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THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST'S EXALTATION  
IN LUTHER'S THEOLOGY

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A Thesis Presented to the Faculty  
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,  
Department of Systematic Theology  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Bachelor of Divinity

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by

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June 1958

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Julius Schabert, *Das Evangelium nach Markus* (Leipzig: 1892), p. 11.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The teaching and life of the Church has been impressed and characterized by different accents and developments in various periods of the Church's history. It is common to refer to the early Church as Johannine in her spirit. Some would characterize the Reformation period as Pauline, though not signifying an essential difference by such a description. The contemporary or modern period would then be referred to as the age with the accents and spirit of the Synoptic Gospels. This latter description of the contemporary Church finds application in the Protestant Church of the West as a whole. It seems to involve principles or accents which emphasize and set forth the "historical Jesus." This emphasis is accompanied by a de-emphasis on the exalted Christ.

Those who refer to the spirit of the modern period as Synoptic should probably use this term in a qualified sense. It is altogether possible that the Synoptic Gospels are being misinterpreted by the Western Protestant denominations. Julius Schniewind in his commentary to the Gospel according to St. Mark reminds us: "Die Evangelien sind von Christen geschrieben, die an den Erwechten Christus geglaubt haben."<sup>1</sup> Therefore an interpretation of the Synoptic Gospels which neglects the exalted Christ is probably alien to the understanding which the early Church had of the Synoptics. New Testament study, however, is not our immediate concern in this thesis. At this point we wish merely to call attention

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<sup>1</sup>Julius Schniewind, Das Evangelium nach Marckus in Das Neue Testament Deutsch (Goettingen: Vanderhoeck & Ruprecht, 1956), I, 61.

to the de-emphasis on the exalted Christ in the Western Protestant Church milieu. If we, as Lutherans, are within Western Protestantism, it would hardly be possible for us to escape the influence of this milieu. And this writer believes this influence and its effects are readily found also within our own church body. There may be no traces of this influence in our doctrine and theological discussion, but it might become manifest already in our cultus and then in some of our religious publications and devotional art for popular consumption. If so, this thesis has a very "practical" bent. It tries to set forth Luther's doctrine of the exalted Christ as a corrective for the influences from the milieu of Western Protestantism.

Three questions were involved in the choosing of the topic here presented. The first gave the writer a concern for the doctrine of Christ's exaltation instead of leaving him with a more general concern for the holiness of Christ's Person. This question is raised for one who has been made aware of Protestantism's emphasis on the "historical Jesus." If this accent on Jesus the man has been constantly present through a study of the Gospels, then one is startled anew at the resurrection and ascension of our Lord. When the happening of the ascension is given its due by one who does not hold the three-story cosmology with heaven up above, then the ascension can only be expressed as taking over divine omnipresence and rulership. Such a man, who becomes omnipresent ruler to an infinite degree, must also be God. Such an exaltation certainly entails the holiness of Christ's Person, but it especially sets forth the man Jesus as also God. So we ask the question, "Have there been theologians who stressed the exaltation as they came to

the affirmation that Jesus was true God and true man?" It is fitting that a Lutheran would ask specifically whether Luther accents this approach-- through the doctrine of the exaltation--to the affirming of the union of the divine and human natures in Christ's Person. This is the first question.

The second question is that which really fixed this topic to a study in Luther. The question is born out of the writer's distress over the way Protestant Sectarianism regards the Person of our Lord. This is not meant as a criticism of the familiarity which characterizes Sectarian devotion to our Lord. Any real devotion to our Lord must involve familiarity. But this writer feels Protestantism's regard for Christ is often disrespectful familiarity rather than an adoration which would involve the relationship of holy familiarity. In seeking to abolish this disrespectful familiarity--this familiarity which cannot comprehend the amazing significance of Christ's Person or work--this familiarity which is begun and set aside with an easiness that might be described as "immoral," the writer found it natural to turn to the exalted human nature of our Lord Jesus Christ. If one does this, he begins to detect a de-emphasis on the exalted Christ in the teaching, preaching and devotional literature that has reached him. Unfortunately the setting up of national holidays in the United States of America has not been influenced by the Church's historic year of grace and its feast and fast days to any great extent. Therefore even we Lutherans find it inconvenient to celebrate our Lord's Ascension, which always falls on a work day; whereas, we do find occasion to accent the birth, passion, death and resurrection of our Lord in the cultus of our Church. This absence of the Feast of the Ascension in the

cultus of American churches is only a smaller mark of the de-emphasis of our Lord's exaltation. When one examines the literature and sermons of Protestantism, there is a very marked absence of the exaltation of Christ's human nature. Instead we see a constant pre-occupation with the suffering and death of Jesus. At this point the writer might be asked whether he intends to advocate a theology of glory to replace the theology of the cross which Protestantism seems to have. Here Luther himself shall speak to that question. It is necessary to quote his evaluation of theologians of glory and his own theology:

Das haben vorzeiten die hoehesten Theologi gethan, das sie von der menscheit Christi geflogen sind zu der Gottheit und sich allein an dieselbige gehenget und gedachten, man mueste die Menscheit Christi nicht kennen. Aber man mus so steigen zu der Gottheit Christi und daran sich halten, das man die menscheit Christi nicht verlasse und sur Gottheit Christi allein kome.<sup>2</sup>

This evaluation gives us the principles for a solution of our problem. We now contend that we must ascend to the human nature of Christ, in such a way as not to abandon the humanity of Christ which was in humiliation. We should know nothing of any human Christ sitting at the Right Hand of God and reigning, but Him who is declared to have suffered, been crucified, dead and buried. Therefore in saying that we want to remove the de-emphasis of our Lord's exaltation, we are not advocating a theology of glory in place of the theology of the cross. One of the fruits of the writer's investigation is that Luther shows us how the exaltation must always be soteriologically investigated, formulated and proclaimed. Yet

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<sup>2</sup>Martin Luther, "Die 12. Predigt am 11. tage Februar," D. Martin Luthers Werke, kritische Gessamtausgabe, edited by J. K. F. Knaake et al. (Weimar, 1883 ff.) 33, 155, 16ff. Hereafter cited as WA.

the writer feels that this exaltation is not given its due in Western Protestantism and that even within our Church this exaltation fails to receive its due in some of our "practical" work. Now why should this de-emphasis of the exalted Lord plague Protestantism and to a much lesser degree even our Church? Can the de-emphasis be traced to Luther? He did react against Christ being seated at the Right Hand of God as our Judge. He did emphasize the Lord of the stall and the cross. Can Luther be responsible for Protestantism's dwelling on our Lord of humiliation in such a way as to exclude the Lord of exaltation? This is the second question which led to the writer's investigation of the Doctrine of Christ's exaltation in Luther. The question has already been answered negatively by the quotation from Luther found above.

The third question has to do with the exalted Lord in His relation to the communion of saints. It seems to the writer that our exalted Lord was a most vital and personal reality to the early Church. This might be attested by the liturgical prayer, maran atha, which concluded the worship services of the early Church. The medieval Church gave expression to her continuous relationship with the exalted Lord in the creation of the liturgical ending to her collects: "Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end." In the Reformation period no one expressed the Church's continuous relationship with her Lord better than Luther. His doctrine and proclamation concerning the Kingdom of Christ receives emphasis throughout his writings. And in all these periods of the Church the living Lord of the Church was pictured by the saints not only in the state of humiliation, but also as He is now-exalted. The writer now means to imply that the accents of



Western Protestantism do not include an emphasis on the exalted Lord as reigning now in exaltation for the benefit of His saints. That this may be true is shown perhaps in Protestantism's unwillingness in her devotional art to picture the Lord as exalted. It seems rather that only the Lord of humiliation is in communion with the Church today. And yet there is something vague about this communion and relationship. We often hear it expressed as "going to the cross" or "standing at the cross." Perhaps this vagueness may be a result of a de-emphasis of the Lord's exaltation. Isn't it only the Lord of humiliation now exalted who is living reality, not the Lord of humiliation? Werner Elert's contention that we must connect the exalted Christ with the Kingdom of Christ, the doctrine of the Church and the doctrine of the Sacraments seems to be in order here.<sup>3</sup> Somehow then we must make the exaltation of Christ more than a doctrine to which Western Protestantism gives its assent. The exaltation of Christ must be living doctrine that speaks to the heart. It must have something to do with faith for Western Protestantism. Our third question then becomes, "How did Luther proclaim and teach the exaltation of Christ to the hearts of his listeners?"

The following thesis seeks to be a true setting forth of the doctrine of Christ's exaltation in Luther's theology with reference to the above interests and acknowledging this background and motivation.

