

Law and Gospel

*According to Their
Several Effects*

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FOREWORD

Valparaiso University herewith presents to the pastors of the Synodical Conference a translation of one of the forgotten classics of American Lutheran theology. For many years one of the weaknesses of our period of transition from the German medium to the English has been the lack of adequate translations of many of the doctrinal and exegetical treatises which, under God, profoundly influenced the formulation of the theological position of the Synodical Conference.

The present essay by Dr. George Stoeckhardt, the greatest exegete of American Lutheranism, goes directly to the rock from which we were hewn. The constant, insistent, powerful preaching of sin and grace has always been the glory of the Lutheran Church. If it is to be done properly, it must rest solidly on the Scriptural distinction between the Law and the Gospel, both in their nature and in their effect. A preacher must, above all, know how rightly to divide the Word of Truth. The line must be clear, sharp, decisive. Any and every confusion of the Law and the Gospel leads inevitably to sentimentality or moralizing. The Law loses its power and the Gospel loses its sweetness.

Nowhere in Lutheran literature has this been expressed more clearly than in Dr. Stoeckhardt's treatise which appeared originally in Volume 33 of *Lehre und Wehre*. It is our conviction that our pastors, especially of the younger generation, will read it with instruction and profit. It is a complete philosophy of preaching.

The University is grateful to the Rev. Walter H. Bouman for permission to include this essay in the present pamphlet series. For a number of years Pastor Bouman has devoted his exceptional bilingual ability to the task of making available in English some of the historic doctrinal and exegetical treasures of the Lutheran Church. The task of translating our fathers is admittedly difficult. One is constantly confronted with the choice between literal faithfulness to the original and the smoothness of the modern English idiom. Pastor Bouman has been able to solve this problem with discretion and sensitivity.

The Lutheran Church will not break or die if it continues to retain its humility before the Word. As its task becomes greater in these evil days, its loyalty and devotion to the Word of Truth must become greater. To this end Valparaiso University hopes to make a small contribution by the publication of this essay.

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O. P. KRETZMANN

Law and Gospel According to Their Several Effects

I. The Nature of the Law and the Gospel

The proper distinction between Law and Gospel is whole-some knowledge, which has been disclosed to us by Luther. It is, as Luther so often stresses, "a very noble art" and "highly necessary" "to differentiate correctly between Law and Gospel." Where these "two different words" are mixed, false doctrine and wrong practice will follow. The doctrinal confusion of our day and the consequent disorder in life largely result from the fact that this difference has been forgotten. Today one hears remarks about the "comfort of the Law," about the Law "being a guide to sanctification." Preachers of the Gospel therefore do well continually to study the Scriptures and the confessional writings in regard to this *krinomenon* of the pure doctrine.

However, it is not the purpose of this treatise once again to illuminate the oft-treated theme of the difference between Law and Gospel. At present we intend only to consider more closely the differing effects of these "two kinds of word." For just at this point misunderstanding and misuse of both Law and Gospel become most apparent. With this as the starting point, we also shed new light on the Scriptural and confessional doctrine of repentance and conversion.

Only in so far as it serves our purpose, shall we refer to the differing contents of these two different words. Luther in his "Sermon on the Difference Between Law and Gospel" describes it in these words: "By the Law nothing else is to be understood than God's word and commandment, wherein He commands us what we are to do and not to do and demands of us obedience and works." "Contrariwise, the Gospel is such doctrine or word of God as does not demand our works nor commands us to do anything, but asks us simply to accept and be showered with grace as it is proffered to us. . . . Here we do nothing, but simply receive and suffer ourselves to be given what is offered to us through the Word, namely, that God promises and proclaims to us: This and that I give unto you." (St. Louis edition, IX: 802—803.)

At the same time let us remember that ordinarily when we speak of the Law in contrast to the Gospel, when the Apostle in general speaks of the Law and contrasts Law and faith, we mean that word of the Law which is found in the Scriptures, the revealed Law, the Law of Moses in so far as it concerns all men. We learn from the New Testament which portions of the Law were in force only temporarily and for the children of Israel alone, and which portions of the Law constitute God's command and demand for all men of all times. Yes, everything that God demands of man properly

belongs under the title "Law." Hence we also find the preaching of the Law in the New Testament. On the other hand, the Gospel comprehends all the promises of God, those of the Old as well as those of the New Testament.

However, so far as the Law is concerned, even though the phrase "The Law demands," may correctly define the peculiarity of the Law, this definition is nevertheless not exhaustive and does not fully cover what Holy Writ says of the essence and purpose of the Law. Luther himself supplements this definition in the writing cited above. For if we let it go at that, namely, that the Law demands, we might perhaps arrive at the thought that the Law helps man to do right and so serves him in becoming pious. But just this very thought is rejected by Scripture. When St. Paul says (Gal. 3:21): "For if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the Law," he denies both, namely, that the Law justifies man and that it helps man to attain life. If we would speak correctly of the essence, end, and effect of the Law, we dare never look away from the nature and condition of man, to whom the Law has been given. Implied in the Scriptural definition of the Law is the concept that it deals with sinful mankind.

"That the Law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners," St. Paul considers the basic purpose (1 Tim. 1:9), which must underlie every instruction in the Law. The Law tells man what God demands of him. However, this demand is addressed to sinful and sinning man. An unholy nation, which from the very beginning always resisted the Holy Spirit, received the Law at Sinai. The very form of the demand "Thou shalt not kill, not commit adultery, not steal" clearly indicates that the demands of the Law oppose the mind and will of man, which is bent on evil. Hence these demands do not serve to turn man away from his evil mind, will, and doing, and to accustom him to that which is good. Rather, since the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth, and since natural man cannot be obedient to the Law of God (Rom. 8:7), the Law only incites man to opposition. Sinful man, fallen away from God and hostile to God, opposes and resists the demands of God.

In itself the Law is just and holy and good. But the sin dwelling in man at the first approach of the Law to man reacts to the Law in such a way as to produce the opposite of that which is pleasing to God, namely, disobedience and transgression. Evil lust and desire live and thrive in natural man. Before the coming of the Law man does not know that such lust is sinful and evil. But as soon as the commandment "Thou shalt not covet" becomes known to man, erstwhile dead, sin immediately becomes alive. Man now becomes

aware that the lusts which slumber in his heart are actual sin and opposition to God's Law. And now, too, even though he knows and sees the commandment, he cannot prevent the evil lust from becoming a deed, an act of sin, and actual transgression of the Law becomes a fact. Constantly those things are done by man which he desires, which, however, the Law prohibits and forbids. And inasmuch as the Law opposes the desires and lusts of man, yes, nourishes, increases, and heightens them, it is indeed proper to say with St. Paul that by the Law "the motions of sins . . . did work in our members" (*enērgeitō*, Rom. 7:5). He says the same thing in this short sentence (Rom. 3:20): "By the Law is the knowledge of sin." The Law exposes sin, which is in man and which constantly reveals itself in word and deed as actual sin, i. e., transgression and disobedience, and as such is brought into the consciousness of man. And since God does not permit His Law to be transgressed without punishment, the Law, branding sin as transgression, causes wrath in the sinner. "The Law worketh wrath; for where no law is, there is no transgression" (Rom. 4:15). The Law results in death for man (Rom. 7:10, 11).

However, all of this does not happen accidentally, but rather according to God's intention. In all of it is fulfilled God's intended purpose of the Law. Sin is incited by the Law. But that does not exclude the fact that it is God's purpose that the Law give occasion to sin. St. Paul, when vindicating the Law, indeed says it was given unto life (*Hē entolē hē eis zōēn*). However, there he points out only the Law's own provision, namely, that he who would do all this should have life. That it is the final purpose of the Law that this very provision should convince man of his inability to attain life through the Law, Christ proves by smashing to pieces the pretension and conceit of that self-righteous scribe with the words "This do, and thou shalt live" (Luke 10:28). The Scriptures clearly testify that God, in giving the Law to sinners, had no other intention than that of concluding mankind under sin and wrath. Paul answers the question "Wherefore, then, serveth the Law?" with the explanation "It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made" (Gal. 3:19). In giving the Law it was God's purpose that sin be revealed as transgression, that men should stand before God as transgressors. St. Paul writes on another occasion: "The Law entered" — such was God's purpose — "that the offense might abound" (Rom. 5:20). And in 2 Cor. 3:4—11 St. Paul speaks of the Law revealed by God as the letter which killeth, as the ministration of condemnation. The term "ministration," or "service," *diakonia*, shows that God Himself has fixed the purpose of the Law, namely, to kill and to condemn mankind.

The argument therefore does not hold that God originally had a different purpose in mind with the Law, as though He wanted to experiment therewith whether man in this manner might attain righteousness and life, and as though through man's own fault the Law became subservient to another, a foreign purpose, namely, to point out and to rebuke sin. Nay, this latter function was rather from the very beginning the real purpose of the Law, i. e., of the revealed word of the Law. That man was and is sinful and sins against the Law, yea, that he cannot do otherwise than transgress the Law, this fact God has included from the beginning in the pedagogy of the Law. He has given the Law for the express purpose of revealing sin, transgression, and wrath, and of making sinful man conscious of it.

On this point, too, our Lutheran Confessions only re-echo the teaching of Holy Writ. In the Apology, Art. XII (*Concordia Triglotta*, p. 260) we read: "For the Law only accuses consciences, commands what is to be done, and terrifies them." Of course, the Law commands what is to be done. However, that is self-evident. Hence this addition is omitted in the Latin text. To accuse the consciences, to convict them of transgression, to terrify them with the wrath of God, these are the characteristics of the Law.

The Smalcald Articles, Part III, Art. II, describe the essence and purpose of the Law in these words: "But the chief office or force of the Law is that it reveal original sin with all its fruits, and show man how very low his nature has fallen, and how he has become [fundamentally and] utterly corrupted; as the Law must tell man that he has no God nor regard for God, and worships others gods, a matter which before and without the Law he would not have believed. In this way he becomes terrified, is humbled, becomes despondent, despairs, and anxiously desires aid, but sees no escape; he begins to be an enemy of God, and to murmur." (*Trigl.*, p. 479.) That is the power and efficacy of the Law to point out sin and the deep corruption of human nature and thereby to throw man into terror and despair, yes, to intensify resistance and enmity against God to the utmost. And this is the chief office, yes, the essential office, of the Law, the purpose of the Law as fixed by God.

