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PAULUS TANQUAM ABORTIVUS
(I Cor. 15:8)

by

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THE term ἔκτρωμα in I Cor. 15:8 is difficult to interpret. This is its sole appearance in the NT, and the context gives no clear indication of its significance. In I Cor. 15:1 ff. Paul discusses the resurrection—that of Christ, which has already taken place, and that of the Corinthians, which is still in the future. After having reminded his readers in vv. 3-4 of the tradition of Christ's death and resurrection which he passed on to them during his mission in Corinth, Paul goes on to enumerate witnesses to the resurrection, beginning with Peter and the Twelve. As the last of these witnesses he mentions himself: ἔσχατον δὲ πάντων ὡσπερεὶ τῷ ἐκτρώματι ὤφθη κἀμοί.

While the earlier interpretation of ἔ. stressed the suddenness and violence of Paul's call, which placed him apart from the other apostles, two admirable papers have recently appeared, by Anton Fridrichsen and Gudmund Björck, both until lately eminent members of the University of Uppsala. The word ἔ. is interpreted by both as a term of abuse applied to Paul by his opponents. Thus Fridrichsen, in 'Paulus abortivus. Zu I Kor 15,8' (*Symbolae philol. O. A. Danielsson* (1932), 78-85), holds that the idea to be conveyed is that of the demoniac and non-human qualities of an untimely birth, a 'monster'. In quoting the term used by his opponents Paul indicates that it is used metaphorically by adding ὡσπερεί.

Fridrichsen stresses that the image ἔ. contains a denunciation of the apostle in his pre-Christian days as a persecutor, but is not descriptive of him as a Christian or an apostle (p. 79). In addition, he maintains that Paul's opponents have described him as an ἔ. τῆς ἀναγεννήσεως. In his case, the power of baptism has not been able to form him in Christ's image; instead, a diabolical shape came into being. This more problematical part of Fridrichsen's article

may possibly be one of the reasons why Schneider (TWNT ii, 463–65) reverts to the earlier interpretation, so rightly opposed by Fridrichsen: 'Paul describes himself as one who "spiritually speaking" was born out of due time because he was not already a disciple while Jesus was alive.' 'His vision of Christ and his call come out of due time and are extraordinary, being moreover characterized by violence' (p. 464, 5–7, 10–11). Schneider has thus overlooked the point in which Fridrichsen is conclusively right, 'that ἔ. describes the result, not the action' (p. 82).

In 'Nochmals Paulus abortivus' (*Coniect. neotest.* 3 (1938), 3–8) Björck begins by saying that in modern Greek the word also signifies 'monster', and traces the semantic history of the word back to older Greek; his contribution marks a real advance, in that he also takes into consideration the synonym ἄμβλωμα, which is accounted correct Attic. ἔ. signifies something abnormal, whose unnatural deformity is congenital, and the word is therefore an excellent epithet for Saul, the persecutor of the Christians. After examining the other uses of the word Björck concludes (p. 7):

> It is my opinion that not only is the significance 'freak', 'monster' that which fits the Pauline text best, but that it is also the only one that would occur to a Greek of his period when ἔ. was used to describe a living person, and without any metaphysical significance. There is no reason why we should not assume that the significance which we can trace back to the late classical period also prevailed in the time of Paul, more especially since it must have been far more frequent in daily speech than in what has survived.

Björck's article also marks an advance in that he rejects the usual interpretation of the article with ἔ. (e.g. Bengel: 'Articulus vim habet, etc.'). The article is essential for the significance.

ὡσπερεὶ ἐκτρώματι ὤφθη κἀμοί must mean '. . . he revealed himself to me also as (he would have revealed himself) to a ἔ.' In τῷ ἔ. we have the well-known figure ἡμεῖς οἱ Ἕλληνες (Kühner-Gerth i, 602; Gildersleeve § 606) (p. 8).

The two articles by Fridrichsen and Björck have advanced research on this subject, but it can in my opinion be carried still further. Fridrichsen has shown us that ἔ. describes the result and not the action, and Björck that ἄμβλωμα should be included in ἔ.'s semantic history, and that the article with ἔ. has no demonstrative force. It is also important, as assumed by Fridrichsen, that it is

Paul who is speaking, and who uses ἔ. with a significance chosen
by him. But it is questionable whether any opponents ever used
the word ἔ. of Paul. Apart from the hitherto general interpreta-
tion of the article with ἔ., there is no reasonable basis for assuming
that Paul's remark indicates the polemical use of a terrible term of
abuse against the apostle.