It is necessary finally to call the reader's attention to the use of the adjective "exalted" in the phrases "our exalted Lord," or "our Lord as exalted." Throughout this paper "exalted" is used to refer to our

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<sup>3</sup>Werner Elert, Morphologie des Lutherismus (München: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1952) I, 223.

Lord's human nature as sharing divine attributes because of the personal union of His two natures, because of the Incarnation. This is commonly referred to as the genus maiestaticum in systematic terminology. Our use of "exalted" has no reference to the "exalted" of systematic terminology, which speaks of the constant use of divine majesty according to the human nature in the exaltation. The writer uses "exaltation" in the proper sense as a state of exaltation. This differentiating between "exalted" and "exaltation" in this thesis will be made more clear as we treat first of Christ's Person and then of His Work.

## CHAPTER II

### LUTHER'S INTEREST IN THE EXALTED CHRIST

Luther's interest in the exalted Christ arises from his interest in the Person of Christ. Nihil nisi Christus praedicandus.<sup>1</sup> Luther's interest in the Person of Christ was not an interest in the Person per se, though. Luther's interest was for the Christus pro nobis, Christus pro me. Pro me must be understood when Luther says Nihil nisi Christus praedicandus. Luther's interest was then the strong concern of faith. Christus pro me was the answer to his fearful question towards God which overcame all anxiety for the wrath of God. Since, however, the pro me was not just the subjective creation of Luther's own heart, he could not separate the Work of Christ, as though this could stand alone, from the concern or question about his Person.

This balance in Luther, which lays equal stress on the Person of Christ and on His Work, is not artificial. There is an interrelation between Work and Person which brings about this balance for Luther. And this interrelation is important here for characterizing and describing Luther's interest in the exalted Christ specifically. We may perhaps best approach Luther's connection of Christ's Person and Work through a comparison that Werner Elert draws between Anselm and Luther.<sup>2</sup> Anselm asked why there should have to be an incarnation of God in man. He

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<sup>1</sup>Martin Luther, "Predigten ueber das 2. Buch Mose," D. Martin Luthers Werke, kritische Gesamtausgabe, edited by J. K. F. Knaake et al. (Weimar, 1883 ff.) 16, 113, 7. Hereafter cited as WA.

<sup>2</sup>Werner Elert, Morphologie des Luthertums (Muenchen: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1952) I, 193.

found the answer in the necessity of the Atonement. This means that Anselm has to do with necessity, cause, and the God who wills with determination. Luther, on the other hand, asked why the Atonement should hold good or have reference for him. He found the answer in the Person of Christ, true God and true man, a worthy sacrifice counting for all men. This interpretation of Luther's question explains his concern for Christ's Person. Here we have the relation that binds the Work of Christ to the Person of Christ. Christ's Person has become the foundational structure for what Luther has to say about the soteriological Work of Christ. As everyone in controversy seeks to establish first his basis or foundation, so Luther fought with the concern of faith to defend the Person of Christ, true God and true man. Since this was contested so much by Luther's contemporaries, we find an amazing preoccupation in Luther with the Person of Christ. Because these controversies were concerned with the presence of the exalted Christ in the Sacrament, so the verbal expressions of Luther's view of Christ's Person all developed from concern for the exalted Christ. But there is also the other relation that leads from the Work of Christ to the Person: to bind the Person of Christ to the Work. The Person of Christ is bound to the Work, for the Person is understood and emphasized soteriologically. Werner Elert says the doctrine of Christ's Person has its starting point in the Work.<sup>3</sup> The Person of Christ becomes and is purely soteriological Grace from an amazing God. The Person of Christ is characterized and impressed throughout with Christ's Work. The doctrine of Christ's Person is all soteriology. Thus Luther has to do finally not with Anselm's God

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<sup>3</sup>Loc. cit.

who wills with determination, but rather with an infinitely amazing God of Grace.

These two relations in Luther's balance on Christ's Person and Work characterize Luther's interest in the exalted Christ, too. We may trace two concerns for him, both of which criticize and reject contemporary emphases at Luther's time. On the one hand there is the concern to bring all thoughts of exaltation and glory into God's revelation, Christ. For this reason he condemns those who let their thoughts flutter toward and through heaven.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand there is the concern to establish the Person of Christ only soteriologically. In this connection he constantly deplores those who would make Christ a tyrant, set to judge us all with wrath at his reappearing.

Therefore we knew Christ only as an angry judge, whose anger we had to reconcile with our good works and holy life and whose grace we had to obtain through the merit and intercession of the dear saints. That is a shameful lie that not only deceives poor consciences miserably but also profanes God's grace to the extreme, denies Christ's death, resurrection, ascension into heaven, etc., together with all His inexpressible blessings, blasphemes and damns His holy Gospel, destroys faith, and sets up in its place nothing but horror, lies, and error.<sup>5</sup>

Therefore Luther has an overwhelming interest in Christ's Person because the Person of Christ is the foundation of Christ's Work. Luther is specifically interested in the exalted Christ, for it was in the state of exaltation that Christ's Person was fully developed into doctrine and proclamation for Luther. This is due to Luther's historical situation and

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<sup>4</sup>WA., "Das XIV. und XV. Kapitel S. Johannis," 45, 549, 9ff.

<sup>5</sup>Martin Luther, "Psalm 23," Luther's Works: The American Edition edited by Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1956) 12, 156. Hereafter cited as AE.

its influences upon him and his theology. But through all the controversies and in all his writing, Luther's interest in the exalted Christ always remains soteriological. The exalted Christ is still the Christ of Luther's faith, who was in humiliation, Christus pro nobis.

## CHAPTER III

### CHRIST'S EXALTED HUMAN NATURE---COMMUNICATIO IDIONATUM

As we have seen, Luther's interest in the Person of Christ is really a concern for Christ's Person as the foundation of Christ's soteriological work. For this reason the Christological problem is raised for Luther already with the birth of Christ.<sup>1</sup> In order that Christ and His Work might count for men, Christ must be true man. In order that Christ and His Work might count for all men and not just Christ, Christ must be true God. This perfect union of two natures in one person is accomplished, according to Luther, already at the conception and birth of Christ. Luther rejoices that the child who lies in the crib is at the same time ruling the world.<sup>2</sup> For Luther this is the indescribably great miracle.<sup>3</sup> It is the mystery passing all mysteries. Two different entities, the Creator and creature, which are as far apart as nothing and something, or everything are united.<sup>4</sup>

This incarnation of God in man was for Luther a perfect, finished union of the divine and human in one Person. The divine was in the Person of Christ. "In Christ He is consummate Grace, Life, Salvation, Redemption."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Werner Elert, Morphologie des Luthertums (Munchen: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagbuchhandlung, 1952), I, 197.

<sup>2</sup>Martin Luther, "Epistel an Christtag, Hebr., 1. 1-12," D. Martin Luthers Werke, kritische Gesamtausgabe, edited by J. K. F. Schneke et al. (Weimar, 1883 ff.), 10, I, 1, 150. Hereafter cited as WA.

<sup>3</sup>Martin Luther, "Sermons on the Gospel of St. John," Luther's Works: The American Edition, edited by Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1956), XXII, 106. Hereafter cited as AE.

<sup>4</sup>AE, "Sermons on St. John," XXII, 361.

<sup>5</sup>AE, "Psalm 90," XIII, 137.

This statement shows Luther's view that God is in the Person of Christ. It also shows that Christ was a true man capable of being known and grasped. Luther never tires of stressing the humanity of Christ. "Wie tiefer wir Christus bringen ins Fleisch, je besser ist es."<sup>6</sup> With such a union in the Person of Christ Luther can say, "The infant Christ . . . created heaven and earth," or "The Son of God is crucified and dies."<sup>7</sup> Whatever is said of one nature, can be said of Christ as Person, too. In other words it can be said of the other nature when considered in Christ. Luther calls this communicatio idiomatum, and he is fond of stressing this as he says the Fathers have.<sup>8</sup> This communicatio idiomatum is finally the foundational statement for Luther's doctrine of Christ's Person. This communicatio idiomatum must be upheld and defended in order that there be a foundational structure for Christ's soteriological Work. Luther is conscious of his setting communicatio idiomatum as the foundation for his doctrine. He says that the disputes over the communicatio idiomatum are robbing him and Christians of their joy over salvation.<sup>9</sup>

Since this thesis is concerned with the doctrine of Christ's exaltation, we need show no concern for the problems which communicatio idiomatum raise for the divine nature. How God, Who may not suffer or

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<sup>6</sup>WA, "Evangelium in der Christmess. Luke 2, 1-14," 10, I, 1, 68.

