lauded most highly by men of understanding outside of our own circles, is in full keeping with the Lord's will, appears from a number of passages. Thus St. Paul chides the Christians of Corinth for their slow progress in Christian knowledge. He writes: "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk and not with meat; for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able." 1 Cor. 3, 1, 2. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews makes a similar remark when he calls his readers to task for their slow

The Virgin Birth of Christ.

Essay read before a conference by REV. G. ALBERT SCHULZE and published at its request.

The vehement attacks made upon the Virgin Birth of our Savior by modern theologians dare not be ignored by us. For faith in the Virgin Birth has ever been a cherished article of Christian faith. Confession of it was incorporated in the Creed of the early Church and has survived to this day in the Ecumenical Creeds to which the vast majority of Christians subscribe and which

have been received into the Symbolical Books of our beloved Lutheran Church, which confesses its faith in this doctrine also in several of its particular confessions. Moreover, we look upon this doctrine as a source of much comfort. Hence, I dare say, we are agreed that the subject of the essay assigned to me is important and timely.

If we were Roman Catholics, we might not feel any need of discussing the Virgin Birth. In the *Sunday Visitor* of August 24, 1924, Rev. H. C. Semple, S. J., writes: "Why do I believe the Virgin Birth? Because the Church teaches it. Because God told it to my Mother, and my Mother told it to me. Because I say in my Act of Faith: 'O my God, I firmly believe all the sacred truths which Thy Holy Catholic Church believes and teaches, because Thou hast revealed them, who canst neither deceive nor be deceived.' In every age of the last nineteen centuries this has been the reason why every Catholic has believed in every sacred truth revealed by God and proposed by the Church. . . . This has ever been the reason of every Catholic's belief in every article of the Apostles' Creed, and thus of his belief, not only in the divinity of our Lord, but also in the virginity and perpetual virginity of Our Lady. For the Church has ever taught that Mary is the Virgin, and thence she is Blessed Mary ever Virgin." But, thank God, we are not sons of the "Holy Father," and so we do not think very highly of a *fides carbonaria* concerning any point of doctrine. We hold that *Verbum Dei solum condit articulos fidei*. We want the assurance that the doctrine that Jesus was born of a virgin is taught in the Word of our God. Though we do not care very much what the Roman Catholic Church teaches, we are, of course, interested, deeply interested, in the testimony of faithful adherents to the Word of God as to this doctrine also. And if for no other reason, then at least from a desire to silence the Old Adam within us, we cannot well escape feeling a need of being able to refute the objections of the opponents of the Virgin Birth and exposing the fallacy of their arguments.

In the following I will endeavor to show that the doctrine of the Virgin Birth is plainly taught in the Scriptures, that it is accepted by faithful teachers of the Church, both past and present, and that the attacks made upon it by avowed enemies and professed friends of the Christian faith are groundless. I purpose to show:—

I. *The Virgin Birth of Christ is explicitly taught by Matthew and Luke.*

II. *The Gospel of Mark and the other New Testament Scrip*

tures contain nothing that can be construed as a denial of the Virgin Birth.

III. The Virgin Birth is foretold in the Old Testament.

IV. The doctrine of the miraculous person and work of Christ involves the miracle of His birth from the Virgin.

V. The Virgin Birth has been universally accepted by the Church of the New Testament.

VI. Denial of the doctrine that Jesus is virgin-born is without foundation.

I.

That Jesus was born of a virgin mother is taught in plain, clear, unmistakable language in Matt. 1, 18—23 and Luke 1, 26—37. A careful perusal, indeed, the most superficial, reading of these two narratives can hardly have any other effect than to convince the reader that both Matthew and Luke believe, and would have their readers believe, that Jesus was born of a virgin pure and undefiled, who had not had sexual intercourse with a man. It almost seems incredible that any one who professes to accept the Bible as the inspired Word of God should express any doubts that God would have us believe the Virgin Birth of Him whom we call our Lord. The plain words of the evangelists should forever dispel from our minds every vestige of uncertainty on this point. If it were merely stated that the mother of Jesus was a *παρθένος*, there might be some excuse for doubting her virginity in the sense in which we are accustomed to use the term; but the explicit and repeated negation of Christ's having been born as a result of Mary's having come together with a man and the positive declaration that His miraculous conception by the Holy Ghost was the cause of His birth establish beyond the shadow of a doubt that He has no human father and renders superfluous any investigation of the Greek term *παρθένος*.

