

PREACHING LAW AND GOSPEL

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Probably the most formative event of all my time at seminary—something I shall never forget—was on the occasion of a sermon which I had to preach for one of my homiletical classes at seminary. The professor for the class was Australian Dr. Henry Hamann, and the sermon was to be on one of those classic texts discussing Law and Gospel—Romans 3. I endeavored to write a sermon which would give the best in-depth discussion of Law and Gospel that they would ever hear. At the end of the sermon, I remember Dr. Hamann saying, “That was just about the best and most lucid exposition on Law and Gospel that I have ever heard this side of Walther—I’d like a copy of it to hand out to future classes. . . . and it also had the least amount of Law and Gospel of any sermon I’ve heard preached in this class all year!”

Hamann’s comment made a penetrating and enormously important point about preaching Law and Gospel—the distinction between talking ABOUT the Gospel and proclaiming the Gospel, or, as Gerhard Forde puts it, “secondary discourse—words about God, and primary discourse, Word FROM God.”^{1[1]} The high calling and sacred task of preaching which we, as pastors, have been given by our Lord to do is not one of merely talking ABOUT Christ and the Gospel—describing them in order to elicit a response from the mind which says “this is true and orthodox.” Preaching, rather, involves proclamation—the pastor PROCLAIMS these truths to the congregation “in His stead and by His command”—God Himself speaking through the pastor’s mouth His very own word. When the pastor preaches the Law, it is not merely to talk ABOUT God judging sin, reporting such to the hearer, but rather in this very Word being preached, God Himself is speaking His judgment upon the hearer through the mouth and words of the pastor—the actual shattering voice of the Lord to the goats on His left on the Last day, “Depart from me, you accursed,” is being put into the mouth of the pastor preaching Law and is being spoken from God, to the hearer—his Judgment Day is right there going on. Furthermore, when the pastor preaches the Gospel, it is not merely talk ABOUT the forgiveness and life of God, but rather, the actual ringing voice of the Lord to the sheep on His right hand on the Last Day, “Come, you blessed of my Father inherit the kingdom prepared for you” is sounding through the mouth of the pastor and is spoken to us. God Himself is present speaking, absolving, and forgiving in the mouth and word of the pastor—in His stead and by His command. The Gospel IS the power of God to salvation, just as the Law is the power of God to damnation. Such proclamation is what the high, sacred, and solemn task of preaching is all about.

And being Words of the Lord, such preaching must be as the Lord gives it to be—Law and Gospel. There are two utterly disastrous things for a Lutheran pastor to do with Law and Gospel in his preaching—first, is that he keeps a proper balance between them. Cursed be the Lutheran pastor who keeps a proper balance between Law and Gospel—and blessed is the one who keeps a proper imbalance between them, and blessed are their congregations. ‘Balance’ is what one has between two things of equal weight and emphasis—neither which is ever allowed to ‘outweigh’ or take precedence over the other. In the Apostolic faith delivered by Christ through the Scriptures

^{1[1]}Gerhard Forde, *Theology as Proclamation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990)

to the Holy Catholic Church, and therefore heartily and faithfully confessed by the Lutheran church, nothing must ever be allowed to ‘balance out,’—and thus have equal importance and stress as—the Gospel in preaching and teaching, for it is only the Gospel ALONE which creates, builds up and sustains the Church and all who are within her. Never can the Gospel be preached alone without the Law and certainly never the Law alone without the Gospel, but, as Walther would put it in his final (and we might venture to say his concluding^{2[2]}) thesis in his magisterial work, Law and Gospel,

“The Word of God is not rightly divided when the person teaching it does not allow the Gospel to have a general predominance in his teaching.”^{3[3]}

And furthermore, Walther goes on to say,

“Law and Gospel are confounded and perverted, not only when the Law predominates in the preaching, but also when Law and Gospel, as a rule, are equally balanced.”^{4[4]}

But secondly, equally as disastrous for the Lutheran preacher is when he does not also keep a proper distinction between Law and Gospel, and when they are confused with each other. Note that it is the word ‘distinction’ (not anything like ‘balance’) which is used repeatedly by the Confessions and the Lutheran fathers to describe the correct way in which Law and Gospel is to be understood and preached. Hence, the title of Walther’s book, and also the confession of the Formula of Concord, Article Five,

“We believe, teach and confess that the distinction between Law and Gospel is an especially glorious light that is to be maintained with great diligence in the church so that, according to St. Paul’s admonition the Word of God may be divided rightly.”^{5[5]} “So that the writings of the Holy prophets and apostles may be explained and understood correctly.”^{6[6]}

As Lutheran preachers, of course, we wish to see the preaching in our sermons shine with such an especially glorious light, but not in order to dazzle others with our homiletical prowess and eloquence, but in order to show forth the Light of the World Who scatters the darkness of sin and death, and in Whom is Life—the Light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Essential to such homiletical Light shining is that such preaching be solidly grounded in right doctrine—doctrine always must undergird any good preaching—and specifically the doctrinal distinction of Law and Gospel. So, any discussion of sound preaching must first enquire into what this distinction is. Far from any of the many false distinctions, such as that one is peculiar to one Testament and one to another—that the Old Testament is all Law and New, all Gospel—both, of course, are in each Testament; or that only one is necessary and the other is not—BOTH are necessary components of the Christian faith; or that the Law is not for Christians and the Gospel is—Christians need BOTH Law and

^{2[2]}An observation concerning this thesis made by John Pless, ‘*Handling the Word of Truth*,’ p. 111

^{3[3]}Walther, “Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel,” p. 403

^{4[4]}Walther, p. 403

^{5[5]}FC, VI, Ep. 2

^{6[6]}FC, VI, SD, 2

Gospel preached to them; far from any of these false distinctions—and far more than any of the real differences between the two—for instance, how they are revealed to us—the Law is written in our hearts, the Gospel can only be known by revelation; that the Law tells us what we are to do, the Gospel what God does for us; that the Law holds out conditional promises—contingent upon it being perfectly followed—the Gospel promises are given freely unconditionally; the Law threatens us with death and hell with no escape, and the Gospel has no threats whatsoever; the Law causes us to be more unwilling to keep it, while the Gospel puts into us a heart willing to follow the Law; the Law is to be preached to secure sinners, and the Gospel to alarmed sinners—far more than any of these real differences between Law and Gospel—by which they are to be distinguished from each other—is the ONE central and crucial difference—and any of these other differences will only make sense in light of this, and all preaching will be a bungled mess and dangerous confusion without this central distinction—and that is that only the proclamation of the Gospel is Christ’s ‘proper work.’—the essential work of the church, while the proclamation of the Law is NOT—it is only an ‘alien’ work which is done only in the ultimate service of the Gospel. In the use of His law, God kills and damns the sinner—but He never does so as His ultimate objective; as Paul Althaus observes, “in doing so, [God] is always aiming at His proper work,”^{7[7]} which is, to give life, forgiveness, and salvation. Indeed, there is a crucial difference between God and Satan in the ways by which they use the Law. As does God, the devil also uses God’s Law to kill and damn—but he does so always as his ‘proper work’—it is his ultimate objective to do such things toward man. For God, however, “this alien work is only a means through which He accomplishes something else,”^{8[8]} namely, the ‘proper work’ of the Gospel.

