

The Formula of Concord: Article V – Of the Law and the Gospel

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[Metro-North Pastoral Conference, Milwaukee, WI, September 18, 1995]

It's Thursday night, the night you and an elder go out to make some visits. You are meeting with one of your members who hasn't been in church for over a year. He was raised WELS, went through a Christian elementary school, even an area Lutheran high school. John opens the door, invites you in, and says, "Pastor, you can save your breath. I really don't believe all this Jesus and Bible stuff anymore." What do you say? After all he has heard all about Jesus. He really should know better. Is this what you should say? "I just can't understand you John. You know what Christ has done for you. You know he lived and died for you. You know how much he loves you. Don't turn away from him. Show your love for Jesus and come to church." That may very well have been what a Philippist would have encouraged you to say. For they taught that "since this greatest and chief sin [unbelief] is revealed, rebuked and condemned by the Gospel alone, therefore also the Gospel alone is expressly and particularly, truly and properly, a preaching and voice of repentance or conversion in its true and proper sense."¹

You leave to visit another member, a young lady who also hasn't been in church for quite a while. You knock on the door and Shirley opens it immediately. She, and a young man, are all dressed up, apparently ready to go somewhere. "Hi, Pastor," Shirley says. "This is my boyfriend, Ralph. I can't talk right now because we're ready to go out." "Well, Shirley, I didn't know you had a boyfriend." "Oh, we've been living together for about six months now. But we really must be going." "I hope you can both come to church soon," you reply as they head out. To your utter surprise, they are in church next Sunday. You were going to preach on the Sixth Commandment. But, you don't want to offend them. Maybe they'll never come back to church. You decided to do an extemporaneous homily on Psalm 23 instead. John Agricola would have been proud of you. "The Decalog belongs in the courthouse, not in the pulpit. All those who are occupied with Moses are bound to go to the devil. To the gallows with Moses!"²

The first quote, by Paul Crell of the Philippists, and the second, by John Agricola, show why Article V of the Formula of Concord was written. Both of these men, along with their cohorts and followers, held false views about the purpose of the Gospel. They sparked what we call the Antinomistic Controversy. In various ways, these men were *anti nomos*, that is, against or opposed to the Scriptural use of the Law. They ascribed to the Gospel the function of the Law and subtracted from the Law what was properly its function. Article V of the Formula of Concord was written to show the proper function of both Law and Gospel as recorded in the Holy Scripture. (Article VI of the Formula of Concord speaks to yet another aberration of the Antinomians, their rejection of the Third Use of the Law.) The purpose of today's paper is 1) to give you some historical background to the controversy which occasioned the writing of Article V, 2) to discuss the response stated in Article V, and 3) to give some practical application.

¹ F. Bente, *Concordia Triglotta*, "Historical Introductions," St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921, p. 172.

² Bente, *op. cit.*, p. 163.

The False Teachings of the Antinomians

I. The False Teachings of Agricola and His Followers

Antinomianism appeared in a double form: one chiefly before the death of Luther, the other after his death.³ John Agricola was chiefly responsible for the antinomianism before Luther's death. Although he studied at Wittenberg and became a close friend of Luther and Melanchthon, it appears that Agricola became jealous of Melanchthon and unjustly angry with Luther when in 1526, Melanchthon was given the new theological professorship at Wittenberg instead of Agricola. Perhaps Melanchthon was chosen over Agricola because already in 1525, Agricola had written, "The Decalog belongs in the courthouse, not in the pulpit. All those who are occupied with Moses are bound to go to the devil. To the gallows with Moses!"⁴ Agricola's sinful envy and anger showed itself in 1527, when he publicly attacked Melanchthon. Melanchthon, in his *Instructions to the Visitors of the Churches of Saxony*, had written,

At present it is common to vociferate concerning faith, and yet one cannot understand what faith is, unless repentance is preached. Plainly they pour new wine into old bottles who preach faith without repentance, without the doctrine of the fear of God, without the doctrine of the Law, and accustom people to a carnal security, which is worse than all former errors under the Pope have been.⁵

Agricola considered these exhortations to be Romanizing and published his dissent in which he stressed that "genuine repentance is wrought not by the Law, but by the Gospel only."⁶ Luther mediated a settlement of this dispute in late 1527.

In 1536, through Luther's influence, Agricola finally received an appointment at the University of Wittenberg. A year later, he began secretly to renew his antinomian attacks. However, this time they were directed against Luther as well as Melanchthon. He branded them both as "contorters of the words of Christ." Agricola said that their

...mode of justification was sometimes pure, sometimes impure.... Impure because both Luther and Melanchthon taught that "since Christ commands that repentance and remission of sins is to be preached in his name, hence the Decalog is to be taught.... As the Gospel therefore teaches that the law has been given to humiliate us, in order that we may seek Christ... Luther says that it is the office of the Law to torment and to terrify the conscience, that it may know Christ more readily. Many similar passages are found in this commentary (Galatians), which we reject as false, in order to maintain the purity of doctrine."⁷

Over the next four years, Luther applied firm, but evangelical church discipline. He published a response and announced a number of disputations against antinomianism. The first disputation, consisting of 39 theses, was held in December of 1537. Agricola did not appear but instead secretly continued his attacks. When Luther demanded that his privilege of lecturing at the University be withdrawn, Agricola, through his wife, sued for peace. Luther demanded that he publicly recant at the next disputation. In January of 1538, Agricola appeared, retracted his errors and gave his assent to Luther's 48 theses of the second disputation. As a result, Luther did not continue with a third series of 40 theses and a fourth series of 41 theses both of which he had

³ What follows in this section is basically a "Readers' Digest Condensed Version" of Bente's "Historical Introductions" in the *Concordia Triglotta*, pages 161-169.

⁴ Bente, *op. cit.*, p. 163.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

already prepared. Although Luther doubted the sincerity of Agricola's repentance, Agricola was able to resume his lectures.