In the Formula of Concord, Thor. Decl., Art. V, two expressions of Luther are quoted: "Anything that preaches concerning our sins and God's wrath, no matter when or how, that is all preaching of the Law." "Everything that reproves sin is and belongs to the Law, whose peculiar office it is to reprove sin and to lead to the knowledge of sins." (*Trigl.*, pp. 955, 957.)

Accordingly, we may apply to the effect of the Law the term contrition, as does the Apology in Article XII, "Of

Repentance." As is explained there, repentance comprises two parts, namely, contrition and faith (*Trigl.*, p. 259). And these two stand in the same relation to each other as Law and Gospel. What the Law works in the sinner is contrition. But such contrition is nothing else than "terror of conscience," "utter wrath and despair." The Law brings sin and transgression to life in the conscience of the sinner and therefore fills his heart with anguish, fear, wrath, the terrors of hell. So far does the Law lead man — down into hell.

The Gospel, on the other hand, is in every respect the direct opposite of the Law. While the Law commands man what he is to do, the Gospel contains only promises. To promise, to give, to confer, that is its peculiarity, as noted above. However, also this definition is too general, even as it does not suffice simply to define the Law as a demand. One must add at once the specific benefit which is given through the Gospel. The Law concerns the sinner, it makes man a sinner and transgressor and pronounces wrath upon him. The Gospel promises and gives unto the sinner, whose conscience is burdened with sin and wrath, what he needs most, namely, forgiveness of sins and salvation. Thus the Scriptures speak of the Gospel throughout. It is the Gospel of Christ, the Savior of sinners, of Him who died for our sins. (1 Cor. 15: 1, 3.) This Gospel is the power of God unto salvation, "for therein is the righteousness of God revealed" (Rom. 1: 16—17). The Gospel is, to say it with Luther and the Formula of Concord, "such a preaching as shows and gives nothing else than grace and forgiveness in Christ" (F. C., Thor. Decl., Art. V, *Trigl.*, p. 955).

Accordingly the effect of the Gospel consists in this, as the Apology expresses it in several places, "to cheer, sustain, and quicken the contrite" (*Trigl.*, p. 261). If, however, a poor sinner comforts himself with the gracious promise of God, what else is this than faith? The Gospel of promise demands faith. A present needs to be accepted. The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation "to everyone that believeth" (Rom. 1: 16). But by demanding, by insisting upon faith, by giving the sinner the promise "Here you have in Christ forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation; it is yours," the Gospel works faith and puts this treasure into the heart. In Article XII the Apology explains in detail that faith cometh by hearing, by the promise of divine grace, by the Gospel.

In Article II, Thor. Decl., of the F. C. conversion is described as follows: "Through this means, namely, the preaching and hearing of His Word, God works, and crushes our hearts, and draws man, so that through the preaching of the Law he comes to know His sins and God's wrath and experiences in his heart true terror, contrition, and sorrow, and through the preaching and consideration of the holy Gospel

concerning the gracious forgiveness of sins in Christ a spark of faith is kindled in him, which accepts the forgiveness of sins for Christ's sake and comforts itself with the promise of the Gospel." (*Trigl.*, p. 903.) However, where faith is in the heart, there is also new life and light. Hence regeneration, spiritual life, is the effect of the Gospel. St. Peter reminds the Christians that they have been born again "by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever," and adds: "This is the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto you" (*euangelisthen*), hence the Gospel. (1 Pet. 1:23—25.) St. Paul praises the Gospel as the ministration of "the Spirit which giveth life" (2 Cor. 3:4—11). That is the divinely appointed task and the specific function of the preaching of the Gospel. As the Law leads into hell, so the Gospel again leads out of hell and transfers the sinner into heaven.

The contrast is indeed sharp. Law and Gospel according to their several effects are as far removed from each other as hell and heaven, damnation and salvation. Nothing is farther from the truth than to present the Law as an introduction to the Gospel, the effect of the Law as the beginning of the reform which is perfected in faith. The Law indeed is called, and truly is, "our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ" (*paidagōgos*), Gal. 3:24. But that does not mean to say that the Law brings the heart of man into a certain moral disposition in which it is receptive for faith and salvation in Christ. On the contrary, the Apostle points out God's purpose and pedagogy, who first of all concludes everthing under sin (Gal. 3:22), so that in an entirely different way, a way directly opposed to the Law, namely, by promise and faith, He may lead to salvation. St. Paul has nothing else in mind than what is stated in the following words of the Apology: "For God only quickens. But He terrifies, he says, for this reason, namely, that there may be a place for consolation and quickening, because hearts that are secure and do not feel the wrath of God loathe consolation." (*Trigl.*, p. 265.) First sin, then grace. First death, then life. First terror, then consolation. The way to heaven leads through hell. In this sense only does the Law lead over to Christ. The Law only works wrath. But, of course, it is God's purpose, having filled man with fear and terror through the Law, afterwards to comfort him with the Gospel and to give to condemned sinners salvation through the Gospel. When administering Law and Gospel, God on His part has but one end in view: the salvation of mankind.

II. The Functions of the Law and the Gospel in Conversion

The difference between Law and Gospel, especially the effect of these two different words, must be kept in mind particularly in the doctrine of the sinner's conversion to God.

The way of salvation becomes distorted if that difference is overlooked, if Law and Gospel are mixed.

Where our Lutheran Confessions treat of the highly important topic of repentance, or conversion they distinguish clearly between what God effects through the Law and what He effects through the Gospel.

In Article XII of the Apology, "Of Repentance," we read: "Almost without exception, when Paul describes conversion or renewal, he designates these two parts; that we are dead to sin, which takes place by contrition and its terrors; and that we should rise again with Christ, which takes place when by faith once more we obtain consolation and life." (*Trigl.*, p. 263.) And again: "In repentance these two things are essential, namely, contrition and faith." (*Trigl.*, p. 267.)

In the Smalcald Articles, III, 3, "Of Repentance," Luther says: "This, then, is the thunderbolt of God by which He strikes in a heap both manifest sinners and false saints, and suffers no one to be in the right, but drives them all together to terror and despair. This is the hammer, as Jeremiah says, 23:29: 'Is not My Word like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?' This is not *activa contritio*, or manufactured repentance, but *passiva contritio*, true sorrow of heart, suffering and sensation of death.

"This, then, is what it means to begin true repentance; and here man must hear such a sentence as this: You are all of no account, whether you be manifest sinners or saints; you must all become different and do otherwise than you now are and are doing, whether you are as great, wise, powerful, and holy as you may. Here no one is godly.

"But to this office the New Testament immediately adds the consolatory promise of grace through the Gospel, which must be believed, as Christ declares, Mark 1:15: 'Repent and believe the Gospel,' i. e., become different and do otherwise, and believe My promise. And John, preceding Him, is called a preacher of repentance, however, for the remission of sin; i. e., John was to accuse all and convict them of being sinners, that they might know what they were before God, and might acknowledge that they were lost men, and might thus be prepared for the Lord, to receive grace, and to expect and accept from Him the remission of sins. Thus also Christ Himself says (Luke 24:47): 'Repentance and remission of sins must be preached in My name among all nations.'" (*Trigl.*, pp. 479, 481.)

In the F. C., Thor. Decl., Art. II, "Of Free Will," conversion is described as follows: "Therefore God, out of His immense goodness and mercy, has His divine eternal Law and His wonderful plan concerning our redemption, namely, the holy, alone-saving Gospel of His eternal Son, our only Savior and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, publicly preached; and by this

[preaching] He collects an eternal Church for Himself from the human race, and works in the hearts of men true repentance and knowledge of sins, and true faith in the Son of God, Jesus Christ." (Trigl., p. 901.)

True repentance, or conversion, then, consists in this, that God, first of all, through the Law works in the heart a knowledge of sin, fear, and terror of God's wrath and judgment, or, in a word, contrition and repentance, in the narrower sense. Then He kindles saving faith in the heart through the Gospel of Christ.

However, we do well to note here by means of which word conversion, or reform, or renewal, is actually called forth in the heart of the sinner. Alone through the Gospel. Luther does indeed say in the portion cited from the Smalcald Articles that repentance begins with contrition, namely, with the *contritio passiva*, and we are entirely right in defining repentance, or conversion, briefly as contrition and faith. But that does not exclude, rather includes, the fact that a real renewal takes place in the heart through faith, that a new spiritual life is wrought in the heart first and only through the Gospel. The Apology emphasizes the fact that this "renewing" is done "by faith." "For by faith we are comforted and quickened and saved from death and hell." (Trigl., p. 262.) In the F. C., Thor. Decl., Art. V, "Of Law and Gospel," these words are stressed: "The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, that preaches righteousness and imparts the Spirit" (Trigl., p. 959). And in the second Article of the F. C. we read "that through the preaching and consideration of the Holy Gospel concerning the gracious forgiveness of sins in Christ a spark of faith is kindled in the heart" (Trigl., p. 903), and that "God, out of His infinite goodness and mercy, comes first to us and causes His holy Gospel to be preached, whereby the Holy Ghost desires to work and accomplish in us this conversion and renewal, and through preaching and meditation upon His Word kindles in us faith and other godly virtues" (Trigl., p. 909).

Yes, so it is. Through the Gospel alone the sinner is converted and renewed. The Gospel alone speaks to us of Christ, the only Savior and Redeemer, of that righteousness which Christ has merited, of forgiveness of sins, and of the life to come. Through this preaching the heart of the sinner is cheered and consoled, or, what is the same, "a spark of faith" is kindled in the heart. However, when but a spark of faith glows in the heart, then, and only then, man is truly converted and renewed. Thereby understanding and will have been renewed. Faith is a new light in the heart, new, saving knowledge, confidence and trust in God. From it flows love to God and everything good. All "other godly virtues" are then kindled in the heart. It is the preaching of

the Gospel alone which quickens, and bestows the Spirit, arouses spiritual, godly life in the heart. The Gospel is the seed of regeneration. Thus the Gospel, and only the Gospel, is the power of God unto salvation. Thus Paul writes that through the Gospel God has saved us and brought life and immortality to light. (2 Tim. 1:9-10.)

