

## THE PASTOR IN HIS WORK.

## II. The Pastor and the Pulpit.

In order to preach the saving Word in its truth and purity a careful and thorough distinction between Law and Gospel is indispensably necessary. The distinction between these two doctrines is the key to the Bible. Any man who does not know that the Bible contains these two distinct doctrines will not and cannot understand its teachings; the Bible will appear to him a book full of contradictions. When the Lord says, "This do—love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself,—and thou shalt live," Luke 10, 28, and the apostle writes, "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God; not of works," Eph. 2, 8, these two words cannot but seem contradictory to him who does not know that they belong to two distinct systems of teaching. It is not possible that a preacher who has himself not learned to distinguish doctrines could present the plan of salvation in its proper order. A sharp distinction between Law and Gospel alone will teach the pastor where each doctrine belongs and in what connection it must be preached.

On the importance of this distinction the *Formula of Concord* (Art. V, No. 1) says: "Inasmuch as the distinction between the Law and the Gospel is a peculiarly glorious light, which contributes to a right dividing (2 Tim. 2, 15) of the Word of God, and to a proper explanation and understanding of the writings of the holy prophets and apostles, it must be retained with the greatest diligence, lest these two divisions of doctrines be commingled, or the Gospel be transformed into a law; by which course the merits of Christ would be obscured, and afflicted consciences would be deprived of that comfort which they otherwise have in the Gospel, if it is preached purely and sincerely, and by which they can sustain themselves in their severest trials, against the terrors of the Law."

For the right distinction and application of both Law and Gospel it must be remembered that the Law is the hammer to shatter the rocky hearts of the impenitent, a fire to consume the impurities remaining in the hearts of the converted, Jer. 23, 29. The Gospel is the good Samaritan pouring oil into the wounds of the alarmed conscience and binding up the broken hearts with the assurance of mercy, Luke 10, 34. The Gospel is the glad tidings of great joy which comes from heaven and proclaims the gracious forgiveness of sins for Christ's sake. To hurl the thunders of Sinai at the alarmed and penitent is using the hammer on the broken hearts, a cruelty rebuked in Ezek. 34, 4. To comfort those who "go on in sin" with grace and forgiveness in heaven is pouring oil over the unbroken rock, a waste of the precious forbidden in Matt. 7, 6. To mix up Law and Gospel, to preach that faith and works must go together for the salvation of man, that, if man does what he can, God will not fail to do His part, to speak of the Gospel of love to our neighbor and to picture Christ as a savior whose favor we must win by doing good is using hammer and oil indiscriminately, which will create a muddle and such a splashing that neither preacher nor hearer can tell which is which. In all theology and in all preaching the right distinction between Law and Gospel is the most necessary thing, because without it the way of salvation cannot be taught right.

This distinction between Law and Gospel must not only be presented theoretically—a sermon bearing directly on this subject is frequently in place—in all his preaching the pastor is to carry it out practically. A point where the two are frequently mingled without the preacher knowing or intending it is in exhortations unto good works. To make the Law the primary motive for good works, to teach people that they must do a certain thing because it is a service of God commanded in His Law, and to make the mercy of God the primary motive for doing good, teaching

people to walk in good works because God has shown them such great mercy in Jesus Christ are two very different ways of exhorting unto good works. The one is legalistic, the other evangelical. The one genders a servile spirit of bondage, the other a free spirit of adoption. When one man goes to church on Sunday morning thinking he must because it is commanded in God's Law, and the other goes to church on Sunday because he wants to, remembering the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, those two men are actuated by two very different spirits. The one has the Jewish spirit of legalism, the other the free spirit of Christ. The one is a son of Hagar, the bondmaid, the other a son of Sarah, the mistress of the house. The pastor's preaching should therefore not make the hearers Hagarites, it should be of such a character as to make them sons and daughters of the freewoman. By preaching the love of God, free salvation in Jesus Christ, the preacher should fill his hearers with zeal and ardor to run, and then he should lay down the Ten Commandments as the way *in which* to run, so that the word be fulfilled in them: "I will run the way of Thy commandments, when Thou shalt enlarge my heart," Ps. 119, 32.

