Law and Gospel
According to Their
Several Effects

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VALPARAISO, INDIANA
FOREWORD

Valparaiso University herewith presents to the pastors of the Synodical Conference a translation of one of the forgotten classics of American Lutheran theology. For many years one of the weaknesses of our period of transition from the German medium to the English has been the lack of adequate translations of many of the doctrinal and exegetical treatises which, under God, profoundly influenced the formulation of the theological position of the Synodical Conference.

The present essay by Dr. George Stoeckhardt, the greatest exegete of American Lutheranism, goes directly to the rock from which we were hewn. The constant, insistent, powerful preaching of sin and grace has always been the glory of the Lutheran Church. If it is to be done properly, it must rest solidly on the Scriptural distinction between the Law and the Gospel, both in their nature and in their effect. A preacher must, above all, know how rightly to divide the Word of Truth. The line must be clear, sharp, decisive. Any and every confusion of the Law and the Gospel leads inevitably to sentimentality or moralizing. The Law loses its power and the Gospel loses its sweetness.

Nowhere in Lutheran literature has this been expressed more clearly than in Dr. Stoeckhardt's treatise which appeared originally in Volume 33 of Lehre und Wehre. It is our conviction that our pastors, especially of the younger generation, will read it with instruction and profit. It is a complete philosophy of preaching.

The University is grateful to the Rev. Walter H. Bouman for permission to include this essay in the present pamphlet series. For a number of years Pastor Bouman has devoted his exceptional bilingual ability to the task of making available in English some of the historic doctrinal and exegetical treasures of the Lutheran Church. The task of translating our fathers is admittedly difficult. One is constantly confronted with the choice between literal faithfulness to the original and the smoothness of the modern English idiom. Pastor Bouman has been able to solve this problem with discretion and sensitivity.

The Lutheran Church will not break or die if it continues to retain its humility before the Word. As its task becomes greater in these evil days, its loyalty and devotion to the Word of Truth must become greater. To this end Valparaiso University hopes to make a small contribution by the publication of this essay.

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O. P. Kretzmann
Law and Gospel According to Their Several Effects

I. The Nature of the Law and the Gospel

The proper distinction between Law and Gospel is wholesome knowledge, which has been disclosed to us by Luther. It is, as Luther so often stresses, “a very noble art” and “highly necessary” “to differentiate correctly between Law and Gospel.” Where these “two different words” are mixed, false doctrine and wrong practice will follow. The doctrinal confusion of our day and the consequent disorder in life largely result from the fact that this difference has been forgotten. Today one hears remarks about the “comfort of the Law,” about the Law “being a guide to sanctification.” Preachers of the Gospel therefore do well continually to study the Scriptures and the confessional writings in regard to this kai'momenon of the pure doctrine.

However, it is not the purpose of this treatise once again to illuminate the oft-treated theme of the difference between Law and Gospel. At present we intend only to consider more closely the differing effects of these “two kinds of word.” For just at this point misunderstanding and misuse of both Law and Gospel become most apparent. With this as the starting point, we also shed new light on the Scriptural and confessional doctrine of repentance and conversion. Only in so far as it serves our purpose, shall we refer to the differing contents of these two different words. Luther in his “Sermon on the Difference Between Law and Gospel” describes it in these words: “By the Law nothing else is to be understood than God’s word and commandment, wherein He commands us what we are to do and not to do and demands of us obedience and works.” “Contrariwise, the Gospel is such doctrine or word of God as does not demand our works nor commands us to do anything, but asks us simply to accept and be showered with grace as it is proffered to us.... Here we do nothing, but simply receive and suffer ourselves to be given what is offered to us through the Word, namely, that God promises and proclaims to us: This and that I give unto you.” (St. Louis edition, IX: 802—803.)

At the same time let us remember that ordinarily when we speak of the Law in contrast to the Gospel, when the Apostle in general speaks of the Law and contrasts Law and faith, we mean that word of the Law which is found in the Scriptures, the revealed Law, the Law of Moses in so far as it concerns all men. We learn from the New Testament which portions of the Law were in force only temporarily and for the children of Israel alone, and which portions of the Law constitute God’s command and demand for all men of all times. Yes, everything that God demands of man properly
belongs under the title "Law." Hence we also find the preaching of the Law in the New Testament. On the other hand, the Gospel comprehends all the promises of God, those of the Old Testament as well as those of the New Testament.

However, so far as the Law is concerned, even though the phrase "The Law demands," may correctly define the peculiarity of the Law, this definition is nevertheless not exhaustive and does not fully cover what Holy Writ says of the essence and purpose of the Law. Luther himself supplements this definition in the writing cited above. For if we let it go at that, namely, that the Law demands, we might perhaps arrive at the thought that the Law helps man to do right and so serves him in becoming pious. But just this very thought is rejected by Scripture. When St. Paul says (Gal. 3:21): "For if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the Law," he denies both, namely, that the Law justifies man and that it helps man to attain life. If we would speak correctly of the essence, end, and effect of the Law, we dare never look away from the nature and condition of man, to whom the Law has been given. Implied in the Scriptural definition of the Law is the concept that it deals with sinful mankind.

"That the Law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners," St. Paul considers the basic purpose (1 Tim. 1:9), which must underlie every instruction in the Law. The Law tells man what God demands of him. However, this demand is addressed to sinful and sinning man. An un holy nation, which from the very beginning always resisted the Holy Spirit, received the Law at Sinai. The very form of the demand "Thou shalt not kill, not commit adultery, not steal," clearly indicates that the demands of the Law oppose the mind and will of man, which is bent on evil. Hence these demands do not serve to turn man away from his evil mind, will, and doing, and to accustom him to that which is good. Rather, since the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth, and since natural man cannot be obedient to the Law of God (Rom. 8:7), the Law only incites man to opposition. Sinful man, fallen away from God and hostile to God, opposes and resists the demands of God.

In itself the Law is just and holy and good. But the sin dwelling in man at the first approach of the Law to man reacts to the Law in such a way as to produce the opposite of that which is pleasing to God, namely, disobedience and transgression. Evil lust and desire live and thrive in natural man. Before the coming of the Law man does not know that such lust is sinful and evil. But as soon as the commandment "Thou shalt not covet" becomes known to man, erstwhile dead, sin immediately becomes alive. Man now becomes aware that the lusts which slumber in his heart are actual sin and opposition to God's Law. And now, too, even though he knows and sees the commandment, he cannot prevent the evil lust from becoming a deed, an act of sin, and actual transgression of the Law becomes a fact. Consequently those things are done by man which he desires, which, however, the Law prohibits and forbids. And inasmuch as the Law opposes the desires and lusts of man, yes, nourishes, increases, and heightens them, it is indeed proper to say with St. Paul that by the Law "the motions of sins . . . did work in our members" (entérgóntos, Rom. 7:5). He says the same thing in this short sentence (Rom. 3:20): "By the Law is the knowledge of sin." The Law exposes sin, which is in man and which constantly reveals itself in word and deed as actual sin, i.e., transgression and disobedience, and as such is brought into the consciousness of man. And since God does not permit His Law to be transgressed without punishment, the Law, branding sin as transgression, causes wrath in the sinner.

"The Law worketh wrath; for where no law is, there is no transgression" (Rom. 4:15). The Law results in death for man (Rom. 7:10, 11).