I

ἔ. and ἄμβλωμα (with the basic verbs and their derivatives) before
the period of the NT generally signified a premature (that is, pre-
maturely born) and stillborn child. It has been maintained that ἔ.
did not mean a prematurely born child, but a stillborn child, but
this distinction is incorrect. The word signifies a child that is born
prematurely, and is therefore normally not alive, but, as will
appear, ἔ. can also signify a premature, living child (see p. 185 f.).

Björck rightly points out that ἔ. occupies no definite place in
medical terminology, and issues a warning against the precon-
ceived opinion that in the general linguistic instinct ἔ. was always
closely connected with the use of ἐκτιτρώσκειν, 'miscarry', and
ἔκτρωσις, 'miscarriage'. According to Littré's index to Hippo-
crates, Kühn's to Galen, and Hude's to Aretaeus ἔ. (like ἄμβλωμα)
is not used by these medical writers. ἐκτιτρώσκειν on the other
hand is frequently used, and other words of the same stem occa-
sionally.[1] One of the reasons for this is however that these doctors
see the matter from the mother's point of view, and not from the
child's, still less from that of the unborn child.

Björck here makes a wrong deduction from his correct observa-
tions. It is clear from those ancient dictionaries that discuss non-
Attic words that ἔ. means a stillborn child.[2] This evidence is con-
firmed by the texts treated below, LXX, Philo and the heretical
sects, whose doctrines are recorded by the Fathers. These texts are
of great importance because taken as a whole they broadly cover
Paul's environment. Lastly, it will be shown that to the exegesis
of the ancient church ἔ. signified a premature, stillborn child (see
pp. 189–190).

Now, as stated by Björck, ἔ. = 'monster' may have been used
more frequently in ordinary speech than in what has survived. But
the curious thing is that the evidence from a later period which
forms the basis for the theory of the existence of this significance

does not derive from popular circles but from the learned, and those trained in rhetoric. It is only in the more recent periods that 'monster' occurs as a common significance of *ἔ.*, corresponding to a similar usage in several other European languages. If these learned texts can be taken to indicate that *ἔ.* signified 'monster' at that time, then our earlier and not always literary sources can with equal justice be used to demonstrate that this significance did not yet exist in Paul's days.

II

The basic significance of *ἔ.*, a prematurely born dead foetus, is used in LXX and the later Greek translations of the OT as an image of the deepest human wretchedness. In LXX it is used in Num. 12:12, Job 3:16, and Eccles. 6:3. In addition it occurs in Ps. 57(58):9 in Aquila (A), Theodotion (T) and Symmachus (S), and the last-mentioned also uses the word in his translation of Isa. 14:19.[3] In Num. 12:12 Aaron prays that Miriam may be cured of her leprosy, μὴ γένηται ὡσεὶ ἴσον θανάτῳ, ὡσεὶ ἔκτρωμα (a double translation of *kameth*) ἐκπορευόμενον ἐκ μήτρας μητρὸς καὶ κατεσθίει τὸ ἥμισυ τῶν σαρκῶν αὐτῆς. According to MT Miriam is here compared to a stillborn child whose flesh at birth is half consumed. In Job 3:16 *ἔ.* occurs in the passage where Job curses the day he was born (3:1-10) and laments that he was not born dead, or died at birth (3:11-19). Here he expresses the wish that he now rested in peace in his grave, thus in v. 16: ἢ ὥσπερ ἔκτρωμα ἐκπορευόμενον ἐκ μήτρας μητρὸς ἢ ὥσπερ νήπιοι οἳ οὐκ εἶδον φῶς. In accordance with *parallelismus membrorum* the two members of the verse can mean the same, or there can be the same difference as in v. 11 between the stillborn child, who was already dead before birth, and the child that dies at birth. MT reads *kᵉnephel ṭāmûn*, 'like a hidden (or buried) untimely birth'. In Eccles. 6:3-5 the man whose soul is not filled with good is compared to an untimely birth. The latter is better than he. It is *hanāphel* that in v. 3 is translated as τὸ *ἔ.*

It is not in LXX but in A, T and S that *ἔ.* is used in Ps. 57(58):9.[4] In vv. 7-10 the psalmist prays that God will destroy the wicked. V. 9 runs: 'Let them become as the snail, dissolved in slime, as an untimely birth (*nephel ʾēseth*) that never saw the sun.' In LXX the second hemistich runs: ἐπέπεσε πῦρ, the plural form *ḥāzû*, which

has given great difficulty to modern interpreters, being under-
stood as applying to the godless and violent men, whose destruc-
tion is related in the aorist. Here A reads: ἔκτρωμα γυναικός, S:
ἢ ἔ. γ., T: ὡς ἔ. γ. Lastly, S makes use of ἔ. in translating Isa. 14:19.
In the song of mockery on the fall of the king of Babylon (14:4–
23) it is stated in v. 19: 'but thou art flung aside without a grave,
like a miserable foetus'. Here S translates kᵉnēṣer in MT as ὡς ἔ.
(Field II, 457), presumably because it has been read as kᵉnēphel.
In the Targum of Isaiah (ed. Stenning, 1949, 49–51) the same text
or textual interpretation as in S must have formed the basis, since
the translation is keyaḥaṭ. The Isaiah text here has the following
interesting rendering (Stenning's translation): 'But thou art cast
forth out of thy grave like the untimely birth of a woman that is
hidden away.' The last part is reminiscent of MT's version of Job
3:16, and may be connected with this.[5]

