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## THE OLD LUTHERAN DOCTRINE OF FREE-WILL IN THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION.

(Concluded.)

To His Church the Holy One has given the *correct means of being constituted and made one*: "I have given them *Thy Word* and I pray for them, not only for them, but also for all who *by their Word* believe on me, that they may be one," John 17. Thus the Church is made, constituted, and forever kept together by the Word, not by a confession. This Church — and this only — can make a true confession of what constitutes her. That is the psychological order. We presume that Dr. Richard is able to give from memory a correct Lutheran definition of the Church, but not being of it he stumbles when he steps up to her from a different direction — here from the relation of Church and doctrine. We may mark his way of proving the prevalence of free-will by the confessions as unacknowledged rationalism. Let us hang it low, that he who runs may read. We quote Dr. Richard: "It is in part" — what are the remains? — "with the hope of making at least a small contribution to the inculcation of the principles stated above" (that Lutherans must be clocks never striking and ticking alike) "that we now advance to the discussion of the subject placed at the head of this article (The Old Lutheran Doctrine of Free-will), and we begin with the year 1530, for prior to that time there was no Lutheran Church, but only Lutherans, who were united in opposition to the teaching of the Roman Catholic

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# THE PROOF TEXTS OF THE CATECHISM WITH A PRACTICAL COMMENTARY.<sup>1)</sup>

(Continued.)

John 20, 17: *I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.*

In that touching discourse with Mary Magdalene after His resurrection, Christ says among other things: "I ascend unto *my Father*, and *your Father*." The term *Father* is here applied to the first person of the Trinity, and He is said to be the Father of Christ and the Father of Christ's disciples, the true Christians. But let us observe the peculiar wording of the text. The Lord does not say: "I ascend unto *our Father*," but, "I ascend unto *my Father* and *your Father*," indicating that though we have with Christ the same Father, yet not in

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1) With the present issue Prof. Wessel relieves the editor in expounding the proof texts. Regular contributions by the same author may be expected on this subject. — Ed.

the same sense. *Christ stands in a peculiar and unique relation to the Father.* God is the Father of Christ on account of the essential, most singular, and inexplicable eternal generation of the Son. Ps. 2, 7: "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten Thee." (Cf. THEOL. QUART., vol. X, p. 167.) Christ is "the Only-Begotten of the Father," John 1, 14. 18; He is the essential and co-equal Son of God, being "one with the Father," John 10, 30. "He is the Son of God, not *χάριτι*, or by grace, but *φύσει*, or by nature, John 1, 14. 18." (Quenstedt.)

The "brethren," however, to whom this message is to be communicated (cf. John 20, 17: "Go unto my *brethren*, and say to them"), the disciples of Christ, the true Christians, are through Him the adopted children of God, *χάριτι*, by grace. John 1, 12: "But as many as received Him, to them *gave* He the power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." His disciples He taught to pray: "Our *Father*, which art in heaven."

In short, Christ born out of the essence of the Father is very God of very God; the believers, begotten "with the word of truth," James 1, 18, "born of incorruptible seed, by the Word of God," 1 Pet. 1, 23, "born of God," John 1, 13, remain men, creatures of God.

The subtle discrimination made in the text between "*my* Father and *your* Father," etc., has been observed and commented on ever since the days of the church-fathers. Augustine's terse explanation may find a place here: „Non ait, Patrem *nostrum*; aliter ergo meum, aliter vestrum; *natura* meum, *gratia* vestrum. Et, Deum meum et Deum vestrum. Neque hic dixit Deum *nostrum*; ergo et hic aliter meum, aliter vestrum. Deum meum, sub quo et Ego sum homo: Deum vestrum, inter quos et Ipsum Mediator sum." (Tract. CXXI.) "He does not say: '*Our* Father;' therefore in one sense mine, in another, yours; mine by *nature*, yours by *grace*. And, He says, '*my* God and *your* God.' Here, too, He has not said, '*our* God;' therefore also here in one sense mine, in another yours.

*My* God, under whom also I am as a man; *your* God, whom I reconciled to you as the Mediator between you and Him."

Mal. 2, 10: *Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us?*

In a certain sense God is the Father of all mankind. "Have we not all one *Father?*" This rhetorical question demands an answer in the affirmative. The reason for this implied assertion is given in the second interrogation which is in the nature of an explanation to the former. "Hath not one God *created us?*" Inasmuch as God *created* all mankind, He is said to be the *Father* of all.

