

Walther and Giertz: Law and Gospel Properly Distinguished / But to How Many Applied?

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Dr. Robert Kolb calls it “perhaps the best treatment of the proper distinction of law and gospel in the history of Lutheran theology.”¹ C. F. W. Walther’s *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel*, you say?² No. Rather, the renowned Reformation scholar is referring to Bo Giertz’s beloved novel, *The Hammer of God*.³

It is natural and right to think of these two works together. They complement one another to such a great extent that one might say that what Walther expounds in systematic discourse, Giertz demonstrates in belletristic narrative.⁴ Nonetheless, Giertz wrote his literary masterpiece seemingly without knowledge of Walther’s classic. It was not until a dozen years after writing *The Hammer of God*⁵ that Giertz received a copy of Walther’s *Law and Gospel*, apparently the bishop’s first.

Bishop Bo Giertz of Gothenburg (1905-1998; bishop 1949-1970) visited St. Louis in April 1953. On April 21 he was given a German version of Walther’s *Gesetz und Evangelium*.⁶ The book was given and dedicated to him by Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod President J. W. Behnken, “In fond remembrance of your gracious visit to our Synod and with best wishes.” Some marginal notes are found in the book, presumably made by Giertz: his *ex libris* is also in the volume. According to the pencil notes in the front of the book where the theses are listed, Giertz was especially interested in the later theses, IX-XV and XX-XXIV. He also made some indications in the body of the work, especially under theses XIII and XXII.⁷ Under the latter,⁸

Giertz noted the passage where Walther only recognizes two kinds of people from a pastoral perspective, “*Bekehrte und Unbekehrte*” [converted and unconverted]. According to the Swedish tradition of *Nädens ordning* [the Order of Grace / *ordo salutis*],⁹ three groups are recognized: the self-secure or self-confident, the awakened, and the converted. This understanding has had a tremendous influence on biblically conservative preaching and even pastoral care. Walther explicitly condemns this teaching as pietistic¹⁰ and connects it with Francke, Rambach, Bogatzky, Fresenius, and others. This means that Giertz’s theological standpoint here, in which he was influenced by Henric Schartau (1757-1825),¹¹ would be heavily criticized by Walther.¹²

⁹ For more on the Order of Grace, see Eric R. Andræ, “Was Bo Giertz a Pietist?: Bishop Giertz and the Order of Grace,” *Logia* IX:4, Reformation 2000:43-50, or, in more detail, Eric R. Andræ, “Bishop Bo Harald Giertz: Pietism and the *Ordo Salutis*” in Eric R. Andræ, ed., *A Hammer for God: Bo Giertz*, 19-69. Giertz presents the order thusly, with baptism as foundational: Call, Enlightenment through the Law, Enlightenment through the Gospel, Justification and Rebirth, Sanctification.

¹⁰ It is well beyond the limited scope of this essay to explore the nature and varied forms of pietism. Pietism has become rather narrowly understood and almost universally disparaged, at least in today’s Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. However, as Kolb points out, “the terms ‘pietist’ and ‘revivalist’ mean so many different things to different people that they are about as worthless -- or more so than -- as liberal and conservative” (Robert Kolb, personal e-mail to this writer, 16 May 2010). Even Francis Pieper maintains, “As for ‘Pietism,’ it has been said with good reason...that the term has not always been employed in the same sense” (Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, vol. III, trans. Theodore Engelder and Walter W. F. Albrecht [St. Louis: Concordia, 1953], 174), and Walther himself adds that “the writings of Pietists...contain a great deal of good.... These Pietists were well-intentioned men and by no means wished to depart from the right doctrine”; Walther “does appreciate Pietists on some level” (Walther, *Law and Gospel: How to Read and Apply the Bible*, 409; including editorial note). In *The Hammer of God*, Giertz is not countering all forms or all aspects of pietism, nor does he lump them all together; indeed, at least four different Swedish strains are addressed in the novel: that is, Old pietism, New/Rosenian pietism, Schartauesque pietism, and Waldenströmian pietism, and even a Baptist version. Giertz is against *legalistic* pietism. For more on Giertz and pietism, see Eric R. Andræ, “Bishop Bo Harald Giertz: Pietism and the *Ordo Salutis*” in Eric R. Andræ, ed., *A Hammer for God: Bo Giertz*, 19-69; and Eric R. Andræ, “Pietism According to Bo Giertz,” *Lutheran Forum* web-site (<<http://www.lutheranforum.org/extras/pietism-according-to-bo-giertz/>>), 25 January 2010.

