TWENTY-SIXTH EVENING LECTURE.

(May 1, 1885.)

In order to be a true Christian genuine faith is an indispensable requisite. However, in order to be a true minister, genuine faith is not suffient, but there must be, in addition to faith, the ability to express in proper terms the things that must be believed. Accordingly, the holy Apostle Paul enjoins upon his assistant Timothy with great earnestness this duty: "Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." 2 Tim.1, 13. It is indeed indispensable for a minister to have genuine faith in his heart and to guard well this mystery of faith in his heart; however, it is equally indispensable that he present the true faith in "sound words," as the apostle expresses it, that is, in clear, plain, unmistakable, and adequate terms. This is a warning to be heeded particularly by those young theologians who were not reared in the sound words of faith as Timothy was, according to the report of the Apostle Paul; who did not from a child hear the true doctrine, but, instead, heard the teaching of rationalistic preachers or of believing preachers of the modern type. Some erroneous expression that is fundamentally wrong may have stuck in their memory, and they will probably make use of it in their sermons to the great injury of their hearers.

You know that rationalistic preachers refer to repentance and conversion by calling it amending, or reforming, one's life; to sanctification, by calling it walking in the path of virtue; to the anger of God, by calling it the serious purpose of God; to the predestination of God, by calling it men's fate; to the Gospel, by calling it the teaching of Jesus. Any one who has heard these phrases since his childhood days may easily adopt this dangerous rationalistic terminology in his sermons, even if he does not do it because he harbors a wrong belief.

However, even believing theologians of the modern type are frequently too timid to use technical terms that are fully warranted by Biblical and ecclesiastical usage, because they are afraid that these terms might prove offensive to their audience. They are averse to speaking of hereditary sin in their sermons or of the wrath of God against sinners, of the blindness of natural man, of spiritual death, in which all men are merged by nature. They do not like to speak of the devil going about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, because that would make them unpopular with their hearers. They are disinclined to speak of the everlasting fire of hell, of eternal torment and damnation; they prefer to speak of these matters to their hearers in terms that do not seem so strange, faulty, and offensive to them, employing phrases that are more in harmony with "the religious sentiment of an enlightened people.

Now, there is no doubt that these men wish to convert people by using such false

terms. They believe that they can convert men by concealing things from them or by presenting matters in a manner that is pleasing to men as they are by nature. They are like sorry physicians who do not like to prescribe a bitter medicine to delicate patients, or if they do prescribe it, they add so much sugar to it that the patient does not taste the bitter medicine, with the result that the effect is spoiled. Accordingly, preachers who do not clearly and plainly proclaim the Gospel, which is offensive to the world, are not faithful in the discharge of their ministry and inflict great injury on men's souls. Instead of advancing Christians in the knowledge of the pure doctrine, they allow them to grope in the dark, nurse false imaginations in them, and speed them on in their false and dangerous path.

The history of the Church shows how dangerous it is when theologians, otherwise reputed as orthodox, use wrong terms, which can easily be misunderstood. As a result, the most abominable heretics, to cover up their errors with a halo of sanctity, have appealed to phrases which men admittedly orthodox have used. These heretics have deprecated being denounced for the use of terms which were accepted without question from men regarded as orthodox. True, the faulty expressions which orthodox teachers used in a right sense are used by these heretics to hide their error. Nevertheless, those who first used these expressions and believed that they were using them in the right sense are not altogether without blame. In the manner aforestated Arius, Nestorius, all the scholastics, etc., appealed to men whose orthodoxy was acknowledged and thus created the impression that they were continuing to teach the doctrine of the old Church and that their opponents must be false teachers.

Bear this in mind, my dear friends, and consider that as ministers of the Gospel it is your duty not only to *believe* as the Church believes, but also to *speak* in harmony with the Christian Church. Accordingly, before you commit your sermons to memory and deliver them to your congregations, you must subject your manuscript to a severe *critique*, to ascertain not only whether your sermons are according to the analogy of faith, but also whether you have throughout chosen proper terms, lest against your own intention you destroy where you want to build up. This is of the utmost importance. That is the reason why our Church from the very beginning declared that it requires its preachers "not to depart an inch" from its confessions, not to turn aside from the doctrines laid down in them, *non tantum in rebus, sed etiam in phrasibus*, that is, both as regards the matter offered in their sermons and the manner of their teaching.

