THE SIGNIFICANCE
OF THE ASCENSION
TO REFORMED
THEOLOGY

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The meaning of existence is one of the great riddles of the ages. For the Christian, however, that riddle has been solved, for he knows that the answer is in God. Faith in him does not answer all the questions—there is still much mystery—but the Christian at least knows One who makes his own existence meaningful and who makes sense out of our human existence as a whole. In the revelation from God which interprets life's meaning we learn that certain momentous events have transpired in this order of reality of which we are a part. Chief among these are creation, the call of Abraham, the exodus and establishment of the theocracy, the incarnation of the Son of God and his subsequent death, resurrection and ascension to heaven. History's center, we believe, is the mighty drama of redemption centering in Jesus Christ, our Lord. Certain events in Gospel history have received great emphasis among us. The birth of the Savior, celebrated in festival and in song, his death and resurrection whereby our redemption was accomplished—these, largely because of the general structure of our ecclesiastical community existence—are ever remembered by us, and it is well that they should be.

The situation is much different, however, with respect to two other equally significant events in the history of redemption, the ascension of our Lord and his gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church. While the one event receives only incidental mention in the Confession of Faith of the Reformed Church in America, the other is not mentioned at all. Such emphasis, or lack thereof, I believe, is but a reflection of the emphasis they have had in our thinking. Yet the New Testament ascribes to them very great importance and, inasmuch as the Reformed Churches have cherished the thought that they must ever be re-formed according to God's Word, it is well that we address ourselves to one or both of these matters. Directing our attention principally to the ascension, we observe that, notwithstanding the scant attention given that event in our circles, it actually
has had an important place in the theology of the Reformed Churches. Indeed, one can say that only in Reformed theology has the ascension received anything like an approximation to its Biblical importance.

It is for these reasons then that I have chosen to make this subject the theme of my address with the hope that the exalted Head of the Church may be pleased to use these remarks to his glory and our edification. I should add that an additional reason for my interest in this subject is that my thinking has been stimulated by the studies of contemporary continental scholars who, in the exigencies of our time, have given fresh treatment to the highly relevant themes of the ascension and the present Lordship of Christ.¹

I.

It is well first that we review the meaning of the ascension of our Lord as it is interpreted for us in the New Testament. As we do so we remember immediately that the ascension meant the return of Christ to his heavenly home. He had already predicted it in the days of his ministry before his passion. He once said to Jews who were disturbed about his teaching, “Doth this offend you? What if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where he was before;”¹² Subsequently he made repeated reference to his return to the Father in words familiar to all of us. He would return whence he had come to prepare a place for his disciples and to send them the Holy Spirit.³ At the end of his sojourn among us while his disciples were with him “he was taken up and a cloud received him out of their sight.” The angels who appeared as the disciples “looked steadfastly towards heaven as he went up,” informed them that this same Jesus who was “taken up from [them] into heaven, shall so come in like manner as [they had] seen him go into heaven.”⁴ The rest of the New Testament witness concurs in that interpretation of the event. Peter both speaks⁵ and writes⁶ of Christ “who is gone into heaven and is-on the right hand of God.” The Apostle Paul was prostrated by a light and a voice which came to him from heaven and he did not hesitate to relate that transforming experience with Christ later in his ministry.⁷ The “mystery of godliness,” according to Paul, which cannot be disputed, is that “God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the gentiles,

² John 6:62.
⁴ Acts 1:9ff.
⁶ I Pet. 3:22.
believed on in the world, received up into glory." As he had come from glory, now that his work was completed, he would return to glory.

The ascension meant further that Christ's saving work was completed so that he could appear in heaven for us. In the epistle to the Hebrews, where this teaching is stated most clearly, every reference to redemption is in the past implying completion once and for all. "When he had by himself purged our sins [he] sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." His session in heaven is to intercede for his brethren; we are specifically told that at least four times in this letter. He is said to be eminently qualified for this task because of his participation in our human frailty and his susceptibility to temptation while among us. Both human and divine, he could offer the perfect sacrifice, himself, and is an all-sufficient advocate and intercessor. His presence in heaven is a guarantee that our interests will be guarded and a pledge of our final salvation. If he goes and prepares a place for us, he will come again and receive us unto himself, that where he is there we may be also. Our catechism states the matter beautifully when it gives the advantages of the ascension as: "First, that he is our advocate in the presence of his Father in heaven; secondly, that we have our flesh in heaven, as a sure pledge that he, as the head, will also take up to himself us, his members; thirdly, that he sends us his Spirit as an earnest, by whose power we seek the things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God, and not things on earth."

