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Table of Contents

Walther and the Revival of Confessional Lutheranism

Martin R. Noland..... 195

Grabau Versus Walther: The Use of the *Book of Concord* in the American Lutheran Debate on Church and Ministry in the Nineteenth Century

Benjamin T.G. Mayes 217

C.F.W. Walther's Use of Luther

Cameron A. MacKenzie 253

Mission through Witness, Mercy, Life Together in Walther and the First Fathers of Missouri

Albert B. Collver 275

Eduard Preuss and C.F.W. Walther

Roland F. Ziegler 289

Wilhelm Löhe: His Voice Still Heard in Walther's Church

John T. Pless 311

Walther, the Third Use of the Law, and Contemporary Issues

David P. Scaer 329

The King James Version: The Beginning or the End?

Cameron A. MacKenzie..... 343

Theological Observer	367
Dean Wenthe: An Appreciation	
An Old Seminary, a New President, and the Unfolding of Divine History	
The Sacred Character of Human Life	
Book Reviews	372
Books Received	381
Indices for Volume 75 (2011)	382

Observing Two Anniversaries

Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther was born on October 25, 1811, in Langenchursdorf, Saxony, Germany. It is appropriate that this issue honor C.F.W. Walther on this 200th anniversary of his birth because of his significant influence as the first and third president of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (1847–1850 and 1864–1878) and also president and professor at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis (1850–1887). Most of the articles below, which were first presented at the 2011 Symposium on the Lutheran Confessions in Fort Wayne, reflect his influence in many areas of biblical teaching, confessional subscription, and the life of the church in mission. These historical and theological studies are offered here so that Walther may be understood in his context and continue to be a blessed voice in our synod as we face the future.

This issue also recognizes one other anniversary. The venerated King James Version of the Bible, first printed in 1611, is now 400 years old. The article below on the King James Version was originally given as a paper at the 2011 Symposium on Exegetical Theology in honor of this anniversary. The importance of this translation for the English-speaking world is widely acknowledged. Although many may think that its day has passed, this article demonstrates the ongoing influence of the King James Version through other translations.

The Editors

Eduard Preuss and C.F.W. Walther

Roland F. Ziegler

On Friday, January 26, 1872, in Saint Mary of Victories church at 744 South Third Street in St. Louis, the second oldest Roman Catholic church in the city and center of the German Roman Catholic population at that time, an adult was baptized. Only two months before, he was a professor at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. Eduard Preuss was received into communion with Rome. From all appearances, there was no long gradual change in Preuss; the defection was sudden and unexpected.

One might expect that this defection caused controversy, but there was no controversy in Missouri. There was no lengthy exchange and lively theological debate between Walther and Preuss on the doctrine of justification, comparable to the discussions on church and ministry or on election between Walther and diverse theologians. Preuss left, and that was it. Seven years later Preuss gave an account of his story in his anonymously published book *"In Praise of the Immaculate Conception of the Most Blessed Virgin."*¹ This study will give you an outline of the story, then analyze Preuss's reasons for leaving. Since this is the Walther anniversary, if and how Walther in his *Law and Gospel* addressed the issues raised by Preuss will also be investigated.

I. The Story

Friedrich Reinhold Eduard Preuss was born July 10, 1834, in Königsberg, Prussia, and earned a licentiate in theology (the equivalent of a Th.D.), a Ph.D., and the *venia legendi* (the permission to lecture at the university) at the Friedrich-Wilhelm-Universität in Berlin.² As a *Privatdozent* he was allowed to lecture but was not salaried, so that he made a

¹ *Zum Lobe der unbefleckten Empfängniß der Allerseligsten Jungfrau* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder'sche Verlagshandlung, 1879), 181–227.

² The main sources for his biography are his book *Zum Lobe der unbefleckten Empfängniß der Allerseligsten Jungfrau*, (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder'sche Verlagshandlung, 1879), 181–227, which was published anonymously; C.F.W. Walther, "Ein Abfall", *Der Lutheraner* 28 (1871/72), 73–75; and the chapter on him in Ludwig Ernest Fuerbringer's *Eighty Eventful Years* (St. Louis, Mo: Concordia Publishing House, 1944), 230–238. See also David August Rosenthal, *Convertitenbilder aus dem neunzehnten Jahrhundert* vol. 1, *Deutschland Part 3*, 3rd ed. (Regensburg: Verlagsanstalt vorm. G. J. Manz, 1901), 663–672.

living teaching at the Friedrich-Wilhelms-Gymnasium (a preparatory school). He devoted himself primarily to the editing of classical Lutheran texts. He edited Martin Chemnitz' *Examination of the Council of Trent*,³ Johann Wilhelm Baier's *Compendium*,⁴ and started the reprint of Johann Gerhard's *Loci theologici*.⁵ Out of his edition of Chemnitz' *Examen* grew his monograph on the dogma of the immaculate conception of Mary.⁶ His *Justification of a Sinner before God* came out of the controversy started by Hengstenberg.⁷

Preuss's career came to a sudden halt when he was accused of improper relations with his pupils.⁸ He resigned from his position and, without any prospects in teaching, friends collected money for him to emigrate to America. There he was welcomed by the Missouri Synod after Karl Büchsel, the General Superintendent of Berlin, vouched for his innocence.⁹ He became a professor at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and taught Church history, and Old and New Testament from 1869 till 1871.¹⁰

³ Martin Chemnitz, *Examen Concilii Tridentini* (Berlin: Schlawitz, 1861); reprinted 1915 (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrich'sche Buchhandlung) and 1972 (Wiesbaden: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft). Preuss wrote an introduction and a supplement dealing with the dogma of the immaculate conception of Mary.

⁴ Jo. Guilelmi Baier, *Compendium theologiae positivae: secundum editionem anni 1694, denuo accuratissime typis excribendum curavit vitam B. Baieri ac indices necessarios adjecit* Ed. Preuss (Berlin: Gust. Schlawitz, 1864).

⁵ Johann Gerhard, *Loci Theologici*, vol. 1-5 (Berlin: Schlawitz, 1863-67). Vol. 5-9 had different editors.

⁶ *Die Römische Lehre von der unbefleckten Empfängniss: Aus den Quellen dargestellt und aus Gottes Wort widerlegt* (Berlin: Gustav Schlawitz, 1865). For English translation see *The Romish Doctrine of the Immaculate Conception Traced From Its Sources*. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1867).

⁷ Eduard Preuss, *Die Rechtfertigung des Sünders vor Gott. Aus der heiligen Schrift dargelegt* (Berlin: Gustav Schlawitz, 1868). A second edition, was an identical reprint of the first, was published in 1871.

⁸ Cf. Walther, *Briefe* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1916), 2: 157; "Lic. Dr. E. Preuss," *Lehre und Wehre* 15 (1869), 203. Preuss himself says that he was accused "durchaus tadelnswerte Zärtlichkeiten gegen einzelne seiner Schüler erlaubt" (Preuss, *Lobe*, 193) and says that this was exaggerated but there was a truth in it, since the ideal of his youth was Horace, not St. Aloysius. He was also accused of using improper and coarse language in class when talking about their late majesties Louis XV of France and Katharine II of Russia, whose personal life was admittedly not above reproach. Here too, Preuss confesses that the accusations were exaggerated, but that he had, influenced by the style and language of Luther and the polemicists of the 16th and 17th century, used "unclean terms."

