

# An Analysis of H.C. Schwan's Propositions on Unevangelical Practice

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The assignment of analysing Pastor Schwan's first twenty-four propositions on unevangelical practice presents its own peculiar difficulties. These propositions were drawn up ninety years ago out of the very practical consideration of warning against current weaknesses of that day. No record of the discussion of the propositions has been handed down. Hence there is considerable possibility of missing the particular force of this or that wording, considerable possibility also of misunderstanding some of the emphases, inasmuch as we may be facing new trends in church life, trends which might occasionally call for a different emphasis. On the whole, however, the dangers of falling into unevangelical practice remain very much the same. Since we are all exposed to these dangers, the study of these propositions from the past should be a profitable one.

Since the propositions touch upon a great many points, and suggest still others, it is quite impossible to treat all of them exhaustively in the time allotted for this presentation. If our comments on the first four theses<sup>1</sup> seem somewhat lengthy in comparison to the treatment of subsequent propositions, it should be understood that this is advisedly so, in order to lay the proper foundation for an analysis of these propositions.

## Proposition 1 and 2<sup>2</sup>

1. Evangelical practice consists not in this, that we teach and treat nothing except the evangelical message (the Gospel), but in this, that we treat everything in evangelical fashion.
2. This means that since we expect justification before God, the renewal of the heart, and the fruits of the Spirit only through the Gospel, we in everything that we do have this one thing in mind, to give free course and sway to the Gospel.
  1. *Evangelische Praxis besteht nicht darin, dass man nichts als Evangelium, sondern dass man Alles evangelisch handelt.*
  2. *Darunter ist zu verstehen, dass man, weil man die Rechtfertigung vor Gott, die Erneuerung des Herzens und die Fruechte des Geistes nur vom Evangelium erwartet, bei allem was man thut, das Eine im Auge hat, naemlich das Evangelium in Schwang zu bringen.*

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<sup>1</sup> In the comments on the first four propositions the reader will detect a similarity to certain portions of the essayist's article *What is the Function of the Church in Promoting Civic Righteousness*, printed in the previous issue of the *Quartalchrift*. Since the two essays were written in close succession for two different audiences without thought of publication, it was a natural thing to take over carefully worded thoughts which appeared equally pertinent for this analysis.

<sup>2</sup> The English text of these *Propositions on Unevangelical Practice* which was submitted to the essayist for his assignment was taken from the *Concordia Theological Monthly*, Vol. XVI, May, 1945, where it is printed with the following instructive footnotes: "These propositions, written in German, were discussed at the 1862 convention of the Central District of the Missouri Synod. The original number was thirty-two, but lack of time prevented consideration of the last eight, and hence the latter are not given here. The name of the author, or authors, is not mentioned. But since the President of the District, the Rev. H. C. Schwan, later on President of the Missouri Synod, in his presidential address speaks of 'offering' the propositions to the convention, he seems to have been the, or one of the, authors. The translation is largely the work of the sainted P. T. Buszin, School Superintendent of our Northern Illinois District.—A."

Since your essayist found it profitable for his analysis to consult the original German text, it is also being submitted to our readers, taken from the Report of the 1862 Convention of the Central District of the Missouri Synod. The German text was also available in a library copy of 32 *Thesen wider unevangelische Praxis von H. C. Schwan*, evang-luth. Pastor in Cleveland, *herausgegeben von F. Gnauck in Dresden, Justus Naumann's Buchhandlung*. This edition revealed two minor omissions in Theses 19 and 22.

According to Mark 16:15 the Savior before His Ascension told His disciples: “Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.” Here we have the one comprehensive task which Christ our Lord has assigned and entrusted to us as His Church of believers. It is the glorious and privileged task of bringing His Gospel to sinful men that through it they may come to rejoice with us in their justification before God, be renewed in their hearts, and bring forth the fruits of the Spirit. Hence, all of our activity in the discharge of this task should needs be evangelical, that is, in the interest of the Gospel and of the purpose for which God would have it brought to men.

In acknowledging this these opening propositions aim to guard against a misunderstanding. With the commission which the Savior has given to His Church He does not put the saving message of His pardon and grace into contrast to everything else which is revealed to us in the Holy Scriptures committed to His Church. It is true, of course, that only the Gospel message can impart spiritual life and salvation. Still, the Savior’s commission does not restrict our proclamation to the Gospel message in such a way that everything else that is found in His Word is thereby excluded from our task of witnessing. What our Savior does in this great commission is this that He binds everything up with the preaching of His Gospel, for every part of God’s Word somehow stands in close relation to the central Gospel message, serves this message and the purpose for which it is to be brought to sinners. Evangelical practice, therefore, consists in this that we ever keep everything that we teach from God’s Word in its proper Scriptural relation to the central Gospel message. Thus, these opening propositions state: “Evangelical practice consists not in this, that we teach and treat nothing except the evangelical message (Gospel), but in this, that we treat everything in evangelical fashion ... that ... we in everything that we do have this one thing in mind, to give free course and sway to the Gospel.”

These truths also become evident through other passages which sum up the blessed commission entrusted to Christ’s Church of believers. The risen Savior told His disciples: “Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission Of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things.” (Luke 24:47, 48). In Matthew 28:19, 20 we read: “Go ye therefore and teach all nations (more exactly: Ge ye therefore and make disciples of all nations), baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” In these passages we again have the whole duty of the Church toward all men unto the end of time. The Church and every individual believer, in particular also those whom the Church calls to teach and preach publicly, are by these words of the Savior made the stewards of the saving mysteries of God. Through Word and Sacrament Christ’s Church of believers is to bring the message of repentance and remission of sins in Christ’s name to all nations. Yet this includes teaching all things whatsoever He has commanded us, neither departing from His Word nor withholding any part of it. The entire Word of God, which the Church is to proclaim without human alterations, subtractions, or additions, however, stands in close relation to the central message of pardon and salvation. In proclaiming and applying any part of God’s Word to men the Church is to keep it in its proper Scriptural relation to this message and to divorce no part from this message. Only thus will all of its testimony remain a part of the proclamation of the Gospel, the one task assigned to the Church. Only thus will all the activity of the Church in the discharge of its entrusted task remain evangelical.

In this we need to learn from the Apostle Paul. To the elders at Miletus he states concerning his ministry: “I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:26, 27). We need but consider the Epistle to the Romans and all the subject matter of its sixteen chapters to understand what Paul means when he speaks of the whole counsel of God. Yet the same apostle says in the opening verse of Romans that he is separated unto the Gospel of God, and he tells the Corinthians: “I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (I Cor. 2:2). As in his ministry Paul declared all the counsel of God to men, he was ever intent upon keeping every part of it in its proper relation to the Gospel message of the crucified Savior, having ever “this one thing in mind to give free course and sway to the Gospel.”

Evangelical practice, by which we remain faithful in our God-entrusted task, also includes keeping the purpose in mind for which Christ asks us to proclaim His Gospel and then putting our entire testimony into the service of this purpose. It means that we will carefully avoid supplanting this purpose in any way or to any degree with a purpose of our own conceiving. When Christ first told His disciples to go out into all the world and preach the Gospel, the number of believers in Christ was still exceedingly small. It was almost exclusively an unregenerate, unbelieving world to which they were to preach the Gospel. The purpose for which they were to preach it was that of making disciples of all nations, that through their preaching the Holy Spirit might bring ever more sinners to saving faith in Christ. Everything in their testimony was to stand in the service of this purpose. Thus the body of Christ, His Church of believers, would be built up from without. Ever more souls would be added to it. For this purpose we, too, are to bring our Christian testimony to the unregenerate, that they may be converted, that they may become blessed disciples of Christ. With its testimony the Church is not bidden to reform sinners, merely to induce them to lead outwardly decent and orderly lives. With its testimony the Church is not bidden to instruct human government how to maintain a measure of outward peace and order, of outward justice and prosperity in this world. By specifically apportioning any part of its testimony to such purposes the Church would be falling into unevangelical practices.

