

“The Promise Of God”

Confidence, Confusion, and the Promise of God! Bedrock for Bondslaves!

- I. Luke’s preface and the introduction of John and Jesus (1.1—2.52)
 - A. Preface: Luke carefully builds on precedent (1.1-4)
 - B. Infancy narrative: forerunner and fulfillment (1:5–2:40)
 1. Announcement to Zechariah (1:5–25)
 2. Announcement to Mary (1:26–38)

The Appearance, Luke 1.26-27

The Announcement, Luke 1.28-37

1:28. Is Mary the “bestower” of God’s grace? An important translation variant is found in the Vulgate, which suggests that Mary possesses grace, so that in some sense she is “full of grace.” Against the Vulgate rendering, 1:30 clearly portrays Mary as “finding grace” with God, as the object of grace, not the possessor or bestower of it. What God will do in giving her this special child is his act of grace. Mary is a simple humble object of God’s work, without any idea of personal merit on her part. However, this Lucan phrase, along with that in 1:42, serves as the basis for the Catholic Ave Maria, a liturgical prayer to Mary: “Hail Mary, full of grace; the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of death.” The first two sentences have roots in Luke and appear to go back to Gregory the Great, but they were not authorized as a creedal formula until 1198. The third portion of the saying, with its plea for Marian intercession, was authorized by Pope Pius V in 1568. The theological speculation derived from these verses is unrelated to 1:28, which treats Mary as an object of blessing, not a source of it.

Darrell L. Bock, Luke Volume 1: 1:1–9:50, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1994), 128-29.

The Promise

The Predicament

1:34. The meaning is straightforward, yet it has occasioned a long discussion in Catholic theology. Traditional Catholicism argues that Mary’s reply is based on a vow of virginity that she had taken and expected to maintain even in her marriage to Joseph. This argument was popularized by key fathers of the West—Ambrose and Augustine. Alongside this view there also developed the view that Mary stayed an intact virgin, even in birth, a teaching that appears in the NT apocryphal work the Protevangelium of James 19–20. When combined, these views led to the three-part mariological confession that Mary was *virginitas “ante partum, in partu, et post partum,”* that is, “a virgin before birth, in birth, and after birth.” The creed goes back to the fourth century. The Lucan text supports only the prebirth virginity.

Darrell L. Bock, Luke Volume 1: 1:1–9:50, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1994), 130.

The Provision

The Principle

The Acceptance, Luke 1.38