⁹ Cf. C.F.W. Walther, "Lic. Dr. E. Preuss," *Lehre und Wehre* 15 (1869), 203-210

¹⁰ He published during this time "Was lehren die neueren orthodox sein wollenden Theologen von der Inspiration?" *Lehre und Wehre* 17 (1871), 33-45, 65-76, 97-106, 129-

During this time he married Paulina Concordia Schuricht (1850–1935). At the end of 1871, Preuss suddenly resigned his position at the seminary; he was received into the Roman Catholic Church by baptism in early 1872. He became the editor of the German language Roman Catholic periodical *Amerika*. In 1887 he received the *Laetare* medal, awarded to outstanding Roman laypeople, from Notre Dame University. He did not publish any more books except, as mentioned above, one anonymously in which he retracted his critique of the dogma of the immaculate conception and gave an account of his rejection of Lutheranism. He died on July 17, 1904, in St. Louis, Missouri.

II. Reasons for Defecting to Rome

The only source for Preuss's reasons for defecting to Rome is the account he published seven years later. As with all such accounts of a change in denomination, there is the danger that one's past is rewritten to fit one's present, not necessarily to give an account, as Ranke put it, "*wie es eigentlich gewesen ist*" ("as it actually was").¹¹ With this caveat in mind, that which follows reflects Preuss's own view of things.¹²

The most prominent feature in Preuss's account was the experience of failure. What got him to doubt was the dissonance between his zealous defense of pure doctrine and the personal and professional disaster he experienced in Germany. The "*Lutheranergott*" ("god of the Lutherans"), as he called the deity, he worshipped when he was a Lutheran, a deity, as he stated, that was half-forgotten when Preuss had started to defend him, had allowed that his livelihood was destroyed.¹³ "Truly, the god of the Lutherans has to be a completely impotent being, more impotent even than 'the absolute Spirit' of the rationalists, of whose nullity the editor of Gerhard's *Loci* [i.e. Preuss] had previously made fun."¹⁴ Of course, Preuss knew that the Christians had suffered persecution before. But their persecutions had glorified God's cause and led to the conversion of many.

141 (Fuerbringer, op. cit., 233f) and "Die Lehre vom Hades" *Lehre und Wehre* 17 (1871), 289–295, 321–329, 353–366 (Walther, op. cit., 74).

¹¹ Leopold von Ranke, *Geschichten der romanischen und Germanischen Völker von 1494 bis 1514*, 3rd ed. (Berlin: Verlag von Dunckler & Humblot, 1885), VII.

¹² I did not engage in any archival research. There might exist material in the archives of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, or in the unpublished correspondence of C.F.W. Walther that would shed more light on the whole affair.

¹³ Preuss obviously did not believe that the God whom Lutherans worship is the true God. Therefore, in quotations taken from Preuss, I do not capitalize "God." I know it is an offence to a Christian to repeat Preuss's blasphemy, but in the interest of the historical record I cannot but do it; cf. SD VII, 67.

¹⁴ Preuss, *Empfängniß*, 199.

Preuss's sufferings led not to the increase of the church, rather, the liberals triumphed—and that was it. There was no happy ending for him.

Preuss saw this story also repeated in the fate of the Lutheran Church. Elector John the Constant was incarcerated and lost most of his territory. The university he founded, Jena, had become a bullwark of the Enlightenment by the 19th century.¹⁵ The city of Magdeburg, our Lord's chancellery during the interim, was destroyed in 1631 by a Roman Catholic army, and there was no Lutheranism in it left at the time he wrote. Lutheranism in general had turned into pietism and rationalism and then into atheism. "The poor god of the Lutherans had to watch calmly, as other, more powerful ones, robbed millions of his children."¹⁶ Thus, it is the experience of God's absence and his perceived non-interference in the world, his experienced powerlessness, that made Preuss question his faith. The God whom Preuss experienced was a God who lacked the predicates of omnipotence and wisdom.¹⁷ In contrast to Lutheranism that was in shambles after three hundred years, stood the Roman Church, which was powerful, making converts, and was not riled by apostasy from the faith. Thus, behind Preuss's problems was the expectation that God's might is manifested in the preservation and growth of his church.

The experience of failure made him also question his belief that justification is through faith alone by the righteousness of Christ alone. Rather vividly he describes his experience on his way to the United States. His ship got into a ferocious storm, and he feared for his life when he heard that the ship had a leak. He started to prepare for death. With all his strength he clung to the "bloody sufferings of Christ." This and this alone he put before God and at last, literally, struggled with him, as he had learned it from Luther. But to all his ardent prayers, indeed, to every outcry of his deadly wounded heart an answer sounded, which, though not spoken by human lips, drowned out the tumult of the elements: "And their works followed them" [Rev 14:13]. And now they appeared out of the night, all his works, from the first moment of his conscious life, in such a horrible detail, that, lying on his face, he trembled. A long, long series, they came, steadily looking at him: [*Opera tua sumus, non te deseremus.*] We are your works, and will not forsake you. "Christ's blood and righteousness, that is my jewelry and garment of honor, with that I will endure before

¹⁵ Preuss, *Empfängniß*, 199. What is said here is actually true of Johann Friedrich I, the Magnanimous, the son of John the Constant, who died in 1532.

¹⁶ Preuss, *Empfängniß*, 201.

¹⁷ Preuss, *Empfängniß*, 201.

God when I will enter heaven.”¹⁸ But the almighty God opened his living word: “I will give each according to his works” [Rev 2:23]. And it was, as if in an instant, all the texts of Scripture were before him in shining letters, which he had twisted in his books so cruelly. The one who has been “justified” by mere faith had received every fortnight the Lord’s Supper, had with him in his pocket a copy of the Psalms, had written books for his and his God’s honor, but to take care of the sick, to clothe the naked, feed the hungry, or give drink to the thirsty, he had made never his business. Good works in the sense of the judge he did not have. But more than once he had acted against his conscience. Could then—could his fate be anything but damnation, if there is one atom of truth in the Bible?¹⁹

The ship did not sink, and when Preuss arrived in New York he did continue to contemplate his fate and that of Lutheranism and wondered whether the providence of God was manifested in it. But he also sent a letter to Walther and was welcomed into the Missouri Synod.²⁰ His affliction did not subsume completely, but, as he said, when he was perturbed, he prayed the hymn “Trust patiently, my soul, trust in the Lord.”²¹ His peace at the “American Zion”²² was disturbed by the defection of Hermann Michael Baumstark, a teacher at the *Gymnasium*, then located with the seminary in St. Louis, who joined the Roman Catholic Church.²³ Baumstark put the thought in Preuss’s head that it was not the word of God that had built the Missouri Synod and made it into an orthodox Lutheran Church, but the personal genius of Walther (i.e., that the “miraculous things” worked in the Missouri Synod were man-made, not God’s work).²⁴ Additionally, Preuss continued to be attacked in journals.²⁵

¹⁸ Preuss quotes here the first stanza of the hymn by Zinzendorf “Christi Blut und Gerechtigkeit.” In English, a free cento translation by Charles Wesley is known as “Jesus Thy Blood and Righteousness.” Unfortunately, it is so free that its first stanza in does not convey the meaning which is decisive here, so that I have to supply a prose translation.