The ascension also signified the assumption of Jesus to the place of power. Since "all power is given unto (him) in heaven and in earth" his disciples need not fear as they discharge their responsibility to evangelize all nations. Those words had been spoken just before his departure but a few days later Peter, on Pentecost, spoke of his "being by the right hand of God exalted" and later references to his possession of divine authority and power are frequent. Having "ascended up on high, he led captivity captive" and "is on the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him."

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8 I Tim. 3:16.
9 Heb. 1:3 et al.
11 Cf. I John 2:1f.
12 John 14:2.
14 Matt. 28:18ff.
16 Acts 7:55f.; Rom. 8:34; I Cor 15:25; Eph. 1:20; Phil. 2:9ff.; Heb. 10:12f.
17 Eph. 4:8; I Pet. 3:22.

(60)
Finally, the ascension signified the gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church. Allusion has been made to this earlier and here I simply underscore the fact, Jesus had explicitly informed his disciples the night before his death that it was expedient for them that he go away. "For," said he, "if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." 18 When the Holy Spirit was given at Pentecost Peter, after proclamation of the resurrection and ascension of that same Jesus whom they had crucified, said that Christ, "having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear." 19 In the fourth chapter of his epistle to the Ephesians the Apostle Paul has many things to say about the Church, the body of Christ, some of which are most important for an understanding of the purpose of the ascension. A point which he wishes to make is that the gifts needed for the life and ministry of the Church must come from Christ.

"Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, until we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; so that we may no longer be children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the cunning of men, by their craftiness in deceitful wiles. But, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up into him in all things, who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body fitly joined and knit together by every joint with which it is supplied, when each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and upbuilds itself in love."

I have quoted the entire passage because of the light which it throws on our subject. When this passage is supplemented with the twelfth chapter of first Corinthians the importance of Christ's gifts to his Church is seen even more clearly. The ascension, says Jesus, is necessary that he may send his Spirit and supervise the distribution of gifts to the members of his body.

II.

Having reviewed the meaning of the ascension I desire now to speak of its significance to Reformed theology. I stated in my introduction that only in Reformed theology does the doctrine of the ascension of Christ begin to approximate its Biblical representation. I can only outline here how that thesis could be sustained and I shall do so in three particulars.

First, Reformed theology has given serious attention to the biblical teaching concerning the Lordship of Christ. In the pre-Reformation Church this doctrine was never worked out. Athanasius has powerful passages on our Lord's triumph over death and evil and revels in the fact that He has gained the victory; Gregory of Nyssa extols our Lord's deity and speaks often of his power over sin, death and the devil in the sections of The Great Catechism where redemption is discussed; Augustine spoke of the "Kingdom of Christ" by which he meant the Church; Aquinas referred to Christ as the "head" of the human race and of the Church frequently, and others undoubtedly did the same, but the rich biblical significance of the doctrine was not worked out until later.

During the age of the Reformation Luther had some powerful things to say about Christ's victory over the powers of darkness, as Aulen has reminded us, and he believed that Christ is Lord of the Church and also of the world. However, in his own teaching and especially in later Lutheranism there is greater emphasis on the antithesis between the two realms, that of the Church and of the world, so that "the Church appears to be the only realm in which, in this present dispensation, Christ's Kingship is truly operative and relevant and . . . no explicit theological foundation is laid for a consistent witness by the Church concerning Christ's Lordship in and over the world." In his formulation of the work of Christ Calvin gave to the Church the teaching of the triplex munus, the three-fold office of prophet, priest and king. In the discussion on the regal office in the Institutes Calvin makes it synonymous with Christ's Lordship, saying that "the Scripture often styles him Lord because the Father has given him authority over us, that he may exercise his own dominion by the agency of his son." In his comments on Mark 16:19 Calvin remarks that "Christ was taken up into heaven, not to enjoy blessed rest at a distance from us, but to govern the world for the salvation of all believers." In numerous places in the commentaries the universal and sovereign reign of Christ is mentioned, Calvin desiring to impress upon his readers the splendor and dignity of Christ's person and office. He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords from whom comes all authority and power.

