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Human Will in Bondage and Freedom*

By F. E. MAYER

II

THE GLORIOUS LIBERTY OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD

"STAND fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free" (Gal. 5:1). That is the sum and substance of St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians. Christian liberty is Paul's one and only theme: the glorious liberty which has freed us from the tyrannical bondage under the Law, sin, death, the devil, and the wrath of God. This was also the heart and core of Luther's theology set forth in his Commentary on Galatians and especially in his treatise *The Liberty of a Christian Man*. The occasion for writing this tract is highly significant. The papal threat of excommunication had reached Wittenberg, October 3, 1520. Luther immediately dispatched a letter to Leo with the plea that the Pope should not heed the flattering counselors who had ill advised him. Since Luther did not wish to come empty-handed to the Pope, he enclosed in the letter a treatise, which, said Luther, is small as far as size is concerned, but which contains a summary of the entire Christian life, points which he had hoped to discuss with his Roman antagonists. *The Liberty of a Christian Man* is Luther's first treatise in which he sets forth in a systematic and comprehensive form his entire theology. In the opinion of many this is Luther's most charming literary production. Pastors and laymen should read and reread this tract—and make it their theological confession. Luther's treatise is the entire Gospel in a nutshell, for it is the confession of a believer whose faith was born out of the fiery trial of spiritual afflictions into the glorious liberty of sonship.

* Part I appeared in the October issue of this journal.

Scripture presents God's redemptive act under various pictures and from various viewpoints. The message of our redemption is such a brilliant light that it is refracted in many beautiful hues. Sometimes it is present as God's reconciliation with man; as Christ's full and complete satisfaction to His heavenly Father for the sins of the world. Such terms as "the vicarious atonement," "expiation and propitiation," "the forgiveness of sins," "the doctrine of justification," "adoption," are familiar terms in Lutheran theology.

Though all these concepts are present in Luther's writings, he frequently views the redemptive work of Christ as a liberation from the tyrants which have cruelly ruled over us. In the exposition of the Second Article in the Large Catechism, Luther states very significantly: "I believe that Jesus Christ has become my Lord." In the Small Catechism we read: "I believe that Jesus Christ *is* my Lord." Since Luther wrote both Catechisms simultaneously, and since the Large Catechism is a commentary on the Small Catechism, the Second Article is to be understood in the light of Luther's question and answer in the Large Catechism. There he answers the question "What does it mean that Christ has become my Lord?" as follows:

He has redeemed me from sin, the devil, death, and all evil; for before I had no Lord nor King, but was captive under the power of the devil, condemned to death, enmeshed in sin and blindness. For when we had been created by God the Father and had received from Him all manner of good, the devil led us into disobedience, sin, death, and all evil, and we fell under the wrath of God and eternal damnation. There was no one to help us except the Son of God, who expelled the tyrants and jailers. Thus Christ Jesus has become the Lord of life, of righteousness, of every blessing, and of salvation, has delivered us from the jaws of hell, made us free, returned us to the grace and favor of God, and has taken us as His own property to govern us by His righteousness in time and eternity. (*Trigl.*, 685, somewhat condensed.)

Luther's confession "Christ is my Lord" is a synopsis of the entire Gospel. This phrase means that Christ has become my Lord and King by conquering all my tyrants, namely, Satan, death, sin, the wrath of God, and that He has done this by His holy, precious

blood, His innocent suffering and death, and His glorious resurrection. This emphasis on the work of Christ as liberation from the tyrants was due to Luther's religious experience. He lived in dread and fear of his sin and the wrath of God, and his highest desire was to be free from these tyrannical powers. It is this point which the Lundensian theologians wish to emphasize. (Aulen, *Christus Victor* and *The Faith of the Christian Church*, pp. 225 ff.) We appreciate the emphasis which this school has given to one facet of Christ's work, though we cannot subscribe to the somewhat one-sided emphasis of their major thesis nor to some of their theological conclusions. After reading a book like *Zwei Tausend Tage in Dachau*, after seeing the Dachau concentration camp with its torture chambers and its gas ovens, after personally meeting many who had lived under the Gestapo or are now behind the "Iron Curtain," one learns to appreciate what liberty really means, and for that reason the work of Christ under the aspect of a liberation from spiritual tyrants has become so significant and meaningful to Luther and his followers.

1. *The Christian Is Totally Free*

"The truth shall make you free. . . . If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." (John 8:32, 36.) It is difficult, if not impossible, to define Christian liberty; it must be experienced. The best description of the New Testament concept "liberty" is release from sin (Rom. 6:18-23; John 8:31-36), from the Law (Rom. 7:3 f.; 8:2; Gal. 2:4; 4:21-31; 5:1), and from death (Rom. 6:21 f.; 8:21). (Cp. Schierl, *s. v.* ἐλευθερος in Kittel, *Theol. Wtbuch. z. N.T.*, VI, 493—500.) This freedom so far transcends our understanding that we can describe it only in negative terms, e. g., a liberation from something dreadful. As light appears in its full brilliance when contrasted with darkness, so freedom becomes the more meaningful, the clearer one perceives the bondage from which he has been freed. It is difficult for modern Americans to join Patrick Henry ("Give me liberty or give me death!") because we have not experienced the thralldom of political oppression. Only the Christian, who has experienced the bondage of the spiritual tyrants, can appreciate—at least in a measure—the glorious liberty of the children of God (Rom.

8:21). We shall therefore show under (a) that Christ has freed us from our enemies; and under (b) that through faith in Christ the Christian possesses full freedom as a present reality.

a. Christ has Freed Us from the Law, Death, and the Devil

Christ has freed us from the Law. To appreciate this glorious truth, we must first understand what it means to be under the Law. According to St. Paul, who more clearly than any other Apostle sets forth the bondage under the Law, it implies three dreadful facts. It denotes, in the first place, to be tyrannized by the Law, for "the Law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth" (Rom. 7:6), and "before faith came, we were kept under the Law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed" (Gal. 3:23). Second, the Law can only increase sin, as St. Paul says: "Was, then, that which is good made death unto me? God forbid! But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful" (Rom. 7:13). And finally, the Law subjects man to the wrath and the curse of God, "because the Law worketh wrath; for where no Law is, there is no transgression" (Rom. 4:15), and: "As many as are of the works of the Law are under the curse; for it is written: Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law to do them" (Gal. 3:10).

Following in the steps of St. Paul, Luther points out again and again that the purpose of the Law is not to make us just and holy, but to reveal sin and to work wrath. The Law does not pay us any compliments. It does not curtsy us as a subject bows to his king in respect. Its office is solely in the area of sin, of wrath, of death, and of eternal damnation. The function of the Law is only to accuse, and to accuse constantly. It always shows God's wrath. It has no other function. This is the express statement of the Lutheran Confessions. In the Apology's article on "Justification and Love," Melancthon uses the phrase *lex semper accusat* (the Law always accuses) again and again (cp. *Triglot*, 130, 38; 156, 7.40. 83. 136. 149. 164. 174. 198). Luther correctly identifies the Law with the revelation of sin and the wrath of God. The two

are synonymous terms. (Harnack, *Luthers Theologie*, Vol. I, 388.) Luther states that from God's viewpoint the Law is an "office of wrath"; from the sinner's viewpoint it is an "office of conviction." In other words, in the Law God accuses man, and in the Law man's evil conscience confirms God's sentence. Man may try to escape the dominion of the Law, but in his own conscience he is constantly convicted of its authority, its divine jurisdiction and power. Luther states:

Though man refuses to render obedience to the Law, the Law nevertheless tyrannizes man. . . . It is a mighty and unconquerable sovereign over the entire human race and has full authority to exercise its sovereignty. It therefore not only has the highest jurisdiction in the world, but also possesses the most terrifying power in the world. . . . Man may be able to refuse the obedience which the Law demands, but he cannot shut the Law out from his heart and negate or nullify its power over his conscience, because the heart is so constituted that in creation God's holy Law is written into man's heart with its demands and with its inexorable power. (*Ibid.*, 425.)