Admittedly the comfort of the grace of God and faith find room nowhere else than in a broken and contrite heart. Comfort takes hold in a terrified heart only. They that are sick need a physician, not they that are whole. One must be dead before one can be quickened. And that is the office and effect of the Law, that it points out the sickness of sin, that it kills, that it fills with terror, and that it causes wrath. Thus contrition, wrought by the Law, is necessary for repentance and conversion. In other words, contrition is an essential part of repentance, of the process of conversion. Thus the Apology testifies, Art. XII: "And since faith is to bring consolation and peace into the conscience . . . it follows that there is first terror and anxiety in the conscience." "*Ideo terret Deus, ut sit locus consolationi et vivificationi*"; i. e., "God terrifies for this reason, that there may be a place for consolation and quickening." (Trigl., pp. 263, 264.) And the F. C., Article V, says: "For the Gospel proclaims the forgiveness of sins not to coarse and secure hearts, but to the bruised and penitent." (Trigl., p. 955.) In this sense the call to repentance, proclaimed by John, as Luther pointed out, "prepared the hearts for the Lord to receive grace" (Trigl., p. 481). . . .

The papal Church has changed this *contritio passiva* into *contritio activa*, has made contrition a meritorious work of man. Over against these errors the Apology says, Article XII: "Still more involved is what follows. They teach that by contrition we merit grace. In reference to which, if any one should ask why Saul and Judas and similar persons, who were dreadfully contrite, did not obtain grace, the answer was to be taken from faith and according to the Gospel, that Judas did not believe, that he did not support himself by the Gospel and the promise of Christ. For faith shows the distinction between the contrition of Judas and of Peter. But the adversaries take their answer from the Law, that Judas did not love God, but feared the punishments. [Is not this teaching uncertain and improper things concerning repentance?] When, however, will a terrified conscience, especially in those serious, true, and great terrors which are described in the Psalms and the Prophets, and which those certainly taste who are truly converted, be able to decide whether it fears God for His own sake or is fleeing from eternal punishments? These people may not have experienced much of these anxieties, because they juggle words

and make distinctions according to their dreams." (*Trigl.*, p. 255.)

The papistical error mentioned and refuted here has lately taken on a new form. Some do not view contrition exactly as a meritorious work; they do not exactly suggest that sins are washed away through tears of repentance; yet they see in such contrition as evoked by the preaching of the Law a truly good, God-pleasing impulse, the beginning of renewal. Necessity becomes a virtue. Knowledge of sin and the sensation of divine wrath is considered true humility and fear of the Lord. Yes, it is possible that man in his sinful sorrow basks in self-satisfaction and boasts of the confession of his sins. Many have prided themselves on lamenting and on bemoaning their sinful weakness and the deep corruption of human nature and on displaying the mien and air of poor sinners before the whole world.

Such opinions regarding contrition and repentance are diametrically opposed to the Scriptural doctrine of the Law and its effects. According to the Scriptures the Law was given solely for the sake of sin and not to make man pious. According to the Scriptures the effect of the Law on the unregenerate is threefold, namely, to reveal sin and evil in man, to punish and condemn sin, yes, to increase and augment sin. By the Law is the knowledge of sin. The Law works wrath. "The Law entered that the offense might abound" (Rom. 5:20). The Law reveals sin, convicts the sinner of his transgression and guilt. And if a sinner has been convicted of his misdeeds and the utter corruption of his nature, if he realizes that there is nothing good in him, if he pleads guilty to offending against every commandment of God—how now, is such a feeling and confession of guilt in itself something praiseworthy and a virtue? A sinner on whom the Law has done its work, whom the Law has actually concluded under sin, sees and finds, no matter where he turns, everywhere in his life, in his conduct, in his heart, only the night and darkness of sin; but his knowing and acknowledging this fact certainly does not bring light into his night, certainly does not make of sin, an evil, something good. The Law terrifies and condemns the sinner and concludes him under the wrath and judgment of God. Contrition, wrought by the Law, is often briefly called terror of the Law in our Confessions. However, such terror, the sensation of God's wrath, is truly not in itself a "nobler feeling and sensation." This wrath produced by the Law is not an imaginary wrath. Whoever has experienced such "true and great terrors, which are described in the Psalms and the Prophets," has truly experienced the agony and terror of hell. When, however, those damned in hell see, taste, feel, nothing but agony, wrath, and condemnation, and when in

consequence they weep and gnash their teeth, is that something good, a desire for good? The Law does not help man to do good. It rather increases the real, actual, chief sin, resistance to God.

We remind ourselves once more of what Luther says in the Smalcald Articles, III, 2: "But the chief office or force of the Law is that it reveal original sin with all its fruits, and show man how very low his nature has fallen, and has become [fundamentally and] utterly corrupt. . . . In this way he becomes terrified, is humbled, desponds, despairs, and anxiously desires aid, but sees no escape; he begins to be an enemy of God and to murmur." (*Trigl.*, p. 479). What the Law produces in man is terror, despondency, despair. But despair is not God-pleasing. Whoever despairs does not give all glory to God. True, despair is different from defiance, insolence, self-sufficiency. The Law turns insolent sinners into despairing sinners. But thereby the sinner is in no wise improved; not in the least is there a beginning of conversion. Both despair and defiance are offspring of the corrupt human heart. . . . Despair is as wrong as defiance. In the final analysis, despair is nothing else than enmity against God. Thus Luther, describing the sinner concluded under the Law, after having dealt with despair, says that "he begins to be an enemy of God and to murmur." Whoever has been terrified and laid low by the Law grumbles against God and becomes His enemy. He also becomes his own enemy and hates sin in a certain sense. He execrates and curses his evil deed. He wishes he had never committed this or that sin. However, he is not an enemy of sin because it is sin and transgression; he rather hates and execrates sin because of its evil consequences, because it has hurled him into misery and misfortune. In the final analysis such hatred, enmity, grudge, is directed against God because He has given such a severe Law, and because He lays man's transgressions to his charge, and because He has threatened to avenge the transgression with wrath and punishment. Those who experience the terrors of the Law are actually in hell. The damned in hell execrate their evil deeds, wish they had never lived, but, on the other hand, they are the enemies of God and are full of resentment against Him for having brought them to this place of torment.

What the Apology says in the last quotation on the contrition of Saul and Judas is significant. [*Cp. Art. XII, Trigl.*, p. 261.] Certainly they were "dreadfully contrite." Saul felt mortal fear. Scripture expressly testifies that Judas "repented himself" on account of his sin. Both were evidently children of perdition. After having fallen away from God, they first continued in their blindness and in the defiance and the pride of their heart. Later they were tossed to and

fro by the terror of despair, and no ray of light ever again entered into their benighted souls. The contrition, which later followed, did not interrupt the condition of spiritual death nor in any wise mitigate it. Contrition, the terror of the Law, does not reform. Judas is an example of contrition as well as Peter. It is not correct to assume that Peter's contrition and grief were more intense than those of Judas. The difference between the repentance of Peter and that of Judas lies elsewhere. The contrition which we see in Judas was not feigned contrition, not a mere contrition of the lips, of which the heart knew nothing. Judas recognized and felt the terrifying weight and enormity of his guilt. And his sin was constantly before him. He was sorry that he had betrayed innocent blood, that he had betrayed the Lord of Glory. When he returned those fateful pieces of silver to the high priests, he in no wise desired thereby to rid himself of his guilt and responsibility. Rather, the high priests in their unrepentant, hardened attitude refused to assume any part of this guilt by saying to Judas: "See thou to it!" And still Judas with his contrition was not an hairbreadth better than they. In throwing the silver pieces into the Temple, he strove with God and man. And he went his way in his despair and delivered his soul into eternal death. From this example we learn to what extremes the Law will drive man.

But does not Luther at the same time say of the sinner despairing under the Law that "he anxiously desires aid, but sees no escape?" [Cp. *Trigl.*, p. 261.] Is not, then, a desire for aid aroused through the Law? And is not such a desire for redemption the beginning of redemption? Yes, we teach that the first spark of desire for salvation is faith indeed. And where it has been kindled in the heart, a change and renewal have taken place; there man is converted. But here we must distinguish between desire and desire. Desire for salvation in Christ, a sigh rising from the depths to God, is the first impulse of faith. But this is produced alone by the Gospel. There is, however, also a desire of the natural, unconverted heart. But this is not directed upon the grace of Christ, not upon God, rather it seeks relief from the anxiety and pain of conscience, from wrath and terror. And this desire for aid, without knowing where such aid is to come from, this desire, which is very well compatible with grumbling and enmity against God, is admittedly one of the last effects of the Law. Expressions such as these are heard from time to time in sermons dealing with the sinner's conversion: first the sinner is convicted of his sins by the Law and then terrified by God's wrath and condemnation, and finally, finding no help and deliverance either within or without himself, he turns to God and pleads for mercy. In itself that is speaking correctly. However, it must be

clearly noted and explained that this last effect, this cry for mercy, is no longer a fruit and effect of the Law, but has rather been produced by the preaching of the Gospel. "Alas, that I would be rid of my torture and the pain and of my evil conscience!" This desire is caused by the terrors of the Law and is far removed from being a prayer or pious attitude of the mind. Even Dives in hell still uttered the wish that his brothers might not come to this place of torment. He himself desired to be rescued, if that were possible. On the other hand, the cry "Lord, help me, I perish!" rises out of a terrified heart only after it has been touched by the Gospel, and is proof of the fact that the Gospel has taken root in the heart.

Contrition wrought by the Law, Luther describes in the Smalcald Articles and elsewhere as despair, enmity against God. But does not Luther contradict himself? In his writings he often insists upon such sorrow as flows from the love to God, love to righteousness. In his sermon on Repentance, 1517, he writes: "Therefore first bring a man to love righteousness, and without your doctrine he will have sorrow over his sins; let him love Christ, and he will hate himself unsparingly." And again: "If you, however, desire to be contrite out of love for a new and better life, you would be contrite indeed, though not one man were contrite or crushed or repented, and though the whole world would act differently, and though it regarded not even one commandment." (St. Louis, X:1224.) Well, such contrition which has its source in the love to God and for that which is good, which hates sin for God's sake, is certainly a good, God-pleasing attitude. But here Luther does not speak of contrition which is produced by the Law and its terrors, but of contrition at a different stage. He is speaking of the manner and form of contrition in a penitent, believing Christian, a fruit of the Gospel. He explains his meaning clearly in the sermon on the Sacrament of Repentance, 1518, saying: "Where there is no faith, there is no contrition" (St. Louis, X:1241).

