

What Does It Mean To Fear God?

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You have asked me to address you on the fear of God.

Who is this God whom we fear?

We meet Him in the very first verse of the Bible: In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. There you have God, the Creator of heaven and earth.

Heaven and earth, that is the world, the universe in which we live and of which we are a part. This vast world with all its diversified and forms of existence owes its being to God. If God were not the Creator there would be no heaven and earth. He gave to the world its existence and also the forms in which it is to exist. Think of the vastness of the world, and then try to conceive the vastness of Him who created it, in whose hands the vast world is but a tiny toy. And then try to think what it may mean to stand before our Creator, who made us what we are according to His pleasure. What does it mean to fear Him?

We know a little about the world, we have contact with it through our senses: we see, we hear, we touch, we taste and smell. Yet this is only a very limited contact, we observe merely phenomena, the real essence remains hidden from our senses. Moreover, the phenomena are discernable to us only in part. Take our sense of hearing as an illustration: when the number of vibrations falls below or rises above a certain number, our ear no longer can distinguish the tone. Likewise our eyes can perceive only the colors of the spectrum. We know from other sources that there are "colors" below the red on one end of the spectrum; we call them infra-red, but we cannot see them. There are "colors" on the other end of the spectrum in which we call ultra-violet.

Our eyes reach out into space, we behold the stars millions of miles remote from our earth. We reinforce our sight by powerful telescopes, and what appeared to the naked eye as mere nebulae presents itself through the telescope as world systems and systems of world systems. And the end has not yet been reached. Rather, the impression forces itself upon our mind that far more wonders lie beyond the reach of our present telescopes than come within their range. What a large world, of which we see only a very tiny part!

Going into the other direction, we have armed our eyes with wonderful microscopes, and what appeared to our naked eye as an indivisible atom presents itself under the microscope as a veritable universe in miniature. The end has not yet been reached. Rather, the discoveries of the past suggest that ever greater wonders of smallness lie beyond.

God is the Creator of all this.

Look at the world again. It is made up of what we call elements, each element having its own properties, each one showing a very definite reaction toward other elements, as we study them in chemistry. There are also physical reactions, some very closely related to the chemical, as e. g. when chemical-processes produce physical heat etc., others purely physical as in electromagnetism and gravitation. We speak rather glibly about gravitation, but no one so far has been able to explain just how objects can mutually exert a drawing influence on each other.

Whence did these relations come, which we call the laws of nature? They are included in the word: God created the world. God in the beginning gave to all matter its peculiar, diversified properties.

Look at the world again. We observe many processes that cannot be accounted for by the laws of chemistry and physics. There are the peculiar phenomena of botany and zoology. Physical and chemical processes are involved, yet they alone are not sufficient to explain the facts. By summing up these two sciences under the common head biology we name that mysterious force, it is life.

What is life? Even such as deny the existence of a special "vital force," as does e. g. the Britannica, must admit their inability to explain life as the sum of purely physical and chemical processes. "When the chemical and physical ledger is added up, it does not give a unified description of what has actually occurred

when, c. g., a migrant bird makes its journey.” Generalizing, the Encyclopedia says: “it must be allowed that life is a unique kind of activity, for the formulae of matter and energy, electrons, protons and electromagnetic radiations or etherwaves, as at present understood, do not suffice to describe (a) the everyday functions of the body in their orchestration, (b) the purposive behavior of higher animals well-endowed with brain, (d) the phenomena of development and heredity, or (c) the facts of evolution.” In other words, life is more than the sum of purely physical and chemical processes, but what it is we are unable to say.

Life is included in the statement of Scripture that God created heaven and earth. Life is a masterpiece of God’s handicraft.

Life as such is not God’s greatest masterpiece. There is a form of life separated from the ordinary forms of plant and animal life by a gulf that has not been bridged and is too firmly established to be ever bridged. This is the personal life of man. Man’s life in many respects resembles the life of animals, many functions in his life being perfectly paralleled in the animal kingdom; but there is one thing that absolutely sets him apart in a class by himself. Man has an ego, he is endowed with self-consciousness and self-determination.

This is a form of life which we study in psychology, a life which manifests itself in the production of literature and art, a life which unfolds itself in the history of individuals and nations.