The Law holds man captive by two chains, neither of which man can break. The Law is always both mandatory and punitive. By its impossible demands and unbearable punishment it exercises its dreadful dominion over the sinner. In Luther's words:

The Law demands a perfect obedience toward God and condemns all who refuse to render this obedience. Now it is evident that no man is able to render such perfect obedience, nevertheless God demands it of us, and for that reason the Law can do no more than to curse all who have not kept every word of the Law. . . . God does not want a portion of our devotion, He wants our obedience in fullest perfection. Throughout our entire life we should be dedicated wholly and entirely to Him. God demands a free, joyous, willing spirit, He demands the heart. In short, God is not satisfied with outward works. The Law demands our love and can be satisfied only with love (*mit Liebe gesaettigt sein*). . . . But here my conscience convicts me. Since I must love God with all my heart and my neighbor as myself, but have not done it, therefore I am condemned, and God says Yea and Amen to this verdict. Who will counsel me in this? The Law says, I know of no counsel for you, I can only demand that you be obedient. . . .

So the Law rests as a heavy yoke upon our neck, it oppresses our shoulders, it drives us, it imposes an unbearable burden, it prods us with a prick. (*Ibid.*, 426—428.)

In summary, to be under the Law, according to Luther, means to be a debtor to the Law, to be a servant of sin, to be subject to death, and to be a captive of Satan. In Luther's words, the sum and the substance of the work of the Law is not to make people holy, but to make them worse, that is, to reveal sin in its true nature in order that such knowledge may humble them, frighten them, pulverize them, in order that they may yearn and long for the grace of God in Christ Jesus, which alone can free them from this dreadful bondage. There is no sweeter message than the simple Catechism truth: Christ has freed me from the demands, the curse, and the dominion of the Law. That is the Gospel in a nutshell.

Liberation from the Law's Threefold Power

1) Christ has freed us from the demands of God's Law. In His Law, God demands perfect obedience of us, summarized in the First Commandment: "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me." The First Commandment is the sum total of all of God's requirements for us. It is the strand upon which all other Commandments are strung as pearls. In order to understand what the Commandment really means, it is well to hear Luther's wonderful exposition in the Large Catechism. He states:

To have a God means to have something from which we expect all good and to which we take refuge in all distress. To have a God is nothing else than to trust and believe in Him from the whole heart. It is our faith which makes both God and an idol. Whereupon, therefore, we set our heart and put our trust, that is properly our God. Therefore the intent of this Commandment is that our trust in every condition of life must be settled upon the true God alone. Whatever we lack, we must expect from God. Whatever difficulties strike us, we must seek our escape from these only in and from God. God demands of us that we come to Him alone and not for a moment ever trust in anything of our own, our strength, our wisdom, friendship, money, whatever it may be, nor dare we ever for a moment lose our confidence in God and even with the slightest movement of the heart fail to trust Him perfectly and completely.

God's holy Law is not directed to man impersonally. God and man always stand in an "I-Thou" relation. It is quite significant to note that God gave the first man a name. God deals with every man as an individual personality; He never employs the generic designation "N.N." God gave the first man a name by which God distinguishes him from all other men. Each of us is known to God by his name. Every sinner is known by his distinctive characteristic, even as Cain was a "marked" man. Each sinner's fingerprints are registered in divine FBI files, and each one is individually and personally confronted by his failure to meet the demands of God's Law. (W. Elert, *Das Christliche Ethos*, 59 f.) The individual cannot dismiss the universal sentence: "All must die," because this judgment is not a philosophic universal, but an individual and personal reality. Not only the names of the elect are recorded individually in the Book of Life, but also the name of every person whom the Law of God addresses. There is no anonymous person in the sight of God's holy Law. Man has always tried to deny his individual responsibility toward the Law by seeking refuge behind society *en masse*. Like Adam, he seeks to escape the Lord by hiding behind the trees of the garden. But it is impossible for man to deny his personality and individual responsibility in God's sight by shifting the responsibility to his nation and its government or by hiding behind racial characteristics, social environment, and similar impersonal institutions. In its dreadful demands God's Law confronts the individual in his "being-in-responsibility." It is this which makes the Law in its inexorable demands and my personal responsibility such a dreadful tyrant.

It is from this tyranny that Christ has made us free by the perfect obedience of His holy life and innocent death. That is the heart of St. Paul's glorious message in Rom. 5:12-19. The parallelism between the First and the Second Adam is not intended by Paul to show the similarity between Adam and Christ, but rather the great difference. The two resemble each other only inasmuch as both are representative of the entire human race. In all other respects the contrast between the two is as great as the difference between Law and Gospel, death and life, hell and heaven. By his one act of disobedience Adam brought condemnation upon all men. But Christ by His act of obedience has brought

righteousness upon all men. Adam, as mankind's representative, brought God's wrath and death upon all; Christ, as the Second Adam, brought God's love and life upon all. (Cp. A. Nygren, *Commentary on Romans*, 206—229.)

But Christ cannot be our Representative unless He is true God and true man. He was made *under* the Law (Gal. 4:4-5). He was subject to the demands of God's holy Law like everyone of us. And that includes also this, that in meeting these demands, He was opposed by mighty forces to deflect Him from rendering perfect obedience to His heavenly Father. He was tempted in all things like as we (Heb. 2:18; 4:15), not once or twice, but throughout the state of humiliation. But He could not yield to the temptations. Christ not only remained sinless; He was impeccable; He could not sin. He is always true God as well as true man. He who is tempted as truly and genuinely as Adam was, cannot yield to sin. There have always been those theologians who either questioned the validity of this paradox or have attempted to solve it. Some theologians say that Scripture nowhere teaches Christ's impeccability. The fact is that wherever Scripture teaches that Christ is true God, it teaches also that Christ cannot sin. This is evident especially in His debate with His opponents, climaxing in the rhetorical question: "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" (John 8:46.) The entire context shows that Christ here establishes His divine Messiahship and His eternal Godhead. The challenge to His enemies is really tantamount to the assertion: "I, the eternal Son of God (v. 58), cannot sin." As strenuously as we must maintain the true deity of Christ, so firmly we hold to Christ's impeccability. (Cp. F. Pieper, *Christliche Dogmatik* II, 77 ff.) Other theologians, especially the kenoticists, say that in His temptation to be drawn away from God, Christ experienced His impotence and learned to rely solely on His Father's divine omnipotence. The Scriptural theologian, however, believes that Christ as true God is above the Law (Matt. 12:8) and yet, for our sakes, He came in the likeness of sinful flesh (Rom. 8:3); though in the form of God, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death upon the cross (Phil. 2:8).

Only as God-Man could the "Second Adam" render the obedience whereby the many shall be made righteous. In the personal

union the Second Adam through His righteousness brought freedom from the demands of God's Law. Not for one moment did He fail to love His Father and His fellow men. His entire life is one continuous act of obedience to every demand of the divine Law. In our preaching we probably place greater emphasis on the so-called passive obedience than the active. But we must never forget that this dogmatical distinction is actually antithetical and is necessary to refute the Anselmic error that only the death of Christ has vicarious value, an error which crept into the Lutheran Church and was rejected by the Formula of Concord (Art. III, 4, 9, 15). The terms active and passive obedience are very useful to emphasize that Christ's entire life was an act of obedience to free us from the demands and the punishment of the Law.

Now the Christian can say: "I am a saint; I have kept all of God's Law, because I have appropriated to myself the perfect obedience of the Second Adam." Luther brings this home beautifully in a sermon for St. Thomas Day (John 20:24-31):

The true righteousness which alone avails in the sight of God rests upon foreign works. . . . But what are these foreign works which please God? They are the works of our Lord Jesus Christ, whom God the Father has sent from heaven to fulfill the Law perfectly and fully, for He has loved the Lord with the whole heart and soul, and with all His powers, and His neighbor as Himself. In these two things the entire work of Christ can be viewed, namely, that He loved God, did not follow His own will, became man, rendered obedience, and did everything that His heavenly Father asked Him to do; likewise He also loved His fellow man, for all the works which He did upon earth were only for the purpose to show His unselfish love toward His fellow man, such love that He even gave His life for mankind. Since Christ has fully kept the Law, it cannot accuse Him. Now, if the Law comes and accuses you that you have not kept it, then point to Christ Jesus and say: There is the Man; He has kept it in my stead. I cling to Him who in my stead has fulfilled the Law and gratuitously gives me His own perfect obedience to the Law; then the Law can no longer make any demands upon me. . . . As we are guilty because of Adam's transgression, so now we are righteous in the sight of God because of the righteousness which Christ has rendered for us. (St. Louis, Vol. XI, p. 1962 ff.)