In his sermon on the Epistle for the First Sunday after Epiphany, Luther speaks of the right way to exhort unto good works in this wise: "*I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God.* Paul does not say: I command you. He is preaching to those who are already Christians, pious through faith after the new man. And these should not be compelled by commandments, but admonished, so that they may do willingly what is to be done with the sinful old nature. For whosoever does not do it willingly, moved by friendly admonition, is not a Christian; and whosoever extorts it from the unwilling by commandments is no more a Christian preacher or ruler, but a worldly taskmaster. The legalist drives with threats and punishments, the preacher of grace incites and persuades by the divine goodness and

mercy which has been manifested unto us; for he does not want unwilling works or a demure service, he wants cheerful services rendered to God joyously."

Next to St. Paul no other man was such a master in distinguishing Law and Gospel as was Martin Luther, and none other saw the necessity of such a distinction more clearly than he did. He had learned it in a hard school of bitter experience, and it is self-experience indeed which alone can make a man truly skilled in this divine art. To give a definition in theory is easy enough. The Law commands, the Gospel persuades; the Law drives, the Gospel draws; but to carry out the demarcation line practically in all the work of the ministry is an art which the Holy Ghost must teach, and every truly God-fearing man who has grown gray in the work of the ministry is ready to confess just with regard to the right application of Law and Gospel: In Thy light alone, O Lord, can we see the light (Ps. 36, 9); for it is the right application of Law and Gospel which teaches when to rebuke, when to praise, when to warn, when to comfort.

The right distinction between Law and Gospel will go far towards presenting the various doctrines of the Scriptures in their proper order. It is true that all teachings of the Scriptures are divine truth, the least as well as the greatest, but not all are of the same importance. Hence it is a duty of the pastor in the course of time to preach all the teachings of the Scriptures, as Paul testified of himself in saying to the elders of the church at Ephesus: "I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men; for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God," Acts 20, 26, 27. But the more important truths must be preached the more frequently. The first elements of the Christian doctrine, as, the articles of redemption, of justification, of the means of grace, must be made familiar to the hearers, and the preacher should exercise care to put each doctrine in the proper place where it

belongs. To preach the election of grace in such a way as though it preceded redemption in Christ is corrupting the Scriptures; for according to the Scriptures election grows out of redemption, and not contrariwise. We once heard a preacher speak of sanctification, urging all his hearers to follow holiness, and then going on to speak of conversion, without showing the relation between the two, thus making the impression that a man could be sanctified before being converted.

When we say that the doctrines should be preached in their proper order, we do, of course, not mean that a pastor should preach the articles of doctrine in the order in which he finds them in a compend of theology, but he should present the teachings of the Scriptures in such a way that the simplest among his hearers can gather a clear knowledge of the way of salvation from his preaching. To attain this object the preacher must exercise care to employ a clear and lucid arrangement and style in each sermon. It is, of course, true that the Holy Ghost can use also disconnected truths to kindle saving faith, but the confused sermon is not adapted either to hold the attention of the hearer or to impart a clear knowledge of the plan of salvation. For this purpose, too, a sermon must be carefully prepared, that it may form a logical, or, at least, a well-connected discourse in all its parts.

Before closing this subject a few things should be mentioned which a pastor should be diligent to avoid in preparing his sermons. He should avoid making a hobby of any subject, *i. e.*, he should not give undue prominence to any one particular teaching. Making a hobby of some particular doctrine belongs to sectarianism. Another evil to be avoided is the habit of running along in certain ruts. If a pastor has a certain circle of doctrines and subjects on which he preaches year after year, his sermons, even when composed new, are almost certain to lose in freshness, and he is apt to become tedious to his hearers. The Lutheran

custom of preaching on the Gospels and Epistles offers great advantages and should by all means be kept up and not be displaced by the modern method of using half a clause for a text. Yet a pastor preaching continually on the prescribed texts may fall into the habit of preaching *substantially* the same sermons year after year. After serving the same pastorate for a number of years the preacher will find it an advantage frequently to choose other than the regular Sunday texts. It is a change for both preacher and hearers, and awakens new interest and new relish.