However, all of this does not happen accidentally, but rather according to God's intention. In all of it is fulfilled God's intended purpose of the Law. Sin is incited by the Law. But if this does not exclude the fact that it is God's purpose that the Law give occasion to sin. St. Paul, when vindicating the Law, indeed says it was given unto life (Hé entolê hê einai zoën). However, there he points out only the Law's own provision, namely, that he who would do all this should have life. That it is the final purpose of the Law that this provision should convince man of his inability to attain life through the Law, Christ proves by small, yet pieces the pretension and conceit of that self-righteous scribe with the words "This do, and thou shalt live" (Luke 10:28). The Scriptures clearly testify that God, in giving the Law to sinners, had no other intention than that of concluding mankind under sin and wrath. Paul answers the question "Wherefore, then, serveth the Law?" with the explanation "It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made" (Gal. 3:19). In giving the Law it was God's purpose that sin be revealed as transgression, that men should stand before God as transgressors. St. Paul writes on another occasion: "The Law entered" — such was God's purpose — "that the offense might abound" (Rom. 5:20). And in 2 Cor. 3:4—11 St. Paul speaks of the Law revealed by God as the letter which killeth, as the ministration of condemnation. The term "ministration," or "service," diakonia, shows that God Himself has fixed the purpose of the Law, namely, to kill and to condemn mankind.
The argument therefore does not hold that God originally had a different purpose in mind with the Law, as though He wanted to experiment therewith whether man in this manner might attain righteousness and life, and as though through man's own fault the Law became subservient to another, a foreign purpose, namely, to point out and to rebuke sin. Nay, this latter function was rather from the very beginning the real purpose of the Law, i.e., of the revealed word of the Law. That man was and is sinful and sins against the Law, yea, that he cannot do otherwise than transgress the Law, this fact God has included from the beginning in the pedagogy of the Law. He has given the Law for the express purpose of revealing sin, transgression, and wrath, and of making sinful man conscious of it.

On this point, too, our Lutheran Confessions only re-echo the teaching of Holy Writ. In the Apology, Art. XII (Concordia Triglotta, p. 260) we read: "For the Law only accuses consciences, commands what is to be done, and terrifies them." Of course, the Law commands what is to be done. However, that is self-evident. Hence this addition is omitted in the Latin text. To accuse the consciences, to convict them of transgression, to terrify them with the wrath of God, these are the chief purposes of the Law.

The Smalcald Articles, Part III, Art. II, describe the essence and purpose of the Law in these words: "But the chief office or force of the Law is that it reveal original sin with all its fruits, and show man how very low his nature has fallen, and how he has become [fundamentally and] utterly corrupted; as the Law must tell man that he has no God nor regard for God, and worships others gods, a matter which before without the Law he would have believed. In this way he becomes terrified, is humbled, becomes despondent, despairs, and anxiously desires aid, but sees no escape; he begins to be an enemy of God, and to murmur." (Trigl., p. 479.) That is the power and efficacy of the Law to point out sin and the deep corruption of human nature and thereby to throw man into terror and despair, yes, to intensify resistance and enmity against God to the utmost. And this is the chief office, yes, the essential office, of the Law, the purpose of the Law as fixed by God.

In the Formula of Concord, Thor. Decl., Art. V, two expressions of Luther are quoted: "Anything that preaches concerning our sins and God's wrath, no matter when or how, that is all preaching of the Law." "Everything that reproves sin is and belongs to the Law, whose peculiar office it is to reprove sin and to lead to the knowledge of sins." (Trigl., pp. 955, 957.)

Accordingly, we may apply to the effect of the Law the term contrition, as does the Apology in Article XII, "Of Repentance." As is explained there, repentance comprises two parts, namely, contrition and faith (Trigl., p. 259). And these two stand in the same relation to each other as Law and Gospel. What the Law works in the sinner is contrition. But such contrition is nothing else than "terror of conscience," "utter wrath and despair." The Law brings sin and transgression to life in the conscience of the sinner and therefore fills his heart with anguish, fear, wrath, the terrors of hell. So far does the Law lead man — down into hell.

The Gospel, on the other hand, is in every respect the direct opposite of the Law. While the Law commands what he is to do, the Gospel contains only promises. To promise, to give, to confer, that is its peculiarity, as noted above. However, also this definition is too general, even as it does not suffice simply to define the Law as a demand. One must add at once the specific benefit which is given through the Gospel. The Law concerns the sinner, it makes man a sinner and transgressor and pronounces wrath upon him. The Gospel promises and gives unto the sinner, whose conscience is burdened with sin and wrath, what he needs most, namely, forgiveness of sins and salvation. Thus the Scriptures speak of the Gospel throughout. It is the Gospel of Christ, the Savior of sinners, of Him who died for our sins. (1 Cor. 15:1,3.) This Gospel is the power of God unto salvation: "for therein is the righteousness of God revealed" (Rom. 1:16—17). The Gospel is, to say it with Luther and The Formula of Concord, "such a preaching as shows and gives nothing else than grace and forgiveness in Christ" (F.C., Thor. Decl., Art. V, Trigl., p. 955).

Accordingly the effect of the Gospel consists in this, as the Apology expresses it in several places, "to cheer, sustain, and quicken the contrite" (Trigl., p. 261). If, however, a poor sinner comforts himself with the gracious promise of God, what else is this than faith? The Gospel of promise demands faith. A present needs to be accepted. The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation "to everyone that believeth" (Rom. 1:16). But by demanding, by insisting upon faith, by giving the sinner the promise "Here you have in Christ forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation; it is yours," the Gospel works faith and puts this treasure into the heart. In Article XII the Apology explains in detail that faith cometh by hearing, by the promise of divine grace, by the Gospel.

In Article II, Thor. Decl., of the F. C. conversion is described as follows: "Through this means, namely, the preaching and hearing of His Word, God works, and crushes our hearts, and draws man, so that through the preaching of the Law he comes to know His sins and God's wrath and experiences in his heart true terror, contrition, and sorrow, and through the preaching and consideration of the holy Gospel
concerning the gracious forgiveness of sins in Christ a spark of faith is kindled in him, which accepts the forgiveness of sins for Christ's sake and comforts itself with the promise of the Gospel." (Trigl., p. 903.) However, where faith is in the heart, there is also new life and light. Hence regeneration, spiritual life, is the effect of the Gospel. St. Peter reminds the Christians that they have been born again "by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever," and adds: "This is the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto you" (evangelisteiōn), hence the Gospel. (1 Pet. 1: 23–25.) St. Paul praises the Gospel as the ministration of "the Spirit which giveth life" (2 Cor. 3: 4–11). That is the divinely appointed task and the specific function of the preaching of the Gospel. As the Law leads into hell, so the Gospel again leads out of hell and transfers the sinner into heaven.

The contrast is indeed sharp. Law and Gospel according to their several effects are as far removed from each other as hell and heaven, damnation and salvation. Nothing is farther from the truth than to present the Law as an introduction to the Gospel, the effect of the Law as the beginning of the reform which is perfected in faith. The Law indeed is called, and truly is, "our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ" (paidagōgos), Gal. 3: 24. But that does not mean to say that the Law brings the heart of man into a certain moral disposition in which it is receptive for faith and salvation in Christ. On the contrary, the Apostle points out God's purpose and pedagogy, who first of all concludes everything under sin (Gal. 3: 25), so that in an entirely different way, a way directly opposed to the Law, namely, by promise and faith, He may lead to salvation. St. Paul has nothing else in mind than what is stated in the following words of the Apology: "For God only quickens. But He terrifies, he says, for this reason, namely, that there may be a place for consolation and quickening, because hearts that are secure and do not feel the wrath of God loathe consolation" (Trigl., p. 265.) First sin, then grace. First death, then life. First terror, then consolation. The way to heaven leads through hell. In this sense only does the Law lead over to Christ. The Law only works wrath. But, of course, it is God's purpose, having filled man with fear and terror through the Law, afterwards to comfort him with the Gospel and to give to condemned sinners salvation through the Gospel. When administering Law and Gospel, God on His part has but one end in view: the salvation of mankind.