A comparison of the two passages, however, may seem to reveal some discrepancies, and these have been urged by some as proof that, whatever Matthew and Luke may say about the birth of Christ, their testimony must be thrown out of court. Luke, for instance, mentions the fact that Joseph and Mary were residents of Nazareth; Matthew does not mention their native town, but speaks as though they had not been in Nazareth before the birth of the holy Child. Chap. 2, 23. This difference in the two accounts has been pointed to by some (Soltan) as a contradiction. The unprejudiced reader, however, will find it rather difficult to discover

a real contradiction. The fact that Matthew does not say that Nazareth had been the home of Joseph and Mary does not prove that he would denounce Luke as a liar and that, therefore, the two reports which we have of Christ's birth do not agree and consequently cannot be true. Of course, if we encountered a palpable discrepancy here, we could not avoid drawing the conclusion that we are not dealing with the infallible Word of God and that, hence, it is not safe to accept the words of the evangelists as divine truth. But there is no contradiction.

The accounts of the two writers agree beautifully, perfectly, throughout. Though a careful study will reveal many other points of difference than the one already mentioned, though, *e. g.*, Matthew tells us more about Joseph and his emotions than about Mary, yet we cannot but say that the points in which they agree outnumber by far those in which they differ. In both passages, for instance, it is said: 1) that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Ghost, Matt. 1, 18. 20; Luke 1, 35; 2) that His mother was a virgin, Matt. 1, 18. 20; Luke 1, 27. 34; 3) that Mary was espoused to Joseph, Matt. 1, 18; Luke 1, 27; 4) that Joseph was of the house and lineage of David, Matt. 1, 16. 20; Luke 1, 27; 5) that it was God's command that Mary's Son should bear the name Jesus, Matt. 1, 21; Luke 1, 31; 6) that the annunciation of the conception of the Lord was accompanied by the appearance of an angel, Matt. 1, 20 f.; Luke 1, 27 f. If we include the second chapter of Matthew and the second chapter of Luke in our comparison, we shall discover a number of additional coincidences in the two accounts, *e. g.*, that Jesus was born in the days of Herod, that He was born in Bethlehem, that He was called Savior, etc. In fine, the two evangelists have evidently reported independently of each other, and their reports are not contradictory, but supplementary.

Neither is either of the two sacred writers guilty of contradicting the other one. Human reason, the old rainmaker (as Luther loves to call it), is so half-witted that it does not hesitate to adduce the two genealogies of Christ contained in Matthew and Luke as evidence that the thought of Christ's being the son of a virgin never entered the minds of the writers. Orr (*The Virgin Birth of Christ*) quotes Lobstein as saying: "*Es kann kein Zweifel sein, dass nach dem Urteil beider Genealogen Jesus der Sohn Josephs ist*" (p. 110). Matthew and Luke, whom we must certainly credit with sufficient intelligence to understand the simple words of their own records, who certainly were not so ignorant as not to know the meaning of the word *virgin*, do not seem to have felt that the genealogies and

their doctrine of the Virgin Birth were contradictory; indeed, Matthew prefaces his account of the Virgin Birth with the genealogy in order to prove that Jesus is the legal heir of Joseph. Moreover, we must not overlook the fact that both Matthew and Luke carefully avoid making the statement that Joseph is the father of Jesus. Matthew is extremely accurate in the matter. He says: "Jacob begat Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus" (1, 16). Luke is equally careful in the choice of his words; he begins his genealogy with the words: "Jesus . . . being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph (3, 23). Whether you regard both genealogies as presenting the family tree of Joseph, or whether you believe that Matthew traces Joseph's descent and Luke that of Mary, you cannot use the genealogies as a lever to overthrow what the writers say about the Virgin Birth. Neither of them contradicts himself by saying that Jesus was virgin-born and that He was not virgin-born.