In his volume entitled The Kingship of Christ Dr. Visser 't Hooft asserts that Calvin does not make clear in what manner Christ is King of this world and he quotes a sentence from the 20th chapter of the fourth

20 The Incarnation of the Word, par. 24ff.
21 Vid., chaps. 24-32.
22 The City of God, XX, 9, 1.
23 Summa Theol., Q. 8, a. 1, 3, 4; Q. 48, a. 1; Q. 49, a. 1, and a. 3.
24 Christus Victor.
25 W. A. Visser 't Hooft, op. cit., p. 22.
26 II, XV, v.
27 Vid., e.g., Comm. on the Ep. to the Heb. 1:3-10.
book of the *Institutes* where Calvin says that "the spiritual kingdom of Christ and the civil order are things which are far away from each other." It should be remarked, however, that Calvin does not drive the two realms apart. He is making a necessary distinction and he states in the next paragraph that these two orders "are in no respect at variance with each other." Moreover, he assumes that the state and civil order will be Christian, and he refers to "Christian government," "Christian magistrates," and "Christian princes" in his discussion. Christ is Lord of the State and society as well as of the Church to Calvin.

Dr. Visser 't Hooft states that there are in Calvin two lines of thought in this question of just how clearly and consistently Calvin taught the universal reign of Christ. "The world is sometimes seen from the angle of common grace and the law of nature," in Calvin, he avers. "In that case the accent falls on the orders of creation; the world and the state exist as if in a realm by themselves. But this is not the dominating motive of his thought. The main accent falls on the universal sovereignty of Christ; the world and the state are conceived in a definitely Christocentric manner. It is possible to interpret Calvin as Dr. Kuyper has done in his Stone Lectures of 1898 as the advocate of a theocentric rather than a Christocentric view of the world and the political order and so to construct a 'Calvinistic' theology of orders of creation in which the decisive word is not spoken by the Christ who makes all things new. But it is certainly more true to Calvin's own intentions to find in him, as Wilhelm Niesel has done, a Christocentric view of the civil order based on the royal office of Christ, according to which all government is rooted in the fact that Jesus Christ sits at the right hand of God."

I subscribe to Dr. Visser 't Hooft's thesis that, although the Protestant confessions and theologies accepted the teaching of the three-fold office of Christ after Calvin's time, that the royal office was most often defined in terms of the Church. The confessions, he says, "do not call the Church to a persistent and joyful witness concerning Christ's present Lordship in all realms of life. The general tendency of Protestantism becomes, therefore, more and more to describe the Reign of Christ as an invisible, spiritual and heavenly reality which is located in the souls of men. This shift of emphasis from the universal, all-embracing sovereignty of Christ over the whole world to a purely inward sovereignty leads inevitably to the pietistic conception that the affairs of this world are the sole concern of the secular powers and that the Church has no word for the world but only for individuals who are to be saved out of this world. A voice such as that of Johann Georg Hamann—who wrote in the days of Voltaire and

\[28\text{Op. cit., p. 23.}\]
\[29\text{IV, XX, 2.}\]
\[30\text{Op. cit., p. 23f.}\]
Frederick the Great that Christianity is above all a political sect because it has a King, who proclaims a Kingdom—remains a voice crying in the wilderness. The whole trend is in the other direction. Christianity becomes more and more introspective and the Church knows less and less what to do with the world-embracing and world-shaking affirmations of the Bible.”

Dr. Visser ’t Hooft sketches the 19th century neglect of the kingly and priestly offices of Christ in favor of his prophetic character. But he was no longer a “priestly prophet whose word is confirmed by his sacrifice, nor the royal prophet who overcomes the world ever in and through his death.” He becomes merely another religious teacher and the Church is left alone with itself—without a King.