II. The Functions of the Law and the Gospel in Conversion

The difference between Law and Gospel, especially the effect of these two different words, must be kept in mind particularly in the doctrine of the sinner's conversion to God. The way of salvation becomes distorted if that difference is overlooked, if Law and Gospel are mixed.

Where our Lutheran Confessions treat of the highly important topic of repentance, or conversion they distinguish clearly between what God effects through the Law and what He effects through the Gospel.

In Article XII of the Apology, "Of Repentance," we read: "Almost without exception, when Paul describes conversion or renewal, he designates these two parts: that we are dead to sin, which takes place by contrition and its terrors; and that we should rise again with Christ, which takes place when by faith a new life is given to us. Thus the reform which is perfected in faith. The Law indeed is described as follows: "Therefore God, out of His immense goodness and mercy, has His divine eternal Law and His wonderful plan concerning our redemption, namely, the holy alone-saving Gospel of His eternal Son, our only Savior and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, publicly preached; and by this
[preaching] He collects an eternal Church for Himself from the human race, and works in the hearts of men true repentance and knowledge of sins, and true faith in the Son of God, Jesus Christ." *(Trigl., p. 901.)*

True repentance, or conversion, then, consists in this, that God, first of all, through the Law works in the heart a knowledge of sin, fear, and terror of God's wrath and judgment, or, in a word, contrition and repentance, in the narrower sense. Then He kindles saving faith in the heart through the Gospel of Christ.

However, we do well to note here by means of which word conversion, or reform, or renewal, is actually called forth in the heart of the sinner. Alone through the Gospel. Luther does indeed say in the portion cited from the Smalcald Articles that repentance begins with contrition, namely, with the contritio passiva, and we are entirely right in defining repentance, or conversion, briefly as contrition and faith. But that does not exclude, rather includes, the fact that a real renewal takes place in the heart through faith, that a new spiritual life is wrought in the heart first and only through the Gospel. The Apology emphasizes the fact that this "renewing" is done "by faith." "For by faith we are comforted and quickened and saved from death and hell." *(Trigl., p. 262.)* In the F. C., Thor. Decl., Art. V. "Of Law and Gospel," these words are stressed: "The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, that preaches righteousness and imparts the Spirit" *(Trigl., p. 959.)*

And in the second Article of the F. C. we read "that through the preaching and consideration of the Holy Gospel concerning the gracious forgiveness of sins in Christ a spark of faith is kindled in the heart" *(Trigl., p. 903.)* and that "God, out of His infinite goodness and mercy, comes first to us and causes His holy Gospel to be preached, whereby the Holy Ghost desires to work and accomplish in us this conversion and renewal, and through preaching and meditation quickens and kindles in us faith and other godly virtues" *(Trigl., p. 909.)*

Yes, so it is. Through the Gospel alone the sinner is converted and renewed. The Gospel alone speaks to us of Christ, the only Savior and Redeemer, of that righteousness which Christ has merited, of forgiveness of sins, and of the life to come. Through this preaching the heart of the sinner is cheered and consoled, or, what is the same, "a spark of faith" is kindled in the heart. However, when but a spark of faith glows in the heart, then, and only then, man is truly converted and renewed. Thereby understanding and will have been renewed. Faith is a new light in the heart, new, saving knowledge, confidence and trust in God. From it flows love to God and everything good. All "other godly virtues" are then kindled in the heart. It is the preaching of the Gospel alone which quickens, and bestows the Spirit, arouses spiritual, godly life in the heart. The Gospel is the seed of regeneration. Thus the Gospel, and only the Gospel, is the power of God unto salvation. Thus Paul writes that through the Gospel God has saved us and brought life and immortality to light. *(2 Tim. 1:9-10.)*

Admittedly the comfort of the grace of God and faith find room nowhere else than in a broken and contrite heart. Comfort takes hold in a terrified heart only. They that are sick need a physician, not they that are whole. One must be dead before one can be quickened. And that is the office and effect of the Law, that it points out the sickness of sin, that it kills, that it fills with terror, and that it causes wrath. Thus contrition, wrought by the Law, is necessary for repentance and conversion. In other words, contrition is an essential part of repentance, of the process of conversion. Thus the Apology testifies, Art. XII: "And since faith is to bring consolation and peace into the conscience . . . it follows that there is first terror and anxiety in the conscience." "Ideo terret Deus, ut sit locus consolationi et vivificatiu"; i.e., "God terrifies for this reason, that there may be prepared for consolation and quickening." *(Trigl., pp. 263, 264.)* And the F. C., Article V, says: "For the Gospel proclaims the forgiveness of sins not to coarse and secure hearts, but to the bruised and repentant." *(Trigl., p. 955.)* In this sense the call to repentance, proclaimed by John, as Luther pointed out, "prepared the hearts for the Lord to receive grace" *(Trigl., p. 481). . . ."

The papal Church has changed this contritio passiva into contritio activa, has made contrition a meritorious work of man. Over against these errors the Apology says, Article XII: "Still more involved is what follows. They teach that by contrition we merit grace. In reference to which, if one were to ask why Saul and Judas and similar persons, who were dreadfully contrite, did not obtain grace, or place for consolation, the answer was to be taken from faith and according to the Gospel, that Judas did not believe, that he did not support himself by the Gospel and the promise of Christ. For faith shows the distinction between the contrition of Judas and of Peter. But the adversaries take their answer from the Law, that Judas did not love God, but feared the punishments. [Is not this teaching uncertain and improper things concerning repentance?] When, however, will a terrified conscience especially in those serious, true, and great terrors which are described in the Psalms and the Prophets, and which those certainly taste who are truly converted, be able to decide whether it fears God for His own sake or is fleeing from eternal punishments? These people may not have experienced much of these anxieties, because they juggle words
and make distinctions according to their dreams." (Trigl., p. 255.)

The papistical error mentioned and refuted here has lately taken on a new form. Some do not view contrition exactly as a meritorious work; they do not exactly suggest that sins are washed away through tears of repentance; yet they see in such contrition as evoked by the preaching of the Law a truly good, God-pleasing impulse, the beginning of renewal. Necessity becomes a virtue. Knowledge of sin and the sensation of divine wrath is considered true humility and fear of the Lord. Yes, it is possible that man in his sinful sorrow basks in self-satisfaction and boasts of the confession of his sins. Many have prided themselves on lamenting and on bemoaning their sinful weakness and the deep corruption of human nature and on displaying the mien and gir of poor sinners before the whole world.

Such opinions regarding contrition and repentance are diametrically opposed to the Scriptural doctrine of the Law and its effects. According to the Scriptures the Law was given solely for the sake of sin and not to make man pious. According to the Scriptures the effect of the Law on the unregenerate is threefold, namely, to reveal sin and evil in man, to perceive and condemn sin, yes, to increase and augment it. By the Law is the knowledge of sin. The Law works wrath. "The Law entered that the offense might abound" (Rom. 5:20). The Law reveals sin, convicts the sinner of his transgression and guilt. And if a sinner has been convicted of his misdeeds and the utter corruption of his nature, if he realizes that there is nothing good in him, if he pleads guilty to offending against every commandment of God—how now, is such a feeling and confession of guilt in itself something praiseworthy and a virtue? A sinner on whom the Law has done its work, whom the Law has actually concluded under sin, sees and finds, no matter where he turns, everywhere in his life, in his conduct, in his heart, only the night and darkness of sin; but his knowing and acknowledging this fact certainly does not bring light into his night, certainly does not make of sin, an evil, something good. The Law terrifies and condemns the sinner and concludes him under the wrath and judgment of God. Contrition, wrought by the Law, is often briefly called terror of the Law in our Confessions. However, such terror, the sensation of God's wrath, is truly not in itself a "nobler feeling and sensation." This wrath produced by the Law is not an imaginary wrath. Whoever has experienced such "true and great terrors, which are described in the Psalms and the Prophets," has truly experienced the agony and terror of hell. When, however, those damned in hell see, taste, feel, nothing but agony, wrath, and condemnation, and when in consequence they weep and gnash their teeth, is that something good, a desire for good? The Law does not help man to do good. It rather increases the real, actual, chief sin, resistance to God.