Another thing for a pastor to avoid in the pulpit is the appearance of undue contentiousness. A pastor who teaches the true doctrine is in duty bound to reject and to refute the opposite false doctrine, and this he dare not omit where circumstances require it. St. Paul emphatically enjoins this duty when he writes: "A bishop must be . . . holding fast the faithful Word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, especially they of the circumcision; whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake," Tit. 1, 9—11. The pastor who can see the wolf breaking into his own fold and who will not open his mouth to warn against him is a hireling and not a true shepherd. "If the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand," Ezek. 33, 6. The lack of positive firmness in the proclamation of the truth is an ailment of our unionistic times. It must be called a running sore of the modern church that the refutation of falsehood has so largely disappeared from the pulpit and the preaching of heresy is encouraged in wide circles. The very love of the souls entrusted to his care must constrain a faithful pastor to warn against errors

which threaten to undermine the faith of his hearers and to poison their souls.

But every pastor will do well to remember that he is made watchman only in a certain pastorate, and that he is not universal bishop of the universal Church, like the pope who, claiming to be the head of the universal Church of all ages, must count it his bounden duty annually on Maundy Thursday to anathematize by name every heretic that has arisen in Christendom since the days of Caiaphas. For a preacher to resurrect and to refute old and exploded heresies of which the hearers perhaps never heard is not only squandering time, it also gives him the appearance of being over-contentious. To speak of defunct heresies in the pulpit is only justifiable when it is done to illustrate an important point of doctrine. Neither should the preacher aim to refute every error current in newspapers and magazines, he is rather commanded to "avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain," Tit. 3, 9. If the preacher makes the impression of being needlessly contentious, this tends to render the hearts less receptive for the truth which he preaches. The American pulpit has no need of refuting Mohammedanism.

When a pastor does expose the errors of neighboring denominations to whose influence the members of his parish are exposed, he should avoid all hard and harsh terms which would be counted an affront and would hurt the feelings rather than convince the hearts. In warning against popular errors or the wrong teachings of surrounding sects the preacher should studiously avoid yielding to a spirit of rancor and hate, and should always show that it is done from love of the truth, or from watchfulness for his own flock, or both, and he should always prove what he says with convincing arguments. If the preacher speaks in such a way that people have reason to say, he rails at others without proving what he says, he thwarts his own object and suc-

ceeds only in hampering his own usefulness. As the use of physical force cannot build the kingdom of God, even so railing and "running down others," as the common phrase has it, cannot advance the cause of the truth. Here applies that word of the Lord: "The truth shall make you free," John 8, 32. Railing and harsh language cannot free the mind from error. The truth alone can drive error out of the hearts, and the truth alone can fortify the hearts against error.

Even so in rebuking sins, especially sins practiced by his own people and in his own parish, the preacher should avoid harsh and scolding language. Railing language is very apt to embitter, but it will not better. When the preacher rebukes sinful practices, such as dancing, frequenting saloons, holding carousals, etc., and he uses language which impresses the offenders as proceeding from a spirit of bitterness, they are even thereby provoked to kick against the pricks, and while the pastor may be flattering himself that he has done all in his power against the evil, he is too blind to see that his own mistaken zeal has contributed much towards making matters worse. A good and kind word spoken from a loving heart will go farther than ten thunderbolts hurled from the pulpit. When a warning of the strongest character against sin is found necessary, then let language be used to picture the sin in its true colors, its dread sinfulness, and its awful consequences, but even then harsh and offensive terms should be avoided. "Rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a father; and the younger men as brethren; the elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity," 1 Tim. 5, 1. 2. Though the apostle wrote these words with reference to private admonition, they apply also to pulpit language. Denouncing real or imaginary sins in unmeasured and vulgar terms should be left to our so-called evangelists.

Finally, the preacher should avoid doing private pastoral work in so public a place as the pulpit. The rebuking and admonishing of individual persons must not be done



from the pulpit. The sermon is a public address to the whole congregation, or the entire assembly, and it must not be diverted to individual persons. In rare and exceptional cases a preacher may be justified in bringing personal matters to the pulpit, but doing it under ordinary circumstances is both very wrong and very unwise, because it is an affront to the persons concerned, and is sure to cause disturbance in the congregation.

The most essentially important thing in a pastor's work is preaching. Therefore he is called a preacher, because he is called to preach. To this function of his office the pastor is to devote the best of his time and energy. "Preach the Word," says the apostle, 2 Tim. 4, 2; "be instant in season, out of season." The Lord's marching order to His apostles was: "Go ye and preach," and this is enjoined on all the followers of the apostles. The pastor who is negligent in preaching is negligent in the most essential part of his office. The main thing in the office of a priest is sacrificing, and the main thing in the office of a preacher is preaching. Happy the preacher who loves to preach, who takes delight in delivering the message entrusted to him.