However, it wasn't long before Luther obtained evidence that Agricola was continuing in his antinomian, aberrant ways. In September of 1538, another disputation was held and a fifth series of 70 theses was presented. When Agricola realized that his position at Wittenberg was in jeopardy, he let Luther write a public retraction which was published in January 1539. Luther denounced the "false brethren" and "the specter of the new spirits who dare thrust the law or the Ten Commandments out of the church and relegate it to the courthouse."⁸ To make it clear just what "spirit" Agricola was following, in March of 1540, Agricola even lodged a complaint with the Elector against Luther. Luther answered those charges in April. In June, the Elector opened formal charges against Agricola. Although Agricola was devilish, he was not stupid. He fled to Berlin even though he had promised on oath to stay until a legal decision was given. Luther held one final disputation in September of 1540, with a sixth series of 20 theses. A "sort of" peaceful settlement between the two was reached when Agricola sent a revocation.^{9 10}

However, until his death in 1566, he continued his antinomian teachings. A year before his death he said in a published sermon, "Every one who is to be appointed as teacher and preacher shall be asked: What do you intend to preach in the church? He shall answer: The Gospel of Jesus Christ. But when further asked: What does the Gospel preach? He shall answer: The Gospel preaches repentance and forgiveness of sins."¹¹ Those who understood Agricola knew him to be saying that the Gospel in the narrow sense even works contrition. Such confusion of Law and Gospel makes for some strange teaching. Agricola also wrote,

After this [repentance] he [the Christian] acquires a hearty confidence in God, believing that he will condone his folly and not blame him for it, since he did not know any better, although he is much ashamed of it and wishes that it had never happened; he also resolves, since he has fared so well, never to sin any more or to do anything that might make him unworthy of the benefit received as if he were ungrateful or forgetful; he furthermore learns to work out, confirm, and preserve his salvation in fear and trembling... : This is forgiveness of sins.¹²

With these words, Agricola takes the force out of the Law, and puts conditions on ones forgiveness. Agricola lost the very heart of Lutheranism, justification by faith. Klug is certainly correct when he says:

When this distinction [between Law and Gospel] is lost, other articles also become involved; for example the distinction between justification and sanctification, the nature of original sin, free will and conversion. Agricola was not only a vain, small person but a confused theologian as well.¹³

II. The False Teachings of the Philippists

⁸ Bente, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

⁹ Pop quiz. Please answer the following trivia questions:

- 1) How many disputations did Luther have against the antinomians?
- 2) How many sets of theses did Luther prepare against the antinomians?
- 3) How many theses did Luther write against the antinomians?

Answers: Q1 = 4; Q2 = 6; Q3 = 258.

¹⁰ I compiled a sizeable number of Luther's theses against the antinomians only to decide later that they didn't really fit the scope of this paper. Rather than erase all my effort from the computers and this paper, I decided to attach them to the end of this paper. You'll find a number of Luther's theses against the antinomians on pages 22-25.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 169.

¹² Bente, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

¹³ Eugene Klug & Otto Stahlke, *Getting Into the Formula of Concord*, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, p. 45.

The Philippists based their false teachings on some of the unclear and erroneous statements of Philip Melancthon. During Luther's life Melancthon clearly distinguished between Law and Gospel. However, some did misunderstand his statements from time to time as when in the Apology he talked about the Gospel as a preaching of repentance and forgiveness of sins. One example is from Article XII of the Apology where Melancthon asserts that "the sum preaching of the Gospel is this, namely, to convict of sin, and to offer for Christ's sake the remission of sins and righteousness, and the Holy Ghost, and eternal life..."¹⁴ He was, of course, using the term "Gospel" in its wider sense as the entire teaching of God. In that same Article XII, he also clearly distinguished between Law and Gospel when he wrote, "For the two chief works of God and men are these, to terrify, and to justify and quicken those who have been terrified. Into these two works all Scripture has been distributed. The one part is the Law, which shows, reproves and condemns sin. The other part is the Gospel, i.e. the promise of grace bestowed in Christ, and this promise is constantly repeated in the whole of Scripture..."¹⁵

Once Luther was no longer alive, we know that Melancthon had a compromising spirit, tended to speak less clearly, and erred from the truth. This certainly happened with his once clear dividing of Law and Gospel. In a disputation in 1548, Flacius criticized Melancthon when Melancthon again asserted that the Gospel was a preaching of repentance. Flacius was satisfied when Melancthon explained that he was using the term Gospel in the wider sense. However, in 1556, Melancthon wrote that the ministry of the Gospel "rebukes the other sins which the Law shows, as well as the saddest of sins which is revealed by the Gospel, that the world ignores and despises the Son of God."¹⁶ Flacius again opposed him, and, according to Walther, "Melancthon receded from his position and even admitted that he had used inadequate, in fact, wrong terms."¹⁷ The Wittenberg Philippists, however, did not make such an admission, but zealously defended Melancthon's false teaching. In those highly charged religious times following Luther's death, the Philippists (Cruciger Jr., Pezel, Major, Crell, Striegel, and others) went to great lengths to defend Melancthon against the charges of the Gnesio-Lutherans (Amsdorf, Flacius, Weigand, and others). In their zeal, both sides had a tendency to overstate Scripture in their defense. In their efforts to defend Melancthon, the Philippists actually reverted to teachings very akin to Agricola. They went so far as to say that the Gospel in the narrow sense, as properly distinguished from the Law, is a preaching of repentance.¹⁸ Paul Crell, in his *150 Propositions Concerning the Definition of the Gospel Opposed to the Stupid Accusation of John Weigand*, stated: "Since this greatest and chief sin [unbelief] is revealed, rebuked and condemned by the Gospel alone, therefore also the Gospel alone is expressly and particularly, truly and properly, a preaching and voice of repentance or conversion in its true and proper sense."¹⁹

Casper Cruciger the Younger wrote in a sermon of 1570, "In this office [of the Gospel] God wants to terrify men by the preaching of repentance which reveals both all the sins that are set forth in the Law and this saddest of all sins which is really shown in the Gospel, namely the failure to know the Son of God and the contempt of him."²⁰

Such statements show a clear commingling of Law and Gospel. The Gospel in its narrow sense is nothing but the sweet message of Jesus Christ. The Gospel in its narrow sense can never rebuke sin, not even the sin of unbelief. The sin of unbelief is rebuked and condemned by the First Commandment. To attribute to the Gospel the power to convict one of the sin of unbelief is to give to the Gospel what only the Law can do.

The Formula of Concord Addresses These Errors.

¹⁴ *The Concordia Triglotta*, "Apology of the Augsburg Confession," *op. cit.*, p. 259.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 265.

¹⁶ Bente, *op. cit.*, p. 172.

¹⁷ C.F.W. Walther, *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel*, St. Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 1929, p. 280.

¹⁸ Bente, *op. cit.*, p. 171.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 172.