It is worth noticing that of the OT passages cited Num. 12:12,
Job 3:16, Ps. 57(58):9 A, T, S, and Isa. 14:19 S have respectively
an introductory ὡσεί, ὥσπερ, ὡς or ὡς before ἔ. In all these
passages the OT conception of life is revealed in the fact that a man
in the depths of misery is compared to a stillborn child, indeed, in
Eccles. 6:3–5 he is less than this. 'Like a stillborn child' is thus the
strongest expression for human wretchedness.

III

In Plato's Theaetetus Socrates reveals to the young Theaetetus
that he, like his mother, acts as midwife. He can therefore imme-
diately establish that Theaetetus is with child, and is suffering from
birth-pangs (148E, 151B). Socrates' midwifery differs from his
mother's in that he delivers men and not women; he deals with
souls in labour, not bodies (150B). If the child should prove to be
a phantasm and not a reality it is necessary to expel it (151C). On
the other hand, many young people have left Socrates and have
then miscarried (ἐξήμβλωτο) of that with which they were preg-
nant because of bad company (150E). There is reason to believe
that in essentials this passage derives from Socrates, since the
imagery is parodied by Aristophanes (Nubes 137, 139); it may
also have been created by him, and need not imply an already
existing metaphorical usage of the themes of birth and abortion.[6]

After Plato there is scattered evidence of the metaphorical use

of the verb ἀμβλίσκειν, etc., which is reminiscent of the extended
use of the English word 'miscarry': (*a*) In Theophrastus, *Hist.
plant.* iv, 14, 6 'the eyes (buds) of the vine' fail because of frost.[7]
(*b*) In *De lib. educ.* iv (p. 2E) Plutarch writes that bodily strength
is enfeebled by neglect (ἐξαμβλοῦται, cf. τελεσφόρα in the text).
(*c*) Of thought—as early as Aristophanes, *Nubes* 137, 139; Longi-
nus, Περὶ ὕψους, 14, 3, and of the intellect Philo, *De somniis* i,
§ 107 (iii, 228, 1) (ἀμβλόω = make barren). In Aelian three times
of hope, e.g. αὕτη ἡ ἐλπὶς ἐξήμβλωτο αὐτῇ, fr. 211, 12; and fr. 209,
11, in intrans. active with ἡ σπουδή as subject (W. Schmid, *D.
Atticismus*, iii, 1893, 39); Themistius, *Or.* II, 33B (ed. Dindorf,
1830, 39, 27) of words (and thought).

All these examples are concerned with verbs, and it is question-
able whether the corresponding substantive ἄμβλωμα (and ἔ.) can
be similarly used of something that is a failure. The earliest evi-
dence—not of the term, but of the subject-matter—is a rabbinical
statement, *b. Soṭah* 22a Bar (SB i, 496 f.; Epstein, 1936, 111 f.):
'A maiden who gives herself up to prayer, a gadabout widow, and
a minor whose months are not completed—behold these bring
destruction upon the world', an assertion that is rejected. The last
example is further explained as 'a disciple who rebels against the
authority of his teachers' or 'who has not attained the qualification
to decide questions of law and yet decides them', etc. This imagery
may have originated independently of the Greek development
already discussed, but it may also be dependent on this. In Pal-
ladius' biography of Chrysostom (ed. Coleman-Norton, 1928, 91,
19) certain bishops are described as τὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐκτρώματα,
ἃ μήτε χοίρων ἀλόγων ἢ κυνῶν ἄξια. The text is not clear, but the
translation 'failures as human beings, who cannot compare with
either foolish swine or dogs' seems to cover the sense.[8] The use of
birth as an image has thus many possibilities, and it is not as in
Björck simply a question of choosing between the senses 'stillborn
child' and 'monster'.

