Dissertations On Subjects Connected with the Incarnation

Gore Charles
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Author: Gore Charles
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DISSENTATIONS

ON

SUBJECTS CONNECTED WITH

THE INCARNATION

BY

CHARLES GORE, M.A.

CANON OF WESTMINSTER
OF THE COMMUNITY OF THE RESURRECTION, RADLEY

Neque sit mihi inutilis pugna verborum
sed incunctantis fidei constans professio

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IN VERITATE EXPLORANDA CURIOSISSIMO
PREFACE

These dissertations are the fulfilment, after a much longer delay than I anticipated, of an intention expressed in the preface to the Bampton Lectures of 1891 to prepare a supplementary volume addressed to a more strictly theological public. Circumstances however have now led to the selection of a set of subjects not altogether identical with those then indicated. The amount of discussion which arose in connexion with my lectures as to our Lord's human consciousness has rendered necessary a prolonged treatment of the theology of the New Testament and of the Church on this subject. A dissertation on the rise of the transubstantiation dogma followed naturally from this special treatment of the theology of the Incarnation; and recent controversy has rendered desirable a more elaborate discussion
of our Lord's birth of a virgin. Under these circumstances 'the early Greek theology of the supernatural in its relation to nature' and 'the relation of Ebionism and Gnosticism to the theology of the New Testament and of the second century' only come in for incidental treatment.

In the first dissertation—on our Lord’s birth of a virgin—I have tried to give the first place to the presentation of the positive case for this article of the Christian creed, and only the second to resolving objections or considering possible rival theories. Hence I have said nothing about such a theory as that of Holtzmann, of different documents used by St. Luke in his first two chapters and of interpolations and alterations made in the use of them—a theory which seems to rest on purely a priori grounds. It seems to me that, to justify a distinction of various 'sources' used by a compiler, we need either very distinct evidences of style (such as the difference between St. Luke's own style, i. 1–4, and that of his 'source' beginning at i. 5), or very violent inconsistencies, or phenomena apparent over a large area, as in the case of the Hexateuch. If the area is small, the difference of style not plain, and the narrative fairly self-consistent, the proposed distinction becomes at once arbitrary. Critics of

1 Handcommentar zum N. T. (Freiburg, 1889) bd. i. pp. 13, 46.