

THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY.

VOL. IX.

MAY, 1929.

No. 5.

The Marks of Justification.

From Dr. E. Preuss's *Die Rechtfertigung*, Part VIII.

THE REV. JUL. A. FRIEDRICH, Iowa City, Iowa.

So we have full, perpetual, and sure forgiveness. But that is something within us, and hence no one can know for certain whether his neighbor has it or not. Therefore in order that we may not err in our judgment when trying the spirits, God has given us two marks by which we can know whether a person is in the state of forgiveness or not. These two marks are the confession of the mouth and good works. Not good works alone, otherwise many would be in the state of grace who reject Christ. True, ancient and modern obscurants wish to persuade us that good works alone testify to the presence of justification, and in that way they, like the honorable Sultan Saladin, try to bring themselves into heaven on a bypath. God's house, however, has no small side-entrance; it has only *one door*, and that door is Christ. For beside this name there is none other under heaven given among men whereby they can be saved, even though they do all the good works that can be performed. The first mark, then, of the presence of God's perpetual grace is confession of Christ. Where that is wanting, there forgiveness of sins cannot even be thought of. On the other hand, where it is found, there we may at least assume that faith is present in the heart. And where there is faith, there is also forgiveness. Therefore Christ attaches so much weight to our confessing Him freely and openly before men. He says: "Whosoever shall confess Me ¹⁾ before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in heaven." Matt. 10, 32. 33. On the basis of this declaration we say: Where there is a joyous confession of the Lord, there is also forgiveness; otherwise He would not confess in heaven the name of him who confesses His name here on earth. In fact, He caused the pillar among His apostles to make such a confession not only Matt. 16,

1) Ὁμολογήσει ἐν ἐμοί. So that his confession abides in Me.

The Troubles of the Interpolationists.

I.

The simplest way to get rid of an offensive Bible-teaching is to delete the proof-texts, and the easiest way to accomplish that is to stamp them as interpolations. This device is employed by many modern scholars in the matter of the Virgin Birth. They insist that the attestation of the Virgin Birth found in Luke's narrative came into it by interpolation. But the application of the simple device is not so simple, after all. The theory of interpolation in-

14) Luke 7, 47, namely, *propter hanc mulieris confessionem et haec opera.*

15) *Duplex est absolutio. Altera privata conscientiae luctantis cum ira Dei. In hac absoluteione necesse est intelligi, quod fide accipiatur remissio, non propter nostras virtutes. Altera est absolutio publica coram ecclesia. In hac conspici necesse est ab aliis testimonia conversionis, ut hic Christus Pharisaeo ostendit, cur eam recipiat, quia exstent testimonia conversionis. (Examen Ordinandorum, 1593; III, 352.)*

volves its proponents in a sea of troubles. Scripture itself, and Scripture taken merely as a human product, puts insuperable difficulties in their way. This is fully brought out in an article by Dr. J. G. Machen (*Princeton Theol. Review*, October, 1927) entitled: "The Integrity of the Lucan Narrative of the Annunciation." The copious extracts we here offer will serve to show the futility of the attempted deletion and will point out the follies into which the theory of interpolation draws its adherents. The reader need not accept every point of argument, exegesis, etc., brought up in the article. Nor does he have to accept the theories and the terminology of the textual critics. But he will agree that Dr. Machen, meeting the interpolationists on their own ground, leaves them no ground to stand on.

"Whether the interpolation is to be regarded as an interpolation into the completed gospel by a scribe or into the source by the author of the gospel or into the completed gospel by the author of the gospel, how much is to be regarded as interpolated? . . . The earliest and probably still the commonest view is that the interpolation embraces vv. 34 and 35 of the first chapter. That view received its first systematic grounding from Hillmann in 1891. It has since then been advocated by Usener, Harnack, Zimmermann, Schmiedel, Pfeleiderer, Conybeare, and others. A second view was suggested by Kattenbusch and defended by Weinel. It is to the effect that only the words 'seeing I know not a man' in Luke 1, 34. 35 are to be eliminated. A third view includes vv. 36 and 37 with vv. 34 and 35 in the supposed interpolation. (Clemen includes even v. 38 as well as vv. 36 and 37.) . . .

