

# TRIUNE GOD

## Review

The Shema in the New Testament: "...yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, & one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist" (1 Cor. 8:6).

- Lord = Jesus Christ (Greek term *kurios*, equivalent to Hebrew Yahweh)
- God = The Father (Greek term *theos*, equivalent to Hebrew term Elohim)

*The Lord Jesus is both Adonai Master and Yahweh God.*

Psalm 110:1 in the New Testament: Jesus is the Lord, ruling at the Father's right hand.

Jesus the Lord: Jesus is the Lord of heaven as the Son of God & the Lord of earth as the Son of Man.

## Humiliation & Exaltation

In our previous class, we continued discussing the Lordship of Jesus Christ, noting the progression of His Lordship from:

1. Pre-Existence to
2. Incarnation to
3. Exaltation

Over the next few classes, we are going to consider in what sense Jesus was Lord during (and through!) His incarnation.

Because my recent sermon series is focusing on humility, I have attached two articles for us to consider. These are meant to bring us into larger conversations around these subjects. These are challenging, so please don't become discouraged by them. I will work us through them together during our time together.

## Karl Barth

Key Idea: “The humiliation of the Son of God and the exaltation of the Son of Man.”

### Encyclopedia Entry Summarizing Barth’s Work on This Topic

#### *Church Dogmatics IV/1 § 59: The Obedience of the Son of God*

In § 59.1, Barth continues to uphold his early confession of the deity of Christ. But he now explains it in this way – that ‘God as God is able and willing and ready to condescend, to humble Himself’ (CD IV/1: 177). He continues: ‘Who the one true God is, and what He is... His “divine nature” ... this we have to discover from the fact that as such he (Christ) is the very man and a partaker of human nature ... from what He has done and suffered in the flesh’ (CD IV/1: 177), as ‘He humbles himself and becomes lowly and obedient ... without being in contradiction with His divine nature’ (CD: 199). That means, also, that the obedience of the Son of God and the equality of the Father and the Son are not in contradiction. Rather, Barth posits, ‘God is God in these two modes of being ... in the history which takes place between them’ (CD IV/1: 203). This is not a ‘kenotic’ Christology in the 19th century sense of the word, but it might be asked whether this rendering of the matter does not invite us to speak of a willed self-emptying and receptivity by the Logos vis-à-vis the experience of the human nature it assumed – its obedience, its passion, its being condemned and brought to death (McCormack 2006; commented on by Jones 2008: 214).

Barth’s first major elaboration of the priestly office of Christ since the Göttingen Dogmatics is found in § 59.2. It would be interesting to compare both texts in detail. In his mature work in Church Dogmatics, Barth at this point often retains Anselmian or orthodox Reformed vocabulary, yet – often more through suggestion than argument – he effects slight modifications of the tradition. Specifically, Barth does not primarily focus on the morifs of the priest who offers a sacrifice, but instead consistently favours juridical forms of expression (perhaps thereby generating some problems – see Thomas 2002). To the question, ‘what did Jesus Christ do for us and for the world?’ Barth answers: ‘he took our place as Judge. He took our place as the judged. He was judged in our place. And he acted justly in our place’ (CD IV/1: 273). Jesus Christ, in other words, executed divine judgement over sin by undergoing it himself – Barth recalls here Rom. 8:3: ‘God sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, and

condemned sin in the flesh' (CD IV/1: 255). In this event the human sinner meets the annihilating fire of God's love (Jones 2008: 239; see also Mikkelsen 2010: 178-202).

A 'transitional discussion' is offered in § 59.3. In the new act of raising Jesus from the dead, God the Father declares a verdict on the path followed by the Son – a verdict that asserts that the Son acted justly. This is an assessment of Jesus Christ in his following the will of his Father by going the way of the cross, of course; but at the same time it forms the basis of the change in the standing of human beings of all times (CD IV/1: 316). And the only possible response human beings can give to this event, this change in standing, is the response of faith.

