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THE MISSOURI SYNOD AND DIETRICH'S CATECHISM.

The late Intersynodical Conference which was convened at Fort Wayne during August, 1905, had met for the stated purpose of examining the proof-texts of Scripture bearing on the doctrine of election. As frequently happens during discussions of this nature, matters not really essential to the business in hand were touched upon by the speakers. Thus the Fort Wayne Convention was advised that the Missouri Synod had adopted a new catechism for use in its churches and schools in lieu of Conrad Dietrich's Catechism, formerly the authorized catechism of the Missouri Synod; and that this action was tantamount to a repudiation of Missouri's former teaching on the subject of election, inasmuch as Dietrich's Catechism taught the doctrine which the Missouri Synod at present rejects. We quote the information as it was communicated to the public through church papers at the time.

Dietrich's Catechism was referred to in order to prove that the opponents of Missouri stand where this Synod (Missouri) stood formerly. Dietrich's edition of Luther's Smaller Catechism was for years published by the Missouri Synod and used in its churches. This catechism teaches on election: The grounds for election are threefold, to-wit: 1. the unfathomable goodness and mercy of God; 2. the unlimited atonement proclaimed in the Gospel; 3. the abiding saving faith in Christ. This catechism has for some years been replaced by another edition which, it is claimed, is in greater harmony with the present teaching of the Synod.

(Dr. Nicum in report to *The Lutheran* of August 31, 1905, regarding the Intersynodical Conference held at Fort Wayne, Ind., Aug. 8-10.)

THE PROOF TEXTS OF THE CATECHISM WITH A PRACTICAL COMMENTARY.

Deut. 6, 4: *Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord.*

Various renderings have been proposed for this passage, e. g.: "Jehovah is our God, Jehovah is one." (See Clarke, *The Holy Bible*, ad loc.) Inasmuch as our Lord cites this passage Mark 12, 29 in exactly the same sense and construction as the Authorized Version has given to our text, it is futile to attempt a different rendering. This text declares the *unity of God*. God is *achad*, one, i. e., "beside me there is no God," Is. 44, 6; "there is none else," Is. 45, 5. 6. 14. 18. 22; "there is none like me," Is. 46, 9. Paganism acknowledges many gods; Israel's God is one Jehovah. And this very name He will not share with another, Is. 42, 8 ("that is *my* name"). God's name stands for the divine essence. God cannot be named by comparison with other similar beings. His name is as much His own exclusively as His attributes, properties, etc. God is one and Jehovah is His name, therefore, means: There is one eternal, one almighty, one omniscient, etc., Being or Essence. We cannot imagine two eternal, almighty, omnipresent Beings without imagining, at the same time, a constant conflict between the two. Or if they exist in harmony with one another, we imagine a power still higher than the two,

which controls them, and thereby destroys their omnipotence. — A divine name, indeed, has been conferred on beings other than God. Moses is made *elohim*, a god, to his brother Aaron, Ex. 4, 16, to Pharaoh, Ex. 7, 1. The civil authorities, Ex. 12, 12; 22, 28; 23, 32; judges, Ex. 22, 8 (in Hebrew text v. 7: “the master of the house shall be brought unto *elohim*”); Ps. 82, 1, 6; John 10, 34; people of influence, Ps. 89, 7, and the holy angels, Ps. 97, 7 (comp. Hebr. 1, 6), are given the divine names *elohim* and *el*. Evidently this is done by a figure of speech. Scripture recognizes the fact that divine titles may be applied when the divine nature is wanting, Gal. 4, 8. Accordingly, when God claims the divine name for Himself alone, the term “name” is used as the exponent of the divine essence. He alone is all-wise, almighty, good, etc. Absolute goodness can be predicated of one Being only, that is God, Matt. 19, 17; Mark 10, 18; Luke 18, 19. Luther’s rendering in these three passages, “*der einige Gott*,” is preferable to the literal rendering of the Authorized Version, because it expresses the mind of Christ more strikingly. Likewise in its religious relations mankind is restricted to one divine Being only; there is “one Lawgiver,” James 4, 12; belief in the existence of one God is approved, James 2, 19. Christ mediated between mankind and one God, Gal. 3, 20. One God justifies Jew and Gentile, Rom. 3, 30. And so Paul teaches Christians: “There is none other God but one (*εἰ μὴ εἷς*). For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth (as there be gods many and lords many), but to us there is but one God” (*εἷς θεός*), 1 Cor. 8, 4—6.

For his own sake, not for use in the class-room, the catechist may note furthermore, that this text teaches also the *plurality of persons* in the One Godhead. “The Lord *Eloheinu* is one Lord.” *Eloheinu* is the plural. In the same breath God declares Himself to be several and one.

