



"Meditate  
upon these things;  
give thyself  
wholly to them;  
that thy profiting  
may appear unto all"

I Timothy 4:15

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## OUR SUBSCRIPTION TO THE BOOK OF CONCORD

The year 1980 is a year to be observed with special celebrations of thanksgiving and praise, for it marks the quadricentennial of the Book of Concord. The high esteem in which this book is held in our circles is indicated not only in the diploma of Vocation issued to the called servants of the Word, but also in the confessional articles of our congregations and of our church body. A typical paragraph of a church constitution verbalizes the confessional standard as follows:

This congregation acknowledges and accepts all the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as the revealed Word of God, verbally inspired, and acknowledges and accepts all the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, contained in the Book of Concord of 1580, to be a true and genuine exposition of the doctrines of the Bible. These Symbolical Books are: the three Ecumenical Creeds (the Apostolic, the Nicene, and the Athanasian), the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, the Apology of the same, the Smalcald Articles, Luther's Large and Small Catechisms, and the Formula of Concord.

In Article III of the CLC Constitution we find the following statements under A and B: "We accept without reservation the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the verbally inspired Word of God ('verbally' - I Corinthians 2:13; 'inspired' - II Timothy 3:16; cf. also II Peter 1:21) and therefore as the sole and only infallible rule of doctrine and life. We confess the Apostolic, Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds and the Particular Symbols of the Lutheran Church as published in the Book of Concord of 1580, because they are a true exposition of the Word of God."

At once it is recognized that this form of subscription does not equate the Book of Concord with the Holy Scriptures as though these are considered to be on the same level. The Book of Concord has as its source and rule the Holy Scriptures. The one is drawn from the other; the latter being designated as the *norma normans*

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(the norming norm — the only infallible rule of doctrine and life) and the former as the *norma normata* (the norm that has been normed — a rule that has been tested and found to be doctrinally sound and Scripturally true). We therefore make no apologies in requiring our pastors and teachers and congregations to commit themselves to a *quia*\* subscription to the Book of Concord, for we are convinced that it is a true exposition of the Word of God. Not only does this commit us to the three ecumenical creeds of Christendom but also to the particular symbols of the Lutheran Church. To relegate this commitment to a *quatenus*\* subscription to the Book of Concord would render it innocuous and of no value as a test of one's confessional stand.

We are, of course, familiar with the argument of those who say that it is legalistic to require a *quia* subscription to any writing of human production such as the Book of Concord. Usually one hears such objections raised by those who wish to reserve for themselves a latitude of difference as well as tolerance for variant teachings on the part of others. One is reminded of the flood of objections raised in the Missouri Synod some years ago when a resolution was passed binding its pastors and professors to teach in accordance with the confession which had been laid down in its Brief Statement of 1932. It was quite evident at the time (and later history has borne it out) that objectors did not wish to be bound to statements such as those which say that Scripture speaks infallibly also in respect to historical, geographical and scientific matters. Later, in its weakness, the Missouri Synod retreated from its former position. As a consequence, the liberals felt free to propagate its new hermeneutics and its historical-criti-

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\* For the benefit of readers not familiar with these terms, may it be said that a *quia* subscription commits one to the Book of Concord because it is in harmony with Holy Scripture and is a true exposition of the same, while a *quatenus* subscription commits one to the Book of Concord only insofar as it is true to the Word of God. This would be meaningless since a person could subscribe even to the Book of Mormon on those terms.

cal approach to Scripture interpretation. This had found acceptance at the St. Louis seminary. Though there has been a purging, there are still pockets of opposition, and there is no visible indication that effective discipline is being exercised. Men in positions of leadership are openly avowing their agreement with those who have separated to form a church organization more liberal and tolerant than their parent body. Certainly subscription to confessional statements, be they ever so orthodox and sound, means nothing if the practise does not conform. The Brief Statement has well stated it in paragraph 29: "The orthodox character of a church is established not by its mere name nor by its outward acceptance of, and subscription to, an orthodox creed, but by the doctrine which is actually taught in its pulpits, in its theological seminaries, and in its publications. On the other hand, a church does not forfeit its orthodox character through the casual intrusion of errors, provided these are combated and eventually removed by means of doctrinal discipline. Acts 20,30; I Tim. 1,3."

This, then, is a matter to be borne in mind by all who subscribe, as we do, to the symbols of the Lutheran Church and other confessional statements founded upon Scripture. It is proper also that a church body be not negligent in continually putting its subscription to the confessions to the test and consider if its practise conforms to its outward and verbal acceptance of its confessional articles. To say one thing and then to practise another makes a sham and a charade out of confessional statements and subscription. This will have the result of bringing the church into disrepute in the eyes of all those to whom it is to bear witness. The force of one's testimony will be neutralized, if not rendered completely ineffective, when practise does not conform to subscription. Every church body that desires to maintain its true orthodoxy needs to take heed lest it thus prostitute its treasured calling as witnesses bringing darkness rather than light. Our subscription to the Book of Concord, then, has more practical and ethical implications than simply passing a resolution or signing our names to it.

Our subscription to the Book of Concord does not im-

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ply that we regard this confessional volume as a settlement of all controversies that may arise. The very history of this honored book is proof of the fact that as controversies arose, confessional statements, for instance, beyond the Augsburg Confession and its Apology became necessary. These did not in any way constitute a retraction of previous confessions but rather emphasized adherence to them while amplifications and necessary additions were made. Here it would be helpful to be reminded of the following words from the introduction to the Formula of Concord:

To this Christian Augsburg Confession, so thoroughly grounded in God's Word, we herewith pledge ourselves again from our inmost hearts; we abide by its simple, clear, and unadulterated meaning as the words convey it, and regard the same confession as a pure Christian symbol, with which at the present time true Christians ought to be found next to God's Word; just as in former times concerning certain controversies that had arisen in the Church of God, symbols and confessions were proposed, to which the pure teachers and hearers at that time pledged themselves with heart and mouth. We intend also, by the grace of the Almighty, faithfully to abide until our end by this Christian Confession, mentioned several times as it was delivered in the year 1530 to the Emperor Charles V; and it is our purpose, neither in this nor in any other writing, to recede in the least from that oft-cited Confession, nor to propose another or new confession. Now although the Christian doctrine of this Confession has in great part remained unchallenged (save what has been done by the Papists), yet it cannot be denied that some theologians have departed from some great and important articles of the said confession, and either have not attained to their true meaning, or at any rate have not continued steadfastly therein, and occasionally have even undertaken to attach to it a foreign meaning, while at the same time they wished to be regarded as adherents of the Augsburg Confession, and to avail themselves and make their boast of it. From this, grievous and injurious dissensions have arisen in the pure evangelical churches; just as

even during the lives of the holy apostles among those who wished to be called Christians, and boasted of Christ's doctrine, horrible errors arose likewise ... Necessity, therefore, requires us to explain these controverted articles according to God's Word and approved writings, so that every one who has Christian understanding can notice which opinion concerning the matters in controversy accords with God's Word and the Christian Augsburg Confession, and which does not. And sincere Christians who have the truth at heart may guard and protect themselves against the error and corruptions that have arisen. (*Concordia Triglotta*, pp. 847, 849.)

There are those in our day (*i.e.*, the LCA) who refuse to consider any doctrinal commitment beyond the Book of Concord as a basis for church fellowship. They thereby claim to be more faithful to the Lutheran standards than those who say that it is necessary to deal with current differences by setting down the present points of controversy and examining them in the light of God's Word with specific acceptances of the truth and specific rejections of the opposing errors. Theirs is but a ploy whereby differences are buried and error is permitted to continue on an equal level with the truth. This is neither Lutheran nor Christian. The writers of the Formula of Concord bear testimony to this, and they would be the first ones to approve of the work of present-day confessors of the truth who have found it necessary to define their position in areas where differences have arisen. Thus the CLC in its constitution has defined its doctrinal position not only by its acceptance of the Scriptures as the only infallible rule of doctrine and life and by its adherence to the Book of Concord as a true exposition of the Word of God, but also by its subscription to the Brief Statement of 1932 and its acceptance of specific documents on the doctrines of Church Fellowship and of Church and Ministry. Now, this in no way down-grades its acceptance of the Holy Scripture as the *norma normans* or of the Book of Concord as *norma normata*, but rather emphasizes its resolve to adhere most faithfully to them. Anyone who maintains that the Book of Concord must stand as the only test of orthodoxy in the Lutheran Church in our day is thereby raising it to a position which its

authors never intended. (cf. *Concordia Triglotta*, pp. 855 ff.) This position tends to place the Book of Concord on an equal level with the Scriptures. Some have gone so far as to insist that no doctrine can be considered binding on the conscience unless it be confessionally fixed in the Book of Concord. This is an extreme position which leads to legalism and unionism.