<sup>7</sup>AE, "Sermons on St. John," XXII, 352.

<sup>8</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>9</sup>Martin Luther, Dr. Martin Luthers Saemtliche Schriften, edited by Dr. Joh. Georg Walch (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1890), XVI, 2231.



die, is in Christ, who suffered and died, is a problem that is not directly concerned with this investigation. The problems which communicatio idiomatum raise for the human nature are involved with this setting forth of Luther's doctrine of the exaltation of Christ.

Before considering the communicatio of the divine idiomata to the human Christ, we are involved in the question of when did this occur. If this perfect union takes place at the time of Christ's conception, and if Christ according to His human nature always has God's attributes--omnipresence, eternalness, wisdom and love--how can Christ be in humiliation or then later in exaltation? Luther is very clear with regard to these problems. The union takes place in the Blessed Virgin Mary at the instant of the sinless conception of our Lord. "In the fullness of time He assumed His humanity from the Virgin Mary."<sup>10</sup> And this humanity, though on the one hand suffering and dying, always had and has divine attributes--being everywhere and nowhere, and reigning over all things. Luther says:

Wu er aber ein solch mensch ist, der uber natuerlich mit Gott ein person ist, und aussor diesen menschen kein Gott ist, so mus folgen, das er auch nach der dritten ubernatuerlichen weise sey und sein musge allenthalben, wo Gott ist, und alles durch und durch vol Christus sey auch nach der menscheit.<sup>11</sup>

Christ's humanity shares divine attributes, therefore, because of its union with divinity in Christ's Person. If this union is effected at the time of our Lord's sinless conception, then our Lord is always an exalted human with regard to His Person. Luther can say that Christ began to be God with reference to His incarnation.<sup>12</sup> This is not meant to deny the

<sup>10</sup>AE, "Sermons on St. John," XXII, 323.

<sup>11</sup>EA, "Vom abendmal Christi, Bekenntnis," 26, 332, 13ff.

<sup>12</sup>EA, "Epistel an Christtag. Hebr. 1, 1-12," 10, I, 1, 3ff.

human nature of our Lord. Luther says at the same time that God began to be man.<sup>13</sup> The human nature remains, but because of union with the divine in Christ's Person, it always has divine attributes beside its human attributes. And it has these from the moment of the union, so that Christ is always an exalted human at the same time that he is truly human. There is the question whether our Lord's human nature can even be in a real humiliation. Luther said that Christ should be portrayed as a divine ruler already at his birth. Government is upon the shoulder of Mary's child.<sup>14</sup> We are not concerned with the reality of the humiliation here, however. We wish only to conclude that an exaltation of Christ's human nature is not possible if we consider only Christ's Person. Luther proclaimed Christ as exalted in his human nature even in humiliation throughout his writings. There can only be a doctrine of humiliation and one of exaltation with reference to Christ and his work. That is why we have often used the past participle, "exalted," in this thesis when referring to Christ. With regard to the Person of Christ alone, there has never been any human Christ, who has not had an exalted human nature. Christ's humanity has always shared divine attributes.

This maintaining of the communicatio idionatum seems to involve us in contradiction. How can Christ be in one place as a human, and yet be simultaneously everywhere as a human? This is what Luther and his communicatio idionatum seems to maintain. Luther says, "Wo du kanst

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<sup>13</sup>loc. cit.

<sup>14</sup>ibid., "Predigt am ersten Weihnachtsfeiertag, nachmittags," 34, II, 511, 20ff.

sagen: Wie ist Gott, da mustu auch sagen: so ist Christus der mensch auch da."<sup>15</sup> Yet Luther will maintain that Christ is truly human and only is one place. Here it should be noted that we are dealing with attributes of human local presence and divine omnipresence. The sphere of spatial dimension is used as example here because it was the sphere or aspect of the communicatio idiomatum which had to be dealt with so extensively in Luther's controversies with the Sacramentarians. Actually it was the Sacramentarians who found this position of Luther's hopelessly contradictory. They came to this view because divine omnipresence was something local for them. They said Christ as human couldn't be simultaneously local and then also locally everywhere. Luther never saw this particular either/or. For him Christ as human was present locally, and then he was present outside, above and beyond spatial terminology as God is. One could say God's mode of presence was so different for him, from that of the creature, that it stopped being anti-rational to possess both modes of presence at once. On the divine mode of presence, which Christ as human shares, Luther says, "ist auch Gott solte nicht, wo er auch ist, er sey an allen enden oder an etlichen enden."<sup>16</sup> Specifically with regard to Christ's human nature: "Dem da must die wesen Christi, so er mit Gott eine person ist, gar weit, weit ausser den Creatur setzen, so weit als Gott draussen ist, widerumb so tieff und nahe ynn all Creatur setzen, als Gott drynnen ist."<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup>WA, "Abendmal Christi," 26, 332, 31.

<sup>16</sup>WA, "Abendmal Christi," 26, 311, 20.

<sup>17</sup>WA, "Abendmal Christi," 26, 336, 15.

Thus Luther's communicatio idiomatum is a profound union of two radically different idiomatum. In stressing this union Luther coined many original expressions. Some would wish to make his whole doctrine something new, which did not understand the Scriptures in the same way as the early and medieval Church did. So Erich Seeberg says, "Orthodox war Luther nicht."<sup>18</sup> Werner Elert has perhaps best analyzed Luther's newness with regard to the communicatio idiomatum. He regards this new element in Luther as a contribution rather than something unorthodox. For him it is wholly within the the basic Spiritual statements and the definitions of the historic Church. He says it comes from Luther's concern to preserve the oneness of the Person of Christ through every doubt or controversy.<sup>19</sup> Luther's concern included an interest in the psychological oneness of the historical personality, Jesus Christ. This interest has become one of the dominant interests of the modern Church, though in another form than Luther's. Moderns wish to trace Jesus' Messianic consciousness. For Luther the interest in the historical personality was not free from his soteriological need for God's Son incarnate in man.

"He is one Person. He is not two Christs."<sup>20</sup> "Also das aller gewalt soll allein Christo nach der menscheit geben werden."<sup>21</sup> These are Luther's central affirmations regarding the exalted human nature of our

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<sup>18</sup>Erich Seeberg, Luthers Theologie in ihren Grundzügen (Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1937), p. 63.

<sup>19</sup>Elert, op. cit., I, 210.

<sup>20</sup>ib., "Sermons on St. John," XXII, 326.

<sup>21</sup>ib., "Auslegung des 109 Psalms. 1513," I, 691, 13.

Lord. Though they stress the oneness of the Person of Christ, they still maintain that only humanity can receive and lay aside exaltation. They also limit Christ's humiliation to His Work and exclude in one sense the humiliation of Christ's exalted human nature. "Divinity and humanity are now one essence and one Person in Christ."<sup>22</sup> Therefore we will turn to this continuously exalted human nature now to notice the areas of exaltation which are developed in Luther. Which are the areas which he expressly defines? We shall notice that the historical controversies of Luther's time played a large part in determining which areas of the exaltation were developed.

The first area or aspect of the communicatio idiomatum which gives divine attributes to the human nature is that of power. The exalted human nature is omnipresent, it shares eternalness, it shares omniscience.

The human nature shares the divine mode of presence which occurs even outside of space. Luther cannot describe this except in spatial dimensions. He qualifies his spatial description therefore in the following manner.

Nichts ist so klein, Gott ist noch kleiner, Nichts ist so gros, Gott ist noch grosser, Nichts ist so kurz, Gott ist noch laertzer, Nichts ist so lang, Gott ist noch longer, Nichts ist so breit, Gott ist noch breiter, Nichts ist so schmal. Gott ist noch schmaeler und so fort an.<sup>23</sup>

This description of the divine presence was given in Luther's "Vom abendmal Christi, Bekenntnis." It was only given in order to explain the divine mode of presence which Christ's exalted human nature shares.

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<sup>22</sup>AE, "Sermons on St. John," XXII, 326.

<sup>23</sup>WA, "Abendmal Christi," 26, 339, 39ff.

Nor does this apply to the human nature only after the resurrection. "He also ascended into heaven, but He was also in heaven before His ascension."<sup>24</sup>

The human nature shares the divine mode of eternal existence which occurs even outside of time. "This Infant, born of Mary and suckled by her or lying in her lap, created heaven and earth."<sup>25</sup> "The Son, begotten by the Father before the beginning of the world, lies in the lap of Mother Mary."<sup>26</sup> Elert helps in approaching this paradox by referring to Christ's entire soteriological work as "ein zeitloser Akt" according to the divine nature and exalted human nature.<sup>27</sup> It was Zeitspame for the human nature and considered as simple human nature having human attributes. The human nature as exalted does share the divine mode of existence, then. Perhaps we might call it being over, through and in time.

