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THE CHURCH AND THE MINISTRY.

A. THE CHURCH.

The church in the widest sense of the term is the whole number of the children of God. These are, collectively considered, *the household of God*,¹⁾ united under the *one God and Father of all*,²⁾ *the whole family in heaven and earth*,³⁾ comprising *all the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven*,⁴⁾ the multitude gathered from out of *every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation*,⁵⁾ whom Christ has *made unto God kings and priests*,⁶⁾ the aggregate of the *heirs of salvation*.⁷⁾ In this sense the church has also been defined as the whole number of God's elect. This is, in its full compass in which it shall endure for ever as a perpetual and permanent whole, the church described by St. Peter as *a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people*.⁸⁾ This is the mystical body of Christ,⁹⁾ *the fulness of him that*

1) Eph. 2, 19.

2) Eph. 4, 6.

3) Eph. 3, 15.

4) Hebr. 12, 23.

5) Rev. 5, 9.

6) Rev. 5, 10.

7) Hebr. 1, 14.

8) 1 Pet. 2, 9.

9) Eph. 4, 12. Col. 1, 18.

leave it in doubt who may be right, they or the word of God. In fact, astronomers have been correcting themselves and one another these many years and centuries, not only since the days of the ancient Greek philosophers and the long rule of Ptolemy's *Almagest*, but also since Copernic's book *De Revolutionibus* was published with a preface by the Lutheran theologian Osiander. What if a revolution in Optics with new discoveries on the nature and laws of light or its conditions in siderial space should turn a leaf for our scientists and open a new chapter *de revolutionibus orbium coelestium*? But be that as it may. One thing we know. When all these temporal speculations and investigations through telescopes and microscopes shall be forever closed, and the objects of physical science themselves, including the earth and the greater and lesser lights which God has made, shall have passed away at the command of Him whose fiat called them into being, and in the light of glory we shall no longer know in part, the word of God, the Book of Genesis not excepted, shall still be true and abide forever.

A. G.

THE PROOF TEXTS OF THE CATECHISM

WITH A

PRACTICAL COMMENTARY.

THE CREED.

John 3, 16: *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

This text may be fitly called an epitome of all Scripture, both the Law and the Gospel. It teaches that, left to itself, all the world must have perished, and no man could have obtained eternal life. For if salvation is by the love

of God in Christ and through faith in him, then by his own works man must be lost now and forever. But the text also teaches that God, the only true God, whose Son is the only begotten of the Father, the God whom no man can know but by revelation, is not only just but also merciful, that instead of condemning the world, as he might have done, he loved the world. That this is very remarkable is indicated by the emphasis which the original lays on the verb, *loved*, placing it before its subject, *οὕτως ἠγάπησεν ὁ θεός*. And this wonderful love of God is all the more wonderful, the more we consider and comprehend the state and condition of the objects of his love. The *world*, *κόσμος*, the whole mass of fallen mankind, sinful, ungodly, rebellious in enmity against God, and damnable in his sight, was the object of God's love. Love is the longing for union and communion with the object of such desire. The world was separated from God by sin.¹⁾ But though man had turned his back upon God and neither could nor would return to him, God longed to be reunited with the wayward race. In this God did not deny but reassert his holiness. He loved the world, not ignoring but taking away the sin which separated between him and man, by laying that sin upon a substitute for man, a substitute whom he had himself provided. He so longed to recover the fallen world into union with himself, that he gave his only begotten Son, to be the Redeemer of the world, *that the world through him might be saved*,²⁾ *through the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world*.³⁾ And now, since God has provided a Savior for all the world, because he loved the world, it is his earnest will that by accepting this Savior and salvation in him every sinner should have and enjoy the benefits of the redemption now and for ever, that he should not suffer what by sin he has deserved, and which Christ has suffered in his stead, and that he should enjoy what he could not have procured for

1) Is. 59, 2.

2) John 3, 17.

3) John 1, 29.

himself, but which Christ has secured for him by his vicarious obedience unto death, everlasting life. This is the sum and substance of the Gospel and of our Christian faith.

Rom. 1, 16: *I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.*

The English word, gospel, is a literal translation of the Greek *εὐαγγέλιον*, good tidings, good spell, a gladsome story. It is the glad news the angel of the Lord brought to the shepherds, saying, *Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ, the Lord.*¹⁾ But the Gospel is not a mere announcement of the goodness of God in Christ Jesus; it is also an exertion of the saving grace of God. The apostle describes it as being not only *δυναμένον* or *δυνατόν*, mighty, powerful, but *δύναμις*, a power, and not a human power, but a power of God, so that wherever it is preached and heard, God himself is active, working on and in the heart of the hearer. It is, furthermore, described as the power of God unto salvation. God is active with his power also in the physical world, as the almighty Preserver and Ruler of the universe. But whenever and wherever the Gospel is preached, God is active in the divine work of saving those who are lost. Salvation is the work of God performed by the Gospel. How? Not by teaching us what we must do to merit salvation, but by teaching us what God has done in Christ to procure our salvation, and by leading us to accept such salvation by faith. This is what the text says in describing the Gospel as the power of God unto salvation, not to every one that worketh, but to every one that believeth. Hence this Gospel of *Christ crucified* is *unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness.*²⁾ For the self-righteous Jews and the self-wise Gentiles, the adherents of all

1) Luke 2, 10 f.