There are many within Christendom who would vigorously disagree with this. Karl Barth, for example, after accurately describing the Lutheran position that:

“it is only for the sake of understanding the Gospel that the Law has any place in revelation. One might go so far as to say that this is an over-emphasis, made with the kind of impetuous wilfulness which is at once the secret and danger of Lutheran teaching in more than one place—and over-emphasis which cannot be substantiated either by facts or by the Biblical testimony to the facts. . . the Law takes its place alongside the Gospel (without in any way detracting from the latter as Gospel), on the same footing and as a part of the selfsame eternal treasure. The demand for repentance stands on the same level with absolution, sanctification with justification, harmonizing the same act of revelation and reconciliation. . . .and as much as one may respect and admire Luther, we would do better not to go along with him in the theological ingenuity which he manifests here.”^{9[9]}

Whom Barth really DOES respect and admire (at least more than Luther) is John Calvin, who says that “when mention is made of the whole law, the Gospel differs from it only with respect to a clear manifestation,” and indeed, “the Gospel has not succeeded the whole law, so as to introduce a different way of salvation, but rather to conform and ratify the promises of the Law.”^{10[10]} For Calvin, Law and Gospel are, as Sasse observes, “two stages of revelation, each

^{7[7]}Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, p. 168

^{8[8]}Althaus, p. 168

^{9[9]}Karl Barth, *Christian Dogmatics*, I, 1, p. 326

^{10[10]}Calvin, *Institutes*, II, 9, 4

complimenting the other.”^{11[11]} What this means is that for both Calvin and Barth, BOTH Law and Gospel are real ‘proper works’ of Christ and the Church, essential things by which the church is built up and sustained and by which is faith created—two realities which work with and alongside each other in order to do so.

Unfortunately, views much like this can be found even within contemporary Missouri Synod Lutheran (and also LCC?) circles. For instance, in a popular book printed by Concordia Publishing House about 15 years ago, called, *The Goal of the Gospel*, authors Philip Bickel and Robert Nordlie advocate a paradigm of preaching which they called “Law-Gospel-Law-Gospel” (indeed they even go as far as to say that the traditional Lutheran “Law-Gospel” paradigm was incomplete!)^{12[12]} In this paradigm, the Law is first preached to condemn sin, the Gospel then to forgive, but then the Law is preached again to inform the Christian how he should live, and then the Gospel again to motivate him to do it. Within this paradigm are enormous confusions of Law and Gospel. As Dr. Edward Kettner incisively notes,

“these attempts to preach the ‘goal of the Gospel’ are symptoms of lack of faith. These exhortations in reality are no different than the arguments that Rome used against the Reformation; namely, that if you tell people their salvation is free and they have to do nothing to gain heaven because it is a free gift, the people in turn will do nothing, but will take their salvation for granted. . . .the problem is not that the Gospel is being preached unconditionally, the problem is that the Gospel is being preached to those who have not been broken by the law. The Gospel, in other words, is being preached to the impenitent, to those who in fact need to hear the Law.”^{13[13]}

In Bickel and Nordlie’s framework, there is the assumption that the Gospel cannot be left alone as ‘proper work’—it cannot by itself bring about renewal of the Christian’s life—but rather, must be supplemented by the Law as another ‘proper work.’ When the Gospel is preached for the purpose and goal of ‘motivating good works’—as it is in Bickel and Nordlie’s ‘second use’ within their framework—they are using the term ‘Gospel’ in a legalistic way—indeed, the Gospel is turned into Law—for that which attempts to “get someone to do something” is by definition Law, rather than Gospel. The Gospel always speaks of only what God does and gives. .Kettner notes that

“the goal of the Gospel is the salvation of the sinner, and good works are properly understood as a fruit or result of the Gospel rather than a goal . . . works are only possible (and indeed, they are inevitable), because the goal has been reached.”^{14[14]}

Bickel and Nordlie’s framework, therefore, is “Law-Gospel-Law-Law”—and one wonders how sound—indeed, how proper and primary—the Gospel is in such a framework. The Gospel is changed into Law, and the Law is preached in a way in which it is assumed can merely ‘instruct’

^{11[11]}Herman Sasse, *Here We Stand*, p. 128

^{12[12]}Bickel and Nordlie, p. 111

^{13[13]}Edward Kettner, “*The ‘Third Use of the Law’ and the Homiletical Task*,” *Lutheran Theological Journal*, VII:1&2, Fall/Winter 1994, Spring/Summer 1995, p. 72-3.

^{14[14]}Kettner, p. 72

instead of condemn. Bickel and Nordlie give the Law a clear ‘proper’ role in the essential proclamation of the church—and to do so is the essence of all legalism (and one must never forget that the central problem of all legalism is not that there is too much law, but rather not enough of it; it is not being preached in its full strength to condemn, but only lightly in order to instruct, with the assumption that someone can profitably and successfully follow it. The solution to legalism is more Law!)

What does it mean when one preaches assuming the Law to have such a ‘proper work?’ First, how does it affect the understanding of faith? The implications of Calvin’s ideas of ‘balancing out’ Law and Gospel for faith are fully developed and put in dogmatic form by the Westminster Confession of Faith (1647) where faith is defined as “first, the acceptance as true of whatsoever is revealed in the word, second, a conduct which conforms with each particular passage thereof, and yielding obedience to the commands, trembling at the threatenings, and embracing the promises of God.” Herman Sasse notes:

When the Gospel is no longer understood exclusively as the gracious promise of the forgiveness of sins for Christ’s sake, the concept of faith is altered. No longer is faith simply the response of man to the promise, his trust in the pledge of divine mercy; it is at the same time a response to the commandment, which accompanies the promise in the Gospel. Thus the idea of faith approaches the idea of obedience.^{15[15]}

In other words, ‘faith’ by which alone one is saved and justified, does not here grasp a completed work of God, but rather necessarily encompasses within it a necessary work of man—that he obey the Law’s commands. In this way, the denial of ‘faith alone’ compromises ‘grace alone,’ for, as St. Paul writes in Romans 11:6, “if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.” When the Law, alongside of the Gospel, is another ‘proper work,’ rather than an ‘alien work,’ then the role of Christ Himself in justification is not merely what He has done for you, which is received by faith, but rather also what He, as the chief interpreter of the Law, says you must do, with He Himself as the chief exemplar of how that is to be done—in other words, essential to the church’s ‘proper work’ is “WWJD”—What Would Jesus Do?