¹⁹ Preuss, *Empfängniß*, 196–197.

²⁰ Preuss, *Empfängniß*, 198–201.

²¹ “Harre, meine Seele,” Friedrich Räder, 1848. For an English translation, see Peter Krey <http://peterkrey.wordpress.com/category/my-poems/translation/> (accessed 16 January 2011).

²² Preuss, *Empfängniß*, 201.

²³ Hermann Michael (1839–1876) wrote with his brother Reinhold a book about their defection: “Unser Weg zur katholischen Kirche,” Freiburg: Herder, 1870.

²⁴ Preuss, *Empfängniß*, 203.

²⁵ Preuss, *Empfängniß*, 203, mentions examples from Roman Catholic and Protestant journals, but does not give the names of the journals.

In his continued study of Scripture, he became convinced that the Lutheran doctrine was wrong. He was convinced that a Christian is saved by faith *and* works by passages like Matthew 7:24–27 (“Everyone who hears my word and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rocks”); by Jesus’ rejection of those who only say “Lord, Lord” (Luke 6:46), in which description he found himself, in his defence of pure doctrine but lack of works of mercy, and by James 1:25 (not the hearer, but the doer of the work will be saved in his deed).²⁶ The true order of salvation Preuss found in Acts 10:34–35. It was not that first one was a poor sinner, then repentance and faith and acceptance by Christ. But rather, as in the case of Cornelius, it was first good works, especially alms, then Cornelius received full grace and came to be born again.

After Preuss had resigned from his professorship at Concordia Seminary in 1871, he started to study the decrees of the Council of Trent. Now the questions of ecclesiology came to the forefront. If the church is the pillar and foundation of the truth (1 Tim 3:15), then it must exist continuously. But since the Lutheran church did not exist continuously, therefore it cannot be the church.²⁷ Additionally, since the gates of hell will not prevail against the church, it could not be that the church existed only in a corrupted way, as the Lutheran church did between 1750 and 1839. The church is to be recognized, according to Roman Catholic doctrine, by its fruits, following Matthew 7:16, 20, not by its causes, word and sacrament, as the Lutherans teach. The fruits of the Roman Catholic Church can be seen in its saints, whereas Luther had broken a solemn vow and used hateful, coarse and indecent language.²⁸ The Roman Catholic Church, so Preuss reasoned, had retained the fundamental Christians doctrines, whereas Lutheranism had given birth to rationalism and atheism.²⁹ The Roman Catholic Church, so Preuss thought, had kept the unity for which Christ had prayed in John 17, whereas the Reformation brought disunity, as the split between Zwingli and Luther shows. This split, then, fostered in-differentism and atheism in Europe.

But what about communion under one kind and priestly celibacy? This raised the question of the authority of the church. Preuss found a solution

²⁶ Preuss, *Empfängniß*, 205.

²⁷ Preuss, *Empfängniß*, 217.

²⁸ Preuss, *Empfängniß*, 219.

²⁹ I have to interrupt here the description and put in a commentary: as far as I know, neither the French encyclopedists, the epitome of rationalism like Baron D'Holbach and Denis Diderot, or somebody like Voltaire, or Thomas Jefferson, or Thomas Paine and Ellery Channing, chief theologian of unitarianism were brought up Lutheran.

in the so-called Apostolic Council of Acts 15. As the council forbade the consuming of blood, but the later church made no issue of it anymore, it shows that the church has the authority to make and abolish regulations.

With all the rather nasty things Preuss has to say about the Lutheran church, he also sees some good in it. The emphasis on the concept of the church, a reverent traditionalism which has a certain *fides implicita*, and the strong authority of Walther were all positives. The latter proved to him that the church is not governed by an "impersonal word of God," but by a person. The church needs "a supreme judge in matters of faith and handler of its order like the daily bread, yea, that without such a monarchical head it cannot exist."³⁰ After all, the pedigree of Pius IX was more impressive than that of Walther, who was "irrespective of his most excellent capabilities, but the successor of that preacher from Dresden, whom his own congregation in 1839, for the weightiest reasons, had ferried across the Mississippi at the 'devil's stove.'"³¹

In summary, Preuss was moved to defect to Rome by a theological interpretation of his life in which he interpreted his sufferings as the expressions of the impotence of the god whom he served. This was because in the face of the accusing law he found no peace in the gospel; rather, he came to reject the Lutheran understanding of the gospel. He did not properly distinguish law and gospel and did not see how this distinction is the most important hermeneutical rule to understand Scripture properly, as the Formula of Concord states: "The distinction between law and gospel is a particularly glorious light. It serves to divide God's word properly and to explain correctly and make understandable the writings of the holy prophets and apostles" (SD V, 1). Additionally, Preuss left because he became convinced that the church is a visible institution that manifests in its life holiness and unity, for which a monarchical authority is necessary.

III. Walther's Response in *Law and Gospel*

Preuss's critique of the Lutheran doctrine of justification and thus of law and gospel—for the doctrine of justification is nothing but the proper distinction of law and gospel—will now be contrasted with Walther's 39 evening lectures on *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel*, given

³⁰ Preuss, *Empfängniß*, 225.

³¹ Preuss, *Empfängniß*, 225.

between September 12, 1884, and November 6, 1885, published posthumously in 1901.³²

Though Preuss is not even mentioned in these lectures, they can, nevertheless, be read as a summary of Walther's experience and study, of which the Preuss affair is a part. It is not misleading to read it also as an answer to the accusations made by Preuss.³³ Thus, I want to present to you two topics that are pertinent to the entire affair. First, affliction in the Christian life. Second, the difference between "dead faith of reason" and true faith, and the question of experience.

Affliction in the Christian Life

For Walther, the existence of the Christian is characterized by struggle.³⁴ Against a revivalistic piety that poses a penitential struggle before the breakthrough to faith, Walther sees the major struggle for the Christian coming after conversion. Those who do not believe are, after all, dead and cannot fight. But once revived, then the fight starts, consisting in killing one's own flesh, suffering the world's scorn, fighting the devil, and turning away from the world's vanities and treasures.³⁵ Walther thinks that actually a great number of people are converted by preaching, but then many fall away from the faith because they do not want to enter into this struggle.