2) 1 Cor. 1, 23.

false religions, teach salvation by works, by man's own endeavors, and despise and spurn a doctrine and way of salvation which gives all the glory to God and his saving grace in Christ. But with Paul and all true believers we are not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God.¹⁾

John 4, 24: *God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.*

The Samaritan woman at Jacob's well was ignorant of the true God. She thought the difference between the Jews and the Samaritans consisted in their different places of worship.²⁾ But Jesus tells her, Ye worship ye know not what.³⁾ He then proceeds to teach her concerning the true God, and in doing this he speaks the words of our text. He says, Πνεῦμα ὁ θεός, God is Spirit. The emphasis is on πνεῦμα, Spirit. He would say, You are ignorant of the very nature of God. You suppose him to be residing at a certain place like a corporeal being, and this false notion determines your notions of divine worship. But God is Spirit, a being without a body or the properties of material things. And it is needful for those who would worship God to know who and what God is. For God cannot be acceptably worshiped according to the false notions which men may entertain concerning him, but must be worshiped in a manner corresponding with his nature, as he is, in spirit and in truth. Thus our text refutes the error of all those who hold, as so many do in our day, that it were immaterial what notions a man had of God, if he only worshiped him according to his views and convictions. Such worship is, in fact, idolatry and damnable before God.

Ps. 90, 1. 2: *Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.*

1) 1 Cor. 1, 24.

2) John 4, 20.

3) Ibid. v. 22.

The psalmist, Moses, here teaches that God is eternal. Men are born and die, generation following generation. But as parents, children, and grandchildren may successively dwell in the same mansion, so God has been the dwelling place where his children have found shelter from generation to generation. While they come and pass away one after another, he is and remains the same mighty fortress for all times. Nor is God of lasting existence only as compared with the fleeting generations of men. The massive mountains, too, have towered for ages above their changing surroundings, looking down in silent majesty upon the short-lived children of men. But God is of still longer duration. The mountains, too, came into being and must pass away. But before the mountains were brought forth, before God had formed the earth and the whole world, the sun and moon and stars, which have been running their steady courses for ages, God is God. He was not only, but he is. In him there is no past or future, but eternal to-day. And when the mountains and the earth and the universe shall pass away, God's existence will have no end. He, and he alone, is from everlasting to everlasting. He is eternal.

Ps. 102, 27: *Thou art the same.*

The Hebrew original is אַתָּה הוּא, *thou art he*. The corresponding אֲנִי-הוּא, *I am he*, from the mouth of the Lord, occurs repeatedly in Isaiah, and in every instance it is an assertion of God's eternity and immutability. Thus when we read, *Who hath wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning? I the Lord, the first, and with the last, I am he.*¹⁾ And again, *I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.*²⁾ And once more, *I am he; I am the first, I also am the last. Mine hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth.*³⁾ Our context is even more explicit. Here the psalmist says: *Thy years are*

1) Is. 41, 4.

2) Is. 43, 10.

3) Is. 48, 12 f.

throughout all generations. Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment, as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end. Thus the psalmist is his own best commentator.

Jer. 23, 23. 24: *Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord.*

These words are taken from a longer passage in which the Lord rebukes the false prophets, who ran, though they had not been sent, and prophesied, though the Lord had not spoken to them.¹⁾ The audacity of these impostors was all the more astounding since their evil ways were known to God. *I have heard what the prophets said, that prophesy lies in my name, says the Lord.*²⁾ For he is near and present everywhere, filling heaven and earth, so that there is no place so secret or remote as to serve as a hiding place from the presence of Him who is omnipresent, as our text says. This omnipresence of God is not expansion through space, as water fills a vessel. Where God is, he is whole and entire, not a part of him in heaven and a part of him in the earth. He fills the heavens, being everywhere in heaven, and he fills the earth, being everywhere on earth, and everywhere the Lord God, performing his divine works, whether amid the hosts of cherubim and seraphim, or in the heart of a little child. Hence, let false prophets and all workers of iniquity beware, and let all that seek his face take comfort.

Luke 1, 37: *With God nothing shall be impossible.*

These are words of Gabriel, the angel of the Lord who was sent to the virgin to announce to her that she was to be

1) V. 21.