May it be our resolve in the forthcoming anniversary year to reaffirm our adherence to the Book of Concord as a correct exposition of the Word of God, as we remember in gratitude the loyalty to Holy Scripture so well demonstrated by the authors of the symbols contained in it. The Quadricentennial of this precious confession would be a good time to promote the reading and study of the various parts of the Book of Concord in our congregations, in the meetings of our pastoral conferences, and at our synodical convention. In the forthcoming issues of the *Journal of Theology* it is our intention to present feature articles on the following subjects: "The Book of Concord and Verbal Inspiration"; "The Book of Concord and 'Gospel Reductionism'"; "The Book of Concord and Ecumenism"; "The Book of Concord and the Doctrine of Church and Ministry." May the Lord of all grace shed His blessing upon these contributions to the quadricentennial celebration of the Book of Concord of 1580!

C. M. Gullerud

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+ As this issue of the *Journal of Theology* was +  
+ going to press, we received word that Pastor Walde- +  
+ mar Schuetze, our brother in the ministry and col- +  
+ league on the staff of the *Journal*, has been taken +  
+ by our Heavenly Father to his eternal rest. The date +  
+ of his death was March 19, 1979. Funeral services +  
+ were conducted at Immanuel Lutheran Church, Mankato, +  
+ Minnesota, with interment in New Ulm, Minnesota. +  
+ God willing, our next issue will contain some +  
+ observation of the life and death of our friend and +  
+ brother, now fallen asleep. +

John Lau

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## G O D ' S     H O L Y     C O V E N A N T S \*

*"The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof; the world and all they that dwell therein, for he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters,"* (Ps. 24:1-2). In His eternal and infinite wisdom, God saw fit to create a universe, filling it with wondrous and beautiful things. Every inch of it became a monument to His greatness. Yet, nothing so displayed His glory and love as did the one creature whom He made in His own image. Man was the center and the climax of this glorious work. Nothing surpassed him in beauty, in ability, and in wisdom. This was the only creature with an eternal soul, possessing righteousness and true holiness. This creature alone lived in an intimate relationship with his Creator. He knew his God, and what he knew made him happy and content. Into his hands God placed the entire earth. Every other creature was to serve man and his offspring.

Yet man was not satisfied with the glorious position that God had given to him. He sought something higher. He sought equality with God. So it was that with one bite of the forbidden fruit man brought an end to the glory that was his. Instead of rising above what he had been, he sank to the lowest depths that could be found. He died. The fulness of death enveloped him like a dark cloud. It took him captive, body, soul, and spirit. No longer was he righteous and holy. No longer was he intimate with God. No longer was he happy and content in his knowledge of God. Suddenly he knew God only as an enemy, someone to fear and oppose. All of creation was turned upside down by that single terrible act of man.

Now what would God do with His creation? Everything

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\* This essay was delivered at the Wisconsin Area Pastoral Conference held at Sister Lakes, Michigan, February 6-7, 1979. The author, John K. Pfeiffer, is the pastor of Messiah Lutheran Church (Milwaukee Area), at Hales Corners, Wisconsin. Lexicographical references are to be found at the end of the essay.

on earth and in heaven still belonged to Him. How easily He could have snatched it out of the hands of man. How easily He could have wiped out all creation and started anew. Now, as the first man and woman stand trembling, what disposition shall He make of His property?

THE USE OF THE TERM  
"COVENANT" IN THE  
OLD TESTAMENT

After man fell into sin, God quickly "made disposition of" (διατάθησεν) His creation. He reaffirmed that it would remain

in the hands of man. However, a curse would now hang over man. His rule over the creation would be diminished considerably. To subdue the earth would no longer be a matter of ease and pleasure. Sorrow, sweat, and death became ever present burdens. Yet, in all, the love of God shows forth: He does not blot man out from the face of the earth.

Instead, God also "makes disposition of" the chief creations. He declares that He will bring to an end the terrible rule of Satan. He promises to send an offspring to the woman, who would undo all that Satan had accomplished. Thus God makes disposition of man, providing him with salvation and a renewal of the original condition. Once more there could be righteousness and holiness. Once more man could have intimate communion with God. Once more man could live. Strictly speaking, this promise was not a "covenant." It was a declaration addressed to Satan, not to man. Yet, man would be the beneficiary.

The term "covenant" (ברית) is not used in Scripture until the time of Noah. This is the first time on record that God came to man and bound Himself to a perpetual agreement. This particular covenant was not made with man alone, but with all living creatures. God agreed that He would never again send such a flood as would destroy the whole earth, (Gen. 6:18; 9:9-17). As a sign to the world and a continual reminder to Himself, God put the rainbow in the sky.

Once again, God "makes disposition of" His property. This time it is definitely called a "covenant." In mod-

ern parlance, a covenant would involve activity by two or more parties. Here we notice that only one party is active. The others are merely passive recipients of this covenant. Whether they agree or not is of little significance. In fact, the Lord as much as declares the impossibility of any contribution by them, when He says: "I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth," (Gen. 8:21). Here, then, is a covenant in which all the details and all the responsibilities are determined by one party, God.

It is significant that the LXX should choose to translate אִתּוֹ with δαθήκη. They did have another term at their disposal: συσθήκη. However, that term assumed an equality among the contractors of the covenant. Apparently the translators thought that δαθήκη would better express the one-sidedness of the covenant. — Note, however, that אִתּוֹ does not, in itself, express a one-sided covenant. In fact, it seems as though the Hebrew language did not have a term equivalent to δαθήκη.

Perhaps this is significant in itself. God is Lord of human language and could easily have provided a term emphasizing the one-sidedness of His covenant. δαθήκη points to the owner of property and states that he made disposition of that property. It does not place the beneficiaries into any position of importance, but almost ignores them. אִתּוֹ places both parties into positions of importance. Could it not be, therefore, that God chose the term "covenant" instead of "testament" for the specific reason of drawing the beneficiaries of His mercy into a prominent position? It is the terms of the covenant which then demonstrate the one-sidedness. (The New Testament usage of δαθήκη must be understood as it had been colored by its use as a translation for אִתּוֹ. More later.)

The post-diluvian covenant was made with all living creatures. It took into account the sinful nature of all men and thus demonstrated the mercy of God. However, it only provided for a disposition of this earth and this time. It did not make disposition of the world to come and eternity. Noah's hope had to rest upon the pro-

mise to Adam and Eve. In this, the everlasting grace of God was abundantly evident. This protevangel had all the certainty of a covenant. (The alternating use of "promise" and "covenant" in Gal. 3:15ff shows that God's promises and His covenants are of equal standing.)

It wasn't until the time of Abraham that God entered into a covenant with man, which provided for a disposition of this world and the next. When God first called Abraham out of Ur, He gave him the most precious promise that any man has ever received (Gen. 12:1ff). This promise was later formulated into a covenant (Gen. 15). The specific terms of this covenant called for the disposition of the land of Canaan.

It is here that we find the term  $\text{קָטַף}$  used in its fullest sense, i.e., "to cut a covenant." Animals were cut in half and the Lord symbolically passed between the halves. Thus the Lord demonstrated His personal commitment to this covenant. (The only other place where there is a reference to passing between divided animals is in Jer. 34:18.) Later, this covenant is amplified (Gen. 17:2ff). God promises that Abraham shall be the father of many nations. It is here that "Abram" receives his wonderful new name, "Abraham," meaning "father of a multitude."