"It may be noticed at the start that the first view, which regards the interpolation of Luke 1, 34. 35 as an interpolation made by a scribe into the completed gospel, is opposed by the weight of manuscript attestation. There is really no external evidence worthy the name for the view that Luke 1, 34. 35 or any part of it is an interpolation. Manuscript b of the Old Latin Version, it is true, does substitute v. 38 for v. 34 and then omits v. 38 from its proper place. But that may either have been a mere blunder in transmission, especially since the two verses begin with the same words, 'and Mary said,' or else may be due to the desire of a scribe to save Mary from the appearance of unbelief which might be produced by her question in v. 34. At any rate, the reading of this manuscript is entirely isolated; as it stands, it produces nonsense, since it represents the angel as continuing to speak (vv. 35—37) after he has already departed; and certainly it cannot lay the slightest

claim either to be itself, or to enable us to reconstruct, the true text. As for the testimony of John of Damascus in the eighth century to the omission of the phrase 'seeing I know not a man' in some Greek codices, that is clearly too late to be of importance. Thus the unanimity of manuscript evidence for the inclusion of Luke 1, 34. 35 is practically unbroken. And it is difficult to see how such unanimity could have arisen if the verses were interpolated in the course of the transmission. In view of the many widely divergent lines of transmission in which the text of the gospel has come down to us, it would be surprising in the extreme if the true reading should in this passage have nowhere left even the slightest trace. . . .

"We shall now examine the question whether or not Luke 1, 34. 35 is an original part of its present context or else has been inserted into that context either by the author of the gospel into a source or by the author of the gospel into his own completed work or by some scribe. The first consideration, which we may notice as having been adduced in favor of the interpolation theory, is of a general character. The rest of the narrative, it is said, outside of Luke 1, 34. 35 is perfectly compatible with a birth of Jesus simply as the son of Joseph and Mary; indeed, it is even contradictory to the notion of a virgin birth; if, therefore, we accomplish the simple deletion of these two verses, all inconsistency is removed, and the story becomes perfectly smooth and easy. . . . It should be noticed, in the first place, that the simple deletion of Luke 1, 34. 35 will not remove the Virgin Birth from the third gospel in general or from the infancy narrative in particular; for the Virgin Birth is clearly implied in several other places. The first of these places is found at Luke 1, 26. 27. Here Mary is twice called a virgin, and in what follows nothing whatever is said about her marriage with Joseph. This phenomenon is perfectly natural if the Virgin Birth was in the mind of the narrator, but it is very unnatural if the reverse is the case. Advocates of the interpolation theory are therefore compelled to offer some explanation of the language in Luke 1, 27. Two explanations are open to them. In the first place, it may be said that v. 27 has been tampered with by the same interpolator who inserted vv. 34. 35 and that originally Mary was not here called a virgin. But against this explanation may be urged the fact that the word *virgin* occurs twice in the verse, and that, if that word was not originally there, the whole structure of the verse must have been different. The second possible explanation is that, although the form of v. 27 which we now have is the original form, — that is, although Mary was really designated there as

a virgin, — yet the mention of her marriage to Joseph has been omitted, by the interpolator of Luke 1, 34. 35, from the subsequent narrative. But it may be doubted whether this explanation quite accomplishes the purpose for which it is proposed. Even if the writer of Luke 1, 27 were intending to introduce later on a mention of Mary's marriage to Joseph, his designation of her as a virgin would seem to be unnatural. . . . Why does he insist so particularly, by a repetition of the word, that it [the Annunciation] was made to Mary when she was a 'virgin'? . . .

"At any rate, it should be noticed that both the two explanations result in an overloading of the interpolation hypothesis. Whether it be held that Luke 1, 27 has been tampered with or that something has been removed by the interpolator at a later point in the narrative, in either case the activities of the interpolator must be regarded as having extended farther than was at first maintained. What becomes, then, of the initial argument, that a simple removal of Luke 1, 34. 35 will suffice to make the narrative all perfectly smooth and easy as a narrative representing Jesus as being in a physical sense the son of Joseph?

"Moreover, what shall be done with Luke 2, 5, which reads: 'to be enrolled with Mary, who was betrothed to him, being great with child'? How could Mary be said to be only betrothed to Joseph when she was already great with child? Certainly this form of expression coming from a narrator, who, of course, intended to record nothing derogatory to the honor of Mary, implies the Virgin Birth in the clearest possible way.

"It is true, the matter is complicated in this case by variation in the extant manuscript transmission. The reading 'who was betrothed to him' appears, indeed, in the best Greek uncials, including the typical representatives of the 'Neutral' type of text, the Codex Vaticanus and the Codex Sinaiticus. It also appears in the Codex Bezae, which is a representative of the 'Western' type of text, and in a number of the versions. But certain manuscripts of the Old Latin Version and the 'Sinaitic Syriac' manuscript of the Old Syriac Version read 'his wife'; and a number of the later uncials, with the mass of the cursive manuscripts, representing what Westcott and Hort called the 'Syrian Revision,' read 'his betrothed wife.' This last reading is generally rejected as being a 'conflate reading'; evidently, it is held, some scribe combined the reading 'betrothed' with the reading 'wife' to make the reading 'betrothed wife.'" (It might also be pointed out that this phrase is substantially the same language as that employed in Matt. 1, 18

and 20: "betrothed — wife," and serves to emphasize the facts in the case as related by Matthew.) "But what decision shall be reached as between the other two readings?"