That brings us to another point in this meditation. But first a final remark concerning that wrong, genuinely papistical conception of contrition as a virtue, as the beginning of reform and conversion. It is nothing else than the leaven of Pelagianism. If actual and willing submission to God's will and judgment, if true humility and fear be found in man prior to the coming of the Gospel, then there is something good in man by nature. To say that God effects it by the Law does not help matters any. The Law only demands, saying what man ought to do, and inflicts curse and wrath upon him who does not fulfill these demands to do them. The Law gives nothing. It only reveals what is in man. If, therefore, through the Law and its terrors the sinner were at last induced to

humble himself under the holy God and to give glory to God, then all that would happen would be that a good germ and seed, latent until now, were brought to light and to unfolding. It would become evident that despite all sin and natural corruption there still were an inclination and impulse unto good in man. But no, it is not so. The Law reveals that there is nothing good in man, but only sin, that man is thoroughly corrupt, a lost and condemned creature. The Law does not incite man to good, to reform, rather to sin and transgression and resistance to God.

We have already touched upon the point of divergence of Law and Gospel, where the Law leaves man in the lurch and where the Gospel comes to man's assistance. After the Law has accomplished its office, has brought the sinner to despair, the Gospel enters the lists. It may be well to note here that the Law has accomplished its office even if the sinner does not in the same measure as David, Peter, Mary Magdalene, experience "those true and great terrors which are described in the Psalms and Prophets." Despair often reveals itself only as inner unrest of the soul and the attendant "murmuring against God" as inward dissatisfaction. Still the sinner under the influence of the Law is at odds with himself, the world, and God and sees no escape.

It is just at this point that the Gospel takes up. Into the midst of the terror of the Law, into anxiety and despair, into the disquieted, despairing, bruised mind now falls a ray from the countenance of the gracious and merciful God through the preaching of the Gospel. A spark of faith and desire is kindled in the benighted heart. God plants the seed of regeneration into the furrowed field. Up to this point only sin and wrath work in the conscience of the sinner. Up to this point does the contrition of despair extend, which finds its full expression in the concreated enmity against God. "Before regeneration," "until man is converted," to speak with the Formula of Concord, "he is and remains an enemy of God." Yes, this enmity is directed also against the Gospel, "which natural man regards as foolishness" (*Trigl.*, p. 889 f.). But now this is the wonderful power and grace of God, the powerful work of the Holy Ghost, that by the Gospel He makes willing hearts out of unwilling, plants assent to the Word in them, "in such a way that a darkened understanding is turned into an enlightened one and a perverse will into an obedient one" (*Trigl.*, p. 905). The sinner who until now has experienced only sin and the terror and wrath of the Law, hears the Word of Jesus, the Savior from sins. And by the Spirit and grace of God this Word kindles in the heart of the sinner. A new light of knowledge has now arisen in his heart. Now he also knows something of God's grace and mercy. And now there arises within him

through the working of the Holy Ghost the desire, the wish, even though it is but a faint, timorous wish, that God be merciful to him also for Jesus' sake. This wish, this sigh is directed to God, who has been revealed to him in the Gospel. So then heart, mind, and will of the sinner are now directed Godward. His will has been renewed. The sinner is converted to God. Be his longing, sighing, yearning ever so weak, he nevertheless takes hold of and touches Christ, the Redeemer. Therefore the sinner now believes in Christ and is converted and saved through faith.

Such is the effect which God purposed from the very beginning, even with the preaching of the Law. With the preaching of the terror of the Law, God wanted only to make room for the Gospel, "*ut sit locus consolationi et vivificationi.*" God does not want the sinner's death, rather that the sinner turn from his way and live. As earnestly as we must stress the thought that the Law works wrath, and only wrath, as little as we dare to minimize the terror of the Law, so emphatically must we stress that John only prepared the way for Christ, that Moses is but a servant in the house of God, but that Christ is Lord, that the Gospel is the second and last and deciding Word, which is but served by the first Word, the Word of the Law. With our thoughts, of course, we are unable to grasp this twofold Word, this contradictory Word, the terror of the Law and the comfort of the Gospel, as one Word. We cannot comprehend how these two words and wills find room in God. The Law proclaims and reveals the wrath of God. And the wrath revealed by the Law is not an imaginary wrath, but the genuine wrath of God, which burns down into the lowest depths of hell. On the other hand, in the Gospel God has revealed His fatherly heart and has promised unto the sinners who are absolutely without excuse, has promised to the condemned, grace in Christ, forgiveness, life, and salvation.

How the same God can be angry with sinners and at the same time love them is something that goes beyond our thoughts and understanding. It is that profound and therefore unfathomable and incomprehensible grace of God which through Christ has changed sin into righteousness, wrath and curse into blessing and salvation. Here we take our reason captive and believe of God the one as well as the other. We believe and follow Scripture, which tells us of the twofold word and will of God. But according to Scripture we consider the Gospel the greater and more sublime revelation of God, to which the first revelation is subservient and preparatory. We speak of Law and Gospel. The Gospel is the second and last [revelation]. The matter rests there. The terror of the Law has been extinguished by the Gospel. That the second [revelation] is more sublime is evident also from

the fact that in point of time it was earlier. In Gal. 3:15 ff. the Apostle Paul explains that the covenant of promise was confirmed before and that the Law was added later.

Previously, in describing contrition and its essence, we rejected false conceptions which would circumscribe the "terror of the Law." Now, speaking of faith and the relation of contrition to faith . . . we must likewise exclude erroneous concepts, unevangelical thoughts. It is wrong to think and to teach the matter as though God delighted in the pangs of conscience of a contrite sinner. Likewise it is wrong to think and to teach that God does not want the sinner to have the comfort of the Gospel without further delay. Again it is wrong to think that the sinner must, at least in part, himself suffer the punishment before there is accounted to him the expiation and satisfaction which Christ has rendered. Nay, by the Law God rather makes men sinners, plunges the secure sinners into despair, only for this purpose that they might understand what a Savior from sins is, that they might grasp the comfort of forgiveness.

Likewise it is also an unevangelical, Methodistic-Pietistic conception of repentance and conversion to require a longer or shorter period of storm and stress, as though the sinner according to God's will and order must first be exercised in the school of the terrors of the Law before he can be admitted to the higher plane of faith and sonship. That would certainly be a questionable cure and exercise. In the midst of terror and despair he might soon stop breathing. In speaking of repentance Luther in the Smalcald Articles, III, 3, notes: "But whenever the Law alone, without the Gospel being added, exercises this its office, there is death and hell, and man must despair, like Saul and Judas." (*Trigl.*, p. 481.) But no, it is not thus and should not be thus. We must well note what Luther expresses in the same connection: "But to this office (of the Law) the New Testament immediately adds the consolatory promise of grace through the Gospel." (*Trigl.*, p. 481.) Quickly the Gospel is added to the Law. No sooner has the Law exercised its office than the Gospel is at hand and immediately snatches the sinner out of despair and anguish lest he perish, as did Saul and Judas. God leads into hell, but out again at once. In the Formula of Concord we read, Thor. Decl., Article V: "... that through the preaching of the Law and its threats . . . the hearts of impenitent men may be terrified and brought to a knowledge of their sins and to repentance; but not in such a way that they lose heart and despair in this process, but that (since the Law is a schoolmaster unto Christ . . .) they be comforted and strengthened again by the preaching of the holy Gospel concerning Christ." Hence the Formula of Concord reminds us in the same article: "From the beginning of the world these

proclamations have been ever and ever inculcated alongside of each other in the Church of God, with a proper distinction." (*Trigl.*, p. 959 f.) In the Scriptures too both proclamations go side by side. All prophetic utterances as well as all apostolic instructions and admonitions contain Law and Gospel. Law and Gospel are often closely united in one and the same sentence. Christ Himself testified and said: "Repent ye and believe the Gospel." As often and as soon as man gives ear to the Word of God, he hears both voices, that of the Law and that of the Gospel. And God is in earnest when His Word is proclaimed to us, is in earnest with the proclamation of the Law as well as with the proclamation of the Gospel. Thus the Formula of Concord, in describing the act of conversion, summarizes both effects, that of the Law and that of the Gospel, saying: "Through this means, namely, the preaching and hearing of His Word, God works and breaks our hearts and draws man. Through the preaching of the Law he comes to know his sins and God's wrath, and experiences in his heart true terrors, contrition, and sorrow. Through the preaching and consideration of the holy Gospel concerning the gracious forgiveness of sins in Christ a spark of faith is kindled in him, which accepts the forgiveness of sins for Christ's sake, and comforts itself with the promise of the Gospel. Thus the Holy Ghost (who works all this) is sent into the heart, Gal. 4:6. (*Trigl.*, p. 903.)

But does not many a poor sinner walk about for a long time under the burden of his sins, under the yoke of the Law, ere he experiences anything of the freeing powers of the Gospel? First of all, a misconception has to be removed. Many a one deceives himself as to his own repentance and conversion. At the time when he tasted only of the terror of the Law and nothing of the comfort of the Gospel, he nevertheless sighed to God for grace and mercy. More than a mere spark of faith was even then kindled in his heart. At the time when he thought of himself as living entirely under the Law, he was already a believing child of God. He was converted, though considering himself still unconverted. However, it is true that others actually have to wrestle with Law, sin, and wrath for a longer time before they come to faith. But they themselves are the cause of their unfortunate condition. God is not at fault. God is not too late with His Gospel. They close their heart to the Gospel. And it is possible for one to remain in despair unto the end and to die in despair. Such is the contrition of Judas, a contrition indeed, but without faith. And such a man is at fault himself that he does not believe. When Judas began to sorrow over and regret his sins, he saw how Jesus was led away to the place of execution. He, too, had heard the testimony of John "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." But he did

not give room to this testimony in his heart. It is man's fault, not God's and the Gospel's, if contrition, despair, murmuring, enmity against God, increase, if faith never enters. We dare never forget that man may at every turn resist the working of God. By unbelief he can obstruct the way of the Gospel, he can also defy the Law of God, or he shakes off the first terror of the Law and kills his aroused conscience. Thus God must often knock twice, thrice, and even oftener with His Word before He succeeds. Or there will be no conversion at all. God forces no one either with the Law or with the Gospel. "Although God does not force man," to say it in the words of the Formula of Concord, "yet God the Lord draws the man whom he wishes to convert" (*Trigl.*, p. 905), draws him in the manner previously described, namely, by bringing him to repentance through the preaching of the Law and to faith through the preaching of the Gospel. At the moment of conversion both occur simultaneously, namely, that Law, sin, wrath, powerfully and vigorously assert themselves, but must at the same time give way to the power, efficacy, and comfort of the Gospel.