We remind ourselves once more of what Luther says in the Smalcald Articles, III, 2: "But the chief office or force of the Law is that it reveal original sin with all its fruits, and show man how very low his nature has fallen, and has become [fundamentally and] utterly corrupt. . . In this way he becomes terrified, is humbled, desponds, despairs, and anxiously desires aid, but sees no escape; he begins to be an enemy of God and to murmur." (Trigl., p. 479). What the Law produces in man is terror, despondency, despair. But despair is not God-pleasing. Whoever despairs does not give all glory to God. True, despair is different from defiance, insolence, self-sufficiency. The Law turns insolent sinners into despairing sinners. But thereby the sinner is in no wise improved; not in the least is there a beginning of conversion. Both despair and defiance are offspring of the corrupt human heart... Despair is as wrong as defiance. In the final analysis, despair is nothing else than enmity against God. Thus Luther, describing the sinner concluded under the Law, after having dealt with despair, says that "he begins to turn into an enemy of God and to murmur." When the Law terrified and laid low by the Law grumbles against God and becomes His enemy. He also becomes his own enemy and hates sin in a certain sense. He execrates and curses his evil deed. He wishes he had never committed this or that sin. However, he is not an enemy of sin because it is sin and transgression; he rather hates and execrates sin because of its evil consequences, because it has hurled him into misery and misfortune. In the final analysis such hatred, enmity, grudge, is directed against God because He has given such a severe Law, and because He lays man's transgressions to his charge, and because He has threatened to avenge the transgression with wrath and punishment. Those who experience the terrors of the Law are actually in hell. The damned in hell execute their evil deeds, wish they had never lived, but, on the other hand, they are the enemies of God and are full of resentment against Him for having brought them to this place of torment.

What the Apology says in the last quotation on the contrition of Saul and Judas is significant. [Cp. Art. XII, Trigl., p. 261.] Certainly they were "dreadfully contrite." Saul felt mortal fear. Scripture expressly testifies that Judas "repented himself" on account of his sin. Both were evidently children of perdition. After having fallen away from God, they first continued in their blindness and in the defiance and the pride of their heart. Later they were tossed to and
felt the unrepentant, hardened attitude refused to assume any part of this guilt by saying to Judas: “See thou to it!” And still Judas with his contrition was not an hairbreadth better than they. In throwing the silver pieces into the Temple, he betrayed innocent blood, that he had betrayed the Lord of Glory. When he returned those fateful pieces of silver to the high priests, he in no wise desired thereby to rid himself of his guilt and responsibility. Rather, the high priests in their unrepentant, hardened attitude refused to assume any part of this guilt by saying to Judas: “See thou to it!” And still Judas with his contrition was not an hairbreadth better than they. In throwing the silver pieces into the Temple, he strove with God and man. And he went his way in his despair and delivered his soul into eternal death. From this example we learn what extremes the Law will drive man.

But does not Luther at the same time say of the sinner despairing under the Law that “he anxiously desires aid, but sees no escape?” [Cp. Trigl., p. 261.] Is not, then, a desire for aid aroused through the Law? And is not such a desire for redemption the beginning of repentance? And is not the first spark of desire for salvation faith indeed. And where it has been kindled in the heart, a change and renewal have taken place; there man is converted. But here we must distinguish between desire and desire. Desire for salvation in Christ, a sigh rising from the depths to God, love to righteousness. In his sermon on Repentance, 1517, he writes: “Therefore first bring a man to love righteousness, and without your doctrine he will have sorrow over his sins, let him love Christ, and he will hate himself sparingly.” And again: “If you, however, desire to be contrite out of love for a new and better life, you would be contrite indeed, though not one man were contrite or crushed or repented, and though the whole world would act differently, and though it regarded not even one commandment.” (St. Louis, X: 124.) Well, such contrition is the heart's first impulse of faith. But does not Luther contradict himself? In his writings he often insists upon such sorrow as flows from the love to God, love to righteousness. In his sermon on Repentance, 1517, he writes: “Therefore first bring a man to love righteousness, and without your doctrine he will have sorrow over his sins, let him love Christ, and he will hate himself sparingly.” And again: “If you, however, desire to be contrite out of love for a new and better life, you would be contrite indeed, though not one man were contrite or crushed or repented, and though the whole world would act differently, and though it regarded not even one commandment.” (St. Louis, X: 124.) Well, such contrition is the heart's first impulse of faith. But does not Luther contradict himself? In his writings he often insists upon such sorrow as flows from the love to God, love to righteousness. 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humble himself under the holy God and to give glory to God, then all that would happen would be that a good germ and seed, latent until now, were brought to light and to unfolding. It would become evident that despite all sin and natural corruption there still were an inclination and impulse unto good in man, but only sin, that man is thoroughly corrupt, a lost and condemned creature. The Law does not incite man to good, to reform, rather to sin and transgression and resistance to God.

We have already touched upon the point of divergence of Law and Gospel, where the Law leaves man in the lurch and where the Gospel comes to man's assistance. After the Law has accomplished its office, has brought the sinner to despair, the Gospel enters the lists. It may be well to note here that the Law has accomplished its office even if the sinner does not in the same measure as David, Peter, Mary Magdalene, experience "those true and great terrors which are described in the Psalms and Prophets." Despair often reveals itself only as inner unrest of the heart and the attendant "murmuring against God" as inward dissatisfaction. Still the sinner under the influence of the Law is at odds with himself, the world, and God and sees no escape.

It is just at this point that the Gospel takes up. Into the midst of the terror of the Law, into anxiety and despair, the disquieted, despairing, bruised mind now falls a ray of grace from the concreated enmity against God. The Law has accomplished its office so effectively that the Gospel now finds its full expression in the concreated enmity against God. "Before regeneration" "until man is converted," to speak with the Formula of Concord, "he is and remains an enemy of God." Yes, this enmity is directed also against the Gospel, "which natural man regards as foolishness" (Trigl., p. 889 f.). But now this is the wonderful power and grace of God, the powerful work of the Holy Ghost, that by the Gospel He makes willing hearts out of unwilling, plants sent to the Word in them, "in such a way that a darkened understanding is turned into an enlightened one and a reverse will into an obedient one" (Trigl., p. 905). The sinner who until now has experienced only sin and the terror and wrath of the Law, hears the Word of Jesus, the Savior from sins. And by the Spirit and grace of God this Word kindles in the heart of the sinner. A new light of knowledge has now arisen in his heart. Now he also knows something of God's grace and mercy. And now there arises within him through the working of the Holy Ghost the desire, the wish, even though it is but a faint, timorous wish, that God be merciful to him also for Jesus' sake. This wish, this sigh is directed to God, who has been revealed to him in the Gospel. So then heart, mind, and will of the sinner are now directed Godward. His will has been converted to God. Be his longing, sighing, yearning ever so weak, he nevertheless takes hold of and touches Christ, the Redeemer. Therefore the sinner now believes in Christ and is converted and saved through faith.