The human nature shares the divine mode of omniscience which occurs even outside of created thought. Luther attests this omniscience of the Person of Christ in his state of humiliation.<sup>28</sup> Yet he would not wish to describe God's omniscience as knowing only finite forms of thought. God's omniscience must be qualitatively different so that one may say with

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<sup>24</sup>AE, "Sermons on St. John," XXII, 325.

<sup>25</sup>AE, "Sermons on St. John," XXII, 362.

<sup>26</sup>AE, "Sermons on St. John," XXII, 323.

<sup>27</sup>Elert, op. cit., I, 210.

<sup>28</sup>AE, "Sermons on St. John," XXII, 135.

Elert: "Gewiss ist das Wissen des Menschen klein . . . Aber--'Gott ist noch kleiner.'"<sup>29</sup>

The first area of aspect of the communicatio idiomatum was never meant to be the chief one. In Luther the aspect of power was developed in connection with omnipresence, because of the controversies over the Real Presence of the exalted Christ in the Sacrament. Yet this never became the chief area of the communicatio idiomatum for Luther as it did for some of his successors. For Luther the chief area of the communicatio idiomatum was that of divine soteriological grace. It was the area of love. The exalted human nature shares the divine attribute of infinite love to save and redeem. Luther maintained that the human Christ shared God's infinite mercy, love, and His will to be gracious. Luther never put this in such systematic terms as he did the communication of divine power to the human nature. Nevertheless, his sermons are dominated by this second communication of divine love.

Es sey also beschlossen, Das in Jhesu Christo, des ewigen Vaters und der Jungfrauen Marien Son, waren Gott und Mensch alle Fuelle wonen sol, Er sol es gantz und gar sein, On und ausser in sol nichts uberall sein, In in sol man suecken Gott und alles, was Gott hat, Gnade, Barmhertzigkeit, Friede, heiligen Geist, Vergebung der Suende, Trost, Frewle, ewige Gerechtigkeit, Leben und Seligkeit.<sup>30</sup>

This divine love, shared also by the human nature, is, according to some, the starting point of Luther's Christology. It is shown again: "He is our Brother. For us men and for our salvation He came down from heaven, became incarnate and died for our sins."<sup>31</sup> This is involved with the

<sup>29</sup>Elert, op. cit., I, 217.

<sup>30</sup>ib., "Von der Menschheit Christi und seinem Ampt," 45, 317, 35ff.

<sup>31</sup>ib., "Sermons on St. John," XXII, 24.

human nature's sharing divine eternalness. It is most likely responsible for Luther's having said so much on this aspect. For Luther the human Christ shares in a trans-human initiative to effect the Incarnation. The amazing love that saves us comes to us also from one of our fellows, from a true man. For this reason Luther could not tolerate any doctrine of our Lord's humanity which regarded it as trifling or contemptuous.<sup>32</sup> Luther also interpreted Christ's title, Son of Man, as referring to Christ's human nature. In all his many references to the Son of Man descending for our salvation in the Incarnation, Luther is emphasizing the human Christ's trans-human initiative to effect our salvation.<sup>33</sup> Luther regarded "die Recke Gottes" as God's grace and power working for our good. This is only ours in the man, Christ.<sup>34</sup> It is always true also of the human nature, "Christ is nothing but life, joy, grace and peace."<sup>35</sup>

In this chapter our concern has been with the Person of Christ. In this connection we talked of Christ's exalted human nature. This terminology means precisely that Christ's human nature has always shared divine attributes because of the Incarnation. This was maintained on the one hand, while it was also said that Christ's human nature should be viewed as unexalted. The human nature is a true human nature having proper human attributes. In this sense it is unexalted.

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<sup>32</sup>WA, "Das Marburger Gesprach und die Marburger Artikel. 1529," 30, III, 132, 23ff.

<sup>33</sup>AE, "Sermons on St. John," XXII, 323.

<sup>34</sup>WA, "In festo Purificationis Mariae," 4, 637.

<sup>35</sup>AE, "Psalm 45," XII, 264.



To maintain this, that the human nature has its own attributes, and then also those of the divine nature, seems to be a hopeless contradiction. It necessitates an incarnation within the flesh of the Blessed Virgin, and seemingly a simultaneous assuming of the human nature by the Son of God up in heaven. From this dual aspect of the one incarnation we cannot free ourselves. We can only be helped to some extent by Luther's view of God and heaven as absolutely undefinable. The divine nature of our Lord may be grasped in the Person of Christ, but we shall never be able to define its attributes by its creatures--space, time, or knowledge. That these divine attributes are shared by the human nature must be maintained according to Luther even though this is a mystery. His concern for such a thorough incarnation is the concern of faith that wants to grasp one Christ. Therefore Luther stressed the Incarnation as the only foundational structure which can make Christ's Work effective soteriology. The Incarnation is the effective foundation of soteriology. As we often stress a foundation as though it were all that we had to hold, so Luther could stress the Incarnation in the same way. Believing on the birth of Christ (true God and true man) was "der recht gnadenreych glawb."<sup>36</sup> Luther can make equally emphatic statements about Christ's Work, though, for it is the real soteriology. In the next chapter we will have to do with this Work of Christ.

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<sup>36</sup>HA, "Evangelium in der Christmess," 10, I, 1, 71, 6.

## CHAPTER IV

### FROM HUMILIATION TO EXALTATION

Luther asked why the Work of Christ should count for him. This led us to his concern from Christ's Person. Now Christ's Person leads us back to His Work, for the Person cannot be understood otherwise. Thus we end at Christ's Work where we began. Luther confesses, "I believe in the Son who was given into death for me."<sup>1</sup> Here it is clear that Luther can only describe the human nature in terms of work--"who was given into death for me."

Therefore we turn to Christ's Work. Here we find humiliation and exaltation. It is the task of this paper to describe these, as Luther did, especially the exaltation. If "exalted" in the last chapter meant sharing divine attributes, what does "exaltation" mean when it is used with regard to Christ's Work? What does it mean that Christ was exalted and is in exaltation after His humiliation?

The humiliation will be set forth first, that we may see what sort of exaltation, if any, follows the humiliation. In this connection we might consider the second chapter of Philippians, which was a problematic passage of Scripture for Luther. The ekenosen of verse seven troubled Luther, for it seemed to say that the humiliation was a change in Christ, specifically with regard to His human nature, as though He no longer shared divine attributes. Because of this Luther said that the Philippians

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<sup>1</sup>Martin Luther, "Sermons on the Gospel of St. John," Luther's Works: The American Edition, edited by Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1956), XXII, 368. Hereafter cited as AE.

passage was a dark saying.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, he interpreted it and said that it referred to Christ's not disdaining to labor, suffer and die for us.<sup>3</sup> In this mentioning of Christ's Work we see how Luther regards the humiliation under Work and not Person. To clarify this we could say that a human action in itself is not humiliating to the Deity, for the creation is good. Luther says that the eternal God suckled on Mary's breasts.<sup>4</sup> This is no humiliation for there is no humiliation in the incarnation or the communicatio idiomatum for the eternal Son. Luther taught condescension, but not humiliation with regard to the incarnation. "He condescends to assume my flesh and blood."<sup>5</sup> This human existence in itself, considered as God's creation, is capable of humiliation rather than being humiliation. This humiliation which may and has come over man is subjection to the Law and its curse, to the Devil, death and hell. Subjection to all of these was Christ's humiliation. With regard to the law Luther says, that the Law has to do only with sinners. But Christ is no sinner. He is verily the Lord of the Law because He is without any sin.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, Christ subjects Himself both to the Law and its curse.<sup>7</sup> So Christ subjected Himself to the Devil's assaults of temptation.

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<sup>2</sup>Martin Luther, "Am III Christtage, Epistel Hebraeae am 1, 1-12," Dr. Martin Luthers saemtliche Werke (Erlangen, 1826ff.), VII, 196. Hereafter cited as EA.

<sup>3</sup>EA, "Predigt von dem Blindgetornen, Joh. 9," XVIII, 199.

<sup>4</sup>EA, "Sermons on St. John," XXII, 323.

<sup>5</sup>EA, "Sermons on St. John," XXII, 102.

<sup>6</sup>EA, "Predigt am neuen Jahrestag," I, 310.