¹¹ For more on Schartau see Eric R. Andræ, “Was Bo Giertz a Pietist?: Bishop Giertz and the Order of Grace,” 43, material which is expanded in Eric R. Andræ, “Bishop Bo Harald Giertz: Pietism and the *Ordo Salutis*,” 20-42; and Henrik Häggglund, *Henric Schartau and The Order of Grace* (Rock

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¹ Robert Kolb, “Bishop Giertz’s Use of History in *Stengrunden*” in Eric R. Andræ, ed., *A Hammer for God: Bo Giertz* (Ft. Wayne: Lutheran Legacy, 2010), 71.

² C. F. W. Walther, *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel*, trans. W. H. T. Dau (St. Louis: CPH, 1929). See also, Walther, *Law and Gospel: How to Read and Apply the Bible*, trans. Christian C. Tiews (St. Louis: CPH, 2010).

³ Bo Giertz, *The Hammer of God: Revised Edition*, trans. Clifford Ansgar Nelson and Hans O. Andræ (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2005).

⁴ See Eric R. Andræ, “*The Hammer of God: Law and Gospel Enfleshed*” in Eric R. Andræ, ed., *A Hammer for God: Bo Giertz*, 151-169, in which Walther’s theses are directly engaged, specifically theses XV, V, XXV.

⁵ Giertz, *Stengrunden* (Stockholm: SKDB, 1941).

⁶ Walther, *Die rechte Unterscheidung von Gesetz und Evangelium* (St. Louis: Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synode von Missouri, Ohio und anderen Staaten, 1946).

⁷ Walther, *Die rechte Unterscheidung von Gesetz und Evangelium*, 249-254, 351-363, as well as 376, corresponding to Walther, *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel*, 260-265, 363-375, as well as 388.

⁸ Walther, *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel*, 362-381, specifically 363.

In the interest of promoting discussion, I think it worthwhile to explore this difference between Walther and Giertz.

One of the most distinctive features of Schartauanism is the style and structure of its sermons.¹³ After the Trinitarian invocation, the introduction begins with a verse of Scripture, followed by its interpretation or brief exegesis, and then the Lord's Prayer. The proposition or theme is then stated along with its subdivisions or parts. The main body of the sermon consists of expounding the theme while addressing the hearer in the third person. The closing application has three sections, one each applied in the second person to the distinct hearers: one part addressed to the self-righteous "confident sinner," another to the awakened stricken sinner or "mournful soul," and finally one to the forgiven reclaimed sinner who knows and believes the "assurance of grace."¹⁴

While Giertz does not employ or propose the Schartauesque homiletical preamble,¹⁵ in *The Hammer of God* and in his theology as a whole he also utilizes the differentiation between what might be called the three hearers. He uses a series of names for each grouping. The first he calls the sleeping or indifferent sinners, the blind, or the self-satisfied, or self-secure; the second the anxious, the troubled, the heavy-laden, or especially the awakened or the poor in spirit; the

third the faithful or the graced, perhaps even the converted.¹⁶ These distinctions Giertz sees as necessary if one is to lead people truly and concretely in the way of law and gospel, especially, but not only, through preaching.¹⁷ "All people are not the same—so says the Word of God," said Giertz.¹⁸ He usually employed these distinctions in his own preaching, sometimes in the concluding application but sometimes elsewhere in the sermon, even if he did not always explicitly name the hearers as such; keeping the hearers' different spiritual states in mind, there was a direct address and concrete guidance:¹⁹ *Seelsorge* and encouragement for the troubled and heavy-laden was always of paramount concern for this preacher and pastoral theologian.²⁰ It is these awakened "poor in spirit" whom Giertz would seem to identify with what Luther calls "those who have been humbled, *that is...*, *those who bewail of their sin and despair of self-help*;" in a section marked by Giertz in his copy of *Law and Gospel*, this is quoted from Luther by Walther to describe "in what condition those must be who are brought to true faith [by] God alone."²¹

Giertz famously appropriates one of Schartau's sermons in the novel.²² However, Fridfeldt's closing threefold application directed to the different hearers is entirely left out of the English translation of *The Hammer of God*. In the original, Giertz addresses the "secure sinners," the "troubled souls," and those who know "the assurance of grace," which, in the end, actually means a more gospel-focused conclusion to the homily.²³

Island, Illinois: Augustana Book Concern, 1928). Among the abundant material available in Swedish, see especially Anders Jarlert, ed., *Henric Schartau 1757-1825: syfte, samtid, samhälle* (Skellefteå, Sweden: Artos, 2005).