I have quoted from this study at length because I believe the positions taken to be so very true. The fact of the Lordship of Christ, in the historical and Biblical sense of the term, was forgotten. It was forgotten because the resurrection and ascension of Christ were no longer believed. Supernatural Christianity, as he shows, was considered impossible and obsolete. However, his study is necessarily a statement of the general theological situation and shares the points of strength and weakness of such a study. It is not true of all theology; in particular it is not true of what might be called the classical stream of Reformed theology. Even in the rationalistic 18th century, and in the liberal 19th century, the more definitive theological writings, studied in Reformed theological schools, had sections on the Kingly office of Christ considered universally as well as in terms of the Church. I do not say that they worked it out—just when is such a teaching worked out anyway?—but the exaltation and Lordship of Christ over creation and over the Church are there. I mention four “systematics” works, widely used, as proof of this contention. They are Turretin,[32] Heinrich Hepp who indeed defines Kingship in terms of the Church but nevertheless speaks of Christ’s universal power and authority,[33] Charles Hodge who has a section on “Christ’s Dominion Over the Universe” in the discussion of the kingly office,[34] and Dr. Abraham Kuyper who has a powerful section on Christ’s kingship including many pages on his relation as king to the world outside the Church.[35] What is true of these best-known theological writers, I believe, is true of those not so well known. It can be affirmed then that Reformed theology has given serious attention to the doctrine of the Lordship of Christ. It has made much of that fact (1) personally—“I am not my own but belong unto my faithful Savior Jesus Christ,” (2)—ecclesiastically—Christ has always been de-

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32 II, IV, xvi.
33 XVIII, XXXIff.
34 II, p. 59ff.
declared the sole Head and King of the Church—and, (3) universally, or cosmically. Proof of his Lordship is his ascension and exaltation to the Father's right hand from which he exercises his sovereign rule.

It is our good fortune, however, to be living in a day when there has been a most remarkable new emphasis on this subject and mainly by scholars—to speak only of the science of theology—in the Reformed tradition. To mention one scholar, Professor Oscar Cullmann has emphasized this fact most effectively. I trust that all of you have or will become familiar with his Christ and Time. In other, untranslated, writings he works out the same theme on the Lordship of Jesus. In one of these, e.g., he shows that the early Church made much more of Christ's reign than we do today, the Apostle's Creed retaining the expression "sitteth on the right hand of God" out of a rich tradition concerning Christ's triumph over the evil powers and his subsequent exaltation. He shows further in this essay that there is no Old Testament passage cited so frequently in the New Testament as the first verse of Psalm 110: "Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool."36

But, as we have already seen, Professor Cullmann is far from alone in his position. The General Secretary of the World Council of Churches made, as we have seen, "The Kingship of Christ" the theme of his Stone lectures at Princeton; Professors A. A. Van Ruler37 and H. Berkhoff38 of the Netherlands have done the same, and Dr. Niesel, in a typical statement of his own position which is that of the "Confessing Church" in Germany, writes: "Fundamental to the witness of the Reformed Churches is the confession that is brought to expression in Question 1 of the Heidelberg Catechism, 'that I with body and soul, both in life and in death, am not my own, but belong to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ.' Jesus Christ has once done something which has also brought me today under his dominion. He is not only a figure in the distant past, but a most living present reality. As Lord of Lords he directs an imperial reign of grace for his own. To him and his salvation-bestowing Lordship we are subject. Reformed theology calls us to remembrance of Easter and the Ascension and sees the cross of Christ in their light."39

To close this part of our discussion with a practical question, I wonder how faithful we are to our theological heritage in this matter. I wonder how seriously our congregations, our people—how seriously we—hold this

38 De Kerk en de Keizer.
39 Das Evangelium und die Kirchen, p. 148.
truth concerning the present, dynamic Lordship of him who was, who is and who is to come.

I wish to say secondly that the ascension is important to Reformed theology because that theology has been characterized by an appreciation for the gift of the Holy Spirit. John Calvin has been called the theologian of the Holy Spirit and Calvin's writings about the work of the Spirit are one of his richest gifts to the Church. Whence comes this gift of the Holy Spirit? The answer, obvious to every student of the Bible, is from the ascended Lord. We saw earlier that Jesus stated that a reason for his return to the Father was that he might send his Spirit to the Church. Ten days after the ascension, while the disciples were praying and waiting, the Spirit was received and the Church was empowered for its task. Pentecost was a unique phenomenon but the Spirit has not been withdrawn from the Church. He is still with us in all his preserving, in all his saving, in all his energizing, in all his charismatic activity. It is easy to forget these truths, grow weary with boredom and then just go on doing things in the same old way, expecting things not to happen.