When the hellish hawk swoops down upon the sinner standing helplessly exposed to the demands of God's holy Law, the sinner must flee to Christ, and under the wings of His perfect righteousness he will find safety and security. It is indeed a glorious paradox, that we, who failed to meet the demands of God's Law, have in Christ met all the demands, have victoriously withstood all temptations to sin, and find in Christ's righteousness our glorious dress. It is therefore perfectly in order when the Lutheran Confessions condemn most vehemently any and all systems of work-righteousness. Is it not a sacrilege, blasphemy, the height of arrogance, when men place their own, and oftentimes very foolish works (such as monkery, praying the rosary, abstaining from certain things) above the perfect obedience which the Son of God has rendered in our stead? (Cp. especially Melancthon's classic statement in the Apology, XXVII, 25.)

There is no more glorious message than the proclamation of our complete liberation from the tyranny of the Law in its inexorable demands, which Luther summarizes in his treatise *The Liberty of a Christian Man* as follows:

Here a most joyous exchange and conflict takes place. Christ is both God and man, who has never sinned and whose piety is unexcelled, eternal, and almighty. And this Christ bestows upon the believing soul the bridal ring, that is, faith, and thereby the heavenly Bridegroom takes over man's sins as though He Himself had done them. As the bridegroom assumes all the obligations of his bride, so Christ has also done it for His bride, the Church. Therefore all our sins must be devoured and completely done away with. His perfect righteousness is too strong for sin. Thus the soul, through the dowry which the Bridegroom gives His bride, is free from all sins and clothed with the heavenly brightness of the heavenly Bridegroom. Is this not a most wonderful way to set up housekeeping, when the rich and noble and pious Bridegroom, Christ, takes the poor, despised adulteress as His wife and thereby not only frees her from all evil, but decks her out with all the treasures, jewels, and rich garments in His possession? It is therefore now impossible that sins should condemn her, for they have been laid upon Christ, who has devoured them. This is indeed a rich righteousness which the bride has in her Bridegroom. St. Paul says of this: "Thanks be to God, who hath

given us the victory in Christ Jesus," in whom death and sin is devoured, 1 Cor. 15:57, 58. . . . Therefore Christ is truly the righteousness of all men and the fulfilling of all Commandments. Whoever has fulfilled the First Commandment has also fulfilled all other Commandments. (St. Louis, XIX: 994.)

2) Christ has fulfilled all the Law's demands. Thereby He has, secondly, freed us from the punishment which the Law imposes. Nowhere does the punitive character of God's Law become so evident as in the Judge's verdict: "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting hell fire." The time when this verdict is pronounced is not a date on the calendar, but an eternal event. It is not a departing as of that moment when God speaks this dreadful sentence, but it is an eternal separation. The Law is a verdict, a judgment which constantly condemns the sinner from the moment of his sinful conception and throughout all eternity. Every word of God, also His judgment in the Law, retains its creative efficacy. Therefore hell is not primarily a place of physical suffering, but the state and condition where God's "Depart!" eternally separates man from God, from life, from hope.

From this curse, Christ has freed us when in our stead He was forsaken by God, when He really and truly experienced for us the full and eternal force of God's judgment "Depart!" We must therefore seek the heart of Christ's Passion not in His physical suffering, as great as that may have been, but in His being forsaken by God. It is just at this point where the personal union is so relevant for our faith. It is the Son of God who is forsaken by God. According to His human nature and according to our standards this dreadful experience was of relatively short duration. But He is—even in this dreadful experience—the eternal Son of God. Our faith does not watch the clock to judge the significance of the Cross, but it looks at the *Person* who is forsaken for us. The Law can now no longer confront us with its dreadful sentence "Depart!" Christ has freed us from its curse and condemnation. That is the second aspect of the glorious liberty from the Law.

Thus Christ has won for us the glorious liberty from the Law by removing its mandatory and punitive character. In the face of the Law with its demands and threats the Christian can sing tri-

umphantly: "Jesus, Thy blood *and* righteousness my beauty are, my glorious dress." But this glorious liberty is a reality only because it was gained for us by the God-Man. There can be no message of a glorious freedom without the proclamation of the mystery of Christ's Person. The doctrine of the personal union is not a theological problem or an academic question, but the absolute corollary and the very foundation of Christ's work. The Church will lose her glorious liberty from the Law if she yields in any way to the luring voice of modern kenoticism. This is done by those Lutherans who will not fully subscribe to either Article III or Article VIII of the Formula of Concord. The former article condemns the Anselmic error that Christ had to fulfill the Law for Himself. Modern kenoticism claims that Christ had to keep the Law for Himself and thus denies that He who was put under the Law was *always* also the Lord of the Law. To say that God's demands cannot be fulfilled by another is a mere subterfuge. It is merely a specious argument when the modern kenoticists claim that the mystery of divine forgiveness is denied if God's pardon were contingent upon a sort of *quid pro quo*, if it were viewed as a juridical act, and not as a sovereign and creative act of God. The Lutheran Church must hold fast to its confession in the Formula of Concord, Art. III, that God justifies the sinner solely by imputing to him the "foreign" righteousness of the God-Man, Jesus Christ. Modern kenoticism also denies the vicarious Passion of Christ. The argument runs as follows: Christ could not have endured the eternal torments of hell, since eternal punishment presupposes the eternity of sin and of man's rebellion against God; on the Cross, Christ did not pay the future penalty of sin; the significance of Christ's fourth word upon the Cross is this, that Christ was tempted to despair, but overcame that temptation; that He shared with the sinner the dreadful anxiety over sin; the mystery of divine forgiveness is this, that by His creative sovereignty the loving God cancels the punishment. In short, modern kenoticism does not take the personal union seriously and therefore holds that the only way to view Christ's atoning work is that of a warfare, in which the sovereign love of God overcomes, sets aside, and finally conquers His wrath. Christ, so they say, experiences the punitive character of the Law not in our stead, but only in our behalf; not to fulfill

the Law, but to enable the sovereign God to set it aside. (P. Alt-haus, *Die Christliche Wahrheit*, II, 256—259; cp. also G. Aulen, *The Faith of the Christian Church*, 225—237.) This view, however, does violence to the holiness of God, denies the vicarious character of Christ's work, and robs the Christian of the certain hope that Christ has completely and fully freed him from the demands and the threats of the Law. If we would retain our glorious liberty, we must believe the personal union. That will be our guarantee that we are free from the Law in its inexorable demands and unbearable punishment.

3) Being freed from these, we are free from its dominion. By nature all men have placed themselves under the terrible servitude of the Law. Man knows no other theology than a theology of the Law. Man is by nature self-centered, egocentric. He can comprehend only such a theology as centers in himself. His theology is summarized in *do ut des*, I give, I do good, in order to be rewarded. The religion of the Law is the highest form of egocentricity. Even when he seems to worship God, he does so to make demands upon God for his own sake. Luther brings this self-centeredness of man into sharp focus in the short treatise *Exposition of the Lord's Prayer Forwards and Backwards* (WA 6, 20—22). We pray the Lord's Prayer "forwards," says Luther, when we start with the First Petition and pray all the petitions only from the viewpoint that God's glory may be magnified. But man is always inclined to pray "backwards," starting with the Seventh Petition. He prays only when he is in trouble; he is concerned with deliverance from all evil only in order to live happily for himself; and he prays even the first three petitions solely for himself. Thus he runs through the Lord's Prayer backwards for himself. (Cp. Watson, *Let God Be God*, p. 39 f.) In short, to follow the theology of the Law means that man is thinking only in terms of saving himself and of serving himself. Whoever puts himself under the dominion of the Law to save and serve himself will find that the Law is like *sheol*, the place with an insatiable appetite, which "the more it gets, the more it wants." The Law is never satisfied, and when a person thinks that he has kept one Commandment, a dozen others arise demanding observance.