Matthew and Luke remain consistent with themselves to the end. There is nothing in the writings of either that does not harmonize with the opening statements of their productions. It has been said by some that their application to Jesus of the title "Son of David" proves that they do not mean what they say when they speak of Him as the son of a virgin (*vide* Matt. 9, 27; 12, 23; 21, 9; Luke in several places). If the writings of Matthew and Luke did not contain this appellation and Mark and John used it, we might perhaps be somewhat taken aback and — in a moment of doubt as to the divine inspiration of the Scriptures — begin to reason within ourselves: Matthew and Luke call Jesus the son of a virgin, but the other two evangelists call Him the Son of David; here is a contradiction. But since this expression is used by the very writers who record the Virgin Birth, and that, too, in immediate connection with their accounts of Jesus' birth (Matt. 1, 1; Luke 2, 4 f.), it is perfectly clear that, though we may grant that both contain the genealogy of Joseph, their purpose cannot at all be to designate Joseph as the natural father of Jesus, but merely to show that through His connection with Joseph, Jesus is entitled to hereditary claim upon the throne of David, that is, that Joseph is the father of Jesus according to the law. Or are we ready to charge Matthew and Luke with such lack of intelligence that they were capable of declaring emphatically and in the same context that Jesus is of the house and lineage of David and that He has no human father, if these two statements were contradictory? Moreover, it is not by any means certain that Luke purposes to trace the ancestry of Joseph; on the contrary, there is much internal

evidence that he purposes to show the descent of Mary, a relative of Joseph (Edersheim, Ebrard). Davis (*Dictionary of the Bible*) says: "The table in Luke gives the genealogy of Mary and shows Jesus to be the actual son of David. With the clear declaration of Luke that Jesus had no human father, with the customary usage of the Hebrew word 'son' for descendant, however remote, and on the basis of the approved Greek text, the advocates of this view render Luke 3, 23: 'Jesus being son (as was supposed, of Joseph) of Heli,' etc. Jesus, according to Luke, is grandson of Heli, Mary's father, and thus a lineal descendant of David. . . . This conception is probably correct." The genealogy at the head of Matthew's gospel, too, creates the impression that, though he gives us the family-tree of Joseph, he would intimate that Mary, too, is of the house of David. In fine, the two genealogies cannot be cited as witnesses disproving the Virgin Birth.

But do not the two evangelists sometimes call Jesus the son of Joseph? Do they not thus declare Joseph to be His father? It is true, in Matthew, for instance (13, 55) the question is asked, "Is not this the carpenter's son?" Luke 4, 22 we encounter the question, "Is not this the son of Joseph?" John, by the way, also uses this expression (1, 45; 6, 42). A glance at the passages in which these names occur is sufficient to show that in every one of them we are dealing with a quotation of words spoken by people of Nazareth, Capernaum, Bethsaida, who, very likely, knew nothing of the miracle of Jesus' birth. Strange to say, the only other passages in which Jesus is called the son of Joseph are to be found in Luke. And still stranger — Luke uses this designation almost immediately after he had declared Jesus to be the son of the Virgin, namely, chap. 2, 27. 33. 41. 43. 48. He speaks of "the parents," of "His parents," of "His father and mother," and quotes Mary as saying, "Thy father and I." I fail to see how any can urge that these expressions prove that Jesus was born according to the ordinary course of nature. The very fact that Luke uses them is very significant, showing, as it does, that it never entered his mind that they might be looked upon as setting aside the doctrine of the Virgin Birth taught by him a few verses above. Before the law, Jesus was the son of Joseph. Before the law, Joseph was His father. For Joseph was the husband of Mary. It may well be, too, that Jesus called him father. — The two accounts that we have of the Virgin Birth are eminently satisfactory.

This is probably as good a place as any to inquire into the substance of the evangelists' teaching on the subject of Christ's

birth. It can be summed up under three heads: 1) That because of His birth from the Virgin Mary Christ is a true man; 2) that He was born a holy man; 3) that He is the Godman.