Also this personal life is included in the act of God’s creation. We find personal life in this world because God called it into being and put it into the world.

Do we begin to realize who God is?

Let us contemplate the matter a little further. When we consider this world, or any part of it, we take it for granted that every object occupies a definite place in space, clearly circumscribed, occupied by this one specific object to the exclusion of every other object. We take space for granted. We take it for granted that space is three-dimensional, we measure its length and breadth and height. We take this for granted so much so that if anything does not occupy space it is simply non-existent. It is far beyond our conception that God should not be so limited, that He dwells in omnipresence, and that He merely created space as a form for the world’s existence.

We accept it also as axiomatic that all events take place in time. If any event does not require at least an infinitesimal fraction of a second, it simply is not action, it is absolute rest. And again it is beyond our conception that God should not be bound by time. Yet also time belongs to those things which God created in the beginning, it is a form shaped for the history of heaven and earth. He is not subject to time. He can act in time and without time. He dwells in eternity.

When we see things happen, we look for an adequate cause. If we can find a cause we consider the matter as explained; but when no adequate cause is found we are mystified. So deeply ingrained in our system is the idea of cause and effect that a causeless happening, a really spontaneous process, is a contradiction in terms. Again this is something that God created together with this world and as a form for its existence. He is beyond the laws of cause and effect. He can operate by causes, or without them, yes in the face of all causes. He is omnipotence in person.

The same we find to be the case when we turn to the laws of the mind. We take it that nothing is simpler and less controvertible than the axiom that two times two is four. Even the inventor of the theory of relativity did not apply it to this truth. Two times two do not relatively speaking equal four, but absolutely, at all times, under all circumstances. All our calculations in business, in mechanics, in science are based on this truth. We cannot conceive even the remotest possibility that in any case this truth might not hold good. Yet God is not governed by our form of calculation. It is a form He created for the control of affairs on earth. He gives us a little glimpse of His independence when He reveals himself as the Triune, three distinct persons, each one of which is perfectly and completely God, and yet not three gods, but absolutely one. God is the Lord over the law of numbers.

As it is with the law of numbers, so it is also with all other laws of logic, the law of identity, of contradiction, of the excluded third. God is not subject to them. We know that all men are lost in sin, and that God would have them all saved. Some are saved, others are not. We ask, why are some saved and God answers: By My grace alone. We conclude, then others are lost because God’s grace did not extend to them. God says

emphatically, No, they are lost by their own fault. We conclude, then, God must have detected a slight difference in the people, the first class must have been a little more amenable to His grace. He answers, No, there is no difference, all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. All laws of human logic are violated in this judgment of God. He is not subject to them. He is Lord over them.

This is just a brief sketch of who God is, as He is revealed to us in the very first verse of our Bible. Do we need to be told that we must fear Him? What can we do? He owes us nothing. He made us what we are, and He can do with us as He pleases. We cannot call Him to account. He is not subject to our laws nor to our reasoning. He is always justified when He speaks, He is always clear when He judges. Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor? Therefore, who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?

This is really too much for us, to be so absolutely helpless over against God, to be so helplessly delivered into His unchecked power. This is terrible. What other emotion but fear, fear bordering on despair, yes the fear of wailing and gnashing of teeth, could spring up in our hearts under such conditions? We are delivered into the hands of one who can destroy body and soul in hell.

Yet more terrible than this is the fact that we dare to oppose this God, that we can but for a moment forget the awe in which we must stand of Him. Yet such is the case. We are sinners, and by our sin we challenge the authority of God. We dare Him to assert His authority. We forget that though the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing, though the kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His anointed, aiming to break their bands asunder and to cast away their cords from them, yet He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh, the Lord shall have them in derision. We often fear where there is nothing to fear, where no one can harm us, but we forget the fear of the Lord.

It thus becomes necessary that God continually, thunder in our ears, Fear God, and give glory to Him. It is necessary that God attack us with heavy plagues to remind us of His fear.

But what good would it do? Sin is too deeply rooted in our hearts to be driven out by threats and punishments.