This is indeed a great task, requiring hard study. However, in three years you can accomplish a great deal. At the close of your theological triennium those of you who have faithfully applied themselves will know — some more, some less — not only what the true doctrine is, but also how it must be presented. The task will be somewhat more difficult to those of you in particular who have had to listen to perverse teachers nearly throughout their youth. They will reveal in their sermons that they have not been

brought up in the sound words of faith. Proper terms must be employed, for the Apostle Paul beseeches the entire congregation at Corinth to "speak the same thing." 1 Cor. 1, 10. They are not to use divergent terms when expounding the same doctrine. The apostle adds another important remark: "that ye be perfectly joined together *in the same mind and in the same judgment."* Teaching the same doctrine is of no avail if it is not done in the same mind and in the same judgment. The United (*unierte*) Church affords a pertinent illustration. Its teachers may speak as we do, but they do not connect the same sense and meaning with the words that we do. These two things, then, are required of you: the same doctrine in the same terms and the same mind and judgment.

In our fifteenth thesis we are taking up the study of an instance which shows the injury that may be wrought by a faulty expression.

Thesis XV.

In the eleventh place, the Word of God is not rightly divided when the Gospel is turned into a preaching of repentance.

To understand these words correctly, you will have to bear in mind that the term *Gospel* has a usage similar to that of the term *repentance.* In the Holy Scriptures the term *repentance* is used in a wide and in a narrow sense. In the wide sense it signifies conversion viewed in its entirety, embracing knowledge of sin, contrition, and faith. This meaning occurs in Acts 2, 38, where we read: "Repent and be baptized every one of you," etc. The apostle does not say: "Repent and believe." Accordingly, he refers to conversion in its entirety, inclusive of faith. Nor could he have said: "Be contrite and then be baptized." He must have conceived of contrition as joined with faith. What he means to say is this: If you acknowledge your sins and believe in the Gospel which I have just preached to you, then be baptized for the forgiveness of sins.

The term *repentance* is used in a narrow sense to signify the knowledge of sin and heartfelt sorrow and contrition. In Mark 1, 15 we read: "Repent ye and believe the Gospel." In this statement Jesus evidently did not include faith in repentance, otherwise his statement would be tautological. In Acts 20, 21 Paul relates that he had been "testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." Since faith is named *separately* in this text, the term *repentance* cannot embrace knowledge of sin, contrition, and faith. Likewise, the Lord says concerning the Jews that despite the preaching of John the Baptist they "repented not afterward that they might believe him," Matt. 21, 32 (Luther translates: *"tatet ihr dennoch nicht Buße, daß ihr ihm danach auch geglaubt hättet"*). By repentance he refers to the effects of the Law and means to say that, since they had not become alarmed over their sins, it had not been possible for them to believe. For there will not be faith in a heart that has not first been terrified.

There is a similar usage as regards the term *Gospel;* sometimes it is used in a wide,

then again in a narrow meaning. The narrow meaning is its proper sense; in its wide meaning it is used merely by way of synecdoche, signifying anything that Jesus preached, including even His very poignant preaching of the Law, as, for instance, the Sermon on the Mount and His reproving of wicked men. Besides the term Gospel is used in contradistinction to the Old Testament, which often signifies only the teaching of the Law.

Rom. 2, 16 we read: *In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my Gospel.* Here the apostle cannot refer to the Gospel in the narrow sense, for that has nothing to do with the Judgment, since Scripture declares: "He that believeth on Him is not condemned" — "shall not come into condemnation." John 3, 18; 5, 24. By *Gospel* in this text, Paul understands the doctrine which he had proclaimed and which was composed of both Law and Gospel.

The term *Gospel* is unquestionably used in the narrow sense in Rom. 1, 16: *I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.* It is called, first, a Gospel of Jesus Christ; next, a Gospel that saves *all that believe it.* No such demand is made upon us by the Law, which requires that we keep it. Accordingly, the apostle is here speaking of God's gift to the world and of faith, hence of the Gospel in the narrow sense, to the exclusion of the Law.