IV

Towards the time of Jesus another birth image becomes very
important. Man is to all appearances alive, but is in reality dead.
If he is to attain life he must be born anew, perhaps first die in
order to live.[9] This religious imagery, which is still in use, also

included at that time the idea that this second birth is not one process, but consists of several stages, perhaps several births (thus Philo, *De conf. ling.* § 145 ff (ii, 256 f.)). This imagery is put to a singular use in the so-called 'gnostic' systems in the description of the æons which together form the Pleroma. The last of these, Sophia, has without its σύζυγος[10] produced an οὐσίαν ἄμορφον καὶ ἀκατασκεύαστον.[11] This event threatens the heavens with chaos, and the powers above intervene to restore order. What is formless is given form.[12] It is not possible to discuss here the variations assumed by this doctrine in the different heretical systems, and the difficulties of interpreting the texts of the Fathers of the Church. The common feature of the imagery seems to be that ἔ. does not signify a stillborn child, but a premature child, whose life can still be saved, but which only outside intervention can make fully developed and capable of surviving. Since the events in the Pleroma reflect the salvation of mankind this informs us of the possibilities offered to the adherents of these syncretistic sects. There is here a decisive difference between the Platonic realization of the possibilities latent in man, and the expectation in these sects of help from above. Thus ἔ. here is not something that is for ever a failure, but something which for the time being is not fully developed or perfect. What is inferior or incapable can be stressed because it is certain that the powers above are in the course of fulfilling the possibilities of salvation.

Somewhat later than the NT we find in Eus. HE V, 1, 11 ἐκτιτρώσκειν used of the weak Christians who were not steadfast under persecution, ἐξέτρωσαν ὡς δέκα τὸν ἀριθμόν. Later, however, these apostates confess (V, 1, 45–6): καὶ ἐνεγίνετο πολλὴ χαρὰ τῇ παρθένῳ μητρί, οὓς ὡς νεκροὺς ἐξέτρωσε, τούτους ζῶντας ἀπολαμβανούσῃ. δι᾽ ἐκείνων γὰρ οἱ πλείους τῶν ἠρνημένων ἀνεμετροῦντο καὶ ἀνεκυΐσκοντο καὶ ἀνεζωπυροῦντο καὶ ἐμάνθανον ὁμολογεῖν καὶ ζῶντες ἤδη καὶ τετονωμένοι προσῄεσαν τῷ βήματι κτλ. Here it may also be mentioned that according to V, 1, 49 Alexander stood by the judge's seat and urged those who were being examined to confess, φανερὸς ἦν τοῖς περιεστηκόσιν τὸ βῆμα ὥσπερ ὠδίνων. Martyrdom is here visualized as a birth, and those whose steadfastness fails are stillborn (V, 1, 11 and 45–6 (the opposite ζῶντας, ζῶντες)), but it appears that they can be revived and experience the true birth. The image, like the other metaphorical usages of ἔ., is not executed consistently, but it is important that after the time of Paul

ἔ. was used of something as yet embryonic, which by God's help could be transformed into life and perfection.

V

In the scientific view of today there is no connection between a stillborn child and a monster. The former is a child born dead, before its time, or born at the normal time but stillborn owing to special circumstances, while the deformed or at least defective, living child may very well be born at the normal time and at a normal birth. Nevertheless, these two are coupled together, and 'abortion' is applied to a deformed person or in a wider sense to a person of somewhat singular appearance, sometimes simply to a small person. We are familiar with this phenomenon from European culture as a whole; thus Shakespeare, in *Richard III*, Act I, Scene II:

> If ever he have child, abortive be it,
> Prodigious, and untimely brought to light,
> Whose ugly and unnatural aspect
> May fright the hopeful mother at the view.

In his investigation Björck (p. 3 f.) goes back from modern Greek to the period after Paul. It is more natural to attempt to go the opposite way and begin with Aristotle, who in *De gen. anim.* pp. 769b–773a discusses the causes of congenital defects and monsters, and of the birth of several children or young ones, and lays down that the cause is the same as that of abortion (769b; 770b; 771a; 772b–773a). The stillborn child and the monster are thus coupled together as early as the time of Aristotle. That there is a more popular and less logical tendency to confuse the two has already been shown. In the material we possess it is however seldom that ἔ. is used of a monster. But it must be admitted that ἔ. may have been used with this significance. The further sense of a failure, something that has come to nothing, which was discussed above, makes such a change of meaning possible and natural.