In conversion, contrition, which is the terror of the Law, gives way to the comfort of the Gospel. However, that does not mean to say that faith, wrought by the Gospel, now completely blots out contrition, the consciousness of sin, guilt, punishment, from the heart. We must yet consider a last point if we would correctly determine the relation of contrition and faith. We have already indicated it above. Faith does not entirely annul contrition, but changes it into something else. By faith man is born again. And in that regenerated heart, the abode of the Holy Ghost, all manner of spiritual emotions arise. Among them is numbered contrition. Together with faith, "other godly virtues are kindled in the heart" as the Formula of Concord expresses it (*Trigl.*, p. 909). Contrition too is now such a godly virtue. Even though the converted sinner now takes hold of Christ by faith, even though his heart, mind, and will are directed Godward, yet he cannot at once forget his former sins, which he has learned to know by the Law. However, sin, revealed by the Law, now appears in a new light. Godly sorrow now awakens in him. It now grieves him that with his sins he has offended God. And he now hates sin with all his heart, not because of its dire consequences, but for its own sake as being contrary to God; he hates sin out of love to God. In the power of God the Holy Ghost, dwelling in him, he is now enabled to abstain from and avoid sin. Thus by the operation of the Gospel the terror of the Law has been turned into a blessed contrition "which bringeth no regret" (2 Cor. 7:10). This contrition, founded upon faith and the love of God, is that genuine contrition of which Luther often speaks, a God-

pleasing attitude. It is true humility and fear of the Lord. Such contrition moved the heart of Peter, who went out and wept bitterly, and of the great adulteress, who moistened the feet of Jesus with her tears.

From this point of view we begin to gain a correct understanding of the sighs and prayers of repentance of the saints, e. g., of the penitential Psalms of David. When the Word of the Lord had come to David by the mouth of the Prophet Nathan, he was struck and crushed by the rod of the Law. When David in his penitential Psalms speaks of the arrows of the Almighty which have pierced him, of the hand of the Lord which lies heavy upon him, of the fact that the Lord has hidden His face from him, of the fact that he has been lowered into a deep pit, he proves thereby that he has tasted and felt those great anxieties and terrors of the Law. After his heavy guilt and misdeeds had fallen on his conscience, he had, however, at once heard also the comforting voice of the Gospel: "The Lord also hath put away thy sin," and had accepted it in faith. By faith, as a converted and pardoned sinner, he now composes and sings his penitential Psalms. His penitential Psalms are prayers. He confesses his sins before God. He pours out the sorrow of his soul before God. But prayer presupposes faith in God. Only a believer can pray to God. David prays and implores God: "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy loving-kindness; according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions." (Ps. 51:1.) That is an indication of his attitude toward God. He knows and acknowledges God as the Gracious and Merciful One. Toward Him were the desires of his soul turned. Hence he believed from the heart. His penitential prayers and the godly sorrow in them were the fruit of faith, fruit of the Gospel. Thus all penitent, believing Christians now take the penitential hymns of David on their lips and in them bring to God a sweet-smelling sacrifice. With the publican in the parable we say: "God, be merciful to me, a sinner," and indicate thereby that the grace of God has already taken root in our hearts.

This blessed, God-pleasing contrition, this godly sorrow flows from faith and again serves faith. What else is faith than a poor sinner's joy and comfort in the grace of God? And growth in faith consists in this, that a poor sinner learns to know the depth and breadth of God's grace better right along and gains a more joyful and more comforted heart. Such faith, such joy in the Lord and His salvation, however, is exercised, increased, and strengthened by godly sorrow. If we are fully conscious of our grave offenses against the faithful God, we shall thank Him the more fervently for forgiving us all the sins that we have committed against Him.

Hence we see God's purpose in the entire proceeding,

namely, to save the sinner from his sins. . . . The terror of the Law in the hands of God is only a means for this salutary end. Indeed, God wants and seeks nothing else than that His grace, unfathomable and boundless, be glorified and praised by poor sinners in time and in eternity. And whatever he now performs in the sinner by the Law and the Gospel must serve to attain the final, noble, sublime end.

III. The Effect of the Law and the Gospel on the Regenerate

Having considered how Law and Gospel work together in the conversion of the sinner to God, we proceed another step and note the differing effect of these two kinds of word in the converted, or regenerated, children of God.

Whatever Scripture says in general of the office of the Law, how the Law points out, rebukes, yes, even multiplies, sin; and of the Gospel, how it is a power of God unto salvation, how it comforts the bruised heart of the sinner, how it quickens and renews the heart of the sinner; whatever Scripture says of the respective office of Law and Gospel remains in force also at this point. The doctrine and preaching of the Law as well as of the Gospel has its significance also for the regenerate as long as they live upon this earth.

What happened at the beginning, at the time of conversion, repeats itself daily in our life as Christians. The entire life of the Christian is nothing else than constant, continuing repentance. . . . And this constant, daily contrition and repentance is of the same nature as conversion in the real sense of the term. That is the daily occupation of the Christian, to confess his sins to God in true contrition and in faith to take hold of Jesus Christ, the only Redeemer from sin. But in order to continue in the one as well as in the other he needs the continued use of these two different words, of the Law and of the Gospel.

By conversion, or regeneration, the heart has not been completely renewed. Believing Christians, too, still have sin. In the name of all the regenerate, St. Paul says: "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing" (Rom. 7:18). As long as a Christian continues upon this earth, he cannot completely and entirely cast off his flesh, his original sinful nature. And the flesh of the Christians is not a whit better than the flesh of other children of men. In the very connection in which St. Paul describes his present condition, in which he thinks of the twofold law, the law in his members, which strives against the law in his mind, he stresses the truth that carnal-mindedness is enmity against God. This underlying fundamental and chief sin has its roots also in the hearts of the believers. And this sinful flesh stands in need of the rod of the Law. "By the Law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:20). That is a truth which is confirmed unto

us daily. A Christian who has learned to know God aright learns to know the spiritual sense of the Law better and the great abyss between God and all ungodly and antigodly ways, which still adhere to him. He looks ever deeper into the abyss of his natural heart, alienated from God. And a Christian too, becoming conscious of his sins, experiences and feels the terror of the Law. A single sin, exposed by God's Word and Law, can indeed torture and torment us unmercifully. "The Law works wrath" (Rom. 4:15). Children of God are not spared this experience either. Often they are still afraid for the terror by night and for the arrows that fly by day (Ps. 91:5).

Of course, in all of this, faith wrought by the Gospel is and remains the fundamental, the real characteristic of the Christians. They are not thrown back by sin, Law, wrath into their former hopeless condition before conversion. We are now speaking of the experiences which Christians have in their lives, hence leaving out of consideration the possibility of a Christian entirely denying and losing his faith. To what is it owing that faith is not entirely absorbed by those terrors of the Law? Not to this, that sin, exposed by the Law, and the wrath of God over sin were less severe. Nay; it is rather owing only to this, that a Christian, knowing Christ, at once flees from sin, Law, wrath, damnation, to Christ and seeks and finds in Him protection and grace. Whoever believes carries Christ in his heart, and when the curse and wrath of the Law, a real wrath, cut into his conscience, he reminds himself of his liberation through Christ from sin, curse, wrath, and thus extinguishes the fiery darts of the Wicked One with the shield of faith at the very moment in which he feels the heat within himself. Because faith is present and at once reacts against the terrors of the Law, this terror is immediately turned into that true, salutary contrition and sorrow which is pleasing to God. A Christian takes sin, aroused by the Law, into his hand and prayerfully places it before God and sighs out of his renewed heart, yes, in the power of the Holy Ghost, concerning the evil which still clings to him, saying: "Oh, wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7:24.) However, into this sigh is mixed the prayer of thanksgiving for redemption by Christ Jesus, our Lord, saying: "I thank God through Jesus Christ, our Lord." (Rom. 7:25.) But such faith, making Christians what they are, constantly overcoming sin, Law, wrath, comes from the Gospel and is nurtured and preserved through constant, continuing use of the Gospel. The Holy Ghost preserves us in the true faith by the Gospel. But that we might not become lukewarm, apathetic, indifferent, to the comfort of the Gospel, the Holy Ghost because of our sins must constantly rebuke and terrify us with the Law.

What has been expounded by us is summarized in the

Formula of Concord, Art. IV, ^{V.1?} "Of the Third Use of the Law," in this short sentence: "Therefore, as often as believers stumble, they are reprov'd by the Holy Spirit from the Law, and by the same Spirit are raised up and comforted again with the preaching of the holy Gospel." (*Trigl.*, p. 967.)

Our Confession adds the following, saying: "So, too, the doctrine of the Law, in and with [the exercise of] the good works of believers, is necessary for the reason that otherwise man can easily imagine that his work and life are entirely pure and perfect. But the Law of God prescribes to believers good works in this way, that it shows and indicates at the same time, as in a mirror, that in this life they are still imperfect and impure in us, so that we must say with the beloved Paul: 'I know nothing by myself; yet I am not hereby justified,' 1 Cor. 4:4." (*Trigl.*, p. 969.) The Law, by which is the knowledge of sin, convicts the believers not only of their many sins and the presence of a sinful nature in them, but also of this, that even that which is good, which they have received by the grace of God, their good conduct, every single one of their good works, is still spotted with impurity and uncleanness. Here too the Gospel offers comfort to the believers. The Formula of Concord continues: "But how and why the good works of believers, although in this life they are imperfect and impure because of sin in the flesh, are nevertheless acceptable and well-pleasing to God, is not taught by the Law, which requires an altogether perfect, pure obedience if it is to please God. But the Gospel teaches that our spiritual offerings are acceptable to God through faith for Christ's sake," 1 Pet. 2:5; Heb. 11:4 ff. (*Trigl.*, p. 969.)

In this passage from our Confession mention is already made of the good works of the believers. Even though many shortcomings and spots still adhere to them, they are nevertheless in truth good works. The heart has been renewed, and the good tree brings forth good fruit. Faith of the Christians necessarily becomes evident in good works. Contrition and repentance, pervading the entire life of the Christians, manifest themselves in righteous fruits of repentance. Their good conduct also visibly distinguishes the Christians from non-Christians, from the unconverted. And here now is the main point actually at issue, the question: What is the relation of Law and Gospel to the good works of the believers?