There is also an affliction that is specific to the pastor. Walther mentions that the hardest task of the pastor is to reject false doctrine. This, according to the old proverb *veritas odium parit* ("The truth gives birth to hatred"), causes division.³⁶ Preaching divides the hearers into two classes: those who believe and those who reject the word of God. Those who reject it start to hate and persecute the Christians. The preacher should remember that in this life the church is always *ecclesia militans* ("a fighting church"), and if there is an *ecclesia quiescens* ("a church at rest"), then this is surely a false church. Additionally, as a shepherd he not only feeds the

³² C.F.W. Walther, *Die rechte Unterscheidung von Gesetz und Evangelium*, 30 Abendvorträge von Dr. C.F.W. Walther. Aus seinem Nachlaß (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1901). This edition was photographically reprinted in 1946. I am using the 1901 edition; all translations are mine. Roman numerals when followed by arabic numerals refer to the lecture, arabic numerals to the page.

³³ To my knowledge, Walther took no notice of Preuss's book.

³⁴ "Die Christen haben viel mehr Angst und Noth und Trübsal als die Welt. Aber dennoch ist der Christ viel seliger" (Walther, *Gesetz und Evangelium*, VII, 51).

³⁵ Walther, *Gesetz und Evangelium*, XXV, 355.

³⁶ Walther, *Gesetz und Evangelium*, XXV, 254. The proverb is from Terence, *Andria* 68 and says: "Obsequium amicos, veritas odium parit."

flock but protects the sheep from the wolf. Therefore: "If you want to be faithful servants of Christ, then it is impossible that you will become that without battle and strife against false doctrine, against the false gospel, against the false faith."³⁷ Therefore *Anfechtung* (affliction) is part of being a pastor. Walther can even state: "Who does not experience affliction, he may be industrious in his office, it is not the right kind of industry."³⁸ The right kind of industry does not only include planting and building, but it also means that one goes forward to fight the Lord's wars. Thus, it is inevitable that one is slandered by the community of false Christians and declared to be an abomination. The comfort in this struggle is eschatological: the reward the faithful servant of the Lord will receive from his master (Matt 25:21).

If we read this after we have looked at Preuss, it is telling that Walther does not expect some kind of resolution in history as Preuss expected (i.e., the triumph of truth over its enemies and thus the growth of the true church in time). Walther's view of the church includes that there is never any kind of rest for the church and individual pastors. The struggle and the situation of affliction, rather, is a constant feature because of the enduring reality of unbelief and the double effect the word has: in those who do not believe it it stirs up unbelief into a rejection of truth which manifests itself in vocal opposition to the truth and in the persecution of the true church. Preuss rejected this view of the course of the word of God in the world. For him, God as the ruler of the world must overcome his enemies in this world, otherwise he is the "god of the Lutherans," an impotent being. The fundamental error of Preuss is to conflate God's providence and general rule of the world, the hidden God, with his revelation in the gospel. Rather, these are two ways one encounters God which are irreducible in this life; they even seem, as Preuss's interpretation of history shows, to be contradictory. Why is the true church so weak and why does the error flourish if God governs everything? The solution is, as Walther points out here, only eschatological: God will vindicate his servants on judgment day and approve their work, but there is no solution for this dissonance until that day.

In this context it is interesting that in all his affliction Preuss did not seem to have sought either absolution or the consolation of the brethren.

³⁷ "Wollen Sie ein treuer Diener Christi sein, so ist es unmöglich, daß Sie das werden ohne Kampf und Streit gegen die falsche Lehre, gegen das falsche Evangelium, gegen den falschen Glauben" (Walther, *Gesetz und Evangelium*, XXV, 256).

³⁸ "Wer keine Anfechtung erfährt, der mag noch so fleißig sein in seinem Amt, es ist nicht der rechte Fleiß" (Walther, *Gesetz und Evangelium*, XXV, 256).

He mentions that he recited Bible passages and hymn verses in his affliction, but he did not seek the comfort of the word of forgiveness spoken to him. Walther dedicates his eighteenth lecture to the doctrine of absolution, pointing out its consolation and defending it against the errors of Rome that make the power of the absolution dependent on the office and against the scorn of the Reformed that absolution is a remnant of the papacy in Lutheranism.³⁹ Absolution is the individual application of the gospel to the person, and thus the power of the gospel lies not in the officiant but in the words themselves that are true because of the death of Christ.

Of course, nobody knows if the gospel would have comforted Preuss had he sought absolution. Certainly, it would have been embarrassing for a theologian of his stature to admit that he had doubts on what he had so forcefully defended. But if anything, it shows that even a highly trained theologian should not think that he can work through afflictions all by himself, that he can apply law and gospel properly to himself. He, too, needs to hear the comfort of the gospel in situations like Preuss's or, conversely, needs to hear the law when he hardens in his sin. Walther's praise of absolution can also be read as an admonition to the lonely pastor to seek the comfort of absolution said to him in his struggles instead of "sitting in his corner."⁴⁰

"Dead Faith of Reason," True Faith, and the Question of Experience

In his article after Preuss's defection, Walther mentions that he had for a while the suspicion that Preuss was not truly converted.⁴¹ Walther

³⁹ Walther refers here to a selection of quotes by Luther, among others from his house postil "Sermon on the 19th Sunday after Pentecost," St. L. 13a, 912-925. (WA 52, 497-504). For the original notes cf. WA 37, 174-179.

⁴⁰ Walther quotes Luther (Housepostill): "Da lehrt die Heilige Schrift mich und alle Christen, wenn ich Vergebung der Sünden will haben, müsse ich mich nicht in den Winkel setzen und sagen: mein Gott, vergib mir meine Sünden; und alsdann warten, wenn ein Engel vom Himmel komme und mir sage: Deine Sünden sind dir vergeben" (Walther, *Gesetz und Evangelium*, XVIII, 172).

⁴¹ "Zwar müssen wir gestehen, daß wir schon seit einiger Zeit von starken Zweifeln, ob Dr. Preuß ein bekehrter Christ sei, angefochten worden waren, welche Zweifel wir auch wiederholt unseren Herrn Collegen eröffnet haben. Denn weit entfernt, daß die stete Bereitwilligkeit des Dr. Preuß, alles, bis auf die subtilsten Punkte, anzunehmen und zu vertheidigen, was wir je als Wahrheit aufstellten, und weit entfernt, daß die schneidende, über das Herz richtende und dabei oft leichtfertige Art gegen im Glauben Irrige zu streiten, weit entfernt, sagen wir, daß dies uns Zutrauen zu dem Manne eingeflößt haben sollte, erregte es im Gegentheile neben anderen Charakteräusserungen in uns seit einiger Zeit den höchst peinlichen Zweifel, ob Dr. Preuß, was er bekenne, auch selbst von Herzen glaube, oder ob nicht sein ganzer

mentions one reason for this was his abrasive and uncharitable polemics. Walther is here making the distinction between somebody who agrees to all doctrines of the Christian faith but nevertheless is not a Christian and a person who agrees to all doctrines and truly is a Christian. The language might first seem to betray a pietistic bias towards "heart faith" against "head faith," but even a superficial acquaintance with Walther should be enough to dissipate any suspicion that he is downplaying the importance of doctrine in favor of some emotional piety. Rather, if we want to understand him, it might be helpful to see it as a reception of the distinction between *fides historica* and justifying faith made by Melancthon in the Apology. Melancthon writes:

But that faith which justifies is not only historical knowledge, but to assent to the promise of God, by which freely on account of Christ forgiveness of sins and justification are offered. And so that nobody suspects that it is only knowledge, we add further: it is to will and receive the offered promise of the forgiveness of sins and of justification.⁴²

This faith is not an idle thought, but liberates from death and gives birth to new life in the heart (Ap IV, 64; cf. SD IV, 10, an echo from Luther's preface to Romans).