But let us take another look at God. He created us in the beginning, and He created us anew in the fullness of time. God, who by merely withdrawing His Spirit might have returned the entire world to its original nothingness, or by a word of His mouth might have hurled us into the torments of hell, did neither of these two. He so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him might not perish but have eternal life.

Can we grasp it? God, who in the beginning gave us all we have and are, God, against whose authority we rebelled, whom we tried to dethrone, against whom we set up ourselves as gods who want to determine for themselves what is good and evil, this God loved us, loved us, not with a Platonic love, saying, I pity you, but I am sorry I cannot do anything for you. To save you from your plight, for which you have no one but yourselves to blame, or even to relieve the situation, would cost too much. I love you, but I can not help you. No, God commended His love toward us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. He spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all.

Picture to yourselves what this means. We cannot understand the relation that exists between God the Father and the Son. It was most intimate. The Father loved the Son, and the Son loved the Father. The Son was with the Father. He was in the Father's bosom, He and the Father were one. A love and harmony in which both were happy beyond measure, a happiness far surpassing our understanding. Human parents are happy in the love of their children; nothing so hurts them as to lose their children. Yet parental love and the happiness it brings is but a faint shadow of the unspeakable love that united Father and Son in the Godhead, and of the mutual happiness they enjoyed.

Now turn your eyes to Calvary. There you behold the Son, hanging on the cross. Yes, the Word, by which we had been created in the beginning, had, in order to bring about a salvation of the sinful creature, been made flesh, had taken upon himself the form of a servant, had become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. There was to be a new creation, and in order to bring it about, God had laid on His Son the sins of us

all. He had made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin. God, now seeing in His Son only the sinful, rebellious world, turned His love into fierce wrath. The Son still continued to love His Father with a perfect love. In bearing our curse He sought comfort from His Father. The load became almost unbearable. His eyes were dimmed, he did not understand anymore what it was all about. He turned to His Father for an explanation and for relief: My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?

The curse was removed by the sacrifice of the Son. Reconciliation was effected. Creation was saved, a new creation it is rightly called.

This is God. Him we are to fear. That cannot be a fear of terror and despair; it is a fear mingled with love, a fear dominated by love and gratitude.

Yet even this fear of love does not gnaw spontaneously in our hearts, as we might expect. God himself must implant it and patiently nourish and preserve it. "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him." The Holy Spirit, by the life giving power of the Gospel, calls me to faith, creates faith in my doubting heart, nourishes and preserves it.

This is another view of the same God whom we are to fear.

We have already indicated that fear of God may be of different kinds.

When we hear of a God who is all-powerful, who can do with us as He pleases - He can dash us to pieces with no more than a breath of His mouth, He can, if He so chooses, hurl us body and soul into eternal torment - shall we not stand in awe of Him! Must we not tremble, uncertain as we are of His intentions? When we, moreover, become aware that we have aroused His fierce anger because we have frivolously transgressed His holy will, must not our fear assume such proportions that we are driven to despair?

On the other hand, when we realize that God's love toward us is unbounded, that He stands ready to use all His perfections in our interest, to make us truly happy; when we realize that God was ready to sacrifice His "best and dearest" in order that we might be spared the eternal agony we had so fully deserved; when we furthermore realize that God is anxious that we should take the proper attitude over against His salvation, that He does not share any effort to produce it in our hearts: shall we then not fear Him, always anxious lest we do something that might displease Him, that might disturb the beautiful relation existing between Him and us? When we own something that we treasure highly, we are always fearful lest through some oversight or neglect or fault of ours our treasure be marred or lost.

What a vast difference between a fear that trembles before the righteous wrath of God, and the fear which trembles at the thought of offending the object of its love!

What fear, then, is meant when Luther in the explanation of all commandments insists that we should fear and love God?

This question may not be easy to answer, and on the other hand, it ought not prove so very difficult.

Since Luther combines fear with love, it would seem that he has a fear in mind which may well co-exist with love in the heart, a fear mingled with love, or, as it were, growing out of love. Such is, indeed, the case.

Yet Luther also has the fear of dread and despair in mind. Witness the following words from his explanation of the conclusion of the ten commandments: "God threatens to punish all that transgress these commandments. Therefore we should dread His wrath and not act contrary to these commandments."