But it is this last, vaguer sense which in itself must make us sceptical of Fridrichsen's and Björck's assumption that ἔ. should without further explanation signify 'monster'. Björck's material, in addition to Palladius, whom we interpret otherwise (see p. 185), consists of Tzetzes, a Proclus scholium and *Corpus Hippiatr. Graec.*

(ed. Oder-Hoppe, 1924, p. 374, 8). In the last-mentioned passage
Björck prefers the reading: ἀμβλώματα τῆς φύσεως καὶ τέρατα to
the παραχαράγματα κτλ. of the text, and points out that Tzetzes has
the same expression. Tzetzes (*Histor. var. Chiliades* ed. Kiessling,
1826, VII, 505 f.) turns on his opponents in anger and calls them
ἔ-τα, because they are incompetent in their work. In a last burst
of anger he calls them both ἀμβλώματα φύσεως and νόθον τέρας.
In V, 515 ἔ. occurs again according to Liddell-Scott 'as a term of
contempt', but here Björck's interpretation, which assumes it to
refer to court jesters, etc.,[13] is probably better. Finally Björck
cites a Proclus scholium to Hesiod, *Erga* v. 235, which I have re-
covered from *Poetæ minores græci*, ed. Gaisford, iii, 1820, 143, 12:
τὰ πολλὰ τῶν ἀμβλωθριδίων καὶ τῶν τεράτων ἐξ ἀκρασίας γίνονται
καὶ πλησμονῆς.[14]

It seems to me that this material cannot form a proof that ἔ. has
the same significance as τέρας. But it confirms what was *a priori*
assumed above, that ἔ. can occasionally, as in Tzetzes V, 515, sig-
nify a person not normally developed. I attach no great importance
to *Corp. Hipp.* and the Proclus scholium. It can thus be assumed
that to Paul's contemporaries the word ἔ. might as a faint possi-
bility bring to mind a deformed person, but not something de-
moniac. Another explanation must be sought for the fact that a
persecutor of the Christians is described as an ἔ.

VI

After this investigation of the significance of the term ἔ., we
may turn to 1 Cor. 15:8. What makes this verse so difficult to
understand is the abrupt introduction of this word, which, as we
have seen, is used in several senses. In the list of witnesses to the
resurrection Paul mentions himself as the last of all, which may
mean of all the witnesses to the resurrection, or of all the apostles
(who for Paul are not identical with the Twelve[15]). The next
question is whether the next verse, with its 'I am the least of the
apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I perse-
cuted the church of God,' is an explanation of the significance of
ἔ., or of the significance of ἔσχατον δὲ πάντων, which could be
simply an indication of time, but could also imply an order of
precedence.

The difficulty of choosing between these possibilities is not re-

moved by reference to the earliest exegetes. As early as the NT the unknown authors of Eph. and 1 Tim. have used 1 Cor. 15:8, and thus given the first interpretation. But both Eph. 3:8: ἐμοὶ τῷ ἐλαχιστοτέρῳ πάντων ἁγίων ἐδόθη ἡ χάρις αὕτη, τοῖς ἔθνεσιν εὐαγγελίσασθαι, κτλ., and 1 Tim. 1:15: . . . ἁμαρτωλοὺς . . . ὧν πρῶτός εἰμι ἐγώ · ἀλλὰ διὰ τοῦτο ἠλεήθην, ἵνα ἐν ἐμοὶ πρώτῳ ἐνδείξηται Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς τὴν ἅπασαν μακροθυμίαν, κτλ., show that ἔ. is not considered, but only the contrast between imperfection and mercy.

Ignatius also uses 1 Cor. 15:8, and implies his understanding of Paul's words. In *Rom.* 9:2 he says: οὐδὲ γὰρ ἄξιός εἰμι, ὢν ἔσχατος αὐτῶν (of the Christians of the church in Syria) καὶ ἔκτρωμα, ἀλλὰ ἠλέημαί τις εἶναι, ἐὰν θεοῦ ἐπιτύχω. It is important that Ignatius' condition as ἔ. need not be final. He expresses what must happen to him if he is to find grace in the words: ὁ δὲ τοκετός μοι ἐπίκειται (*Rom.* 6:1). Death for Christ's sake can make him a 'disciple', let him ἐπιτύγχανειν θεοῦ or something similar.[16]

In the patristic commentaries ἔ. receives no comment by J. Damascenus (PG 95, 689D). He merely writes a sentence which is characteristic of several of the Fathers: τοῦτο ταπεινοφροσύνης τὸ ῥῆμά ἐστιν (cf. Chrysostom, PG 61, 327-9; Oecumenius, PG 118, 864-5; Theophylactus, PG 124, 756 f.; Ambrosiaster on v. 9 only: PL 17, 276). Chrysostom tends to the significance 'failure' when he writes τοῦ μὲν ἔκτρωμα εἶναι τὸ ὕστερον αὐτὸν ἰδεῖν τὸν Ἰησοῦν. Cyril of Alexandria (PG 74, 896) renders v. 8: ὤφθη δὲ κἀμοί, ὡσπερεὶ τῷ ἐκτρώματι τῶν ἀποστόλων. Theodoret (PG 82, 352) says that Paul wishes to describe himself as the lowest of all men, and therefore passes over all those born in the normal way and compares himself to a stillborn child, which cannot be accounted a human being. Oecumenius (864 f.) repudiates the idea that Paul should have been less than the others because his revelation was later. In that case James would also be less than the 500 brethren (thus already Chrysostom). It is merely excessive humility that makes Paul call himself an ἔ.: ἔκτρωμα, ἤγουν ἐξάμβλωμα καὶ ἀμβλωθρίδιον, ἤγουν τὸ ἀτελὲς ἔμβρυον, τὸ ἄμορφον. Theophylactus defines: Ἔκτρωμα δὲ λέγεται κυρίως, τὸ ἀτελεσφόρητον ἔμβρυον, ὃ ἀποβάλλεται ἡ γυνή. Since Paul considered himself unworthy to be an apostle he used this expression ὡς ἀτελεσφόρητον κατά γε τὸ τοῦ ἀποστόλου ἀξίωμα. Others have interpreted ἔ. as τὸ ὕστερον γέννημα, because he was the last of the apostles.[17]