¹²Rune Imberg, of the Lutheran School of Theology in Gothenburg (*Församlingsfakulteten*) [LSTG], provided the information for this paragraph via the Society for Scandinavian and American Lutheran Theology e-group (27 May 2011) and he thanks colleague Daniel Johansson, who alerted him to the book's presence in the LSTG Library. He also provided me with photocopies of the pertinent pages.

¹³For fifteen examples of Schartau's sermons see Henrik Hägglund, *Henric Schartau and The Order of Grace*, 38-216; Henric Schartau, *Femton Predikningar och ett Skriftermålstal* (Lund: Fr. Berlings förlag, 1859). Cf. Gösta Nelson, *Hur Predikan Bygges Upp* (Malmö, Sweden: Gleerups, 1952).

¹⁴Eric R. Andrae, "Bishop Bo Harald Giertz: Pietism and the *Ordo Salutis*," 34-36. See Henrik Hägglund, *Henric Schartau and The Order of Grace*, 125, 126. See also Adolf Hult in C. O. Rosenius, *The Believer Free from the Law*, trans. Adolf Hult (Minneapolis: Lutheran Colportage Service, 1923), 19.

¹⁵Giertz writes that the sermon "must not be especially 'liturgical.' It must not in any special way become liturgically constructed. Many pastors have a dangerous inclination to do this. The sermon is introduced by a special small liturgy which includes an apostolic greeting, hymn reading, set prayers, the Trinitarian formula and other things. Such a fixed introduction to the sermon is often only a meaningless duplication of the liturgy already celebrated. The greeting was already there (in the *Salutatio*), as was the appropriate prayer (in the *Collecta*); and the sermon hymn should have completed the essential preparation of prayer. Personally, I am of the opinion that sermon preambles in the pulpit should be as short as possible. A brief prayer, usually a free one, will in most cases be sufficient" (Giertz, "The Meaning and Task of the Sermon in the Framework of the Liturgy" in *The Unity of the Church* [Rock Island, Illinois: Augustana Press, n.d.], 138). "For him who has learned to understand [Schartauesque preaching], it has more to offer and is easier to remember than any other manner of speaking. ... But if you lack sufficient preparation and knowledge, this kind of a sermon is rather unfathomable" (Giertz, "The Gothenburg Diocese" in Robert Murray, ed., *The Church of Sweden: Past and Present* [Malmö, Sweden: Allhem, 1960], 154).

¹⁶See, e.g., Giertz, *The Hammer of God*, 98-103; and Giertz, *Den stora lögnen och den stora sanningen* (Stockholm: SKDB, 1945), 120-37, especially 134-137; much of the latter is left out of the English translation found in Giertz, *The Message of the Church in a Time of Crisis and Other Essays*, trans. Clifford Ansgar Nelson and Eric H. Wahlstrom (Rock Island, Illinois: Augustana Book Concern, 1953), 58-64.

¹⁷Giertz, "En själavårdande predikan: 1. Att göra skillnad på folk [A soul-curing sermon: 1. To make distinctions among people]," *Svensk Pastoraltidskrift* 16, no. 34 (1974): 616. See also Giertz, "The Meaning and Task of the Sermon in the Framework of the Liturgy," 135, 138-139.

¹⁸Giertz, Giertz archives, homiletical seminar, Gothenburg Archives (GLA), as quoted in Hans-Olof Hansson, "Biskopens homiletiska seminarium" in Anders Jarlert, ed., *Bo Giertz – präst, biskop, författare* (Gothenburg: Församlingsförlaget, 2005), 98, this writer's translation.

¹⁹Hans-Olof Hansson, "Biskopens homiletiska seminarium," 103.