What then distinguishes "dead head faith" from "true faith"? First, the complete person is affected. "The thought: 'I believe' is not yet the thought, but my entire heart must be affected, must rest in the gospel. Then I am also changed, then I cannot but love and serve God."⁴³

Secondly, true faith is existential faith: beyond believing the *fides quae*, it includes also the belief that *my* sins are forgiven.⁴⁴ Thus, Walther can say: "What is a living, true faith of the heart other than the divine certainty that

sogenannter Glaube nur eine das Herz leer, kalt und unverändert lassende Sache seines Verstandes sei" (Walther, "Ein Abfall," *Der Lutheraner* 28 [1871/72]), 73–75, 73.

⁴² "Sed illa fides, quae iustificat, non est tantum notitia historiae, sed est assentiri promissioni Dei, in qua gratis propter Christum offertur remissio peccatorum et iustificatio. Et ne quis suspicetur tantum notitiam esse, addemum amplius: est velle et accipere oblatam promissionem remissionis peccatorum et iustificationis." Ap IV, 48 (BSLK 169, 39–170, 2)

⁴³ "Der Gedanke: 'Ich glaube' ist noch nicht der Glaube, sondern meine ganzes Herz muß erfaßt sein, muß in dem Evangelium ruhen. Dann bin ich auch umgewandelt, dann kann ich nicht anders, als Gott lieben und ihm dienen." (Walther, *Gesetz und Evangelium* V, 35)

⁴⁴ Walther, *Gesetz und Evangelium*, XXVII, 279.

one has forgiveness of sins and that the gates of heaven are open to us?"⁴⁵ This again is not a subjectivization of the faith, but follows Melancthon in the Apology. "Beyond such belief [sc. that there is God, that he punishes the ungodly] we require that each one believes that the sins are forgiven to him."⁴⁶ Walther assumes that there are people who have a mere historical faith among the listeners of a sermon, thus the preacher has to point out this distinction as part of preaching the law.⁴⁷ For that, though, it is necessary that the pastor himself knows this difference, not only intellectually, but personally, i.e., that he has true faith, not only historical faith.⁴⁸

But beyond that, Walther also says that real faith is connected to experience. In my view, he tries to go a middle way. On the one hand, he rejects the view which he associates with Methodism, a view that grounds the certainty of salvation on one's experience. On the other hand, he also rejects the total divorce of faith from experience:

There are people who think of themselves as good Christians but they are spiritually dead. They never experienced true anxiety because of their sins, they were never filled with terror of them, they never were scared of hell, of which nevertheless they are guilty, they never were on their knees, they never lamented with tears to God that they are despicable, condemned sinners, and much less they have shed tears of joy and praised God that he had mercy on them. They read God's

⁴⁵ Walther, *Gesetz und Evangelium*, XXXVIII, 379: "Was ist ein lebendiger, wahrer Herzensglaube anders, als die göttliche Gewißheit, daß man Vergebung der Sünden habe und daß die Pforten der Himmels uns offen stehen?"

⁴⁶ "Nos praeter illam fidem requirimus, ut credat sibus quisque remitti peccata." Ap XII, 60, BSLK 263, 32-34

⁴⁷ "Aber die Unchristen sind nicht alle gleich. Der eine ist ein grober Religions-spötter und Bibelverächter, der andere ist orthodox, hat den todten Verstandesglauben, aber der Prediger merkt: 'Du bist noch noch blind, du liegst noch im geistlichen Tode.' Wer natürlich noch selbst in Sünden liegt, der weiß auch einen solchen nicht zu beurtheilen" (Walther, *Gesetz und Evangelium*, VII, 53).

⁴⁸ "Wenn man bloß so objectiv die verschiedenen Lehren darstellt, so hilft das nicht genug. Wer zwar orthodox ist, wer zwar die reine Lehre gefaßt hat, er steht aber nicht selbst im Verkehr mit Gott, hat noch nicht seine Rechnung mit Gott abgeschlossen, hat noch nicht Gewißheit erlangt, ob ihm seine Sündenschuld vergeben ist oder nicht, wie kann der eine christliche Predigt machen? Ja, es gilt auch hier wie bei den Heiden das Wort: 'pectus disertum facit' 'das Herz macht beredt.'" (VII, 49) Though, Walther will reject the idea that only the sermon of a believing pastor faith can be generated: "Wer das alles [sc. die Verdammung des Gesetzes und den Trost des Evangeliums RZ] nicht erfahren hat, der ist - sine mente sonans, der ist wie eine klingende Schelle und wie ein tönend Erz. Wenn aber ein Prediger das selbst erfahren hat und es geht nun recht von Herzen, so geht es auch wieder zu Herzen. Wenn durch einen unbekehrten Prediger jemand erweckt und bekehrt wird, so geschieht es bloß per accidens." (Lecture III, 21)

word, they hear it, but they experience nothing. They go to church, get absolved, and it does not refresh them; they go to the Lord's Supper and stay cold as ice and feel nothing. But they think, when they at times get restless because of it, that they are so indifferent in respect to their salvation that they have no taste for the Word of God and try to calm themselves thus: "Well, in the Lutheran Church they teach that feeling does not matter. Thus, even if I have not felt anything, it does not hurt. I can nevertheless be a good Christian, since I believe." But this is a great, terrible self deception. He who is in such a state has nothing but a dead faith of reason, has only a sham faith, or, to put it coarsely, a snout-faith. Though he speaks with his mouth "I believe," with his heart he does not know anything of it. No, God's word calls to us: "Taste and see how friendly the Lord is." He who has never tasted how friendly the Lord is may not think that he is in the true faith.⁴⁹

Hearing this, especially talking about tears, you might feel a little uncomfortable, even thinking that Walther had not quite outgrown his pietistic phase. Those of you who are fond of the early church should remember that "the gift of tears" was a common matter of discussion among monks and a spiritual gift eagerly sought for.⁵⁰ But if you are inclined to dismiss him as a pietist, consider again state the difference to revivalistic piety: law and gospel produce experiences, yes, indeed,