The author goes on to show that the external evidence certainly favors the first reading, "betrothed," that at first sight transcriptional probability might seem to be in favor of the second reading, "wife," as being the original, some scribe, eager to protect the virginity of Mary from any possible misunderstanding, substituting the word "betrothed" for it, but that, on the other hand, it is more probable that some devout scribe, in order to harmonize Luke's account with that of Matthew, where Mary is called Joseph's wife, changed the original "betrothed" into "wife," and concludes: "Transcriptional considerations are thus not opposed to the reading of the Neutral text, and that reading should in all probability be regarded as correct. Then we have another overloading of the interpolation hypothesis with regard to Luke 1, 34. 35; the advocates of that hypothesis must suppose that the interpolator tampered with Luke 2, 5 as well as with Luke 1, 27. Obviously the removal of all mention of the Virgin Birth from Luke 1—2 is by no means so simple a matter as was at first supposed.

"There is, of course, still another place in the third gospel where the Virgin Birth is clearly alluded to, namely, Luke 3, 23. The words clearly imply that Jesus was only 'supposed' to be the Son (in the full sense) of Joseph and that really his relationship to Joseph was of a different kind. In this case there is no manuscript evidence for the omission of the words. . . . The verse, therefore, constitutes an additional weight upon the hypothesis that Luke 1, 34. 35 is an interpolation into the completed gospel. For if Luke 1, 34. 35 is an interpolation, the words 'as was supposed' must also be an interpolation; and the more numerous such interpolations are thought to be, the more difficult does it become to explain the disappearance from the many lines of documentary attestation of all traces of the original, uninterpolated text." (His subject being "The Integrity of the *Lucan* Narrative," Dr. Machen naturally does not refer to the pertinent statements of Matt. 1, to the increased difficulty Von Soden, Loofs, and the others encounter in attempting to explain how this same interpolator or some other corruptionist so easily succeeded in palming off a corrupted text of Matthew or a "later stratum of the evangelical tradition" as the original one.)

The interpolationists, forced to admit that one or two verses outside of Luke 1, 34. 35 do imply the Virgin Birth, next proceed

to argue that the bulk of the narrative proceeds upon the assumption that Jesus was the son of Joseph by ordinary generation. Their arguments may be classified under three heads. "In the first place, it is said, the narrative traces the Davidic descent of Jesus through Joseph, not through Mary, so that it must regard Joseph as His father." Dr. Machen answers that, while the Davidic descent of Mary is not definitely stated, Luke 1, 27, for instance, declaring, most probably, the Davidic descent of Joseph, though there is nothing in the narrative preventing us from holding that Mary also was descended from David, still Matt. 1 proves that the Virgin Birth and the Davidic descent through Joseph are very well compatible, this being so because according to law (compare in this connection the institution of the levirate marriage) Joseph was the father of Jesus, Jesus being "a gift of God to the Davidic house, not less truly, but, on the contrary, in a more wonderful way, than if He had been descended from David by ordinary generation."

"The second argument is based upon the application, in the second chapter of Luke, of the term 'father' to Joseph and of the term 'parents' to Joseph and Mary." Answer: "Such terms could well be used on Semitic grounds to describe even an ordinary adoptive relationship. . . . Thus those manuscripts of the Old Latin Version which substitute in these passages 'Joseph' for the term 'father' are adopting an apologetic device, which is altogether unnecessary."

The third argument (Mary's marveling at the things spoken about her child by Simeon and others, her astonishment at finding her twelve-year-old Son in the company of the doctors of the law, etc., would be unnatural if she knew her Son to have been conceived by the Holy Ghost) proves too much; it would require excision, not merely of Luke 1, 34, 35, but also of vv. 32 and 33 and of the whole annunciation scheme. Furthermore, "these modern advocates of mechanical consistency seem to suppose that Mary must have been a person of a coldly scientific frame of mind, who, when she had passed through the wonderful experience of the supernatural conception, proceeded to draw out the logical consequences of that experience in all their minutest ramifications, so that thereafter nothing in heaven or on earth could affect her with the slightest perplexity or surprise. . . . No doubt, if she had been a modern superman, she would have been far beyond so lowly an emotion as wonder," etc. Finally, "'Mary kept all these words and pondered them in her heart,' 'Mary kept all these words

in her heart,' place Mary before the readers in a way that is comprehensible only if she alone, and not Joseph, is the center of interest in the narrative. And what made her the center of interest save the stupendous wonder of the Virgin Birth?" E.

(To be continued.)