But this universal fatherhood of God over all creatures must not be confounded with the special fatherhood over His children adopted unto Himself through Jesus Christ. As Christians we have become God's children in a sense in which not all men are His children.

If there be no other connection between God and man than the fact that God created him, this fatherhood will avail him nothing. Man, by sin, has lost the first estate into which he was created. Sin has separated him and his God. The Prodigal Son, who had wasted his substance in riotous living, full well knew that he was not worthy to be called his father's son. He was a *lost* son, until he returned penitently. Cf. Luke 15, 11 sqq. The relation in which man by nature stands to God is that in which a violator of the law, convicted of, and condemned for, his crime, stands before his sovereign. He is the object of divine displeasure. "The wrath of God abideth on him," John 3, 36. The condemnation that Christ hurls at the Jews who did not believe on Him, applies to all unbelievers: "Ye are of your *father*, the *devil*, and the lusts of your father you will do," John 8, 44. Again, in the language of Scripture: "They have corrupted themselves; their spot is not the spot of children: they are a perverse and crooked generation," Deut. 32, 5. The wicked are not spiritual children of God, but rather "children of the wicked one," Matt. 13, 38.

Who, then, are the only true children of God? Paul answers: "Ye are all the *children* of God by faith in Christ Jesus," Gal. 3, 26.

This distinction between the universal and the special fatherhood of God must be plainly kept in view, in order to guard against that rationalistic conception of the "all-fatherhood of God," according to which God is supposed to be a gracious God without Christ, a conception about which the lodges prate so loudly in order to mislead the unwary, and which finds expression in that meaningless jingle of phrases: "The fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man."

Eph. 3, 14. 15: *For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.*

In these opening words of the supplication of the Apostle Paul for the congregation at Ephesus, the first person of the Trinity is spoken of as the Father in reference to His dear Son, Jesus Christ. Why He is so termed has been sufficiently expounded in a preceding passage. But God is also called Father on account of the *family* that is named of Him. This latter fact we shall endeavor to elucidate.

The phrase: "Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named," reads in the original: *ἐξ οὗ πᾶσα πατριὰ ἐν οὐρανοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς ὀνομάζεται*. The point made by the apostle in these words is somewhat obscured by the English translation. In Greek there is a play upon the words *πατήρ* (Father) and *πατριὰ* (family) which cannot be reproduced in English. The Greek word *πατριὰ* (family) is etymologically derived from *πατήρ* (Father). "The relation of names expresses here a relation of facts. God is the true Father to every family, loving it and caring for it." (Voigt.) The word for *family* (*πατριὰ*) designates a lineage, the descendants of a common father; so a *πατριὰ* is a generation of children. Thus Joseph, Luke 2, 4, is described as "being of the household and *family* (*πατριὰ*) of David." — "From whom," *ἐξ οὗ*, obviously refers to the "Father (*πατέρα*) of our Lord Jesus Christ." Every *πατριὰ*,

says the text, receives its name from the *πατήρ* (Father). It is so named because it stands in close relation to the Father. The term *Father* connotates the notion *child*. A person is called a *father* because he has a child or children. Now, who are they that stand in child-relation to this heavenly Father? Who are they of whom God says: These people belong to my family, they are my children? "Ye are all the *children* of God by *faith* in Christ Jesus," Gal. 3, 26. So, then, "*every family*" does not comprise all mankind, but only the community of God's own. This explanation is in keeping with the context and is favored by the tenor of the whole epistle. (Cf. chap. 1, 9. 10.)

From the foregoing it is already patent what the endearing appellation is that the Father has bestowed upon those constituting His family. In holy wonderment over the ineffable grace of God in Christ Jesus, St. John exclaims: "Behold, what manner of love the *Father* hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the *sons*" — *τέκνα*, the *children* — "of God," 1 John 3, 1. Only they who have received the adoption of sons can cry: "Abba, Father!" (Cf. Gal. 4, 6.)

The name *Father* calls to mind all the abundant mercy God has showered upon us through His dear Son, in whom He has adopted us as His children; the name "*child of God*" contains the unspeakable blessedness of a sinner saved. "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ," Rom. 8, 16.