But the Savior's commission to preach the Gospel to all creatures, which stands unto the end of time, also includes preaching the whole counsel of God to those who have already come to faith. In the fourth chapter of Ephesians St. Paul sets forth the purpose for which it is to be done. He does so as he calls attention to the manifold gifts which the exalted Lord has bestowed upon His Church for the proclamation of the Gospel. The apostle writes, Ephesians 4:11–16: "... and he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers: for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." We see that it is the spiritual purpose of perfecting the saints, of edifying the body of Christ, His believers. To edify means to build up.

The Church is edified, is built up, from within, when those who already belong to it are through God's Word strengthened and furthered in their Christian faith, joy, comfort, understanding, love, and hope. The Christian is built up when through the Gospel he is strengthened in the blessed assurance of faith that for Christ's sake all his sins are blotted out, that he is a dear child of God and rests securely in His fatherly love, that his prayers are acceptable to God and heard, that all things must work together for his good, that a blessed inheritance in heaven, a glorious resurrection unto eternal joy is awaiting him. The Christian is edified when through God's Word he grows in Christian knowledge and understanding: "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love may grow up unto Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ." The Christian is edified when through the Gospel his thankful love toward his Lord and Savior becomes ever more ardent and his child-like awe and reverence before Him ever deeper, so that he is constrained to glorify God ever more fully in all that he thinks, says, and does, letting his words and deeds be motivated and permeated by a faith-born fear and love of God. The Christian is edified when through God's Word he is guided and trained to express his faith-born fear and love of God in every situation of life according to God's holy will. Whatsoever does not serve the edification of Christ's church of believers, either by increasing the number of believers or by furthering those who already are believers in their faith and life, therefore has no place in evangelical practice.

The Church has no call to seek and to wield temporal power, to take an active part in politics, to function as the instructor of civic authority; it is not bidden to be the guardian of public morals, to initiate and to foster social reform. Neither is the Church to pursue the purpose of fostering pride in its own achievements, in the force of its numbers, in its position of importance in the sight of men, in the prominence of its members in the affairs of this world. By losing itself in the pursuit of such purposes it falls into unevangelical practice.

### Proposition 3 and 4

3. For this very reason, when we follow evangelical practice, we do not discard the Law or make its edges dull through bringing in the Gospel, but we rather preach it with all the more seriousness in its full severity, however in evangelical fashion.

4. The Law is used in an evangelical way if it is employed solely for the purpose of preparing the soil for the evangelical message (the Gospel) and of submitting a divine norm for the manifestations of the new life which spontaneously arises through the evangelical message.

3. *Eben deshalb wird bei evang. Praxis das Gesetz nicht etwa bei Seite gestellt oder durch Einmischung von Evangelium abgestumpft, sondern vielmehr mit um so groesserm Ernst in voller Schaerfe, aber in evangelischer Weise gehandhabt.*

4. *Evangelisch wird das Gesetz dann gebraucht, wenn man es lediglich dazu gebraucht, dem Evangelio den Boden zu bereiten und den aus dem Evangelio frei erwachsenden Erweisungen des neuen Lebens die goettliche Richtschnur vorzuehalten.*

*Evangelisch wird das Evangelium dann gebraucht, wenn es Allen und unbedingt und unverkuerzt dargeboten wird.*

These two propositions can again be considered together. They rest on the premise established in the first two that evangelical practice does not consist in this that we teach and preach nothing except the evangelical message, but in this that we treat everything in evangelical fashion, that is, in the interest of the Gospel and the purpose for which the Lord would have us proclaim it.

The third proposition now applies this truth to the message of God's Law. It correctly states that also the Law has a place in evangelical practice, saying: "When we follow evangelical practice we do not discard the Law." Since it is also true that "we expect justification before God, renewal of the heart, and the fruits of the spirit *only* through the Gospel," this third proposition very properly emphasizes that we do not make the edges of the Law dull through bringing in the Gospel. For what could possibly induce anyone to dull the edges of the Law by trying to mix in the Gospel? Would it not be the deliberate or indeliberate thought of holding out some comfort still to the sinner on the basis of the Law? But just this evangelical practice will not do. The Law says: "Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy." (Lev. 19:2). The Law makes the spiritual demand of a perfect love toward God and man in every situation, in every respect, in thought, word, and deed. The Law says: "Whosoever shall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." (James 2:10). The Law says: "Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." (Gal. 3:10). In evangelical practice we will not dull any of these edges of the Law by bringing in the love of God from the Gospel. We will not console the sinner by saying: God indeed has said all this in the Law, but do not despair amidst your faults and imperfections, for God is also longsuffering and kind; He will not demand the impossible from you. Do what you can in your weakness, be sincere in your intentions, and God's mercy will take care of your imperfections. That would mean tearing a patch from the Gospel in order to repair the utterly worthless garment of work righteousness. In evangelical practice we look solely to the Gospel to offer comfort and hope to the sinner. This comfort and hope we seek to glorify and to magnify against the dark background of our sin and its curses. Therefore instead of dulling the edges of the Law, we rather "preach it with all the more seriousness in its full severity, however in evangelical fashion," that is in the interest of the Gospel and its purpose of winning sinners to faith and of perfecting them in faith. The fourth proposition shows what this means, how the Law is used in an evangelical way.

Let us consider first the usefulness of the Law for the church's Gospel testimony to the unregenerate, to those who have not yet come to faith. The use, and the only use that can come into consideration is that of a mirror, that through it sinners be brought to a knowledge of their sins and their utter condemnation before God. As this fourth proposition says, it is employed solely for the purpose of preparing the soil for the evangelical message. The Gospel which the Church is privileged to preach to lost sinners that they may be brought to faith is the message of gracious pardon and salvation through Christ. This message is meaningless and without

appeal unless the sinner fully realizes that of himself he is utterly lost and condemned in his sin and guilt. The comfort of the Gospel does not take root in cold, satiated, secure hearts.

As we study the earthly ministry of our Lord and consider the various instances in which He dealt with people who did not yet believe in Him, we find that He ever used the Law to awaken a knowledge of sin and condemnation. To the lawyer who asked what he should do to inherit eternal life Jesus told the story of the Good Samaritan portraying true love toward the neighbor. But why? Was this picture of love to serve this lawyer as a guide and a rule? Only to His disciples did Jesus unfold the Law as a guide. Jesus held it up before this lawyer because He had given a fine enough summary of the Law and yet clung to the hope of justifying himself. The Savior's parable was to show him that he had not really loved his neighbor as himself and thus also stood under condemnation. Or consider the rich young ruler who had effectively used the Law as a curb and led an outwardly commendable and upright life. Did Jesus finally tell him that as a last thing he should now distribute his goods unto the poor in order that he might rise to even greater heights of civic righteousness? No, Jesus sought to show him that he really loved his possessions above all things and could not inherit eternal life by his works. We will look in vain for instances where Jesus used the Law to promote mere outward decency and order. St. Luke tells us that when "one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me" Jesus "said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a director over you?" This did not belong to the Savior's work. Also the Church, through whom the Savior now continues His prophetic office, can use the Law for only one purpose in its testimony to those who have not yet been won for Christ and as long as they have not been won. It is to use the Law to bring them to the realization that of themselves they are lost and condemned sinners. Only thus is the real message of the Church, its message of gracious salvation and pardon, served. For the sinner must be humbled and crushed before the Gospel can awaken blessed faith in his heart. This is the only use of the Law which fits into evangelical practice toward the unregenerate.