Among the Latin annotators Ambrosiaster maintains (PL 17,

276): Abortivum se dicit, quia extra tempus natus in Christo, apostolatum accepit jam Christo in coelos recepto cum carne. Pelagius (ed. Souter ii, 214) interprets Tanquam abortiuo: De cuius uita desperatum est. Primasius (PL 68, 543-4) holds: Abortivus dicitur, qui extra tempus nascitur, seu qui mortua matre vivus educitur.[18] Abortivum se nominat, qui extra tempus dominicæ prædicationis credidit.

The general interpretation in the patristic exegesis is that Paul is speaking of himself with humility. No importance is attached to the use of the article, and if ἔ. is considered at all it is generally in order to point out that Paul became an apostle at a different time from the other apostles (in the Fathers used of the Twelve), when Christ was no longer among men.

VII

Of the significances of ἔ. discussed above, only two need be seriously considered. They are the second and the fourth. If we assume ἔ. to refer to the statement in v. 9, that Paul has persecuted the church of God, ὡσπερεὶ τῷ ἐκτρώματι must be taken as expressing that Paul is the most wretched of men, only to be compared to a stillborn child. If so, we have here an OT reminiscence, or rather a 'miniature quotation', comprising in two words an OT passage which in LXX appears in its clearest form in Job 3:16 and Eccles. 6:3. The idea is not alien to the NT. We have in Matt. 26:24[19] and in Mark 14:21 a saying of Jesus, pronouncing woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed. It were better (for him) if that man had not been born. In using the word ἔ. Paul ranks himself with Judas Iscariot.[20]

The other possible interpretation is to be found in the fourth significance of ἔ., as something embryonic, that needs to be formed. This interpretation assumes that ἔσχατον δὲ πάντων anticipates ὁ ἐλάχιστος τῶν ἀποστόλων, while ἔ. describes something else in Paul, as he was when Christ met him at Damascus. This interpretation was first put forward by Severian of Gabala (Cramer, *Catenae* V, 286 f.; in Staab, *Pauluskommentare*, 1933, 272 in two versions, of which the shorter version is quoted here): Τὰ ἐκβαλλόμενα βρέφη πρὶν ἢ διαμορφωθῆναι ἐν τῇ γαστρὶ ἐκτρώματα καλεῖται. ἐπεὶ οὖν ἐν μὲν τῷ νόμῳ προεμορφοῦντο αἱ ψυχαὶ πρὸς εὐσέβειαν, ἀναγεννῶντο δὲ ἐξ ὕδατος καὶ πνεύματος, ὁ δὲ Παῦλος ὡς οὐ μορφωθεὶς[21] ἐν τῷ

νόμῳ ἐδίωκε τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, διὰ τοῦτο εἰκότως ἔκτρωμα ὀνομάζει.
There is however a difference, in that Severian takes Paul to be
one not formed under the Law, and therefore an ἔ.; but it is more
plausible from Paul's view of his relationship to Judaism to regard
him as formed under the Law, but nevertheless an ἔ. because he
had not yet been formed by Christ.

The conception of rebirth is to be found in John 3:4-5 in the
words of Nicodemus, who rejects it crudely: How can a man be
born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's
womb, and be born? Jesus answers that except a man be born of
water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.
Paul has a saying that assumes not only a new birth, but a con-
tinued process until the desired result is obtained. It occurs in
Gal. 4:19: 'My little children, of whom I travail in birth again
until Christ be formed in you.'