Now, God has a family *in heaven*. The text says: *πᾶσα πατριὰ ἐν οὐρανοῖς* — every family in heaven. This expression does not only comprise the perfected saints, but primarily the "sons of God," Job 38, 4. 7, the holy angels, divided amongst themselves into various orders, such as thrones, dominions, principalities, powers, Col. 1, 16, cherubim and seraphim, Is. 6, 2. — The Father has a family *on earth*: His children collected from among all nations, kindreds, and tongues. Both the children in heaven and those on earth constitute one great family, the *ecclesia una sancta* in a wider sense.

Luther's free translation: "Der der rechte Vater ist ueber alles, was da Kinder heisst im Himmel und auf Erden," is at the same time a beautiful commentary of the text.

Gen. 1, 1: *In the beginning God created heaven and earth.*

This statement, so simple yet so sublime on account of its very simplicity, brands all the nebulous theories regarding the creation of the world of so-called scientists as falsehoods and lies.

"In the beginning *God* created heaven and earth." Incontrovertibly, then, God already existed *in* the beginning, *aye, before* the beginning of things. Besides Him there was nothing that had existence. It was He alone that inhabited eternity. "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever Thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, Thou *art* God," Ps. 90, 2.

"*In the beginning* God created heaven and earth." The phrase, "In the beginning," precludes the evolutionistic notion of the eternity of matter. This world of ours had a beginning. "Of old hast Thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of Thy hands," Ps. 102, 25. In the light of these majestic dicta of Scripture, how absurd, nonsensical, and puerile are the vague mouthings of the evolutionists! Millions of ages ago, say they, the illimitable space was filled with nebulous matter. This indefinable something "gradually cooling and contracting, threw off, in obedience to mechanical and physical laws, successive rings of matter, from which subsequently, by the same laws, were produced the several planets, satellites, and other bodies of the solar system." Whence did this nebulous matter come? Who established these mechanical and physical laws? How did they work?—all of which questions we should not have the temerity to ask. It must suffice that Science has spoken. Thus God is done away with. "The *fool* hath said in his heart, There is no God." A scientist of this stripe is a *fool*.

"In the beginning God created *heaven and earth.*" That was the actual beginning of this world's history, the beginning

of all things, the beginning of time. Heaven and earth were *created*. They did not arise by a process of emanation, nor were they evolved from any pre-existent primeval material. The statement simply reads: God *created* heaven and earth in the beginning. That says, when as yet there was no material existence, God brought this world into being by His almighty creative power. "He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast," Ps. 33, 9.

From the foregoing explanation the meaning of *create* becomes patent. Prior to the *beginning* of which the text speaks God only was in existence, nothing else besides Him. God called into being this universe. How? Out of nothing. Hence to *create* means to *make out of nothing*. The word  $\text{בָּרָא}$ , to *create*, occurs about fifty times in the Old Testament and is always used in reference to God. God only can create. Everywhere it signifies a divine production, a bringing into being by God's almighty power that which had no existence before. In a few instances where  $\text{בָּרָא}$  is used, a material is not absolutely excluded, as for example in Gen. 1, 27, but the primary and proper signification of the term is to *produce something out of nothing*, as is evident from the passage under consideration, where the idea of pre-existent material is simply absurd. The making of heaven and earth is a *creation out of nothing*. By His creative word God called the things that were not into existence, τὰ μὴ ὄντα: ὡς ὄντα, Rom. 4, 17. "Things which are seen were not made of things which do appear," Hebr. 11, 3. (See Is. 42, 5; 40, 26, etc.) —

$\text{בָּרָא}$  (*bara*) is also applied to the almighty work of Renovation. When David prays: "Create in me a clean heart," Ps. 51, 12, he thereby confesses his utter inability to make his heart clean. To do so is not within the power of man; it, too, is a work of divine omnipotence. This David knew from the Word of God; this he had learned by sad experience.

The Greek word corresponding to the Hebrew *bara* is *κτίζω* (*create*), as is evident, *e. g.*, from Col. 1, 16: "By Him were all things *created*" (*ἐκτίσθη*). Rom. 1, 25: "They wor-



shipped and served the *creature* (τῇ κτίσει) more than Him who *created* it" (τὸν κτίσαντα). Eph. 3, 9: "God who *created* all things (τὰ πάντα κτίσαντι) by Jesus Christ." Instances might be multiplied. The term is not only used in reference to the creation of the world, but also in regard to the new-creation in Christ. Conversion of man is, according to Scripture, a new-creation. Eph. 2, 10: "We are His workmanship, *created* (κτισθέντες) in Christ Jesus." Man, by nature, is *dead* in trespasses and sin. To bring this dead man to life spiritually is as great a miracle as to raise a dead man from the grave; it is a work requiring the same almighty creative power that produced this visible world. Conversion, too, is a *creatio ex nihilo* by the word of God.—In short, the true and original meaning of *create* in the Old and New Testaments is *to produce out of nothing by the mere power of His word*. It is a prerogative of the almighty God.