By preaching the Law to unbelievers for the express purpose of leading them to outward decency and uprightness, before they have been converted, the Church would hinder its real work and fall into the role of a reformer. It would contribute toward hardening people in their self-righteousness. For this very reason we also hold that the Church cannot identify itself with the program of Scouting, which is intended for every boy as he is by nature, and which consists in the preaching of the Law as a guide and a rule. By giving the impression of indorsing this program, even though we would modify it in our midst, the Church would be vitiating its testimony and thereby involving itself in unevangelical practice.

By this we do not mean to say that the Church does not in an indirect way promote civic righteousness even in those who do not come to faith in Christ. Through its evangelical testimony to sin and grace, particularly also through the sanctified life of its members, the Church exerts a marked influence also upon the conduct and behavior, the thoughts and judgments of those who are not believers or have not yet come to faith. Their conscience is sharpened, the inscribed Law and their natural knowledge of God is confirmed. Thus the faithful testimony of the apostolic Church in word and deed and its growth through such faithful testimony had a remarkable influence upon the social order of its day, eradicating many of its abuses. Yet these things were and still are mere by-products of the Church's God-given activities. Let the Church be true to its God-given function, follow evangelical practice, and God will also bring forth the by-products according to His purposes of making this earthly life a time of grace.

In following evangelical practice the Church will, however, preach the Law also to those who have already come to faith, to its members. Because of his flesh, which still clings to him, because of the bitter battle which he must wage with his Old Adam in his daily life of sanctification, the Christian needs the Law in all of its uses, as a curb, as a mirror, and as a guide. That our flesh may be terrified and restrained in its evil lusts we need to hear what God says of the works of the flesh, how He hates sin and punishes sin; we need the warning: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption." Lest our flesh deceive us and lead us to think lightly of sin and thus lightly also of the Savior who delivered us from sin and its curses, we need to hear the holy will of God that we may continue to realize our own sin and helplessness and our great need of a Savior. Thus also for the

Christian the Law continues to serve in preparing the soil of his heart ever anew for the Gospel message and its saving and sanctifying functions.

Yet the Christian also needs to hear the Law as a guide for a God-pleasing life—or to use the language of this fourth proposition—as “a divine norm for the manifestation of the new life which spontaneously arises through the evangelical message.” Through the Gospel the Holy Spirit has brought the Christian to faith and now dwells in his heart; through the Gospel the Holy Spirit continually glorifies the Savior and His precious gifts before the Christian’s soul. Thereby the Holy Spirit fills his heart with thankful love and reverent awe toward his God and Savior, incites him to an ardent desire and willingness to do God’s will in all of his thoughts, words, and deeds. But because the Christian here on earth still has his sinful flesh clinging to him, darkening his understanding and confusing his judgment, he needs to have God’s Word unfold the holy and immutable will of his God so that in every station and relation of life he may express his faith-born fear and love of God in a manner pleasing to the Lord. Thus the Church is to show its members from God’s Word what it really means to fear, love, and trust God above all things, how His Name and His Word are to be hallowed. Through God’s Word the Church is to instruct Christians concerning the God-pleasing relation between parents and children, teacher and pupil, pastor and congregation, employer and employee. Through God’s Word the Church is to lead its members to a true understanding of civic authority which God has ordained, to a true understanding of its function and of the obligation which rests upon those in authority and upon those under authority. The Church is to show Christians from God’s Word how He would have husband and wife live in unbroken wedlock which He has instituted, what constitutes a chaste and decent life in word and deed, what true love toward the neighbor will do and not do in respect to his life and health, his possessions, his good name and reputation. To this end the Church will also throw the illuminating light of God’s Word upon all the patterns of human conduct and behavior which surround and confront Christians at their particular time and in their particular environment. Yet how far is the Church to do this? It can only pass judgment on those things to which it can apply a clear Word of God. It will not presume to give instruction concerning matters on which God’s Word has not spoken, on matters which lie in the realm of human reason and judgment. Thesis 12 takes up this thought when it states that evangelical practice lets *adiaphora* remain real *adiaphora*, that is, it leaves the decision concerning them to the conscience of the individual.

In his epistles, where we see the Apostle Paul giving guidance for a God-pleasing life, for the manifestations of the new life born of the Gospel; we have a fine picture of evangelical practice. We find that he gave this guidance with constant reference to pagan conduct and behavior as it confronted those to whom he was writing. He also took full note of the social order in which they were living. Let us mark, however, that in such guidance he was speaking to the members of Christ’s flock and only to them. He told the Corinthians: “For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? . . . them that are without God judges” (I Cor. 5:12). He, of course, corrected the wrong impression which some seem to have gotten that as Christians they were now to separate themselves outwardly from all the unbelievers and not to have any contact with them even in the external affairs of life. Not outwardly but spiritually they were to be separated from the unbelievers, having no part in their pagan idols, ideals, and lusts, no fellowship with their unfruitful works of darkness. He exhorted the believers to be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation and shine as lights in the world. As a Gospel messenger of the Lord the Apostle Paul did not consider it his function to advocate or initiate social changes, to abolish the institution of slavery, to change the outward pattern of family life, to bring about a more democratic form of government. Rather within the existing social order he exhorted Christians to lead their lives as joyful, thankful children of God and to shun the abuses and vices that commonly prevailed in this social order. He exhorted Christians to love their wives even as Christ loved the church; Christian wives to submit themselves to their husbands as unto the Lord; masters to be merciful and to forbear threatening, knowing that they also have a Master in heaven; slaves to be dutiful, not with eye service as men-pleasers, but as servants of Christ doing the will of God from the heart; fathers not to provoke their children to wrath, but to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

## Proposition 5

5. It is not evangelical practice to cast the pearls before the swine, but much less is it evangelical practice to keep them in one's own pocket.

5. *Es ist nicht evangelische Praxis, die Perlen des Evangelii vor die Saeue zu werfen; noch viel weniger aber, sie in der Tasche zu behalten.*

This proposition warns against unevangelical practice which lies in two opposite directions. It warns against two ways of dealing with the Savior's commission to preach His Gospel which are both unevangelical because they have this in common that they do not manifest a deep appreciation of the Gospel and of the blessed purpose for which the Savior would have us proclaim it.

The thesis says, first of all: "It is not evangelical practice to cast the pearls before the swine." Therewith it alludes to the Savior's exhortation recorded in Matthew 7:6: "Neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you." The Savior had voiced an earnest warning against loveless hypocritical judging. Here He points out that as we refrain from judging others in a loveless manner this is not to mean that we are to neglect to note something that is very manifest concerning others and then fail to take it into consideration in our actions. Jesus brings this home to us by a very vivid and striking figure. That swine have no appreciation for precious pearls is something that is very manifest concerning them. That is something that they demonstrated before our eyes through all of their characteristic habits and actions. Should we therefore cast some pearls before them, we have nothing else to expect of them than this that they would trample the pearls under foot in the hope and delusion that they are a handful of peas or corn kernels with which to fill their stomachs. We have also this to expect of swine that when they realize that we did not give them what they looked for, but rather something for which they have no appreciation, they will turn around in a rage of displeasure and attack us. Hence it is reprehensible to cast pearls before swine. In the face of what is apparent and inevitable this would show an utter lack of appreciation for the priceless pearls; it would also mean putting our safety into jeopardy in a foolhardy manner.