First of all, we answer in the words of our Confession, the Formula of Concord, Thor. Decl., VI., "Of the Third Use of the Law": "But we must also explain distinctively what the Gospel does, produces, and works towards the new obedience of believers, and what is the office of the Law in this matter, as regards the good works of the believers. For the Law says indeed that it is God's will and command that we should walk in a new life, but it does not give us the power and ability to begin it and do it; but the Holy Ghost, who is given and

received not through the Law but through the preaching of the Gospel, Gal. 3:14, renews the heart." (*Trigl.*, p. 965.) The Law indicates the good works which are pleasing to God; the Gospel, however, excites desire for obedience and gives strength and ability to do good. The Gospel only, not the Law, reforms man and make him pious. The Law has not been given to quicken, to renew and sanctify man, but was added because of transgressions.

Of course, man, even the Christian, in so far as he still is flesh, is outwardly to some extent kept in line by the Law's warnings, demands, threats, scoldings. Of this we are reminded in the Formula of Concord, where we read: "But since believers are not completely renewed in this world, but the Old Adam clings to them even to the grave, there also remains in them the struggle between the spirit and the flesh. Therefore they delight indeed in God's Law according to the inner man, but the law in their members struggles against the law in their mind; hence they are never without the Law, and nevertheless are not under but in the Law, and live and walk in the Law of the Lord, and yet do nothing from constraint of the Law. But as far as the Old Adam is concerned, which still clings to them, he must be driven not only with the Law but also with punishments; nevertheless he does everything against his will and is under coercion, no less than the godless are driven and held in obedience by the threats of the Law, 1 Cor. 9:27; Rom. 7:18, 19." "For the Old Adam, as an intractable refractory ass, is still a part of them, which must be coerced to the obedience of Christ, not only by the teaching, admonition, force, and threatening of the Law, but also oftentimes by the club of punishments and troubles, until the body of sin is entirely put off and man is perfectly renewed in the resurrection." (*Trigl.*, pp. 967, 969, 971.)

The Law with its coercion, driving, threatening, instills into the Old Adam of the Christians, as into the ungodly, fear and horror and terror of condemnation and thus hinders the coarsest excesses of the flesh and urges and coerces man to obedience. That also is a use of the Law, which, of course, has nothing to do with the way of salvation, which rather belongs into the town hall and civil domain than into the Church. The Law drives, coerces, to obedience. But this obedience of the Old Adam, like that of the ungodly, is an unwilling and forced obedience, entirely an outward thing, utter simulation and hypocrisy and not in the least virtuous and praiseworthy before God. The Old Adam, though outwardly forced to obedience, nevertheless rebels inwardly against this constraint, becomes the more hostile to God for having given such a rigid Law and for spoiling his lust and pleasure. Thus the Law also in this respect fulfills its wretched service in educating, increasing, and intensifying opposition to God.

A Christian nevermore does anything truly good by "constraint of the Law," but alone by "constraint" of the Gospel. The good conduct of the Christians manifests itself in their denial of ungodliness and worldly lusts. But nevermore are we brought to deny fleshly lusts, hatred, wrath, jealousy, unchastity, avarice, covetousness, by the rigid demands of the Law, such as: "Thou shalt not kill, not commit adultery, not steal," etc. A Christian's hatred and heartfelt loathing of sin, his inward turning away from sin, is actuated and brought about solely by the love of God revealed in the Gospel. He loves Him who loved him first, and for God's sake he hates all manner of ungodliness. That a Christian parts with and avoids sin, yes, actually overcomes the evil, that is done alone in the power of the Holy Ghost, who is given by the preaching of the Gospel.

On the other hand, obedience of the believers manifests itself in all manner of godly virtues, in love to God and the neighbor, patience under the cross, etc. But nevermore are we enabled to love God and our neighbor by the "Thou shalt" of the Law, namely, "Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart," etc., "and thy neighbor as thyself." Love will not be constrained. A Christian's love to God from the heart, his joy and pleasure in God and things godly, his love to the brethren for God's sake, his endurance of all evil for God's sake, his overcoming in patience, are made possible alone by the love of God which is revealed in Christ and proclaimed unto us in the Gospel. It is God the Holy Ghost who works in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure, who awakens good resolutions in our hearts and gives us the power and ability to carry out these resolutions. We have received the Holy Ghost, however, through the preaching of the Gospel. It is the Gospel which increases the gift of the Spirit. The new man, thinking, imagining, speaking, and doing that which is good, lives entirely from and in the Gospel by which he has been born again.

But the Law shows those works which are pleasing to God, which we perform in the power of the Holy Ghost, who has been given to us through the Gospel. We term the Law a rule and pattern of the Christian's conduct. And regenerate man delights in the Law of the Lord according to the inner man and lives, though not under the Law, yet in the Law. Is, therefore, the Law in this respect not serviceable and conducive to that which is good? Must, therefore, the statement that the Law serves to give the knowledge of sin and works wrath, that the Law was added for the sake of sin, that there is no Law for the righteous not be amplified?

Our answer to this question we again connect with a longer quotation from the Formula of Concord, where we read: "A dissension has occurred between some few theologians concerning this third use of the Law. For the one side

taught and maintained that the regenerate do not learn from the Law the new obedience, or in what good works they ought to walk, and that this teaching [concerning good works] is not to be urged thence [from the Law], because they have been made free by the Son of God, have become the temples of His Spirit, and therefore do freely of themselves what God requires of them, by the prompting and impulse of the Holy Ghost, just as the sun of itself, without any [foreign] impulse, completes its ordinary course. Over against this the other side taught: Although the truly believing are verily moved by God's Spirit, and thus, according to the inner man, do God's will from a free spirit, yet it is just the Holy Ghost who uses the written Law for instruction with them, by which the truly believing also learn to serve God, not according to their own thoughts, but according to His written Law and Word, which is a sure rule and standard of a godly life and walk, how to order it in accordance with the eternal and immutable will of God.

"For the explanation and final settlement of this dissent we unanimously believe, teach, and confess that although the truly believing and truly converted to God and justified Christians are liberated and made free from the curse of the Law, yet they should daily exercise themselves in the Law of the Lord, as it is written, Ps. 1:2; 119:1: 'Blessed is the man whose delight is in the Law of the Lord, and in His Law doth he meditate day and night.' For the Law is a mirror in which the will of God, and what pleases Him, are exactly portrayed, and which should [therefore] be constantly held up to the believers and be diligently urged upon them without ceasing.

"For although the Law is not made for a righteous man, as the Apostle testifies, 1 Tim. 1:9, but for the unrighteous, yet this is not to be understood in the bare meaning that the justified are to live without law. For the Law of God has been written in their heart, and also to the first man immediately after his creation a law was given according to which he was to conduct himself. But the meaning of St. Paul is that the Law cannot burden with its curse those who have been reconciled to God through Christ; nor must it vex the regenerate with its coercion, because they have pleasure in God's Law after the inner man.

"And, indeed, if the believing and elect children of God were completely renewed in this life by the indwelling of the Spirit, so that in their nature and all its powers they were entirely free from sin, they would need no law, and hence no one to drive them either, but they would do of themselves, and altogether voluntarily, without any instruction, admonition, urging or driving of the Law, what they are in duty bound to do according to God's will; just as the sun, moon, and all the constellations of heaven have their regular course of themselves, unobstructed, without admonition, urging, driv-

ing, force, or compulsion, according to the order of God which God once appointed for them, yea, just as the holy angels render an entirely voluntary obedience.

“However, believers are not renewed in this life perfectly or completely, *completive vel consummative* [as the ancients say]; for although their sin is covered by the perfect obedience of Christ, so that it is not imputed to believers for condemnation, and also the mortification of the Old Adam and the renewal in the spirit of their mind is begun through the Holy Ghost, nevertheless the Old Adam clings to them still in their nature and all its internal and external powers. Of this the Apostle has written Rom. 7:18 ff.: ‘I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing.’ And again: ‘For that which I do I allow not; for what I would, that I do not; but what I hate, that I do.’ Likewise: ‘I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin.’ Likewise Gal. 5:17: ‘The flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.’

“Therefore, because of these lusts of the flesh the truly believing, elect, regenerate children of God need in this life not only the daily instruction and admonition, warning and threatening of the Law, but also frequently punishments, that they may be roused [the old man is driven out of them] and follow the Spirit of God, as it is written Ps. 119:71: ‘It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn Thy statutes.’” (*Triglot*, pp. 963, 965.)

The meaning of this teaching, warning, threatening, driving, of which mention is made again also in this exposition, namely, that thereby the Old Adam with his fleshly lusts be kept in custody, has already been explained above. Here the matter is given a new turn. We are told that Christians still stand in need of the punishments of the Law as well as of other punishments and plagues for this reason, “that they be aroused and follow the Spirit of God.” This is not to be understood as though the threatening and punishment of the Law were in itself an encouragement and, therefore, an inducement to obedience. No, a regenerate person nevermore does anything good by constraint of the Law. However, the Law with its teaching, warning, threatening, does indeed make room for the Gospel and prepares the way for it also where the conduct of the Christians is concerned. The Law reminds the Christian of his continual, daily sinning, disquiets him and becomes an occasion for him to seek with new zeal after righteousness and holiness. That willingness and that joyousness to obedience, which, of course, proceed alone from the Gospel, begin in the heart filled with anxiety because of inherent weakness.

But now we are chiefly interested in that part of the quotation from our Confession when it speaks of “the teaching

of the Law.” Is it really so that believers need the doctrine of the Law for their good works, being unable to find the right way and erring in darkness without such doctrine? True, the Law is “a rule and standard of a godly life.” However, our Confession clearly teaches that believers “because of the Old Adam, which still clings to them,” and “because they are not renewed in this life perfectly or completely,” still need “the doctrine of the Law.” It teaches that if in their nature they were entirely free from sin, they would need absolutely no Law, that they would without any instruction of the Law do what they are in duty bound to do according to God’s will. Hence the Law is rule and standard for the walk of the regenerate in so far as they have not been born again, in so far as they still have flesh and are flesh. A Christian, in so far as he is born again, is driven by the Holy Ghost, whom he has received in the Gospel. Therefore he does willingly without coercion, of his free will, what is pleasing to God just as the sun, moon, and all the constellations of heaven of themselves gleam and, unobstructed, complete their regular course. Thus the good works of the Christians are fruits of the Spirit, fruits which grow of themselves. But the Spirit of God, who governs the children of God in what they do or do not do, certainly knows of Himself the good and gracious will of God and needs no teaching, no instruction. He guides and directs and drives according to His mind and will, and that is God’s mind and will, and thus leads us into the land of uprightness and teaches us to do according to God’s good pleasure. He is the Spirit of prayer, a Spirit of joy and gentleness, a Spirit of correction and fear of the Lord. A Christian therefore, in so far as he is a temple of the Holy Ghost, in so far as the Spirit of God has gained room within him, walks in paths of uprightness, lives in the Law, the will of God, knows, desires, and does what God wants “without any teaching of the Law.” But in so far as he still has the Old Adam, he is still subject to the error of sin and therefore often has the wrong conception of what he owes God and man, and loves to choose his own ways and works, his own manner of serving God. For this reason he still needs “the written Law,” the teaching of the Law, in order that he does not serve God according to his “own thoughts,” as our Confession notes. The Law exposes and condemns all self-chosen and self-devised holiness and piety. So the Law ever observes its prescribed course, even when it serves the Christians as rule and standard of their walk and life. Here too that expression of Scripture, the Law was given because of sin, remains perfectly lawful.