²⁰For a collection of Giertz's sermons in two volumes, see Giertz, *Söndagsboken* (Gothenburg: Församlingsförlaget, 2006, 2007). On the other hand, the English title of Giertz's *Preaching from the Whole Bible*, trans. Clifford Ansgar Nelson (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1967. Reprinted: Ft. Wayne: Lutheran Legacy, 2007) is actually misleading; it is not so much a homiletic text, but rather presents briefly and helpfully the Gospel lesson's theme for each Sunday and is aimed at least as much at laymen as at pastors. The Swedish title is *Vad säger Guds Ord?*, that is, "What does the Word of God Say?"

²¹Walther, *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel*, 369.

²²Giertz, *The Hammer of God*, 170-75: the English translation of the sermon can be found in Hägglund, *Henric Schartau and the Order of Grace* and is also available at <<http://thefirstpremise.blogspot.com/2009/08/henric-schartau-jesus-only.html>>; for the original, preached in the Lund cathedral in 1795, see Henric Schartau, *Femton Predikningar och ett Skriftermålstal*, 79-88.

²³Giertz, *Stengrundnen*, 170, this writer's translation. The conclusion of Fridfeldt's sermon in the original is thus more evangelical, more gospel-centered. While the version in *The Hammer of God* ends with an exhortation to "be like Jesus...by walk[ing] in your Savior's footsteps"

However, in his thirty-fifth and thirty-sixth evening lectures, under thesis XXII, Walther says that the Pietists'

classification was utterly wrong. They would have been right if by people who have been awakened they had understood such persons as occasionally receive a powerful impression of the Word of God, of the Law and of the Gospel, but promptly stifle the impression, so that it is rendered ineffectual. For there are, indeed, men who can no longer continue to live in their carnal security, but suppress their unrest until God smites them again with the hammer of His Law and then makes them taste the sweetness of the Gospel. But the awakened persons to whom the Pietists referred are no longer to be numbered with the unconverted. According to Scripture we can assume only two classes: those who are converted and those who are not.²⁴

Walther, using several biblical examples (Herod Antipas, Felix, Festus, Agrippa), goes on to state that "People like these must not be numbered with the converted. But it is wrong to call them awakened."²⁵ Notably, Pieper disagrees, writing, "The term 'awakening' has been used particularly by the Pietists to describe the condition in which a man has been roused out of his carnal security but has not yet come to faith in Christ. *Felix was in that condition...*; he 'trembled' (Acts 24:25). While Scripture never uses the term in this sense, *such a use of it is not wrong.*" He then goes on to state that it is wrong, however, to require certain "spiritual experiences" or "self-decision" before claiming that a man has been converted; "the one who 'has the first beginnings of faith...' has been converted."²⁶

Meanwhile, Giertz maintains that when, by the law,

awakened sinners...see how badly things are with them, [then they] have the opportunity to understand in all seriousness why the Savior must die and why he is the *only* foundation for our salvation and our right to be called Christians. The one who preaches can, if need be, do without *the term* "awakening," but he must in any case teach about *the thing itself*. The Gospels give us countless examples. The disciples with their misadventures, their weak faith, their self-confidence, their arguments, and their ultimate flight [during the passion], give us wonderful possibilities in describing the modern disciple's way through humbling experiences to a true faith in the Atoning

Christ *and nothing else*. ... The main thing is that one really speaks concretely, so that the awakened can recognize himself and understand that grace is really for *him*.²⁷

Unrepentance needs to be described, but with an appeal to seek that help which the Lord so dearly wants to give. For he calls through the gospel.²⁸

Walther, however, goes on to challenge us to:

Try to find a single instance in the Scriptures where a prophet, apostle, or any other saint pointed the people [to] another way to conversion, telling them that they could not expect to be converted speedily and that they would have to pass through such and such experiences. They always preached in a manner so as to terrify their hearers, and as soon as their hearers realized that there was no refuge for them, as soon as they condemned themselves, and cried, "Is there no help for us?" they told them: "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and all will be well with you." Fanatics declare that this is not the proper order of conversion. It is not the order of fanatics indeed, but it is God's order.²⁹ As soon as the

²⁷Giertz, "En själavårdande predikan: 2. Att leda lärjungarna till tro," *Svensk Pastoraltidskrift* 16, no. 35 (1974): 638, this writer's translation.

²⁸Giertz, GLA, as quoted in Hans-Olof Hansson, "Biskopens homiletiska seminarium," 98, this writer's translation.