Since ἔ. in 1 Cor. 15:8 describes Paul before Damascus, it must,
as Severian holds, refer to his Jewish past. In the account of his
call in Gal. 1:13 ff. two features of his Jewish past are mentioned:
his persecution of the church of God, and his progress in Judaism,
and we know from the Acts that these two features are character-
istic of the tradition of Paul's call.[22] His Jewish past is commonly
conceived as a time of suffering under the yoke of the Law, until
the meeting with Christ. But Phil. 3:7 shows that it was on the
contrary Christ who led him to regard the Law and all other
Jewish advantages as losses. Gal. 1:15 shows that God has separated
Paul from his mother's womb, and called him by his grace. Al-
though the latter expression is used of the Christians in v. 6 (χάρις
Χριστοῦ however) it is most natural, in spite of the commentaries'
differing interpretations (see however G. S. Duncan in *The
Moffatt NT Comm.*), to assume that the call in v. 15 took place
before the call at Damascus, and did not anticipate the latter. At
all events, Paul's Jewish past was also under God's election and
vocation, and it is from the standpoint of the later grace that this
first stage can be described as an ἔκτρωμα.

VIII

This article is only an outline. Much further material could be
cited, and everything said be stated in greater detail. Nevertheless,
I hope some light has been cast on a single word in a single verse

of the NT. Material has been collected from scattered sources, both from Israel and from Greece. The words investigated have been used both as terms of abuse and to express the fundamental nature of life in the terms of the mystery of birth. The scantiness of the material has made it necessary not to confine investigation to the use of the word itself, but to try to discover the ideas connected with birth and miscarriage.

To conclude with two solutions may seem to be a weakness, but it agrees with the vagueness of the word and the text, and yet has the advantage of excluding other interpretations as useless. It is often our task to make it clear how little we know, and merely to indicate the field within which the correct solution must be sought.

NOTES

[1] On ἔ. Galen 17, 1, p. 324, 10 Kühn, see Björck, p. 6, note 1. Altogether, neither Aristotle nor the medical writers have any fixed usage. In addition to ἐκτιτρώσκειν and ἀμβλίσκειν and their derivatives, φθείρω and its derivatives are for instance also used.

[2] Phrynichus, ed. Rutherford, 1881, p. 288 f., warns against using ἐκτρῶσαι and ἔ.; ἐξαμβλῶσαι, ἄμβλωμα and ἀμβλίσκει are to be used instead. ἐξάμβλωμα and ἀμβλωθρίδιον are to be preferred to ἔ. We meet the same warning in Thomas Magister, *Eclog. Voc. Attic.*, ed. Ritschl, 1832, p. 110, 6–7. Hesychius explains ἄμβλωμα by ἔ. (ed. Latte, i, 1953), and ἔ. by παιδίον νεκρὸν ἄωρον [ἐκβολὴ γυναικός] (ed. M. Schmidt, 1858–60). In Suidas (ed. Adler, i, 1928, p. 136, 22) ἀμβλωθρίδια is explained by ἐκτρώματα, τὰ ἐξημβλωμένα ἔμβρυα (thus also Photius, ed. Reitzenstein, 1907, p. 89, 11). Lastly, Zonar (ed. Tittmann, 1808) explains ἔ. on p. 660 by ἀποβολὴ γυναικός, and on p. 661 he annotates ἔ.: ἢ ὡς ἐξάμβλωμα. καὶ ἀμβλωθρίδιον. He points out that Paul describes himself as an ἔ. ὡς ἀτελῆ ἐν ἀποστόλοις καὶ μὴ μορφούμενον τῇ κατὰ Χριστὸν πίστει ἀπ' ἀρχῆς.

[3] S uses ἐξέτρωσε (Job 21:10).

[4] Field, *Origenis Hexaplorum*, etc., ii, 185.

[5] For the rabbis' interpretation of these passages see: for Num. 12:12 SB i, 818, cf. 524, and iv, 751 (note n); for Job 3:16 SB i, 854–5; ii, 80; cf. iii, 71; for Eccles. 6:3–5 I have found nothing; for Isa. 14:19 SB ii, 417–18; cf. i, 95. In ii, 148 Billerbeck sees Paul in Jesus' disciple Neçer, on a basis of 1 Cor. 15:8.

[6] The metaphor in *Theaetetus* is used by Maximus Tyrius X, 4 (Hobein 115–117), and by Philo, *Leg. alleg.* I, § 76 (Cohn-Wendland, i, 81, 7–8), who compare the foolish man to a woman who is always in labour, but never gives birth to a child. As he cannot bring forth a child, the result is merely ἀμβλωθρίδια and ἐκτρώματα, and Philo refers to Num. 12:12, and thus connects a Platonic idea with an OT passage with a different content. Cf. *De congressu* § 127–30 (iii, 98, 6 f.) and § 138 (iii, 100, 21 f.).

[7] Zonar i, 158 writes ἀμβλυώττειν, similarly *Etymol. genuin.* (Reitzenstein, *Gesch. d. griech. Etymologika*, 1897, 20). Cf. Passow-Crönert, sub ἀμβλώσσειν.