This has further implications for the doctrine of the church. The church is defined not as the congregation of those who have faith in the promise, with the marks of those who have such unseen faith being the outward Word of the Holy Gospel and Holy Sacraments which produce such faith and sustains it, which, in turn, is known only by faith—but rather, the church is defined as the congregation of believers and obeyers, and, of course, ‘obedience,’ is something which is expected to be seen. The church is ‘marked’ not by where one sees Gospel and Sacrament, where Christ is with His promise, but rather by casting one’s eyes to the individual believer where obedience can be seen to be going on—and perhaps even to the proclamation of the Law which is supposed to exhort such obedience. That’s where the church is. But, this becomes quite complicated, because of course, the Law is also written in man’s heart, and can therefore be found spoken of quite well outside the church by noble and upright pagans. Is the church there, also?

What consequences does all of this have for preaching? Quite simply, If the law is what Calvin understands it to be—a ‘proper work,’—then it is the Law also which builds up and sustains the

^{15[15]}Sasse, p. 130

Church, and it is the goal for and reason of the Church's preaching to use the Law alongside of the Gospel to build up and sustain the church. Therefore, the task of preaching is not yet complete simply when the Gospel has been preached, and sinners brought to faith in Christ; the Law, also, must be preached to make such believers into obedient believers. The Law has its own independent end and purpose—it is preached not merely for the purpose of preparing one for the Gospel (indeed, rather, the Gospel, in some sense, is preached in order to prepare one for the preaching of the Law), but rather to complete what the Gospel has left still undone.

For the Lutheran, the SOLE ultimate content and purpose for all sermons—the proper focus for all preaching—is the 'proper work' of the Gospel, the free giving out of the Lord's forgiveness and gifts. No matter what the text, no matter what article of faith is addressed, it is always handled in such a way that the Gospel is what is focused upon in the text, and the Gospel is proclaimed as the heart, core and substance of that article of faith. Consider, for example, if on a certain Sunday one has a pericope concerning the topic of prayer. The temptation might be to preach a description of "what prayer is"—or upon "seven Biblical principles for praying"—or, "how to make your prayers effective." Already with such a thing, one is preaching Law—the way one is to pray, and what one is to do in one's praying. But, actually, it isn't law at all, for the Law does not merely and primarily instruct what we are to do, but chiefly, it is the mirror by which we are shown our sin—that we do NOT pray as we should be praying. In fact, the Law which needs to be preached here is to condemn the sinful presumption that all that it takes are some 'how to's' for us to pray rightly to God. To say such a thing IS sin, because it does not take seriously that we can only pray to "Our Father" when we are first His children, and because He has first made us so by His grace. It does not take seriously that we are by nature sinful, and all of OUR 'how to's' for making ourselves into successful 'prayer warriors' are shot through with self-centred hypocrisy and damning self-righteousness. So, a sermon on prayer must first say that in our sin, we cannot pray at all because our god is an idol, and all prayers coming out of our mouth from our sinful hearts is idolatry and worship to a false god, rather than to the true heavenly Father—and Father will not eavesdrop on prayer not directed to Him, nor will it be heard by Him. Only Jesus can pray rightly, because only He is, properly speaking, the Son of the Father. But THEN, in the Gospel, Christ freely shares the status of His sonship with us, so that God "tenderly invites us to believe that He IS our true Father and that we ARE his dear children, so that with boldness and confidence we MAY ask Him as dear children ask their dear Father," and then "be certain that these petitions are pleasing to Him, sinners though we are, for He Himself has commanded us to pray and has promised to hear us—yea, yea, it shall be so." In this way, everything which would be preached about prayer is set within the structure and matrix of proclamation of Law and Gospel, contrition and repentance and faith, for only from faith can true prayer arise. As Roger Humann notes, "It is entirely appropriate and necessary to preach sermons with respect to the Christian life," but "Only the Gospel can apply the needed healing, and bring to bear on the basic problem the needed changing power. Therefore, although we may address life problems in preaching, there can be, properly speaking, only a 'faith goal.'^{16[16]} Our words to God begin first with His Gospel words to us, grow out from them and confess them.

All other distinctions which might be expressed between Law and Gospel are really only elaborations of this one basic distinction—Law and Gospel, as proper and alien work, respectively—and one knows that one has grasped any of the distinctions correctly and fully when Gospel is kept 'proper,' and Law 'alien.'

^{16[16]}Roger J. Humann, "Four Theses and Some Auxiliary Statements on Preaching to the Christian" *Lutheran Theological Review*: I;2 (1989): p. 56.

What does the Law do which distinguishes it from the Gospel? We may answer that question by looking at the different ways in which the Law affects both Old Man and New Man, and how they both respond to it, and then also, how the Gospel affects both Old Man and New Man, and how each responds to it.

First, what happens when the Law is preached to sinful Old Man–Peccator? The first response from Peccator is that he will attempt to take the Law into his own hands, snatching away from God His own Law, in order to use it for his own selfish purposes, and for his own sinful agenda. What he uses it for is to justify himself. As Luther writes in the Smalcald Articles, Peccator “becomes blind and presumptuous, imagining that he can and does keep the law by his own powers.”^{17[17]} But, he can ONLY do this by misunderstanding the law, altering it, and changing its demands and accommodating them to their own capacity by eliminations or additions. This is done, above all, by severing each of the commandments from the First Commandment, failing to see that the essence of each of the commandments is not just the outward performance of what it commands–nor even that it must be done from heart–but that what is done must grow out from fear, love and trust in God. In fact, each of the commandments are merely commentaries on how one, “has no other Gods,” and “fears, loves and trusts” Him. It is ONLY such fear, love and trust in God from which there will be the keeping of the commandments; the First Commandment is the Life and essence of all of the others. Furthermore, not only are each of the commandments specific ways in which one acts out the first commandment–how one lives out fear, love and trust in God–but also each of the commandments are ways in which the preacher can ‘get a handle on’ slippery and elusive Peccator who is quite good at hiding his idolatry and escaping detection from the Law which seeks to condemn him. The law makes specific demands–and not only will the pastor find Luther’s explanations of the Commandments in the Catechism of great use for preaching specific Law, but also of equally great use for the preacher demonstrating that the law’s specific demands are made to specific people in specific places in their life is the Catechism’s Third Section, “the Table of Duties.”^{18[18]} Peccator attempts to act out commandments apart from the First, and to give the outward impression of fulfilling them, and to claim something from God, much like jiggling about a skeleton, and saying, “he must be alive–he can dance,” but in that very act shows forth for all to see how dead the skeleton really is.