<sup>7</sup>EA, "Am Sonntage nach dem Christtage," VII, 271.

"He [Christ] no doubt endured from His very youth, especially in the night-time, many assaults of temptation from the devil--terrors driving almost to despair, so that His life was on the brink of hell."<sup>8</sup> With regard to Christ's subjection to death and hell Luther is most specific. This suffering unto death is the heart of his teaching and faith. He does not regard it as chiefly physical but rather a relation with God. This relationship is that Christ is forsaken of God. "He underwent such need and anguish that He sweat blood and felt nothing so much as that He was forsaken of God."<sup>9</sup> Luther says, "All creation behaves as though it were against Him. He hangs in the air and is suspended on high and has nowhere on earth to place His foot, there is no one to sympathise with Him or comfort Him."<sup>10</sup> Again, "It is true that he was cursed by the Lord; because the father made him a curse for us and he truly died on account of sin."<sup>11</sup> All this becomes Luther's chief emphasis. "What he has done and suffered is on our behalf."<sup>12</sup> This is God's Revelation. "For the Cross of Christ runs through the whole Scripture."<sup>13</sup> "You see, therefore, the passion and Cross of Christ is everywhere depicted, so that we can very well say with St. Paul, 'We will know nothing save Christ and him

<sup>8</sup>LA, "Passionspredigten: zweite Predigt," III, 48.

<sup>9</sup>AE, "Psalm 8," XII, 127.

<sup>10</sup>AE, "Psalm 8," XII, 128.

<sup>11</sup>Martin Luther, "Psalms 68," D. Martin Luthers Werke, kritische Gesamtausgabe, edited by J. K. F. Knoke et al. (Weimar, 1883 ff.), 3, 426, 23. Hereafter cited as WA.

<sup>12</sup>WA, "Psalmus 18," 3, 63, 1.

<sup>13</sup>WA, "Psalmus 38," 3, 211, 16.

crucified."<sup>14</sup> The crucified, God-forsaken Christ, is the humiliated Christ. This is the humiliation.

Humiliation is described by Luther as being forsaken by God. We can make this more specific. It is the absence of God's active Love, since that is Luther's emphasis. We are dealing with "active" Love in this description because there has also been a divine passive Love operative in Christ's offering of Himself. Active Love, or rather its removal, is the most profound description of humiliation for Luther. An essential description of humiliation would involve cursing and wrath, devil and the agonies of hell. But the chief description in Luther is the absence of God's active Love. Therefore exaltation would be the presence of God's active Love. This presence would also be a sharing of active Love and an exercising of this Love. Luther himself does not give us this analysis, but he is preoccupied with God's active Love. "I don't want to hear or know anything else about God than that He loves me."<sup>15</sup>

Christ's reception of this active Love can only occur according to his human nature. We say further that it can only occur according to his human nature when we consider his human nature with proper human attributes and no divine attributes. The rest of this chapter will deal with such a view of Christ. We shall consider him as human having human attributes. Viewing Christ as divine in exaltation or as human with divine attributes will be the task of the next chapter.

Christ's reception of God's active Love after the humiliation

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<sup>15</sup>AE, "Sermons on the Gospel of St. John," XIII, 368.

according to his human nature receives no emphasis in Luther. This is to be expected for Luther taught that the human nature of Christ should have gone to heaven without having to suffer or die. Instead Luther deals with Christ's reception of power according to his human nature. This proves for Luther that Christ as human is in union with the Divine. This proves the Incarnation and the communicatio idionatum.

Since this Man Christ, who was forsaken of God for a little time, is to be made Lord over God's works--heaven, angels, sun, moon, earth, men, air, water and everything that is in heaven, on earth, and in the water--it follows that He is true God.<sup>16</sup>

The same thought is frequently reiterated by Luther, especially in his exegesis of the Psalms. He refers to it so often because of his text, but his emphasis is more conditioned by his concern for the Person of Christ. This theological conclusion brings us back to Christ's Person then. This thought is not an integral part of our discussion of Christ's Work. It is a noteworthy emphasis in Luther for Christ's Person, though. The interest of this writer was to find this in Luther. And it appears frequently.<sup>17</sup>

In connection with this return to Christ's Person, we want to show that Luther used the exaltation to stress Christ's true humanity. He could say that Christ had not been seated at the right hand of God before the exaltation. Or: "Suddenly He is exalted above all measure, so as to be seated at once at the right hand of majesty, in order to sit and rule where God is."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>AE, "Psalm 8," XII, 131.

<sup>17</sup>AE, "Psalm 2," XII, 61; "Psalm 3," XII, 101, 134; "Sermons on St. John," XXII, 321.

<sup>18</sup>AE, "Psalm 110," XIII, 233.

This use of the exaltation as a doctrine referring to Christ's Person is important in Luther. We should remember that, for Luther, Christ's Person was that which makes the sacrifice of Christ an acceptable one. Christ's Person is what makes the sacrifice count for us. If we can equate the Person of Christ with what we see in the resurrection, then the resurrection has become a doctrine proclaiming the acceptability of the sacrifice and its efficacy for us. Luther often uses this approach.<sup>19</sup> We should note, though, that this is placing the resurrection and exaltation under the Person. If humiliation is to be considered as Christ's Work, then the exaltation is to be considered Work, too. Which is this work in the state of exaltation? To answer this question will be the task of the next chapter.

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<sup>19</sup>BA, "Sermon ueber das Evangelium an vierten Sonntage nach Ostern," XVII, 117.

## CHAPTER V

### CHRIST IN THE STATE OF EXALTATION

In the last chapter humiliation was defined in terms of being forsaken by God. This was equated with "absence of the active love of God." In the state of exaltation we would expect the presence of the active love of God, then. This should not be thought of as only reception of the active love of God, so that Christ is no longer forsaken. When Christ's forsakenness is over and He receives the active love of God, He is immediately involved in exercising this active love of God. So the exaltation is the presence of divine love in Christ, exercised for us. This active love in Christ which he receives and immediately exercises may be described more concretely in Christ's accomplishments for us. He triumphs over hell for us. He makes death a shame for us, He conquers the devil for us, He ascends or goes to the Father for us, He reigns with the Father for us. A part of Christ's work of active love which is wholly future is His consummation of all things for us and His imparting of eternal life and salvation in the fullest sense. Luther says:

Christ Auferstehung und Sieg wider Sünde, Tod und Hölle ist grösser denn Himmel und Erden; du kannst seine Auferstehung und Sieg so gross nicht machen, sie ist noch viel grösser. Denn weil seine Person gross, ewig, unendlich und unbegreiflich, so ist seine Auferstehung, Sieg und Triumph auch gross, ewig, unendlich und unbegreiflich.<sup>1</sup>

Here we have the oft disputed and discussed, Christus Victor. In discussions of the Christus Victor, however, He is also placed in the

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<sup>1</sup>Martin Luther, "Predigt ueber Marki 16, 15f," D. Martin Luthers Werke, kritische Gesamtausgabe, edited by J. K. F. Knake et al. (Weimar, 1883 ff.), 37, 77ff. Hereafter cited as WA.



work of humiliation. The controversy has raged over the Christus Victor as though this presentation were another tropos of the Gospel. Some wish to replace the Christus Victim and say that the Christus Victor is the chief tropos. This thesis does not lead to such a problem. Instead it would question the seeing of Christus Victim and Christus Victor follows the Christus Victim; just as the work of exaltation follows the work of humiliation.

Such a suggestion has far-reaching effects. It would mean that Luther meant to be understood literally.

Da musst also glauben, dass er auferstanden sei im Götterwillen und nicht um sein selbst willen in die Ehre gesetzt; sondern dass er dir und Allen, so da an ihm glauben, helfe, und dass durch seine Auferstehung Sünde, Tod und Hölle überwunden sei.<sup>2</sup>

This would mean that the Resurrection is not just a declaration that Christ's Work is accomplished. Luther does not seem to teach this. The Resurrection is instead an active overcoming of all that He had suffered.

Deshalb ist Christi der Sieg ueber des Gesetz, ueber die Sünde, ueber unser Fleisch, Welt, Teufel, Tod, Hölle, und alles Uebel.<sup>3</sup>

These statements in Luther are too frequent to ignore. We can only suggest that Christ's soteriological Work is first as Victim and then as Victor, but that it includes both. Luther says;

Die Sünde fiel ihm auff den hals, gleich als wollt sie yhn erseuffen [Christus Victim]; sie verlor aber an yhm, das er sie verschlungen hat Christus Victor.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup>WA, "Von den drei Artikeln," 45, 11ff.

