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THE OLD LUTHERAN VIEW OF WHAT CONSTITUTES THEOLOGY.

Beginning with Luther and extending to about the middle of the eighteenth century, Lutheran writers on the nature of theology are careful to segregate theology from philosophy, jurisprudence, and medicine, thus destroying the ancient academic *quadrige* of the universities. They assert that theology must be placed in a class by itself. The later dogmaticians discuss this matter in the Prolegomena of their works on systematic theology, usually in the first chapter, *de natura et constitutione theologiae*, or some kindred phrase. The earlier dogmaticians, before Hutter, have not felt the necessity of entering into an elaborate argument on what constitutes theology, but they express their mind on this question in connection with the various heads of doctrine which they present. Luther wrote no *Dogmatik*, yet Luther has more than any other writer of the Lutheran Church made plain the essential and characteristic features of theology. In the "Locis," "Systems," and "Compendis" of the later period we find merely in logical and precise form what Luther had expressed more or less casually.

The old Lutheran view insists, first of all, that theology is something in the theologian, "in the soul of the human being whom we call a theologian," and that the theologian earns his title to that name by possessing theology.¹⁾ This is a basic point in the old Lutheran view, and it deserves to be exhibited

1) Calov, *Isagoge ad ss. theol.*, l. 2., p. 201.

THE PROOF TEXTS OF THE CATECHISM WITH A PRACTICAL COMMENTARY.

THE SECOND ARTICLE.

(Continued.)

CHRIST OUR HIGH PRIEST.

As our Prophet Christ *taught* the way of salvation; as our High Priest He *merited* salvation. Hence the priestly office is the foundation for the prophetic. To stand as the High Priest of the world between the 'holy and just God, on the one hand, and man, lost in sin, on the other, Christ must do two things: He must make *satisfaction* and *intercession* for our sins.

He must make *satisfaction* for our sins. How? 1. By rendering perfect obedience to the divine Law that man did not keep and cannot keep. This is called His *active obedience*. 2. By suffering the penalties threatened to the transgressors of

that Law, and hence offering Himself a sacrifice for the sins of the world. This is known as His *passive obedience*.

Now as to the passages quoted in our Catechism. Hebr. 7, 26. 27 shows us our need of a High Priest; Gal. 4, 4. 5 speaks of Christ's active obedience; 1 Pet. 2, 24 treats of His passive obedience, and 1 John 2, 1. 2 of His intercession.

Hebr. 7, 26. 27: *Such an High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this He did once, when He offered up Himself.*

The central thought of this passage is: Christ is our true High Priest, who offered up Himself once for all time. — The people of the Old Testament had a great multitude of priests, chief of them being the high priest. His most important duties were: 1. the bringing of the great annual sin-offering for the atonement of the manifold transgressions of the people; 2. the intercession before God for the people. These priests and their sacrifices were but types of the great High Priest Christ. "The law had the *shadow* of the good things to come, not the very image of the things," Hebr. 10, 1. Of the insufficiency of the Old Testament priesthood the writer of Hebrews says: "If there was perfection through the Levitical priesthood, what further need was there that another priest should arise after the order of Melchizedek?" Hebr. 7, 11. Hence the stress on the opening words of our text: "*Such an High Priest became us,*" *i. e.*, was suitable to us, of such a one we stood in need, "*who was holy, harmless, undefiled,*" etc. The inscription on the miter of the Old Testament high priest read: "Holiness to the Lord," but he himself was a sinner, not "holy, harmless," etc., who therefore had need "*to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins,*" before making offering for the sins of the people. Such a high priest could do us no good. We stood in need of one "*who is holy, harmless, undefiled,*

separate from sinners." This High Priest is Christ Jesus. He is true man, and as such could become man's substitute; He was at the same time "made higher than the heavens," *i. e.*, true God. This High Priest could fill up the chasm between God and man.