Just so the Savior does not want us to cast our pearls, the pearls of His Gospel, before those who through their words and actions have made it quite manifest that they will accord our testimony a very similar treatment. When we consider whether this warning word of our Savior applies to any given situation, we need to decide this wholly on the points that are emphasized in the figurative language in which the warning is clothed. We ought not to inject any other point of comparison on which we may not be willing to designate those as swine from whom we feel constrained to withhold our testimony. No, we are to ask ourselves: are we dealing with people who through word and deed have made it quite manifest that they have no appreciation for the truth of God's Word which we would be testifying before them, who would be looking for other things in permitting us to bring this testimony, so that the Word of God would be trampled under foot in the procedure and we would in a foolhardy manner be exposing ourselves to spiritual danger? Scripture has such a situation in mind when it says: "A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject," when it bids us not to walk in the counsel of the ungodly nor to sit in the seat of the scornful. This warning of the Savior would also be disregarded if we should enter into fellowship with manifest unionists in the hope of bringing effective testimony in such a fellowship. Of course, an evangelical application of this warning will always presuppose that it is born out of a deep appreciation of God's Word, our bread of life, which makes us unwilling to lose any part of it, unwilling also to expose to danger the spiritual life which this Word has implanted and sustained in our hearts.

The proposition goes on to say: "But much less is it evangelical practice to keep them in one's pocket." What is the "much less" to express? These words certainly do not want to say that of two things that are wrong and displeasing to God the one is the lesser evil and thus the one to choose if a choice must be made. That in itself would be a thought that would be wholly unevangelical. We hold that the author of these propositions merely chose this particular wording because he was writing out of the conviction that those whom he was

addressing, because of their conservative stand, were in greater danger of falling into the latter form of unevangelical practice.

The earnest warning needs to be heeded. It must immediately be said, however, that the danger of keeping the Gospel in our pocket when we ought to be giving it out is not caused by the fact that we are conscious of the Savior's warning not to cast the pearls before the swine, not caused by the fact that we heed it out of a deep appreciation for His Gospel. This shows an evangelical spirit which will never cause a lack of zeal for the spreading of the Gospel. Thus we also know from the history of the Church that those who have been sensitive about keeping God's Word pure and of avoiding spiritual dangers have often also been the very men who showed the greatest zeal for the proclamation of the Gospel. As in all unevangelical practice it is our flesh and our flesh alone which could induce us to keep the precious pearls of the Gospel from those to whom the Lord would have us extend them. It is our sinful flesh which ever undermines our thankfulness toward the Savior and our faithborn love toward all the sinners whom He has redeemed. It is this sinful flesh which will tempt us to mis-apply the Savior's warning about casting our pearls before the swine, to use it as pretext for withholding our testimony in situations which merely our flesh finds unpleasant and inconvenient and demanding unwelcome sacrifices and efforts. It never applies where we still have an obligation to carry out toward the weak, and the Scriptures have a great deal to say about that obligation. It never applies to those who are still ready to listen to our testimony. Note that the Savior did not apply this thought when He met with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well, social outcast though she was. Note also that Paul did not apply it over against the Galatians, who, though affected by error and entangled in it, were still open for instruction.

### Proposition 6

6. Evangelical practice drops not one iota of the things which God demands, but it demands nothing else and no more than faith and love.

6. *Evangel. Praxis erlaesst kein Iota von dem, was Gott erfordert; fordert aber nichts anderes und mehr, als Glauben und Liebe.*

We understand this proposition in this wise: Evangelical practice will not disregard anything that is revealed in God's Word as a part of His holy and immutable will; it will not set aside or ignore the least part of anything that God has commanded or forbidden. Still evangelical practice never thinks of the various things which God according to His Word seeks in us as so many individual, unrelated items which we are to render to God. It rather thinks of every fulfillment of God's commandments as an expression of the Christian's thankful love toward God and of his trust in Him as his heavenly Father through Christ. It is this trust which calls forth the Christian's thankful love and which alone makes it possible. Only in such expressions of faith and love is evangelical practice at all interested. It seeks no other kind of fulfillment of God's commandments. In the evangelical manner of Luther in his Catechism explanation evangelical practice ever leads the fulfillment of all divine commandments back to this that we fear, love, and trust in God above all things.

### Proposition 7

7. Evangelical practice demands manifestation of faith and love if we desire to be saved, but it does not issue commands about their various manifestations as far as aim, amount, and mode are concerned.

7. *Evang. Praxis fordert Beweisung des Glaubens und der Liebe bei Seelen Seligkeit; giebt aber ueber die einzelnen Erweisungen derselben nach Ziel, Mass und Weise kein Gebot.*

Like in the previous proposition so also here the German "*fordert*" is translated by the English term "demands." We feel that the connotation of legal compulsion, which invariably is associated with the word



“demand,” need not necessarily lie in “*fordern*.” It is not associated with this word when it is used in our confessional writings, and we feel that it is not implied here. Then there is the German phrase “*bei Seelen Seligkeit*,” reproduced by the paraphrase: “if we desire to be saved.” We hold that the translation “on peril of our salvation” would be more exact. For the thought is wholly that of not losing our salvation; the matter of gaining salvation is not touched upon.

In evangelical practice we teach and testify, of course, that through faith alone we are saved, that through faith we come to enjoy all the blessings of salvation which our Savior has won for us. At the same time, however, we shall not fail to state that such God-given faith, if it really is that, will manifest itself. For faith is spiritual life, and life will of necessity express itself. St. James writes: “Faith without works is dead.” If therefore in an individual manifestations of faith are hardly perceptible, this is an indication that his spiritual life of faith is at a very low ebb and in great danger of dying out with loss of his salvation. St. Paul says of saving faith that it worketh by love. (Gal. 5:6). That it works by love, of course, does not make it saving faith. But because it is God-given saving faith, faith which joyfully embraces God’s gift of salvation, it inevitably will work by love. Jesus states this in a beautiful figure, John 15:5: “I am the vine, ye are the branches; he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit.” If fruits of love are therefore very little in evidence, we have reason to fear that such a person is in the greatest danger of ceasing to be a living branch of Christ, the heavenly vine, and thus in great danger of losing his salvation with the loss of his faith. Thus Scripture exhorts: “Follow ... holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.” (Heb. 12:14.)

As soon, however, as we undertake to prescribe the extent and the manner in which saving faith is to manifest itself, as soon as we prescribe the amount and the degree of love by which faith is to work, we fall into unevangelical practice. There is only one way to stimulate the fruits of the Spirit, only one way to cause them to abound, and that is by nourishing and building up the faith of the individual through the Gospel.

### **Proposition 8**

8. Evangelical practice demands fulfillment of even the smallest letter of the Law, but it does not make the state of grace dependent on the keeping of the Law.

8. *Ev. Praxis fordert Erfuellung auch des kleinsten Buchstabens im Gesetz; macht aber am Halten des Gesetzes den Gnadenstand nicht abhaengig.*

The demanding spoken of here must again be understood in the only sense in which evangelical practice ever demands anything. It includes the fulfillment of even the smallest letter of the Law in that fulfillment which comes into consideration for the Christian. For the believing child of God everything that is a part of God’s holy will is precious, sacred, and holy. The will of the Christian according to his new man agrees wholly with the will of his Heavenly Father. For the new man the thought, therefore, never occurs to set aside, to slight, or to ignore any part of God’s holy will. Paul says: “I delight in the law of God after the inward man” (Rom. 7:22). And that means in all of the Law of God without any exception.