By virtue of His birth from the Virgin, Christ is a true man, a genuine human being. He is, as Elisabeth, filled with the Holy Ghost, exclaims, the fruit of the womb of Mary. The Angel of the Annunciation gave Mary the promise: "Thou shalt conceive in thy womb and bring forth a son." Jesus drew human substance from the body of Mary. In her womb there developed an embryo, which, after the usual duration of pregnancy, came into the world as a child, a truly human child. This doctrine is corroborated by other writers of the New Testament. The author of Hebrews says: "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same." Paul, in 1 Tim. 2, 5, calls the Lord "the man Christ Jesus." Throughout His earthly life Jesus gave constant evidence of His true humanity. The Scriptures, as Schwan says in his Catechism, attribute to Him the natural parts and ways of a man. The doctrine that Jesus had only a phantom body, as was taught by the Docetae, is nonsense and contrary to the Scriptures. The Bible also disproves the theory that in the case of Jesus the place of the human soul was taken by the *λόγος* (Arians, *ἄψυχοι*); that He had a body and a soul, but no *νοῦς*, the *λόγος* dwelling where the *νοῦς* should have been (Apollinarians); that He was possessed of body and soul, but not of a human will (Monothelites); that He brought with Him from heaven a body worthy of Himself, which passed through the sexual organs of Mary like water through a canal (Valentinus). Senseless theories like these have not yet totally disappeared. In the *Formula of Concord*, for instance, we are told that the Menonites did not believe that Jesus received flesh and blood from the Virgin Mary, but descended with them from heaven. Guenther (*Symbolik*) quotes the following from Schwenkfeld: "*Das Fleisch Christi hat keinen kreatuerlichen Anfang, sondern einen uebernatuerlichen und neuen aus dem Samen seines Vaters, das ist, aus dem Heiligen Geist. . . . Christi menschliche Natur ist nicht gleich der menschlichen Natur der Tuerken.*" Champion (*The Virgin's Son*) says: "Dr. David Smith has lately presented the interesting view that Jesus had not only no human father, but no human mother. The Virgin Mary provided not even the ovum of the embryo, but only the nidus by which it was attached and through which it was nourished." Over against all speculations of this nature we maintain the *veritas et integritas humanae Christi naturae*.

Christ's Virgin Birth is a guarantee of His sinlessness. The Son of Mary is a man without sin. Otherwise the term *man* always connotes the idea of sin. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," John 3, 6. "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Ps. 51, 7. Sin is propagated by the propagation of the race. All that have human parents have sin. Christ is without sin. The angel in Luke speaks of "that Holy Thing" which shall be born of Mary. The holiness of Jesus is plainly taught not only here, but in many other passages, for instance, 2 Cor. 5, 21; Heb. 7, 26. In the case of Jesus the sinful features otherwise connected with human generation are totally absent. But is not Jesus' mother, a human being, contaminated with sin? Indeed, Mary is a sinner. The mere fact that she brought forth her Son in untouched virginity does not render her offspring holy. Had it pleased God to provide for the propagation of the human race after the fall of man by some other method than cohabitation of the two sexes, let us say solely by agency of the female sex, we should nevertheless be sinners. The suppression of man's part in the generation of a child is not in itself a protection against sinful origin. The Scriptures nowhere teach that the seed of a man is impure and that of a woman is holy. Christ is undefiled by virtue of the *causa efficiens* of His birth from the Virgin, because of the positive operation of the Holy Spirit in the origin of His human nature. If we lose sight of this fact, we are forced to accept the vagary of the Docetae, the Romish doctrine of the immaculate conception of Mary, or the monstrous theory of a sacred germ which descended from Eve, was preserved in the people of Israel, and finally reached its maturity in the human nature of Christ. Christ — this is what God tells us — is sinless because of the connection of the Holy Ghost with the beginning of the existence of His humanity. He who caused His conception is perfectly holy and purifies and sanctifies the flesh and blood which Christ receives from His mother. In the case of Christ's birth the human act of begetting, which in the case of all other men is the beginning of existence, is excluded; a holy act, performed by the Holy Spirit, is substituted therefor; hence the evil consequences resulting from the human act of begetting are eliminated. Just how the Spirit wrought this great miracle Mary herself did not understand; and I dare say that we shall not be able to understand it either. The best that we can hope to do is to repeat what the Scriptures teach: The Holy Ghost came upon Mary, that is, the power of the Highest overshadowed her; and the result was