<sup>3</sup>Martin Luther, "Das erste Capitel d. Galaterbriefs," Dr. Martin Luthers Sämtliche Schriften, edited by Dr. Joh. Georg Walch (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1890), IK, 39, 29f. Hereafter cited as StL.

<sup>4</sup>WA, "Sermon am Himmelfahrtstage," 12, 565, 2ff.

After Christ is risen and the victory is accomplished, we say: "Meyn herr Christus ist oyn herr ubir todt, teuffel, sunde."<sup>5</sup> This dual aspect of the soteriological work is further maintained in such statements:

So aber Christus groesser ist denn Himmel und Erden, groesser denn Himmel und Erden, groesser den Suende, Tod und Teufel, so muss auch Alles sehr gross sein, was er leidet und tut. Gross muss sein Leiden sein, gross muss auch sein seine Auferstehung von den Todten."<sup>6</sup>

Dass er mi stirbt und von todt wider aufferstehtet, geschickt aus lauter Lieb gegen uns."<sup>7</sup>

Nach der Historie muessen wir wissen und glaeben, dass Christus eine hohe treffliche Person sei, wahrhafter Gott und Mensch, und dass sein Leiden und Sterben gross und hoch, und seine Auferstehung von den Tod helich und sieghaft sei.<sup>8</sup>

Luther becomes even more specific:

In seynen leyden macht er unszer sund bekant und erarget sie."<sup>9</sup>

Erwergen should be thought of passively as accomplished just by dying.

Christ bore sin upon himself and it died with Him in His death. Luther

continues: "Aber durch seyn aufferstehn macht er unsz herecht und loss

von allen sunden."<sup>10</sup> Nacht necessitates thinking of Christ's work in the

Resurrection as active. This seems to be the Christus Victor.

Instead of two dramatic presentations of Christ's Work, then, there

is one. The conclusion is not meant to exclude those insights which

<sup>5</sup>WA, "Sermon am Himmelfahrtstag," 12, 563, 13.

<sup>6</sup>WA, "Predigt ueber Marci 16, 15f.," 37, 77, 272f.

<sup>7</sup>WA, "Eine Hauspredigt von den Artikeln des Glaubens," 45, 19, 9ff.

<sup>8</sup>WA, "Predigt ueber Marci 16, 15f.," 37, 77, 15ff.

<sup>9</sup>WA, "Ein Sermon von der Betrachtung des heiligen Leidens Christi," 2, 140, 24.

<sup>10</sup>WA, "Ein Sermon von der Betrachtung des heiligen Leidens Christi," 2, 140, 25.

would lead us to see the Victor in the state of humiliation or the Victim in the state of exaltation. Rather it wishes to describe such insights as qualifications of the basic dramatic presentation, Victim-Victor. It seems doubtful that the insights mentioned above would validate a continuous Christus Victim tropos or a continuous Christus Victor tropos. There seems to be, instead, one dramatic presentation, Victim-Victor, which may or may not be qualified by further insights. This is the presentation of Christ's Work on which Luther's preaching and teaching seem to be dependent.

If there is a dual aspect to the soteriological work of Christ, it would seem both should receive equal stress. We have seen how Luther can regard the cross and the passive sufferings of Christ as the center of his doctrine. Luther can become just as emphatic with regard to the Resurrection.

Wenn man wil das Evngelium predigen so muss es kurtz umb sein vond der sufferstehung Christi.<sup>11</sup>

Und das heissen wir 'Glauben,' wenn wir es uns so einbliden, dass wir uns ganz und gar darin stecken, eben als sei sonst nicht anders geschrieben, dem Christus ist erstanden.<sup>12</sup>

Ja er [St. Paul] schweigt alle werck und miracel Christi und prediget und lernet uns sunderlich die furcht und bruch der Auferstendtnus Christi, was wir dardurch endtfangen.<sup>13</sup>

Do all these statements make the Christus Victor receive just as much as the Christus Victim? This does not seem to be true in Luther. The Christus Victor is He Who was Christus Victim. The Christus Victim

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<sup>11</sup>WA, "Das erste Capitel S. Petri," 12, 263, 19f.

<sup>12</sup>WA, "Christi Auferstehung, 1532," 36, 157.

<sup>13</sup>WA, "Sermon am Auffahrttage," 10, III, 138, 16.

remains the heart of the soteriological work for Luther. This is best seen when Luther drops his major emphasis "die Auferstehung Christi" for "die Gottes Auferweckung Christi." Whenever Luther speaks according to this presentation the Work of Christ is accomplished entirely by the Christus Victim. Victory and heaven become gifts of God according to this presentation. Yet the Victim is still responsible for these gifts coming. Therefore Luther says:

Gottes Lamb ist fur der Welt Suende geschlachtet und geopffert, Der rechte Hohepriester hat sein Opfer vollendet, Gottes Son hat sein Leib und Leben zur bezahlung fur die Suende dahin gegeben und aufgeopffert, die Suende ist getilget, Gottes zorn versuemet, der Tod uberwunden, das himelreich erworben und der Himel aufgeschossen.<sup>14</sup>

Luther in this connection teaches that Christ's passive suffering has an active result without referring to the Christus Victor. The active result is won by Christ by a passive sacrifice acceptable to God. This thought may be found quite frequently in Luther. "Die Frucht (seiner Leiden war) unser Friede und Gesundheit."<sup>15</sup> (Friede and Gesundheit do not only include forgiveness of sins--Christus Victim. They also include life and salvation--Christus Victor.) Luther's use of Christus Victim for Christ's entire soteriological work is, nevertheless, not as frequent as his use of Victim-Victor. This is the opinion that this thesis presents. There is a good reason for Luther's preference for the Victim-Victor, too. With the Victim presentation Christ's deity retreats to the background in all the acts of exaltation. Christ is raised by God and given authority and kingdom by God. Though Christ worked in the humiliation, the

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<sup>14</sup>WA, "Wochenpredigten ueber Joh. 16-20. 1524/9.,) 23, 406, 13ff.

<sup>15</sup>WA, "Predigt ueber Jes. 53, 2. April 1513," 1, 336, 10.

exaltation now removes us from Work to Person. With the Victim-Victor, Christ's deity and His humanity with divine attributes are emphasized in the exaltation. The exaltation is a working of Christ just as His humiliation was. It should be noted again, however, that even with the Victim-Victor presentation, the Victim remains the understructure of the statements concerning the Victor. Seen from this aspect there can never be a really equal balance of both Victim and Victor even in the Victim-Victor presentation. In Luther's final proclamation of this presentation there does seem to be an equal balance.

Now we shall set forth Christ's work in the exaltation. The first work is Christ's descent into hell.

Der Herr Jesus Christus ist zur Hoelle hinuntergefahren, hat die Hoelle subrocken, den Teufel ueberwunden und die, so von Teufel gefangen waren erloeset.<sup>16</sup>

From another citation it is clear that the persons who were erloest were "uns, die da solten darinn gefangen ligen."<sup>17</sup> To understand this fully we must see that every act of the Victim-Victor frees us from that which is therein involved. So in the Victim-Victor one does not say he is freed from hell because of Christ's death. That is the contingent reason for Christ's suffering hell. We are freed from hell because Christ overcame hell. "Christus hat die Hoelle subrocken."

Once again the far-reaching effects of the Victim-Victor presentation become apparent. It involves a literal reception of Luther's words, and perhaps it involves a literal hearing of Scriptures, too. Because Christ's death is removed from this confession, "We are freed from hell because

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<sup>16</sup>WA, "Christi Auferstehung, 1532," 36, 159, 21ff.

<sup>17</sup>WA, "Der dritte Predigt, auff den Ostertag," 37, 62, 31ff.

Christ overcame hell," this confession should not be charged with sighting the death of Christ. His death remains the understructure. The sacrificial suffering of hell is that which makes the overcoming possible. It should also be said that Christ's death is more than understructure. The whole series of acts in the Victim-Victor presentation, whether passive or active, are effecting the corresponding acts in us until our total salvation. In this presentation death deals with sin. But more needs to be dealt with than sin in the Victim-Victor presentation. Because sin is dealt with we are not called justified in the Victim-Victor presentation.

"Aber durch seyn sufferstechn macht er unsgerecht."<sup>18</sup>

Here we are forced to leave the presentation of Christ's work as exaltation. The descent into hell needs special treatment. This is true, for Luther did not always regard it as an act of exaltation. Earlier in his life he was troubled by this particular act. It seemed to be rather an act of the humiliation for him. "Ich glaube . . . dass sein Fleisch zwar geruht in Hoffnung, aber dass seine Seele die Helle geschmeckt habe."<sup>19</sup> Later the tasting and suffering of hell was made a part of the agony of his death.<sup>20</sup> This left the descent open for interpretation as solely an act of the exaltation. He came to this interpretation at least by 1533.<sup>21</sup> Luther's interpretation of the

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<sup>18</sup>StL, "Eyn Sernon von der Betrachtung des heyligen leydens Christi," 2, 140, 25.

