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Editorial Comment

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Hill: Editorial Comment

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Editorial Comment

In this issue we are continuing the observance of the 400th anniversary of the death of Philip Melancthon. To the articles appearing in the August issue of our journal, we are adding two more which likewise were read as a commemorative symposium at Concordia Seminary on April 20—21 of this year. In calling these articles to the attention of our readers, we have chosen to let Melancthon speak to us directly from his *Loci communes*, selecting some of his 33 theses, which conclude his treatise on Law and Gospel.

SUMMATION: LAW, GOSPEL, FAITH

1. Law is that teaching which prescribes what ought and what ought not to be done.

2. The Gospel is the promise of the grace of God.

3. The Law demands the impossible: love of God and neighbor. Rom. 8.

4. They who attempt to express the Law through human powers and free will, only feign external works and fail to express the affections which the Law demands.

6. Hence it is not the function of the Law to justify.

7. But the proper function of the Law is to reveal sin and therefore to confound the conscience, Rom. 3:20: "The knowledge of sin is by the Law."

8. To the conscience which now knows sin and is confused by the Law, Christ is revealed by the Gospel.

10. Faith, by which we believe the Gospel, showing us Christ, and by which Christ is received as the One who has placated the Father, which through grace is given, constitutes our righteousness, John 1:12: "As many as received Him, to them gave

He the power to become the children of God."

11. If indeed such faith alone justifies us, there is plainly no respect for our merits or our works, but only of Christ's merits.

12. Such a faith pacifies and exhilarates the heart, Rom. 5:1: "Being justified by faith we have peace."

13. And it results that for such kindness, for the fact that sin is forgiven for Christ's sake, God is loved in return, and thus the love of God is the fruit of faith.

20. He who has believed the Gospel and knows the goodness of God, his heart is now made erect so that he trusts God and fears Him and consequently abominates the counsels of the human heart.

21. Peter has most aptly said in Acts 15:9: "Hearts are purified by faith."

25. The Gospel is the promise of grace or the forgiveness of sins through Christ.

27. For the first promise was of grace or the promise of Christ. Gen. 3:15: "Her seed shall bruise thy head," that is, the Seed of Eve should bruise the kingdom of the serpent lying in wait for our heel, that is, sin and death.

30. Upon the birth of Christ the promises which had been made were consummated and the remission of sins was openly accomplished, for which purpose Christ was to be born.

33. Therefore he truly believes who in addition to threats believes the Gospel also; who turns his face to the mercy of God or to Christ, who is the Pledge of divine mercy. (Translation by Charles L. Hill, *The Loci Communes of Philip Melancthon* [Boston: Meador Publ. Co., 1944], pp. 215—218.)