It is at this time, also, that God institutes the sacred rite of circumcision. An entirely new "cutting" is established. The covenant is not established in the flesh of animals, but in the flesh of Abraham and his descendants (17:13). This cutting was significant, for it demonstrated that from their own flesh would One come forth, by Whom this covenant would receive its ultimate fulfilment. The Lord later emphasized this fact: "In your seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed," (Gen. 22:18).

In instituting circumcision, the Lord emphasized that this was their part in keeping the covenant (17:9 -  $\text{וְאַתְּמִלְּכֶם}$ ). This was not a work for them to perform, whereby they might earn the covenant blessings. Rather, it was symbolic of their acceptance of and belief in the covenant. The failure to be circumcised would converse-

ly be a breaking of the covenant (17:14), symbolizing the inner rejection of it. Therefore, Paul calls Abraham's circumcision "a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised ..." (Rom. 4:11).

The covenant with Abraham became the spiritual cloud which overshadowed the children of Israel throughout their history until the coming of Christ. God's consistency in abiding by the terms of His covenant stands as a monument to His faithfulness. Though often and severely tested, He never swerved from His covenant. As a father with his children, the Lord often disciplined His people, but He never nullified the promises made to Abraham. "He has remembered his covenant forever, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations," (Ps. 105:8; cf. Ps. 106:40-46).

There may have been times when the children of Israel thought that God had forgotten. Such a time was when they were in bondage in Egypt. However, this bondage had been spelled out when God gave His covenant to Abraham (Gen. 17). Then, at the time specified to Abraham, "God heard their groaning; and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," (Ex. 2:24). This "remembering" must not be understood as the termination of a period of forgetfulness, but rather as an "effective remembering." In other words, God brought His covenant to mind for the specific purpose of putting its terms into action: "I have heard the groaning of the sons of Israel, because the Egyptians are holding them in bondage; and I have remembered my covenant. Say, therefore, to the sons of Israel, 'I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage' ..." (Ex. 6:5-6).

God's faithfulness to His covenant is repeatedly held before the eyes of the children of Israel: "The Lord your God is a compassionate God; He will not fail you nor destroy you nor forget the covenant with your fathers which He swore to them;" (Deut. 4:31; 5:2-3 show this to be the covenant with Abraham). "I brought you up out of Egypt and led you into the land which I have sworn to your fathers; and I said, 'I will never break my covenant

with you," (Judges 2:1). "The Lord was gracious to them and had compassion on them and turned to them because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them or cast them from his presence until now," (II Kings 13:23).

Such consistent faithfulness, even in the face of repeated rebellion on the part of the people, can be credited alone to the grace of God. For this reason, the word **רַחֻמִּים** (mercy, loving-kindness) became appositional to "covenant." Some examples of this are: "Know therefore that the Lord your God, he is God, the faithful God, who keeps his covenant and his lovingkindness to a thousandth generation with those who love him and keep his commandments," (Deut. 7:9). "O Lord the God of Israel, there is no God like thee in heaven above or on earth beneath, who art keeping covenant and showing lovingkindness to thy servants who walk before thee with all their heart," (I Kings 8:23). "I beseech thee, O Lord God of heaven, the great and awesome God who preserves the covenant and lovingkindness for those who love him and keep his commandments," (Neh. 1:5; 9:32). "He remembered his covenant for their sake, and relented according to the greatness of his lovingkindness," (Ps. 106:45). The covenant given to Abraham and his descendants was a covenant of grace. Perhaps the words of Paul to Timothy best sum it up: "If we are faithless, he remains faithful; for he cannot deny himself," (II Tim. 2:13).

It is this faithfulness to His covenant of loving-kindness and His repeated promise to keep this covenant, which remained the rock upon which the Old Testament believers could firmly anchor their faith. Yet, not all in Israel grasped the full meaning of the covenant. David testified, "The secret of the Lord is for those who fear him, and he will make them know his covenant," (Ps. 25:15). The grace inherent in the covenant with Abraham could only be known by those who were enlightened by the Holy Spirit. They saw the spiritual intent.

God beautifully reveals the spiritual content of His covenant through the prophet Isaiah: "For the mountains may be removed and the hills may shake, but my loving-

kindness [  $\text{רַחֲמֵי$  ] will not be removed from you, and my covenant of peace will not be shaken," (54:10). The poetic parallelism draws  $\text{רַחֲמֵי}$  and  $\text{שְׁלֵמָה}$  together, just as is mentioned above. Therefore, this covenant of peace ought to be understood as that given to Abraham. — In His loving-kindness God promised to bring peace to the nations of the earth through the Seed of Abraham. "Peace, peace to him who is far and to him who is near," (Is. 57:19; Eph. 2:17).

As was said before, the covenant with Abraham was a spiritual cloud, which overshadowed the children of Israel until the coming of Christ. It was under the shadow of this covenant that the Lord came to His people to make another covenant with them. This occurred at the time of their "nationalization." Prior to this, they had been a family under the government of the Pharaoh. However, at Sinai, God forged this family into a nation.

It was not by democratic principles that laws were formulated. This was not to be a government "of the people, by the people, and for the people." The nation of Israel existed for one purpose, and that was to be the bearers of the promise. God, therefore, was the One to nationalize this family. He alone would establish laws: laws for civil governing, laws for worship, and laws for morals. Furthermore, these laws were not simply in the form of a code. They were delivered as a covenant, a binding agreement.

This covenant was totally different from the one delivered to Abraham. The covenant with Abraham was a Gospel covenant. It contained only promises and called for nothing in the way of works. God would do all. The Sinaitic covenant, however, was a two-way agreement: "Now then, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, then you shall be my own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is mine," (Ex. 19:5). "Then he (Moses) took the book of the covenant and read it in the hearing of the people; and they said, 'All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient!' So Moses took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, and said, 'Behold, the blood of the covenant, which the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words,'"

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(Ex. 24:7-8). This nation's continuing, intimate relationship with Jehovah was contingent upon their obedience.

The heart of this covenant was the Ten Commandments: "So he declared to you his covenant which he commanded you to perform, that is, the Ten Commandments; and he wrote them on two tables of stone," (Deut. 4:13). When God brought warnings of impending destruction, it was not because of failures under the civil or ceremonial laws, but because of the failure to keep the moral law. When, in the days of Micah, the people sarcastically offered to appease God by sacrificing everything, even their own children, Micah pointed to the spirit of the moral law: "He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8). Christ also summarized the Law by directing people to love God and their neighbor.

Did this covenant displace that given to Abraham? It would have been sad if it had. Who, among men, could have been perfectly faithful to all these demands? "Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and who never sins," (Eccl. 7:20). It is evident from the very outset that the Abrahamic covenant overshadowed the Sinaitic covenant. The Lord began on Sinai with the words, "I am the Lord (Jehovah) your God..." (Ex. 20:2). It was with the name "Jehovah" that God identified Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (cf. Ex. 3:13-15). Jehovah is the God who established the covenant with these patriarchs. Thus, prior to establishing the Sinaitic covenant, God raised up the spiritual cloud of the Abrahamic covenant.

Throughout their history the faithful in Israel could always look above the Sinaitic covenant and find their comfort in the Abrahamic covenant. (Deut. 4:23-31, especially vv. 23, 21; 5:2-3 show that v. 23 is the Sinaitic covenant and v. 31 is the Abrahamic covenant.) One must carefully read the context whenever the word "covenant" is used. There are passages in which God accuses Israel of breaking the covenant, while He promises that He will keep the covenant. So often the former refers



to the Sinaitic covenant, while the latter refers to the Abrahamic covenant (Cf. Judges 2:1, 20). — It is a wonderful preaching of Law and Gospel. On the one hand, their sins portend impending doom, causing the guilty to shudder. On the other hand, the overshadowing Abrahamic covenant brings comfort to the penitent.

The Lord, in the multitude of His mercies, even built into the Sinaitic covenant symbols and types meant to direct the eyes of the people to the higher, Abrahamic covenant. Paul calls them "a shadow of what is to come," (Col. 2:17). The writer to the Hebrews calls them "a copy and shadow of heavenly things," (8:5). Without the Abrahamic covenant, however, these types would have been meaningless. The people would have observed them in a purely mechanical manner, as indeed they did, at least those who forgot the Gospel promise.

