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Good Works.

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Faith is a light, and good works are its rays. The Lord said to His disciples: "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Matt. 5, 16; cp. 1 Pet. 2, 12. Good works are testimonies for, and fruits of,¹⁾ faith. Christ says: "Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit." Matt. 7, 17, 18; cp. with v. 21. And Paul calls love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, "the fruit of the Spirit." Gal. 5, 22. See also Titus 3, 14; Col. 1, 10. The fruits stand in a twofold relation to the tree: first, the tree bears them, that is, it puts forth buds and nourishes them with its sap; secondly, seeing the fruits, one can tell the species of the tree. So faith, through the Holy Spirit, brings forth good works and, *vice versa*, is known by them. Matt. 7, 20 we read: "By their fruits ye shall know them." And when the Apostle James wishes to describe "the wisdom that is from above," he says: "It is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits." Jas. 3, 17. Such honor is due good works. But they have nothing to do with our atonement. The tree does not draw nourishment from the soil by means of the fruits, but through the roots. So we at all times apprehend Christ, our Lord, by faith alone and receive from Him forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. Therefore Luther is right when he says: "Inwardly we become godly through faith; outwardly we show our faith through works of love. For Scripture speaks of man in a twofold way, first, of the inner, secondly, of the outer man. For Scripture must needs make this distinction

1) 1 Tim. 5, 8, 10: *ἐν ἔργοις καλοῖς μαρτυρουμένη.* Titus 2, 7—10.

The Troubles of the Interpolationists.

II.

When men reject the Virgin Birth as incredible, they refuse to accept the plain teaching of the Bible. They had better let the matter rest there, as a matter of plain unbelief. For when they attempt to justify their attitude as being the result of honest scientific study of the material to be investigated, they only bring additional troubles upon themselves. The unfairness, prejudice, and incredible shallowness of argumentation displayed by the advocates of the interpolation theory as applied to the Lucan narrative of the Annunciation will appear from the further perusal of Dr. J. G. Machen's calm investigation of their claims.

"If such general considerations will not establish the interpolation theory, what shall be said of the two verses considered in detail and in the immediate context in which they appear? Is it possible to discern elements of style in these verses which designate them as foreign to the narrative in which they now appear? . . . Harnack discovered in the use of two conjunctions in the verses

8) Particula γὰρ in „Esurivi enim,“ etc., nequaquam habet significationem causalem, sed ratiocinativam. Neque enim hic a causis ad effectum, sed ab effectis ad antegressam causam ratiocinatur; h. e., probat ex operibus misericordiae, fideles illos vere esse tales, quales ipsos proclamet, nempe haeredes regni, siquidem fidem suam, accipiendae haereditatis coelestis ὁγαγον, tam illustribus documentis testatam reddiderint. Sic itaque Christus opera allegabit, non ut fontem vel causam aeternae haereditatis, sed ut testes declarantes, fidem electorum non in nuda gloriatione fuisse sitam, sed sese protulisse per caritatem in facta seu opera. Summa brevissima est haec: Pronuntio ego vos electos et sempiterni regni haeredes. Unde vero id probas, Jesu Christe? Inde videlicet, quia, quum esurirem et sitirem ego in membris meis, paverunt et potarunt illi me et fidei suae veritatem his testibus ad oculum comprobaverunt. (Aegidius Hunnius, *De Justificatione*, 229.)

9) Matt. 25, 41. 42. 43. 45. 46. Luther. St. Louis Ed., XI, 1451.

evidences of a hand other than that of Luke. One of these conjunctions, *διό*, he says, occurs, indeed, a number of times in Acts, but nowhere in the rest of the third gospel, unless it is genuine in Luke 7, 7 (the words in question are no doubt genuine); the other, *ἐπεί*, according to the best text of Luke 7, 1 (where it is probably not genuine) occurs nowhere else in the Lucan writings.—The former of these two words does occur, on Harnack's own showing, a number of times in Luke's double work. And with regard to the other word, it may simply be remembered that an author's choice of such words is seldom completely uniform. Bardenhewer gives a list of other particles besides this one that occur only once in the Lucan writings. In general, it is significant that Zimmermann and, more recently, Vincent Taylor can point to the Lucan character of the diction in these verses positively in support of their view that Luke himself—and not some scribe—was the interpolator. The truth is that the arguments of Zimmermann and Vincent Taylor, on the one hand, and of Harnack, on the other, at this point simply cancel each other. . . . Nothing could be smoother from a stylistic point of view than the way in which these verses harmonize with the rest of the infancy narrative.