When Peccator attempts to use the law to hide over his sin with a Pharisaic fig leaf of self righteousness, and to justify himself–he bears witness for all to see of his own breaking of the first commandment, and does so in three ways. First, he uses the Law ‘unlawfully,’ for the law was not given for one to justify himself. Secondly, he robs the Law from God and uses it for his own self-centred purposes, for the Law is God’s for Him to use, and God always uses the Law for selfless purposes–pro nobis–to lead one to the Gospel. Thirdly, Peccator changes the Law by making additions or negations to it. He negates it by watering it down into some emasculated, light, fluffy Law which only demands as much as he is able to fulfill and keep–which he may boast about. Or, as with the Pharisee, there is added to the Law various humanly-devised traditions not commanded by God–which are then held to impress God with supposed extra sanctity, earnestness, civil righteousness and upstanding middle-class decency, natural religion, or, as the Apology lists, “celibacy, fasting, alms, rosaries, pilgrimages,” all where “wretched

^{17[17]}SA, III, 2, 3

^{18[18]}It is highly significant that in his ‘model confession’ within the Catechism’s Fifth Chief Part, ‘Confession,’ Luther leads one to see his sin by means of how he has failed in his vocation.

human traditions are regarded as better than the works commanded by God.” (Ap. XII, 145). And lastly, Peccator changes God Himself, by turning Him from a gracious Father, Who freely gives His gifts, to a legalistic policemen, who can be brown-nosed, bought off, and appeased by our works of the Law—which is, of course, breaking the First Commandment.

Therefore, in the very act of trying to follow the Law, Peccator ends up sinning ever more against it—and this brings us to the second effect of the Law on Peccator. As St. Paul writes, it “increases the trespass,” (Rom. 5:20) and causes one to hate God. The Law says we should love God, but it causes us to hate Him. “Those who hate the Law because it forbids what they desire to do and commands what they are unwilling to do, are made worse thereby. Accordingly, in so far as they are not restrained by punishment, they act against the law even more than before.”^{19[19]} And what is more, Peccator will always respond in such a way—he will always want to do so—hence the bondage of the will. Therefore, one cannot get people to do what they should be doing by preaching to them about what they should be doing, nor by urging them that they should be doing it. While such preaching MAY, indeed, bring about certain external improvements in people’s behaviour, it will bring them about ONLY from a heart made more sinfully self-centred.

And ultimately, Peccator attempts to kill the God Who gives such a Law, in order to be free from it—and free from Him. But the ultimate effect of the Law is quite the opposite, the Law kills Peccator. It strips away his fig leaves, reveals Peccator for all that he is, puts him to death, and damns him. And in this work of the Law, God is not standing idly by watching it happen from afar—it is not the devil’s work here, for it is not the devil’s Law—it is God’s Law, and by His own design He is using His Law relentlessly to hound down Peccator with His threat of death, and in His Law, God says, “you are my enemy—you can run, but you cannot hide from Me,” and like the Terminator, He will not stop until He has caught you and executed you.

No wonder, then, the Law, when it is really taken seriously brings total despair and terror. The Law makes one “terror-stricken and humbled.” One becomes “despondent and despairing, anxiously desires help, but does not know where to find it.”^{20[20]} “When a conscience is properly aware of its sin and misery, all joking, all playful thoughts vanish and the situation becomes one of utmost gravity; here, no heart and conscience can be pacified or appeased.”^{21[21]} And this despair is also, in itself, sin, for it is not fully trusting in God.

And if that wasn’t bad enough, the response of Peccator to the Gospel is even worse; he ignores it, mocks it, desecrates it, and will never do otherwise, for he ‘cannot by His own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ His Lord or come to Him.’”

Now, if the Law can ONLY condemn, kill and damn Peccator, and if Peccator will only reject the Gospel, and Peccator cannot ever be reformed, then what hope IS there, since all are all born as Peccators? The solution is that the Gospel declares Peccator to be what he is not—forgiven and justified—and from this Life-giving and forgiving word of the Gospel there is created in the sinner a new heart, called Justus. And indeed, it is a new creation. The New man is NOT built

^{19[19]}SA, III, 2, 2

^{20[20]}SA, III, 2, 4

^{21[21]}Ap, IV, 20

out of the building blocks of anything within Peccator; Peccator has contributed nothing towards what Justus is—but it is entirely a new creation in Jesus Christ. When Jesus says to Nicodemus that in order to enter the kingdom of God he must be “born again,” he was saying that he needed more than mere reform of the life he was born into—he needed, rather, a new life—the life he was born into was beyond repair already when he was born (indeed nine months before this!) The Law puts Peccator to death, but does so in the death of Jesus Christ, upon whom all the sin of Peccator has been put, so that Peccator dies in Him. And in His resurrection, there is raised to life—breathed into the one who before was only Peccator—something new, the New Life—Justus. What has brought forth Justus? Only the Gospel—the power of God to salvation.

Even more important than keeping the Law distinct from the Gospel, so that it CAN produce true contrition, is keeping the Gospel distinct from Law, so that it can create true faith. Blurring such a distinction is done whenever the Gospel is expressed as something which calls for our co-operation or response in order to ‘complete’ it or in order for it to do what it says it will do. When, for instance, the Gospel is expressed as a mere ‘potential’ gift of forgiveness which God is ready to give, but which He will only do when we ‘respond’ to Him in the right way by our faith or decision, then the Gospel is being muddled with Law. The complete reconciliation of the world to God by the atoning death of Christ has not quite finished the job, and must be supplemented, completed and put into effect by the work of our response which we are called to make—a work, not of Christ, but of the Law. The preaching of the Gospel, here, is therefore not a freely given, unconditional promise of absolution, all which the Lord does, but rather a conditional promise—conditional upon the hearer responding in the right way. Therefore, the goal of such preaching is to exhort one to do so. And if that is what needs to be done, one had better go all out and do it with all the zeal which one can muster—and so one finds those such as Charles Finney, with his ‘New Measures,’ and revivalistic techniques, supported enthusiastically (no pun intended!) by so-called ‘Lutherans’ of his day such as Samuel Simon Schmucker and Benjamin Kurtz. Their spiritual descendants can be found among today’s television evangelists and megachurch preachers who have refined ways of manipulating the emotions and will in order to lead people to the proper response of a heartfelt decision to offer one’s heart to Jesus in prayer. And, unfortunately, one also sees this in many ways within Lutheran—indeed Missouri Synod (perhaps also LCC?)—circles also—hence, the temptation can often be found among those in Lutheran circles today to preach and fashion ‘contemporary’ worship services for the purpose of attempting to pull out from the worshiper what they would like to see in him—and that is the way of the Law. Proper preaching, worship, and liturgy is for the purpose of faithfully conveying Word and Sacrament to the hearer (and then stepping out of its way so that it can do its job!) from which will come faith, and the fruits of faith—that is the way of the Gospel.