<sup>19</sup>StL, "Arbeiten ueber die ersten 22 Psalmen," IV, 991, 16ff.

<sup>20</sup>StL, "Kurze Ausl. ueber d. ersten 25 Psalmen," IV, 1475, 33ff.

<sup>21</sup>StL, "Der dritte Predigt, auff den Ostertag," 37, 63, 5ff.

descent as a preaching or declaration in hell should be considered as a part of this interpretation. Throughout Luther, even in the young Luther, the most emphatic and unhesitant interpretation of the descent is an act in exaltation. "Christus hat die Hölle zerbrochen."

Considering the exaltation as work the next act is the resurrection. Since we are not free of death in the same sense that we are free of hell, the act of the resurrection is quite complex. Our confession has to be in the future tense. "We are going to rise because Christ rose." On the one hand Luther could be precise here. He said that Christians had in some way risen because Christ rose. "Das beste stueck ist schon im himel."<sup>22</sup>

For the most part Luther did not treat the act of resurrection in this fulfilled sense. Instead he made it the summary of all the exaltation acts. So it even takes over that which Christ's reigning at the Father's right hand accomplishes--that all evil is now made harmless when it works on Christians. Luther says of the resurrection: "Deshalb ist Christi Sieg der Sieg ueber . . . Hölle und alles Uebel."<sup>23</sup> There is a great significance in this summarizing under the act of resurrection. One can see here that the work of exaltation is one work, even as the work of humiliation is one work. As we cannot for long separate suffering and dying; so we cannot speak of the resurrection too long before it is connected with Christ's ascension, his reigning at the Father's right hand and with the whole work of exaltation.

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<sup>22</sup>La, "Predigt am Ostertag, nachmittage," 36, 162, 12.

<sup>23</sup>Stl, "Das erste Capitel d. Galaterbriefs," IX, 39, 29.

The other acts of Christ's exaltation are found usually as a summary of Christ's work of exaltation. At times they are also made to refer to the specific act involved. So we ascend because Christ ascended; we reign because Christ reigns; we judge because Christ judges. These are the remaining acts of the exaltation: the ascension or going to the Father, the reigning at the Father's right hand, the final judgment. We detect a very profound influence in Luther, then, from the Apostolic Symbol.

It is the interest of this paper to stress the act of Christ's reigning at the Father's right hand. This act of exaltation is a present reality now, even as our Lord's Person executing this reign, is a present reality. Luther says:

Mayn herr Christus ist eyn herr ubir todt, teuffel, sunde, gerechtikeit, leyb, leben, feynd und freund, wo fur sol ich mich denn furchten? Denn wenn meyne feynd fur der thur sitzen und gedancken, sie willen mich erwurgen, soo gedanckt meyn glawb also, "Christus ist gen hymel gefaren und eyn herr uber alle creatur worden; so müssen ja meyn feynd ym auch unterthan seyn, darumb ist es nicht yn yhrer gewalt, das sie mir schaden, und trots dass sie eyn Finger regen odder mir eyn har krummen, oh Christus Willen.<sup>24</sup>

Christ's reigning now was something powerful for Luther that fed his faith. If we do not hear of Christ's reigning for us now, then we might expect a weakening of faith. And in truth, Protestantism seems filled either with the Reformed resignation to a God of predestination or with the Anabaptist decision to submit. If we wish to guard against such influences upon our Lutheran Church, then let our theology and preaching be filled more with Luther's emphasis on Christ's reign at the Father's right hand even now for me and you. Why should this strengthen faith?

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<sup>24</sup>WA, "Sermon an Himmelfahrtstage," 12, 563, 18ff.



It strengthens faith because the very same Christ who died for us, now reigns for us. Luther tells us not to make a tyrant out of the reigning Christ.<sup>25</sup> Christ is still the same Christ. He is pure grace.

The reigning of Christ brings faith when it is preached. But what kind of reigning is this that brings faith? First we might say that it is a reigning over all creation, so that all things are in the hands of Christ.

Christus ist gen hymel gefaren und cyn herr uber alle creatur worden, so müssen ya meyn feynd yhm auch unterthan seyn, darumb ist es nicht ym yhrer gewalt, das sie mir schaden . . . on Christus Willen.<sup>26</sup>

This was a strong emphasis in Luther and is responsible for his constant use of the word Unglueck. For Christians the difficulties of life may be helpful trials and testings from God, or they may be regarded as one's own sacrifices freely given as they come, but they are not Unglueck. "Alles unglueck ist überwunden."<sup>27</sup> This is all true because Christ, and not some other tyrannical power, is reigning through out creation.

The reigning of Christ is especially described by Luther, however, as the forgiveness of one's sins.<sup>28</sup> In other words Christ's reign is especially characterized by the grace which brings one into the Kingdom and keeps one in it. So we must maintain a connection between Christ in exaltation and His forgiving grace now. Elert says this must be done

<sup>25</sup>WA, "Sermon auf den anderen Osterfeiertag," 12, 498, 32.

<sup>26</sup>WA, "Sermon am Himmelfahrtstage," 12, 563, 21ff.

<sup>27</sup>WA, "Evangelium am Ostersonntag. Mark. 16, 1-8," 10, I, 2, 223, 7.

<sup>28</sup>WA, "Predigt am 19. Sonntag nach Trinitatis," 15, 697, 31.

or the identity of the historical and the ascended Christ will be lost.<sup>29</sup> This connection is to be maintained especially in our preaching on the Church, on the Sacraments and on Christ's reign. The Word and Sacraments would receive perhaps the most stress of these three. Luther says:

Denn wie wol er ueberal ist ym allen creaturen und ich mochte ym ym stein, ym feur, ym wasser, odder auch ym strick finden, wie er dem gewislich da ist, will er doch nicht, das ich ym da suche on das wort und nich ym feur odder wasser werffe odder an strick henge. Ueberal ist er, er will aber nicht, das du iberall nach ym tappest, sondern wo das wort ist, da tappe nach, so ergreiffestu ym recht.<sup>30</sup>

So the Sacraments and the Word, as the heart of the "Church" and "Christ's Reign," seem to be the most real connection between the Christ in exaltation now and His working for us. These are Christ's own words we hear. This is Christ's own body and blood we eat and drink. As he gives us these gifts according to his human nature, the divine nature must be there too. Luther has these divine-human gifts in mind when he says that Christ has ascended to give gifts to men.<sup>31</sup> So God's powerful Word is in us, and we have eaten and drunk God's Body and Blood.

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<sup>29</sup>Elert, *op. cit.*, I, 223.

<sup>30</sup>*ibid.*, "Sermon von dem Sacrament, 1526," 19, 492, 19ff.

<sup>31</sup>*ibid.*, "Psalm 68," XIII, 21.

## CHAPTER VI

### EXALTATION AS PROCLAMATION

Luther protests the handling of the ascension as a fact to be known and accepted. He says that the ascension must be left as living word.<sup>1</sup> It must speak to the heart. Luther proclaims the ascension in this manner.

Nun müssen wir von auffart des herren Christi tzu hymel auch reden. Affs erst ist es leyshtlich gesagt und verstanden, das der herre ist gen hymel gefaren und sitzet da sur rechten hant gottis. Es ist aber eyn todt wort und verstandit, wenn es nit mit dem hertzen gefast wirt. Darumb muss man seyn auffarung ynn hymel und sitzen lassen eyn thettig und krefftig ding seyn, das ynnor dar ym schwanck gehe, und nit gedoncken, das er da hyn sey gefaren, und da oben sitze, uns hie regiren las, sonder darun ist er hynauff gefaren, das er da am meysten kan schaffen und regiren. Den wenn er auff erden vor bliben sichtlich fur den leutten, het er nit szo vil miessen schaffen; denn es het er nit alle leut bey ym seyn konnen und gehoeren. Darumb hat er eyn solche weysz angefangen, das er nit allen tzu schaffen hat und ynn allen regire, das er ym allen predige und sie es alle hoeren und er bey allen seyn kan. Darumb hat dich, das du dir nit also gedonckist, das er yetzund weyt von uns kumen sey, sonder gerad widderstus, do er auff erden war, war er uns tzu ferren, yetzund ist er uns nah. Aber da kan die vernunft nit fassen, wie es tzu gehe.<sup>2</sup>

Here we see how the whole work of Christ in exaltation is to be made ours. The sermon must proclaim Christ as near--as immanent with His grace.