Let it be remembered that these types only pointed to a higher covenant. In and of themselves, they were not Gospel. They could not impart knowledge of the saving love of God. The ability to understand that they foreshadowed the Savior came not from the types themselves, but from the Abrahamic covenant, as well as the many other Gospel promises. All that is contained in the Sinaitic covenant is pure letter, no spirit. It dictates, but does not empower. This is "the ministry of condemnation," (II Cor. 3:6ff). The Sabbath may have been a shadow of the rest which Christ brings, but the Sabbath law was a command, which brought punishment for disobedience (Cf. Ex. 31:14f). It should never be forgotten that the Sinaitic covenant was a covenant which placed requirements on Israel. Failure to meet the terms of the covenant brought the curses.

It would be a mistake to say that the Abrahamic covenant is found within the Sinaitic covenant. For then we would have to attach the curses of the latter to the former. The two are completely different. While the Abrahamic covenant (and the Davidic covenant) brought continual living water to quench the thirsting souls, guilt-ridden by the sins under the Sinaitic covenant, no waters tasted quite so sweet as those which poured forth from the promises of a new covenant. Jeremiah (31:31ff)

describes it as a covenant which is able to accomplish that which the Sinaitic covenant could not. This New Covenant would, of its own accord, fill the people with a knowledge of God. His holy will would become a part of them. The Old Covenant could only demand that the people know their God. The Old Covenant also demanded righteousness which the people failed to achieve because of the sinful flesh (Cf. Rom. 8:3; Heb. 8:8a). The New Covenant, however, and this is its chief proviso, would provide righteousness through the forgiveness of sins (Cf. Rom. 11:27). Isaiah (59:21) further describes the power of this covenant by promising that God's Spirit would be upon them and His words would be in their mouth. All this would come to pass when the Redeemer appears in Zion (v. 20; cf. also Jer. 32:40; Ezek. 16:62ff; Hos. 2:18ff).

THE USE OF THE TERM  
"COVENANT" IN THE  
NEW TESTAMENT

The last of the Old Testament prophets to make reference to the New Covenant was Malachi:  
"Behold, I am going to send my

messenger, and he will clear the way before me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the Lord of Hosts," (3:1). These words must have filled the faithful hearers with excitement. The appearance of the Messiah with His new covenant was approaching.

Then came the glorious day when John the Baptist was born. Zacharias saw the truth: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited us and accomplished redemption for his people ... to show mercy toward our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant, the oath which he swore to Abraham our father, to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days," (Lk. 1:68ff). By the revelation of the Holy Spirit, Zacharias knew the full import of the covenant with Abraham and that the birth of his son marked the beginning.

It can be assumed that Zacharias used the terms  $\text{בְּרִית}$  and  $\text{בְּרִית}$  in his hymn of praise. However, we

have moved out of the Old Testament scriptures. Greek is now the language by which God makes His revelations. Now the word that confronts us is that used in the LXX: δαθήκη.

The probable reason for the use of δαθήκη in the LXX was explained above. Here, however, we are working with words given by inspiration. Why does the Lord consistently use δαθήκη and never συνθήκη? One of the reasons has already been presented, i.e., because συνθήκη emphasizes a two-sided agreement.

Like the Abrahamic covenant, the New Covenant is completely one-sided. God sets the terms; God fulfills the requirements. Nothing is required on the part of man. Even his acceptance of the covenant is not his own work, but a work of God within him.

Another reason for the use of δαθήκη is found in the wondrous manner in which God carried out the terms of this covenant. δαθήκη was widely used as the term for a man's last will and testament. The provisos of such a will are in force only when the testator dies.

The New Covenant becomes a living reality when Jesus died on the cross. His death and resurrection accomplished the chief proviso, namely, the forgiveness of sins. Since a death is rarely the chief requirement of a συνθήκη, δαθήκη appears to be the preferable term. The Lord verifies this significance of δαθήκη in the letter to the Hebrews: "For this reason he is the mediator of a new covenant, in order that since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. For where a covenant is, there must of necessity be the death of the one who made it. For a covenant is valid only when men are dead, for it is never in force while the one who made it lives," (Heb. 9:15-17).

A third reason is closely related to this. δαθήκη is basically "a testamentary disposition." By his δαθήκη, a man disposes of his property. Throughout His life, Christ accumulated such riches as would stagger

the imagination. Of course, these riches were not visible to the human eye, for they were spiritual. The new διαθήκη contains the disposition of these riches upon the death of the Testator. The riches of Christ's righteousness and the glory of His earned inheritance have been "willed" to us.

It is hard to imagine συσθήκη relaying to us all the flavor of διαθήκη: the one-sidedness of the covenant; the necessity of the death of the covenant-maker; the disposition of his property upon his death.

With all that must be said in favor of διαθήκη, meaning "testament," one dare not forget the concept of a "covenant." We ought not to discard this wonderful term. Whereas in a testament, one of the parties, namely the testator, must die, in a covenant both parties are assumed to be living. A covenant is a solemn agreement between the living.

Such is the glory of the New Covenant. It is a testament, by virtue of the fact that He is now alive. In Christ's death, the riches of His righteousness were dispensed. In His life, the solemn covenant remains in force forever. He died to set in motion and fulfil the terms of the testament. He lives to perpetuate the covenant. "In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of his purpose, interposed with an oath, in order that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have strong encouragement, we who have fled for refuge in laying hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil, where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek," (Heb. 6:17-20). Therefore, as we consider the word διαθήκη, let us appreciate it in all its fullness, both with the Koine flavor of "testament" and as it has been colored by the Old Testament term בְּרִית, "covenant."

The New Covenant is now secured for us. It has displaced the Sinaitic covenant. One thing should be noted, however. The Sinaitic covenant was not simply abolished

without fulfilment. As Jesus said, "... not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all<sup>1</sup> is accomplished," (Matt. 5:18). The Sinaitic covenant was given to Israel to be fulfilled. So it was through Israel's chosen Son, Jesus Christ. All its requirements were satisfied to perfection. Even its curse was carried out upon Christ. From beginning to end, from the first commandment to the last sacrifice, all is complete. In Christ, the Sinaitic covenant finds its goal (τέλος): "Christ is the end (τέλος) of the Law for righteousness to every one that believes," (Rom. 10:4). Even so, with His last breath, Christ declared "τετέλεσται!" Thus, our great Substitute abolished the Sinaitic covenant and became the eternal Mediator of the New Covenant, a covenant which effectively accomplishes all the Sinaitic covenant could only demand.

What of the Abrahamic covenant? There is little difference between that and the New Covenant. The only difference is that the former was a covenant of promise, while the latter is one of fulfillment. — If a man wishes to reach the ocean, he might choose to sail down a major river. These flowing waters bring promise of an ocean at the end. Even so, the Abrahamic covenant flowed peacefully into the ocean of forgiveness found in the New Covenant. Furthermore, the waters of the river do not cease, when the river reaches the ocean. It is only the river, with its confining banks, that stops and gives way to the ocean. Likewise, the loving-kindness, which was the heart of the Abrahamic covenant, did not cease, when it flowed into the New Covenant. Rather, it poured forth into an ocean, which reached beyond the physical descendants of Abraham to touch all the nations of the earth.

The covenants of God never cease to fill us with wonder. Our human understanding shall never fathom the love which would move God to make such a disposition of the earthly and heavenly glories. Who are we, that we should be so blessed? Even now we continue to sin against so gracious a God. Yet, time and again, He comes to us with the assurance that His great, New Covenant is still in force, saying to us: "Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is

shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins," (Matt. 26:27f). Praise be to His Name forever! "Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead that great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen," (Heb. 13:20f).

*John K. Pfeiffer*

### LEXICOGRAPHICAL NOTES

On δλαθήκη —

δλατθήμε — to arrange; to arrange according to one's own mind; to make disposition of; to make a will; to settle the terms of a covenant; to ratify.

δλαθήκη — a testamentary disposition; a testament; a will; a covenant; a decree; a declaration of God's will.