Secondly, Walther observes in Thesis 14 that the Gospel is not being kept distinct from the Law when faith “is required as a condition of justification and salvation, as if a person were righteous in the sight of God and saved, not only by his faith, but on account of his faith,”^{22[22]}—another variation of the need for a ‘proper response.’ The Lutheran preacher must always be careful about the way that he preaches about ‘faith.’ On the one hand, against the false idea that one is saved by a mere head knowledge of an ‘inert acceptance of truth’ (which the Confessions note even the devil has!) one must vigorously emphasize that ‘faith’ is required. What distinguishes ‘faith’ from such ‘head knowledge’ is that while the latter speaks of and focuses upon something within and about man (what he knows—which puffs up!), the former takes away all boasting by

^{22[22]}Walther, p. 3, 268

focusing upon something outside of man—for while faith is a trust of the heart, it is a trust which looks outwards towards the promises and gifts given, and which confesses a helplessness which must trust the One giving the Promise and the gift. On the other hand, the pastor must avoid appealing to faith as a cause of salvation—that one little thing left for the hearer to muster up his will to do in order to be saved. Faith is a creation of the Gospel, and only receives, and does not make true what it believes, but rather says ‘amen’ to what comes to it as complete and true already. In fact, it may sometimes be necessary, in order for saving faith to be created and sustained in a hearer’s heart, for a preacher NOT to mention faith at all, but only the gifts upon which faith trusts and which will give such faith life. When preaching about faith, one must always focus upon the Gift—the object of faith, and not on the faith itself. Faith is only spoken of (or not spoken of!) in order to keep the focus upon the promise upon which faith believes.

And finally, the Gospel is not kept distinct from the Law when one believes that one must muster within one’s self some sufficient level of contrition as a necessary preparation for the work of the Gospel to begin. The belief in such ‘contritionism’ in medieval Romanism—that it is being really sorry enough that will move God to forgive (and if not that, then at least ‘attrition’—being at least sorry that you are not as sorry as you ought to be)—was severely condemned by the Lutheran Confessions. Walther, however, notes that even in his own day it ‘not infrequently happens that preachers who claim to be true Lutherans mingle Law and Gospel by the way they describe contrition—and do so in two ways—by either saying too little or by saying too much about contrition.’^{23[23]} First, one may say too little by ‘soft-peddling’ the Law—constantly qualifying it in order to protect the hearer from the terrors of contrition (For instance, saying to those who feel sorely contrite over their sins such things as “Don’t worry about it” “it’s/you’re not that bad,” “It’s O.K.” “I know you meant well”) Or, one may say too much by requiring a certain earnestness in the contrition—that he cannot be forgiven unless he really, really does feel contrite enough.

Although, of course, without true contrition, there can be no conversion and faith, such contrition does not make the heart more ‘convertible.’ Contrition is not like crying, apologizing, feeling bad and remorseful in front of the policeman who has just stopped you for speeding in order to make him feel sorry enough for you that he will not give you the ticket and fine. First of all, your sins are not comparable to speeding, but rather, to first degree murder, and the policemen will not let murderers go no matter how sorry they feel about it. Secondly, such behaviour is a sign of false contrition, since contrition is, by definition, the terrible recognition that one can never do anything to escape the judgment of God and agreeing with him that he is “justified when he judges.” (Psalm 51:4) Any so-called earnest contrition which is believed to be able to get one out of one’s judgment from God is not really contrition—in fact, it is the sin of a still secure sinner. And finally, as Walther notes,

“The contrition which precedes faith is nothing but suffering on the part of man. It consists of anguish, pain, torment, a feeling of being crushed; all of which God has wrought in man by the hammer of the Law. It is not an anguish which man has produced in Himself, for he would gladly be rid of it, but cannot, because God has come down on him with the law; and he sees no way to escape from the ordeal. If a person sits down to meditate with a view to producing

^{23[23]}Walther, p. 250

contrition in Himself, he will never gain his object that way. He cannot produce contrition. Those who think they can are miserable hypocrites.^{24[24]}

When proclaiming the Law to produce contrition, it is not the task of the Lutheran preacher to wrestle or cajole the hearer into feeling a certain way—making him sufficiently ‘bad enough’ (so that he can then at least feel good about feeling sufficiently bad enough!), or appealing to his will to do something to that end. Rather, he damns even this attempt to ‘feel contrite’ as Pharisaic hypocrisy—and damns everything else about him, by simply clearly preaching the Law to him, and letting this alone produce contrition. Indeed, Walther can even say that one can have true contrition “even if he does not feel it—in fact, even if he is “unaware of it”—if there is a “desire to come to Jesus.”^{25[25]} When, for example, a hearer of the Law might say that “he does not feel that the Law condemns him,”—the pastor is not then to try to wrestle his feelings into feeling as bad and condemned as he should—this focuses things entirely too much on murky feelings and subjectivity. Rather, the pastor is simply to say something like, “Your feelings are telling you a damned lie—God says to you in His law that you ARE condemned—see how sinful you are that your feelings feel and say something to you so contrary to what God says—and you believe them? Repent!”

And furthermore, at the instance that the Law has taken effect to produce contrition, the pastor must NOT go on with more Law in order to try to produce more or deeper contrition, but rather, must go on immediately with the comfort of the gospel. When there is contrition, the Law’s work is over. Walther mentions that:

“When you preach, do not be stingy with the Gospel; bring its consolations to all, even to the greatest sinners. When they are terrified by the wrath of God and hell, they are fully prepared to receive the Gospel. True, thus goes against our reason; we think it strange that such knaves are to be comforted immediately; we imagine they ought to be made to suffer much greater agony in their conscience. Fanatics adopt that method in dealing with alarmed sinners; but a genuine Bible theologian resolves to preach the Gospel and faith in Jesus Christ to a person whom God has prepared for such preaching of the law.”