²⁰ Walther, *op. cit.*, p. 282.

Article V of the Formula of Concord addresses specifically the aberration of the Philippists. As stated by the Formula, here is the principal question in this controversy.

Whether the preaching of the Holy Gospel is properly not only a preaching of grace, which announces the forgiveness of sins, but also a preaching of repentance and reproof, rebuking unbelief, which they say, is rebuked not in the Law, but alone through the Gospel.²¹

When speaking of repentance, the Formula is using repentance in its narrow sense of contrition. Can the Gospel move an unbeliever to contrition, sorrow over his sin of unbelief? Is this sorrow over unbelief something only the Gospel can do?

In paragraph 1 of the *Affirmativa*, the authors of the Formula state that the proper “distinction between the Law and the Gospel is to be maintained...” In fact, “the word of God is rightly divided” only if that distinction is maintained. With this statement, the authors of the Formula reach back in time and recall all the errors of Agricola and his followers as well as those of the present Philippists. In fact, they remind the reader that almost any area of doctrine will suffer if one does not retain the proper distinction of Law and Gospel, whether it be the Papists with their work-righteousness or the Philippists with their antinomianism. To be faithful to God and His Word, a Christian must correctly distinguish between Law and Gospel if he is to be a workman who correctly handles the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15).

However, one cannot clearly divide Law and Gospel unless one knows what Law and Gospel is. Paragraphs 2 and 3 of the *Affirmativa* define the Law. It is a “divine doctrine, which teaches what is right and pleasing to God and reproveth everything that is sin and contrary to God’s will.” It reminds us that everything in Scripture that “reproves sin is, and belongs to, the preaching of the Law.” The Law is from God, given by God to his church, to use as a guide in showing the Christian what is pleasing to God and to show mankind his sin and what sin is as he looks into the mirror of that Law. Anything in Scripture that shows man his sin and God’s anger over sin is Law. *There is no one righteous, not even one... through the law we become conscious of sin... The wages of sin is death* (Romans 3:10, 20; 6:23).

Paragraph 4 teaches the doctrine of the Gospel. It is a teaching for the man “who has not observed the law, and therefore is condemned by it.” It contains an emphatic Gospel invitation that the one condemned by the Law “is to believe... that Christ has expiated and made satisfaction for all sins, and has obtained and acquired for him, without any merit of his, forgiveness of sins, righteousness that avails before God, and eternal life.” The Gospel is only for those who have felt the hammer of God’s Law and realize their utter helplessness to erase their sin, guilt and condemnation before God. The Gospel is God’s sweet invitation to believe that Christ has paid in full God’s wrath for his sins, and that Christ alone has won for man his forgiveness, righteousness and salvation. Man had nothing to do with it and can have nothing to do with it. It is God’s working alone. *What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!* (Romans 7:24-25).

The issue of defining the Gospel in its wider and narrow sense is taken up in paragraph 5. The writers admit that “if by the term Gospel is understood the entire doctrine of Christ” – that is all the teachings of Christ in his entire ministry, or the entire Word of God – then the term Gospel can be correctly understood as “a preaching of repentance and forgiveness of sins.” They cite such Scriptural references as Mark 1:15, *Repent and believe the good news*, and Acts 20:21-24, but these are poor proof passages. A better one would be Mark 1:1, *The beginning of the Gospel about Jesus Christ, the son of God*.

Paragraph 6 begins with a big “but.” “But if the Law and the Gospel... Moses and Christ... are contrasted with one another then the Gospel can not be properly understood as a preaching of contrition or reproof over sin.” If the two are contrasted, then the Gospel can only be “a preaching of consolation, and a joyful message which does not reprove or terrify, but comforts consciences... points alone to the merit of

²¹ *Concordia Triglotta*, “The Formula of Concord: Article V,” pages 800-805.

Christ, and raises them up by the lovely preaching of the grace and favor of God, obtained through Christ's merit." In his *Law and Gospel*, Dr. C.F.W. Walther lists five marks by which we can tell if the Gospel is to be used in its narrow sense:

1. Whenever the Gospel is contrasted with the Law... as in Eph. 2:14-17, *For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations... and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near.*
2. Whenever the Gospel is presented as the peculiar teaching of Christ or as the doctrine which proclaims Christ... as in John 1:17, *For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.*
3. Whenever poor sinners are named as the subject to whom the Gospel is addressed as in Matt. 11:5... *the good news is preached to the poor.*
4. Whenever forgiveness of sins, righteousness, and salvation by grace are named as effects of the Gospel as in Romans 1:16, *I am not ashamed of the Gospel because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.*
5. When faith is named as the correlate of the Gospel as in Mark 1:15, *Repent and believe the good news.*²²

Paragraph 7 tells what happens to the sinful men who hears only the "bare preaching of the Law" and not Christ's explanation of it. They "either become presumptuous hypocrites... as the Pharisees, or despair like Judas." Through sections of Scripture like Jesus' Sermon on the Mount and the Book of Romans, "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all sinners, how great it is." Only through being hammered by the Law, with Christ's spiritual explanation of it, can mankind truly learn to know how far they've fallen and how angry God is with them, something "which Moses never could have forced out of them" *So the Law was put in charge to lead us to Christ* (Gal. 3:24). If the Law is preached simply as a guide, the natural intention is to become Pharisaic, pat ourselves on the back because we keep the Law so well, and happily walk away from Christ. Or if the Law, acting as a mirror, shows us our sin, the depth of our sin, the depravity of our human nature, it can lead one to such despair that he hangs himself as Judas did, or he bemoans his wickedness as Paul did in Romans 7, but without the comfort of the Gospel. Such a person also walks away from Christ, the only resolution to the problem.

Next, the authors take up the issue of Christ's suffering and death and it's relation to Law and Gospel. The preaching of Christ's suffering and death "is an earnest and terrible proclamation and declaration of God's wrath..." If, through this preaching, "men are first led into the Law... so that they first know aright how great things God in his Law requires of us" (absolute perfection, eternal condemnation for one sin) and are therefore led "to seek all our righteousness in Christ," then this "is still not properly the preaching of the Gospel, but the preaching of the Moses and the Law, and therefore a foreign work of Christ, by which he arrives at his proper office, that is, to preach grace, console, and quicken, which is properly the preaching of the Gospel," as paragraph 8 of the affirmative states. If we speak of Christ's suffering and death, the horrible afflictions he went through for us, the horrible wrath of God he endured for our sin because we are such awful sinners, that, too, is still a preaching of the Law. It still speaks of sin and its horrible consequence. If it lays the foundation for the sinner to turn to Christ and see in Christ his only hope, his consolation, his message of forgiveness, then it is still a preaching of the Law. It is Gospel only when we hear Jesus say, *Take heart (Cheer up), your sins are forgiven* (Matt. 9:2), or when John writes, *The blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from every sin* (1 John 1:7), or when Paul states with assurance, *there is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus* (Rom. 8:1).