“On this verse the Jews lay great stress; it is one of the four passages which they write on their phylacteries, and they write the last letter in the first and last words very large, for

the purpose of exciting attention to the weighty truth it contains. It is perhaps in reference to this custom of the Jews that our blessed Lord alludes, Matt. 22, 38; Mark 12, 29. 30, where He says, *This is the first and great commandment. . . .* When this passage occurs in the Sabbath readings in the synagogue, the whole congregation repeat the last word *achad* (one) for several minutes together with the loudest vociferations: this, I suppose, they do to vent a little of their spleen against the Christians, for they suppose the latter hold three Gods, because of their doctrine of the Trinity. . . . Were the Christians, when reading this verse, to vociferate *Eloheinu* for several minutes as the Jews do *achad*, it would apply more forcibly in the way of conviction to the Jews of the *plurality* of the persons in the Godhead, than the word *achad*, of *one*, against any pretended false tenet of Christianity, as every Christian receives the doctrine of the *unity* of God in the most conscientious manner." (Clarke, *ibid.*)

Matt. 28, 19: *Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*

Three appellatives are here introduced, but these three are *one* name (*εἰς τὸ ὄνομα*, not *τὰ ὀνόματα*). In a different view Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are three names. One person of the Godhead calls the other by the name here given, Ps. 2, 7; John 17, 1; Luke 23, 46; John 15, 26. But the three names here given are backed by one authority, one almighty power, one grace and love, all of which virtues are required for the institution of a sacrament and its maintenance and abiding obligation upon men. (NB. This is not the place to show that *εἰς τὸ ὄνομα* means *into* the name; that is a matter that should be reserved when this text occurs again as the baptismal command; see Qu. 277.) This text, then, teaches that there are *three* persons in the Godhead, not more nor less, and that these three share the name, dignity, power, etc., of God equally. Hence, there is a Trinity in Unity. God is three in one, triune.

“Baptism is not made in the name of a quality or attribute of the Divine nature. The orthodox, as they are termed, have generally considered this text as a decisive proof of the doctrine of the holy Trinity: and what else can they draw from it? Is it possible for words to convey a plainer sense than these do? And do they not direct every reader to consider the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as three distinct persons? ‘But this I can never believe.’ I cannot help that—you shall not be persecuted by me for differing from my opinion. I cannot go over to *you*; I must abide by what I believe to be the meaning of the Scriptures.” (Clarke ad loc.)

2 Cor. 13, 14: *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all.*

Numb. 6, 24—26: *The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: the Lord make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.*

The preceding passage showed that there are in the Godhead three persons united in One Being. These two passages name and refer to the same persons, but show that they are distinct from each other. This was indicated also in the passage from Matthew by the definite article which is affixed to each person there named. The article expresses individuality, marks the person as distinct. But in these two passages the distinction is made stronger, because each person is represented as holding to us a peculiar relation. We are taught to view God the Father as the One who loves us. He so loved us that He sent His Son to redeem us, John 3, 16. He blesses us and keeps us. We are taught to view Christ as the God who is gracious to sinners. In Him the grace of God which bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Tit. 2, 11. He makes His face shine upon us; He does not look at us with a sour, surly, wry face, but with a face beaming with tender affection, radiant with smiles, as a father looks upon his child. And we are taught

to view the Holy Ghost as the God who brings us into communion with the Father and the Son by giving us peace with God. Thus these passages express to the mind what was exhibited to the senses at the Lord's baptism in Jordan, Matt. 3, 16. 17.

The three persons of the Trinity are really persons, not attributes, energies, modes of manifestation, etc., of the One Supreme Being. Each person not only exists together with, but also distinct from, the other. The revelation which John witnessed at the baptism of Jesus "forcibly marks divine personality." (Clarke ad Matt. 3, 16. 17.) As the Son was incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth, so the Spirit became visible also in a bodily shape, Luke 3, 22, like a dove, while the Father is distinct from both by the voice from heaven. Neither person in that moment was engaged in the same act as the other. Though by the unity of essence each cooperated, unseen by man's eyes, in the action of the other, yet each was engaged in a distinct act, as each also exhibited Himself in a different place from the other.

In conclusion, we note that the doctrine that there are three distinct Persons in one divine essence, is very old. We derive arguments for it from *both* Testaments. Adam, Moses, David, Isaiah, knew the true God to be triune, as well as did Peter, Paul, Luther, and any Christian child in our day. The Scriptures of the New Testament shed greater light on this truth, as they do on other truths, but the doctrine of the Trinity is recorded with sufficient distinctness on the very first page of the Bible. "God created," "the Spirit moved upon the face of the waters," "God said" (Gen. 1, 1—3), *i. e.*, God spoke into being through His Word, who was with Him in the beginning and was God (John 1, 1—3) — thus God, from the beginning, has declared Himself to be One and Three. When Aaron and his successors were commanded to bless the children of Israel, a stated form for doing this was given them. Thrice they had to invoke the name of God in their blessing, and God Himself calls this act "putting His name upon the children of Israel,"

Numb. 6, 27. This act of blessing the people was considered an important priestly function as it is mentioned on a line with other functions, Lev. 9, 22; 1 Chron. 23, 13. Isaiah was made to hear the seraphims sing their "Thrice Holy." Thus God was at pains to have His people constantly put in mind that the God who is truly One is this God who is Three in One.