As the Lutheran preacher is not to preach generic, but rather specific Law, so also he is not to preach generic, but rather specific Gospel. The Absolution formula which has the pastor speaking “I forgive YOU all your sins” endeavors to do just that—especially in the context of Private Confession and Absolution. Also, extensive use should be made in preaching of all of the many metaphors used by the Scriptures in expressing the Gospel—resurrection from death, adoption to sonship, payment of a debt, finding the lost, etc. And finally, when preaching on texts which speak of what the Law and the Commandments says one is to do, one can use them not only to preach the Law that we do NOT keep them, but also preach the Gospel that Christ in His active obedience DOES keep them perfectly—and does so for us and for our salvation, and that it is being clothed in THIS perfect obedience which we are given in the Gospel!

From the preaching of the Law, in contrition, Peccator is given the death blow, and from the Gospel, there is created and resurrected the New Life, called Justus. We have heard how Peccator responds to the preaching of the Gospel—but how does Justus respond? In a word, he

^{24[24]}Walther, p. 250.

^{25[25]}Walther, p. 251.

does so with faith! Upon hearing the Gospel, Justus loves and trusts its Word of promise, and in the One who made them, and there also flows forth praise, thanksgiving, bold and confident prayer and the fruits of the Spirit from a free and merry spirit.

Furthermore, Justus always listens only to what the Word of God says about the Gospel, and not to what subjective feelings of the Christian may say about it when he hears it—and it is to this objective word of such Gospel upon which the preacher must always focus everything. When, for example, one who hears a sermon with clear Gospel preached in it responds with something like “I just don’t feel forgiven,” or “It didn’t uplift me,” the preacher should not respond to him with trying to make him feel forgiven or uplifted—this, again, focuses things far too much on the quagmire of subjectivity. Rather, the pastor should say something like, “Your feelings are telling you a damn lie!—the Gospel DOES forgive you—the Lord promises that it does—the Gospel DOES uplift you, whether you feel it or not, for it lifts you up out of the slimy pit of sin and death and gives you Life and forgiveness. It’s the truth, believe it, and if your feelings say something different, tell them to shut up!”

But how does Justus respond to the Law—or should the Law even be preached to Justus? There were some in Luther’s time, such as [Johannes] Agricola and the antinomians, who believed that it should not. For them, true repentance is not the result of the Law, but comes only from the sweetness of the Gospel. If, indeed, one is freed from the Law through the Gospel, what place can it have within the life of a Christian if one is to keep the freedom of the Gospel?

First, it must be recognized that wherever there is sin, there will also always necessarily be the Law of God around to condemn it. As Gerhard Forde notes, all antinomianism is ‘fake theology,’ since one cannot remove the Law until one has removed sin and death. Indeed, even if one removes preaching of the Law from the ears of the Christian, it will still be speaking to him from his heart, since, after all, the Law is written there—and it is God speaking! Therefore, attempts to remove the Law will succeed only in relocating it; since everything is either Law or Gospel—and there is no other third category or neutral thing between them—removing the Law will only result in inserting it in the only place left—in the Gospel! Hence, antinomianism results in a legalization of the Gospel, and a confusion of Law and Gospel.^{26[26]}

What then is the place of the Law in the life of the Christian? The confessors of the Formula of Concord speak to this matter by means of a number of careful distinctions, each which must be kept in order to prevent one from slipping into either the extremes of legalism or antinomianism. The first of these distinctions is that every Christian is BOTH Justus and Peccator, and every part of the Christian is both thoroughly and completely Peccator as well as Justus, without one ever existing by itself free of the other. Therefore, the Christian is entirely a sinner so that everything in him and everything he does is a sin. Conversely, Justus involves the whole Christian together so that he is entirely justified and so that everything he does, though utterly sinful, is accounted righteous for Christ’s sake. Furthermore, Justus and Peccator do not exist in the person of the Christian in a ‘Nestorian’ way, so that a Christian might have Justus act on one occasion and Peccator on another. There is a ‘perichoresis’ between the two, so that in any act of the Christian they remain inseparable until God Himself separates the two at the resurrection.^{27[27]} There is a Chalcedonian distinction to be kept between the two, without confusion, without change, and

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^{27[27]}FC, Ep. I. 10; p. 467

until the resurrection, without division, without separation. Nevertheless, mindful of such a careful Chalcedonian balance, one must not fall into some anthropological eutychianism where the two are no longer distinguished. Justus and Peccator are two very real realities in the Christian, though absolutely distinct and at odds with each other. Always within each Christian, in fact, “a conflict between the spirit and flesh continues.”^{28[28]}

The Formula, therefore, warns against describing the Christian’s growth in the life of sanctification in any way which implies a truce which lessens the conflict between Peccator and Justus. Such an idea would envision Peccator in some sense to be successfully won over, reformed, or made more favourably disposed toward the Law of God and therefore, to be made, even if ever so slightly, more like Justus. Against such a blurring of the distinction between Justus and Peccator, the Formula states that Peccator can never be reformed in any way, but rather, can only be put to death. The Christian therefore, is spiritually sick when he seeks ‘wholeness,’ ‘inner harmony,’ and peace within him between Peccator and Justus, and his spiritual life is carrying on in the healthy way that it should when he is totally broken apart within in Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde fashion, with his two ‘selves,’ Peccator and Justus, battling it out to the death within him.

Such distinction, however, between Peccator and Justus, remain articles of faith hidden to philosophical, psychological or common sense observations of outward human traits. It is therefore impossible to identify any of the Christian’s observable external or internal powers, aptitudes, or good works as only Justus, not also tied up with Peccator. Every ‘good work’ from the Justus which the Christian does he does also with all that is Peccator within him producing counterfeit works exactly identical to those of Justus (indeed, they are both together the very same acts, but those from Peccator having damnably selfish motives.) While one can, by faith, distinguish the works of Justus and Peccator, one cannot do so simply by observing the Christian, for then an observed part of the Christian is put beyond the reach and condemnation of the Law.

This distinction has enormous practical implications for pastoral work and for preaching. First, it humbles one from becoming self-righteous towards non-Christians. Christians are just as evil and are no better than pagan non-Christians. Everything done by the Christian is totally evil, even if is at the same time forgiven. Secondly, the line between good and evil does not run outside the Christian—between him and the non-Christian—but rather runs through each Christian. Thirdly, this, in turn, teaches the Christian a theology of the cross. Battles only take place at the point where the armies are facing and clashing with each other. Each Christian must expect himself to be the arena and battleground for the stupendous battle between God and Satan and must expect suffering, trials, crosses and temptation in the heat of such battle. If one wants relief from all of this before his death, he can only do so by apostasy from the Christian faith. And finally, one sees, therefore, why this first distinction is so critical—it is the only thing which can make sense of the fact that Justus does not sin though the Christian does, and the Christian sinner nevertheless, is free from the Law, though he does not live without it. This paradox leads us to a second distinction.