Therefore also evangelical practice will not make any distinctions; it will not treat any part of God’s holy will as unimportant and inconsequential. Evangelical practice also bears in mind however, that every Christian must confess with St. Paul: “But I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.” Evangelical practice is aware of the fact that for this very reason the Christian will never attain a perfect fulfillment of God’s law in his life. As it encourages the Christian to strive for dominion over the flesh on every point of God’s Law, it nevertheless does not make His state of grace dependent on this that he has met with perfect success. No, for the assurance of his state of grace evangelical practice will direct the Christian solely and alone to the perfect righteousness of Christ, which has been imputed to him by faith and which ever gives him new strength and willingness to mortify his flesh and to strive for what is pleasing in God’s sight.

### Proposition 9 and 10

9. Evangelical practice endeavors indeed to prepare the way for the operations of the Gospel by the Law; but it does not endeavor to aid the Gospel in its real functions by the Law; and since it expects the fruits of the Spirit to be produced solely by the Gospel, it is willing to wait for them, too.

*9. Ev. Praxis sucht der Wirkung des Evangelii durch das Gesetz zwar vorzuarbeiten, aber nicht nachzuhelfen; und weil sie die Fruechte des Geistes allein vom Evangelio erwartet, so kann sie auf dieselben auch warten.*

The temptation is ever present in the church of becoming impatient in waiting for the Gospel to bring forth the fruits of Christian life. Thus the thought arises to come to the aid of the Gospel, to supplement it with rules and regulations. When, for example, the work of the church at home and on the mission field does not receive the desired support in our congregations, we are greatly tempted to take recourse to some rigid regulations which would simply obligate all members to make certain contributions if they wish to remain in good standing, if they wish to be considered Christians; and if not that, to shame them into greater liberality, or to make a strong appeal to their pride in an endeavor, or to stress stewardship in such a way that it is felt as a burdensome compulsion from without rather than a joyful service. Since similar methods are often effective in earthly affairs, the thought so easily arises that they should also be proper and effective in church life. This seems so much easier than to win the thankful gifts of our members by patiently glorifying the Savior of sinners before their hearts and showing them how He alone has help for all of their needs, so that they are moved from within to express their thankfulness and to respond gladly to opportunities pointed out to them.

To mention another example: we often see that the Lord's Supper is being sadly neglected by so many in our Christian congregations, and we are tempted to remedy the situation by simply emphasizing a certain frequency of attendance at the Lord's table as an essential requirement of good Christian life. That, too, seems so much easier than patiently to awaken an ever deeper longing for Holy Communion in Christian hearts by setting forth its rich benefits and their constant need of these blessings.

Rules and regulations cannot supplement the Gospel or nourish the life of faith and love which the Gospel alone produces in human hearts. By employing them with this intent in administering the Gospel we make the fatal mistake of pouring the new wine of the Gospel into old bottles. The Gospel is endangered. Christians are easily misled to place their hope and assurance, at least to a degree, in the performance of certain outward deeds and ceremonies, and thus their hearts are drawn away from the Gospel of salvation as a pure gift of God's grace. The message that we sinners are justified freely by God's grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus is a precious new wine, which we want to see preserved to the last drop. It is the power of God unto salvation. It gives sinners the assurance of faith that their sins are forgiven, that they are at peace with God, that they are God's dear children and heirs of His glory. Through these blessed assurances of faith the Gospel gives power and willingness for a new life of obedience and service.

At the same time, however, the flesh is opposing, undermining, and weakening this new life of faith which the Gospel has called forth. Thus Christians are kept from fully expressing their faith in all that they say and do. They are still misled into doing many things which are not in harmony with their faith, and they still fail to carry out many of the God-pleasing things in which they have their delight according to the inward man. The weaker the faith of the individual still is, the more will such sinful shortcomings show themselves. Christians are therefore in constant need of hearing the clear testimony of God's holy law that they may come to a full realization of their sinful shortcomings and faults. Yet the power to overcome them can only come from the Gospel, from its assurance of grace and salvation, so that for his Savior's sake the Christian suppresses his Old Adam, wherever he has still given way to his fleshly promptings and now willingly carries out God's will also in those matters in which he has still been sadly remiss. Therefore we also heartily concur with *Proposition 10*.

10. Evangelical practice considers nothing that does not come through the Gospel, that is, through faith; therefore it rather bears with all manner of defects, imperfections, and sins than to remove them merely in an external manner.

10. *Ev. Praxis haelt Alles, was nicht aus dem Evangelio d. i. aus dem Glauben erwachsen ist, fuer keinen wesentlichen Gewinn; traegt deshalb lieber allerlei Maengel, Uebelstaende und Suenden, als dass sie dieselben bloss aeusserlich beseitigt.*

### Proposition 11

11. Evangelical practice limits pastoral care (Seelsorge) to specific applications of the Law and the Gospel; the scrutiny and judging of the hearts it leaves to God, the Searcher of hearts.

11. *Ev. Pr. beschaenkt die Seelsorge auf specielle Application des Gesetzes und des Evangelii; das Erforschen und Richten des Herzens ueberlaesst sie dem Herzenskuendiger.*

In His Word our Savior earnestly warns against hypocrisy; in His name we, too, are to warn against the sin of hypocrisy. Yet in our pastoral care of individuals we have no responsibility to carry out over against hypocrites or in respect to hidden sins, for the simple reason that we cannot know them. This is a realm which the Lord has reserved for Himself; He alone searches the hearts and discerns also the hidden things. It would be a false and unevangelical zeal if we should presume to meddle with that which belongs to the Lord alone. We have no testimony to bring on the basis of mere suspicion. We shall refrain from seeking to ferret out hidden sins, from playing the part of a spiritual detective; we shall desist from ascribing and judging motives which are not expressed. Except for those things which God in His Word says of every human heart, we shall restrict ourselves to rebuking and reproving those sins which have become manifest by word or deed. Even so, it behooves us as humble and grateful children of our Heavenly Father to bear patiently with the conscious weaknesses and frailties of our fellow-Christians. When it is obvious enough that the Christian is himself earnestly battling against certain sins, there is no need for making them the subject for pastoral admonition.

### Proposition 12

12. Evangelical practice insists on good human order, but still more does it insist on Christian liberty, and for that reason its *adiaphora* remain real *adiaphora*, that is, it leaves the decision concerning them to the conscience of the individual.

12. *Ev. Pr. haelt auf gute menschliche Ordnung; vielmehr aber auf christliche Freiheit and laesst deshalb Mitteldinge auch wirklich Mitteldinge bleiben, d. h. ueberlaesst sie schliesslich dem Gewissen des Einzelnen.*

Evangelical practice insists on good human order, that is, it sees value in good human order and therefore stresses and emphasizes it. The original German wording says: “*Evangelische Praxis haelt auf gute menschliche Ordnung.*” Why? Because through good human order the interests of our faith and of our faith-born love are met. For example: our faith needs nourishment through the public administration of the means of grace. Thus Christian congregations will provide for such public worship with the help of good human order, agreeing not only on the days and the appointed hours of worship but also on the order of service. Again, their faith-born love desires to provide for the means which are necessary to make the public administration of the means of grace through public servants of the Word possible. Hence, they agree upon some orderly way of ascertaining that all the needed gifts of love will be at hand, let us say through a system of individual pledges. So in a host of ways good human order serves the interests of our faith and of our faith-born love.