Ps. 2, 7: *Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten Thee.*

We had ascertained that the three persons of the Godhead are distinct each from the other. The distinctness of each is declared not only to us, but also within the circle of the Holy Trinity itself. It flows from certain acts which cause us to predicate something of one person that we cannot predicate of the other. Each person has a personal attribute which never passes over to either of the other persons, and thus fixes its distinctness forever. In Ps. 2, 7 we behold this difference in full operation as between the Father and the Son. The brief statement is in the form of an address: there is a party speaking and a party spoken to. I and Thou, my and Thee, as every child knows, refer to the first and second person. The relation of speaker and addressee is accidental. The speaker on one occasion may be the addressee on another. Thus we find the addressee in this text the speaker in John 17. However, the subject of the brief discourse between speaker and addressee in the text before us never changes hands, so to speak, between them. The speaker here states with regard to Himself: "I have begotten Thee," and with regard to the party spoken to: "Thou art my Son." He claims for Himself fatherhood, for the party spoken to sonship. This relation is never inverted between the first and second persons of the Godhead. True, Christ is also called Father, Is. 9, 6. A person may hold to one the relation of son, while to another he holds the relation of father. Christ is "the everlasting Father," or the eternity-Father, from whom eternity takes its origin (if we can speak of an origin of eternity!). He is the father of the raindrop, Job 38, 28, the "Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turn-

ing," James 1, 17. He has created us and acts as a father to us. But He is not the father of the Father. This statement: "To-day I have begotten Thee," cannot be made by any other than the first person of the Trinity. And this statement: "Thou art my Son," based on the ground here stated, cannot refer to any other than the second person of the Trinity. Angels are called "the sons of God," Job 1, 6; 2, 1; 38, 7; also all men, Mal. 2, 10, especially those who walk in His ways, Gen. 6, 2. 4. But Christ alone is the Son of God, because "He hath begotten Him;" He is "the only Begotten of the Father," John 1, 14. 18; 3, 16. 18; 1 John 4, 9. In an inscrutable and ineffable manner God has communicated His essence to His Son, who thus is "the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person," Hebr. 1, 3. He is "the Firstbegotten," Hebr. 1, 6, "the image of the invisible God, the Firstborn of every creature," Col. 1, 15. Luther rightly renders the genitive *πάσης κτίσεως* by "vor" (*prae*, not *ante*) "allen Creaturen." The Son's origin not only antecedes by the difference of eternity, but also excels by the difference of divine majesty that of every creature. He has taken His being directly from God and shares all God's attributes, being "one with the Father," John 10, 30. He addresses the first person of the Godhead as His Father, and the Father proclaims Him as His beloved Son. This relation constitutes the personal attribute of the Father and Son.

John 15, 26: *When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of me.*

Gal. 4, 6: *Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.*

These passages state the personal attribute of the Holy Spirit. Christ speaks of Him as "another," John 14, 16, distinct from Himself and from the Father. He goes out from the Father (*ἐκπορεύεται*). Christ also is gone out from the Father (*ἐξέρχεται*), John 8, 42; 16, 27 ff.; 17, 8. The choice

of these two verbs, the former of which is always applied to the procession of the Spirit, while the latter is used to describe the advent of Christ into the world, shows that each is a different action. Virtually Christ, in John 15, 26, predicates of the Spirit both *ἐξέρχασθαι* and *ἐκπορεύεσθαι*, the former as an action to be expected by the disciples, the latter as an action which is already going on, the former as an official act of the Spirit, the latter as an action by which the Spirit is constituted in His essence and being. He is "the Spirit of God," τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ (1 Cor. 2, 11), *i. e.*, as the next verse declares, "the Spirit which is of God," τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ. The mode of this procession passes our comprehension. The allusion to breath issuing from the mouth (Ps. 33, 6; John 20, 22), to the wind (John 3, 8), is helpful, but inadequate to express this act.

The procession is not from the Father alone, but also from the Son, but this latter fact is not as explicitly stated as the former. Still the genitive in Gal. 4, 6, whether it is understood as expressing ownership or origin, sufficiently indicates the procession also from the Son. Christ also speaks and acts in a manner indicating this procession, John 20, 22; 15, 26; 16, 7.

The reading of the Athanasian Creed, especially to applicants for confirmation, would serve the purpose of a resumé or review of this doctrine.

(To be continued.)