Another pertinent text is Eph. 6, 15, which speaks of "*the Gospel of peace.*" Since the Law does not bring peace, but only unrest, the apostle in this text is speaking of the Gospel in the narrow sense, that is, of the glad tidings that Jesus Christ is come into the world to save sinners.

Our Lutheran Confessions follow the Bible in using the term *Gospel* now in the wide, now in the narrow sense. That explains the statement which occurs in them, *viz.:* "The Gospel preaches repentance." You will have to note this fact in order to understand our thesis correctly: a commingling of Law and Gospel takes place when the *Gospel of Christ,* that is, the Gospel in the narrow sense, is turned into a preaching of repentance.

In the *Apology,* Art. XII, § 29 (Mueller, p. 171; *Trigl. Conc.,* p. 258), we read: "For the sum of the Gospel is comprehended in these two parts: First, it tells us to amend our lives, thus denouncing every one as a sinner. In the second place, it offers forgiveness of sin, everlasting life, salvation, every blessing, and the Holy Spirit through Christ, by whom we are born again."

It is quite evident that in this passage Melanchthon is using the term *Gospel* in the wide sense. Luther does the same in ever so many places throughout his writings, whenever he speaks of the Gospel's reproving men. But when he teaches what the Gospel really is, he speaks of nothing but consolation, mercy, forgiveness of sins; in short, of what the Gospel in the narrow sense proclaims.

Lest you think that Melanchthon, who is not always absolutely to be trusted, used a

faulty diction even in our Confessions, let me submit another citation from the *Apology,* Art. XII, §§ 53.54 (Mueller, p. 175; *Trigl. Conc.*, p. 264): "Accordingly, the entire Scriptures urge these two doctrines. The one is the Law, which reveals our misery and reproves sin. The other doctrine is the Gospel; for the promise of God, when He offers grace through Christ, the promise of grace, is repeated again and again throughout the Scriptures ever since the days of Adam. For at first the promise of grace, or the first Gospel, was given to Adam in these words: 'I will put emnity,' etc. Afterwards promises concerning the same Christ were made to Abraham and the patriarchs; later it was preached by the prophets, and lastly the same promise was preached among the Jews by Christ Himself when He had come into the world, and finally it was spread among the Gentiles throughout the world by the apostles. For by faith in the Gospel all patriarchs and all the saints since the beginning of the world have been made righteous in the sight of God, not on account of their contrition or sorrow or any other work."

From this statement you can see that when Melanchthon, a few pages previous, says: "First, the Gospel says: Amend your lives," he uses the term *Gospel* in the wider sense, referring to the tidings of grace together with the preaching of the Law, and *vice versa*. But in the last-quoted passage he speaks of "both parts" as contrasted with one another, naming the two doctrines into which the entire Scripture is divided.

It is not only extremely dangerous, but actually harmful to the souls of men for a minister to preach in such a manner as to lead men to believe that he regards the Gospel in its narrow and proper sense as a preaching of the Law and of the anger of God against sinners, calling them to repentance. Not to be cautious about the terms he uses is a great and serious fault even in a preacher whose personal faith may be correct. Accordingly, the Lutheran Church has from the beginning watched a speaker closely who was wont to say: "The Gospel is a preaching of repentance," to see whether he was speaking of the Gospel in the wide or in the narrow sense. When Melanchthon published the Altered Augsburg Confession, he was looked upon with suspicion because of the new exposition he gave of this matter. He was immediately taken to task by Flacius, who never took false teaching lightly. Melanchthon receded from his position and admitted that he had indeed used inadequate, in fact, wrong terms. This was satisfactory to Flacius, who did not wish to quarrel about terms, since heresy is not so much in the terms one uses as in the matter which one teaches, although the terms are not to be treated as an indifferent matter. When using terms that do not correctly express a certain thought, we are not heretics, but careless speakers. Accordingly, Flacius did not rush at Melanchthon, exclaiming: "For God's sake, look what you have done!"