The proposition goes on to say: “but still more does it insist on Christian liberty and for that reason it lets □□□□□□□□ remain real □□□□□□□□, that is, it leaves the decision concerning them to the conscience of the individual.” By failing to reproduce one word of the original German wording the translation has made it more difficult to grasp the force of the addition. In the final clause the original reads: “*d. h.*

*ueberlaesst sie schliesslich dem Gewissen des Einzelnen.*” The word *schliesslich* is not translated. We feel, however, that it is very vital to the thought and thus suggests the translation: “that is, it *ultimately* leaves the decision concerning them to the conscience of the individual.”

Thus the second portion of the proposition wishes to point out that in its stress on good human order evangelical practice does not lose sight of the higher consideration of preserving our Christian liberty. Christian liberty is not used here in its widest and its basic sense as referring directly to the glorious deliverance from the guilt, the curse, and the dominion of sin which Christ has won for us and which has been imparted to us in faith. Christian liberty is here used in the narrower sense as referring to one of the fruits of this basic liberty, namely to this that in a wide realm the Lord lets His New Testament children freely choose the forms in which they enjoy and express the precious liberty which Christ has won for them. As they, therefore, establish good human order in this realm of *adiaphora* in which the Lord has neither forbidden nor bidden anything, they will always do it in such a way as to leave the ultimate decision concerning the observance of this order to the conscience of the individual. They may strongly urge all the considerations of love which cause this human order to be established, but they will not make its observance an absolute must. We may urge all the worthy considerations which have moved us to agree upon a uniform order of services in the public worship of our congregations. Yet, we will not make it a matter of conscience for a congregation to comply with it under all circumstances. Again, if out of some personal apprehension which he finds difficult to overcome an individual member of a congregation would rather make his gifts for the support of the ministry of the Word without using the pledge system on which the congregation has agreed, this privilege will be granted to him. The other side of the problem, one which this proposition does not touch upon, is, of course, this that an individual Christian will never want to invoke his Christian liberty in an arbitrary manner, with an uncharitable disregard for all the considerations which have led to the establishment of some measure of good human order.

### Proposition 13

13. Evangelical practice is faithful in little things; yet it considers matters in their larger aspects and totality more important than individual details.

13. *Ev. Pr. ist treu im Kleinen, hat aber doch mehr das Ganze im Auge, als das Einzelne.*

This proposition is difficult to translate, so that the original needs to be consulted.

The proposition does state that evangelical practice is faithful in little things, *ist treu im Kleinen*. We do not feel that the rest of the proposition in any way wishes to detract from that faithfulness or discourage it in favor of something more important. We hold that the rest of the sentence rather wishes to define more fully this evangelical faithfulness in little things, in details; it wishes to show how it properly expresses itself and to guard it against perversion. It places this faithfulness into contrast to an atomistic treatment of individual points of Christian truth or of individual aspects of Christian life.

Paul exemplifies this evangelical faithfulness in the manner in which he met the individual errors which troubled his congregations. Judaizers had invaded the group of congregations which Paul had founded in Galatia, teaching the people that, though salvation had been won for them by Christ, they must submit to circumcision and observe the Mosaic festivals. Paul does not isolate this error and attack it with direct arguments, merely showing that the Mosaic Law was no longer in effect. Paul did not think of this error all by itself. Devoting an entire epistle to the problem created by this error, Paul built up the faith of his hearers in Christ, their only and all-sufficient Savior, showing them that their error conflicted with the place of Christ in God’s plan of salvation, that this error really set His glorious work aside. “Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the Law.” In the same manner the apostle met the Gnostic error at Colosse through an entire epistle, in which he again built up these Christians in their precious faith in their Savior to give them strength and understanding to overcome the error that had affected them. Thus we see that

in his faithfulness in helping Christians to overcome individual errors Paul ever considered them in the wider setting of the entire Gospel truth and of the entire faith life of the Christians who were troubled by them.

When we find Christians weak in some point of Christian life, we will in all faithfulness seek to overcome this weakness in them. Yet in that very faithfulness we will not want to consider this weakness as a thing all by itself. We will rather see the need of nourishing and building up the faith and Christian understanding of such a weak Christian that he may be stimulated to a more fervent love toward his God and Savior, so that he may be moved to express his faith-born love also on the point on which a weakness manifested itself.

### Proposition 14

14. To be wise as serpents, to redeem the time, not to let Satan gain an advantage over us, to become all things to all men in order that by all means some might be saved, are likewise elements of evangelical practice.

14. *Klug sein, wie die Schlangen—sich in die Zeit schicken—sich vom Satan nicht uebervortheilen lassen—jedermann allerlei werden, um allenthalben etliche selig zu machen—sind auch Stuecke evangelischer Praxis.*

There can be no doubt about the fact that these Scriptural precepts are elements of evangelical practice. It is vital, of course, that we understand and apply them correctly.

We are merely God's instruments in bringing His Word to sinful men. It is not a part of our calling, nor does it lie within our power, to make the Word of God effective. God's Word has its own inherent power to effect its salutary purpose. Natural man wants to work out his own salvation, is wise in his own conceits, vainly insists on recognition of his own merits. Yet God's Word is equal to the situation, it has power to reprove natural man, to convict him of his utter guilt and condemnation before God. God's Word manifests this power through its message of the Law. But even when the sinner is thus reprovved and convicted of his sin and condemnation he is still at enmity with God. Yet God's Word is profitable for correction. Through its Gospel message it awakens faith in the sinner's heart and in such faith comforts him with the assurance of pardon, life, and salvation. Finally, God's Word is profitable for instruction, for training. It constantly nourishes, strengthens, preserves the believer in faith, fills his heart with thankful love, constrains and guides him to do what is pleasing in God's sight. God's Word has such power to turn men from their vanities to salvation, such power to set them free, because it is God's Word, His power unto salvation.

Being wise as serpents, becoming all things to all men that by all means some might be saved never means taking liberties with the Word of God, adapting it to what men may be willing and ready to hear, taking off some of the sharp edges of the Law, making the Gospel less of an offense to them, or in general making some compromises and concessions on individual points of God's message. It is not for us to streamline God's Word into an effective message for our day. We are to proclaim God's Word, the whole counsel of God, just as He has given it to us.

All of these precepts mentioned in this proposition are rather exhortations addressed to us who are entrusted with the privilege of serving as God's instruments in bringing this saving Word to men that in our conduct, in our attitude, in our manner of approaching men, and of bringing our testimony before them we do not put hindrances of our own in the way of God's Word and its wholesome effect. We are to be wise as serpents in this respect and not to create any stumbling blocks of our making. We are to be on guard that we do not let Satan gain an advantage over us through our tactlessness, our half-heartedness, our use of poor judgment, our lack of meekness, our unwillingness to inconvenience ourselves, to expend effort and to make sacrifices.

The Lord bids us to walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. (Col. 4:5.) We are not to let our opportunities for effective testimony slip by, but to make the most of them, willing to pay the

necessary price in effort and whatever else may be demanded. In the same context St. Paul admonishes: “Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.”

In his letter to the Corinthians Paul uses his own example to show how he, being free from all men, made himself a servant unto all that he might win the more. He did this that he might conduct himself as a partaker of the Gospel. He says, for example: “To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak.” He does not say that he pretended to be weak or acted as one who was weak, but he placed himself into the position of the weak; he actually made their problems his own and fought their battles in his own heart. In this way he cultivated the ability to deal with the weak on their own level and thus to win them. In Gal. 1:6 he uses the figure of placing one’s self under the other man’s burden, exhorting: “Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” It is in this way that we are to become all things to all men in order that by all means some might be saved. We shall do this in the manner of a shepherd who is untiring in his search for a stray sheep. This is the evangelical practice to which we are moved as we truly live in the Gospel.