*Church Dogmatics IV/2 §64: The Exaltation of the Son of Man*

In the second part-volume of Church Dogmatics IV, Barth writes that in the divine election of grace, in which 'we have to do with the Son of Man elected by the eternal Son of God', 'we have to do with His election to a fellowship with God corresponding to God's fellowship with him, and therefore to his wonderful exaltation to be the faithful covenant-partner of God, to an existence as the brightness of His glory, to participation in His own, eternal life, in the perfect service of His Word and work' (CD IV/2: 34). Indeed, Barth observes, '[a]ll that follows depends on this. Reconciled man is not merely a shadow of the reconciling God. The exaltation of man is not to be envisaged only optionally with the humiliation of God' (CD IV/2, 35). Barth begins his exposition on this second aspect of the one Christ-event, which is just as important as the first aspect treated in the previous part-volume, with an exploration of the hypostatic union and the togetherness of the true God and the true human being in the one person of Jesus Christ (§ 64.1). He seems to repeat many of his statements found in Church Dogmatics I/2, but he now has a greater tendency to reframe the language of 'natures' (which is prominent in the Symbol of Chalcedon of 451) and to emphasize instead the story of reconciliation as the telling of a story, as real history. After dealing with the an/enhypostatic character of the hypostatic union, Barth pursues an exploration of threefold communication that exists between the divine and the human in this union, and in doing so follows the order of Johannes Wollebius (CD IV/2: 73). The discussion with the Lutherans on the subject of the communication of properties (*communicatio idiomatum*) is more balanced than it was in the time of Göttingen, but distrust remains:

Barth posits that there must be 'no deification of the creature or humanisation of the Creator, or both' (CD IV/2: 79). The communication of graces (*communicatio gratiarum*), meanwhile, gives Barth the opportunity to elaborate, as Calvin had done earlier, on 'the presence and effective working' of the Holy Spirit both in the life of Jesus and in the execution of his royal office towards the community (CD IV/2: 94-5). And Barth conceives finally of the communication of works (*communicatio operationum*) as the 'common actualisation of divine and human essence as it takes place in Jesus Christ' (CD IV/2: 104). Here one might comment that an argument that began in an Alexandrian key, with the identity of the divine person and his human person, ends in the Antiochene key that emphasizes the relationship of God and human being in Jesus Christ (Hunsinger 2015: 162; contra Waldrop 1984; cf. Loon 2003).

Barth's subsequent section entitled 'The royal man' (§ 64.2) has been linked to the 'new quest' for the historical Jesus in New Testament exegesis. Yet it is clear that Barth upholds here the legacy of Martin Kähler, emphasizing that all knowledge of Jesus, at least as it is given in the synoptic gospels, depends on his self-revelation to his disciples in his resurrection and ascension (CD IV/2: 156). Barth himself conceived of his detailed sketch of the human Jesus as a new undertaking in dogmatics. The doctrine of the threefold *communicatio* is presupposed here. Jesus as the true human being lives in conformity to God, and this implies a particular kind of revolutionary preaching and acting that is determined by a particular exercise of human freedom (Jones 2008: 150-83). At this point, on a secondary level, there is a connection to contemporary debates around the Cold War: for Barth, a free human being who tried to escape the so-called inevitable alternatives of that time could only exist in affliction (see the personally tinted material on CD IV/2, 609-11).

The 'transitional discussion' in this volume (§ 64.3) can be characterized by noting the way in which Barth cites questions 45 and 49 in the Heidelberg Catechism regarding the benefits of Christ's resurrection and ascension. Barth notes that the Catechism responds that the respective benefits are 'that we are awakened now by His power to a new life', and 'that we should have our flesh in heaven as a sure pledge that he as the head will also take to himself us as his members' (CD IV/2: 274). It is for Barth these

answers, in fact, that form the basis for everything that is to be said on Christian discipleship.

## **The Two States of King Jesus by Jeremy Treat**

### Exaltation Through Humiliation

In response to the common understanding of exaltation after humiliation, I propose that the proper view is exaltation in humiliation within a broader progression of exaltation through humiliation. “Exaltation in humiliation” breaks down the typical dichotomy by demonstrating that Christ is exalted supremely in his redemptive suffering, the apex of which is his death on the cross. “Exaltation through humiliation” maintains a general progression from humiliation to exaltation while at the same time showing how they overlap and are interrelated.

The argument will be based on Scripture and theology and will draw from Calvin and Barth in order to revise the interpretation of humiliation and exaltation as strictly successive temporal states. Calvin and Barth both differ from the linear schema and offer a middle way between the Reformed and Lutheran positions, affirming the simultaneity of humiliation and exaltation with the idea that Jesus is humbled in his divinity and exalted in his humanity. Though I will draw from both in arguing for exaltation in humiliation, I will part ways with Barth—who ultimately dismisses the doctrine— and follow Calvin in maintaining a broader temporal progression.

### Exaltation in Humiliation: Integrating the States

The primary mistake of the standard view of the states of Christ is that it polarizes humiliation and exaltation. The simplistic view of humiliation then exaltation simply does not do justice to the breadth of Scripture’s witness— namely, that Christ is exalted before the resurrection and humble after the crucifixion. Not only do humiliation and exaltation overlap in Christ’s work, but they both find their apex in his atoning death. Below, I will break down the dichotomy of “humiliation then exaltation” by showing that Christ is exalted before the resurrection and remains humble after the crucifixion, and that the overlap of humiliation and exaltation finds its apex at the cross.