²⁹Giertz is not so concerned with the "order of conversion," as Walther calls it. Rather, the bishop maintains that it is not a matter of "stages or steps in the process of grace.... One must be careful not to make the Order of Grace a staircase on which one gradually moves up to God.... It is rather a descent, a process of impoverishment, in which God takes away from man one after the other of his false grounds of comfort. At its heart it is a description of how God's love overcomes the obstacles and breaks down the dams which prevent the divine grace from freely pouring itself over a life. These obstacles usually are in a certain context and group themselves in a complementary order. Therefore grace also has its order. But this order is not to be forced and is never allowed to be made a law. God's grace works everywhere it is given the opportunity. Therefore everything becomes intertwined in the work of conversion. Already in the call [the calling grace] there can be a deep insight into the mystery of the Cross. Every meeting of the law and every new confession of sin usually carries with it a new revelation of grace. And when finally faith victoriously enters in, then 'justification' and 'rebirth' is already a reality" (Giertz, *Kyrkofromhet* [Stockholm: SKDB, 1962; first edition, 1939], 40, this writer's translation. A portion of this book [15-40] has been translated as Giertz, *Life by Drowning: Enlightenment through Law and Gospel*, trans. Eric R. Andræ in Eric R. Andræ, ed., *A Hammer for God: Bo Giertz* [Ft. Wayne: Lutheran Legacy, 2010], 221-239, see specifically, 239.) The most recent edition of *Kyrkofromhet* is appropriately sub-titled "God's way to man's heart" (*Kyrkofromhet* [Skellefteå, Sweden: Artos, 2001]). While for Schartau, "a conversion that has not occurred according the specific order [in the *ordo salutis*] is no true conversion," this is not exactly the case with Giertz. "Even if Giertz considers it important to have knowledge of the Order of Grace – especially for the one who is doing pastoral care – it is clear that he does not want to make the Order of Grace into an outline or plan that is applicable in every conversion. He simply maintains that the Order of Grace describes that which *usually* occurs at conversion.... This is an important difference between Giertz and Schartau" (Rune Söderlund, "Trons ABC" in Rune Imberg, ed., *Talet om korset – Guds kraft: Till hundraårsminnet av biskop Bo Giertz' födelse* [Gothenburg:

(175), in *Stengrunden* Schartau/Fridfeldt concludes with the gospel by reminding us that "When the peace of Christ has brought you comfort and his promises have given you the assurance of grace, then it shall also be your lot, at the approach of death, when your eyes can no longer see the things of this world, that the eyes of your soul shall be opened and given heavenly clarity to behold, in the great eternal glory, face to face, Jesus only" (170, this writer's translation). Note also that in the original, being "like Jesus" is something ultimately "granted by your election" (*Stengrunden*, 170; this writer's translation); this, too, is omitted in the translation.

²⁴Walther, *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel*, 363. Ironic, or at least interesting, that Walther uses the term "the hammer of His Law."

²⁵*Ibid.*, 364.

²⁶Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, vol. II, trans. Theodore Engelder and John Theodore Mueller (St. Louis: CPH, 1951), 501, emphasis added.

Gospel sounded in the ears of the persons aforementioned, it went through their hearts, and they became believers. We read that David, after receiving absolution, still had to suffer a great deal of anguish. But his penitential psalms are at the same time a confession of his assurance that God was gracious to him. It is sheer labor lost when a minister leads a person who has become alarmed over his sins a long way for months and years before that person can say, "Yes, I believe." Such a minister is a spiritual quack; he has not led that soul to Jesus, but to reliance on its own works. In a certain sense the Pietists have been guilty of this awful sin. It is just those ministers who are manifesting great zeal that are in danger of committing this great and grievous sin. They are sincere and well-intentioned, but they accomplish no more than tormenting souls. To every sinner who has become spiritually bankrupt and asks you: What must I do to be saved? you must say: That is very simple: Believe in Jesus, your Savior, and all is well.³⁰

Of course, through such means as Katrina and Pastor Fridfeldt's aforementioned Schartau sermon on "Jesus only," this is exactly what Giertz's novel does, that is, proclaim: "Believe in Jesus, your Savior, and all is well." "Amen. I believe!" the dying Johannes can thus say.³¹