⁴⁹ "Es gibt Menschen, die halten sich für gute Christen und sind doch geistlich todt. Sie haben nie eine rechte Angst wegen ihrer Sünden erfahren, sie sind nie mit Schrecken darüber erfüllt worden, sie haben sich nie entsetzt vor der Hölle, deren sie doch würdig sind, sie haben nie auf ihren Knien gelegen, haben es nie mit heißen Thränen Gott geklagt, daß sie greuliche, verdammte Sünder seien, und viel weniger haben sie süße Thränen der Freude geweint und Gott gepriesen, daß er sich ihrer erbarmt habe. Sie lesen Gottes Wort, sie hören es auch, aber sie erfahren nichts dabei. Sie gehen in die Kirche, sie lassen sich absolvieren, und es erquickt sie nicht, sie gehen zum heiligen Abendmahl und bleiben kalt wie Eis und fühlen nichts. Aber sie denken, wenn sie ja einmal unruhig deswegen werden, daß sie so gleichgültig in Absicht auf ihr Heil und ihre Seligkeit sind, daß ihnen das Wort Gottes gar nicht schmeckt, und suchen sich dadurch zu beruhigen: 'Ja, in der lutherischen Kirche wird doch gelehrt: Auf das Gefühl kommt nichts an. Also wenn ich auch gar nichts gefühlt habe, das schadet nichts. Ich kann deswegen doch ein guter Christ sein, denn ich glaube ja.' Aber das ist eine große, schreckliche Selbsttäuschung! Wer in einem solchen Zustand ist, der hat nichts als einen todtten Verstandesglauben, hat nur einen Scheinglauben, oder—um es grob auszudrücken—einen Maulglauben. Er spricht wohl mit dem Mund: 'Ich glaube,' aber sein Herz weiß nichts davon. Nein, Gottes Wort ruft uns zu: 'Schmecket und sehet, wie freundlich der Herr ist!' Wer das nie geschmeckt ha, wie freundlich der Herr ist, der meine nur nicht, daß er im wahren Glauben stehe!"

⁵⁰ Cf. John Cassian's discussion in his "Collationes," 9 *Patrologiae Cursus Completus*, vol. 49, 804-807, *Series Latina* (Paris: Migne, 1846), 28-30.

feelings in the Christian, but the Christian does not rely on them when he wants to know if he is saved. It is similar to the Christian's relationship to works: good works are a necessary consequence of faith, and their absence is an indication of the lack of faith, without faith being identical with works or the Christian relying on works. Additionally, Walther does not state that the Christian has all the time the full experience of the law which results in terrors of conscience—a term often used in the confessions, by the way—nor does he prescribe a certain experience at conversion.⁵¹ Neither does he claim that the sweetness of the gospel, of the forgiveness of sins, is always felt but discusses at length the feelings of desertion the Christian experiences.⁵² Law and gospel stay not outside of a person's heart (i.e., his complete personality); they not only concern his transcendental Ego, but also the empirical Ego. So there is an affective dimension to faith, even though his experience will never be completely congruent with law or gospel, i.e., his reaction to the law will be many times deficient because it affects only parts of his person like the intellect, but not his feelings, conversely, the good news will not always elicit great joy. But that does not mean that this lack is good or that the complete absence of an impact on the whole person is not alarming.⁵³

Walther claims Luther for his thesis that law and gospel do create experiences. He quotes from Luther's Church Postil, from the sermon on the epistle of the Sunday after Christmas on Gal 4:1-7. The quoted passage is an explication of Gal 4:6, "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Luther says:

⁵¹ "Zwar können wir den Sündern nicht den *Grad* der Buße vorschreiben; denn wir finden in der heiligen Schrift, daß der Grad der Buße ein sehr verschiedener gewesen sei bei denen, von welcher uns berichtet wird, daß sie bekehrt wurden. Aber etwas von der bitteren Bitterkeit der Buße muß jedermann erfahren haben, oder wer wird nie etwas von der Süßigkeit der Evangeliums schmecken. Und wenn der liebe Gott einen solchen Menschen ohne viel Angst und Schrecken zum Glauben hat kommen lassen, um ihn zur Seligkeit zu bringen, so holt er das immer später nach" (Walther, *Gesetz und Evangelium*, XIII, 110).

⁵² Wo?

⁵³ Walther finds his experience of the law in Paul's statement of the divine sorrow (2 Cor 7:10) and in Melancthon's description of contrition (Walther, *Gesetz und Evangelium*, XXII, 231-232, Ap XII, 29: "Sed dicimus contritionem esse veros terrores conscientiae, quae Deum sentit irasci peccato, et dolet se peccasse." Ap XII, 32: "In his terroribus sentit conscientia iram Dei adversus peccatum, quae est ignota securis hominibus secundum carnem ambulantibus. Videt peccati turpitudinem et serio dolet se peccasse; etiam fugit interim horribilem iram Dei, quia non sustentetur verbo Dei."). Walther praises Melancthon's treatment of the law here because it shows that it is not a theoretical construction, but "everything is said from Scripture and experience" (Walther, *Gesetz und Evangelium*, XXII, 232-233).

Here everyone has to perceive and to examine whether he feels the Holy Spirit and senses his voice in himself; for St. Paul says here: Where he is in the heart, there he calls: Abba, dear Father, as he also says in Romans 8: Ye have received the spirit of gracious childhood of God through which we call: Abba, dear Father. But this calling one feels, when the conscience, without wavering, is strongly confident and is certain is the same manner that not only one's sins are forgiven, but also that one is God's child and be assured of salvation, and that with a joyous, certain heart, and with all confidence may call God one's dear Father and may call upon him.⁵⁴

Luther says in the same sermon:

If you do not feel that calling, then think and rest not, till God will listen to you; for you are Cain, and you are not well. But do not desire that this calling is there alone and pure in you, there shall also be the cry of the murderer, which will drive you to such calling and exercise you, as it happens with all others. Your sin will also cry, that is: create a strong despondency in your conscience.⁵⁵

Walther comments on this: "If a Christian is certain in his state of grace, nevertheless, always he will hear the murderous cry of the devil."⁵⁶ It is the accusing voice of the law, pointing out one's sin, that Walther here identifies with the voice of the accuser, the voice of the devil.⁵⁷ In this situation of the affliction, the Spirit gives to the Christian confidence that his sins are forgiven. Again, Walther is rejecting the idea that the experience gives

⁵⁴ "Hie ist nu eynem iglichen wartzunhemen und tzu prüfen, ob er den heyligen geyst auch fule und seyne stymme empfinde ynn yhm; denn S. Paulus spricht hie: Wo er ynn den hertzen ist, da ruffet er; Abba, lieber vater, wie er auch sagt Ro. 8: Ihr habt empfangen den geyst der gnedigen kindschafft gottis, durch wilchen eyr ruffen; Abba, lieber vatter. Das rufen fulet man aber denn, wenn das gewissen on alles manchken und tzweyffeln festiglich sich vormuttet und gleych gewiß ist, das nit alleyn seyn sund yhm vorgeben seyn, ßondern das es auch gottis kynd sey und der selickeytt sicher, und mit frolichem, gewissen hertzen, ynn aller tzuuorsicht mag Gott seynen liben vatter nennen und ruffen." Text according to WA 10 I 1, 370,18–371,3. Walther quotes Luther, as is his custom, according to the edition of Walch (Walther, *Gesetz und Evangelium*, XIX, 185–186).