Jesus said that he would not leave us but that he would continue with his disciples. "Lo, I am with you always... I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you." Yet he has left us; but he has given us his Spirit and that Spirit is Christ with us, Christ in us, the hope of glory. Reformed theology, I say, has taken these truths comparatively seriously. It has been imperfect, just as have been all other attempts to build systems of thought, although such attempts are necessary if faith is to be intelligible, as is being shown frequently again in our day. But at this point, as in others, the Reformed Churches have caught truth from the Word of God.

In the last years we have been hearing much about Pentecostalism and Pentecostal Churches—and they have vigor indeed, and apparently God's blessing. Some folks, including Pentecostalists, believe that they alone understand the Scriptural teaching on the Holy Spirit. Some of them become extreme in their emphases, wander from the truth of the Word, but all the while feel sorry for the rest of us. I have recently had some lively correspondence from a woman like that. She was once a member of a Reformed Church but is now a Pentecostalist. She takes issue with something that I wrote and says, in part,

"I will not let you off so easily. I like your frankness; then we can get somewhere. The trouble in the lukewarm church groups in these last days of this dispensation is that there is too much pussyfooting which is greatly hindering the cause of Christ (2 Tim. 4:3, 4; Rev. 3:14-22) ... I understand your difficulty, for it is only a few short years ago that I was as much 'in the dark as you are. First of all I will give my testimony. I was in the Reformed Church for about thirty-one years; there is where I was saved, but there was no growth in my spiritual life. We got very good spiritual preaching from the pulpit; Jesus was real from the pulpit, during most of these years. But as
soon as I'd take my eyes from the pulpit onto the congregation Jesus seemed to fade away. In other words, Jesus is not real to the individuals in the congregation. This was something I could not understand. I took my burden to the Lord, and my blessed Lord led me into a group where Jesus is real. I praise His wonderful name! He truly becomes sweeter as the days go by."

At the end of the long letter she writes, "I thank my lovely, precious Jesus for having given me an opportunity to witness to you, a man who is far above me in education and position. Please, Brother Osterhaven, seek the Lord on this matter; You will never be sorry. All my words are of no avail unless you seek the Lord, and when you have done so let me hear from you again and we shall take up the other matters mentioned in our correspondence."

There is undoubtedly much good in that lady's Christianity. She is fervent, frank and, as Paul might say, full of the Spirit. But whatever good there is in her understanding of the Christian faith has been in Reformed theology from the days of Calvin. I believe that some Pentecostalists would be greatly surprised if they would read certain chapters in the Institutes and passages in the Commentaries. But Calvin was but the beginning of that Biblical emphasis in the Reformed stream of thought. There was also John Owen and Abraham Kuyper, and today there is A. A. van Ruler who had probably made the finest attempt in our time to work out a thorough Biblical pneumatology. And I do not believe that it was by chance that Puritanism and Methodism, with their interest in the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, came out of the Reformed Churches.

There is an interesting relationship of the three-fold office of Christ to his present, exalted ministry in our behalf. As he continues as our only priest, having brought his sacrifice to heaven and now interceding for us, and as he is our eternal king, so he is also our prophet. Through his Spirit he is teaching his Church, as he taught it during his earthly life by his voice, bringing all things to its remembrance, guiding it into all truth. He, the Spirit, does not speak from himself, but what things soever he hears, those he speaks. And he declares to us the things that are to come.

Finally, I wish to relate the significance of the ascension to Reformed theology by stating that that theology has understood the ascension as precisely that, as Christ's removal of himself from one place, earth, to another place, heaven, whence he will come again. This, of course, was the point at issue between the Lutheran and the Reformed Churches in the sixteenth century and it continues a major point of difference today.

The doctrine of Luther and of strict Lutherans is that at the ascension there was a communication of attributes, more particularly that just Christ's divine attributes were imparted to his human nature. Thus his human nature could be ubiquitous, in more than one place at any one time. Accord-

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41 John 14:25f.; 16:13f.
ing to some Lutherans, this communication of attributes took place at the birth of Christ, but during his earthly sojourn he emptied himself so that his divine power and glory were concealed. Other Lutheran scholars aver that the communication occurred at the time of Christ’s exaltation only.