From this very first passage of the Bible we learn how vain are the imaginings of those self-styled scientists who endeavor to substitute a vapory theory of evolution for the doctrine of creation; we observe furthermore how flatly Scripture denies atheism, polytheism, pantheism, and all other cognate "isms."

On the other hand, this passage affords great consolation for the Christians. This God, who has created heaven and earth, is our dear Father in Christ Jesus. He, the Almighty, can keep us in every need. With Him all things are possible. In all confidence we can trust in His divine guidance, saying with the psalmist: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth," Ps. 121, 1. 2. And again: "Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth," Ps. 124, 8.<sup>2)</sup>

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2) It may not be amiss to call attention to the fact that the words "God created" in the original text read: בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים (bara Elohim), thus joining a verb in the singular number (bara) with a plural noun (Elohim).

Hebr. 11, 3: *Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.*

In the preceding passage the *fact* of God's having created heaven and earth was stated; in this we are informed of the *manner* in which He performed the work. "The worlds were framed *ῥήματι θεοῦ*, *by the word of God.*" God said, "Let there be light!" and there was light. Through this almighty fiat of God things that did not exist before came into being. "He spake, and it was done," Ps. 33, 9. This assertion is enforced by what follows. The "things which are seen," *τὰ βλεπόμενα*, "the worlds," *τοὺς αἰῶνας*, all that exists in time, have not their being from things which appear in outward manifestation, *μὴ ἐκ φαινομένων*. This says emphatically that there was no material present out of which the "things seen" could have been made; there were no earthly germs, substances, or cells pre-existent from which by the power of nature the world could have evolved. This latter clause says as plainly as language can put it that the creation of the world was a *creatio ex nihilo*, and thus it substantiates the former, which declares that the worlds sprang into existence by the omnipotent *word* of God. Luther's translation, "dass alles, was man siehet, *aus nichts* worden ist," though not literal, hits the nail on the head.

The doctrine of the creation of the world is an article of faith. "*Through faith* we understand that the worlds were framed by the *word* of God." But does not Rom. 1, 18—20 say that natural man can know of the existence of God by virtue of his reason, that he can know by the things that are made that there is a Creator? Is there a contradiction between these two passages? By no means. When contemplating nature the light of reason tells us that of itself, by accident, this world could not come into being. It must have had a rational, super-

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This plural form of the noun indicates plurality *in* God, but not a plurality of Gods. The verb in the singular indicates that the Creator of heaven and earth is *one* God.

natural, wise, divine author. Further than this, however, reason cannot argue. *How* this universe was made reason cannot fathom. That it was made by the *word* of God reason cannot know. Reason says: *Ex nihilo nihil fit!* There must have been a matter from which the world was made. Therefore the text says: "*Through faith* we understand that the worlds were framed *by the word of God.*" Through what faith do we understand this? Through faith in the Word of God as it is recorded in Gen. 1, Ps. 104, and other passages which treat of this matter. This word is God's word, therefore true. This we believe, upon this we rely, and are thus divinely certain as to how this world was created, all the vain babblings of science falsely so-called to the contrary notwithstanding. Scientists are fallible men; God, who speaks in the Scriptures, is infallible. He, the Creator, knows more about His handiwork than all the geologists and germ theorists put in a heap. Where the statements of scientists and those of the Bible clash, the Bible must prevail, because it is the absolute truth from Genesis to Revelation.

Ps. 115, 3: *Our God is in the heavens: He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased.*

This passage is a mighty weapon in the hands of the believers, with which to put to flight all reproaches of unbelievers, scoffers, and blind reason. When questions are asked such as these: "How is it possible? How can these things be?" we answer in the words of Scripture recorded above. The text points out the omnipotence and sovereign majesty of God. "Our God is *in the heavens:*" that is the seat of His power and glory. He is not a man-made, impotent idol (cf. context), but the *almighty* God: "He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased."

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(To be continued.)

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