Arndt-Gingrich (p. 182) — The translation "covenant" can be used only when one bears in mind that this is an agreement, whose terms are set by one, in this case, God. Thus, the concept of a last will made by one is retained. (The foregoing is not a direct quote.)

Lenski ("Acts," p. 266) — "The ordinary word for covenant was συνθήκη, but the LXX translated 'BERITH' δλαθήκη, apparently because it has less the idea of mutuality even as it is also used in the sense of 'testament.' For the covenant was wholly onesided ..."

Barnes ("Hebrews," p. 174) — "In the Scriptures, it is employed to describe the arrangement which God has made to secure the maintenance of His worship on earth, and the salvation of men."

On BERITH —

חַךְ חַךְ אֶחָד — cut, cut asunder; eat; choose.

בְּרִית אֶחָדָה — a covenant; a league.

Gesenius (*Lexicon*, p. 141) — "... it was the custom in making solemn covenants to pass between the divided parts of victims." Tregellas here quotes Lee: "The Hebrews too were accustomed to eat together when entering into a covenant, see Gen. 31:54; and in this way we obtain an explanation of חַךְ חַךְ אֶחָדָה covenant (an eating?) of salt."

Fuerst (*Lexicon*, p. 238f) — "... cutting in pieces (of the sacrificial animal), hence the metaphor 'covenant, league,' Gen. 21:27, from the custom of going between the parts of the cut animals."



#### A PROPER UNDERSTANDING OF THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT\*

We regard it as a gracious dispensation of God that the doctrine concerning the distinction of Law and Gospel became a topic of discussion again in the previous issue of this publication. We had frequently and more thoroughly discussed this matter during the time when the confusion that had grown so familiar troubled us, but this did not result in a general agreement. A lack of understanding of this issue still prevails today in some quarters. It is this consideration that has given impetus to this particular article.

No theologian has written more thoroughly and forcefully on this doctrine and concerning this matter than Luther. We draw your attention here especially to his

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\* Note: This presentation is a translation of an article by Prof. Aug. Pieper originally appearing in the January, 1937, issue of the *Theologische Quartalschrift*. The translation is by Waldemar Schuetze.

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interpretation of the Ten Commandment (Exodus 20), Vol. III; and to his great commentary on Galatians, Vol. IX; and in the same volume, his two sermons on I Timothy 1, pp. 858-1013; and his second sermon on the Gospel for the 19. p. Trin., Vol. XI. Luther speaks copiously on this matter in almost all his writings, both scholarly and popular, polemic and devotional. How great his concern is to express himself clearly, so that he would be understood by everyone, also by his students! This is evidenced, among other things, by the fact that over against them he even makes use of the technical terminology of Aristotelian logic, which he used in his struggle with the scholastics, especially with Scotus and Occam. Speaking as an instructor, he also in this matter refers to *causa formalis*, *causa materialis*, and *causa finalis* - in order to be clearly understood by his students.

As for the rest, we Lutherans own in Article VI of the Formula of Concord an official presentation of this matter in such perfect, logical form as hardly exists elsewhere. Anyone reading these sources carefully alongside of the Scriptures will, as Luther did, come to the conviction that the intellectual understanding of this matter does not present the greatest difficulty. The difficulty rather lies in the proper use of Law and Gospel, and in the pastoral application of each to sinners, the ungodly and Christians, who spiritually, according to God's Word, are so completely different from one another.

Permit us to adduce here, in word and substance, a few important passages from Luther dealing with the need for separating Law and Gospel and treating the essence, office, and application of each, in order that we may apply them as standards for our elaboration.

In his *Galatians* Luther writes as follows regarding the importance of understanding this matter:

I exhort all who cherish godliness, especially those who will be teachers, that they diligently learn from Paul's writing to understand the proper and precise use of the Law, which, I fear, will be



darkened and suppressed after our day. For while we are still living and are pointing out with the greatest diligence the office and use of both the Law and the Gospel, yet there are very few even among those who would be regarded as godly and confess the Gospel with us, who have a correct understanding of this. What, do you suppose, will happen after we are gone? (Vol. IX, p. 413)

This difference between Law and Gospel is the highest art in Christendom, which all and everyone, who have and make a boast of the Christian name, should have and know. Where something is lacking in this matter, there one cannot distinguish a Christian from a heathen, or Jew — so much depends on this difference. (Sermon on Gal. 3:23-24, Vol. IX, p. 798)

Regarding their difference in essence, he writes:

God has given this twofold word, Law and Gospel, the one as well as the other, and each at his bidding. Both are God's Word, but they are not both alike. True, the Law and the Ten Commandments have not been repealed, as though we were free of them and no longer needed them. No, this God does not want, but that we with great earnestness and diligence keep them. (Vol. IX, p. 806)

The Law is to be understood in no other way than that it is God's Word and commandment, by which He commands what we are to do and not do, and this is the general commandment. (Matt. 22:37-39: To love God and the neighbor.)

On the contrary, the Gospel, or faith, is such instruction, or God's Word, which does not require our works nor orders us what to do, but bids us accept the proffered grace of the forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation, and allow such gift to be bestowed upon us. Here we do nothing but receive God's favor and eternal salvation. (Vol. IX, 802f.)

Law and Gospel are distinguished *formali causa*

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in this manner: The one promises, the other commands. The Gospel gives and bids us take; the Law demands and says: This you should do. (Vol. IX, p. 803.)

After we have taught faith, we also teach concerning good works: Because you have laid hold on Christ by faith, through whom you are righteous, now begin to do good works, love God and the neighbor ... Do good to the neighbor and serve him, fulfill your office honorably. Truly good works are such as flow from faith and a joyful heart, which we have acquired when our sins have been forgiven through Christ. (Vol. IX, p. 182.)

Now the works of the Law may occur either before or after justification. Prior to justification many good people, also among the heathen, have (outwardly) kept the Law and have done choice works ... for constancy and love of truth are very good virtues and very beautiful works of the Law. And yet, they were not thereby justified. (I Cor. 4:4, Vol. IX, pp. 168 & 170.)

Therefore, simply set the "work of the Law" in contrast to grace. Whatever is not grace is Law, whether it is a judicial or ceremonial command, or also one of the Ten Commandments. But herein you will not be justified before God, "For through the works of the Law shall no man living be justified. (Gal. 3:10, Vol. IX, p. 168.)

True repentance begins with the fear and judgment of God. (Vol. IX, p. 180.)

The simplest form of the Law is this: Do this, and thou shalt live. Luke 10:28. The simplest form of the Gospel, on the other hand: My son, be of good cheer, thy sin be forgiven thee. Matt. 9:10. (Vol. IX, p. 808.)

The Lord presumably also rewards the so-called works of the heathen, bodily and temporally, but not with everlasting salvation. He does it purely

out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy. Gen. 8: 22; Ps. 104:14,27. The Law commands, and it does not come to pass. Grace says: Believe on Him, and already it has come to pass. (18. 39. 53, Thesis 26.)

We now proceed to the discussion of the Sermon on the Mount.

It is evident from v. 1 and 2 (Matthew, Ch. 5) that it is addressed to Christians. It is stated expressly: "His disciples came unto him ... and he opened his mouth and taught them." These were Peter and Andrew, James and John (5:18-22), and at this time most likely also those who were chosen later. Also the multitudes, whose coming together occasioned this sermon, are treated as believers by the Lord, because they at least regard Him as a prophet sent from God, mighty in word and deed before God and all the people (Luke 24:19), and because they followed Him as believing in His Messianic office, although certainly there also were some unbelieving persons among them. He deals with them as one treats a crowd of people gathered about God's Word, among whom are also found unbelievers. It is in this sense that the "disciples" mentioned here are representative of the whole group.