²² Walther, *op. cit.*, p. 294ff.

The *Negativa* rejects the teaching of the Philippists “that the Gospel is properly a preaching of repentance” (contrition and reproof of sin) “and not alone a preaching of grace.” Not to keep this proper distinction between Law and Gospel is to convert the Gospel “into a doctrine of the Law, the merit of Christ and Holy Scriptures are obscured, Christians robbed of true consolation, and the door is opened again to [the errors and superstitions of] the Papacy.” Any commingling of Law and Gospel must of necessity blur and obscure Christ and what he did for us. One has to add something to what Christ did in order to secure salvation, or one is lulled into a false sense of security because the hammer of the Law isn’t being preached, or one is led to despair over sin that he can’t atone for because there is no real Gospel being preached. In each case, Christ and his work is lessened. To confuse and commingle Law and Gospel only robs the Christian of true consolation. It turns the sunshine of God’s love into a black cloud, the unbreakable cable of hope into a thin, straw string.

Practical Application to Our Pastoral Ministry

More than anything else, the Formula reminds us that nothing is more important for the minister of God’s Word than “that the distinction between Law and Gospel be maintained in the Church with great diligence as an especially bright light” (FC, Art. V, Par. 1). Only when the distinction between Law and Gospel is properly divided can the light of God’s Word burn brightly. If it is not maintained, the light dims; it smolders and chokes; it eventually blinds one to the truth. Any commingling of Law and Gospel eventually leads to a corruption of the doctrine of justification which is the very heart and core of Christianity. Bente in his *Historical Introductions to the Book of Concord* stated this fact in an interesting way, “The cocoon of antinomianism always bursts into antigospelism.”²³ Let’s look at some examples.

When Agricola said that the Law was not meant for the pulpit, but for the courthouse, such a belief can only lead one to a false sense of security which despises the Gospel. If the Law is not preached one cannot recognize his sin and its damning consequences. If one doesn’t recognize how lost he is, one will not look for Christ as his Savior from sin, nor appreciate his sacrifice for sin. Without sin there is no need of redemption. The result is that one is left feeling good about himself and is lulled into a false sense of security. He doesn’t fear death and hell; he doesn’t fear the Lord’s coming judgment. Eventually, the Word becomes merely a guidebook for Christian living. Jesus becomes a good example of love and perseverance in tough times.

A good example of that is found in a book that recently crossed my desk. A friend of our congregation subscribes to Charles R Swindoll’s series of Bible study guides for our church. The most recent is entitled *Strengthening Your Grip*. Chapter 1 is entitled “Strengthening Your Grip on Priorities” and what follows are “Four Priorities That Characterize a Vital Ministry.” The first of those priorities for a vital ministry is that “Our Foundation Must be Biblical.” Referring to 1 Thessalonians 2:1-4, the author maintains that “the foundation of Paul’s message was the Gospel.”

Had you sat among the worshipers in Thessalonica, you would have heard the clear and consistent declaration of God’s Word, not a preacher’s idle ramblings or opinions. The *gospel of Christ was the foundation upon which the apostle built his exhortations and reproofs*, making his teaching sure and dependable. (I added the emphasis.)

In contrast, whenever a church concentrates on pleasing people instead of God, its spiritual structure begins to wobble. God’s Word is our only infallible blueprint. It provides rock-solid principles for every area of ministry.... A ministry built on something other than the Word of God is headed for spiritual collapse.²⁴

²³ Bente, *op. cit.*, p. 161.

²⁴ Charles Swindoll, *Strengthening Your Grip*, Dallas, Word Publishing, 1995, p. 2.

Is the author using the term Gospel in the narrow sense or the wider sense? Is he saying that the Gospel can be used for reproof? Is he espousing the errors of Agricola, the Philippists and the antinomians? It would appear that perhaps the author is using the Gospel in its wider sense. But in the next section of the Bible study entitled, “Our Application Must Be Authentic,” the author writes, “God’s Word, however, isn’t taught in a vacuum. It does its work among real people with real needs.”²⁵ Nowhere is it mentioned that mankind’s greatest need is a Savior from sin. The point is this, if our foundation must be Biblical, we must have a clear presentation of Law and Gospel, sin and grace. There is no mention of sin or the consequences of sin in this chapter until three pages later when the author comments:

In the interest of making biblical truth more palatable, more in line with the congregation’s “felt needs,” we can end up pleasing people instead of God. Perhaps you’ve seen this happen. Maybe you’ve even heard some of these comments: “People don’t want to hear about sin these days; it’s too negative. We need to uplift people—help them feel good about themselves.”²⁶

I believe the author has fallen into the very trap he warns against. There is no mention of sin in chapter one except in this one instance. There is no mention of sin in chapters two or three. Not until chapter four, “Strengthening Your Grip on Purity,” do we hear of sin. And when it does come up, it’s mostly in regard to church discipline and the sins of others. In chapter 14 entitled, “Strengthening Your Grip on Evangelism,” we are strongly encouraged to “keep the spotlight on the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ”²⁷ just as Philip did with the Ethiopian Eunuch. There is no mention of the Law. It is not even suggested that the one we’re witnessing to might need to hear the Law. The author sounds like a Philippist. All we have to do is keep the focus on Christ in order to rebuke the sin of unbelief. The author states in a concluding paragraph,

Believe it or not, though, Philip could have done all these things [be sensitive, tactful and Christ-focused] and still left out the primary element of any gospel presentation—the Scriptures. He could have, but he didn’t. He knew that Isaiah 53 was a prophecy about Christ. So he used the very passage the Ethiopian was studying as an entry point to teach him about Jesus.²⁸

I believe Philip probably also used the words of Isaiah 53: 5 and following, *But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities... We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us have turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.* I don’t know what Philip said to the Ethiopian. But if he was like Peter on Pentecost and Paul in Romans, he used the words of Isaiah 53 to first hammer home to the Ethiopian his desperate need for a Savior in addition to presenting Christ as the fulfillment of that prophecy as our Savior. Why else would the Eunuch have “*went on his way rejoicing*” (Acts 8:39)?

