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WALTHER THE LUTHERAN.

“The Lutheran Church of this country mourns the departure of a spiritual father. . . . A very particular mission to the Lutheran Church of this century had been entrusted by God to this man”¹⁾— pensively the eye rests on these simple, yet far-reaching statements, which suggest two splendid *Richtlinien* for reflection: Walther and the Lutheran Church of America; Walther and the Lutheran Church of the Nineteenth Century.

The words quoted were uttered on May 15, 1887, at Walther's bier, when the remains of the great American Lutheran were about to be transferred from Concordia Seminary, whose President and best-known professor he had been, to “old Trinity,” the Lutheran mother-church of St. Louis, whose beloved *pastor primarius* he had been up to the hour of his death. The speaker, Walther's pastor, was a man not given to excessive praising or idolizing of men. The statements which he made regarding his famous parishioner were a sober estimate of Walther's worth, and they were spoken reverently and in the fear of God. In the same spirit we study these words, now that the centenary of Walther's birth is upon us, and seek to verify their scope and applicableness.

The Walther memorial of this year is to witness no hero-worship on the part of Missourians, no fulsome eulogies, no injudicious and unreflecting exaltation of human achieve-

1) *Lutheraner* 1887, p. 85.

THE PROOF TEXTS OF THE CATECHISM WITH
A PRACTICAL COMMENTARY.

THE SECOND ARTICLE.

(Continued.)

THE STATE OF HUMILIATION.

Phil. 2, 5—8: *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*

“*Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.*” Christ is set forth as a pattern from which Christians should copy. What *mind* was in Christ? “*He humbled Himself.*”

So Christ is a pattern of humility for the Christians. This is the scope of the present passage, and must not be overlooked in its interpretation. *Baldwin*: "Hoc observetur tantum scopus apostoli nostri, cui propositum non est, docere, quomodo Filius Dei carnem assumerit, sed quomodo Jesus Christus in sua humanitate formam servi assumerit *et hoc ipso exemplum humilitatis suis reliquerit.*" At the same time we have in this text the *sedes doctrinae* for the state of humiliation.

1. *Who humbled Himself?* "He," "Christ Jesus." Let us mark this well! Christ Jesus humbled Himself, the God-man, this Person who possesses a divine and a human nature, this theanthropic person. So who is humiliated and afterwards exalted? The *person* of Christ Jesus. *Quenstedt*: "Subjectum quod est persona τοῦ λόγου, non qua ἄσαρκος et incarnanda, sed qua ἔνσαρκος et incarnata." The entire context bears out this statement. Of the Χριστὸς ἔνσαρκος only the apostle can say that He "made Himself of no reputation," "He humbled Himself," and, later, that He "was exalted."

2. *According to which nature did Christ humble Himself?* According to His *human* nature. For *a priori*: the *divine* nature cannot be abased and cannot be exalted; it is immutable. *In Deum non cadit mutatio.* Again: The apostle says: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus,"—be humble! According to His *divine* nature Christ would not be presented to us as an example whom we were to follow. And again: The text says: He took upon Himself the form of a servant; He was made in the likeness of men; found in fashion as a man; He died—all of which can be said of the *human* nature only.

3. *Wherein does the humiliation not consist?* Not in the assumption of the human nature. One may call that a condescension, but not humiliation in the Biblical sense of the term. If His humiliation had consisted in His assumption of the human nature, His exaltation would consist in the laying aside of His human nature, and Christ would no longer be the God-man! The text does not say: "He was made *man*," but: "He was made *in the likeness* of men." Furthermore, as we have

seen, the subject of the whole discourse is Christ Jesus, the God-man. This theanthropic person, possessing a divine and a human nature, "*was made in the likeness of men,*" "*took upon Himself the form of a servant.*" So "the form of a servant" is not equivalent to His human nature, because that He already had and hence could not "take upon Himself."

4. *What, then, is the state of humiliation?* St. Paul says: "*Christ Jesus, being*" — existing — "*in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation,*" etc. What is the form of God? Clearly not the divine nature, otherwise the form of a servant were His human nature; of this form of a servant, however, Christ divested Himself, consequently that would be asserting that Christ is no longer true man. *Form, μορφή, Gestalt*, is the external manifestation, it is that whereby one is known, is seen; *form of God* is the external manifestation of God, that whereby God is known, is seen. The *essence* of God is presupposed; only He who possesses the *essence* of God can exist in the *form* of God. The *form* is the manifestation of the *essence*. God only can appear in the form of God. Since Christ is in the *form of God*, He is true God. God is invisible; still a *form, Gestalt*, is predicated of Him. The *form* of God is that whereby this invisible God manifests Himself as God. The *μορφή θεοῦ* is equivalent to the *δόξα θεοῦ*, the *glory of God*, John 1, 14, *i. e.*, the aggregate of all divine attributes, especially His omnipotence, His omniscience, and His omnipresence. "The Word was made flesh," says St. John, "and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father." By the manifestation of His divine attributes, of His divine majesty, they saw this *man* Christ is almighty, this *man* is God.