Under the dominion of the Law, man lives in constant fear. He

squirms and turns because he constantly feels that a thousand eyes of the night are watching his every move. Eat not! Drink not! Touch not! The hope of reward and the fear of punishment are the cruel tyrants which determine his every action. All his energies are dissipated to conform to a self-invented pattern of goodness or to the current social standard of behavior. And the harder he tries to keep the Law, the more his conscience condemns him. He is a slave of the Law, subject to fear. That is what it means to be under the dominion, the coercion, the compulsion of the Law. Indeed the Law is a most dreadful tyrant. To free us from this dominion of the Law, Christ was put under the Law. He has brought us true liberty, the freedom to do what pleases God, without any coercion, social pressure, or any other form of compulsion. The Christian is free to do spontaneously whatever is God-pleasing.

This is the threefold glorious liberty of the Law. Brethren, stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free. He is the end of the Law by abolishing its demands, threats, and dominion. A glorious liberty indeed! "For the law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the Law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:2).

Liberation from Death and the Devil

Since we have freedom from the tyranny of the Law, the other tyrants have also lost their power. Death and the devil can no longer tyrannize the Christian. The bondage of death is completely destroyed, because the fear of death has been removed. Man fears death not because of the coffin and the grave, nor the decomposition to which his body is subject, but on account of his sins, which the Law of God has revealed and threatens to punish. And thus all mankind, yes, even creation, exists under the dreadful tyranny of the fear of death. And from this Christ has set us free by His death and resurrection. Christ really and truly suffered death in all its dreadful aspects, both temporal and eternal, and by His glorious victory on Easter Sunday Christ swallowed death in victory. Before Easter the world was a dreadful concentration camp and a large cemetery. But all this has been changed, and we are now living in true liberty. From subjects of death, corruption, and constant fear, we have become the children of God, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. We are living in the light and

joy of the final manifestation of our glorious liberty. The groaning and travailing of nature, e.g., the trees moaning in the hurricane, the pitiful cry of a helpless animal in the clutches of a predatory beast, must remind us of the dreadful fear of death under which man lives. However, every anxious cry of animate and inanimate creation is also an expression of the hope to be delivered from the bondage of corruption unto the glorious liberty of the children of God. (Rom. 8:19 f.) Because Christ has freed us from death, the Christian changes the ancient mariner's song "In the midst of life we are surrounded by death" to read: "In the midst of death we are surrounded by Life" (Luther, Exposition of Psalm 90, St. Louis V: 741).

The devil's kingdom, as Luther frequently points out, consists of sin, death, hell, and God's wrath. Since Christ has destroyed these, the tyrannical power of the devil, our third tyrant, is broken. In a Good Friday Sermon, Luther says:

This text [Gen. 3:15] Christ had to hear again and again [during His Passion]. For His hour had now come to crush the serpent's head, not the serpent which creeps in the grass and devours frogs, but the old serpent, the devil. And this He was to do with His body and life, permitting the devil to overrun Him and to pour his venom and anger upon Him. In this way Christ crushes and pulverizes the devil so that we might have peace and security. . . . True, the devil remains the devil. But his head is demolished. Christ has destroyed his empire of sin, death, and hell and stripped him of all his power.—This text [Gen. 3:15] was constantly before Jesus during the period when the Jews observed Easter [the Passover]. Therefore He said: This is *My* Easter, a holy day of indescribable anguish, suffering, pain, and sorrow. It was indeed a most severe sermon which was preached to Christ during the night and the day of His suffering. But in His suffering He observed the Jewish Easter in a glorious way, for by His agony He destroyed Satan's empire. He need only to speak one word, and the devil's domain of death, sin, and hell is gone. Whoever believes in Christ shall be certain that sin, death, and hell cannot harm him. (St. Louis, XIII: 1861 f.)

True, the devil is still a liar and a murderer, and by his lies he attempts to destroy faith, and by his murders to annihilate love. He has, as Luther states in the Large Catechism, a serpent's head,

for wherever the serpent finds an opening large enough for its head, it can drag its entire body through. Satan is a master of a thousand arts (*Tausendkuenstler*) and knows untold devices to carry out his lying and murdering. The Christian is therefore constantly conscious of the dangers which threaten him. But Satan's power is broken, and Satan knows it. One little word can fell him, such as "Deliver me from evil," which, according to the original, is either masculine or neuter and can therefore be translated either deliver us from evil, or from the *evil one*, that is, the devil. (Cp. Large Catechism, Seventh Petition.)

Luther frequently summarizes our enemies in the one concept of God's wrath and speaks of God's curse and wrath in one breath with the usual triad of tyrants: sin, death, and the devil. This is truly Scriptural and fully in accord with Luther's own experience of the message of the Law. Therefore Luther saw the essence of the Gospel in Christ's victory over, and conquest of, God's wrath. This is undoubtedly the reason why Easter, as Christ's glorious victory, was so predominant in Luther's theology. It is indeed significant that Luther, though he composed many hymns, wrote no Lenten hymns, but concentrated on Easter hymns. His message was "Christ lives." And because Christ lives, he knows that the wrath of God is conquered. It is the concern of the Lundensian Luther renaissance to emphasize this. (Cp. Aulen, *The Faith of the Christian Church*, 230—241.) However, in doing this, this school fails to do justice to the full import of the objective character of the Vicarious Atonement. It does not take seriously the wrath of God and the vicarious character of Christ's work in enduring the wrath and curse of God. When they appeal to Luther in support of the theory that divine love is fused with divine wrath, they do not quote the entire context in which Luther seemingly makes such a statement.

The Christian must indeed make much of Easter, but there can be no Easter without Good Friday; there can be no victory for Christ and us without His having succumbed to the curse of God; there can be no love of God in Christ without God's wrath having truly been poured out on Christ. Luther brings this out forcefully in his commentary on Galatians 3:13, where he says in part:

The philosophers have been offended at this word of God and say that Paul could not have honestly meant such an impious statement as that Christ was accursed of God. . . . It must be kept in mind that Paul does not say Christ has become accursed for Himself, but that He has become accursed *for us*. All the prophets have seen that Christ is the worst malefactor, murderer, adulterer, thief, blasphemer, because He is the Sacrifice for the sins of the entire world, of a Paul, of a Peter, of a David. Thus Christ is the worst sinner, not because He has committed the sins Himself, but because the sins have been laid upon His body. . . . In Christ two diametrically opposed factors meet: the sins of all mankind and the highest and only righteousness. In this Person, who is the greatest and only sinner as well as the eternal and unconquerable Righteousness, sin as a mighty god fights against Christ. One of the two must yield and be vanquished when they meet in terrific battle. . . . Likewise the curse and the blessing wrestle with each other. The curse, which is God's wrath over the entire world, lies in conflict with the blessing, which is God's grace and mercy in Christ. The curse wants to destroy the blessing. This it cannot do, because God's blessing is divine. If the blessing in Christ could be vanquished, then God Himself would be conquered. This, of course, is impossible. Therefore Christ's divine power, righteousness, grace, life, destroys the monster of sin, death, and the curse when Christ assumed these in our stead (Col. 2:15). St. Paul shows that these great things have been accomplished by the glorious Person of Christ, who because He is true God, has conquered sin, death, and the wrath of God, hell, and the devil. Therefore you see how important it is to believe the doctrine of the deity of Christ, for only divine power [the deity of Christ] can destroy our enemies. . . . Therefore with deep gratitude we should accept this glorious doctrine that Christ has become a curse for us, that is, a sinner and subject to the wrath of God, has assumed our person and our sin. For if He had not assumed our sin, He, the eternal Righteousness, could not have become a curse for us nor have freed us from God's wrath. He says: As for Me, I require nothing according to My humanity or deity. But I shall empty Myself of My bliss, clothe Myself in human form (*larva*) and become a curse for you. But because He is a divine and eternal Person, death could not hold Him, and He now lives eternally. . . . [Therefore] you do not have Christ if you do not know that He is God and man. You have Christ only when you believe that this

pure and innocent Person has been given to you by faith so that He might become your High Priest and Savior, yes, your Servant. For you He has put aside His innocence and holiness and has put on your person, your sin, death, and the curse, and thus has freed you from the curse. (St. Louis, IX: 367—387.)