I have not studied any other books published by Charles Swindoll’s organization. However, his book is typical of many that come from Reformed circles. This one definitely lacks a clear distinction between Law and Gospel. It confuses Law and Gospel. It is antinomian in its teaching. It speaks precious little of the Law. When it does speak, it speaks about the Law in general rather than pointing the reader into the mirror of God’s Law to see his sin, its damnable consequences, and his desperate need for a Savior. It implies that the Gospel without the Law can convert. It lulls the Christian into thinking that lie is acceptable in God’s sight because he has strengthened his grip on priorities, involvement, encouragement, sexual purity, money and eleven more chapter headings, and thus turns the Gospel into Law. It’s been said that the danger with the Reformed is not so much what they say, but what they don’t say. This book would serve as a good example. Without a clear preaching of the Law, the Bible, another name for the Gospel, becomes merely a guide for Christian living. Without the Law

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

²⁷ Swindoll, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

to mirror our utter inability to live the Christian life the way God wants us to, we end up living the Christian life for the wrong reason, as a form of work righteousness rather than a fruit of faith. Let us beware of recommending such books to others or having them put in our church libraries.

Pastor Lyon in his *Counseling at the Cross* also warns about handing out such books to the troubled sheep who come to us for help and guidance, or sending them to a “Christian counselor” or other mental health care professional. “Preaching law and gospel is not an academic theology lesson. God expects Christians to use all the equipment he has given to confront people with their personal sin so the gospel can be used to introduce them or reintroduce them to their personal Savior.”²⁹ Can anyone who does not clearly divide Law and Gospel, can anyone who does not clearly distinguish the function of Law and Gospel, help resolve the problems of sin and guilt that our people face?

Confronting sin puts us on the way to Gospel resolution. When a person knows he or she needs the Savior, that’s progress. Gospel resolution occurs when a person knows and believes *his* or *her* sins have been paid for in full by Jesus Christ.... Our small but essential part is to do all we can to confront sin and communicate the gospel directly the way Jesus did, the way Peter did, the way Nathan did and the way thousands of Christ’s disciples have communicated the gospel over the centuries.³⁰

That’s because the power lies in God’s Word of Law and Gospel, not in us. When we use God’s Word of Law and Gospel, we are using the most powerful counseling tools available. Others who counsel, but who do not counsel with the foundation of Law and Gospel, may be able to help and to treat various symptoms. But they can’t provide real resolution.

A counselor who is not equipped with the law and gospel may be able to uncover guilt, but the best he can do is try to convince his client that he or she shouldn’t be feeling guilty in the first place. As a result, no resolution occurs. If a Christian who is equipped with the law and the gospel does not take the time, expend the effort, or see the need to look for the sin behind the sin, no resolution occurs either, because he hasn’t really dealt with the problem. If a Christian equipped with the law and the gospel merely speaks the law and the gospel at the people who seek his assistance, people will probably get the impression that he has a tape-recorded generic message for all the people he talks to.... Gospel resolution occurs only when the guilt of specific sin is washed away by the forgiveness Jesus won. That way we are not just saying, “All sins have been forgiven,” we’re saying, “Your sins have been forgiven. That sin has been paid for.”³¹

If we recommend counseling without the foundation of Law and Gospel, it may end up being very antinomian. “What you did wasn’t that bad. Don’t feel guilty. That’s okay; plenty of people do that today.” And if your Law and Gospel sermons make them feel guilty, they may stay away from church so they don’t feel guilty. Or the alcoholic may become Pharisaic now that his alcoholism is under control and he’s living a more Christian life. The encouragement to use the Law and Gospel tools we possess in counseling is not to give us more work, or to make us feel guilty about past failures. It’s an encouragement for us to realize that we possess the best tools in the business. It doesn’t mean we should ignore the other help that God has given us in substance abuse counselors, psychiatrists, psychologists and the like. It means that we shouldn’t sell ourselves short.

And when we do counsel let us refrain from another subtle temptation to antinomianism. Pastor Lyon makes this interesting and important point:

²⁹ H. Curtis Lyon, *Counseling at the Cross*, Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1991, p. 3.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

The law is not a means of grace, it is a means to an end. The law is the handmaid of the gospel, intended to prepare the heart for planting the gospel seed. We might think the law is the last thing people need to hear when they come to our offices in tears and apparent hopelessness. Only listening to them present their problems will reveal whether they need to hear the law or the gospel at that time. We cannot assume that the law has already done its work just because a person is hurting. Sin causes the pain, not the law.³²

Just because the tears are flowing doesn't mean the counselee has realized his or her sin. Listen. Apply the Law when necessary. Help uncover and point out sin and its damning consequences. Then bring about hope and forgiveness with the comfort of the Gospel.

We live at a time when many people don't want to use the Law. In our preaching, teaching and counseling, we must use the Law if we are to rightly divide the Word of truth and make hearts ready for the Gospel.

God certainly would not have revealed the written law unless he wanted that law proclaimed. He would not have made known the signs of his zeal and wrath against transgressors when he gave the law, nor would he have attached such terrifying threats and curses to it. And after revealing the written law at Sinai, he has it proclaimed over and over again through his prophets. *Shout it aloud, do not hold back. Raise your voice like a trumpet. Declare to my people their rebellion and to the house of Jacob their sins*, Isaiah 58:1....

We find neither a prophet nor an apostle who is silent about the law and has exclusively proclaimed the gospel. To say nothing of the prophets or Christ himself... So there is no excuse for those who think it unnecessary to tell unbelievers about their sins right to their face, and to condemn their ways with the written law...

It seems even more right not to proclaim the written law to fallen and wayward church members. Surely they have richly learned to know and understand the law in its revealed form. Why preach more written law? But this is also man's own wisdom. When dealing with the impenitent—and here we are speaking of them alone—we cannot shirk our duty to call the sin they have committed what it is, and to proclaim God's wrath to the impenitent. In no other way can they come to repentance. Wanting to be silent about sin and win the impenitent only with the sweetness of the gospel amounts to denying God's zeal and holiness and suppressing his threats. It amounts to hypocrisy, practicing spiritual quackery. It means leading the poor people to fleshly security instead of to faith and casting the pearls before the swine.