the conception and birth of Him whom the angel calls holy. — The Holy Spirit's connection with the birth of Jesus, however, cannot properly be termed an act of paternity. True, Matthew (1, 18, 20) says that Mary was pregnant *ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος*. But *ἐκ* in this connection, as Gerhard says, is not *ἐκ materiale*, but *ἐκ potentiale*, that is, in the sense of efficient, operative cause (Baier, III, 27). The Holy Ghost was active in the conception and birth of Christ, not as communicating His substance, but rather as operative *ad extra*. *Ex Spiritu Sancto conceptus est Christus οὐ σπερματικῶς, ἀλλὰ δημιουργικῶς* (Damascenus. Baier, III, 29). Athanasius: "*Inventa est in utero habens de Spiritu Sancto, non quod Salvatoris nostri pater dicendus Spiritus Sanctus, ut duo credantur patres, sed cum Patre et Filio idem Spiritus Sanctus cooperarius et unius potestatis est*" (*ibid.*). *Der ueber die Maria kommende Heilige Geist und die ueberschattende Kraft des Hoechsten wirkt bei der Empfaengnis Christi, . . . dass diese Masse, dadurch der Sohn Gottes Fleisch annahm, geheiligt, das ist, gereinigt und von der Suende geschieden wird, Hebr. 7, 26, damit das, was hernach geboren wird, heilig sei*" (Besser, *Echt evangelische Auslegung*; quoted in *Hom. Mag.*, 31, 74). Christ's challenge to His enemies to convince Him of sin is not an act of vain self-exaltation, as Strauss says. Nor does the challenge merely imply absence of all consciousness of wrong-doing, as Ritschl maintains. We shall, however, have occasion to enlarge upon this point in one of the following chapters.

The sacred writers teach that the Son of the Virgin is the Son of God. Matthew calls Him Immanuel, God with us. 1, 23. The angel announces to Mary that the Holy Thing that shall be born of her shall be called the Son of God. Luke 1, 35. In the man whom Mary brought forth the Son of God dwelleth as in a dwelling. That is the teaching, not only of Matthew and Luke, but of all the New Testament writers. The passages containing this truth are so numerous that one is almost in a quandary where to begin when desiring to make quotations. I would remind you only of John 1, 14, 18. This truth is taught in the Old Testament, too, *e. g.*, Micah 5, 1. It is presupposed in many passages, for example, John 8, 23: "I am from above," and in all the numerous passages in which Christ speaks of His coming into the world from the Father. According to the Scriptures, Jesus is not merely *Filius Dei nuncupativus*, but *Filius Dei essentialis*. The words of Luke: "Therefore (*διό*) also that Holy Thing . . . shall be called the Son of God," are cited as proof that Jesus merely bore the

title "Son of God." Hofmann writes: "*Weil heilig ist, was diesem Kind den Ursprung gibt, darum wird es heilig; und weil Gott selbst es ist, der ihm den Ursprung gibt, darum wird es Gottes Sohn heissen. Die Art und Weise, wie es seines Daseins Anfang nimmt, wird dies zur Folge haben, wenn es fuer das erkannt wird, was es dadurch ist.*" (Quoted in *Hom. Mag.*, 31, 73, from *Die Heilige Schrift Neuen Testaments.*) Again: "*Demnach besagt die Stelle Luk. 1, 35, dass das Kind, welches durch Machtwirkung Gottes in der Maria seines Lebens Anfang gewinnt, um des willen Gottes Sohn heisst.*" (*Schriftbeweis; Hom. Mag.*, 31, 73.) Hofmann objects to the distinction made between the *generatio aeterna Christi* and the *generatio temporalis*. He is of the opinion that Jesus is the Son of God by virtue of His supernatural birth and hence not really God the Son. The teaching of Hofmann and other Arians is not the teaching of the Bible. When Luke says, "Therefore also," etc., we must not overlook the fact that he does not say *ἔσται*. He does not say that Jesus shall be the Son of God by virtue of His miraculous birth; but only this, that He shall be conceived and born in a supernatural manner and that *therefore* He shall be called, honored, praised, as the Son of God (*κληθήσεται*). His miraculous, extraordinary birth shall have the effect of bringing home to men the truth that He is more than a mere man, that He is the Godman. If we adhere to the Scriptures, we cannot but say: "*Maria hat durch Wirkung des Heiligen Geistes nicht nur eine Aussonderung und Heiligung ihres Fleisches und Blutes zur Bildung der menschlichen Natur Christi erfahren, sondern sie hat auch durch Wirkung des Heiligen Geistes ein Ich, eine Person, empfangen, die von Ewigkeit her ist und auch in alle Ewigkeit dieselbe bleibt, die nicht erst mit der Empfaengnis entstanden ist.*" (*Syn.-Ber.*, Mich., 41, p. 42.) If we discard the doctrine of the