### Exaltation Before the Resurrection

From the cradle to the cross the life of Jesus is clearly one of humiliation. However, Scripture reveals, and the eye of faith perceives, that even during his time of humiliation he is being exalted, glorified, and enthroned as king. The most common and explicit way Scripture speaks of Christ's pre-Easter exaltation is with the language of glorification. Far from being reserved for his resurrection and ascension, the glory of Christ is displayed from the moment of the incarnation, for as John declares, "The Word became flesh . . . and we have seen his glory" (John 1:14). Though hidden to sinful eyes, "He is the radiance of the glory of God" (Heb 1:3, italics mine). In Cana Jesus "manifested his glory" through his first "sign" (John 2:11) and through the transfiguration he "received honor and glory from God the Father" (2 Pet 1:17).

In the transfiguration, where the disciples "saw his glory" (Luke 9:32), they were given a preview of what would be fully revealed in the resurrection. Jesus himself says, "My Father . . . glorifies me" (John 8:54) and later speaks of "the glory that you have given me" and even "my glory" (17:22, 24). Finally, Jesus refers to his own death as "the hour . . . for the Son of Man to be glorified" (12:23) and "lifted up" (12:32), thereby combining glorification and exaltation and centering them on the cross. As Paul would later say, they "crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Cor 2:8). Clearly in Scripture, Christ is glorified and exalted as king before the resurrection.

Rightly understanding the person of Christ is essential for his pre-Easter exaltation. In accordance with Chalcedonian Christology, Jesus is not only truly God and truly man, but his two natures are united in his one person (the hypostatic union). This means, first of all, that he as the God-man is exalted and glorious in his divinity. The majestic glory of Christ's divinity, though "concealed and not exerting its force," was by no means absent from his person during his ministry on earth. His humanity need not be subsumed into his divinity (the Lutheran tendency) nor treated in isolation from his divinity (the Reformed tendency) but in union with it. As the eternal Son of God he does not need to be exalted, but as the incarnate Son of God he is exalted for us.

Christ is also exalted before the resurrection in his human nature. Although truly human, Jesus was not just any human. According to Calvin, Christ was the human who was exalted above every other human because he was completely "without sin" (Heb 4:15)

and uniquely empowered by the Holy Spirit, which was evident in his miracles and proclamation of the kingdom. Barth discusses the exaltation of the human nature of Christ under the title “the royal man,” highlighting an often-overlooked point: Christ’s kingship is attributed primarily to his humanity. God’s rule over the earth is mediatorial, and Christ is the second Adam and the Son of David, who will establish God’s kingdom and restore his people to their proper place of dominion over the earth.

### The Overlap of Humiliation and Exaltation in Christ

Based on this evidence, any strictly successive interpretation of the two states—“humiliation then exaltation”—must be rejected. Temporally, there is overlap. More importantly, as aspects of Christ’s person and work, humiliation and exaltation are deeply intertwined. Barth speaks of the “inter-connexion” between humiliation and exaltation and helpfully shifts the emphasis from temporal succession to christological simultaneity: “The exaltation of the Son of Man begins and is completed already in and with the happening of the humiliation of the Son of God; and conversely . . . the exaltation of the Son of Man includes in itself the humiliation of the Son of God, so that Jesus Christ is already exalted in his humiliation and humiliated in His exaltation.”<sup>41</sup>

How can these apparently contradictory aspects be simultaneous in Christ? The key for Calvin and Barth is that Jesus is the God-man who is simultaneously humbled in his divinity and exalted in his humanity. According to Barth, “As God he was humbled to take our place, and as man he is exalted on our behalf.” Furthermore, the simultaneous humiliation and exaltation of Christ is not a contradiction because Christ always humbles himself (Phil 2:8; cf. Luke 14:11) and is exalted by the Father (Phil 2:9; cf. Acts 2:33).

In other words, Christ is not in two static states of humiliation and exaltation but is constantly humbling himself and being exalted by the Father. Calvin adds that Christ is able to retain his exalted status because he takes on the form of a servant voluntarily. In other words, Christ sovereignly accepts a mission of servitude. I conclude with Thomas Torrance that “we are not to think of the humiliation and exaltation of Christ simply as two events following one after the other, but as both involved in appropriate measure at the same time all through the incarnate life of Christ.”