It becomes apparent again and again, as Jesus speaks, that He is addressing this multitude as believers. This is evident already from the content and tone of the so-called Beatitudes, Ch. 5:3-12, especially vv. 10, 11 and 12. In the following words He calls His hearers the salt of the earth (to prove their "salt" nature) and the light of the world (to let their light shine). For this reason they are set in contrast to the earth and the world with its unbelieving "people." Already in v. 16 and then again in vv. 45 and 48 and in Ch. 6:4, 6, 8, 14, 15, 18, 26 and 32 He addressed them as "children of your Father which is in heaven," also in 7:11. This makes it unmistakably clear that the Sermon on the Mount is not addressed to unbelievers, ungodly, worldlings, hypocrites, such as were the scribes and Pharisees, Ch. 5:20, but to believers, truly devout Christians and children of God, partakers of the kingdom of God on earth, and

heirs of the heavenly kingdom — to poor sinners, who are not first and still in need of justification and forgiveness of sins, but to persons who are enjoying the full grace of Christ through faith, though it may be a weak faith, Ch. 6:30.

This point is of decisive moment for a proper understanding of the distinction between Law and Gospel. The Sermon on the Mount does not treat of the justification of natural, unbelieving, lost and condemned man, who is still under the wrath of God, but of the sanctification of pardoned, saved, believing children of God and heirs of the heavenly kingdom, who are to be strengthened in their faith through consolations. Whoever preaches to the natural, unconverted children of this world what Jesus here preaches, particularly the Beatitudes, corrupts the Christian doctrine in its essential point and is doing untold harm, because he is turning what essentially (*causa formali* and *materiali*) is Law unto Gospel and is thereby declaring the ungodly blessed. Luther often complains that none of the fathers before him properly understood the art of purely separating Law and Gospel. He writes in Vol. IX, p. 415: "One reads nothing of this difference between Law and Gospel in the books of the monks, the teachers of papal authority, school theologians (scholastics), not even in the books of the ancient fathers. Augustine recognized this difference in part; Jerome and others knew nothing of it." Also: "St. Jerome wrote much about it, but as a blind man about colors." (Vol. IX, p. 307) He says that also the sectarians of his day, the Anabaptists, the Sacramental enthusiasts (Zwinglians) know as little of this difference as do the Papists. "They have fallen away from the pure doctrine of the Gospel, back to the Law, and therefore they do not preach Christ. ... They teach laws and ceremonies in the name of the Gospel." (Vol. IX, p. 414)

Whoever regards the Sermon on the Mount as saving, justifying Gospel, offering grace and forgiveness, can only make sanctimonious, self-righteous, and hardened Pharisees; and declare Universalists, Unitarians, Freemasons, and Modernists and all honorable heathen and Jews to be good Christians, even as so many of these people regard themselves.

The reason for this may be that they, like so many sectarian preachers, look upon the Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount as statements of Christ, declaring people of this kind or that kind to be righteous. Among Germans it may come about because they do not properly distinguish between the terms "selig sein" (be blessed) and "selig werden" (become blessed), which terms are entirely different in meaning. The term "selig werden" Luther understands to mean what in the English Bible is translated as "to be saved, salvation." It denotes the difference from spiritual and eternal perdition, which in noun form Luther offers as "Seligkeit" (salvation). It is a translation of the New Testament concept σωζεσθαι, σωτηρία. The Old Testament has the word — but in a very general meaning — JESCHA': "help, deliver"; in the Niphal "to be saved"; as a noun: JESCHA': "help, deliverance, salvation." An entirely different concept is Luther's "selig sein" (be blessed, blessed are), as we have it in the Beatitudes, and as it otherwise often appears in the New Testament. In Hebrew it is ASCHREJ, and Luther as a rule translates it as "wohl dem" (blessed are), Ps. 1:1; 2:12; 32:1-2; 39:9; 40:5; 41:2; but also in 127:5; 128:1-2; even in 137:9; then again in 146:5; and then very often in Proverbs as promises for all Christian virtues and good works. In true character is also Ps. 41:2. In the New Testament the term μακάριος or derivatives of the same are consistently used for the Hebrew ASCHREJ, and both speak not of "selig werden" in the sense of justification, but of "selig sein" (being blessed), of the state of well-being and blessedness of a Christian, either because of the forgiveness of his sins or also because of his Christian virtues and good works, because of his sanctification. So it is in the Beatitudes. They treat of pure virtues and good works, on account of which Christians are promised rewards. "Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven."

Likewise, vv. 13-16 are also clear appeals unto good works, namely unto a faithful fulfillment of their special Christian calling on the basis of their spiritual salt nature. In vv. 17-19 the Lord exhorts and warns His disciples by His own example — "that he is not come to destroy the Law and Prophets but to fulfill them" —

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not to destroy one of these least commandments, but rather that they should teach them to do them.

No person of understanding would question that the Lord in v. 20 and throughout Chapters 5, 6, and 7 is speaking of the fulfilling of the Law. When He calls for a better righteousness from His own people than that which is to be found among the scribes and Pharisees, He is not speaking of that righteousness "which avails in the sight of God," which comes from faith to faith, Rom. 1:17, of which Paul speaks expressly in Chapters 3-5, and later especially in his Epistle to the Galatians, but He is speaking of the righteousness of life flowing out of the Spirit and faith, true holiness.

The Sermon on the Mount, therefore, according to its content, including the Beatitudes, is pure preaching of the Law, telling us how we are to be and what we are to do and not do, combined with promises of a reward, with exhortations concerning the fulfilling of duty, with special warning against destroying the least of these commandments, with the threat of losing the kingdom of heaven, with the general warning against hypocritical and half-and-half piety, against the self-deceptive and idolatrous gathering of treasures, and caring for this temporal, earthly life, and against the broad way that leads to eternal destruction, against false prophets, and self-deception. And in order that we may know how seriously these exhortations are meant, Jesus caps His Sermon on the Mount with a thoroughly law-like conclusion: "Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them is a wise man ... and every one that heareth these sayings and doeth them not ... etc." That is Law proclaimed unto Christians in all tones and with all the stops pulled out.

But have we not heard from Paul that "the Law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless," (I Tim. 1:9 and Gal. 3-6)? Yes, and that must stand unshaken. On the other hand, in spite of what has here been said, the preaching of the Law, precisely in the form in which it appears in the Sermon on the Mount, dare not be withheld from a devout Christian, if the effects of the Gospel are not again to be nullified. Why and to what

extent not, is clearly and systematically set forth in Article VI of the Formula of Concord, and it is hardly presented better elsewhere. We are therefore presenting extracts of the argumentation as set forth therein.

Paragraph 5: In I Tim. 1 it is not Paul's intent that the righteous live altogether without Law, but that the Law with its curse and coercion dare not plague him, because through Christ he has been reconciled to God and delights in the Law of God according to the inner man.

Paragraph 6: If the believing were completely renewed and were entirely free from sin, they would need no Law, no one urging them, no admonition, instruction to drive them to do the will of God, because they like the constellations according to the order of God would have their regular course and like the angels would render an entirely voluntary obedience.

Paragraph 7: Because the believers are not renewed perfectly and the renewal has only begun, the Old Adam still clings to them in their nature and all its external and internal powers, as the Apostle teaches in Romans 7:18ff and Galatians 5:17.

Paragraph 8: Therefore, because of these lusts of the flesh the regenerate children of God need in this life not only the daily instruction, and admonition, warning, and threatening of the Law, but also frequently punishments (*castigationibus*), that they may be roused and follow the Spirit of God, as it is written in Psalm 119:71; I Cor. 9:27; and Hebrews 12:8.

Paragraph 10: But we must also explain distinctly what the Gospel does toward the new obedience of believers, and what is the office of the Law in this matter.

Paragraphs 11-14: The Law says indeed that it is God's will that we walk in a new life, but it does not give the power and ability to do it. But the Holy Ghost through the preaching of the Gospel, Gal. 3:14, renews the heart. Thereafter the Holy Ghost employs the Law to point out and show them in what good works according to the good and acceptable will of God they should walk,

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Rom. 12:2; exhorts them and reproves them through the Law when they are idle because of the flesh. Thus He carries on both offices together; He slays and makes them alive. For His office is not only to comfort but also to reprove the world of sin, John 16:8. To the world belongs also the Old Adam, and sin is everything that is contrary to God's Law. So writes also Paul in II Tim. 3:16, when he says that all Scripture is profitable for reproof. This is the peculiar office of the Holy Ghost, Who through the Law reproves, and with the Gospel raises up and comforts, as often as we Christians stumble.