### Propositions 15, 21, and 22

15. Evangelical practice is equally far removed from Antinomian and from legalistic practice.

21. Legalistic practice does not consist in this, that one does not treat anything except the Law, but in this, that one treats everything in a legalistic manner, that is, in such a way that one’s main aim is to see to it that the Law gets its due and that one tries to accomplish through the Law or even through laws what only the Gospel can accomplish.

22. In addition, the more (as is often the case where the inner motive power really still is the Law) fiery zeal asserts itself which not even permits love to be the queen of all commandments, which spurns Christian wisdom as its counselor, and which even when it appears merely to teach, to reprove or to admonish, in reality applies coercion, and at that the worst kind of it, namely, moral coercion—all the more unevangelical our practice gets to be.

15. *Ev. Pr. ist ebensoweit von antinomistischer als von gesetzlicher Praxis entfernt.*

21. *Gesetzliche Praxis besteht nicht darin, dass man nichts als Gesetz, sondern Alles gesetzlich treibt, d. h. also treibt, dass man vor Allein darauf ausgeht, dass dem Gesetz sein Recht geschehe, und dass man durchs Gesetz oder gar durch Gesetze ausrichten will, was nur das Evangelium ausrichten kann.*

22. *Je mehr nun dazu noch (wie das oft geschieht, wo das innerlich Treibende eigentlich noch das Gesetz ist) der treibende Eifer schlaegt, der nicht einmal die Liebe die Koenigin der Gebote bleiben laesst, die Weisheit als Rathgeberin verschmaeht, und selbst clann, wann er nur zu lehren, zu strafen oder zu ermahnen waehnt, doch eigentlich Zwang, und zwar den schlimmsten, naemlich moralischen Zwang anwendet—je unevangelischer wird die Praxis.*

In view of everything that has already been stated in previous propositions this 15th thesis hardly calls for much comment. Evangelical practice neither dispenses with the God-intended functions of the Law in our Gospel ministry, nor does it use the Law for purposes for which it is not meant and which it cannot accomplish. What is meant by such legalistic practice is clearly unfolded in propositions 21 and 22.

### Propositions 16–20, and 23

16. Evangelical knowledge and disposition should issue in evangelical practice, but do so rather seldom and slowly.

17. Usually we do not advance beyond legalism, or we fall into Antinomian laxity; to such an extent the Gospel is foreign to our nature.

18. There is danger in both directions. For us at present the greater danger is still in the direction of legalism.
19. Apart from the natural tendency of the old Adam and our origin in pietistic circles, etc., our present situation and the necessary reaction against the prevailing moral laxity in principles and in life are responsible for this state of affairs.
20. Or how many are there not who secretly fear more to give the blessings of the Gospel to an unworthy person than to deny them to a poor sinner or to curtail them? Whose conscience is not hindering him to follow the example of Paul and to become all things to all men? But where this is the case, one surely still finds legalistic practice.
23. Unevangelical, legalistic practice is found not only in churches and congregations, but likewise in schools and in the homes, and besides in our fraternal intercourse.
16. *Aus evangelischer Erkenntniss und Gesinnung sollte wohl evangelische Praxis fliessen; thuts aber selten und langsam.*
17. *Wir bleiben meist in Gesetzlichkeit stecken, oder fallen in antinomistische Schlawheit. So fremd ist der Natur das Evangelium.*
18. *Es ist Gefahr nach heiden Seiten; fuer uns bis jetzt noch mehr nach der gesetzlichen Seite hin.*
19. *Von dem natuerlichen Hange des alten Adam, dem Herkommen aus dem Pietismus u. a. abgesehen—bringt das schon unsere hiesige Lage und die noethige Reaction gegen die herrschende Zuchtlosigkeit in Lehre und Leben mit sich.*
20. *Oder wie viel sind ihrer, die nicht heimlich doch noch mehr Angst davor haetten, einem Unwuerdigen die Gueter des Evangelii zu spenden, als davor, dieselben dem Beduerftigen zu versagen oder zu verkuerzen? Were staende nicht sein Gewissen im Wege, nach St. Pauli Vorgang Allen Alles zu werden?—Wo es aber so steht, da findet sich sicherlich auch noch gesetzliche Praxis.*
23. *Unevangelisch-gesetzliche Praxis findet sich nicht bloss im Kirchen- und Gemeinde- sondern auch im Schul- und HausRegiment, so wic im bruederlichen Verkehr.*

These propositions call for less comment. They are of the nature of an earnest exhortation to examine our conduct and practice, as to whether we are really translating our understanding of the Gospel into life and action. They are meant to make us deeply aware of the fact that the Gospel is utterly foreign to our old Adam, which makes us all too blind to many practices which are not in harmony with the Gospel and which so easily misleads us to cling to them out of sheer force of habit. It is the exhortation of the Apostle Paul: "If we live in the spirit let us also walk in the spirit." There is, of course, only one remedy. We need to turn all the more diligently and incessantly to God's Word, the fountain of all spiritual life, that built up in faith we may live more fully in the Gospel and by the Gospel.

#### **Proposition 24**

24. The instances of unevangelical practice which are still most frequent with us in the realm of ministerial work, the cure of souls, and congregational government are perhaps the following:
24. *Die noch am meisten vorkommenden Beispiele im Predigtamt, Seelsorge und Gemeinderegierung moechten folgende sein:*

The wealth of material which now follows cannot possibly be analyzed in all of its details in the period allotted to this discussion. While it points out many unevangelical trends against which we, too, need earnestly to be warned, there are in our opinion also statements found here which can easily be misunderstood and themselves lead to unevangelical practice. We shall content ourselves with pointing this out in a few instances.

- a. In sermons: overabundant castigation (*durchgeisseln*) of individual sins, unwholesome conditions or perhaps even of matters of personal dislike—the portraying of well-known sins of well-known persons,

instead of laying bare the bitter roots out of which all evil fruits grow—mere so-called testifying without real instruction and admonition—unnecessary or premature or unedifying polemics—urging that repentance and faith be manifested, instead of preaching that which produces repentance and faith—a pietistic classification of the hearers—attaching conditions to the Gospel promises (*Verklausulierung des Evangelii*)—preaching faith preponderatingly as to its sanctifying power—presentation of the grace of God only to build demands on such presentation.

a. *In Predigten: Durchgeisseln einzelner Suenden, Uebelstaende oder gar nur persoendlich missliebiger Dinge—, Abmalen bekannter Personen; anstatt die bittere Wurzel aufzudecken, aus welcher alle boesen Fruechte wachsen.—Blosses sogenanntes Zeugnis ablegen ohne eigentliche Belehrung und Ermahnung. Unnoethiges oder verfruehtes oder unerbauliches Polemisiren.—Ermahnen zu Busse und Glauben, anstatt das zu predigen, was Busse und Glauben wirkt.—Pietistisches Classificiren der Zuhoerer—Verklausuliren des Evangelii—Vorwiegende Darstellung des Glaubens nach seiner heiligenden Kraft.—Verkuendigung der Gnade Gottes nur urn alsobald Forderungen darauf zu bauen.*

b. With respect to Confession and the Lord's Supper: To demand more for admission than is absolutely required for its salutary use—schoolroom catechizing and inquisitorial searching of the heart of those announcing—postponing reproof till announcement for Communion or Confession—to use refusal of Holy Communion as a coercive, terrifying or disciplinary means—to refuse even when a state of unrepentance cannot be proved;

b. *Bei Beichte und Heil. Abendmahl: Als Bedingung der Zulassung mehr fordern, als zu heilsamen Gebrauch unentbehrlich ist.—Schulmaessiges Katechismus- und inquisitorisches Herzensverhoer.—Aufsparung dessen, was etwa zu strafen ist, auf die Anmeldung oder Beichte.—Drohen mit Abendmahlsversagung als Zwang-, Schreck- oder Zucht-Mittel.—Abweisung ausser bei erweislicher Unbussfertigkeit.*

c. With respect to Baptism: To be either entirely unwilling to baptize children of heretics or unbelieving people who, however, are in contact with the Word (*die unter dem Schall des Wortes leben*), even if there is no intrusion in somebody else's domain (*in ein fremd Amt greifen*) or only after various human guarantees have been given—to put acceptance of sponsors on a level with admission to Holy Communion.