“Then, what shall be said of the way in which the thought of the two verses fits into the immediate context? . . . Some of the arguments which have been advanced by advocates of the interpolation theory are certainly very weak. Thus, when Harnack says that the question and answer in Luke 1, 34. 35 unduly separate the words, ‘Behold, thou shalt conceive,’ in v. 31, from the corresponding words, ‘Behold, Elisabeth, thy kinswoman, hath conceived, she also,’ in v. 36, surely he is demanding a perfect regularity or obviousness of structure which is not at all required in prose style. Even if vv. 34. 35 are removed, still the two phrases that Harnack places in parallel are separated by the important words of v. 32f. . . . The words in v. 36f., Harnack argues, obtain a good sense only if no mention of Mary's conception by the Holy Spirit has gone before; for if the most wonderful thing of all has already been promised, then it is weak and unconvincing, he thinks, to point, in support of this wonder, to the less wonder of Elisabeth's conception in her old age. Surely this argument should be exactly reversed. . . . If all that had been mentioned before was the greatness of a son whom Mary was to bear simply as the fruit of her coming marriage with Joseph, then nothing could be more pointless than a reference to the manner in which John was born. . . . It is perfectly true, of course, that there could be in the nature of

the case no full parallel for the unique miracle of the Virgin Birth. But what the angel could do was to point to a happening that was at least sufficient to illustrate the general principle, 'With God nothing shall be impossible.'

"It is not surprising, therefore, that Hilgenfeld apparently makes the reference to Elisabeth an argument, not against, but in favor of, the integrity of the passage and that Spitta and others make it an argument for including v. 36f. in the supposed interpolation. Against this latter hypothesis there are, indeed, the gravest possible objections. . . . If the interpolator inserted so long a passage as vv. 34—37, then it is truly a most extraordinary thing that he should have been able to catch the spirit of the infancy narrative so perfectly that nowhere in the whole course of his long insertion has he struck a single discordant note. Interpolators are not apt to be possessed of such wonderfully delicate skill. Moreover, it may turn out that there are still other special difficulties in the way of this modified form of the interpolation hypothesis. But this modification of the interpolation hypothesis does at least show a salutary feeling for the weakness of the more usual view. Certainly v. 36f. are connected with v. 34f. in the most indissoluble way. . . . What we have here is a rather clear instance of the fate that frequently besets interpolation theories. The critic starts hopefully to remove something from a literary production. At first he thinks that it is an easy matter. But then he discovers, to his consternation, that great shreds of the rest of the book are coming up along with the thing that he is trying to remove; the book proves to be not an agglomeration, but an organism. . . . For one thing, something has to be done with Luke 1, 27 and probably with Luke 2, 5 and 3, 23. And then here, in the immediate context, it is quite evident that, if Luke 7, 34f. is to go, v. 36f. must go too. . . . At any rate, it should certainly be disconcerting to the advocates of the interpolation theory that what Harnack regards as a loose joint, showing v. 34f. to be no original part of their present context, is regarded by equally acute observers as being so very close a connection that, if what appears in one side of the connection is interpolated, what appears on the other side must also go. . . ."

The next "argument is to the effect that v. 34f. constitute a 'doublet' with vv. 31—33 and so could not originally have stood side by side with the former verses. In vv. 31—33, it is said, Jesus is called Son of David and Son of the Most High; in v. 35 he is called Son of God because of the manner of His birth. If—so

the argument runs — the writer has had in his mind the ‘Son of God, in v. 35, he would not have written the ‘Son of the Most High’ and the ‘David, His father,’ of vv. 31—33.” It will be sufficient to quote two sentences from Dr. Machen’s full discussion of this matter: “It is the creative activity of the Holy Spirit and not any assumption of human functions of fatherhood which is in view. . . . How the divine sonship which appears in vv. 31—33 can be regarded as incongruous with the Virgin Birth or as rendering superfluous the mention of it is more than we can understand.”

The next argument “calls attention to a genuine exegetical difficulty which must be examined with some care. It is based upon Mary’s question in v. 34: ‘How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?’ This question has been regarded as being inconsistent with the context for two reasons.” One of these objections can surely, despite the great stress that has been laid upon it by many advocates of the interpolation hypothesis, be dismissed rather easily. It runs thus: “Why is it that Mary should be commended, in the sequel, for her faith if she had uttered this doubting question, which is very similar to the question for which Zacharias was so severely punished?” The answer is, as our author most patiently points out, that there is very little similarity, that Zacharias’s question can be interpreted as nothing else than a definite request for a sign, his refusal to “know” it unless the wonder that is promised is able to exhibit an analogy with something else, that Mary’s question, as it stands, attests, not a refusal to believe without further proof, but only perplexity as to what is involved in the angel’s words, and that, in view of the situation, Mary, being promised a strange, unheard-of thing, which might subject her to all manner of reproach, and yet saying, in simple submission to the will of God: “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word,” it surely is no wonder that Zacharias was punished and Mary praised.