IV. The Law and the Gospel in Congregational Work

To note the differing effects of Law and Gospel is not only of theoretical but also of eminently practical significance. Concluding, we want to point out how this difference as set

forth finds its application in ecclesiastical practice, in the pastor's administration of his office.

Christian pastors are called and are preachers of the Gospel. The Gospel characterizes their office and activity. The purpose and end of their calling is to save those who hear them. However, it is only by the Gospel that men are converted, renewed, and saved. There are preachers, earnest men, who are more the servants of Moses than of Christ. Among the revivalists who at the beginning of this century [nineteenth] called apostate Christendom to repentance, there were many who were predominantly preachers of the Law. They almost consumed themselves in their zeal for the Law of the Lord, which was being trodden under foot. In their circles, perhaps, these men produced tremendous commotion, excitement, convulsion. But lasting effect was absent. This, however, need not surprise us at all; for by the Law nothing is changed or renewed.

On the other hand, an evangelical pastor dare not lay aside the Law in order to bring the Gospel into control. The comfort as well as the regenerating power of the Gospel does not take root in cold, satiated, secure hearts. Ever and everywhere the Law must make room and prepare the way for the Gospel. Hence a pastor misses the purpose of his vocation if he passes lightly and quickly over the Law. Thereby he does damage not only to the Law, which certainly is also a word of the living God, but especially to the Gospel. The Gospel is suspended in midair, as it were, and does not take hold of man, does not enter into the heart. At the present time there are many so-called evangelical preachers who pride themselves on preaching the Gospel, but who accomplish little with their supposed evangelical preaching and practice because they neglect the office of the Law. They sow the seed but have neglected to break up and plow the soil. It is not surprising at all, therefore, that the seed falls to the ground and just lies there. All sweet, comforting words are spoken into the wind because those secure, satiated hearts do not and cannot receive them.

Let us now apply what has been said to the most important functions of a pastor.

His most important work is that of preaching. And preaching accomplishes its purpose if the Word of God is simply presented, expounded, and applied to persons, time, place, and circumstances. If the pastor simply stays with the Word, he will also give expression to, and bring into consciousness, Law and Gospel, these two kinds of word, which walk side by side throughout the entire Scriptures, and produce the double result, repentance and faith, in his hearers.

The more the pastor becomes conscious of the significance and effect peculiar to the Law, the greater will be his zeal

in exercising the office of Moses, so that sinners will truly learn to know their nature and become terrified at the wrath and judgment of God. He will place everything human under sin and wrath, will represent and condemn as wrong-doing everything that is against the Law, will give to every sin its proper name and title, so that each and every loophole be closed to sinning man, and only one escape remain open, namely, that way of escape which has been disclosed in the Gospel. He will expose those sins and vices peculiar to his congregation, the sins of the times, prevailing sins, such as miserliness, contentiousness, worldliness, even the fine and finest, so that all who hear him will feel struck and pricked in their conscience.

And the more a pastor becomes conscious of the significance and effect peculiar to the Gospel, the greater will be his zeal for the administration of his real office, the office of Christ, the office of comforting, and he will open to sinners, "to whom no man can comfort give, for whom the world is all too small; with whom the Law itself hath broken, on whom its judgment hath been spoken," the refuge of the Gospel: "My Savior sinners doth receive," to the end that those who hear may believe and be saved. He will freely proclaim the free grace of God revealed in the Gospel and especially designed for the unworthy, the guilty, and the condemned, to the end that sinners be really saved from their sins. He will offer absolution for all sins and transgression, even for the coarsest kind, so that none of his listeners be left empty-handed. A pastor, when preaching the sternness and the goodness of God to his congregation, need not fly into a passion in order to make the terrors of hell and the grace and salvation of heaven real to those who hear him. Let him simply teach, and give testimony to, Law and Gospel as it is illustrated by examples in Scripture, and leave it to God and His Spirit to bring about the desired effect through both kinds of word, as He alone is able and has promised to do.

If a pastor, mindful of the distinct effects of these two kinds of word, rightly divides Law and Gospel, each of his hearers will receive his due portion of meat. Among his listeners are unconverted persons. Hypocrites, such as are Christians in name only, are to be found everywhere. Strangers, coarse, ignorant men, too, at times expose themselves to the sound of the Word. They need both the Law and the Gospel. They must be shown the way of salvation, the way of repentance and faith. But believing Christians too, even the most advanced among them, still need the same kind of teaching and instruction. The whole life of the Christians is one of constant repentance. A Christian must cover the same ground daily; he must ever anew think upon his sins and flee from his sins to Christ. Growth in faith takes place by daily renewal of faith. But faith will never find

room in the heart unless contrition has preceded. And Christians are sanctified through faith and in faith alone. Hence the teaching and preaching of the Law and the Gospel is also the proper diet for those who live and walk in faith. The same Word which terrifies and condemns the ungodly is exactly the right kind of stroke and blow also for the Old Adam of the Christians. The same Word which converts the ignorant and disobedient serves for the edification, establishment, for the renewal and advancement, of the converted. If a pastor will only rightly divide Law and Gospel, if he will only give expression to each of these two words according to their distinct nature and significance, he will not have to sort and divide anxiously his listeners. He is saved the grievous task of classifying his listeners and of fitting a certain portion of his address to each class.

Everything depends upon the proper division and separation of Law and Gospel. But that does not happen of itself. The matter requires examination and study. The pastor must carefully meet and forestall one danger. Looking more closely at the legal and evangelical parts of the Word which he is to preach to his congregation, he will notice more clearly right along that the former are of a nature entirely different from those of the latter. . . . And ever and anon he is tempted to bridge the gap between Law and Gospel, to disturb the boundary line of these two divided domains, to adjust these seemingly contrary doctrines. Modern preachers perhaps consider such adjusting and mixing of Law and Gospel their special skill. They want to effect something by their preaching, but especially with the Law; with admonition, warning, threatening they would reform their hearers. The preaching of the Law becomes moral philosophy and ethics. And if there is a deficiency in the fulfilling of the Law, if the deed falls short of the good intentions, the comfort of forgiveness enters as a stopgap. And the promises of the Gospel which assure of eternal life are appropriated as a sort of reward to those who to some extent at least satisfy the demands of Christian ethics. Thus the problem is seemingly solved. Law and Gospel are weakened, and from the two a third element is produced, a sort of piety, which, however, is everything but Christian piety.

All pastors who in a similar manner seek to reconcile Law and Gospel, who seek to bring about a certain moral, ethical condition in their hearers, and demand and presuppose some kind of attitude when they begin with the preaching of the Gospel, impede the efficacy of the Law as well as of the Gospel. They produce the notion in their hearers that man can by nature satisfy the demands of the Law to some extent, and thus they prevent an insight into the unfathomable corruption of the human nature, a look into the depth, whence alone arises the cry for mercy. And they put into their

hearers' head the notion that they must always look for and find something in themselves ere they may appropriate unto themselves God's gift of grace. Thereby they deprive them of the comfort of the Gospel and hinder faith. For whoever does not believe that God freely, without cost, justifies the ungodly, but deems some sort of preparation necessary for the gift of God, will nevermore believe in the Gospel and lay hold on the gift of God. Especially if he is in earnest, he will always be in doubt and uncertainty as to whether he has really met those preliminary conditions.

Nay; the terror of the Law, the preaching of condemnation, and the comfort of the Gospel, the preaching of salvation, must stand closely beside each other if the sermon is to have effect. Of course, the pastor must never forget that not the terror and damnation but comfort and salvation are the real end of his sermon, that he is to reprove and terrify only in order that he might raise up, comfort, reform, and save those who hear him. Whatever stern, harsh, bitter truths he speaks from the Law are to prepare the way for the Gospel. An evangelical pastor will never take comfort in the thought that for once he has really told the people the unvarnished truth. What is the use of such reproving if the sinner is not reformed? In order to renew sinners, to help the condemned, an evangelical pastor will first unmercifully, without regard and sparing, scourge and wound his hearers with the inexorable severity and the cutting edge of the Law of Moses. Then he will at once change his voice, turn the leaf, and open heaven and all its blessedness in the name of Christ to the very ones on whom he has just pronounced the verdict of hell, so that they through hell might enter heaven and, as redeemed children of God, henceforth avoid and put away from themselves those sins for which they have been reprov'd. Then too when his sermon is chiefly reproof (as is the case in sermons of repentance and confessional addresses) the pastor will close with the Gospel and emphasize this conclusion especially. Otherwise he will work nothing but wrath.

On the other hand, a Gospel minister who would like to save his hearers will never begin with the Gospel; his lips will not pour forth sweet, soft words only. Not as though such words were perhaps overstating the truth. But the good which alone reforms and brings eternal salvation, the Gospel, will be spilt, will fall by the wayside; the good seed will not sprout and take root unless the Law has first plowed its furrows in the heart. A pastor who preaches only the Gospel bolts and barricades for his hearers the door to the Gospel, to grace and salvation, to faith, and to godliness. A pastor who in his sermons treads all too softly, who deals all too tenderly with his hearers, comforting himself with the thought of having made heaven very attractive to his hearers, of having brought the grace of Christ very close to them, deceives him-

self with a false comfort. Because he has spared himself and his hearers the bitter things, because he did not care to touch upon the disagreeable matter of sin, he has spoiled their taste for grace, for the sweetness of the Gospel. What is the use of all sweetness and salvation if one is not able to taste and enjoy it, if it does not enter into the heart? However, only an alarmed, terrified, bruised heart is able to grasp and to retain the comfort of God. No; a pastor who is not fully in earnest with the Law is not in earnest with the Gospel either.