There really are pastors... who... want to govern everything with the gospel alone, punish no one, excommunicate no one.... This is not evangelical, but denial of the truth. The word applies to them, *They are all mute dogs, they cannot bark*, Isaiah 56:10. The result is that the congregation becomes a desolate house, a Babel, like the state church congregations in Germany, and souls go to ruin.

No, not the law alone—that only makes the unconverted into Pharisees or despairing Judases. But not the gospel alone either—that only strengthens sinners in fleshly security. But law and gospel together, one always related to the other in the proper way—the law as a taskmaster unto Christ, the gospel as the salvation from the law's curse. That is the word which saves, the power of God for salvation for the unconverted, the lost...

So the regular public sermon in the Christian congregation must also be a preaching of the law... because of the sinful natures of God's beloved children. They need instruction from the law continuously.... Through it they become ever more humble, and they are also always

³² Lyon, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

learning to shun the sins that are so prevalent in the world.... In the same way as the whole congregation, the individuals in the congregation, even if they are faithful Christians, need the teaching of the law when they do not know the way. They need the rebuke of the law when they stumble and get lazy. They need its warning against sin, false teaching, unbelief, the eyes of the world, as well as its threat of God's anger and punishment, when they are inclined to let the sinful nature have its way.³³

August Pieper, as does Scripture itself, leaves no doubt. We dare not be antinomian in our preaching, teaching and counseling. We must use the Law.

Since this paper deals primarily with antinomianism, the lack of the Law in our ministry, I must hasten to say that we must never forget to use the Gospel. C.F.W. Walther urged his students with these words:

...make a vow to God that you will adopt the apostle's method, that you will not stand in your pulpits sad-faced, as if you were bidding men to come to a funeral, but like men that go wooing a bride or announcing a wedding. If you do not mingle Law with the Gospel you will always mount your pulpit with joy. People will notice that you are filled with joy because you are bringing the blessed message of joy to your congregation. They will furthermore notice that wonderful things are happening among them. Alas! Many ministers do not meet with these wonderful experiences; their hearers remain sleepy; their misers stay stingy. What is the reason? Not sufficient Gospel has been preached to them.... It is not sufficient for you to be conscious of your orthodoxy and your ability to present the pure doctrine correctly. These are, indeed, important matters; however, no one will be benefited by them if you confound Law and Gospel. The very finest form of confounding both occurs when the Gospel is preached *along with* the Law, but is not the predominating element in the sermon... your hearers will be spiritually starved to death if you do not allow the Gospel to predominate in your preaching. They will be spiritually underfed because the bread of life is not the Law, but the Gospel.³⁴

Since *the letter kills, but the spirit gives life* (2 Cor. 3:6), let us preach not only the Law, but let's make sure there is plenty of Gospel in our sermons, too! It is the Gospel alone which comforts, encourages and moves the Christian. It's the Gospel of Christ that keeps him spiritually alive and breathing, not the Law of Moses. Yes, we cannot leave out the Law. But we must never forget the Gospel.

It goes without saying that we do not clearly divide the Word of truth, Law and Gospel, if in our sermons, we resort to moralizing, if we use the Law to produce fruits of faith or a change in behavior for which we're looking. "That's an attempt to produce sanctification without the motivation of justification. They employ law to do what only the gospel can do."³⁵ *Through the law we become conscious of sin* (Rom. 3:20). But *he has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant – not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life* (2 Cor. 3:6). Since the Law can only convict one of sin and condemn one to hell, we must use the Gospel if we seek to change the heart as well as the mind.

Gerlach and Balge also warn that:

Confusion of law and gospel may creep into our preaching in less obvious ways. It happens when we present the gospel and then follow it up with an encouragement to sanctification which treats the new life as something a Christian ought now be able to produce instead of as

³³ August Pieper, *The Proper Distinction of Law and Gospel and its Applications for Pure Teaching and Spiritual Life*. English translation in the WLS essay file.

³⁴ Walther, *op. cit.*, pgs. 406-407.

³⁵ Joel Gerlach & Richard Balge, *Preach the Gospel*, Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1982, p. 9.

something God produces in and through his people. Or it happens when we use pressure words (must, should, ought) in a way that obscures the proper distinction between law and gospel.³⁶

In the October edition of *Pulpit Helps*, there exists such an example by Dr. Spiros Zodhiates. He has a detailed outline of a sermon entitled, “He Made Himself Available.” In that detailed outline he writes, “Since he gave his life on the cross we should give our lives in proclaiming the message of the cross worldwide.”³⁷ It’s interesting to note that in that same sermon outline, though there is mention of sin (he quotes Heb. 9:28 and 1 Peter 3:18), yet there is no preaching of the Law. Though his whole sermon talks about the Gospel, yet with no mention of the Law he cannot preach the Gospel. One is left wondering why “we should give our lives in proclaiming the message of the cross worldwide.” Is it something we should do because God commands it, or out of love for the Savior who redeemed us? Is proclaiming the Gospel something a Christian should do to help earn heaven, to be in a right relationship with God, or something he gladly does moved by Christ’s love? Out of love for the crucified and risen Savior, Christians will share the message of Christ crucified. In our sermon, confirmation and Bible Class preparation, let’s refrain from confusing Law and Gospel with the unwise use of pressure words.³⁸

From that same edition of *Pulpit Helps*, there is an example of another danger, putting conditions on the promises of God, turning the Gospel into a Law. In a suggested sermon illustration were these words: “If we only obey, he is capable of dealing with the problems and difficulties.”³⁹ As our Almighty God, he’s fully capable of dealing with our problems whether we obey or not. Such a statement says that God will love and help us only if we obey him first. Rather different from John’s statement, *We love because he first loved us* (1 John 4:19). Among the suggested bulletin fillers were these: “When you give everything to Jesus, he will give everything to you,” and “Victorious Christian living. That’s what it is all about.”⁴⁰ Jesus has already given us everything we need. *While we were still sinners Christ died for us* (Rom. 5:8). Very simply, victorious Christian living is not what it’s all about. It’s the victorious Christ. That’s what it is all about. Without him there would be no victorious Christian living.