Such is the effect which God purposed from the very beginning, even with the preaching of the Law. With the preaching of the terror of the Law, God wanted only to make room for the Gospel, "ut sit locus consolationi et vindiicationi." God does not want the sinner's death, rather that the sinner turn from his way and live. As earnestly as we must stress the thought that the Law works wrath, and only wrath, as little as we dare to minimize the terror of the Law, so emphatically must we stress that John only prepared the way for Christ, that Moses is but a servant of the house of God, but that Christ is Lord, that the Gospel is the second and last and deciding Word, which is but served by the first Word, the Word of the Law. With our thoughts, of course, we are unable to grasp this twofold Word, this contradictory Word, the terror of the Law and the comfort of the Gospel, as one Word. We cannot comprehend how these two words are the two hands in God. The Law is but the servant, the wrath of God. And the wrath revealed by the Law is not an imaginary wrath, but the genuine wrath of God, which burns down into the lowest depths of hell. On the other hand, in the Gospel God has revealed His fatherly heart and has promised unto the sinners who are absolutely without excuse, has promised to the condemned, grace in Christ, forgiveness, life, and salvation.

How the same God can be angry with sinners and at the same time love them is something that goes beyond our thoughts and understanding. It is that profound and therefore unfathomable and incomprehensible grace of God which through Christ has changed sin into righteousness, wrath and curse into blessing and salvation. Here we take our reason captive and believe of God the one as well as the other. We believe and follow Scripture, which tells us of the twofold word and will of God. But according to Scripture we consider the Gospel the greater and more sublime revelation of God, to which the first revelation is subservient and preparatory. We speak of Law and Gospel. The Gospel is the second and last [revelation]. The matter rests there. The terror of the Law has been extinguished by the Gospel. That the second [revelation] is more sublime is evident also from
the fact that in point of time it was earlier. In Gal. 3:15 ff. the Apostle Paul explains that the covenant of promise was confirmed before and that the Law was added later.

Previously, in describing contrition and its essence, we rejected false conceptions which would circumscribe the "terror of the Law." Now, speaking of faith and the relation of contrition to faith ... we must likewise exclude erroneous concepts, unevangelical thoughts. It is wrong to think and to teach the matter as though God delighted in the pangs of conscience of a contrite sinner. Likewise it is wrong to think and to teach that God does not want the sinner to have the comfort of the Gospel without further delay. Again it is wrong to think that the sinner must, at least in part, himself suffer the punishment before there is accounted to him the expiation and satisfaction which Christ has rendered. Nay, by the Law God rather makes men sinners, plunges the secure and sinners into despair, only for this purpose that they might understand what a Savior from sins is, that they might grasp the comfort of forgiveness.

Likewise it is also an unevangelical, Methodistic-Pietistic conception that repentance and conversion to require a longer or shorter period of storm and stress, as though the sinner according to God's will and order must first be exercised in the school of the terrors of the Law before he can be admitted to the higher plane of faith and sonship. That would certainly be a questionable cure and exercise. In the midst of terror and despair he might soon stop breathing. In speaking of repentance,uther in the Smalcald Articles, one of the most brilliant, the Law as well as with the proclamation of the Gospel. Thus the Formula of Concord, in describing the act of conversion, summarizes both effects, that of the Law and that of the Gospel, saying: "Through this means, namely, the preaching and hearing of His Word, God works and breaks our hearts and draws man. Through the preaching of the Law he comes to know his sins and God's wrath, and experiences in his heart true terrors, contrition, and sorrow. Through the preaching and consideration of the holy Gospel concerning the gracious forgiveness of sins in Christ a spark of faith is kindled in him, which accepts the forgiveness of sins for Christ's sake, and comforts itself with the promise of the Gospel. Thus the Holy Ghost (who works all this) is sent into the heart, Gal. 4:6. (Trigl., p. 903.)

But does not many a poor sinner walk about for a long time under the burden of his sins, under the yoke of the Law, and never experiences anything of the freeing powers of the Gospel? First of all, a misconception has to be removed. Many a one deceives himself as to his own repentance and conversion. At the time when he tasted only of the terror of the Law and nothing of the comfort of the Gospel, he nevertheless sighed to God for grace and mercy. More than a mere spark of faith was even then kindled in his heart. At the time when he thought of himself as living entirely under the Law, he was already a believing child of God. He was converted, though considering himself still unconverted. However, it is true that others actually have to wrestle with Law, sin, and wrath for a longer time before they come to faith. But they themselves are the cause of their unfortunate condition. God is not at fault. God is not too late with His Gospel. They closed their heart to the Gospel. And it is possible for one to remain in despair until the end and to die in despair. Such is the contrition of Judas, a contrition indeed, but without faith. And such a man is at fault himself that he does not believe. When Judas began to sorrow over and regret his sins, he saw how Jesus was led away to the place of execution. He, too, had heard the testimony of John "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." But he did...
not give room to this testimony in his heart. It is man's fault, not God's and the Gospel's, if contrition, despair, murmuring, enmity against God, increase, if faith never enters. We dare never forget that man may at every turn resist the working of God. By unbelief he can obstruct the way of the Gospel, he can also defy the Law of God, or he shakes off the first terror of the Law and kills his aroused conscience. Thus God must often knock twice, thrice, and even oftener with His Word before He succeeds. Or there will be no conversion at all. God forces no one either with the Law or with the Gospel. "Although God does not force man," to say it in the words of the Formula of Concord, "yet God the Lord draws the man whom he wishes to convert" (Trigl., p. 909), draws him in the manner previously described, namely, by bringing him to repentance through the preaching of the Law and to faith through the preaching of the Gospel. At the moment of conversion both occur simultaneously, namely, that Law, sin, wrath, powerfully and vigorously assert themselves, but must at the same time give way to the power, efficacy, and comfort of the Gospel.

In conversion, contrition, which is the terror of the Law, gives way to the comfort of the Gospel. However, that does not mean to say that faith, wrought by the Gospel, does not entirely annul contrition, but it neutralizes it, as the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions." (Ps. 51: 1.) That is an indication of his attitude toward God. He knows and acknowledges God as the Gracious and Merciful One. Toward Him were the desires of his soul turned. Hence he believed from the heart. His penitential prayers and the godly sorrow in them were the fruit of faith, fruit of the Gospel. Thus all penitent, believing Christians now take the penitential hymns of David on their lips and in their prayers bring to God a sweet-smelling sacrifice. With the publican they pray, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner," and indicate thereby that the grace of God has already taken root in our hearts. This blessed, God-pleasing contrition, this godly sorrow flows from faith and again serves faith. What else is faith than a poor sinner's joy and comfort in the grace of God? And growth in faith consists in this, that a poor sinner learns to know the depth and breadth of God's grace better right along and gains a more joyful and more comforted heart. Such faith, such joy in the Lord and His salvation, however, is exercised, increased, and strengthened by godly sorrow. If we are fully conscious of our grave offenses against the faithful God, we shall thank Him the more fervently for forgiving us all the sins that we have committed against Him.

Hence we see God's purpose in the entire proceeding,
The terror of the Law in the hands of God is only a means for this salutary end. Indeed, God wants and seeks nothing else than that His grace, unfathomable and boundless, be glorified and praised by poor sinners in time and in eternity. And whatever he now performs in the sinner by the Law and the Gospel must serve to attain the final, noble, sublime end.

III. The Effect of the Law and the Gospel on the Regenerate

Having considered how Law and Gospel work together in the conversion of the sinner to God, we proceed another step and note the differing effect of these two kinds of word in the converted, or regenerated, children of God.

What happened at the beginning, at the time of conversion, repeats itself daily in our life as Christians. The essence of the Christian is nothing else than constant, continuing repentance. And this constant, daily contrition and repentance is of the same nature as conversion in the real sense of the term. That is the daily occupation of the Christian, to confess his sins to God in true contrition and in faith to take hold of Jesus Christ, the only Redeemer from sin. But in order to continue in the one as well as in the other, the continued use of these two different words, of the Law and of the Gospel.