By this theory Luther sought to answer the question how Christ could be in heaven and also be corporeally present in the elements of the Lord’s Supper. His ascension means, not that he left the earth and went to heaven where he now is, but that his human nature became ubiquitous and is still with us. The Church of all ages confesses that he “ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty,” but “the right hand of God is everywhere (ubiique) and Christ in respect of his humanity, is truly and in very deed seated thereat.” So spoke Luther and his followers and condemned the teaching “that Christ’s body is so confined in heaven that it can in no mode whatever be likewise at one and the same time in many places, or in all the places where the Lord’s Supper is celebrated.” Nor should the faithful, in the Lord’s Supper, be exhorted “to lift their eyes to heaven, and there seek the body of Christ,” but they are “to seek the body and blood of Christ in the Lord’s Supper.” He is not absent from us corporeally—that is a Zwinglian error—but is today present with us in his whole being.

Strict Lutheran dogmaticians have taken the same position. Their best known and most influential American spokesman was Francis Pieper, who has extensive discussions of the above topics in the second and third volumes of his Christian Dogmatics, although the five pages on the ascension itself, much of it a factitious interpretation of Acts 3:21, are surprisingly, but understandably, brief. The determining consideration in his discussion is the doctrine of the corporeal presence of Christ in the Eucharist, and the interpretation of other Scriptural data, e.g., the ascension, is shaped accordingly. Some statements might strike initiated readers humorously, if the author were not so manifestly in earnest. An example is the straight-faced affirmation, given repeatedly, that “Luther does not ‘interpret’ the words of institution at all, but takes them as they read. The Roman and Reformed teachings, however, rest on extensive and copious ‘interpretations’ of the words of institution. . . . The Lutheran doctrine of the Lord’s Supper rests on the bare words of institution, and not on added ‘exegesis’.” How naive can learned men be? As though any doctrine or knowledge can be anything less than facts plus their interpretation!

42 The Formula of Concord, Art. VII, Affirmative, V.
43 Ibid., Art. VII, Negative, XI, Cf. XIII.
44 Ibid., Art. VII, Negative, XV.
46 II, 173-305; 324-330; III, 293-349.
From the first the Reformed Churches did not understand the ascen-
sion in that way. And so Calvin has numerous places,\textsuperscript{48} and powerful argu-
ments, where he states the local presence of Christ in heaven, a place
removed from earth. The Heidelberg Catechism is as sharp and precise in
its position on the local presence of Christ in his state of exaltation in
heaven, and the reason for those four questions on the ascension, an
unusual number, is the controversy in the Palatinate about the presence of
Christ in the Supper at the time the catechism was written.

Other Reformed creedal statements\textsuperscript{49} and Reformed theologians have
been equally unequivocal in the position they have taken and have, I
believe, been closer to the truth as it has been given the Church. There is
much that could be said, but it may be sufficient here to say that the
Lutheran position has far-reaching implications for many doctrines, among
them not only the ascension and the Lord's Supper, but also Christ's pres-
ent reign—God's right hand, they say, is everywhere; the Second Coming,
interpreted by them as a sudden manifestation of that Christ who has
been \textit{corporeally} in our midst all the time; and also the incarnation—as
Dr. Niesel asks in this connection: "What precisely is the significance of
the incarnation of the Son of God?" And he reminds us that this question
is especially pressing because Luther claimed that during his earthly walk
Christ's body was everywhere present!\textsuperscript{50}

Reformed theology has believed that as Christ came forth from the
Father, so he has returned to him. From there he rules the nations and
sends the Church his Holy Spirit. Some day he will come again, and that
second advent will be an event the dramatic proportions of which will be
greater than creation itself. He will come from heaven. \textit{Where} it is we do
not know, but we know \textit{that} it is. It is the place that he has prepared for
his people. It is the place where he is now with the angels. It is the place
of the special manifestation of God's presence.

\textsuperscript{48} \textit{Institutes of the Christian Religion}, II, xvi, xiv; IV, xvii, ix, xviii, xix, xxiv,
xxvi, xxvii, xxviii, xxix, xxx; \textit{Mutual Consent in Regard to the Sacraments be-
tween the Ministers of the Church of Zurich and John Calvin, Minister of the
Church of Geneva; Second Defence of the Pious and Orthodox Faith Concerning
the Sacraments in answer to the Calumnies of Joachim Westphal}; both in Cal-
vin's Tracts, vol. II.; \textit{et Comm.}, ascension texts supra.

\textsuperscript{49} Vid. P. Schaff, \textit{Creeds of Christendom}, vol. III, articles on the Ascension and
the Lord's Supper.

\textsuperscript{50} \textit{Op. cit.}, p. 225.