As such, Giertz, like Walther, also warns against delaying the offer of forgiveness: "The Order of Grace can be understood as calendar of steps to be made and measures to be taken, a series of requirements, which must be fulfilled before you can believe the forgiveness of your sins. The result can be an anxiety and worry and torturous self-analysis which continue all the way to the death-bed. This is obviously the exact opposite of what is intended.... I have tried to depict this in my novel *The Hammer of God*."³²

It is interesting also to compare Walther's perspective to Pastor Lindér's climactic exhortation in the first novella, in which he, too, speaks of a "refuge" or "fortress" in his conversation with Pastor Savonius.³³ I strongly encourage the reader to look up and read all five-and-a-half pages in the book. Here you may note especially the highlighted portions at the beginning and at the end of the dialogue where I have included the original Swedish:

Församlingföreläggningen, 2005], 242, this writer's translation). "The essential in the order of grace is not the order but rather the grace" (Giertz, *Herdabrev Till Göteborgs Stift* [Stockholm: SKDB, 1949], 151, this writer's translation). Furthermore, in his preaching, Giertz did not apply the Order of Grace as a definitive outline of the biblical text (Hansson, "Biskopens homiletiska seminarium," 103), but rather used it as "a map and an address-book, so that the message reaches" the hearers and makes an impact (Anders Jarlert, "Ordets sakrament – om en predikotradition i nutiden," *Svensk Pastoraltidskrift* 31 [1990]: 658, this writer's translation).

³⁰Walther, *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel*, 366-367.

³¹Giertz, *The Hammer of God*, 23-26, 171-175. Again, the original's closing application of the sermon directed to the three hearers is entirely left out of the English translation of *The Hammer of God*.

³²Giertz, "Västsvensk undervisning," in Lars Eckerdal, Giertz, and Roland Persson, *Västsvensk kyrka: om nattoardsliv, undervisning och andaktslitteratur* (Gothenburg: Gothia, 1984), 39f., as quoted in Hans-Olof Hansson, "Biskopens homiletiska seminarium," 182, this writer's translation.

³³Giertz, *The Hammer of God*, 98-103.

"Henrik!" There was suddenly a powerful eagerness in his voice, as he stood still on the walk and reached forth his hands. "We have never understood this matter of salvation before, even though we have stood amid the storms of a spiritual springtime. *We have divided people into converted and unconverted [omvända och oomvända], we have applied every sermon to the self-secure [säkra] and to the believing ones [trogna – could also be translated as "the faithful ones"]*, we have imagined that when a man was brought under conviction, it was only necessary that he should see his sins, contritely confess them, and come to Jesus in faith and he would be born again. And all that we accomplished in three days, or three weeks, or months at the best. No, my boy, it could take three years, or thirty sometimes. One sees the Lord's happiest disciples going about and singing about salvation only because they have stopped living in drunkenness and adultery and contempt for God's Word, having felt some blessed movement of grace in their hearts. In Lund, they call that the state of being *awakened [uppväckta]*. And the hardest bit of the road remains. If the Spirit of God has been allowed to crush the outward sin, so that one begins to live without intentional transgression, that is only the first, small beginning." ... Lindér had already started speaking again. "As you say, what is now to happen? Justus Johan Lindér is now condemned to death and lives as a lost and condemned sinner – day by day by the grace of his Lord. He sits like a bird and eats from his Redeemer's hand. And in between he sings happily in the sunshine. Henrik, we must start again from the beginning. We have thundered like the storm, we have bombarded with the heaviest mortars of God's law in an attempt to break down the walls of sin. And that was surely right. I still load my gun with the best powder when I aim at unrepentance. But we had almost forgotten to let the sunshine of the gospel shine through the clouds. Our method has been to destroy all carnal security by our volleys, but we have left it to the souls to build something new with their own resolutions and their own honest attempts at amending their lives.³⁴ In that way, Henrik, it is never finished. We have not become finished ourselves. Now I have instead begun to preach about that which is finished, about that which was built on Calvary and which is a safe fortress to come to when the thunder rolls over our sinful heads. And *now I always apportion the Word of God in three directions, not only to the [1] self-satisfied [säkra] and the [2] believers [trogna] as I did formerly, but also to the [3] awakened, the anxious, the heavy-laden, and the poor in spirit [de uppväckta, de ängsliga och betungade och andligen fattiga]*. And I find strength each day for my own poor heart at the fount of Redemption."³⁵

³⁴Walther concurs: "A minister must first cause people to hear the thundering of the Law and immediately after that the Gospel. Otherwise many a precious soul may be led to despair and be lost" (*The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel*, 370).