And what was the nature of His sacrifice? The high priest of the Old Testament offered up—what? A bullock, two goats, and a ram. But such sacrifices "can never take away sins," Hebr. 10, 11. Our High Priest "offered up Himself." He Himself was the Lamb that took away the sins of the world. The high priest of the Old Testament offered up a thing distinct from his own person; our High Priest offered up *Himself*. Because of this fact His sin-offering has *infinite* value. *Christ is both High Priest and Sacrifice*. This sacrifice was a *vicarious* sacrifice, made "for the people's" sins, for our sins, in our stead; the Righteous took the place of the unrighteous, *δικαιος ὑπὲρ ἀδίκων*, 1 Pet. 3, 18.—We further note that it was a *voluntary* sacrifice. Emphatically it is said: "This *He* did once," "*He* offered up Himself." O for the great love of our Savior! And this sacrifice is complete, perfect, perpetually efficacious. This thought is made prominent. We read: "This He did *once*," *i. e.*, once for all time. The repetition of the sacrifices in the Old Testament was a constant reminder of the insufficiency of the Levitical priesthood, of their sinfulness and that of the people. Our High Priest offered Himself *once*. "He offered *one* sacrifice for sins forever." "By *one* offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified," Hebr. 10, 12, 14. Hence, how abominable is the sacrilege and the blasphemy of the Popish priests who pretend to offer up Christ in an unbloody manner in their unholy mass, and that not only as an expiatory sacrifice for the living, but also for the dead! (See *Concil. Trid.*, sess. 6, cap. 2.—Cf. Hebr. 9, 12, 24—28; 10, 10—14; Rom. 6, 10; 1 Pet. 3, 18.) By such false, pernicious doctrine the Catholic Church declares the death of our Redeemer, the *only* sacrifice for our sins, to be insufficient and ineffective. "This He did *once*,"

says the text, and thereby “obtained *eternal redemption*,” Hebr. 9, 12. This offering is not to be and cannot be repeated. It is eternally valid and efficacious. — Such, then, is briefly 1. the character of the High Priest that became us; such is 2. the nature of the sacrifice that became us.

God’s justice is immutable. He demands: “Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,” Matt. 22, 37. 39. But how about us? “All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God,” Rom. 3, 23. The consequence of sin Isaiah states thus: “Your iniquities have separated between you and your God,” Is. 59, 2. On account of our sin we are enemies of God, Rom. 5, 11, and under the curse of the Law, Gal. 3, 15. That there might be help for us a reconciliation must be effected, divine justice must be satisfied, the Law must be fulfilled. For this purpose, our High Priest came into the world. He says: “I am not come to destroy the Law, but to fulfill,” Matt. 5, 17. Of His rendering perfect obedience to this immutable Law of God (obedientia activa) Gal. 4, 4. 5 speaks.

Gal. 4, 4. 5: *When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.*

“The fullness of the time,” τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου, is the time of the New Testament which began with the appearance of Christ in the flesh, when *God sent forth His Son*. The Greek word ἐξ᾿ἀπέστειλεν — *sent forth* — clearly indicates the preexistence of Christ before His incarnation. (Cf. John 1, 1.) This Son, coequal and coeternal with the Father, God *sent forth*. How? The text answers: *made of a woman*. This Son, very God, “was made of a woman,” *i. e.*, He became *man*. Christ, our High Priest, is God and man in one person. The phrase “made of a woman,” moreover, points to His wonderful conception and birth. He was conceived by the Holy Ghost,

born of the *Virgin Mary*. Of this God-man it is said that He was "*made under the Law*." We, all men, are by nature subject to the Law of God. Not so with Christ. He, God's Son, very God, is Himself the Lawgiver. But for our sake He was *made* under the Law.

And what was the purpose of His incarnation ("made of a woman") and His subjection to the Law ("made under the Law")? Answer: "*To redeem* them that were under the Law." This perfectly holy life, in full conformity with the Law, was not lived in the first place to be a pattern for us, but to fulfill the Law perfectly, and thus *to redeem* us. The *guilt* of having transgressed God's most holy will must be removed ere we could find favor in His eyes. The further purpose of Christ's obedience to the Law is stated thus: "*That we might receive the adoption of sons*." By nature we were the children of wrath, Eph. 2, 3. But now, since the Law has been fulfilled by our High Priest in our stead, the adoption of sonship is in store for us. "Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to every one that believeth," Rom. 10, 4. "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be righteous," Rom. 5, 19.