"Being in the form of God," Christ was "equal with God." *Ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων* = "in the form of God existing;" *ὑπάρχων* = existing — is a very emphatic participle. It shows: 1. that Christ *did not take upon Himself* the form of God, as it is said that He "took upon Himself the form of a servant," but that *He existed in it*; 2. that with the form of God Christ

is said to have possessed, at the same time, a divine essence and nature; that Christ Jesus, when He had taken upon Himself *the form of a servant*, neither laid aside the divine nature itself, nor in any way resigned the form of God. (Quenstedt.) — Christ existed in the form of God, and hence could have exercised it to its fullest extent, could have always made use of His divine majesty imparted to Him according to His human nature; He could at all times have acted as God, so that all might have seen this *μορφή Θεοῦ* at all times. But this He did not do. For the text reads: “*He thought it not robbery to be equal with God,*” *i. e.*, He possessed the equality with God, but did not think this a thing of booty that should be used as a means of self-glorification. And that He did not look upon this being equal with God as robbery, as booty, may be seen from the fact that he manifested this form of God, His divine majesty, only now and then in the service of the brethren, but not for His own honor and glory. —

So Christ might at all times have made use of this *form of God*. He did not—for a purpose: He wanted to become our Substitute and Savior, and so He “*made Himself of no reputation,*” etc. That is to say, as a rule, He laid aside the use of His divine majesty communicated to His human nature. He became a man like unto ourselves; He became a servant instead of a master; He humbled Himself so deeply as to die the death of a vile criminal on the cross; and all this He did for our sakes.

5. *Rays of glory.* The passages cited in the Catechism prove conclusively that Christ possessed “the form of God,” divine majesty, in the state of humiliation. John 2, 11 says that by the miracle of His turning water into wine Christ “manifested forth His glory.” John 11, 40 ff. speaks of the climax of Christ’s miracles, the raising of Lazarus. John 18, 6 tells us that with the words, “I am He,” Christ felled His captors to the ground. Aye, indeed, this man Jesus is almighty. Instances might be multiplied. Read Matt. 8, 23—27, which relates His stilling the tempest. In v. 24 we read: “He was

asleep." Here we see the form of the servant: He slept. "He was made in the likeness of men;" like other men He was in need of sleep; "He was found in fashion like a man." Reading v. 26, we behold "the form of God." The danger to that frail craft was exceedingly great, but the angry waves were obedient to His will. "He rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm." Whenever it pleased Him, He could make use of His divine majesty, as here. In v. 27 the men marveling say: "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?" He is "in the likeness of men," just like other men; yet He must be something greater. He cannot be from the earth, He must be from heaven! They saw the form of God, the majesty of God. They saw He was "equal with God." And it was not robbery on the part of Christ to act as He did act, for He was God even in the state of humiliation.—Or take Mark 5, 41 ff. The daughter of Jairus was dead. Christ had said, "The damsel is not dead." "They laughed Him to scorn." He was in fashion as a man; this they saw. The girl was dead; this they knew. Christ brought her to life: "Talitha, cumi!" The sneers were turned into astonishment; they saw the form of God.

We append a running commentary. "*Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,*" be humble, "*who, being*"—existing—"in the form of God," having in or about Him that whereby God is known, seen, or manifested as God, "*thought it not robbery to be equal with God,*" counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, esteemed it not rapine to be equal with God. In ancient times the victors looked upon their booty as upon a means of self-glorification and so used it. Thus Christ did not look upon His being equal with God; He did not make a boast, a display, of it; He did not use it constantly and fully, "*but,*" though He could have done so, "*He made Himself of no reputation,*" He emptied Himself. What this means the preceding context reveals negatively: He did not make a boast of His equality with

God. The succeeding context states the thought positively: He emptied Himself, "*taking the form of a servant.*" Christ, the God-man, who also according to His human nature possessed all power in heaven and on earth; who, also according to His human nature in the state of humiliation was the Lord of lords, He, whom the heavenly hosts would gladly have served at all times, came to serve others, to serve, to redeem us. The concept *form of a servant* is developed in the next phrases: "*being made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man.*" He was a man like other men, yet without sin. This "likeness" was manifested: He ate, He drank, He wept, He slept; thus He was "found in fashion as a man;" thus "*He humbled Himself.*" He did it; it was an act of His; willingly He humbled Himself. Willingly, for our sakes, He forewent high stations, honors, prerogatives, which He might rightfully claim and enjoy. And when the apostle says: "*and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,*" he indicates the last stage of humiliation, the climax of self-humiliation. So deeply Christ humbled Himself that He died the death of a vile criminal—for us! On the cross He cried out, "It"—the work of redemption—"is finished!" That was the purpose of His humiliation—our salvation! That was the reason why He did not employ His divine majesty constantly which He at all times possessed. The purpose of His humiliation was to swallow death up into victory, that we might bless God, saying: "Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!"

The Conception of Christ.