The first to teach entirely false doctrine on this point was John Agricola, the antinomian fanatic. He was an untrustworthy, utterly careless person, who misused the Gospel. He was conceited to a high degree, but he was a learned man. During an illness which every one thought would prove fatal he remarked facetiously: "You cannot kill weeds."

He started out to gather prestige for himself when Luther began to preach stern Law sermons to secure sinners. He imagined that Luther had fallen away from his own teaching of the blessed Gospel which he had proclaimed at a time when he had an entirely different audience, namely, people who had been utterly crushed by the Law. He thought the time had come for him to show that he was the Reformer. He published anonymously eighteen *Propositiones inter Fratres Sparsas* ("Theses Spread among Brethren"). They are found in the St. Louis edition of Luther's Works, Vol. XX, 1624 ff.

Thesis XVIII reads: "For the Gospel of Christ teaches the wrath of God from heaven and at the same time the righteousness that is valid in the sight of God. Rom. 1, 17. For it is a preaching unto repentance, attached to God's promise, which reason does not grasp by nature, but only by a divine revelation."

Rom. 1, 18 the apostle starts a new section of his treatise. After announcing the subject of his epistle, he takes up the Law and in the second half of the first, in the entire second, and in the first half of the third chapter urges its claim. This part of his teaching he begins with the word: "The wrath of God from heaven," etc. He declares that everybody carries in his own bosom the judge that condemns him and feels and observes everywhere the judgments of the holy and righteous God. After preaching the Law, the apostle takes up the Gospel. Now, Agricola interprets the apostle's words as signifying that the wrath of God is manifested in the Gospel, taking Gospel in the strict sense of the term. He indulges in foolish talk when he calls the Gospel "a preaching unto repentance attached to God's promise, which reason does not grasp by nature, but only by a divine revelation." He declares that it cannot be understood, yet he undertakes to preach it to people who have as yet not been crushed. That is self-contradictory, — but that is what heretics always are.

Afterwards the Philippists, the followers of Melanchthon; took up Agricola's teaching. Good Melanchthon could not keep his fanatical followers from declaring Agricola's teaching exactly orthodox instead of saying, as Melanchthon had done, that he had used inadequate terms, which did not express his real meaning.

The worst of these fanatics was Caspar Cruciger the Younger. His father had been an excellent theologian, and Luther had at one time desired him to become his successor. But this son of old Cruciger did not turn out well; he wrote a treatise on justification in 1570 in which he said: "In this office [of the Gospel] God wants to terrify men by the preaching of repentance, which reveals both, all the sins that are set forth in the Law and this saddest of all sins which is really shown up in the Gospel, namely, the failure to know the Son of God and the contempt of Him." (*Disp. de Justif. Hom.* [1570], Thes. 10. See Hutter's *Expl. Conc.*, p. 472.) Cruciger contrasts the Gospel with the Law and claims that the Law does not show us the worst sins, but that this is done by the Gospel. — Some thought that Agricola was not altogether wrong, because the Law has nothing to say about the faith which justifies a sinner; hence the sin of unbelief must be revealed

in the Gospel. This, however, is only apparently so. The Gospel is the preaching of consolation. Though we must conclude that contempt of the Gospel is the most horrible sin, still it is not the Gospel that teaches it, but it is an inference drawn from the Gospel. Certainly I can, by inverting it, turn the most comforting doctrine into a comfortless one. No; it is the Law that reproves unbelief. Where? In the First Commandment, which signifies that "we are to fear, love, and *trust* in God above all things." Unbelief, no matter in what relation it is viewed, is forbidden in the First Commandment. When I commit the sin of unbelief, I *sin* because I break the Law, which requires me to trust in God and believe His Word. The Gospel did not come into the world to reveal the sin of unbelief; this sin had been previously revealed by the Law.

This point you will have to bear in mind, or you cannot prevail against Antinomians.