The glorious liberty which Christ has won for us by vanquishing the Law, sin, death, the devil, and the wrath of God is comprehended in the one word "peace," the peace of God which passes all understanding. This word denotes the salvation and the deliverance of the total man according to body and soul from the tyrants which held every man in total bondage. And this freedom and the peace of God is ours in and through the Gospel.

b. *The Gospel the Liberating Power*

The Gospel is not a newspaper report; the Gospel does not only tell us about the work of Christ; but the Gospel is in itself the liberating power. The Gospel is truly the power of God unto salvation. Luther therefore correctly states that the Christian soul has nothing in heaven or in earth in which it can live and be free and be a Christian except in the holy Gospel. In this Gospel we hear Christ say: "I am the Resurrection and the Life; he that believeth in Me shall live eternally." Or again: "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." Or again: "Man does not live by bread alone, but by the Word of God which proceeds out of the mouth of God." Therefore we can be certain that the soul can dispense with everything except the Word of God; and, again, without the Word of God the soul is absolutely lost. Where the soul has God's Word, it requires nothing more, for here it has an abundant supply of everything. It has its food, its joy, its peace, its light, its righteousness, its truth, its wisdom, its liberty, and all good in an inexpressible manner. (St. Louis, XIX: 990.)

In the Gospel, God gives us the entire Christ and in Him divine grace, perfect righteousness, peace, and liberty. In Thesis 37 of the Ninety-five Theses, Luther states: "Every Christian, living or dead, shares in all of Christ's and the Church's treasures without a letter of indulgence." In the Smalcald Articles he condemns the three parts of Rome's penance on the ground that the Christian contrition, confession, and satisfaction is never piecemeal (*stücklich*

und bettelisch), but always complete (Part III, Art. III, 36—38). We have Christ fully, entirely, or not at all. And this "entire Christ" and His work is summarized by the Church in teaching Christ's threefold office.

In His Prophetic Office, Christ reveals Him whom no man has seen. He declares to men the gracious will of God. But the revelation of God is only one phase of Christ's Prophetic Office. Every word of God is a creative word, and Christ's revelation is, like all divine words, an almighty and creative activity. In condemning Rome's enforced celibacy, Justus Jonas showed very forcefully that the word: "Be fruitful and multiply" cannot be set aside by a papal edict, for its creative efficacy will remain until the end of time, just as an arrow, through the tension of the bow, flies through the air until it hits its mark (G. Plitt, *Einleitung in die Augustana*, II, 457). Christ's Word is the effectual and creative Word which not only brings a report of freedom; it actually opens the doors of the prison house and gives us freedom. In His Prophetic Office, Christ is speaking as creatively today as when He stood at the grave of Lazarus and called to him: "Come forth!" or when He said to the paralytic: "Thy sins are forgiven thee." This is the burden of the Savior's words: "If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32). In His Prophetic Office, Christ is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life" (John 14:6). Christ's Word is the quickening voice of the Son of God; it is spirit, and it is life (John 5:24-27, 39; 6:63). Whether this Word is written, as we have it in the Scriptures; or whether it is spoken, as we have it in the sermon, the absolution, and the mutual admonition; or whether it is signed to us, as we have it in the Sacraments, the Word of Christ always locks the prison gates of hell and opens the portals to eternal life. In every instance the prophetic voice of Christ is the power of God to salvation, the almighty power to make us completely free (Eph. 1:17-23). This is brought out beautifully in Holy Baptism (Gal. 3:23-29). St. Paul contrasts the servants of the bondwoman with the children of the free woman. The Law is the prison from which no man can escape of his own ingenuity and cunning. But the Gospel in Holy Baptism is the power of God to set us free from our enemies. For in Baptism we have put

on Christ; and having put on Christ, we are Abraham's seed, children of God, and heirs according to the promise. Holy Baptism not only tells us that God wants us to be His children; it actually makes us children of God and therefore completely free people. In faith we accept Christ as Prophet, and that means that we possess Him and His mighty Word, which has set us completely free from all the tyrants.

We embrace Christ, secondly, in His Priestly Office, which the Church usually views from its propitiatory and intercessory activity. As Priest, Christ has removed the wrath of God, has broken the power of all the tyrants which ruled over us, has conquered Satan and hell. The Old Testament priests sprinkled the altar with the blood of the goats and bullocks and figuratively placed a covering over sins so that God could no longer see them. The expiation of sins and the pronouncement of the absolution was illustrated by the complete disposal of the sacrificial animal. Thus Christ, our High Priest, by His own sacrifice has covered the face of God, who can no longer see our sins and must pronounce us free from all our sins and of the consequences of sin.

As our Priest, Christ still intercedes for us (1 John 2:1-2). He presents, as it were, His holy and innocent suffering and death to His heavenly Father. When we fall into sin and again become subject to our enemies, death and the devil, Christ pleads with His heavenly Father that for His sake He should deliver us from every evil of body and soul, in short, from the Evil One. The Seventh Petition re-echoes, as it were, the Savior's plea before His Father in our behalf. Faith in our great High Priest gives us complete and full victory.

And finally Christ has become our Lord and King. By nature we were under the tyranny of our enemies, but now Christ has established His kingdom, His gracious rulership in our hearts. This is what Luther has in mind when he answers the question: What is the Kingdom of God? as follows:

Nothing else than what we learned in the Creed, that God sent His Son Jesus Christ, our Lord, into the world to redeem and deliver us from the power of the devil, and to bring us to Himself, and to govern us as a King of righteousness, life, and salvation against sin, death, and an evil conscience, for which end He

has also bestowed His Holy Ghost, who is to bring these things home to us by His holy Word and to illumine and strengthen us in the faith by His power. (*Triglot*, p. 711.)

It is indeed a glorious truth that Christ has become our King, the King of love, of righteousness, and that in complete liberty we can serve Him in holiness and righteousness throughout all eternity. Is there any liberty which can compare with the liberty which the Christian enjoys in Christ Jesus, his Prophet, Priest, and King? What is the liberty which the Americans have brought to Norway, France, and Germany since the last war compared with the glorious liberty which the children of God have in Christ, their Savior?

This liberty is not a future blessing, but a present reality. It is true indeed that we wait for our liberation, but it is equally true that we also possess it now. Luther often speaks of the "already—not yet" of the Christian faith. Luther was deeply rooted in an other-worldly religion. His entire thinking centered in the final goal of the Christian faith: eternal life and salvation. But Luther's theology was truly paradoxical. While his thinking was other-worldly, he was, "with his head in heaven, firmly planted with both feet upon the earth." The Lutheran Christian is constantly filled with joy by virtue of the glorious hope which illuminates every corner and crevice of this universe. The joy which filled Luther's heart at the glorious expectancy manifests itself already in this world.

Frequently our emphasis is on the "not yet." That seems quite natural. All around us we see death, we commit sins daily, we feel the power of the devil, we recognize our own impotence. But we must constantly look upward and keep in mind that even here and now we possess all things. Salvation is not only a future blessing, for to be saved means to be saved here and now. The Christian's motto is: "I rejoice in the Lord alway." His philosophy of life is that of Paul Gerhardt:

Mein Herze geht in Spruengen Und kann nicht traurig sein,
Ist voller Freud' und Singen, Sieht lauter Sonnenschein.
Die Sonne, die mir lachet, Ist mein Herr Jesus Christ;
Das, was mich singen machet, Ist, was im Himmel ist.

(Cp. the translation in *Lutheran Hymnal*, 528:15.)