By conversion, or regeneration, the heart has not been completely renewed. Believing Christians, too, still have sin. In the name of all the regenerate, St. Paul says: "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing" (Rom. 7:18). As long as a Christian continues upon this earth, he cannot completely and entirely cast off his flesh, his original sinful nature. And the flesh of the Christians is not a whit better than the flesh of other children of men. In the very connection in which St. Paul describes his present condition, in which he thinks of the twofold law, the law in his members, which strives against the law in his mind, he stresses the truth that carnal-mindedness is enmity against God. This underlying fundamental and chief sin has its roots also in the hearts of the believers. And this sinful flesh stands in need of the rod of the Law. "By the Law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:20). That is a truth which is confirmed unto us daily. A Christian who has learned to know God aright learns to know the spiritual sense of the Law better and the great abyss between God and all ungodly and antgodly ways, which still adhere to him. He looks ever deeper into the abyss of his natural heart, alienated from God. And a Christian too, becoming conscious of his sins, experiences and feels the terror of the Law. A single sin, exposed by God's Word and Law, can indeed torture and torment us unmercifully. "The Law works wrath" (Rom. 4:15). Children of God are not spared this experience either. Often they are still afraid for the terror by night and for the arrows that fly by day (Ps. 91:5).

Of course, in all of this, faith wrought by the Gospel is and remains the fundamental, the real characteristic of the Christians. They are not thrown back by sin, Law, wrath into their former hopeless condition before conversion. We are now speaking of the experiences which Christians have in their lives, hence leaving out of consideration the possibility of a Christian entirely denying and losing his faith. To what is it owing that faith is not entirely absorbed by those terrors of the Law? Not to this, that sin, exposed by the Law, and the wrath of God over sin were less severe. Nay: it is rather owing only to this, that a Christian, knowing Christ and his love, his grace, his grace, his grace, can and will Christ and seeks and finds in Him protection and grace. Whoever believes carries Christ in his heart, and when the curse and wrath of the Law, a real wrath, cut into his conscience, he reminds himself of his liberation through Christ from sin, curse, wrath, and thus extinguishes the fiery darts of the Wicked One with the shield of faith at the very moment in which he feels the heat within himself. Because faith is present and at once reacts against the terrors of the Law, this terror is immediately turned into that true, salutary contrition and sorrow which is pleasing to God. A Christian takes sin, aroused by the Law, into his hand and prayerfully places it before God and sighs out of his renewed heart, yes, in the power of the Holy Ghost, concerning the evil which still clings to him, saying: "Oh, wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7:24.) However, into this sigh is mixed the prayer of thanksgiving for redemption by Christ Jesus, our Lord, saying: "I thank God through Jesus Christ, our Lord." (Rom. 7:25.) But such faith, making Christians what they are, constantly overcoming sin, Law, wrath, comes from the Gospel and is nurtured and preserved through constant, continuing use of the Gospel. The Holy Ghost preserves us in the true faith by the Gospel. But that we might not become lukewarm, apathetic, indifferent, to the comfort of the Gospel, the Holy Ghost because of our sins must constantly rebuke and terrify us with the Law.

What has been expounded by us is summarized in the
**LAW AND GOSPEL—THEIR SEVERAL EFFECTS**

Formula of Concord, Art. IV, “Of the Third Use of the Law,” in this short sentence: “Therefore, as often as believers stumble, they are reproved by the Holy Spirit from the Law, and by the same Spirit are raised up and comforted again with the preaching of the holy Gospel.” (Trigl., p. 967.)

Our Confession adds the following, saying: “So, too, the doctrine of the Law, in and with [the exercise of] the good works of believers, is necessary for the reason that otherwise man can easily imagine that his work and life are entirely pure and perfect. But the Law of God prescribes to believers good works in this way, that it shows and indicates at the same time in this mirror, that in this life they are still imperfect and impure in us, so that we must say with the beloved Paul: ‘I know nothing by myself; yet I am not hereby justified,’ 1 Cor. 4: 4.” (Trigl., p. 969.) The Law, by which is the knowledge of sin, convicts the believers not only of their many sins and the presence of a sinful nature in them, but also of this, that even that which is good, which they have received by the grace of God, their good conduct, every single one of their good works, is still spotted with impurity and uncleanness. Here too the Gospel offers comfort to the believers. The Formula of Concord continues: “But how and why the good works of believers, although in this life they are imperfect and impure because of sin in the flesh, are nevertheless acceptable and well-pleasing to God, is not taught by the Law, which requires an altogether perfect, pure obedience if it is to please God. But the Gospel teaches that our spiritual offerings are acceptable to God through faith for Christ’s sake,” 1 Pet. 2: 5; Heb. 11: 4 ff. (Trigl., p. 969.)

In this passage from our Confession mention is already made of the good works of the believers. Even though many shortcomings and spots still adhere to them, they are nevertheless in truth good works. The heart has been renewed, and the good tree brings forth good fruit. Faith of the Christians necessarily becomes evident in good works. Contrition and repentance, pervading the entire life of the Christians, manifest themselves in righteous fruits of repentance. Their good conduct also visibly distinguishes the Christians from non-Christians, from the unconverted. And here now is the main point actually at issue, the question: What is the relation of Law and Gospel to the good works of the believers?

First of all, we answer in the words of our Confession, the Formula of Concord, Thor. Decl., VI. “Of the Third Use of the Law”: “But we must also explain distinctively what the Gospel does, produces, and works towards the new obedience of believers, and what is the office of the Law in this matter, as regards the good works of the believers. For the Law says indeed that it is God’s will and command that we should walk in a new life, but it does not give us the power and ability to begin it and do it; but the Holy Ghost, who is given and received not through the Law but through the preaching of the Gospel, Gal. 3: 14, newness the heart.” (Trigl., p. 965.) The Law indicates the good works which are pleasing to God; the Gospel, however, excites desire for obedience and gives strength and ability to do good. The Gospel only, not the Law, reforms man and make him pious. The Law has not been given to quicken, to renew and sanctify man, but was added because of transgressions.

Of course, man, even the Christian, in so far as he still is flesh, is outwardly to some extent kept in line by the Law’s warnings, demands, threats, scolding. Of this we are reminded in the Formula of Concord, where we read: “But since believers are not completely renewed in this world, but the Old Adam clings to them even to the grave, there also remains in them the struggle between the spirit and the flesh. Therefore they delight indeed in God’s Law according to the inner man, but the Law in their members struggles against the law in their mind; hence they are never without the Law, and nevertheless are not under but in the Law, and live and walk in the Law of the Lord, and yet do nothing from constraint of the Law. But as far as the Old Adam is concerned, which still clings to them, he must be driven not only with the Law but also with punishments; nevertheless he does everything against his will and is under coercion, no less than the godless are driven and held in obedience by the threats of the Law, 1 Cor. 9: 27; Rom. 7: 18, 19.” “For the Old Adam, as an intractable refractory ass, is still a part of them, which must be coerced to the obedience of Christ, not only by the teaching, admonition, force, and threatening of the Law, but also oftentimes by the club of punishments and troubles, until the body of sin is entirely put off and man is perfectly renewed in the resurrection.” (Trigl., pp. 967, 969, 971.)