[8] Cf. p. 188 on Tzetzes vii, 507.

[9] For this the NT uses e.g. νεκρός, γεννάω, ἀναγεννάω.

[10] This conception is illustrated by another text, Philo, *Quod det.*, § 147 (i, 291, 22 f.), where it is stressed that God, as the Father (cf. *De conf. ling.*, § 145 ff. (ii, 256 f.)) of all, makes every birth possible, while διανοία is like a χήρα θεοῦ, which either did not receive the divine seed into itself, or else, if it did so, deliberately miscarried (ἐξήμβλωσε). Cf. *De migr. Abr.*, § 33 (ii, 274, 31 f.).

[11] Irenaeus (ed. Stieren) I, 2, 3–4 (p. 22, 1–26, 7); I, 4, 1 (44, 7–48, 5); I, 4, 5 (52, 11–56, 9); cf. II, 20, 3 (351, 6–29); Hippolytus, *Elenchos* VI, 30, 8–31, 8 (C Ber p. 158, 9–159, 25); 36, 5 (166, 7–8); cf. VII, 26, 7 (205, 8)

[12] For the last see Iren. I, 2, 3–4 (20, 15–26, 7); I, 4, 1 (44, 12–46, 3; 46, 10–14); 4, 5 (54, 6–8); 5, 1 (56, 12–58, 9); 7, 2 (82, 4–8); 8, 2 (90, 16–92, 2); 8, 4 (96, 17–20); 14, 1 (164, 1–2); II, 19, 4 (345, 25–6); cf. I, 8, 5 (100, 12–14; 102, 10–11); Hippolytus VI, 31, 2 (158, 24–6); 31, 7–8 (159, 16–25); 32, 2–3 (160, 9–15); 36, 3 (166, 7–8); 42, 8 (175, 7–10); 48, 1 (180, 1–5); VII, 9, 4 (228, 12–14); cf. VI, 46, 2 (178, 7–10).

[13] From the Latin Horace, *Sermones* i, iii, 46–7, may be mentioned. Here a father describes his son as 'pullus' when he is as ludicrously small as was abortiuus Sisyphus, who was presumably Marcus Antonius' dwarf. Fridrichsen (80, note 2) quotes Sueton. *Claud.* 3, 2: Mater Antonia portentum eum hominis dictitabat, nec absolutum a natura (= ἀτελής or ἀτελεσφόρητος), sed tantum incohatum. One might also quote Seneca, *Apocolocyntosis*, also on Claudius, 'monstrum' (V, 3) and 'nemo enim unquam illum natum putavit' (III, 2).

[14] In the 'gnostic' texts one could point out, as Fridrichsen does (80, note 1), that the ἄμορφον is described as an imperfect development. On the other hand it can hardly be deformity, as Fridrichsen maintains, since the process that begins does in fact complete the imperfect process of formation, so that there is no permanent defect.

[15] See 'Paul, the Apostles, and the Twelve', *Studia Theol.* 3 (1950), 96–110.

[16] Cf. Philad. 5, 1: ὡς ἔτι ὢν ἀναπάρτιστος · ἀλλ' ἡ προσευχὴ ὑμῶν εἰς θεόν με ἀπαρτίσει κτλ.

[17] See in addition Zonar, note 2, and Severian, p. 190 f.

[18] The last explanation is to be found only here.

[19] Cf. Matt. 18:6–7, and cf. SB i, 989–990; 775; 38, 11 f.; 779–80.

[20] In Num. 12:12 it is the enemy of Moses, the servant of God, who is described as ἔ., in Isa. 14:19 the enemy of God's people, and in Ps. 57 (58):9 the godless and violent men. These words are easily transferred to a persecutor of God's church.—Iren. II, 20, 1–5 (350, 4–353, 4), cf. I, 3, 3 (36, 5 f.), shows that in the second century heretics identified Judas with Enthymesis (ἔ.).

[21] Cf. Zonar, p. 661: μὴ μορφούμενον.

[22] See *Paulus und die Heilsgeschichte*, ch. I.

Appendix.—In BGDW, 5th ed., 1958, col. 489, Walter Bauer gives a new example of ἔκτρωμα, viz.: 'P. Tebt. 800, 30 [142 v], here in the sense of abortion.' This papyrus (The Tebtunis Papyri, Vol. III, Part I, 1933, p. 253–4) is a complaint of assault, by a Jew whose wife in consequence of the blows is suffering severely and her unborn child in danger of dying and being miscarried. Cf. 'the Complaint of Aurelia', Edgar J. Goodspeed, *Greek Papyri from the Cairo Museum*, etc., Chicago, 1902, p. 21, ll. 15–16 (ἐξέτρωσεν τὸ βρέφος).

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