But is this enough? Protestantism also seems to have Christ near with His grace. The introduction called attention to this familiar and immanent Christ in Protestantism. Through this thesis we have been able

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<sup>1</sup>Martin Luther, "Sermon an Himmelfahrtstage," D. Martin Luthers Werke, kritische Gesamtausgabe, edited by J. K. F. Maake et al. (Weimar, 1883 ff.), 12, 562, 6ff. Hereafter cited as WA.

<sup>2</sup>WA, "Sermon an Himmelfahrtstage, 1533," 12, 562, 12ff.

to see what is lacking in its proclamation of Christ. The incarnation or communicatio idionatum is lacking. Though they have a regard for Christ as a holy saint, meek and lowly, they do not seem to sense that Christ brings to them the absolute holiness of God. We should be conscious of this lack in Protestantism. In order to preserve Christ and His grace for ourselves as He really is, we need to study Luther. He would have us preach Christ not only as weak, but also as strong.<sup>3</sup> So we are to realize that the Gospel is not only human words, but also divine words. Christ, who spoke these words, was both God and man, and therefore we are not to create them.<sup>4</sup> The same is true of the Sacrament. This is not only the presence of a man, but it is also the presence of God. Therefore Luther says we are to fear the real presence.<sup>5</sup> Today in our church this awe and fear of the Sacrament is regarded as something we must dismiss for the minds of our people. But Luther would not have it so. He would rather have us even preach it, that we might then teach our people what sort of infinite, and yet familiar grace is present in the bread and wine. This is Luther's proclamation. That the congregation might also know God's grace in the Sacrament, he tells them they should say, "Nun will ich frolich hynzu gehen, und het ich mer suend uff dem halser."<sup>6</sup> It finally comes to this, that Christ is our brother. Yet

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<sup>3</sup>WA, "Sermon am dritten Osterfeiertag," 12, 511, 38ff.

<sup>4</sup>WA, "Sermon auf den anderen Osterfeiertag," 12, 497, 16.

<sup>5</sup>WA, "Sermon auf den anderen Osterfeiertag," 12, 496, 8ff.

<sup>6</sup>WA, "Sermond auf den anderen Osterfeiertag," 12, 502, 27.

one doesn't cry this out, according to Luther. It is something too wonderful. One can only say it with the Spirit.<sup>7</sup>

The writer considers Protestantism's regard for Christ disrespectful. And the holiness or transcendence of Christ has been stressed in this chapter. In order that this one emphasis may not now grow as to exclude our familiarity with Christ, let us remember that the worst disrespect of Christ is not using Him at all. So Luther clearly maintains.<sup>8</sup> Our regard for Christ is one of awe and familiarity. Our faith knows Christ with holy familiarity.

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<sup>7</sup>LA, "An Osterfeiertag das Evangelion," 10, I, 2, 215, 39.

<sup>8</sup>LA, "Sermon auf der anderen Osterfeiertag," 12, 502, 17ff.

## CHAPTER VII

### CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY

Luther's interest in the exalted Christ was intense. This interest arose because his own faith asked, "Who is this person, who is able to save me?" Luther's interest was really an interest in the Person of Christ. For him Christ's Person was always exalted. Luther's emphasis on the exalted Christ derives partly from the controversies with the Sacramentarians, too. For him the Sacramentarians were making Christ two Persons or no Person. To this Luther's faith could react with vehemence, for faith needs one Christ. He said these controversies were trying to rob him of his joy over salvation.

In speaking of the exalted Christ, we have meant that Christ's human nature has always shared divine attributes. For Luther this is expressed in the phrase communicatio idionatum. This does not mean that the human nature lacks human attributes. Luther says that the human nature is given power, glory and kingdom in the resurrection and ascension according to its human attributes. This is always used by him as a proof for the union of Christ's two natures, as proof for the communicatio idionatum. But it is just as true to say that the human nature can't be given power, glory and kingdom, for it has always shared divine attributes and been incapable of receiving an addition. Furthermore, when the human and divine according to their human attributes are doing human works--eating, sleeping, walking--these are no humiliation to either nature. Humanity is God's good creation. When the divine assumed the human in the incarnation, this was no humiliation. There is no humiliation in the

communicatio idiomatum. Yet Luther's doctrine of Christ's Person, the foundational structure of his soteriology, seems to involve contradictions. Luther said this was because the union was thought of as a union of an all-nature and a finite nature. So the Sacramentarians wished to say that the omnipresent or all-present nature could not be in a perfectly balanced union with the human nature, which had a prescribed finite presence. To this Luther answered that the divine nature is not just omnipresent. It is also non-present and finitely present. God is everywhere, nowhere, and somewhere. Actually Luther is maintaining that God's presence is indescribable and certainly cannot be described in terms of his creatures--place, size, mass. For Luther, then, there was always mystery in the communicatio idiomatum. The incarnation is the greatest miracle of all miracles.

We have seen that it is possible for Luther to talk about the human nature as unexalted, that is as having no divine attributes. However, such a statement will only lead us back to saying, on the other hand, that the human nature is exalted. So we shall always be talking of Christ's Person. Yet the communicatio idiomatum is only held as the understructure to Christ's Work. Therefore we should look to Christ's Work for the real exaltation, that is the exaltation which followed the humiliation. These, the humiliation and exaltation, are states of activity, then. If the humiliation can be described as suffering the law, curse, temptations, death and hell, then the exaltation can be described as triumphing over the law, curse, temptations, death and hell. The act of Christ in his work of exaltation can perhaps be expressed in the one word uberwinden, overcome, in Luther. This act is found in the descent into hell, the resurrection, the ascension, the reign at the Father's

right hand and the reappearing for judgment. This work of exaltation is what Christ did for Himself and what He still does for us. Christ's ongoing Work of exaltation is often summarized by Luther in Christ's present reigning at the Father's right hand. For Luther Christ's work of exaltation becomes ours in Christ's reigning in the Church through Word and Sacraments. This reign of Christ and His reign in nature is a source of comfort to Christians because they know Him as only gracious. Christ is not a tyrant.

This work of exaltation is not Luther's only presentation. If Christ's Person is considered again after the humiliation, then Luther can say the human nature has received something in all of this. The work of exaltation then falls to the side.

The writer here suggests that this latter interpretation of the events after the humiliation is not Luther's major emphasis. In this contention he follows Julius Koestlin, Theodosius Harnack, and Werner Elert.

The writer also suggested that the states of humiliation and exaltation regarded as states of activity, might be equated with the Christus Victim theme and that of the Christus Victor. Instead of being contradictory perhaps these should be combined chronologically to form one dramatic presentation of Christ's activity and work for us.

We may safely conclude that whatever Luther has to say about either the exalted Christ or the Christ working in the exaltation is soteriological. With regard to the exalted Person of Christ we saw that everything was soteriology, for this was part of the basic understructure. With regard to Christ working in exaltation, we concluded that this cannot be separated from Christ's sacrifice and it itself is soteriological.



The introductory questions have also been answered. Christ is regarded sometimes as having proper human attributes at the time of the Resurrection and Ascension. The Resurrection and Ascension then become acts in which Christ is exalted by God to share divine attributes. This is proof for Christ's union with the divine. Here, as always in Luther, one regards Christ with awe. Our faith knows Christ with holy familiarity.

The question whether Luther is responsible for Protestantism's seemingly disrespectful regard for Christ's Person and Work must be answered with a loud no. The holiness of Christ is involved with the communicatio idiomatum and the Incarnation. Christ is also God. This man is eternal and infinite, especially in grace. Luther's faith always knows Christ with holy familiarity.

In answering the question regarding Luther's proclamation of the exaltation we note that Chapter VI gives an example of such preaching. Luther said the acts of Christ had to be relevant for us. Christ is near us working for us with His grace. It was also pointed out that if this should be meaningful, the basic understructure must be there. We must have a specific Christ near us working for us. This necessary Christ must remain both God and man in a real union with communicatio of the idionata.

Therefore we do best to conclude that the Person of Christ must be held and proclaimed as absolutely holy (divine) and yet as familiar to us (human).

Furthermore it seems that the exaltation is best involved with Christ's Work as it will only lead to a maze of circling thought if placed in connection with Christ's Person. If Christ's exaltation may be interpreted as a state of activity, then the work and each act of this work is summed up in the words Christus pro nobis, Christus pro me.

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