³⁵Giertz, *The Hammer of God*, 98-99, 103, emphasis added, adapted for clarity from the original.

Some seventy years later, Pastor Fridfeldt, quoting Schartau, summarizes it in this way: “That which once and for all, and at once, is reckoned as yours in justification will be worked in you little by little in sanctification.”³⁶ Indeed, it might be argued that Walther understands the Pietists as applying the notion of the three different hearers within justification, while Giertz’s *chief* use of the distinction is actually in regard to sanctification and its proper relation to justification. As a matter of fact, when Giertz speaks of those who might be “born again,” such as above through Lindér,³⁷ he uses this and similar phrases to indicate that the application of law and gospel unto conversion has transformed not only the person’s relationship to God (justification), but also to other people (rebirth, “born again”).³⁸ As Giertz writes elsewhere: “At the same time as justification occurs in heaven, something also happens on earth: man is born anew.³⁹ ... And with this then we are already [discussing] sanctification.”⁴⁰

As Giertz scholar Anders Jarlert of Lund importantly points out, when Lindér/Giertz above laments the division of folks into merely converted and unconverted,⁴¹ this is not a critique of orthodox proclamation, but rather of a radical pietism. In the passage cited, it is especially the understanding of the nature of sin which marks the difference. When sin is understood in all its magnitude and depth as, actually, unbelief, then it becomes rather shallow to speak of people as “converted” simply because they have laid aside cursing and other outer sins.⁴² Paradoxically, such an externally based understanding of conversion would actually be a rather law-oriented one.

To a great extent, Walther’s general argument is certainly and simply against any role or decision of man in conversion. Giertz wholeheartedly agrees, while at the same time integrating this contention with the idea of the three hearers and the awakening; to wit: “Certainly [Satan] will be concerned when a man begins to seek the Lord’s Supper or comes within hearing distance of the Word of God. But as long as there is preaching of such a kind that it does not *awaken a sleeping sinner*, and as long as the system only creates *self-satisfied work-righteousness* among Christians, so long Satan himself could be, officially, a church Christian.”⁴³

Walther claims that:

When the Pietists had brought a person to the point where he considered himself a poor, miserable sinner, unable to help himself, and asked his minister what he must now do, the minister did not, like the apostles, answer him: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,” but, as a rule, they told him the very opposite. They warned him against believing too soon and against thinking that, after

having felt the effects of the Law, he might proceed to believe that his sins had been forgiven.⁴⁴

Again, not so Giertz! To reiterate: See the Fridfeldt/Schartau sermon on “Jesus only.”⁴⁵ The law awakens and the gospel converts: law and gospel. See also Pastor Bengtsson’s sermon, in which he speaks of the “awakened,” the “sinner,” and “a true faith in grace,”⁴⁶ as well as his earlier advice to Torvik, whereby he mentions the awakening by the law and then quickly shares the converting gospel.⁴⁷

Finally, Giertz’s *The Message of the Church in a Time of Crisis* has a closing chapter entitled, “Your Conversion.”⁴⁸ In the original there is a section of the essay answering the question, “Who then are the converted in a parish?,”⁴⁹ but this is omitted in the English translation. In this part Giertz addresses the issue of the three hearers, and also maintains that only God knows the border between the converted and the unconverted.

Baptism means...that God himself makes a person into a Christian. God consecrates the person into a Christian. From that moment on he is required to live as a Christian. Naturally he can fail that responsibility, but he cannot revoke it. He can become a lousy Christian, a backsliding Christian, a Christian who is a disgrace to his Lord and His church. But he can never again be a heathen. ... The outer border of the Church is baptism. What lies beyond this border is heathen ground and the mission field. But all that lies within this border, the Church counts as hers, often with shame but always with a mother’s love and intercession.⁵⁰

⁴⁴Walther, *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel*, 372.

⁴⁵Giertz, *The Hammer of God*, 171-175.

⁴⁶Giertz, *The Hammer of God*, 269, 270. This writer’s translation from Giertz, *Stengrunden*, 260, 261.