Luke 1, 35: *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.*

The angel Gabriel was sent to Mary, a descendant of David. His sudden appearance and unusual greeting amaze Mary. The angel tells her, she, the virgin, is to become the

mother of a son whom God will have named Jesus, Savior. This her son is at the same time to be the Son of God, and is to fulfill the prophecies concerning the son of David, the eternal King of Israel. Mary asks wonderingly, "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" Gabriel explains matters, saying, "*The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee,*" and thus "*the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee,*" and in the power of God, the Holy Ghost, Mary shall conceive. Here, then, we have a proof passage for the words of the Creed: "Conceived by the Holy Ghost." What we are here told is wonderfully corroborated by the account of Christ's conception, Matt. 1, 18: "She (Mary) was found with child of (*éx*) *the Holy Ghost,*" and by the divine message of the angel to Joseph: "Fear not to take unto thee Mary, thy wife; for that which is *conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost,*" v. 20.

Her son, so Mary is told, will not owe his existence as man to a human father, but to the miraculous operation of the Holy Ghost, and hence "*also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.*" Here Christ's humanity and divinity are asserted. Mary's son is the Son of God. "*That holy thing which shall be born of thee*": thus the child of the Virgin Mary is distinguished from all other children of men. Man, born according to the common course of nature, is sinful. What is born of the flesh is flesh. Mary's son, however, is "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners," Hebr. 7, 26; "in Him is no sin," 1 John 3, 5; He knows of no sin, 2 Cor. 5, 21. Mary's son is the Son of God. A miraculous conception, a wonderful birth! If asked how it came to pass, we answer with the theologians of old:

Quid sit nasci, quid processus,
Me nescire sum professor.

The Birth of Christ.

Is. 9, 6: *Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given.*

Seven centuries before the Christian era Isaiah prophesied of Christ's conception and birth, saying: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call His name Im-

manuel," Is. 7, 14; and again: "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given." Noting the context of the latter passage, we observe the prophet speaking of a great light shining to a people walking in darkness. The result of the illumination shed by that light is joy, great joy. Who is this great light? Immanuel. He is the cause of all this gladness. As to the structure of this passage, we notice that the prophet has employed the *parallelismus membrorum*, which abounds in Hebrew poetry. The two members virtually express the same thought, the latter enforcing the former, thus throwing more light upon it. "*A Child is born,*" a child of human flesh and blood. This Child is a *son*. Immanuel, Christ, is true man. This Child is *given*. Christ here appears as a gift, a gracious gift of God. God's grace impelled Him to bestow this gift upon us. It is a wonderful Child indeed. Commonly speaking, a child is born unto his parents, but this Child is born *unto us*, is given *unto us*, unto all people. And man, walking in darkness, all his thoughts, words, and deeds being enmity against God, had and has need of this *Child*, this *Son*. Man, without Him, must be damned everlastingly. Only the true believers, however, who know what a precious gift He is, can exult with the prophet: "Unto *us* a Child is born, unto *us* a Son is given!" — And as to the fulfillment of the prophecy see Matt. 1, 21 ff.: "And she" (the Virgin Mary) "shall bring forth a *son*, and thou shalt call His name *Jesus*, for He shall save His people from their sins. Now all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying: Behold, a *virgin* shall be with *child*, and shall bring forth a *son*, and they shall call His name *Immanuel*, which, being interpreted, is, God with us." Cf. Luke 2, 41; John 1, 14; Gal. 4, 4.

The Burial of Christ.

Ps. 16, 10: *Thou wilt not suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption.*

This passage is quoted by Peter in his great discourse on the day of Pentecost, Acts 2, 27. This proves beyond doubt

that Christ is God's *Holy One*. When the psalmist says of the *Holy One*, the God-man, that He is not "to see corruption," he speaks of Him according to that nature according to which He had flesh and blood, and according to which He might have seen corruption had He not been the Holy One. This truth, so plainly stated in the Old Testament, finds its corroboration in the New. Christ's sacred body was laid in the sepulcher and remained there to the third day without seeing corruption.

The Purpose of Christ's Humiliation.

Christ was not compelled to undergo this humiliation, but He did it willingly, out of love to us. In this state He carried out the work of redemption. Hence, in answer to the question, "For what purpose did Christ thus humiliate Himself?" our Catechism says: "To redeem me, a lost and condemned sinner."—This topic, having frequently been dwelt upon in the explanation of preceding passages, needs but brief mention here.

Rom. 3, 23: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Since all have sinned, all men by nature are lost and condemned creatures. But "the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost," Matt. 18, 11. Since all men by nature are lost, Christ has saved all without exception. This truth Scripture reiterates again and again. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," John 1, 29. He taketh away the sin of the world, *i. e.*, of all men. "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world," 1 John 2, 2. Christ has even bought them that deny Him, 2 Pet. 2, 1. So whosoever is now lost is lost of his own fault. In answer to the question, "Whom has Christ redeemed?" we confess: "Me, and all lost and damned sinners." (Cf. Mezger, *Entwuerfe*, p. 136.)