In the large Catechism Luther gives a fuller explanation of the Conclusion of the Decalog. If we read his words carefully we shall notice that at times he refers to the fear of dread, at others to the fear of love, without clearly marking the transition.

We quote from a few paragraphs. "Now there is comprehended in these words both an angry word of threatening and a friendly promise - to terrify and warn us, and, moreover, to induce and encourage us to receive and highly esteem His Word as a matter of divine earnestness, because He Himself declares how much He is concerned about it, and how rigidly He will enforce it, namely, that He will horribly and terribly punish all who despise and transgress His commandments; and again, how richly He will reward, bless, and do all good to those who hold them in high esteem and gladly do and live according to them. Thus He demands that all our works proceed from a heart which fears Him and regards God alone, and from such fear avoids everything that is contrary to His will, lest it should move Him to wrath; and, on the other hand, also trusts in Him alone, and

from love to Him does all He wishes, because He speaks to us as friendly as a father, and offers us all grace and every good.”

Again. “Learn, therefore, from these words how angry God is with those who trust in anything but Him, and again, how good and gracious He is to those who trust and believe in Him alone with the whole heart; so that His anger does not cease until the fourth generation, while, on the other hand, His blessing and goodness extend to many thousands, lest you live in such security and commit yourself to chance, as men of a brutish heart, who think that it makes no great difference how they live. He is a God who will not leave it unavenged if men turn from Him, and will not cease to be angry until the fourth generation, even until they are utterly exterminated. Therefore He is to be feared, and not to be despised.”

Again. “Therefore, although proud, powerful, and rich worldlings are now to be found who boast defiantly of their mammon, with utter disregard whether God is angry at or smiles on them, and dare to withstand His wrath, yet they shall not succeed, but before they are aware, they shall be wrecked with all in which they trusted; as all others have perished who have thought themselves more secure and powerful. And just because of such hardened heads who imagine, because God connives and allows them to rest in security, that He either is entirely ignorant or cares nothing about such matters, He must deal a smashing blow and punish them, so that He cannot forget it unto children’s children; so that every one may take note and see that this is no joke to Him...But terrible as are these threatenings, so much the more powerful is the consolation in the promise.”

Thus Luther, almost in the same breath, speaks of these two kinds of fear as though they co-existed and cooperated in the heart of the same man. Yet they are of such a nature that they mutually exclude each other. For how can there be any room for a fear born of a guilty conscience that dreads the righteous wrath of God, where there is a fear born out of love because of His infinite goodness by which He completely covers all sins? Yet Luther is no more inconsistent, nor his statements self-contradictory, than is the Bible itself. The Bible triumphantly exclaims: There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love (1 Jn. 4:18). On the other hand, that same Bible preaches both kinds of fear.

It speaks of a fear of God which is synonymous to faith and hope. Out of a wealth of passages that might be cited we refer to but three. Listen to Ps. 31:19: O how great is thy goodness which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men. Note the parallelism of the members of this verse. It speaks of the great goodness of the Lord, and then in two parallel statements declares that He laid it up for them that fear Him, that He prepared it for them that trust in Him. The fear of God and trust in God are here used as expressing practically the same idea, they are synonymous. The same is true in the following verse taken from Psalm 33 (v. 18): Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that ‘hole in his mercy. Fear and hope appear as synonyms. And again, Ps. 147,11: The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in these that hope in his mercy.

On the other hand, the Bible demands of these same people a fear born out of extreme dread. When Jerusalem trembled before its mighty enemies and wished to avert the chin get lay entering into an alliance with some strong nation, the Lord sent the prophet Isaiah with the following message: Say ye not, A confederacy, to (i. e. concerning) all them to (concerning) whom this people shall say, A confederacy; neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid. Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself: and let him be your fear and let him be your dread (Is. 8, 12.13). They dreaded their enemies, but the Lord claimed that if there is any one to be dreaded it is none other than He himself.

A similar fear is demanded by Jesus of His disciples when He sent them out to preach. His words are familiar as St. Matthew has them (10, 28): Fear not them which kill the body but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both body and soul in hell. Jesus holds out before the minds of His disciples, whom He is sending forth to preach the Gospel of peace to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (v. 6), the terrible fact that God is able to destroy them body and soul in hell if they, to mitigate the opposition of men, alter in the least the message committed to them, and on the strength of this fact asks them to fear.