The second objection, which indeed lends to the first what weight it may have, is put thus: “We have argued that, if the angel’s promise to Mary seemed inconsistent with her maidenly consciousness, her question, unlike that of Zacharias, was devoid of blame. But, it will be objected, why should the promise have been interpreted by her in any such way? Why should it have seemed inconsistent with her maidenly consciousness at all? The angel, in the preceding verses, had said nothing about anything peculiar in the birth of her son; why, then, did she not understand the promise as referring simply to her approaching marriage? If

she was going to ask any question, surely it ought to have been a question about the greatness of her son rather than about the manner of his birth; the thing which ought to have caused surprise in view of the preceding words is not the mere fact that she was to have a son (for in view of her approaching marriage that was to be expected), but that she was to have *such* a son. . . . Her question ought to have been: 'How shall this be, seeing I am a humble woman?' instead of: 'How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?' As it is, v. 31, we are told, reveals clearly an interpolator's hand; it is entirely unnatural in view of the context and merely constitutes a clumsy device for the introduction of an idea [the Virgin Birth] that was quite foreign to the original story."

To this argument Roman Catholic scholars have a ready answer. They explain the question of Mary by the fact that she had already either made a vow, or at least formed a fixed resolve, never to have intercourse with a man. Our author rejects this solution, first, as running counter to the *prima-facie* evidence regarding the brothers and sisters of Jesus, to Luke 2, 7 and to Matt. 1, 25. We may agree or disagree with his view that it is more probable that Mary was regarded by the narrator as having other children. But we reject the Roman Catholic assertion as being a mere assertion and agree with the author: "If the narrator, in the first chapter of Luke, had meant that Mary had formed the resolve of a perpetual virginity, he would naturally have indicated the fact in a very much clearer way. Such a resolve in a Jewish maiden of the first century would have been an unheard-of thing. . . . If, therefore, the narrator were intending to attribute so extraordinary a resolve to Mary, he would naturally have taken pains to make his meaning perfectly clear. . . .

"If Mary, then, was not giving expression to a resolve of perpetual virginity, how shall her question be understood? Why did she not simply assume that the son whom the angel had promised would be the fruit of her approaching union with her betrothed? Some modern scholars find an answer in the hypothesis of a mis-translation, in our Greek gospel, of a Hebrew or Aramaic original of the angel's words. . . . The original would be a participle, intended to refer to the present; and the whole difficulty has come from the fact that the Greek translator wrongly took it as referring to the future. If, then, the Semitic original is here restored, Mary's question — since she could not explain a *present* conception in her womb by her *future* union with Joseph — becomes thoroughly suited to the context, so that there is no longer any indication of

an interpolator's clumsy hand." Dr. Machen rejects this explanation on the ground that a translator would not be likely, since the participle in the source *might* be translated by a present, to translate it by a future, thus introducing, for no particular reason, such serious confusion into the narrative in its Greek form. (We reject it for the reason that we have no business to investigate the question of a possible Aramaic original and its probable reading. The Greek text is the only inspired and authoritative one. With us the argument against the real presense, for instance, which Edersheim and others base on the fact that in the Aramaic the equivalent for ἐστί would not have occurred, carries no weight whatever.)

"Obviously it would be more satisfactory, if possible, to find an interpretation which would suit the Greek narrative as it stands. Such an interpretation, we believe, is actually forthcoming. . . . The Greek word 'thou shalt conceive' is indeed future; but would it necessarily be referred by Mary to the time of her marriage with Joseph? Might it not rather be referred by her to an *immediate* future? . . . The very appearance of the angel and his momentous greeting would seem clearly to indicate some far more immediate significance in that moment than could be found merely in a promise concerning the indefinite future. After all, it was really strange in itself, as well as an offense to the consciousness of the virgin, if a child to be born in the approaching union with Joseph should be promised before, instead of after, the marriage. The future tense 'thou shalt conceive,' therefore, though not actually equivalent to a present, does refer most naturally to an *immediate* future. Thus the interpretation of the angel's previous words which is implied in v. 34 is a very natural interpretation and cannot possibly stamp v. 34f. as an interpolation." (Vv. 38 and 42 have a direct bearing on the question whether the annunciation of the angel does or does not refer to the immediate future. Dr. Machen discusses these verses in another connection. The comparison of Luke 1 with Matt. 1, of course, establishes the "immediate future." When did the conception take place? "Many have thought of the moment when Mary said, 'Be it unto me in accordance with thy word.' . . . Yet on the whole we think it better to treat the question as it is treated by the narrator — with a cautious reserve. All that is involved in our view is that the 'thou shalt conceive' refers to the near future and would not naturally be taken by Mary as referring to her approaching marriage.")

E.

(To be concluded.)