The unbeliever has no understanding of such a *Weltanschauung*. If he does take life seriously, he can evaluate his life only from the viewpoint of his bondage under the Law. Often this bondage leads to a contempt of the world, manifested in many forms of asceticism. The ascetic frowns upon and usually proscribes every joyful experience and awaits only the day when his spirit will be released from the bondage of this body. Christian liberty, however, is entirely different in its world view. The freed Christian knows that he is a free child of God fully now. True, it does not yet appear what we shall be, not because we are not as yet fully the children of God, but because our glory is hidden and invisible. The world cannot know what we are, and often we Christians, because we still have our old Adam, cannot see and understand the glory that is ours and that shall be revealed. Nevertheless, the future glory of the Christian is his already in this life. In this connection Luther states the following:

Through His birth Christ has the honor and prestige of being born a Priest and King, for He was of royal and priestly ancestry. This is a noble heritage; this Christ shares with us and makes us kings and priests together with Himself, as St. Peter says, "Ye are a royal priesthood." Through faith the Christian is elevated so highly that he is spiritually a lord of all things. Nothing can harm him in his way to heaven. In fact, everything must be subject to him, as St. Paul says: "All things work together for good to the elect, whether it is life or death, sin or piety, evil or good." Whatever we may mention, it is all ours and must serve our eternal salvation, as St. Paul says 1 Corinthians 3. Of course, we do not possess these things empirically and bodily now, for we, too, must die, and no one can escape death; we, too, are subject to many things in this life, but spiritually we are kings and lords, so that even my death and my suffering must serve me. This is indeed a noble heritage which we have when we share in the birth of Christ. Indeed, we are the true and all-powerful nobility, so that we enjoy even now the most precious liberty and the greatest power in the world. (St. Louis, XIX: 997 f.)

The pastor ministers to a congregation composed of priests and kings who possess all things in Christ, who are sitting with Christ in heavenly places and are lords of everything (Eph. 2:4-6). All Christians are blessed with every heavenly blessing in Christ Jesus;

they are heirs of God, and as heirs they possess their eternal bliss now; they now have a reserved place in heaven (1 Pet. 1:4). "Faith is the substance of things hoped for" (ὑπόστασις, Heb. 11:1.) The New Testament readers understood this to mean that faith is like the legal document which shows rightful ownership to a piece of property. The man with a properly notarized deed claims the land described in the deed, whether or not he has ever seen it. So our faith is our deed, the substance, ground, to the heavenly property. And no power can ever dispossess us. All this is vividly portrayed and effectively conveyed to us in the Gospel. Our faith sometimes stumbles at Christ's words on the way to Lazarus' grave: "He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." Is it really true that the Christian does not die, that he has already gone to life everlasting? We find the answer to this perplexing question in Holy Baptism. In Baptism we were buried together with Christ; we share in Christ His battle with our tyrants, sins, death, the devil. But we also share Christ's glorious victory. We have been quickened with Him and now live before God in righteousness and purity forever. It takes very strong faith to believe this. But the essence and core of the Gospel is that everything that Christ has won for us is ours now through faith. We *now* are the children of God; we are *now* living in the liberty of the sons of God through Christ Jesus. Our faith is truly eschatological now.

2. The Christian, a Totally Free Man, Becomes the Servant of All

Luther's theology, like that of St. Paul, is truly "other-worldly." The desire to depart and to be at home with the Lord is a dominant motif in St. Paul's theology. This is only natural, since everything for our salvation is already finished, and we wait only for the coming of our Lord and Savior. In fact, the purpose of all history is the saving of God's elect (Romans 9-11). The Apostolic message centers in a tremendous urgency and a constant expectancy of the Savior's return, summarized in the conclusion of the New Testament canon: "Surely, I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:20; cp. 1 Thessalonians). Luther expressed this same expectancy at Smalcald in 1537, when the politicians attempted to fix an agenda for a proposed council. Luther proposed

an agenda with the concluding prayer: "O Lord Jesus Christ, do Thou Thyself convoke a council, and deliver Thy servants by Thy glorious advent."

Luther viewed life as a pilgrimage. Each evening the pilgrim stops at the hotel, uses its facilities without attaching his heart to them, and continues his journey on the following day. This world view, however, does not consider life as being spent on two levels separated by a great chasm, nor does it teach that life is only the testing ground for the future life. That would be a Law theology, for its basic premise is that man must seek to ascend to God by his own efforts. Such a two-level world view places man in this life on the lower level, where, by self-appointed works and divine testing, man hopes to prepare himself for entry into the upper-level world. This type of theology prompts people to enter religious orders. The Trappist Order, for example, teaches that by self-negation its members can approach this upper level already in this life. Such practices as meditation upon the vanity of life, complete isolation from society, abstinence from all normal activities, even conversation, are viewed as means to transcend from the mundane to the celestial plane. However, every form of self-negation done with the hope of a reward is not self-negation at all, not the Christian denial, not the taking of the cross. It is not denial, but egocentricity when a person "denies" himself something to obtain a reward for it. That is indeed a theology of the Law and leads to a morbid world view. The Gospel theology teaches that God is essentially a *Giver*. Luther compares God to a fountain. The more water it gushes forth, the richer and the purer the supply becomes. True to His name, God is constantly giving. The believer can do nothing but receive. Being under the Gospel, the Christian receives much—everything! Therefore faith is indeed the *Nehmeband*, which is always begging. Luther compares the Christian to a peasant woman with a large apron. The larger the apron, the greater the supply she can carry home. And so faith must always come with a tremendously large apron, the larger the more pleasing to God. In another instance Luther uses the following illustration: A king promises a beggar to give him anything that he may request. Is it not an insult to the king if the beggar

then would ask for a bowl of soup? Likewise we would insult God if we do not bring "large petitions" to God.

But some people say: "If man is totally free and not expected to do anything, if we are free from the burdensome commandments of the Church, then the Christian religion indeed is an easy religion. If faith is everything and there is nothing for us to do, then 'let us eat and drink and be merry.'" And so the charge has always been made by all Law theologians that Lutheran theology, a theology of the Gospel, has taken the seriousness out of religion and has opened the floodgates to a life of license. It is true indeed that the religion of the Gospel has freed us from a tremendous bondage, from an impossible obligation. But since we can do nothing for our salvation, we are now no longer bound to the impossible yoke whereby we had hoped to pull ourselves into heaven. The Gospel has freed and released our powers for a new activity. In every form of Law religion man dissipates all his strength in an entirely false direction and a futile attempt. Under the Law we wasted our energy on absolutely useless and vain undertakings. Under the Gospel we are free to devote our entire strength to serve God and our fellow men. Luther summarizes this paradox as follows: "The Christian, a totally free man, becomes the willing servant of all and is subject to everyone." Free from every obligation, the Christian is cheerfully engaged in many activities. According to Luther, these activities center in two areas: (a) in the works toward oneself, and (b) in the works toward one's fellow man.

a. According to the new man the Christian is perfect. He will now see to it that his total person, that is, body and soul, constantly pleases God. This means, according to Rom. 6:6, 12 and Gal. 5:24, that we must bring our body into conformity with the high and noble purpose for which the total person has been redeemed. St. Paul keeps his body in subjection (1 Cor. 9:27). Luther, too, advocates an ascetic life. However, it must be kept in mind that Luther's asceticism is entirely different from the one which is commonly in vogue. Many people seem to believe that when St. Paul speaks of the body, he means the fleshly and corporeal part of man. They falsely hold that the body is the seat of sin and, as a result,

maintain that by subduing the body with actual chastisements, such as fasting, wakings, celibacy, or even torture, they weaken the body and eradicate sin. This dualistic view of man leads to the Neoplatonic error that by weakening the body the better part of man, the soul, can more easily ascend to God. However, when St. Paul speaks of the body, he has in mind the total person, with all the faculties of intellect, will, and emotions, in so far as the *total person is still under sin*. True, God places chastisements upon us, such as sickness, afflictions, loss of property, and even death, to keep our body in subjection. But these are not self-imposed chastisements, but come from the loving hand of God, because the Christian still has his old Adam. The Christian himself will constantly crucify his flesh with all the sins and evil lusts. He will be temperate and moderate in all things, such as eating, drinking, luxuries. However, the best way to keep the body in subjection is not by abstaining from certain things, but rather by doing something positive and constructive. This was St. Paul's motto when he said to the Christians: "Present your bodies a living sacrifice, . . . which is your reasonable service" (Rom. 12:1). The Christian life does not consist in "don'ts," but in "do's," in activity. Luther comments on this as follows:

God gave Adam something to do in Paradise, not that he should thereby become holy, for he was already holy, but God commanded him to be a farmer lest he become idle. God gave him pleasant works to do so that he would be occupied and his body be protected. (St. L. XIX, 1002.)