2) V. 25.

the mother of the Son of God. That the virgin's motherhood was not to come about in the course of nature, but by a special and particular act of divine power, was also made known to her, and as a token of the working of God's almighty power, her cousin Elisabeth was pointed out to her, by the angel. "For," continued Gabriel, "with God nothing shall be impossible." This is a general truth, by which the angel would corroborate his special announcements. The incarnation of the Son of God was one, but not the only, work of divine omnipotence. God's power has no limit. It is God himself, and God is infinite. There is no contradiction between our text and such statements as, *It was impossible for God to lie*. For there never was nor could be such a thing as a lie in God. A lie in God is, in fact, no thing, nothing, and nothing is impossible with God. This is precisely what our text says in full agreement with the words from the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Ps. 139, 1—4: *Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my words. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether.*

The psalmist here teaches that God knows all things. He begins with an anthropopathism, in order to picture the thoroughness of God's knowledge. If a man would know a thing thoroughly, he must investigate or search it. Thus David here pictures God as having made a thorough investigation of him and thereby having learned to know all about him, all his present and future ways, and acts, and attitudes, and words, and thoughts, everything even beyond the psalmist's knowledge of himself. Remembering this we should walk in the fear of God all the days of our lives, at the same time trusting that, knowing all our wants and weaknesses better than we can ever know them

ourselves, he will provide for us as only an omniscient and omnipotent Father can provide for his children. Knowing all our ways and doings and words and thoughts, he also knows our prayers, even the desires of our hearts directed to him, and he knows best how to adjust the fulfillment of our petitions to our temporal and eternal welfare.

Is. 6, 3: *Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.*

The holiness of God is his absolute purity, according to which all his affections, thoughts, will, and acts are in perfect consistency with his own nature, and in energetic opposition to everything that is not in conformity therewith. This is also the notion which Isaiah has of the holiness of God. For immediately after the description of the wonderful vision which embodied the great trishagion given in our text, the prophet continues:—*Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.*¹⁾ God is holy, thrice holy, though not three holy ones, but one Holy One, in three persons, each of whom is what each of the others is, the Father the Holy One, the Son the Holy One, the Holy Ghost the Holy One, the Lord of hosts. He is the same everywhere: the whole earth is full of his, not *their*, but *his*, glory. Beside him, the Holy One, in his divine purity and conformity with his divine nature, man, even though he be a prophet of the Lord, is of unclean lips, dwelling in the midst of people of unclean lips. And knowing that the Holy One is in energetic opposition to everything that is not of pure godliness like Himself, the prophet cries out, Woe is me! for I am undone. The wrath of God is the reaction of his holiness against all ungodliness.

1) V. 5.

Dan. 9, 7: *O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces.*

These words are a part of the prophet's confession and penitential prayer beginning in the fourth verse of the chapter and continuing to the nineteenth verse. Throughout this prayer Daniel, confessing his sin and that of the people, also acknowledges that they have thereby incurred the righteous wrath of God, as when he says in the 14. verse, 'Therefore hath the Lord watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us: for the Lord our God is righteous in all his works which he doeth: for we obeyed not his voice. Thus standing with the blush of shame upon his downcast face before his God, the prophet by word and mien and attitude avows that in all the sin and guilt of men God has no share, but is and remains all righteousness, all his acts and judgments being in full accord with his holy will and the utterances thereof.

Ps. 33, 4: *The word of the Lord is right; and all his works are done in truth.*

God is truth inasmuch as he is as he manifests himself in word and deed, and his works are in full agreement with his words. Men may deceive by word and deed, pretending to be what they are not, or saying what they do not mean or will not fulfill. But the word of God is a true manifestation of the mind of God, and his works bear out his words to the letter. He who trusts in what God has once spoken is never deceived. יָשָׁר is the Hebrew for *straight*. There is no crookedness in God or his word. אֱמֻנָה is *faithfulness*. God is ever worthy of all confidence.

Ps. 145, 9: *The Lord is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works.*

The 145th psalm is a song of the royal psalmist to the King of kings, the Lord of unsearchable greatness and glorious majesty, mighty in terrible acts.¹⁾ But throughout

1) Vv. 1—6.

the greater part of the psalm the theme is the goodness of the everlasting King toward his subjects, who are also his handiwork. Not only shall his saints bless him¹⁾ for his grace and mercy shown forth in spiritual blessings, but all his works have reason to praise him as the Preserver of them all. The ancient church took the benediction over the noonday meal from this psalm: *The eyes of all wait upon thee*, etc.²⁾ Thus the almighty Ruler of the universe, who will destroy all the wicked,³⁾ is the kind Provider of all blessings for every living thing, and our text sounds the keynote of the magnificent psalm. A. G.

THEOLOGICAL TRAINING IN THE EARLY LUTHERAN CHURCH OF AMERICA.

The Lutheran church of colonial times in America was in various ways and degrees colonial. The first Lutheran congregation in this country was the beginning of an American colony, New Sweden in the valley of the Delaware. The Dutch Lutherans on the Hudson were colonists in New Netherlands. The earliest German Lutheran congregations on American soil were made up of Palatine colonists sent to the pineries on the banks of the Hudson by the British government, and Palatine colonists were the pioneers of Lutheranism in Virginia and the Carolinas. Ebenezer was a colony of Lutheran Salzburgers in Georgia. In Pennsylvania, Germantown, New Hanover, New Providence, and other German settlements, were also the seats of early Lutheran congregations.

The pastors of these colonial congregations were, like their people, colonial. They were not indigenous to the soil to which they had been transplanted. They had re-

1) V. 10.

2) Vv. 15. 16.

3) V. 20.