⁴⁷Giertz, *The Hammer of God*, 264-269, 249, 251. Bengtsson actually speaks of *two* awakenings by the law: the first in which sin is marked and obedience attempted; the second in which one sees the true miserable condition of the sinful heart. (249). Note, too, the title of the second chapter of the first novella! – “Awakened by the Law” (Giertz, *The Hammer of God*, 43). See also Giertz, “Life by Drowning: Enlightenment through Law and Gospel,” especially 232-237; Eric R. Andræ, “The Hammer of God: Law and Gospel Enfleshed,” especially 164-166; and Eric R. Andræ, “The best treatment of the proper distinction of law and gospel in the history of Lutheran theology: A Historical and Systematic Overview,” a lecture given on 7 June 2011 at “Scandinavian Lutheranism: A Conference,” Concordia Lutheran Theological Seminary, St. Catharines, Canada, available at <https://picasaweb.google.com/103000629941768945067/ScandinavianLutheranismConferenceVideos?feat=directlink> (video) and <http://dl.dropbox.com/u/32513489/Scandinavian%20Lutheranism%20Conference/Andrae1%20-%20Hammer%20of%20God.mp3> (audio); the printed version has been published in *Lutheran Theological Review* 24 (2012): 7-32.

⁴⁸Giertz, *The Message of the Church in a Time of Crisis and Other Essays*, 58-64.

⁴⁹Giertz, *Den stora lögnen och den stora sanningen*, 120-137, specifically, 134-137.

⁵⁰Giertz, *Den stora lögnen och den stora sanningen*, 134, 122, 135, this writer’s translation.

³⁶Giertz, *Stengrunden*, 169, this writer’s translation; cf. Giertz, *The Hammer of God*, 175.

³⁷Giertz, *The Hammer of God*, 98.

³⁸Giertz, *Kyrkofromhet*, 40. See Eric R. Andræ, “Bishop Bo Harald Giertz: Pietism and the *Ordo Salutis*,” 56; and Giertz, “Life by Drowning: Enlightenment through Law and Gospel,” especially 239.

³⁹Or, “born again.”

⁴⁰Giertz, *Kyrkofromhet*, 44, 45, this writer’s translation.

⁴¹Giertz, *The Hammer of God*, 98.

⁴²Anders Jarlert, personal e-mail to this writer, 29 July 2011.

⁴³Giertz, *Liturgy and Spiritual Awakening* (Rock Island, Illinois: Augustana Book Concern, 1950), 29, emphasis in quotation and in title added; document available at the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod web-site.

One needs to remember the historical context in which Giertz writes in 1945, in which nearly every Swede was a member of the Church of Sweden and a local parish, but did not necessarily practice the faith given in baptism. Thus:

The first border within the church goes between the self-secure [*säkra*] sinners and the awakened [*uppväckta*] sinners, to use the old terms. Self-secure sinners do not think on their baptism and do not care about their salvation. They might have an obvious faith that a God exists and they might live a rather decent life, but they have no concept of what sin is, and they therefore see no need for any forgiveness either. They do just fine without worship, the Bible, or the Lord's Supper.⁵¹

As the self-secure are awakened by the law, an observer probably cannot see *when* it happens, but can notice that it *has* happened. As such, Giertz maintains, it is the hidden life under the forgiveness of sins that is the sole basis for salvation. One clings to the promises of Christ, remembers one's baptism, hears absolution's word, meets one's Savior at the table of grace, hears the word, and reads the promises of God in one's Bible. In other words, Giertz exhorts the Christian to "make use of the Means of Grace, faithfully use God's Word and prayer, go to Communion, be faithful in your vocation, and fight the daily battle against the Old Man. As such, you can be confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."⁵²

Giertz concludes: "In the end, conversion depends upon something which only the Spirit of God can accomplish: creating faith within a sinner: that faith in Christ, the Son of God, my Atoner, who justifies."⁵³

May the discussion commence.

⁵¹Giertz, *Den stora lögnen och den stora sanningen*, 135-136, this writer's translation.

⁵²Giertz, *Den stora lögnen och den stora sanningen*, 136-137, this writer's translation; see also Giertz, *The Message of the Church in a Time of Crisis*, 64.

⁵³Giertz, "En själavårdande predikan: 2. Att leda lärjungarna till tro," 638, this writer's translation.