The Christian's total person is redeemed, that is, he is saved according to body and soul. Christ became man and took on our flesh to redeem not only our souls, but to redeem us according to body *and* soul as total personalities. Our bodies as well as our souls are temples of the Holy Spirit. The total person performs good works and places all his faculties of body and mind into the service of God. This is symbolized and effected in Holy Baptism. There is, as Luther points out, a specific purpose why the Savior combines the Word with the water. Luther states:

The reason why we use the Word and water in Baptism is that the body, which can apprehend nothing but the water, is sprinkled and, in addition, the Word is spoken for the soul to apprehend;

now, since both the water and the Word are one Baptism, therefore body and soul must be saved and live forever: the soul through the Word, which it believes, and the body, because it is united with the soul and also apprehends Baptism as it is able to apprehend it. (Large Catechism.)

This is the truly ascetic life. However, it is not controlled by a codified system of laws. The Christian has no set standard of rules and regulations according to which he lives, but in every moment, in every situation, there is before him the highest of all standards: *to be active in pleasing God*. Luther expresses it as follows:

Good works never made a pious person, but a pious person performs good works. . . . The Christian is sufficiently pious through his faith (*er ist satt und selig durch seinen Glauben*), which has appropriated Christ and His Person, and therefore there is no work which is necessary to salvation. The Christian is free from all laws. In this absolute liberty he does everything without the hope of reward, never for selfish purposes, for he is blessed in his faith for Christ's sake. This makes labor so highly noble, in fact, the lowest menial labor, such as washing diapers, becomes an activity prompted by love to God. Whatever the Christian does, in high or low position of life, he does it to the glory of God and puts his body into the service of God and his fellow man. (St. L. XIX, 1003 f.)

b. Lutheran theology has often been charged with being totally indifferent to its social responsibilities. The unfortunate lack of social consciousness in many Lutheran quarters does not originate in Luther's theology. Luther had no patience whatsoever with a world view which compelled men to withdraw from society and to enter into a monastery. It was Luther's hope to re-establish the principles of the Apostolic Church, where all things were held in common and where the Gentiles could not but exclaim: "See how these Christians love one another!" The Christian cannot be without works toward his fellow man. In the Christian life, faith is constantly active and concerned only with serving and benefiting other people. Such activity has no other standard than the brother's need. In our fellowship with the Spirit (*Κοινωνία*) we possess everything, we lack nothing for Christ's sake. We now manifest our love to Christ in this, that we no longer look to our welfare,

but follow Christ's example. Though He was in the form of God and possessed everything, He freely gave up everything in order to serve us with His perfect obedience, yes, with His perfect obedience upon the Cross (Phil. 2:5-8). In a sermon on Phil. 2: 5-6 Luther says:

Christ did all this, not because we were worthy of it, but in order to be obedient to His Father. Here St. Paul opens with one word heaven itself and permits us to look into the very abyss of divine majesty and to behold the marvelous will and grace of God's fatherly heart. Thus we can experience how it has pleased God from eternity that His Son should do everything for us. Whose heart does not melt with joy at beholding this? Who should not praise, live, and thank God and again become the servant of all, yes, willingly become less than nothing, when he sees that God has so richly and abundantly poured out His love upon us? (St. L. XII, 476.)

In his treatise *The Liberty of a Christian Man*, Luther points out that the Christian has everything through faith. Therefore it must follow with cold logic that he needs nothing more whatsoever. He states:

What else can I do to such a kind Father, who has blessed me superabundantly, than to give Him freely, joyously, without any hope of reward, whatsoever pleases Him? Yes, I must also become a "Christian," a true Christian, toward my neighbor, even as Christ has become "Christ" for me. Since in faith I have everything through Christ, the only thing I can do is to serve my neighbor in those things that are necessary and beneficial to him. In this way love to God springs out of faith, and out of my love there flows a free, willing, joyous desire to help my neighbor. Just as my neighbor is in need and requires my help, so we also were in need before God and required His grace. And, again, as God has helped us through Christ, without our merit, so we also must serve our neighbor with our body and works. Let us place everything into the service of our neighbor: our talents, our time, our money, our love. (St. L. XIX, 1008.)

We must always come to the aid of our fellow man in his physical need; support our government with our prayers and our taxes; our fellow Christians in truly ecumenical spirit. Luther comments as follows:

If you want to do really good works, give to charity, to the Church, to your neighbor, then do it without any hope of reward, but only with that one thought in mind that other people may be benefited by it; then you are a true Christian. What will you do with your property and your good works which remain over and above those that you need to take care of your own body, since you have more than enough in your faith, in which God has given you all things? Thus God's gifts are to flow from one to another and become truly common property, so that each one takes care of his neighbor as though it were he himself. . . . I must be willing to put my faith and my righteousness at the service of my neighbor in order to cover his sin. Yes, I must take his sins and shortcomings upon myself as though they really were mine, even as Christ has done for me. This is indeed the nature of love, that it never—under no conditions—seeks its own, but always that of the fellow man. (*Ibid.*, 1010 f.)

But does this mean that we may not use our earthly possessions, such as our scientific knowledge, our cultural heritage, our material wealth? All of us have various earthly goods which have been given to us for our use and enjoyment. Is it right to keep these, or should we give everything away? Luther has the right answer to this problem when he states that all these material and earthly blessings are gifts of God for all men, including also the unbelievers. The Bible gives us records of rich and influential Christians, and nowhere does it prescribe that the rich should give away everything. St. Paul has very specific directions for the rich, which do not include the obligation to give away all their money. The entire universe, with the beauty and glory of nature, the wonderful endowments of man manifest in the arts and sciences, yes, even the leisure time for man's enjoyment, are God's gifts to man, which he is to use and to enjoy; however, we should always be mindful of St. Paul's injunction that all of us are to possess whatever gifts we have as though we possessed them not. (Cp. Heinz Bluhm, "Das Diesseits in Luthers 'Von der Freiheit,'" etc., *Monatshefte für den Deutschen Unterricht*, Febr. 1951, 93—107.) As the cobbler uses his tools and, after the pair of shoes has been completed, lays aside his awl and needle, the Christian constantly keeps in mind that the gifts of this world are given only for a transitory and ancillary purpose. Our secular gifts must always remain be-

neath the spiritual gift. As citizens of the secular realm, we shall use them. In the spiritual realm, Luther gives us the following motto:

Through faith the Christian ascends above himself unto God. But from God he again descends beneath himself through love and thus ever remains in God and in divine love. (*Ibid.*, 1011.)

3. *Freedom and Bondage in the Christian Life*

a. As long as the Christian is in this world, he is involved in an invisible conflict.* The Christian is constantly in a state of tensions. Luther describes this conflict as follows: The inner man is at one with God, is always joyful for Christ's sake, who has done so much for him, and finds his full delight in doing in free love what pleases God. But in his flesh he finds a contrary will which would serve the world and seek only what pleases itself. Faith cannot endure this selfishness of the old man and therefore seeks to restrain the old will, as St. Paul says Rom. 7:22, 23; 1 Cor. 9:27; Gal. 5:24. Thus the Christian is both free and bound, he is *iustus et simul peccator*, and he is constantly engaged in a life-and-death struggle.

Scripture describes this conflict in various ways. St. Paul, for example, usually speaks of the Christian as consisting of flesh and spirit and, at first glance, describes the Christian as a dual or "split" personality with two opposing wills. St. Paul seems to think of the Christian as though he were two personalities at war with each other. However, he does this to bring out the reality of the conflict. We must be careful lest we misunderstand St. Paul as though he followed the psychology of the Greek philosophers, the Roman Catholic Church, and many of the present cults. When Paul speaks of two opposing wills (Rom. 7:17-23), he does not have in mind that the Christian is a dualistic personality, the "flesh" living in one compartment and the "spirit" in another. For him the word "flesh" denotes the total person, with all the faculties of body and mind, in the service of sin. The "spirit" is for St. Paul the total person who serves God with a freed will. Christ did not come to

* In his *Das christliche Ethos* W. Elert devotes an entire chapter to "*Der unsichtbare Streit*," pp. 370—431. Some of the topics which he discusses are: "The Christian on Two Paths," "The Totality of Human Personality," "The Third Use of the Law."

redeem only our souls, but our bodies as well, in fact, the entire person, and for that reason the Redeemer did take on not only our human soul, but also our flesh, to redeem our bodies as well as our souls and to make His believers the temple of the Holy Spirit according to both body and soul.