The Law with its coercion, driving, threatening, instills into the Old Adam of the Christians, as into the ungodly, fear and horror and terror of condemnation and thus binds the coarsest excesses of the flesh and urges and coerces man to obedience. That also is a use of the Law, which, of course, has nothing to do with the way of salvation, which rather belongs into the town hall and civil domain than into the Church. The Law drives, coerces, to obedience. But this obedience of the Old Adam, like that of the ungodly, is an unwilling and forced obedience, entirely an outward thing, utter simulation and hypocrisy and not in the least virtuous and praiseworthy before God. The Old Adam, though outwardly forced to obedience, nevertheless rebels inwardly against this constraint, becomes the more hostile to God for having given such a rigid Law and for spoiling his lust and pleasure. Thus, the Law also in this respect fulfills its wretched service in educing, increasing, and intensifying opposition to God.
A Christian nevermore does anything truly good by “constraint of the Law,” but alone by “constraint” of the Gospel. The good conduct of the Christians manifests itself in their denial of ungodliness and worldly lusts. But nevermore are we brought to deny fleshly lusts, hatred, wrath, jealousy, unchastity, avarice, covetousness, by the rigid demands of the Law, such as: “Thou shalt not kill, not commit adultery, not steal,” etc. A Christian’s hatred and heartfelt loathing of sin, his inward turning away from sin, is actuated and brought about solely by the love of God revealed in the Gospel. He loves Him who loved him first, and for God’s sake he hates all manner of ungodliness. That a Christian parts with and avoids sin, yet voluntarily overcomes the evil, that is done alone in the power of the Holy Ghost, who is given by the preaching of the Gospel.

On the other hand, obedience of the believers manifests itself in all manner of godly virtues, in love to God and the neighbor, patience under the cross, etc. But nevermore are we enabled to love God and our neighbor by the “Thou shalt” of the Law, namely, “Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart,” etc., “and thy neighbor as thyself.” Love will not be constrained. A Christian’s love to God from the heart, his joy and pleasure in God and things godly, his love to the brethren for God’s sake, his endurance of all evil for God’s sake, his overcoming in patience, are made possible alone by the love of God which is revealed in Christ and proclaimed unto us in the Gospel. It is God the Holy Ghost who works in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure, who awakens good resolutions in our hearts and gives us the power and ability to carry out these resolutions. We have received the Holy Ghost, however, through the preaching of the Gospel. It is the Gospel which increases the gift of the Spirit. The new man, thinking, imagining, speaking, and doing that which is good, lives entirely from and in the power of the Holy Ghost, however, through the preaching of the Gospel. The new man, thinking, imagining, speaking, and doing that which is good, lives entirely from and in the power of the Holy Ghost, who has been given to us through the Gospel. We term the Law a rule and pattern of the Christian’s conduct. And regenerate man delights in the Law of the Lord according to the inner man and lives, though not under the Law, yet in the Law. Is, therefore, the Law in this respect not serviceable and conducive to that which is good? Must, therefore, the statement that the Law serves to give the knowledge of sin and works wrath, that the Law was added for the sake of sin, that there is no Law for the righteous not be amplified?

Our answer to this question we again connect with a longer quotation from the Formula of Concord, where we read: “A dissension has occurred between some few theologians concerning this third use of the Law. For the one side taught and maintained that the regenerate do not learn from the Law the new obedience, or in what good works they ought to walk, and that this teaching [concerning good works] is not to be urged thence [from the Law], because they have been made free by the Son of God, have become the temples of His Spirit, and therefore do freely of themselves what God requires of them, by the prompting and impulse of the Holy Ghost, just as the sun of itself, without any [foreign] impulse, completes its ordinary course. Over against this the other side taught: Although the truly believing are verily moved by God’s Spirit, and thus, according to the inner man, do God’s will from a free spirit, yet it is just the Holy Ghost who uses the written Law for instruction and for command, the truly believing also learn to serve God, not according to their own thoughts, but according to His written Law and Word, which is a sure rule and standard of a godly life and walk, how to order it in accordance with the eternal and immutable will of God.

“For the explanation and final settlement of this dissent we unanimously believe, teach, and confess that although the truly believing and truly converted to God and justified Christians are liberated and made free from the curse of the Law, yet they should daily exercise themselves in the Law of the Lord, as it is written, Ps. 1:2; 118:1: ‘Blessed is the man whose delight is in the Law of the Lord, and in His Law doth he meditate day and night.’ For the Law is a mirror in which the will of God, and what pleases Him, are exactly portrayed, and which should [therefore] be constantly held up to the believers and be diligently urged upon them without ceasing. “For although the Law is not made for a righteous man, as the Apostle testifies, 1 Tim. 1:9, but for the unrighteous, yet this is not to be understood in the bare meaning that the justified are to live without law. For the Law of God has been written in their heart, and also to the first man immediately after his creation a law was given according to which he was to conduct himself. But the law of St Paul is that the Law cannot burden with its curse those who have been reconciled to God through Christ; nor must it vex the regenerate with its coercion, because they have pleasure in God’s Law after the inner man.

“And, indeed, if the believing and elect children of God were completely renewed in this life by the indwelling of the Spirit, so that in their nature and all its powers they were entirely free from sin, they would need no law, and hence no one to drive them either, but they would do of themselves, and altogether voluntarily, without any instruction, admonition, urging or driving of the Law, what they are in duty bound to do according to God’s will; just as the sun, moon, and all the constellations of heaven have their regular course of themselves, unobstructed, without admonition, urging, driv-
ing, force, or compulsion, according to the order of God which
God once appointed for them, yes, just as the holy angels
render an entirely voluntary obedience.

"However, believers are not renewed in this life perfectly
or completely, completive vel consummative [as the
ancients say]: for although their sin is covered by the perfect
obedience of Christ, so that it is not imputed to believers for
condemnation, and also the mortification of the Old Adam
and the renewal in the spirit of their mind is begun through
the Holy Ghost, nevertheless the Old Adam clings to them
still in their nature and all its internal and external powers.
Of this the Apostle has written Rom. 7: 18 ff.: 'I know that
in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing.' And
again: 'For that which I do I allow not; for what I would,
that I do not; but what I hate, that I do.' Likewise: 'I see
another law in my members, warring against the law of my
mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin.' Like­
wise Gal. 5: 17: 'The flesh lusteth against the spirit and the
spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the
other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.'

Therefore, because of these lusts of the flesh the truly
believing, elect, regenerate children of God need in this life
not only the daily instruction and admonition, warning and
threatening of the Law, but also frequently punishments, that
they may be roused [the old man is driven out of them] and
follow the Spirit of God, as it is written Ps. 119: 71: 'It is good
for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn Thy
statutes.' (Triglor, pp. 963, 965.)

The meaning of this teaching, warning, threatening, driving,
of which mention is made again also in this exposition,
namely, that thereby the Old Adam with his fleshly lusts be
kept in custody, has already been explained above. Here
the matter is given a new turn. We are told that Christians still
stand in need of the punishments of the Law as well as of other
punishments and plagues for this reason, "that they be aroused
and follow the Spirit of God." This is not to be understood as
though the threatening and punishment of the Law were in
itself an encouragement and, therefore, an inducement to
obedience. No, a regenerate person nevermore does anything
good by constraint of the Law. However, the Law with its
warning, threatening, does indeed make room for the
Gospel and prepares the way for it also where the conduct of
the Christians is concerned. The Law reminds the Christian
of his continual, daily sinning, disquiets him and becomes an
occasion for him to seek with new zeal after righteousness and
holiness. That willingness and that joyousness to obedience,
which, of course, proceed alone from the Gospel, begin in the
heart filled with anxiety because of inherent weakness.