Paragraph 15: When we speak of good works, we mean those which are in accordance with God's Law (for otherwise they are not good works), and then the word Law has only one sense, namely, the immutable will of God, according to which men are to conduct themselves in their lives.

Paragraph 16: The difference, however, in the spiritual worth of the works commanded by God, lies in the inner difference in the men who do them. Whoever does the works, because they are commanded thus, from fear of punishment or desire for a reward, he still is under the Law as a slave, and these works Paul, in treating justification, calls the works of the Law (because the unregenerate want to earn God's grace and heaven by their works.) These are saints after the order of Cain.

Paragraph 17: So far as man is born again, he does everything from a free, cheerful spirit, and these works, when Paul treats of justification, are called not properly "works of the Law," but works and fruits of the Spirit. Gal. 5:22ff.

Paragraph 18: But because the Old Adam clings to the believers even to the grave, there also remains in them the struggle between the spirit and the flesh, and indeed in this wise, that they do not live under the Law but in the Law, and yet do nothing from constraint of the Law.

Paragraph 19: But as far as the Old Adam is concerned, who does everything against his will and under coercion, he must no less than the godless be driven not



only with the Law, but also with punishments and be held in obedience. I Cor. 9:27; Romans 7:18-19. (From the Corinthians passage it is evident that the Law is the means with which Paul keeps under [bruises] his body, but the person who does the bruising is the spiritual man Paul. — Pieper.)

Paragraph 20: Here we have only a warning based on Paragraph 15.

Paragraph 21: The Law is a necessary mirror unto the believers, showing them that their works and whole life are imperfect and impure, and is to preserve them from self-righteousness. Romans 7; Ps. 119:32; Ps. 143.

Paragraphs 22-25: How and why the good works of believers, although they are imperfect and impure, nevertheless are well-pleasing to God — is not taught by the Law, which requires an altogether perfect, pure obedience if it is to please God. But the Gospel teaches that our spiritual offerings are acceptable to God through faith for Christ's sake. But the Old Adam is still part of them, and he is an intractable, refractory ass and must be coerced not only by the Law, but also oftentimes by the club of punishments and troubles, until the body of sin is entirely put off, and man is perfectly renewed in the resurrection, when we will need neither the preaching of the Law nor the Gospel, but with unmingled joy, voluntarily, with entire purity and perfection serve God. — Thus far the Formula of Concord, Article VI.

While we are busy with searching and proving, let us consider also Article V, with the title: "Of the Law and the Gospel," which in a similar way treats of the difference between the two. We refer particularly to the well-known first part of the 12th paragraph, taken from Luther's sermon for the 5. p. Trin.: "Anything that preaches concerning our sins and God's wrath, let it be done how and when it will, that is all a preaching of the Law. Again, the Gospel is such a preaching as shows and gives nothing else than grace and forgiveness in Christ." And in paragraph 17 we read: "Therefore, we unanimously believe, teach, and confess that the Law is properly a divine doctrine, in which the righteous, immutable will of

God is revealed, what is to be the quality of man in his nature, thoughts, words, and works, in order that he may be pleasing and acceptable to God, and it threatens its transgressors with God's wrath, and temporal and eternal punishments." "The Gospel" — so we read in the 20th paragraph — "is properly (now that man has not kept the Law but transgressed it ... for which reason he is under God's wrath) a doctrine which teaches what man should believe, that he may obtain forgiveness of sins with God, namely, that the Son of God ... has expiated and paid for all our sins, through whom alone we ... are delivered from death and all punishment of sins and eternally saved." "For everything" — so we read in the next paragraph — "that comforts, that offers the favor and grace of God, is, and is properly called, the Gospel, a good and joyful message that God will not punish sins, but forgives them for Christ's sake."

Should this then not suffice to answer the question, whether the Sermon on the Mount, the Ten Commandments with their threats and promises, and many other similar Scripture passages are Law or Gospel?

We must deny the answer. Why? Because the question rests on the false assumption and also likely originates from the failure to distinguish between the concept Law and legalistic, and between Gospel and evangelical. The question in its form is disjunctive and presupposes that every statement must be either Law or Gospel, as though there could not be a third possibility without a commingling of both. THIS IS A FALLACY. Law and Gospel indeed according to their content dare not be commingled, but it is possible to set them together, alongside of each or following each other, in articulate or non-articulate fashion, in such wise that both retain their own meaning, honor, and effect. When, *e.g.*, the Lord says to His disciples in the Sermon on the Mount: "Ye are the salt of the earth," this is pure Gospel, and then, when He adds: "But if salt have lost its savor, wherewith shall it be salted?", this is pure Law, namely an earnest warning addressed to His believers, not to trifle away their salt nature. So also the statement: "Ye are the light of the world," is pure Gospel; but the warning not to put it under the bushel, with the exhortation to let

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it shine, is according to its content pure Law. The salt and light nature has been given them through Christ; it was created in them through the Gospel. They have done nothing to achieve it; it is exclusively the gracious work of God the Holy Spirit in them. Asserting their salt nature and letting their light shine, on the other hand, is their work. Throughout their life they are to pursue it, not neglecting it or denying it even unto death.

In the beginning of our elaboration on the Sermon on the Mount we have strongly emphasized that it is addressed to disciples of the Lord, to "believing" and regenerate children of "our heavenly Father." This determines the legal or evangelical character of a Scripture passage more than its mere content. In Article VI, Paragraph 16, in the Formula of Concord, it is correctly stated: "The difference, however, is in the works, because of the difference in the men," etc. The question is: To which spirit and powers in man is the appeal directed, when demands are contained in a sermon, to the natural or spiritual powers? The very sharp demand that the disciples' righteousness of life must be better than that of the scribes and Pharisees, if they are to enter the kingdom of heaven, would be the severest Law, if it were addressed to the natural, unregenerate man, to the Old Adam. He cannot fulfill it. It would condemn him. But in spite of its Law content, it is evangelical throughout because it is directed to the spiritual man dwelling in the Christian, who in the face of every demand is of the same mind as that expressed in the demand, and is also able in a measure to carry it out through the powers imparted in the Gospel. If there were no piece of the Old Adam still in us Christians, the demand would not even have to be made. The demand is expressed because the Old Adam still clings to us and makes us sluggish. The passage, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord," would be damning Law, if it were directed to natural man, but because it is addressed to the Christian as an appeal for resisting the Old Adam through the new man, we note, e.g., in accordance with II Cor. 7:1 that all similar passages of Scripture are completely evangelical in character. The whole Scripture abounds with these. This is the third use of the Law.

Of this kind are also the various passages of the Sermon on the Mount, which according to their content preach the doing and fulfilling of the Law, or they threaten with God's wrath, punishments, loss of the kingdom of heaven (5:19-20), with the eternal prison of hell (vv. 26, 29, 30), reverting back into heathenism (6:32), the danger of hypocrisy, and with ultimate falling away (7:21-27). For all these are warnings of their heavenly Father and Savior, proceeding from His faithful, evangelical heart, which desires their eternal salvation. They are addressed to such as possess grace, forgiveness, and the Holy Spirit, but still daily must struggle with sin and their flesh. Romans 7:22-23.

Should someone from the very outset choose to call the Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount evangelical promises, no objection can be raised provided he regards "selig sein" ("blessed are," "being blessed") as the special spiritual good fortune of such as have already "become" or "been made blessed," and does not understand it to mean "selig werden" ("become saved" or "become righteous before God") applied to the unregenerate. When, by the way, Luther translates Romans 8:24 as "Wir sind wohl selig," where according to the Greek we would expect "selig werden," his translation evidently is an abbreviated perfect form of the Aorist, the "geworden" in the German having been omitted. In other places we find, inversely, in the Greek a "wohl dem," ("blessed are") where on first thought we would expect a word denoting "selig werden durch den Glauben" ("becoming saved by faith"). Cf. John 20:29; Matt. 13:16; Luke 7:68; Luke 1:45; Matt. 16:17; 24:25; Luke 11:28. In Psalm 32 and other Psalms the wider concept includes the narrower one, which should well be taken account of in the exegesis.