It is, however, not the much preaching, but rather *the right kind* of preaching which is wanted. Much harm is done in the world by the wrong kind of preaching, and the more there is of it the worse it is. Every minister who would build the kingdom of Christ must take heed what he preaches and how he preaches. On this the *Apology* says: "Because by the grace of God there is Christian and wholesome teaching in our churches for comfort in all trials, therefore the people gladly frequent good preaching. For there is nothing which tends so much to attach the people to the church as the good sermon. But our adversaries preach the people out of the churches, because they do not teach the necessary articles of Christian doctrine, but relate legends of saints and other fables." (Art. of the Mass, No. 51.)

In these words our Confessions express a truth which is amply demonstrated by experience. Good sermons will attract the people, poor preaching will soon cause them to think it not worth while to go to church. A good and wholesome dish is inviting, an empty vessel has little attraction. People do not care to go where they find only the scattering of chaff, or the threshing of straw. When a man goes to church and hears a good sermon it is an incentive to go again.

Now a good sermon wants to be studied. Those men are rare indeed who can go to the pulpit and deliver a good sermon without previous preparation. Only when the preacher enters the pulpit well prepared can the audience expect a good sermon, and it may be laid down as a rule: the more thorough the preparation the better the sermon. This rule is, of course, denied by those who claim inspiration for their preachers, Tunkers, Mennonites, and some others. These declare that preachers must not study their sermons, but are to say what is given them by the Spirit while they are speaking. In support of this extravagant opinion they appeal to the Lord's words: "Beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you," Matt. 10, 17—20. In these words the Lord promised His disciples, at a certain hour they should be enabled to speak by the Spirit of God without previous preparation, but He gave this promise to martyrs and not to preachers, and to refer this promise to the "hour" of preaching is a woeful corruption of the Lord's words. Hearing the insipid talk of such a would-be inspired preacher once ought to be sufficient to convince any man of sober judgment that it is not the Spirit of God speak-

ing by him. There is no promise that preachers shall be inspired, although it is not denied that in cases of extreme necessity, when there was absolutely no time or opportunity for preparation, a God-fearing preacher may arise to preach with the sure confidence that the God who has sent him to preach and has placed him in such a situation will also be his helper. The preacher who is careless and neglectful in preparing his sermons acts in direct violation of the Word of God; for to Timothy Paul writes: "Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all," 1 Tim. 4, 13. 15. And Mal. 2, 7 it is said: "For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the Law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts." If the people are to learn the Law at the preacher's mouth, he must study the Law and must compare all the words which he speaks to the people with the Law of the Lord, and must make sure that he is a true messenger of God. But of this he cannot be sure except he speak after careful preparation. The ambassador of Christ is in duty bound to make full use of his time, that he may deliver the Master's message right and to the best of his ability. Every sermon should be his best effort.

In preparing a sermon a pastor should nevertheless not depend on his own learning, ingenuity, and skill. Instant prayer should precede the composing of each and every sermon. The pastor's study should be a closet of prayer, his writing desk an altar from which sighs arise to the Author of all true spiritual wisdom. Neither linguistic, nor philosophic, nor scientific education and knowledge, nor the most brilliant mental gifts will properly fit a man for the composing of a *good* sermon. These may all be helps, but they must be counted only handmaids and nothing more. While making full use of the knowledge which he has acquired and the gifts of mind which he has received the pastor should never forget that he is called to proclaim "the

mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God," Eph. 3, 9. The true and living knowledge of this mystery cannot be obtained by human research and sagacity, it must be revealed to the heart by Him in whom it is hid. Of this mystery the Lord said to Peter, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven," Matt. 16, 17. Let the preacher be ever so highly educated and ever so gifted, if he depends on "flesh and blood," his own wisdom and ability, the true inwardness of this mystery will remain hid to him. God reserves to Himself this glory that He is "the only wise God," 1 Tim. 1, 17, who "layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous," Prov. 2, 7, and He will not show His secrets to those who are wise in their own conceits, for which the Son returns thanks to the Father saying: "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight," Matt. 11, 25. 26. Humility, despairing of one's own ability, is an essentially necessary prerequisite for the right and truly fruitful study of the Scriptures. "The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple," Ps. 19, 7. A pastor must be humble enough to acknowledge with St. Paul: "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God," 2 Cor. 4, 5. When going to work to prepare a sermon let it be done with instant prayer for the light, the guidance, and the governing of the Holy Ghost.