c. *Bei Taufen: Kinder von Irrgläubigen oder Gottlosen, die doch unter dem Schalle des Wortes leben, auch wenn dabei in kein fremd Amt gegriffen wird, entweder gar nicht, oder nur unter allerlei menschlichen Garantien taufen wollen.—Zulassung zur Pathenschaft auf gleiche Linie mit Annahme zum Sacrament stellen.*

An outright refusal to perform such a baptism no longer seems to be very likely in our midst. There may be the other danger, however, of not accomplishing our willingness to perform such a baptism with the proper testimony, of clearly setting forth the consideration, the soul's welfare of the child, which makes us willing to perform the baptism, so that these unchurched people may not be strengthened in considering baptism as a mere form, nor remain unreminded of the obligation which they have toward the spiritual welfare of their child. Also the other danger is great, that our future responsibility toward such a child, which we have baptized, be forgotten. It has really been placed under our spiritual care.

Concerning the other point in this paragraph, this needs to be said: While the acceptance of sponsors does not lie on the same plane as admittance to the Lord's Supper, this does not take care of every issue. Our freely-chosen form of baptism with sponsors does not allow for the acceptance of unbelievers or errorists as sponsors without creating a basically untruthful situation, without turning prayer and the Word of God used in this connection into a hollow, meaningless form, without creating the impression that differences in confession are of little account. But these are all things which are decidedly unevangelical. That sponsors may be rejected in a very unevangelical manner and that such situations may unnecessarily be permitted to arise and create misunderstanding is another matter.



d. At marriages: To refuse to perform marriages of people who are outside the congregation even if they are not manifestly wicked—a meticulous insistence on a certain form of parental consent and of engagement:

*d. Bei Kopulationen: Grundsatzliche Verweigerung derselben bei Solchen, welche ausserhalb der Gemeinde stehen, auch wenn dieselben nicht offenbar gottlos sind.—Peinliches Halten auf eine bestimmte Form der elterlichen Einwilligung und Verlobung.*

In his willingness to perform marriages of people who are outside of the congregation a Lutheran pastor will certainly want to be extremely careful in preserving his character as a messenger of the Gospel. This is his only calling. If he is approached by an unchurched couple, and their marriage is in itself of such a nature that he can feel free to solemnize it, he may well express his joy over the fact that they have felt the need of God's blessing upon their wedded life. With all tact he will, however, want to point out to them that they need that divine blessing not only on this day but also on every future day, and that there is only one way in which they can be assured of God's blessing, namely through Christ their Savior. Such a conversation may establish a missionary contact or lay the foundation for one later on. At any hand, it will have been made clear to the couple that you, a minister of the Gospel, are not offering your services or the Word of God merely to satisfy a sensational interest in having a pastor perform their marriage, or, what would be even worse, that you have done so to earn a fee.

e. At funerals: Absolute refusal of burial in the case of all who did not somehow belong to the congregation or at least requested the visit of the pastor—adherence to the principle that at every funeral the salvation or damnation of the deceased must be asserted publicly, that sins have to be castigated and the occasion must be used to take a fling (*anzustechen*) at the sins and failings of the survivors.

*e. Bei Beerdigungen: Unbedingtes Versagen derselben bei Allen, welche nicht irgendwie zur Gemeinde gehoeren, oder doch den Besuch des Pastors begehrt haben.—Befolgung des Grundsatzes, dass man jedesmal die Seligkeit oder Unseligkeit des Verstorbenen oeffentlich zu bezeugen, ihre Suenden zu strafen und die Gelegenheit zu bennutzen habe, die Suenden und Gebrechen der Angehoerigen anzustechen.*

Without presuming to know or to judge the precise circumstances which Pastor Schwan had in mind, we would not be ready to endorse these statements in any understanding that would find an evangelical interest met in officiating at the burial of such who have not made a profession of Christian faith. Our form of committal would of necessity be out of place. The thought of availing ourselves of the opportunity to instruct, strengthen, and comfort the living would not warrant a change in the practice that is current and accepted in our midst. Other effective ways of satisfying this earnest desire can be found, ways which will not undermine our testimony. For when people in our day ask a pastor to officiate at a burial, they, and others with them, invariably associate what is said by the pastor with the deceased.

f. In the care of souls: Constant trimming and pressing (*hobeln und feilen*) on everybody till all wrinkles have been removed—acceptance of every kind of gossip (*Zutraegereien*)—mixing into house, family, and matrimonial matters even if no public offense has been given—to judge of one's attitude of heart on the basis of a few words and works—application of moral coercion through exaggeration, etc..

*f. In der Seelsorge: Bestaendiges Hobeln und Feilen an Jedermann, bis Alles fadenrecht ist.—Annahmen irgendwelcher Zutraegereien.—Einmischung in Haus-, Familien- und EheSachen ausser bei offenbaren Suenden.—Aus einzelnen Worten und Werken ueber den Herzensgrund richten—Anwendung moralischen Zwangs durch Uebertreibung u. dgl.*

g. In congregational government and church discipline: Exaggerated demands at the reception of new members—a denial of, or peremptory fixing of time limits for, participation in the spiritual treasures of the Church as a guest, especially for attendance at the Lord's Table—mandatory imposition of dues on church members, requiring the same amount from all—or coercive taxing of the individuals—use of

church discipline as a measure against matters which are not evident, moral sins, or even against self-provoked sins—to consider a person as convicted in his own mind or as opposing maliciously because he is not able to reply to the arguments and charges uttered against him, or even assents—to lay more weight on the correct form of the proceedings than on the achieving of the purpose of the discipline—to demand the same degree of publicity for all confessions of sins which may have to be made—the endeavor to make the chasm between those who are in and those who are outside the congregation really large, instead of building bridges for the opponents and for those who are on the outside.

*g. In Gemeinde-Regiment und Kirchenzucht: Uebertriebene Anforderungen bei der Anfnahme neuer Glieder.—Versagung oder peremptorische Zeitbestimmung ruer den gastweisen Mitgenuss der geistlichen Gemeinde-Gueter, sonderlich des hell. Abendmahls. Gebotmaessiges Auflegen gleichmaessiger Beisteuer, oder zwangsweises Taxieren der Einzelnen.—Anwendung der Zucht gegen Dinge, die nicht offenbare Totsuenden sind, oder gar gegen selbstprovocirte Suenden.—Jemand schon um deswillen als einen im Verstand ueberzeugten aber boeslich widerstrebenden behandeln, weil er gegen die angefuehrten Gruende nichts mehr anzufuehren weiss, oder gar beistimmt.—Mehr auf Formgerechtigkeit des Processes, als auf Erreichung des Zwecks der Zucht sehen.—Alle etwa gu leistenden oeffentlichen Bekenntnisse in gleicher Form und gleichem Grade der Oeffentlichkeit verlangen.—Das Bestreben die Kluft zwischen denen, die in- und denen, die ausser der Gemeinde sind, recht gross zu machen, anstatt den Gegnern und Draussenstehenden Bruecken zu bauen.*