⁵⁵ "Fuelstu nu das ruffen nit, ßo denck und ruge nit mit bitten, biß das gott dich erhore; denn du bist Cayn, und es steht nit wol umb dich. Doch soltu nit begeren, das solchs ruffen alleynn unnd lautter ynn dyr sey, es wirt auch müssen eyn mordschrey daneben seyn, das dich ynn solchem ruffen treyb und ube, wie allen andern geschen ist. Deyn sund wirt auch schreyen, das ist: eyn starcks vortzagen ynn deynem gewissen anrichten" (WA 10 I 1, 373, 2–8).

⁵⁶ "Wenn einer noch so gewiß ist in seinem Gnadenstande, immer wir er noch ein Mordgeschrei des Teufels hören" (Walther, *Gesetz und Evangelium*, XIX, 188).

⁵⁷ He does not reflect on this point that it is also the voice of God, since it is the accusation of his law.

certainty of salvation. He rather says that first one has to believe, then one feels. "Feeling comes from faith, not faith from feeling. The one whose faith comes from feeling has no true faith, for faith needs a divine promise."⁵⁸

Thus, if the Christian realizes that he does not feel anything, that he is "dead" and "cold," that he has no taste for the word of God, that the absolution does not comfort him, that he does not feel the witness of the Spirit, he cries out, and God will, in good measure, give him the experience. Walther cautions that some experience grace all the time, others are led by God through "darkness, through great anxiety, through great doubts, and all kinds of misery (*Noth*)."⁵⁹ So what is the difference between the one who is dead without experience and the Christian without experience? According to Walther, it is the anxiety experienced because of the lack of experience: "For when I am anxious about the fact that I do not feel and sense anything, and I would dearly like to sense and feel something, then it is a sign that I am a true Christian."⁶⁰

Therefore, Walther warns his students not to fall in the error, in order to convict the hypocrites, to picture the Christian in a way that does not take into account that the strength of faith, feeling and fruitfulness can fluctuate.⁶¹ Rather, a pastor has to keep in mind: "A Christian acts often-times in a unchristian way."⁶² Even though, according to Romans 7, the Christian has a good will, he nevertheless not only has a good will, but in his actions he sins. It is therefore also necessary to keep in mind the distinction between the enduring sinfulness which excludes any form of perfectionism and falling into a mortal sin.⁶³ Therefore, the Christian should not be depicted as always experiencing sweetness.⁶⁴ Lack of full experience of the comfort of the gospel is therefore a part of the *simul iustus et peccator*.

⁵⁸ "Das Gefühl kommt aus dem Glauben, und nicht der Glaube aus dem Gefühl. Und wessen Glaube aus dem Gefühl kommt, der hat keinen wahren Glauben; denn der Glaube braucht eine göttliche Verheißung" (Walther, *Gesetz und Evangelium*, XIX, 189).

⁵⁹ Walther, *Gesetz und Evangelium*, XIX, 190.

⁶⁰ "Denn wenn ich in Angst bin darüber, daß ich nichts fühle und empfinde, und ich möchte doch so gerne etwas empfinden und fühlen, so ist das ein Zeichen, daß ich ein wahrer Christ bin" (Walther, *Gesetz und Evangelium*, XIX, 190).

⁶¹ Walther, *Gesetz und Evangelium*, XXIX, 296–304.

⁶² "Ein Christ handelt oft sehr unchristlich" (Walther, *Gesetz und Evangelium*, XXIX, 297).

⁶³ Walther, *Gesetz und Evangelium*, XXIX, 299.

⁶⁴ Walther, *Gesetz und Evangelium*, XXIX, 300.

Walther also sees a difference regarding experiences God gives in the stages of the Christian's life. Experiences of joy predominate when someone comes to faith, then these experiences fade. He compares it with first getting sweet breads, then rye bread. He sees it as a process of purification of the believer.⁶⁵

Walther is walking here a thin line. I think he is successful in avoiding the errors of a Christianity based on feeling and of a Christianity that is devoid of any concept of experience and for which faith is nothing but assent to certain doctrines. But the integration of human experience and its analysis from a theological point of view is risky, and it may seem to be a safer way to stay in a supposedly objective distance. The price to pay, however, is that then faith becomes mere *fides historica*, knowledge and assent—or salvation is mediated *ex opere operato* ritually.

And even though Walther's language might be pietistically tinted, the issue is not some form of pietistic deviation. The experiential side of the work of law and gospel in regard to the Christian was already pointed out by Luther, whose sermons on Exodus are quoted by Walther:

A Christian is not impertinent, wild and coarse, but his conscience is timid, faint-hearted and pusillanimous; sin bites them and they are afraid of God's wrath, the devil, and death; Christ tastes good to such a downcast and pulverized heart. In the same manner, the salvation from sin, death, devil, and hell tastes good to those who are stuck in death and feel such need and would like to have rest. They get it when the heart has faith, but they feel on the side how frail the old Adam is.⁶⁶

Walther comments on this quote:

An important saying! According to Luther those are certainly not Christians who are not bitten by their sins, who are not in a fight with sin and even may ask: "What evil do I do?" For if you are a true

⁶⁵ "Die Liebe eines alten, erfahrenen Christen zu seinem Heiland schmeckt wohl nicht mer so süß, sie ist aber viel lauterer, denn da sind viele Schlacken herausgebrannt worden, die erst noch da waren" (Walther, *Gesetz und Evangelium*, XIX, 193).

⁶⁶ "Ein Christ ist nicht frech, wild und rohe, Sondern sein Gewissen ist blöde, kleinmütig und verzagt, die Sünde beisset sie, und fürchten sich für Gottes zorn und für dem Teufel und Tode, einem solchen niedergeschlagenen und zertriebenen Herten schmecket der Herre Christus wol. Item die Erlösung von der Sünde, Tod, Teufel und Hellen schmecket denen auch wol, die in dem Tode stecken und fülen solche not und wolten gerne ruge haben, die bekommen sie, wenn das Hertz den Glauben hat, Aber sie fülen auch darneben, wie gebrechlich der alte Adam sei" (WA 16, 232,22–31, vgl. [W 3,1285; W² 3,858]).

Christian, you think: Indeed, sins are going over my head, not only when I was not yet converted, but even now. I do not only believe that, because I know it from Scripture, but because I daily experience what an evil thing my heart is, how frail the old Adam is.⁶⁷

The error of the Reformed or the pietists is that they point to an experience of grace which assures one of salvation instead of pointing them to word and sacrament. Walther sees in this a mixing of law and gospel. Why? It seems that he understands such an experience as man-made. The Reformed counsel the person affected by the law "through praying and struggling to gain the state of grace till he feels it."⁶⁸ Walther says: "That looks quite pious, quite Christian, and he—who has no experience—is easily deceived. But we have—thanks be to God!—a word that does not deceive us in which we can trust; we can stay with it in the darkness, that is our lamp."⁶⁹ It is interesting how experience plays here into the ability to discern the error. This fits with the overall approach that the proper distinction between law and gospel is something which has to be learned during one's life. The inexperienced is deceived by pious phrases and the seeming sincerity, how sin in such a case is taken seriously, how "cheap grace" is avoided. The experienced Christian who has learned to distinguish law and gospel properly and analyze the situation of a person using this paradigm realizes that pointing someone who is bothered by his sins to an experience he somehow must produce is just another form of works righteousness. Of course, the response might be that it is not a man-made experience, but rather a God-made experience. Then the situation is indeed different. The problem is not works righteousness but rather idolatry, because a human experience is put in place of the divine promise, which means that a man-made sign of God's grace is worshipped (i.e., trusted in) instead of the divinely established signs of God's grace. It is a man-made gospel, therefore no gospel.