^{28[28]}FC, Sd, VI, 18, p. 567

Proceeding naturally from the distinction between ‘Christian’ and ‘Justus’ is the further distinction between two assertions, “truly believing Christians have been freed and liberated from the curse of the law” and “they should exercise themselves in the Law of the Lord.”^{29[29]}

The question, of course, follows, how is it possible for a Christian to exercise himself in the Law which always accuses him without himself being under its curse?

The paradox is resolved in the Formula precisely by viewing the second distinction within the framework of the first. As there is within each Christian the distinction between Justus and Peccator, so the Law must not be understood to impact the Christian in one undifferentiated way. Rather, there must be a distinction made between two different ways in which the Law makes an impact upon Justus and Peccator. We may explore further what this distinction is by first pointing out what it is not. Justus and Peccator do not receive different impacts of the Law because the Law is somehow different in each case as if the Law comes to Peccator condemning but to Justus without condemnation, but only with instruction. The Law always accuses, *Lex semper accusa*, and it is impossible for it to speak without also accusing, cursing, damning everything which is sin. Therefore, the Formula cannot envision the ‘Third Use of the Law’ in such a way that it only instructs without accusing. Since, as noted before, everything which each Christian does is sin, the Law which instructs him what he is to do also always damns him for not doing so. It follows that one cannot say that the Christian is free from the threats of the law simply because he is a Christian, so that the Law touches him differently (without its threats) from how it would an unbeliever. Indeed, the Formula notes that “for penitent and impenitent, for regenerated and unregenerate, the Law is and always remains one and the same Law, namely the unchangeable will of God.”^{30[30]}

In order to explain the different ways in which the Law touches Peccator and Justus, the Formula refers not to anything about the Law, nor to anything regarding the Christian, but rather to Christ. Justus doesn’t receive the fury of the Law’s condemnation not because of something within him less deserving of it than what one finds in Peccator, but because Christ stands in front of him and receives it in his stead. Justus, therefore, is reckoned free from the curse of the Law only because of Christ. However, though free from the Law’s curse, it does not follow that Justus or the Christian is free from the Law altogether. The Formula notes that “our first parents even before the fall didn’t live without the law”—indeed, in a sinless state, they couldn’t be without the Law since it was “written in their hearts when they were created in the image of God.”^{31[31]} In this way, Justus lives with the Law and daily exercises himself in it, and does so without the Law’s curse because he does it with a free and merry spirit.^{32[32]} Therefore, though the Law speaks even to Justus with all of its imperatives, Justus receives such imperatives, because of his free and merry spirit, as indicatives. The Law works towards Justus as does the Law of gravity toward a falling object, or, as “the sun, the moon, and all the stars of heaven regularly run their courses according to their order which God instituted for them once and for all, spontaneously

^{29[29]}FC, SD, VI, 4, p. 564

^{30[30]}FC, Ep., VI, 2

^{31[31]}FC, Sd, VI, 2

^{32[32]}FC, SD, VI, 17

and unhindered.”^{33[33]} Thus, being freed from the Law’s curse does not free one FROM, but rather FOR its exercise. For the Formula, the second distinction was necessary because Justus is made free of the curse of the Law not in order to do anything it wants to call “good works”—or even none at all—but only precisely and exactly the good works only as the Law defines and describes them, and this freely and without coercion.

Furthermore, this second distinction is necessary to make within the framework of the first because it is only Justus and not also Peccator within each Christian to which the second distinction has something to say. Only Justus can be free from the Law, and therefore, exercise himself in it. Because the Law condemns Peccator mercilessly, he cannot ever be free from it. Everything in Peccator’s existence is basically an anxious and endless fleeing from the light of the Law. With such a heavy pre-occupation with the Law always hovering over him, Peccator cannot be free from it in the way of Justus, whose compliance with the Law flows from him so naturally, freely, and without selfish calculation. Therefore, since the Law recognizes as good only that which is found already in perfect compliance with it, and instantly executes everything falling short from it, Peccator is incapable of following the law.

This brings us to a third distinction. To be distinguished from the false ‘good works’ of Peccator called ‘works of the Law’ are Justus’ genuine ‘fruits of the Spirit.’ The ‘works of the Law’ are those actions which are coerced from Peccator by ‘instruction, admonition, urging, and threatening of the Law’ and the “club of punishments and miseries.”^{34[34]} The Law’s motivations appeal to the Peccator’s innate self-preoccupation over what he may get out of good works, so that the good work itself is entirely self-serving and inward looking. Therefore, the only way that the Law can successfully get an external ‘good work’ done within Peccator is by stirring up his innate self-centredness, sin, idolatry, and unbelief! Everything which Peccator does is thus done out of fear, as a slave to a taskmaster, whom he does not love and trust above all things. Justus, however, does, in fact, love and trust God above all things and the consequences of this are enormous and colour his whole life. First, unlike Peccator, Justus’ whole relationship with God is not bound up by what he owes Him, and what ‘goodies’ he might extract from Him. Peccator treats God in the same way as he treats his neighbor—perhaps respectfully and kind externally, but with selfish motivations internally. What is, indeed, conspicuously absent in Peccator’s dealings with God is any reference to his neighbor at all. This is because good works are not, strictly speaking, for them, but rather, for God, and ultimately, Himself. Peccator can discourse at length about good works without at all thinking about his neighbor. However, such a thing in the framework of Justus’ life is impossible for two reasons. First, God so designs Justus’ relationship with Himself to be one of pure reception. Justus comes to God simply to receive His gifts, secondly, God designs the life of Justus so that all his good works are not focused upon God or done for His benefit, but solely for the benefit of his neighbor in love. In this way, both God and the Christian become utterly self-sacrificing in the exercise of good works. Indeed, if Peccator treats God just like his neighbor, Justus does exactly the opposite; he treats his neighbor as if he were God, seeing him and serving him a little Christ, or rather serving Christ in him. Justus recognizes that Christ, incarnate in human nature, has hidden himself in each neighbor, so that he treats him accordingly. Furthermore, he does such good works not with the cold calculation and planning of Peccator, but spontaneously, with a free and merry spirit, as it is

^{33[33]}FC, SD, VI, 4

^{34[34]}FC, SD, VI, 24

according to his nature to do—as with the fruit of a tree. And indeed, Justus, as a creation of the Holy Spirit, does those things that are fruits of the same Spirit.