. This necessity of prayer is by no means refuted by the fact that a pastor who is himself an unconverted man and who performs his labors without prayer, or whose prayer is but sounding brass may also compose and deliver a sermon which is good in itself. He may possess a formal, theoretical knowledge of the Scriptural doctrine, and he may present it in orthodox words and in such a form and manner that his sermons must be pronounced good both as

to contents and form, but he, nevertheless, cannot preach as every ambassador of Christ ought to do. If conceit and ambition possess his heart, it will show in his conduct and his language, style and subjects will be chosen and framed to find honor with men. If he is a hireling, he will aim to avoid what would be unpleasant to the hearers and might tend to diminish his revenues. If he is ruled by the love of ease, he will not devote the time and labor to his sermons which he might and should devote to them. Even when aiming to preach only what is in the Bible the unconverted preacher who does not seek the face of the Lord will speak of the mysteries of God as would a blind man of colors. He cannot speak as a man who has himself "tasted the good Word of God, and the powers of the world to come," Hebr. 6, 5. He is a man who speaks in a cause in which his own heart is not concerned, and his preaching must be lacking "in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power," 1 Cor. 2, 4. The scribes and Pharisees also studied the Law of Moses and expounded it to the people, but when Christ explained the Law, "the people were astonished at His doctrine. For He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes," Matt. 7, 29. That preacher alone whose heart believes what he preaches to others, whose soul has stood under the lowering clouds of Sinai and has tasted the sweetness of Christ, he alone can preach as a man knowing whereof he speaks, and though he be an Amos and not an Isaiah, the Spirit of God will make his preaching a polished shaft.

Fervent prayer before composing and before delivering a sermon is like a strong anchor for the God-fearing pastor who feels his weakness and realizes his own insufficiency. The right kind of preaching is God's gift. He must give a spiritual eye to discern the things of the Spirit of God, 1 Cor. 2, 14. He must open the understanding to behold wondrous things out of His Law, Ps. 119, 18. Of the times of the New Covenant He said by the prophet: "The tongue

of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly," Is. 32, 4. In the hour of distress, when all wisdom and skill seems to have departed from him, let the pastor do what the Scriptures bid him: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him," James 1, 5. And when a sermon has been prepared with much study and prayer and seems so poor that the manuscript would go into the fire but for lack of time to make another effort, the pastor should commit it to God and should go to the pulpit cheerfully. Not infrequently does God bestow a special blessing on sermons that we are altogether dissatisfied with. And though our preaching do not find the applause of the public or the praise of the learned, what of it? Among the polished Corinthians some said even of St. Paul, "His letters are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible," 2 Cor. 10, 10. Yet this same Paul accomplished more for the planting of the Church than any of the other apostles. God judges differently from men, and He never despises the petitions of an humble pastor who is instant in prayer.

The primary reason why each and every sermon must be prepared carefully and prayerfully is, because it dare contain nothing which is not in full harmony with the Word of God. Churches are built and pulpits are erected for the proclamation of God's revealed Truth unto the salvation of souls. Sectarian churches are built and sectarian preachers are called for the promulgation of sectarian doctrines, a mixture of truth and error, but Lutheran pulpits are built and Lutheran ministers are called for the preaching of "the everlasting Gospel," Rev. 14, 6. Every Lutheran pastor who has subscribed the Book of Concord in an unqualified manner has pledged himself to the principle: "The Word of God makes articles of faith, and no one else, not even an angel." (*Smalcald Art.*, Part II, No. 15.) The sermon, all of it, must be taken from the Word of God. Self-evi-

dently it may be embellished with illustrations taken from nature, from history, from current events, from the doings of men, both pious and wicked, etc., but it must not contain anything which is against the Word of God, or by which men are led into error. Nor should any dubious expressions be used which are liable to be misunderstood or misconstrued. The pastor must pattern after Paul who declared in his defense before King Agrippa, "Having obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come," Acts 26, 22. Paul did not preach politics and science; he did not aim to tickle the ears of his hearers with pleasing discourses; he studied the Scriptures of the Old Testament, and these he preached as having been fulfilled in Christ. The pastor must make sure that the doctrines which he preaches are none other than the doctrines taught in the Scriptures.