Incarnation, we may as well discontinue our discussion of the birth of Christ. For if Christ is not God and man in one person, then that which the Scriptures say concerning His birth is of little importance and significance. This point, too, will have to be taken up later.

The three points we have just considered are plainly taught in God's Word. Before proceeding to the next chapter, we should devote a little of our time to the consideration of doctrines which for years have been taught in connection with the Virgin Birth, though they are not set forth in the Scriptures. There is the doctrine, *e. g.*, that Mary brought Jesus into the world *clauso utero*, that is, that she remained a virgin even after the birth of the

Lord. Calvinists teach that Mary gave birth to Jesus *aperto utero* (Baier, III, 86). There is a reason for that; they deny the communication of attributes. Luther writes: "*Es disputieren auch etliche, wie diese Geburt geschehen sei, als sei sie [Maria] des Kindes genesen im Gebet, in grosser Freude, ehe sie es inne geworden ist, ohne alle Schmerzen. Welcher Andacht ich nicht verwerfe; vielleicht um der Einfaeltigen willen also erfunden. Aber wir sollen bei dem Evangelio bleiben, das da sagt, sie habe ihn geboren, und bei dem Artikel des Glaubens, da wir sagen: 'Der geboren ist von Maria, der Jungfrau.' Es ist keine Truegerei hier, sondern, wie die Worte lauten, eine wahrhaftige Geburt. . . . Ohne dass sie ohne Suende, ohne Schande, ohne Schmerzen, OHNE VERSEHRUNG geboren hat, 1 Mos. 3, 16'*" (St. L. 11, 123). The *Formula of Concord* says: "*Hoc modo (ut loco non circumscribatur, da er keinen Raum gibt noch nimmt) CREDITUR de sanctissima Maria natus esse*" (Trigl., 688, 100). We are not justified in elevating this doctrine to the dignity of an article of faith; nor do I believe that this is the intention of the *Formula of Concord*. I would not accuse the *Lutheran Commentary* of heresy because it contains the statement: "The ascetic spirit of the fourth century was not satisfied with the Scriptural teaching of the miraculous conception of Christ, but began to teach that His birth was also miraculous, that He came into the world without doing violence to the virginal and pure body of His mother" (ad James, p. 85). Baier says: "*Illud autem, quod quidam putant, Mariam clauso utero peperisse Filium, incertum est*" (III, 85). It is an open question.

Another point of this kind — we shall have to admit that we cannot with any degree of finality settle the question: *An Maria semper virgo?* Hastings, in his *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* (sub *Mary*) says: "The view of overwhelmingly the larger part of Christendom is: *Virgo concepit, virgo peperit, virgo permansit.*" Luther writes: "*Weil niemand aus der Schrift beweisen kann, dass Maria hernach verrueckt sei, soll es auch niemand glauben, sondern sie fuer eine Jungfrau halten*" (19, 1370; 20, 1806; 12, 1226). In the Latin version of the *Smalcald Articles* we read: "*Filius . . . ex Maria, pura, sancta, sempervirgine.*"* The views