Confusing Law and Gospel, whether through moralizing, failure to use the Law, putting conditions on the Gospel, or in other ways, always brings about a misplaced emphasis on the individual. He becomes more concerned about how he lives for Christ rather than how Christ lived and died for him. Such people become more concerned about the Christ in them as opposed to the Christ for them. Or one feels so guilty about his sin, he so despairs that he fails to see Christ as his Savior. How interesting that nestled among these short sayings in *Pulpit Helps* was the following, “The recognition of sin is the beginning of salvation – Martin Luther.”⁴¹ Luther realized that there can be no victorious Christian living until we’re hammered down by the Law only to be raised by the beautiful Gospel of Christ. In our preaching and teaching, let us use God’s Law and Gospel as we were trained and as the Scriptures show. With the hammer of the Law let us point out sin in thought, word and deed, as well as it’s damning consequences. With the Gospel let us proclaim the complete and unconditional forgiveness of Christ, and the free gift of eternal life which comes only through the victorious Christ. May we always carefully distinguish Law and Gospel so that we will be “an especially brilliant light” in our preaching, teaching and counseling.

I believe there is still another bit of practical application to be gleaned from the authors of the Formula in regard to Article V. One thing pastors must do is carefully define terms. The Formula of Concord clearly

³⁶ Gerlach & Balge, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

³⁷ Spiros Zodhiates, “He Made Himself Available,” *Pulpit Helps*, Vol. 20, October 1995, p. 16.

³⁸ In that same edition was a basic outline which had the theme “Five Dogmas of Sin.” Part 1: Conception of Sin; Part 2: Deceitfulness of Sin; Part 3: Pleasures of Sin; Part 4: Sinfulness of Sin; Part 5: Wages of Sin. That sounds like a fun sermon to listen to!

³⁹ *Pulpit Helps*, p. 8.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

defined Law and Gospel. It admitted that on the basis of Scripture the term “Gospel” can be used in a narrow or wide sense. But it was very clear to state that when the terms were used together, the Gospel must be understood in the narrow sense as Scripture itself clearly teaches. In the *Thorough Declaration of the Formula of Concord*, Article V, they even made reference to how “repentance” has both a wide and a narrow sense in Scripture as well. One of the reasons this controversy developed was failure to clearly define the terms on the basis of Scripture and use the terms as defined by Scripture. Another reason was their willingness to defend a position or person rather than Christ and his Word.

C.F.W. Walther writes, “Not to be cautious about the terms he [the minister] uses is a great and serious fault even in a preacher whose personal faith may be correct.”⁴² It certainly is a reminder for us to be careful about the terms we use. This is true not only with Scriptural terms like Law and Gospel, or church and ministry, but with other terms like church growth, staff minister, and the like. Let it be a concern to the parish pastor as well as to the Seminary professor, from the Synod official to the Sunday School teacher. Let’s always be careful about the terms we use, how we use them, and how we define them. Great confusion and harm come when terms are misused or not understood, especially if we don’t use them as they are used and defined in Scripture, or as our people normally understand them.

Since we are all sinners, we will all fall prey to the whims of our sinful nature. We may misuse terms or misdefine them. We may even stray from Scripture in our teaching and preaching. It is vitally important that in Christian love we patiently point out errors when they do appear. Previously, we had mentioned the two parties which battled each other in this antinomian controversy, the Philippists and the Gnesio-Lutherans. There was a third party made up of Chemnitz, Andreae, Selnecker and the like. Through careful searching of the Scriptures, they avoided extreme positions on both sides. Through patient love they worked to bring a Scriptural peace and union among the Lutherans of the late 1500s. With firm resolution, they rejected what was clearly contrary to God’s Holy Word and preserved the truths of Scripture as taught and confessed by Martin Luther. To that end they authored the Formula of Concord.

May we likewise search the Scriptures. May the Law convict us of our sin. May God’s Gospel assure us of our forgiveness. Let us be filled with a patient love for each other which flows from Christ’s patient love for us. When we must, out of love for Christ and his precious Law and Gospel, and out of love for each other, let us clearly reject error. In all of this, may God unite us so that, rightly dividing the Word of Truth, carefully distinguishing Law and Gospel, we may comfort, encourage and correct one another and those sheep which God has entrusted to our special care.

⁴² Walther, *op. cit.*, p. 280.

What follows are some of Luther's many theses written in response to these antinomian teachings. The first number refers to the set of theses, the second number to theses within the set.

- 1:4 The first part of repentance, contrition, is wrought by the Law alone. The other part, the good purpose cannot be wrought by the Law.
- 1:25 For the entire Scripture teaches that repentance must be given from the Law, which also the order of the matter itself as well as experience shows.
- 1:31 Necessarily, then, sin and death cannot be revealed by the Word of Grace and Solace, but by the Law.
- 1:32 Experience teaches that Adam is first reprov'd as a transgressor of the Law, and afterwards cheer'd by the promised Seed of the woman.
- 1:33 Also David is first killed by the law through Nathan, saying: "Thou art the man," etc.; afterwards he is saved by the Gospel, declaring: "Thou shalt not die," etc.
- 1:34 Paul, prostrated by the Law, first hears, "Why persecutest thou me?" Afterwards he is revived by the Gospel.
- 1:38 In the Epistle to the Romans Paul observes this method, first to teach that all are sinners, and thereupon, that they are to be justified solely through Christ.⁴³

In these theses, Luther reminds us that we cannot repent of sin and turn to Christ unless we know what sin is. The Law only can reveal sin, its consequences and the need for Christ. Throughout the Scripture that is the pattern. The Law is preached to reveal sin and death. Only after the Law is the Gospel preached to reveal the Savior from sin – Jesus Christ and his blessings.

- 2:4 For the Law was not given to justify or vivify or help in any way toward righteousness.
- 2:5 But to reveal sin and work wrath, i.e. to render the conscience guilty. (Rom. 3:20, 4:15)
- 2:18 Whatever reveals sin, wrath, or death exercises the office of the Law whether it be in the Old or in the New Testament.
- 2:19 For to reveal sin is nothing else, nor can it be anything else, than the Law or an effect and the peculiar power of the Law.
- 2:27 And since the Law of God requires our obedience toward God, these Antinomians abolish also obedience toward God.
- 2:28 From this it is manifest that Satan through these his instruments teaches about sin, repentance, and Christ in words only.
- 2:29 But in reality he takes away Christ, repentance, sin, and the entire Scripture together with God, its author.
- 2:45 For the Law, as it was before Christ, did indeed accuse us; but under Christ it is appeased through the forgiveness of sins, and thereafter it is fulfilled through the Spirit.
- 2:47 Therefore the Law will never, in all eternity, be abolished, but will remain, either to be fulfilled by the damned, or already fulfilled by the blessed.
- 2:48 These pupils of the devil, however, seem to think that the Law is temporary only, which ceased under Christ even as circumcision did.⁴⁴

In this set of theses, Luther makes the point that we need the Law. The sinner needs to stand accused of sin. The Spirit-filled believer needs the law so he knows the great lengths of the Savior's love which fulfilled the Law for him. Therefore, one dare not abolish the Law. If one abolishes the Law he also abolishes the work of Christ who fulfilled the Law for us and paid its damning consequences.