There is a constant conflict between the Christian's new man and his old man. The entire person, both the old and the new man, always participates in every action of the Christian. It is not as though a Christian were for a time living according to the new man and then for a time living according to the old man. In every God-pleasing work the Christian's old man is constantly interfering with what the Christian would do according to his new nature. Take prayer as an example: According to the new man the Christian enters into blessed communion with God and shuts out all selfish and foreign thoughts. But in the midst of prayer the Christian according to his old man is assailed by selfish and even sinful thoughts, so that the Lord's Prayer becomes the greatest martyr at the hand of Christians. For that reason the Christian must confess with St. Paul: "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not, but the evil which I would not, that I do." (Rom. 7:18-19.)

Scripture also describes this "invisible conflict" by presenting the Christian as being on two ways, the narrow and the broad way, the way of believers and the way of unbelievers, the one leading to eternal life and the other to eternal destruction. They run in diametrically opposite directions. In the Christian's experience, however, these two ways often seem to run parallel. They are so close together that oftentimes only a hair's breadth separates them. Our modern highways with their central line seem to be an exact analogy, for the line is intended to keep traffic moving in opposite directions, but fails to do so with fatal results.

In sorrow and contrition the Christian has gone through the narrows of a mountain pass; he is now on the way which is Christ. But this way continues to be very narrow, in fact, so narrow that even one self-righteous deed will block any progress. This way is only wide enough to permit the Christian to take no more than his faith in Christ Jesus. In the Christian's life the other way—

the highway of the works of the Law — runs parallel to this narrow way. It looks very inviting, the scenery seems to be more beautiful, and he is constantly tempted to take this highway. It appeals to our natural inclination to return to the bondage of the Law. A legalistic theology is always popular.

Christians have gone through the narrows, but they are not yet at the goal. Daily, hourly, the believer must go through the narrows again. This does not appeal to his old Adam. The danger which confronts the Christian is that he so often would like to go on the broad way, which appears to be so much more charming. Thus only too frequently he attempts to walk on both highways: trusting in Christ and serving Him alone and at the same time boasting of his good works. Is this the reason why the Christian is so often assailed by doubts and the terrors of conscience? Does the Christian question the assurance of his salvation or become carnally secure because he has entered the broad way of the Law in his attempt to become good in the sight of God, forgetting completely that the Law has only one function, namely, to accuse man? The temptation to straddle the narrow line which separates the two highways constantly confronts the Christian, and he is always in the state of tensions. But thank God for these tensions, for as Luther points out: the greatest temptation for the Christian is not to have any temptations and to feel carnally secure, to forget God, and to walk the broad way without realizing it. The inner conflict finally should have but one purpose, namely, to keep the Christian in the narrow way by constant watchfulness and diligent use of the means of grace.

Scripture furthermore presents the Christian as living in two eras: the old age and the new age. The old age is the dispensation of the Law. This age has its own princes (1 Cor. 2:6), even its own god who blinds man (2 Cor. 4:4), and its own system of theology, the doctrine of salvation by works. This is indeed an evil age (Gal. 1:4). The Gospel, however, has ushered in a new age; it proclaims the new year, the year of liberty; the old things are passed away, all things have become new. According to the new man the Christian has already tasted the powers of this new era (Heb. 6:5). Christians are sitting with Christ in heavenly places and have the full bliss of the new age (Eph. 2:6).

But like the Galatians, the Christian often looks with yearning eyes to the old age. He wants to observe certain rules and regulations whereby he hopes to work out his salvation. Luther says on this point:

Every Christian is divided between two ages (*Zeiten*). Inasmuch as he is flesh, he is under the Law; inasmuch as he is spirit, he is under the Gospel. During the age of the Law, greed, jealousy, and pride cling to his flesh; according to the old man he is ignorant of God, impatient, always murmuring, always angry with God. If you live only according to the flesh, then you are always under the dispensation of the Law. But this period must be shortened; otherwise no one could be saved. The age of the Law is not eternal; it will end. The age of the Gospel, however, is eternal, for Christ died once and now lives eternally, and so also the period of the Gospel will be eternal. (St. L. IX, 452 f.)

Thus the Christian constantly finds himself living in two dispensations, and this accounts for the tremendous tensions and the terrific inner conflict of every Christian.

And, finally, the Christian life is described as being under two doctrines: the Law and the Gospel. According to the new man he is just, absolved from all sins, and desirous to do only holy works, he is *iustus*; but according to the old man he is always a sinner and wants to do only what is displeasing to God and is therefore constantly under judgment, he is *simul peccator*.

According to the new man the words of St. Paul apply: "The Law is not made for a righteous man" (1 Tim. 1:9). In a sermon on this text Luther says:

Through faith the Christian does everything which the Law demands. He has the Holy Spirit, who has set his heart aglow with love for everything that is good. Therefore you cannot command a Christian man to be good. That would be as foolish as to order a man to be a man and a woman to be a woman, for it is their very nature to be that and nothing else. If you therefore attempt to command a Christian to be good, you would be a fool, for you would order him to do something which is already done; and God is no fool, to demand payment for that which is already paid. (*Ibid.*, 880.)

But according to the old man the Christian is also under the Law; he is completely sold under sin, and therefore the Law with

its demands and accusations constantly stands before him. The dogmatic term "third use of the Law" has sometimes been used as a guise to cover a legalistic theology, as though the Law were some sort of a helpmeet for salvation. The typical legalist actually makes the third use of the Law its primary function. (Cp. "The Function of the Law in Christian Preaching" in CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY, 1950, 123—129.) The Law must indeed be preached to the Christian, who because of his old Adam sometimes has foolish notions as to what are good works, invents his own works, and esteems these much higher than the good works which God has prescribed. Because of the old Adam, who is identical with the world, the Law must be preached to the Christian as a curb, as a mirror, and as a rule. But in this threefold function the Law remains plaintiff and judge (cp. Formula of Concord, Art. VI, pars. 18—24). *Lex semper accusat.*

In his every activity the Christian is under both the Law and the Gospel. This makes Christian preaching and Christian living so extremely difficult at times. The Christian preacher does not preach to two persons, but to the one personality under two aspects. Therefore he sometimes finds it difficult to apply each doctrine properly in the cure of souls. In his daily living the Christian encounters tensions because he is under two doctrines. When he looks at himself, he sees his sin, the accusing finger of the Law, and God's wrath. But when he sees himself in the light in which God looks at him, there is nothing but grace.

b. And so the terrible and relentless conflict goes on. The Christian's heart is a constant battleground, and on this battle front the old man and his allies are arrayed in battle order against the Christian according to the new man, whose weapons are the sword of the Spirit, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and prayer. Sometimes the Christian wins glorious victories; in fact, every good work which the Christian does in faith for Christ's sake is a victory such as has never been won on any battlefield of this world. However, the Christian also goes down in defeat because he fails to use his battle equipment and surrenders to the enemy within himself. But by God's grace, in losing a battle, the Christian does not lose the war!

Conscious of the terrific warfare going on within himself, the

Christian cries with Paul: "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7:24.) But, thank God, the flesh, the old age, the broad way, the doctrine of the Law, will finally cease. We long for that time now and look for the final victory when the Holy Spirit will quicken our mortal bodies and transform them so that they will be like the body of our glorified Savior. It is indeed very appropriate that the ancient Church placed the doctrine of the resurrection of the body into the Third Article of our Creed and thereby indicated that in the Christian's bodily resurrection the Holy Spirit will bring His work of sanctification to its glorious culmination. The warfare is of course ended when our souls enter bliss in the moment of death. Therefore the Christian longs for his death, not because he has become battle-weary, not because he is looking for respite from the continuous inner conflict. Such a theology is anti-Scriptural, is the height of egocentricity, and is akin to the Hinduistic Nirvana theory. Beyond death the Christian sees the glorious resurrection of his body. He joyfully awaits this moment because it will usher in that endless period in which the Christian according to body and soul will live under Christ in perfect, eternal, and unalloyed righteousness. Free from every form of bondage and translated into the perfect liberty of the children of God, the perfected saints will serve the Triune God in righteousness and holiness in the new age forever and ever.

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