* It may not be amiss to refer here to the opinion of the sainted Professor Schaller, who holds (*Bibl. Christ.*, p. 62) that the passages quoted from the Confessions do not declare that Mary remained a virgin *ever after*, but emphasize that "*the birth of Christ made no change in her virginity.*" — Ed.

of modern theologians (according to Pieper's *Dogmatik*, II, 367) are divided. In the *Catholic Cyclopedia* (Vol. XV, p. 450) we read: "The perpetual virginity of our Blessed Lady was taught and proposed to our belief not merely by the councils and creeds, but also by the early Fathers. The words of the prophet Isaiah (7, 14) are understood in this sense by St. Irenaeus, Origen, Tertullian, St. Justin, St. Chrysostom, St. Epiphanius, Eusebius, Rufinus, St. Basil, St. Jerome, Theodoretus, St. Isidore, St. Ildefonsus. St. Jerome devotes his entire treatise against Helvidius to the perpetual virginity of Our Blessed Lady; the contrary doctrine is called madness and blasphemy by Gennadius, madness by Origen, sacrilege by St. Ambrose, impiety and smacking of atheism by Philostorgios, perfidy by St. Bede, heresy by St. Augustine, and St. Epiphanius probably excels all others in his invectives against the opponents of Our Lady's virginity." The Bible does not mention the *ἀειπαρθενεία*. There are commentators who believe themselves justified in deducing proof of the contrary from the *ἕως οὗ* of Matt. 1, 25. But this passage makes no statement as to whether or not Joseph knew Mary after the birth of the Savior; cf. Gen. 8, 7; Matt. 28, 20. The application to Jesus of the term *πρωτότοκος* does not give us any information either as to Mary's subsequent life. If I tell you that I am the first-born of my parents, and you conclude from that statement that I have brothers and sisters, you are in error; I never had a brother or a sister. My assertion that I am the first-born is really non-committal as to the number of children in our family. Nor does the mention of brothers and sisters of Jesus (Matt. 13, 55, etc.) give us any clue as to whether or not Mary became the mother of children by Joseph. Tradition may be correct in believing the "brethren" of our Lord to have been brothers by adoption (sons of Alphaeus, also called Cleopas, a brother of Joseph). The *virginitas perpetua* is not contrary to Scripture, nor is it directly taught in God's Word. Prof. Gabr. Oussani, D. D., St. Joseph's Seminary, Dunwoodie, N. Y., says: "It must be admitted that, viewed as a historical fact, it has no explicit support in Scripture. The dogma must therefore be considered as a development, which development, strictly speaking, does not necessarily imply its theological or historical truth or falsehood" (Orr, *The Virgin Birth*, p. 294). In days gone by this professor would have got into a beautiful mess of trouble. When Helvidius and the Antidicomarianites of the fourth century denied the perpetual virginity of our Lord's mother, they were furiously attacked by St. Jerome and others. Even Luther says: "*Helvidius*,

der Narr, wollte auch Marien mehr Soehne nach Christo geben . . . — der grobe Narr!" But the fact remains that we can neither prove nor disprove from Scripture the *semper virginitas*. It is a man-made doctrine, which may, perhaps, be looked upon as being probably true, but is not an article of faith. And if a man like Dr. Weidner (Chicago Lutheran Seminary) writes: "The idea of the perpetual virginity of Mary arose from a false notion of the superior sanctity of unmarried life, a teaching which has no authority in the Word of God" (*Luth. Commentary*, ad James, p. 84), no one should on that account attack him as a heretic.

Finally, we might here refer to the doctrine of the immaculate conception of Mary, if that were necessary. This doctrine, however, is so palpably an invention of the Man of Sin, is so utterly without Scriptural foundation, indeed, so obviously at variance with the Word of God, which teaches the universal corruption of human nature, so conflicting with what the Bible otherwise teaches concerning Mary, and finally so far from explaining the Virgin Birth (really multiplying the miracle by two and thus only increasing our difficulties), that any one who still adheres to the Scriptures cannot but feel disinclined to waste time upon an attempt at a lengthy refutation.

(To be continued.)