⁶⁷ "Ein wichtiges Wort! Nach Luther sind das gewiß keine Christen, die ihre Sünde nicht beißt, die nicht im Kampf mit der Sünde stehen und wohl gar fragen: 'Was tue ich den Böses?' Denn bist du ein wahrer Christ, so denkst du: 'Ja freilich, die Sünden gehen über mein Haupt, nicht nur damals, als ich noch nicht bekehrt war, sondern auch jetzt noch. Ich glaube das nicht nur, weil ich das aus der Bibel weiß, sondern weil ich es auch täglich erfahre, was für ein böses Ding mein Herz ist, wie gebrechlich der alte Adam ist'" (Walther, *Gesetz und Evangelium*, XIII, 112).

⁶⁸ "... durch Beten und Kämpfen sich den Gnadenstand zu erringen, bis er die Gnade fühle" (Walther, *Gesetz und Evangelium*, XVI, 143).

⁶⁹ "Das sieht ja freilich recht fromm, recht christlich aus, und wer keine Erfahrung hat, der läßt sich leicht täuschen, Aber wir haben, Gott Lob! ein Wort, das täuscht uns nicht, dem können wir trauen, be dem könne wir in der Finsterniß bleiben, das ist undere Leuchte" (Walther, *Gesetz und Evangelium*, XVI, 143).

Walther's View of Roman Catholicism

It is not surprising that Walther defended the traditional Lutheran view that the pope is the antichrist and that papacy is antichristianity.⁷⁰ He attributes the unpopularity of this statement, the scorn that says this a spleen of narrow minds who do not want to go with the times,⁷¹ to the loss of discerning what antichristianity is. Against the thesis that, after all, there is no church which has no errors, and that the Roman Church at least holds on to the ecumenical creeds so that there is an agreement in fundamental articles of faith, indeed, that the papacy is a "strong dam against the horrible deluge of unbelief which has flooded Christendom," Walther points out that the antichrist, since he sits in the church, has to mask himself with Christian doctrines. The papacy is antichristianity because it alone within Christendom (i.e., the churches which are trinitarian) is an enemy of free grace in Christ because it teaches that Christ is a new legislator and the gospel is a doctrine of works. That would not be different from Arminianism, which dominated American Protestantism at Walther's time. Rather, "the gospel is obscured in all sects, but it is not condemned and anathemized, as the pope does."⁷²

Preuss himself certainly saw the difference between the Lutheran and the Roman church in that point. For Preuss, Lutheranism was wrong and unscriptural. Justification by faith and works was biblical and right. The Preuss affair would have therefore only confirmed Walther's view of Roman Catholicism. Today, we are confronted with some of the same accusations and arguments as Walther was. We, too, hear that saying the pope is antichrist is just being cranky and reactionary or that the papacy is not the enemy of Christianity but holds to the essentials of Christianity and is the bullwark against the foes of Christianity and the tide of immorality. This, of course, is a topic too broad to address here. But in order at least to begin to answer who is the antichrist, one has to ask if the gospel—that is, salvation without the works of man, alone through Christ, alone through grace, alone through faith in the gospel promise—is essential for Christianity or not. And, is the papacy still the enemy of the gospel, or has it either been all a great misunderstanding since the 16th century or has the ecumenical movement done away with the differences and reached a consensus in the fundamentals also of the gospel, as the "Joint Declaration

⁷⁰ Compare Walther, *Gesetz und Evangelium*, IX, 62–71 for the following.

⁷¹ "eine Schrulle beschränkter Köpfe, die der Zeit nicht folgen wollen" (Walther, *Gesetz und Evangelium*, IX, 62).

⁷² "Das Evangelium wird wohl in allen Secten verdunkelt, aber nicht verdammt und verflucht, wie der Pabst es thut" (Walther, *Gesetz und Evangelium*, IX, 69).

on the Doctrine of Justification" claimed? Simply to repeat what was said before, without checking whether changes in Rome have made statements like those of Walther obsolete, would mean one is a reactionary blockhead. But if the gospel of free grace is still condemned by Rome, then the papacy is what it was before.

But what is the attraction of the papacy? It is, according to Walther, the "appearance of good works spread by the papists."⁷³ The same error that values God's work for little, but man's work highly is not specific to the Roman Catholic Church. Walther thinks that the appearance of good works is also the reason why enthusiastic preachers attract people in the United States.

IV. Conclusion

Even though Walther does not reference Preuss, this comparison shows that Walther has an answer to Preuss's critique of Lutheranism. First, Walther rejects Preuss's theology of glory that identifies success and the gospel and emphasizes that suffering, struggle, and rejection is the normal state of the members of the *ecclesia militans*. Secondly, the accusations of the law do not cease with conversion, but rather continue and have to continue. And this experience of the law is an experience of the wrath of God.⁷⁴ The only escape is the flight to the gospel which alone comforts without being cheap. The tragic of Preuss's life was that he did not find the way to the gospel but remained stuck in the law, a law which is only bearable when it is lessened as it is in the Roman Catholic Church. Walther develops in his *Law and Gospel* a nuanced understanding of experience, so that law and gospel are never abstracted from the life of the Christian without at the same time being identified with interior states of the Christian. One could wish that Preuss would have had the courage and, maybe, humility to seek spiritual counsel from Walther or another pastor. The tragic apostasy of Preuss is a warning to all of us: "Therefore, let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor 10:12). No Christian ever simply "has" the gospel, because he is always also under the condemnation of the law. May God grant to all of us that when

⁷³ Walther, *Gesetz und Evangelium*, XXXVI, 359.

⁷⁴ Cf. Apology IV, 79: "Id est, peccatum perterrefacit conscientias; id fit per legem, quae ostendit iram Dei adversus peccatum, sed vincimus per Christum." (BSLK 176,7-10) "That is, sin terrifies the consciences, this happens through the law, which shows forth the wrath of God against sin, but we overcome through Christ." Cf. also Ap IV, 295 (174): "Ac ne diligere quidem possumus iratum Deum, et lex semper accusat nos, semper ostendit iratum Deum." "And nobody can love a wrathful God, and the law always accuses us, always shows the wrathful God."

the law comes down on us with ferocity—when we hear the murderous voice of the accuser that wants to drive into despair—that then we do not try to find a solution for ourselves, but turn to someone who will tell us the gospel so that in the midst of our death we may have life. For this we pray in the sixth petition of the Lord's Prayer, "And lead us not into temptation":

We pray in this petition that God would guard and keep us so that the devil, the world, and our sinful nature may not deceive us or mislead us into false belief, despair, and other great shame and vice. Although we are attacked by these things, we pray that we may finally overcome them and win the victory.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1991), 21–22.