Agricola's error had also been espoused by Pezel, who wrote a treatise against Wigand, in which he said: "The Gospel in the strict sense contains the sternest threatening and reproves sin, namely, the sin of unbelief, of refusing to know the Son, of despising the anger of God, and finally, of despair." (*Adversus Wigandum.* Comp. Hutter's *Explic. Cond.,* p. 472.) It is gross nonsense when he says in this connection that the Law has not a word to say that despair is sin. Are we not to love and trust in God? That excludes despair. Hence despair must be the most abominable and horrible sin. The Gospel does say: "Believe, and you shall be saved." From this the inference can be drawn: "If I do not believe, I shall not be saved." But this is because the Law requires me to believe. You must rivet this fact on your mind, so as not to be deluded by the claim of Antinomians, which is a most horrible case of commingling Law and Gospel, to which you must never lend your ears. When preaching the Gospel, you must not present it with a black cloud hovering over it, but proclaim free grace and unconditioned consolation. When we are in the agony of death, we must have a sound cable of which we may take hold. We must know that what we grasp is not the Law.

The Antinomians who opposed Luther may have been well-intentioned men, but they were Pharisees. In their pitiful blindness they imagined that they were helping the world by their teaching, while they deprived the world of its only means of rescue.

Paul Crell's treatise against Wigand in 1571, may also be noted in this connection. He says: "Since the greatest and chief sin is revealed, reproved, and condemned only by the Gospel, it is, strictly speaking, the Gospel *alone* which is really and truly the preaching that calls for repentance or conversion in the true and proper sense." (*Disp. adversus Job. Wigandum,* 1571. Comp. Hutter's Explic. Conc., p. 471 f.)

Let us hear now what our Confessions say about this matter, which had become involved in many obscurities. By the *Formula of Concord,* harmony was to be restored also in this point of doctrine. It says, in the *Epitome,* Art. V, §§ 6. 7. 11 (Mueller, p. 535; *Trigl. Conc.,* p. 803): "If the Law and the Gospel, likewise also Moses himself, as a teacher of the Law, and Christ, as a Preacher of the Gospel, are contrasted with one an-

other, we believe, teach, and confess that the Gospel is not a preaching of repentance or reproof, but properly nothing else than a preaching of consolation and a joyful message, which does not reprove or terrify, but comforts consciences against the terrors of the Law, points alone to the merit of Christ, and raises them up again by the lovely preaching of the grace and favor of God, obtained through Christ's merit.

"As to the revelation of sin, because the veil of Moses hangs before the eyes of all men as long as they hear the bare preaching of the Law and nothing concerning Christ and therefore do not learn from the Law to perceive their sins aright, but either become presumptuous hypocrites, who swell with the opinion of their own righteousness, like the Pharisees, or despair like Judas, Christ takes the Law into His hands and explains it spiritually. Matt. 5, 21 ff.; Rom. 7, 14. And thus the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all sinners, Rom. 1, 18, how great it is; by this means they are directed to the Law and then first learn from it to know aright their sins — a knowledge which Moses never could have forced out of them. …

"Accordingly we reject and regard as incorrect and injurious the dogma that the Gospel is properly a preaching of repentance, or reproof, and not alone a preaching of grace; for thereby the Gospel is again converted into a doctrine of the Law, the merit of Christ and Holy Scripture are obscured, Christians robbed of true consolation, and the door is opened again to the errors and superstitions of the Papacy."

In view of the fact that Scripture does not always employ the term *Gospel* in the same sense, the Antinomians had ascribed to the Gospel in the strict sense something that could be ascribed to the Gospel only in the wide sense. We must bear in mind that there is also a Gospel which does not reprove sin, but affords the only comfort to sinners. When reading the Scriptures, we must be able to tell whether the term *Gospel* in a certain passage is intended in the wide or in the strict sense, and we must be particularly careful to find the passages where it is used in the latter meaning.

The same teaching that has been rejected by the *Formula of Concord* was embodied in the *Interim* (the compromise effected between the Evangelicals and the Romanists) and in the *Decrees of the Council of Trent.*

Next Friday we shall try to ascertain in which passages of Scripture the term *Gospel* is clearly used in the strict sense. This matter is quite important, especially for young preachers, if they are to learn how to express their thoughts correctly.