

Luther writes: "The pope is not a vicar of Christ in heaven, but only of Christ as he walked the earth. Christ in heaven, in the form of a ruler, needs no vicar, but sits on his throne and sees everything, does everything, knows everything, and has all power. But Christ needs a vicar in the form of a servant, the form in which he went about on earth, working, preaching, suffering, and dying" (LW, 44: 165).

My problem with this statement, as much as I take its point about Christ's needing only a vicar in the form of a servant, is its assumption that "Christ in heaven" is someone other than "Christ as he walked the earth." I should insist, on the contrary, that "Christ in heaven, in the form of a ruler," *is*, precisely, none other than "Christ as he went about on earth in the form of a servant, working, preaching, suffering, and dying." It is precisely *this* Christ—which is to say, Jesus as he lived and died—whom God raised from the dead and who now rules from heaven as Lord.

Of course, this mythological way of expressing it is profoundly inadequate. But the mythology can be interpreted without remainder in the strictly literal terms of the one whole of reality's being related internally as well as externally to all of its parts, analogously to the way in which they are all related to it. In these terms, it can be made clear that, and why, the risen Jesus does indeed rule, but not in the form of some ruler he never was, but only in the form of the ruler he ever was and is, which is to say, in the form of the servant who lived and died in God and so ever lives as just that servant for all.

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