Just another example how Law and Gospel can and should go hand in hand in the work of preaching. Perhaps an honest pastor is saddened by his congregation's unwillingness to sacrifice and seeks to bring about a reform. If he begins correctly, he will attack the matter at the source and reprove the love of money with holy indignation. Nothing will be accomplished here with a few sighs that things in this congregation are not all as they should be and a few weak appeals to Christian love to give more liberally. Nay; one must rather bear down firmly on the sore spot with the Word of God and the Law and show such Christians that the love of money is the root of all evil, that this snare of Satan has already caused many to err from the faith, that out of the love of money will grow all sorts of harmful lusts, which bring men into perdition and damnation. But a Gospel minister will not stop here. He knows that mere reproof will cause resentment among the people and will, at best, drive them to sacrifices of hypocrisy. Hence he will at once also add the Gospel and speak to his hearers of the boundless love of God, who spared not His only-begotten Son, who spared no pains to save souls, and will admonish and plead for the sake of God's mercy to bring sacrifices of gratitude; and he will experience with joy that at least some become fruitful unto good works. Such evangelical pleading alone makes no impression upon hearts ensnared by the love of money; mere reproof, on the other hand, indeed makes an impression, but does not have the desired result, changes nothing in the matter.

A pastor will always be mindful of the different effect of Law and Gospel also in his care of souls. There is indeed a difference between preaching and the care of souls. Public preaching is designed for the whole group. In the care of souls the pastor applies the Word to the individual. And there he must take into consideration the spiritual condition of the individual, as far as he is able to form an opinion about it from his words and acts, and apply the rule of preaching the Law to hardened sinners but the Gospel to the terrified and sorrowing. However, a pastor who has in mind nothing but the salvation of the individual will never operate wholly one-sidedly, neither altogether with the Law nor only with the Gospel. He will never keep silent regarding the Gospel,

which alone brings salvation; but he will first apply the Law in order to be able to apply the Gospel.

In general, the evangelical practice of a pastor will show itself in his dealings with individuals. He does not seek them out only if and when he has some special reproof to administer to them. If a pastor is seen in the houses of his members only at such times when he has to reprove the inmates, he will soon be generally considered a moralist, and he plays the role of a servant of Moses. A Gospel minister will use his visits above all things as opportunities directly and indirectly to remind his members that they are most happy humans in that they have Christ and are Christians, and to encourage them and to strengthen their faith. But that does not exclude that on suitable occasions, as, for example, when they announce for Holy Communion, he will also call the attention of his members to sins common to the times, of which Christians too are guilty, as, e.g., spiritual slothfulness, materialism, worldliness. Whatever serves to vex the Old Adam also serves to strengthen the new spiritual life of the new man.

True, a pastor must exercise care of souls especially with regard to such as have strayed on wrong paths. Here saving love demands prompt action lest error fasten itself upon heart and mind, lest sin become a habit. As long as he is dealing with such as in Christian charity he can still call brethren, he will in a friendly manner and with all humility reprove the erring and seek to correct them. Not as though we could and should take hold of sin lightly and gently. The Law, alone bringing knowledge of sin, is always stern and pricks flesh and conscience. But oftentimes a gentle reminder suffices to induce Christians, who still have the Holy Ghost, to judge and reprove themselves, and to press the thorn into their heart. And after the erring one has confessed his error, he stands in special need of strong evangelical encouragement for the strengthening of the weak will, enabling it henceforth to deny, leave, and avoid that which is displeasing to God.

It stands to reason that one must deal more harshly and severely with such an erring one as contradicts and seeks to justify himself. And especially if one has to deal with manifestly unconverted people, with non-Christians, and apostates, it is the first and foremost duty of the pastor to proclaim the wrath of God to them and to heap the curse of the Law upon them. But a pastor is mistaken if he thinks he has thereby done his duty. Even though he has unreservedly told the truth to the ungodly and now tells himself: *Animam salvavi*, yet he has not saved his conscience thereby. He must first do everything to save the soul of the sinner. However, by the Law alone no sinner is converted and saved. It is a fatal mistake on the part of the pastor to reserve the Gospel for a later application, say, when the heart has been softened and broken by the preaching of the Law. Only the Gospel

is able to break and so soften the heart and to make willing men of unwilling ones. By operating solely with the reproof of the Law the opposition is intensified. It is the Gospel which is able to break down opposition. Therefore, if we desire to convert and save sinners, we must combine Law and Gospel from the very beginning, not so much comforting with the Gospel, but rather inviting and attracting, in order that as soon as the conscience of the sinner has been struck by the Law, the Gospel may be at hand in the same moment, ready to render its service and unfold its regenerating power. And when we notice but a spark of contrition and desire for forgiveness and renewal, it is especially important to apply the Gospel forthwith, in order that the renewal, now begun, may be firmly established.

The story, which Fresenius relates of his own practice, is well known, namely, how he reproached a dying general, whose conscience was thoroughly aroused over his former sinfulness, with the awful consequences of his sins and the severity of God's wrath. Continuing to dig deeply with the Law of God even when the poor sinner sighed over his burdensome debt and was close to despair, Fresenius waited from day to day ere he dared to add a mite of comfort to his remarks. God indeed was very patient in this case, not so much with the weakness of the malefactor as with that of the pastor, in not permitting the former to die until the latter in his graduation of repentance finally arrived at the Gospel of the Savior from sin. Yes, that is not only torturing the conscience, but also making doubtful conversion, at least delaying and rendering more difficult conversion and renewal.

It belongs to the vocation of the pastor to familiarize the weak, the sick, the suffering, the sorrowing, with the Word of God, especially with the Word of comfort. Where God has already aggravated the voice of the Law through bodily punishment and affliction, a pastor need not again begin at the beginning, but it is his office to cheer the troubled, downcast hearts with the comfort of the Gospel. Suffice it for him to explain the finger of God to those who are so severely chastised. Nothing is so wrong for a pastor as to turn a funeral sermon into a penitential sermon. Where God Himself has already spoken so harshly and severely, human censure no longer has any room. However, where it would seem to be a matter of conscience above all to rebuke, e. g., if a Christian pastor is expected to bury the dead of the unbelieving, there a Christian funeral sermon is out of place altogether. It is self-evident that a Christian pastor should proclaim nothing else than the full comfort of the Gospel to the afflicted who are being tortured day and night by their sins.

An important part of the office of a bishop entrusted to pastors is the exercising and handling of church discipline. A pastor heartily concerned with the welfare of his congrega-

tion, on his part will see to it that all things are done decently and in order in the congregation. He will take care that no evil practices prevail, and he will instruct his congregation to exercise church discipline in the manner prescribed by the Lord. Above all, the pastor must watch closely over himself that he gain and maintain the correct bearing over against the congregation. This part of his office requires special wisdom and understanding, courage and determination.

In the final analysis, however, not the pastor's wisdom, caution, and energy, but the Word of God alone must rule and decide. Here too everything depends upon a correct application of the Word of God, upon rightly dividing Law and Gospel. Christian church discipline will yield fruit and profit only if it is exercised in an evangelical and not in a legalistic manner and spirit. However, it is far from being evangelical if the shepherd of the congregation does not care to lay his finger upon certain ills in the congregation, if he, for fear of possible damage, overlooks manifest offenses against God's Word, and in pretended superwisdom defers the discussion of ticklish questions to a more opportune time. The Law, which is not our Word, but God's, condemns all manner of ungodliness, and those ills which are shielded against the discipline and censure of the Law are thereby removed from the healing hand of the Physician, from the renewing efficacy of the Gospel as well. False, willful tolerance aggravates the evil and hinders renewal. The practice becomes unevangelical and ruinous only if pastor and congregation stay with the Law and punishment, and do not permit the Gospel to have its day. If pastor and congregation vigorously and courageously (privately and publicly), in God's name, attack every new offense which Satan plants in their midst, such as tavern-keeping, lodgery, and other worldly leaven; if they reprove and terrify with God's Word and the Law the persons concerned, privately and publicly; if they then seek to gain, to convert, by means of the Gospel, by presenting the merciful love of God, the saving grace of Christ Jesus, it certainly will never be entirely in vain, for the offenses will be curbed, and Christian discipline and uprightness will be fostered. And if at last base elements must be excluded, if finally the congregation must excommunicate such, it declares thereby that these stubborn sinners have despised God's entire counsel concerning their salvation, not only the Law with its reproof but, above all, the Gospel of the grace of God.

So far we have presupposed normal congregational conditions. But the ecclesiastical, pastoral practice must be essentially the same when the pastor has to deal with special difficulties. Conditions are not to determine the Word of God, but God's Word is to determine conditions. A pastor should preach and apply God's Word, both the Law and the Gospel, under all circumstances. In a comparatively new,

untrained, and ignorant congregation a beginning must as a matter of course be made with the penitential preaching of John and of Moses. The Law of God must first cut into the wild flesh before any spiritual fruit may be expected. But from the very outset also the Gospel of the grace of the Savior of sinners must peal forth clearly and loudly. Christ must follow immediately upon John. Otherwise censure will only make matters worse. Untilled soil, if properly plowed, will often quickly sprout the heavenly seed and produce fruit beyond expectation.

A much more difficult field is an old congregation, long trained in Christian knowledge and practice, but now sated, among whom the Gospel no longer seems to take hold and to produce effect. If anywhere, then it is here that the hammer blows, the thunder and lightning of the Law must strike the hearts. To these sated, slothful, proud spirits it must be shown and proved that in the sight of God their pharisaism is the greatest abomination of all. However, in the end we dare not overlook the fact that all evil exposed by the Law, even the greatest of all evils, dislike of, and satiety with, the Gospel, is actually healed and improved alone through the preaching of the Gospel; that is, as long as there still is hope for improvement. However, praise to God! an incorrigible, completely impenitent congregation, no longer worthy of the office of the ministry, has hardly fallen to the lot of any of our pastors. Hence we can confidently continue our labors in the Word and persevere with teaching, reproving, comforting, trusting God that both the rebuke of the Law as well as the comfort of the Gospel will have its desired effect.

The Law commands and makes us know
What duties to our God we owe.
But 'tis the Gospel must reveal
Where lies our strength to do His will.

The Law discovers guilt and sin
And shows how vile our hearts have been;
The Gospel only can express
Forgiving love and cleansing grace.

What curses doth the Law pronounce
Against the man that falls but once!
But in the Gospel Christ appears,
Pard'ning the guilt of numerous years.

My soul, no more attempt to draw
Thy life and comfort from the Law.
Fly to the hope the Gospel gives;
The man that trusts the promise lives.

The Lutheran Hymnal, No. 289

Amen

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