⁴³ Bente, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

- 3:9 Therefore all works after justification are nothing else than a continuous repentance, or a good propose against sin.
- 3:10 For nothing else is done than that sin, revealed and forgiven by Christ, is swept out.
- 3:17 The Lord's Prayer, taught by the Lord himself to the saints and believers, is a part of repentance, containing much of the doctrine of the Law.
- 3:18 For whoever prays it aright confesses with his own mouth that he sins against the Law and repents.
- 3:27 Therefore also the Lord's Prayer itself teaches that the Law is before, below, and after the Gospel.
- 3:30 From this it follows that these enemies of the Law must abolish also the Lord's Prayer if they abolish the Law.
- 3:31 Indeed, they are compelled to expunge the greatest part of the sermons of Christ himself from the Gospel story.
- 3:32 For Matt. 5:17ff does not only recite the Law of Moses, but explains it perfectly, and teaches that it must not be destroyed.⁴⁵

In this third set of theses, Luther reminds us that our entire life after justification is inseparable from the Law. Even after justification, the believer daily confesses his sin, his need for Christ, his faith in Christ's forgiveness, and his determination to sweep sin out of his life. Even the Lord's Prayer contains Law. For example in the Fifth Petition, we acknowledge our sinfulness and beg God to forgive us as we pray, "Forgive us our trespasses." And then he points to Jesus' Sermon on the Mount as proof that even Jesus used and explained the Law for the benefit of the people with whom he spoke.

- 4:14 For those who deny that the Law is to be taught in reality simply wish that there be no repentance.
- 4:15 The argument: "Whatever is not necessary to justification... must not be taught" amounts to nothing.
- 4:18 [It is the same as though you would argue:] To honor parents, to live chaste, to abstain from murders, adulteries, and thefts is not necessary to justification; hence such things must not be taught.
- 4:22 Although the Law helps nothing toward justification, it does not follow therefrom that it ought to be abolished and not to be taught.
- 4:38 In brief, the Law is neither useful nor necessary for justification, nor for any good works, much less for salvation.
- 4:39 On the contrary, justification, good works, and salvation are necessary for the fulfillment of the Law.
- 4:40 For Christ came to save that which was lost (Luke 19:10) and for the restitution of all things, as St. Peter says (Acts 3:21).
- 4:41 Therefore the Law is not destroyed by Christ, but established in order that Adam may become such as he was, and even better.⁴⁶

In this fourth set of theses, Luther points out that even though the Law is not necessary for justification, yet it is necessary. It shows us our sin and our need for some outside help when it comes to our justification. In fact we would not know the extent of Christ's love in fulfilling the Law for us if we did not know the Law. Nor

⁴⁵ Bente, *op. cit.*, p. 165.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

would we respond in loving obedience in our efforts to fulfill the Law if we did not know God's Law which tells us what is good and pleasing in God's sight and what isn't.

- 5:7 These three: Law, sin and death are inseparable.
 5:8 Accordingly, so far as death is still in man, in so far sin and the Law are in man.
 5:9 Indeed, in Christ the Law is fulfilled, sin abolished, and death destroyed.
 5:15 They are altogether inexperienced men and deceivers of souls who endeavor to abolish the Law from the church.
 5:17 For if you would abolish the Law, you will be compelled to abolish sin and death.
 5:21 Hence they should have first proved that the just are altogether without sin and death.
 5:26 Yet it is a much greater impudence, or rather insanity, when they assert that even the wicked should be freed from the Law, and that it should not be preached to them.
 5:35 Thus it [the Law] is also given to the pious, in so far as they are not yet dead and still live in the flesh.
 5:42 Therefore the Law (as also the Gospel) must be preached without discrimination, to the righteous as well as to the wicked.
 5:44 To the pious, that they may thereby be reminded to crucify their flesh with its affections and lusts, lest they become secure [Gal. 5:24].
 5:45 For security abolishes faith and the fear of God, and renders the latter end worse than the beginning [2 Peter 2:20].
 5:61 For if the Law is removed, no one knows what Christ is, or what he did when he fulfilled the Law for us.
 5:66 The doctrine of the Law, therefore, is necessary in the churches, and by all means is to be retained, as without it Christ cannot be retained.
 5:69 In brief, to remove the Law and to let sin and death remain, is to hide the disease of sin and death to men unto their perdition.⁴⁷

In this fifth theses, one of Luther's main points is to point out the fleshly security man will have if you remove the teaching of the Law. If there is no Law, why fear sin and death? If there is no sin and damnation, why does one need a Savior? Not to preach the Law lulls sinful mankind into a false sense of security.

- 6:2 Likewise this too: Where there is no sin, there is neither punishment nor remission.
 6:12 Whoever denies that the damning Law must be taught, in reality simply denies the Law.
 6:14 A law which does not damn is an imagined and painted law as the chimera or tragelaphus.
 6:15 Nor is the political or natural law anything unless it damns and terrifies sinners, Rom. 13:1-5, 1 Peter 2:13ff.
 6:19 Therefore they must be avoided as most pestilential teachers of licentious living who permit the perpetration of all crimes.
 6:20 For they serve not Christ, but their own belly [Rom 16:18], and, madmen that they are, seek to please men, in order that from them, as a man's judgment, they may gain glory.⁴⁸

The antinomians talked about law, but did not preach the damning, punishing character of the Law. Luther reminds us that you really have no law if you have no punishment. Even in the sinful world where there's no punishment for law you have no law and order. Since to deny the damning character of the Law also

⁴⁷ Bente, *op. cit.*, p. 165-166.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 168.

means to deny the efficacy of Christ's work for lawbreakers, the antinomians and their teachings need to be avoided at all costs.

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