St. Luke reports the same saying of Jesus (12, 4.5), but stresses certain parts of it more than does St. Matthew: I say unto you, my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.

This does, indeed, look like a contradiction, but neither Luther nor the Scriptures seem to be aware of it. It will be futile, then, to argue the question whether the fear of God spoken of in the 'Catechism is the fear of dread or the fear of love. Luther speaks of both, just as the Bible demands both.

I realize that a conclusion of this kind will leave us all rather perplexed and little satisfied. It was necessary, however, to state the case thus bluntly for once the situation is fully grasped the solution is comparatively simple. The solution must be found in the nature of the persons of whom these contradictory kinds of fear are demanded.

We Christians are of a dual nature. We are in one person a new man and an old man, we are flesh and spirit. Of these, St. Paul says in his epistle to the Galatians (5, 16.17): This I say then, Walk in the spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

We know whence the spirit comes in us, the new man: it is born of the Holy Spirit by Water and the Word. We know its nature: it trusts in Jesus Christ and His righteousness, purchased and won for us by His innocent suffering and death. Our new man rejoices in the blessings God has bestowed on us. He loves God because He first loved us. Our new man cannot fear God from an evil conscience, our new man has a good conscience because our sins have been forgiven. According to our new man we fear God out of love.

We can even go so far that we declare, in as much as we are a new man we have no need of the Law which tells us that we must fear God. We fear Him properly by the very nature of the new man. The loving fear of God is born in us together with the birth of the new man out of the grace of God. St. Paul repeatedly declares that we are not under the Law, because and since we are under grace, that for the righteous there is no Law. And St. John assures us that the love born of God, the love which we experience and cultivate in our new man, will drive out all fear.

On the other hand, we know from our daily experience that the Old Adam is still with us. We know the nature of our Old Adam. According to our Old Adam we believe that our relation to our God is regulated by our own achievements. If we do good, we have a right to demand a reward; and if we do evil we may expect punishment. Every other way of determining our relation to God is considered as ruinous folly by our Old Adam. To assume that God is merciful, that His mercy is free, that His mercy is so unlimited that He offers us forgiveness of all our sins without any condition, without any merit or worthiness on our part, is denounced by our Old Adam as undermining public morality and decency; because if the incentive of reward and merit for doing good is removed, morality must collapse.

But this is the Old Adam in his more respectable form, guided by natural probity. Yet this form of the Old Adam, as a rule, does not prevail. As a rule, Old Adam simply follows his own lusts, as St. Paul mentions some in Gal. 5, 19: The works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like.

Our Old Adam is incorrigible. No matter whether he wears a respectable cloak or follows his licentious lusts shamelessly he always persists in his ways, he is stubborn as a mule, yes, the most stubborn Missouri mule will appear docile and tractable, a shamefaced piker in comparison with Old Adam.

While our new man needs no Law to fear God, our Old Adam can never be induced to fear God properly. He will never fear God out of love, as does our new man; all that can be done about him is that he be clubbed into a trembling dread before God.

This dual nature of Christians must be taken into consideration when speaking of the fear of God. And since these two natures are never separated in the heart of a Christian, since Old Adam is never entirely overcome until death, though a Christian is dominated by his new man, therefore we shall always find that the two kinds of fear are spoken of simultaneously.