Luther finds the art of separating Law and Gospel most difficult when it is applied to one's conscience. As natural, unregenerate persons, we do not want the Law to come near us. We hate it like the devil himself because it charges us with sin and threatens us with God's wrath, judgment, punishment, and eternal damnation. We set against it every possible and impossible shield of unbelief: reason, experience, so-called science. We plug our ears and hearts shut against the incessant tes-

timony of nature concerning God's existence, power and works, and brazenly deny Him like the people in Psalms 14 and 53. We deny our own conscience; we deaden it with sin and a life of vice like the debauched world. Like the Pharisees, we cover ourselves with a cloak of self-righteousness and gainsay God's right to demand anything of us. We would rather be blasphemers than submit ourselves to the demands of the Law. In brief, we "will not have this man to rule over us," (Luke 9:14). Cf. Jeremiah 2:20. And yet, feeling how futile is all resistance against God, we are filled with an inner secret fear and dread before Him, and in fear of death are enslaved all our life with a bad conscience.

But when the time comes that it pleases God to quicken His Law in our hearts, when, as we may put it, He speaks to us most personally and brusquely and tells it to us straight to our face: You thief, murderer, adulterer, liar, hypocrite, full of all wickedness and knavery, you are the man! Yes, when He drives a sin or fault which we regarded as trivial deep into our conscience, we may find ourselves at a point, when through pure dread of the soul, in spite of the preaching of the Gospel, we can find no comfort and would despair. This occurs especially when the Lord of the world smites us with outward plagues, sudden poverty, dreadful sickness, severe calamity, great shame before the world, death of loved ones, as in the case of Job — then it happens with the godless as well as with the one who up to this point had been devout (and especially is it the case with such, as with Job): he could no longer properly trust God's goodness and grace, and could find comfort in nothing. God and man, friends and those nearest to him — all creatures seemed to have joined hands against him. This would have been the appropriate time in a practical way to separate Law and Gospel in this way, by setting aside the use of the Law and throwing oneself completely into the arms of the Gospel alone. Luther, who had to pass through many hours of terror and enslavement of the Law, directs us in such cases to Paul's instruction in Romans 10:4 and Galatians 3:24, that the Law was not given for the purpose of terrifying us and lording it over us without end, but for the sole purpose of driving us to Christ, in Whom grace, forgiveness, peace with God, not only for Peter,

but also for all sinners, also for the malefactor and Judas, is to be found. The Law plays no independent, and final role in the counsel of God. This role God has committed to grace, Christ, to the Gospel, Who in our stead rendered more than sufficient satisfaction to the Law. Christ is the end of the Law, that is, of its strength and office. It is only a servant and minister of grace, whose office immediately fades away with Christ. God's final word toward every terrified sinner is: Grace! Believe in Christ! You are forgiven! That stands firm forever.

As preachers we have no right to teach or demand a special depth of despair under the Law. This comes without us from God in the *contritio passiva*, as God in every case deems it right. It will assuredly come in the last hour. Then the Law must keep absolute silence. Now the Lord is the sole speaker, He alone, and His Word is this: Fear not; only believe!

This is the proper separation of Law and Gospel in life and death. Paul says in Romans 5:20: "Where sin abounds, grace did much more abound." And Luther triumphantly repeats the refrain: "Though great our sins and sore our woes, His grace much more aboundeth." "If I may touch His garment, I shall be whole," (Matt. 9:21).

The promises of the Law in Exodus 20:5 (Luther's conclusion) are exactly what the commandments are: In content they are demands of the Law. They are like the Sermon on the Mount intended for the believers in Israel, v. 2, the expected response from their spirit and faith being obedience. For that reason they are evangelical in character throughout, with the understanding, however, that they in form are adapted to Israel's minority age. They become judgments for the ungodly; for the believers, stimulants unto sanctification.



## C H A P E L      A D D R E S S \*

THE TEXT: Romans 3:25: *Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.*

Fellow-redeemed in Christ:

If Immanuel Lutheran College had been a school of the Israelites some 2000 years ago, today would be a holiday. You would, however, not be found in the gym shooting baskets, or in the lounge watching TV, or at some eating place munching on pizza. If you had come to breakfast, you would have found the kitchen and dining room dark and locked, for on this holiday you would be fasting, abstaining from food, as an expression of deep sorrow and grief. If you had had any thoughts about physical activity, the dean of students or the dormitory supervisors would soon have reminded you that this day is to be spent in complete rest and quiet, meditating upon the sin by which you have offended God and upon the forgiveness which was promised to you in connection with the coming Messiah. For today would be the annual Great Day of Atonement, *Yom Kippur*.

Meanwhile, at the temple the high priest, functioning alone and without attendants, would be carrying out the special sacrifices of the day. On this one day of the year, dressed in white linen, he would enter twice into the holy of holies, behind the heavy veil and in the

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\* Note: From time to time we offer chapel addresses delivered at Immanuel Lutheran College both for the edification of our readers and also in order that our members may be informed as to the type of devotional addresses delivered at the college where future laborers of the Church are being prepared for their important work of bearing witness to their faith. The present address was delivered on October 10, 1978, on the day observed as YOM KIPPUR among the orthodox Jews of our day.

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presence of the holy God. There he would sprinkle the blood of sacrifice upon the mercy seat, or cover, of the ark of the covenant — first for his own sin, and then for your sin and the sin of all the people. As that blood touched the mercy seat, the Lord, according to His promise, would no longer regard the sin, but would look upon you and all the people of Israel with grace and mercy.

It is this mercy seat and blood of the Great Day of Atonement that we want to focus our attention upon this morning. The ark of the covenant itself was a box measuring close to four feet in length and somewhat over two feet in width and height. Inside, among other things, were the two tablets of stone on which God had recorded the Ten Commandments. Covering the ark was a lid called the mercy seat, on each end of which was a golden image of a cherub. This mercy seat, and the blood sprinkled each year upon it by the high priest, served as a type or picture of the coming Christ and His sacrifice on the cross.

To be such a type, it had to be intended as such by God. That it was so intended is clear from our text, where Christ is called a "propitiation in His blood." That word "propitiation" means literally "mercy seat." Thus God has set forth Christ before the whole world of sinners to be a mercy seat in connection with His blood. From the very first celebration of the Great Day of Atonement in the wilderness and throughout the long centuries of the Old Testament period, the events which took place each year on this day in the holy of holies were designed by God to be a picture of what would later happen on Calvary!

Only that, then, is a type or picture which was originally intended to be such by God. But there is more about the Old Testament types that needs to be said. We discover from the Bible that these types were always less than the persons or things in the New Testament that they served to picture. And so it is with the mercy seat and blood of sacrifice in the Old Testament as a type of Christ and His blood in the New. Listen to some of the ways in which the fulfillment is greater than the type:



- 1) On the Great Day of Atonement the high priest had to sacrifice first for his own iniquity and guilt, for he himself was a sinner. Jesus Christ, the great High Priest, did not have to do this, for He is "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners," (Hebrews 7:26).
- 2) The blood sprinkled on the mercy seat on the Great Day of Atonement, being the blood of bulls and goats, could not in itself wash away sin. But "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son — true God and true man — cleanseth us from all sin," (I John 1:7).
- 3) The ceremonies of the Great Day of Atonement had to be repeated every year, since their effect was not permanent and final. But, as Scripture says, "by His own blood He (Christ) entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us," (Hebrews 9:12).

But even though the Old Testament type is less than the fulfillment — far less! — it does give us a beautiful and comforting picture of the Gospel. In the Old Testament type, the blood of sacrifice was sprinkled on the mercy seat, and thus stood between the holy God and the condemning verdict of the Law contained in the ark. In a similar, but far higher, way, Christ and His blood stand as the true New Testament mercy seat between sinful mankind, the transgressors of the Law, and the great God. Christ with His blood covers up all of our sin, guilt, shame, and nakedness before God's eyes, so that God sees them no more, no longer regards them, no longer charges them against us!

No, we no longer celebrate an annual Great Day of Atonement, for a greater than this, Jesus Christ, is now with us. May we ever thank and praise God for the saving glory of this New Testament fulfillment! Amen.

C. M. Kuehne



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