But our disobedience to the divine Law not only incurred the *guilt* of being sinners, but also subjected us to the *curse* of the Law. God said: "The soul that sinneth it shall die," Ezek. 18, 20. "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the Law to do them," Gal. 3, 10. From this curse we could not free ourselves, Ps. 48, 8. 9. Christ did. "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us," Gal. 3, 13. How? Peter answers:—

1 Pet. 2, 24: *Christ His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.*

"Christ His own self bare our sins." These words teach the *vicarious* sufferings of Christ. The pronouns *ἡμῶν, αὐτός*

= *our* — *He Himself*, easily overlooked, are very significant. They express two great, important truths: substitution and atonement. These pronouns say, Christ took the place of the sinner. Our sins they were, which He, the Holy One, took upon Himself and atoned for. — Again, the text says: “*Who* (Christ) bare our sins.” Christ is the acting subject. *He* bare our sins. So it was not a fate which He could not escape. The bearing of our sins was a *voluntary* act on His part, and because it was such a willing, patient suffering, His sacrifice is perfect and acceptable to God. Both locutions are biblical: 1. Christ imputed our sins to Himself (Eph. 5, 2), and 2. *God* imputed them to Him, as Isaiah says: “The Lord hath laid upon Him the iniquity of us all,” Is. 53, 6. — And when the apostle says: “He bare our sins *in His own body*,” Christ’s body appears as the vessel in which He carried our sins to the cross. Our sins, the sins of the whole world, He carried “*on the tree*,” *i. e.*, on the cross, Acts 5, 30; 10, 39. Christ suffered the most ignominious death for our sins, the death on the cross, the death of a vile criminal. He became a *curse* for us. “Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree!” — Having taken our sins upon Himself, Christ carried them to the cross. Upon this altar they were offered and thus blotted out, atoned for. By His stripes we were healed. This is the sacrifice of our High Priest, Christ, the God-man. “Christ hath loved us, and hath given *Himself for us* as an *offering* and a *sacrifice to God* for a sweet-smelling savor,” Eph. 5, 2. “He gave *Himself for us*, that He might redeem us from all iniquity,” Tit. 2, 14. By giving Himself a ransom for all, Christ, the High Priest, was the Mediator between God and men, 1 Tim. 2, 5. 6.

Peter addresses Christians who know that the first and foremost purpose of Christ’s sacrifice was to redeem them, Tit. 2, 14. In the present passage he describes the effect of Christ’s sacrificial death thus: “*That we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness.*” Here the state of the converted is described: they are “dead to sin.” They are transplanted from

a life of sin into a new life; they are freed from the *dominion of Satan*. Their new life is governed by "righteousness;" they "*live unto righteousness*," earnestly striving to do the will of God. And this, too, was one purpose of the death of Christ.

Christians, as was said, "live unto righteousness;" they are earnest in their endeavors to avoid sin, and are continually admonished to *sin not*, 1 John 2, 1. And still we have cause daily to pray, "Forgive us our trespasses!" And on account of these trespasses Satan accuses us "before our God night and day," Rev. 12, 10. How consolatory therefore to know that our High Priest, who made satisfaction for us, "hath an unchangeable priesthood," and "is able to save to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make *intercession* for us," Hebr. 7, 24, 25. Of His intercession the last passage treats.

1 John 2, 1, 2: *If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous: and He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.*

Jesus is our *Advocate*, παράκλητος, whence the transliterated English noun Paraclete. Παράκλητος (from παρακαλέω) means *summoned, called to one's side*, especially to one's aid; hence a *helper, an assistant, a succorer, a pleader, legal assistant*, one who pleads another's cause, an *advocate*. Here Christ is called our *Helper*, παράκλητος, before the throne of the Father, hence the specific term *advocate, intercessor* is demanded by the context. Our Advocate is Jesus Christ "*the Righteous*," He, who "*is the propitiation for our sins*," He, who made reconciliation, atonement, for our sins. Hence the relation between Christ's intercession and atonement is apparent. He intercedes for the sinners, by pleading His righteousness, His merits, the propitiation made by Him.

For whom does Christ intercede? The text says: "*He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.*" He, being the propitiation

for all men, makes intercession for all, also for the ungodly. An example of this kind we find in Luke 23, 34. This is called His *general intercession* (*intercessio generalis*). Of this we cannot speak here. — For whom does Christ intercede especially, and of whom especially does our text speak? Of the believers. St. John writes: “My little children, these things write I unto you, *that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate,*” etc. Who are they that sin not and yet have sin? They that sin not intentionally, willingly, with forethought and malice; they that are “dead to sin” and “live unto righteousness,” and still must daily pray, “Forgive us our trespasses,” — the Christians. For these Christ specially intercedes (*intercessio specialis*). How great is the comfort we derive from this doctrine! Jesus Christ, the Reconciliation for our sins, continually makes intercession for us with the Father. So we may rest assured that our petitions to the throne of grace are not unheard, but seconded and sustained by our great High Priest in heaven. “Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.”

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(To be continued.)