In his *Reply to Henry of Brunswick*, entitled: *Wider Hans Wurst* (§ 66), Dr. Luther says: "But the doctrine must not be sin, nor reprehensible. It does not belong into the Lord's Prayer where we say, 'Forgive us our trespasses,' because it is not our work, but God's own Word, who cannot sin or do wrong. For a preacher must not pray the Lord's Prayer and seek the forgiveness of sins after preaching (if he is a true preacher), but must be bold to say with Jeremiah, Jer. 17, 16: 'Thou knowest: that which came out of my lips was right before thee.' Yea, he must be ready freely to say with St. Paul and all the apostles and prophets: '*Haec dixit Dominus*,' God Himself hath said it. And again: I was an apostle and prophet of Jesus Christ in this sermon. Here it is not necessary, yea, rather, not good to ask forgiveness of sin, as though he had taught wrong. It is God's word, not mine, and this God neither shall nor can forgive me, but He must confirm, praise, crown it, and say: 'Thou hast taught right; for I have spoken by thee, and the Word is mine. The man who

cannot boast of his sermon in this way should let preaching alone; for he will surely lie and blaspheme God." (Walch's ed., vol. XVII, 1685.)

Writing out each sermon in full is by all means the safest way to make sure of its coming up to this mark. Then it can be examined in all its parts and sentences. But if, for lack of time or other reasons, the sermon is not written *in extenso*, the whole contents must be so completely stored in the mind that the pastor knows exactly what he will say or has said. When nothing more is done than to write a meager skeleton or to throw a few notes on paper, when the mind has not mastered each particular point, the preacher cannot be positively sure of always finding and using lucid and proper words when in the pulpit. It is therefore always advisable, particularly for younger pastors, to write the sermon sentence for sentence. In this way the preacher also safeguards himself in case of criticism or stricture. When he exercises the utmost care it may, nevertheless, happen that he is misunderstood, or that his teaching is called in question by one or more of his hearers. In such cases it is well if the pastor can produce his manuscript and can show black on white what he did preach. If he cannot do this, he may not be able to remove doubt from the mind of a questioner, and when a hearer doubts the orthodoxy of his pastor, or even is suspicious as to his uprightness, this will become a hindrance to the hearer, preventing him from reaping the benefit of his preaching which he ought and otherwise might.

The great importance of every sermon containing nothing but the truth of God is also specially evident from the words of the Lord: "The truth shall make you free," John 8, 32. The wood, hay, stubble of human thoughts and human opinions will be burned up in the day of trial. Divine truth alone can fortify the soul against all trials. Every pastor having a heart for his people must be intent on building their souls on a foundation which cannot give way when the last test approaches. But the truth alone can make



free, free from error, free from terror. Ever should we pastors in preparing sermons bear in mind the truth which our Confessions express in the words: "If there is to be a Christian church and a Christian faith, they must preach and teach a doctrine which places the soul, not upon error or sand, but on a foundation on which it may firmly rely and trust." (*Apology. De Justificatione, No. 119.*)

VIRGINIUS.

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## MISCELLANY.

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**Facts about Divorce.** *The Christian Statesman*, organ of the National Reform Association, has gathered some facts which go to show that divorces are proportionally more numerous in the United States than in any other country furnishing statistics, and that there have been years when more divorces were granted in the United States than in all other civilized countries together. From 1870 to 1890 the ratio of divorce to marriage nearly doubled. It was 3.5 per cent. in 1870, it had become 6.2 in 1890. Statistics of our great cities will be found of special interest. Those in New York State stand best, the metropolis slightly better than Buffalo. Together these show 40 marriages to one divorce. Then follows Baltimore with 28 marriages to a divorce and Philadelphia with 20. Then the ratio of divorce gradually rises. Washington and Pittsburg with 18.9 and 18.5 rank above Boston and New Orleans, with 14.1 and 13.9, in spite of the exceptional strength in both of the Roman Church. Then by successive steps of social decline we pass from Denver to Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Providence, Indianapolis, San Francisco, and close the list with Kansas City, where there was a divorce for every four marriages in 1901—ten times as many as in New York City. The discrepancies between these great cities in this matter can hardly be attributed to race, to climate, or to confession of faith. Some of the cities, New York and Buffalo, for instance, no doubt owe their