This is beautifully set forth in the sixth article of the Formula of Concord: “Although men truly believing in Christ and truly converted to God have been freed and exempted from the curse and coercion of the Law, they nevertheless are not on this account without Law, but have been redeemed by the Son of God in order that they should exercise themselves in it day and night...The preaching of the Law is to be urged with diligence, not only upon the unbelieving and impenitent, but also upon the believers, who are truly converted, regenerate, and justified by faith. For although they are regenerate and renewed in the spirit of their mind, yet in the present life this regeneration and renewal is not complete, but only begun; and believers are, by the spirit of their mind, in a constant struggle against the flesh, that is, against the corrupt nature and disposition which cleaves to us unto death. On account of this Old Adam, which still inheres in the understanding, the will, and all powers of man, it is needful that the Law of the Lord always shine before them, in order that they may not from human devotion institute wanton and self-elected cults; likewise, that the Old Adam also may not employ his own will, but may be subdued against his will, not only by the admonition and threatening of the Law, but also by punishments and blows, so that he may follow and surrender himself captive to the Spirit...Thus the Law is and remains both to the penitent and impenitent, both to regenerate and unregenerate men, one and the same Law, namely, the immutable will of God; and the difference, so far as concerns obedience, is alone in man, inasmuch as one who is not yet regenerate does for the Law out of constraint and unwillingness what it requires of him, as also the regenerate do according to the flesh; but the believer, so far as he is regenerate, does without constraint and with a willing spirit that which no threatenings, however severe, of the Law could ever extort from him.”

So far the Formula of Concord.

Applying these general truths, which hold good of all our works, specifically to the fear of God, we may say: The fear of God is and remains one and the same, the difference is alone in man. “For the Old Adam, as an intractable, refractory ass ... must be coerced to the obedience of Christ, not only by the teaching, admonition, force, and threatening of the Law, but also oftentimes by the club of punishments and troubles.” But insofar as a Christian “is born anew by the Spirit of God, and liberated from the Law, that is, freed from this driver, and is led by the Spirit of Christ, he lives according to the immutable will of God comprised in the Law, and does everything from a free, cheerful spirit” (F. C., S. D.).

What, then, does it mean to fear God? That depends on the God-fearing subject. Is the God-fearing subject an unregenerate man, or the Old Adam in a Christian then the only kind of fear that he is capable of is the slavish fear of dread and terror; is the God-fearing subject a regenerate person, the new spiritual man in Christians, then the fear of God which he exhibits is a childlike reverence, born of faith and love. And since in a Christian ‘both natures live in close proximity, and since the new man can carry on his beautiful fear of God only under a constant severe struggle against the determined opposition of the flesh, the fear of God as demanded by the Law will assume different aspects, depending on who is addressed by the commandment. Fear not, Moses said to the people at Mt. Sinai, Fear not, for God is come down to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not (Ex. 20: 20).

It is almost needless to add that the fear of God as practiced, or rather suffered, by the Old Adam is always sin, displeasing to God, being the very opposite of the faith in which God delights; while the fear of God of the new man is a good work of the first magnitude.

Addition

A few months after the foregoing lecture had been delivered, Dr. J. T. Mueller published a short article in the *Concordia Theological Monthly* (Dec., 1938) on the meaning of “Fearing God”, of which especially his closing remarks are concise and to the point. We take the liberty to append them here.

“A few corollaries may help to illustrate what has been said above and impress the Scriptural truths regarding filial fear of God more lastingly upon the mind.

“1. To our stubborn, rebellious Old Adam the Law says: Fear God, or He will punish you. - To our humbled, but believing heart the Gospel says: Fear not, for Christ has redeemed you.

“2. We are afraid of God inasmuch as we are Old Adamites. We are not afraid of God inasmuch as we are His children in Christ Jesus.

“3. Just as the Law and the Gospel are more than contradictory (*plus quam contradictoria*; Luther), so also the Scriptural ‘Fear!’ and ‘Fear not!’ are contradictory, and each must be understood in its peculiar sphere. The Law cries: Fear, O sinners! The Gospel cries: Fear not, O ye redeemed!

“4. We must not say that the threatening appendix of the Law is meant only for the ungodly who transgress God’s commandments; for it is meant also for believers, namely, inasmuch as they are still Old Adam-ridden. The Old Adam of believers is just as corrupt as the Old Adam of unbelievers.

“5. While the proper use of the Law by Christians is that of a rule and of a mirror, it is to them also a curb, namely, inasmuch as they still are flesh. It is as a curb that the Law addresses Christians in their natural corruption: Fear His wrath.

“6. The difficulty which faces the Christian theologian whenever he distinguishes between the Law and the Gospel faces him also when he inculcates the Ten Commandments with their demand for true, godly filial fear. Only that minister can teach the Ten Commandments rightly who can rightly distinguish between Mount Sinai and Mount Calvary.”