What constructive role does the preaching of the Law have in building up the life of the Christian? The answer is, none whatsoever. For Justus, the Law acts to describe indicatively what he is fully doing already, while for Peccator, the Law can only extract by coercion a hollow external compliance which is not truly good in any way. One, however, might ask whether the Law should force such external obedience from Peccator, and if so, why it should. The confessions do answer the first question in the affirmative, “The Old Adam” it notes, “MUST be coerced into obedience of Christ.”^{35[35]} But for what purpose? The answer might be found by considering Peccator’s state before God as a criminal, as it were, sentenced to death for capital crimes (we assume in this example that Peccator lives in America, not Canada!), who while awaiting execution in prison, cannot just be let loose in society to do whatever he pleases, perhaps committing more crimes. The law itself locks up such a criminal and coerces a compliance to the law whether he likes it or not. Such ‘compliance’ may even be considered ‘good behaviour’ by which the criminal can earn various rewards WITHIN the prison cell, just as the ‘works which belong to the maintenance of outward discipline and which unbelievers and the unconverted are also able and required to perform . . . even God will reward. . . with temporal blessings in this world.’^{36[36]} However, these works cannot acquit him or rescue him from eventual execution.

But secondly, since no neat division between Justus and Peccator can be made of the Christian by his own observation, Justus’ fruits of the Spirit cannot be done without also Peccator doing the works of the law, and one can only know that there is a distinction between them by considering them from the perspective of a proper distinction of Law and Gospel. Seen from the perspective of the Law, everything a Christian does is utterly sinful, and the Law condemns everything he does, and kills everything he his. From the perspective of the Gospel, however, the Christian’s sinful life is not held against him, and he is freely forgiven. From such forgiveness, the Christian, from “a free and merry spirit,” does for Christ’s sake “what no threat of the Law could ever have wrung from him;”^{37[37]} the Christian is, rather, forgiven of the Peccator within him doing these same works as counterfeit sinful ‘works of the Law.’

The preaching of the Law has a crucial role in the life of the Christian, and therefore in the Lutheran pastor’s preaching to his congregation of believing Christians. “To people who are genuinely believing, truly converted, regenerated, and justified by faith, the preaching of the Law is to be diligently applied.”^{38[38]} The Formula is very clear to point out that this necessity is “on account of their old Adam.”^{39[39]} because this Old Adam “inheres in people’s intellect, will, and in ALL their powers”^{40[40]}—not merely in some of it—this Law must be preached to the whole of

^{35[35]}FC, SD, VI, 24

^{36[36]}FC, SD, IV, 8

^{37[37]}FC, Ep., VI, 7

^{38[38]}FC, Ep., VI, 3

^{39[39]}FC, Ep., VI, 4

^{40[40]}FC, Ep., VI, 4

the Christian life. The purpose of such preaching is to prevent the Old Adam from taking the Christian in its “own self-willed way,”^{41[41]} The Old Adam in its “self-decreed and self-chosen acts of serving God”^{42[42]} always seeks to lead the Christian “to imagine that their works and life are perfectly pure and holy.”^{43[43]} Therefore, the Law must be preached to the Christian in order to reveal to him its true content, and to “light their way”^{44[44]} through its instruction. Such instruction is the “Third Use of the Law” which gives Christians “a definite rule according to which they should pattern and regulate their life.”^{45[45]} The instruction of this third use, seeks to show the ultimate concern for the Law to be to “fear, love, and trust God above all things.” Since this is something which the Christian cannot do perfectly, the same Law which instructs him also always condemns and kills him. “To reprove” says the Formula, “is the real function of the Law”—and this is not gentle reminder, but is equivalent to the Holy Spirit’s work when “He kills” and “brings down to Sheol.”^{46[46]} Therefore, when the Law instructs the Christian according to its Third Use, it cannot do so without also condemning him. The preaching of the Law instructs the Christian what he is to do, but gives him no power to do it, and so immediately puts into effect the operation of its Second Use against him.

However, though having a necessary role in the Christian’s life, it is crucial to note that the preaching of the Law has for the Christian no eternal role. After the resurrection the Christian “will no longer require the preaching of the Law, nor its threats or punishments, just as he will no longer require the Gospel.”^{47[47]} The Law’s preaching is therefore a ‘temporary measure’ which is directed to the temporary and abnormal situation of the existence of sin corrupting God’s perfect creation. Once the abnormality is removed, then the temporary measure of the Law’s preaching is no longer needed. For this reason, even in the Christian’s present life, where the temporary measure of the Law is absolutely needed, such preaching is still only an ‘alien work,’ which has no ultimate independent purpose. Such preaching is always only for the sake of “more important purposes,” namely, “in order” for God to do His “proper work”^{48[48]} of the Gospel, “to preach grace, to comfort, and to make alive.”^{49[49]} Such Gospel preaching teaches Christians that “even though in this life they are imperfect and impure because of the sin in our flesh,” nevertheless, their “good works . . . are pleasing to God.” and their “spiritual sacrifices are acceptable to God.”^{50[50]} From such preaching of the Gospel, there is created Justus, who will be simul with Peccator for the Christian’s whole life on this earth, and faith, which is sustained by

^{41[41]}FC, Ep., VI, 4

^{42[42]}FC, EP., VI, 4

^{43[43]}FC, EP., I, 21

^{44[44]}FC, Ep., VI, 4

^{45[45]}FC, Ep., VI, 1

^{46[46]}FC, SD, VI, 12

^{47[47]}FC, SD, VI, 24.

^{48[48]}Apology, XII, 158.

^{49[49]}FC, Ep., VI, 10.

^{50[50]}FC, SD, VI, 22

the preached Gospel in which it puts its faith. When the Christian dies, he will finally cease to be Simul Justus et Peccator, but rather only Solus Justus, for God will finally separate Peccator and Justus from each other, the former buried away in the tomb from which Christ rose again, and Justus rising and ascending with Christ. It is the Pastor's high and sacred calling to proclaim—indeed, pronounce—this very future of Peccator in his preaching of the Law, and this blessed reality of Justus—and the Christian—in the preaching of the Gospel. And in the resurrection, with no more Peccator, there will be no longer any reason for the preaching of the Law, for being already perfectly there in His heart, with perfect fear, love and trust in God which the Law demands, with His will done spontaneously, without coercion, unhindered, perfectly, completely, and with sheer joy, there is no reason to feed the Law any more into the heart through one's ears. And with nothing more that needs to be forgiven, the preaching of the Gospel has also come to an end, or rather, has reached its fulfillment. The only preaching going on which is left is the chorus of praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honour and power and strength sung to our God in the eternal rejoicing of the saints with one another which will have no end.