But now we are chiefly interested in that part of the
quotation from our Confession when it speaks of "the teaching
of the Law." Is it really so that believers need the doctrine
of the Law for their good works, being unable to find the right
way and erring in darkness without such doctrine? True, the
Law is "a rule and standard of a godly life." However, our
Confession clearly teaches that believers "because of the Old
Adam, which still clings to them," and "because they are not
renewed in this life perfectly or completely," still need "the
document of the Law." It teaches that if in their nature they
were entirely free from sin, they would need absolutely no
Law, that they would without any instruction of the Law do
what they are in duty bound to do according to God's will.
Hence the Law is rule and standard for the walk of the
regenerate in so far as they have not been born again, in
so far as they still have flesh and are flesh. A Christian, in
so far as he is born again, is driven by the Holy Ghost, whom
he has received in the Gospel. Therefore he does willingly
without coercion, of his free will, what is pleasing to God just as
the sun, moon, and all the constellations of heaven themselves
gleam and, unobstructed, complete their regular course.
Thus the good works of the Christians are fruits of the Spirit,
fruits which grow of themselves. But the Spirit of God, who
governs the children of God in what they do or do not do,
certainly knows of Himself the good and gracious will of God
and needs no teaching, no instruction. He guides and directs
and drives according to His mind and will, and that is God's
will and will, and thus leads us into the land of uprightness
and teaches us to do according to God's good pleasure. He is
the Spirit of prayer, a Spirit of joy and gentleness, a Spirit of
correction and fear of the Lord. A Christian therefore, in so
far as he is a temple of the Holy Ghost, in so far as the Spirit
of God has gained room within him, walks in paths of uprightness,
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ness, lives in the Law, the will of God, knows, desires, and
does what God wants "without any teaching of the Law." But
in so far as he still has the Old Adam, he is still subject to the
error of the flesh and plagues of this reason has the wrong conception
of what he owes God and man, and loves to choose his own
ways and works, his own manner of serving God. For this
reason he still needs "the written Law," the teaching of the
Law, in order that he does not serve God according to his
"own thoughts," as our Confession notes. The Law exposes
and condemns all self-chosen and self-devised holiness and
piety. So the Law ever observes its prescribed course, even
when it serves the Christians as rule and standard of their
walk and life. Here too that expression of Scripture, the
Law was given because of sin, remains perfectly lawful.

IV. The Law and the Gospel in Congregational Work

To note the differing effects of Law and Gospel is not
only of theoretical but also of eminently practical significance.
Concluding, we want to point out how this difference as set
forth finds its application in ecclesiastical practice, in the
pastor's administration of his office.

Christian pastors are called and are preachers of the
Gospel. The Gospel characterizes their office and activity. The purpose and end of their calling is to save those who hear
them. However, it is only by the Gospel that men are con­verted, renewed, and saved. There are preachers, earnest
men, who are more the servants of Moses than of Christ.
Among the revivalists who at the beginning of this century [nineteenth] called apostate Christendom to repentance, there
were many who were predominantly preachers of the Law.
They almost consumed themselves in their zeal for the Law
of the Lord, which was being trodden under foot. In their
circles, perhaps, these men produced tremendous commotion,
excitement, convulsion. But lasting effect was absent. This,
however, need not surprise us at all; for by the Law nothing
is changed or renewed.

On the other hand, an evangelical pastor dare not lay
aside the Law in order to bring the Gospel into control. The
comfort as well as the regenerating power of the Gospel does
not take root in cold, satiated, secure hearts. Ever and every­
where the Law must make room and prepare the way for the
Gospel. Hence a pastor misses the purpose of his vocation
if he passes lightly and quickly over the Law. Thereby he
does damage not only to the Law, which certainly is also
a word of the living God, but especially to the Gospel. The
Gospel is suspended in midair, as it were, and does not take
hold of man, does not enter into the heart. At the present
time there are many so-called evangelical preachers who
pride themselves on preaching the Gospel, but who accoun­
tplish little with their supposed evangelical preaching and
practice because they neglect the office of the Law. They
sow the seed but have neglected to break up and plow the
soil. It is not surprising at all, therefore, that the seed falls to
the ground and just lies there. All sweet, comforting words
are spoken into the wind because those secure, satiated hearts
do not and cannot receive them.

Let us now apply what has been said to the most important
functions of a pastor.

His most important work is that of preaching. And
preaching accomplishes its purpose if the Word of God is
simply presented, expounded, and applied to persons, time,
place, and circumstances. If the pastor simply stays with
the Word, he will also give expression to, and bring to
consciousness, Law and Gospel, these two kinds of word,
which walk side by side throughout the entire Scriptures,
and produce the double result, repentance and faith, in his
hearers.

The more the pastor becomes conscious of the significance
and effect peculiar to the Law, the greater will be his zeal
in exercising the office of Moses, so that sinners will truly
learn to know their nature and become terrified at the wrath
and judgment of God. He will place everything human
under sin and wrath, will represent and condemn as wrong­
under sin and wrath, will give to every­
doing everything that is against the Law, will give to every­
thing its proper name and title, so that each and every loophole
be closed to sinning man, and only one escape remain open,
that way of escape which has been disclosed in the
Gospel. He will expose those sins and vices peculiar to his
congregation, the sins of the times, prevailing sins, such as
miserliness, contentiousness, worldliness, even the fine and
finest, so that all who hear him will feel struck and pricked
in their conscience.

And the more a pastor becomes conscious of the signifi­
cance and effect peculiar to the Gospel, the greater will be his
zeal for the administration of his real office, the office of Christ,
the office of comforting, and he will open to sinners, "to
the office of comforting, and he will open to sinners, "to
whom no man can comfort give, for whom the world is all
too small; with whom the Law itself hath broken, on whom
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LAW AND GOSPEL—THEIR SEVERAL EFFECTS

room in the heart unless contrition has preceded. And Chris-
tians are sanctified through faith and in faith alone. Hence
the teaching and preaching of the Law and the Gospel is also
the proper diet for those who live and walk in faith. The
same Word which terrifies and condemns the ungodly is
exactly the right kind of stroke and blow also for the Old
Adam of the Christians. The same Word which converts the
ignorant and disobedient serves for the edification, estab-
lishment, for the renewal and advancement, of the converted.
If a pastor will only rightly divide Law and Gospel, if he will
only give expression to each of these two words according
to their distinct nature and significance, he will not have to
sort and divide anxiously his listeners. He is saved the
grievous task of classifying his listeners and of fitting a certain
portion of his address to each class.

Everything depends upon the proper division and sepa-
ration of Law and Gospel. But that does not happen of it-
self. The matter requires examination and study. The pastor
must carefully meet and forestall one danger. Looking more
closely at the legal and evangelical parts of the Word which
he is to preach to his congregation, he will notice more clearly
right along that the former are of a nature entirely different
from those of the latter. . . . And ever and anon he is tempted
to bridge the gap between Law and Gospel, to disturb the
boundary line of these two divided domains, to adjust these
seemingly contrary doctrines. Modern preachers perhaps con-
sider such adjusting and mixing of Law and Gospel their
special skill. They want to effect something by their preach-
ing, but especially with the Law; with admonition, warning,
warning, threatening they would reform their hearers. The preaching
of the Law becomes moral philosophy and ethics. And if
there is a deficiency in the fulfilling of the Law, if the deed
falls short of the good intentions, the comfort of forgiveness
enters as a stopgap. And the promises of the Gospel which
assure of eternal life are appropriated as a sort of reward to
those who to some extent at least satisfy the demands of
Christian ethics. Thus the problem is seemingly solved. Law
is produced, a sort of piety, which, however, is everything but
Christian piety.

All pastors who in a similar manner seek to reconcile
Law and Gospel, who seek to bring about a certain moral,
ethical condition in their hearers, and demand and presuppose
some kind of attitude when they begin with the preaching of
the Gospel, impede the efficacy of the Law as well as of the
Gospel. They produce the notion in their hearers that man
can by nature satisfy the demands of the Law to some extent,
and thus they prevent an insight into the unfathomable cor-
rup\ion of the human nature, a look into the depths, whence
alone arises the cry for mercy. And they put into their
hearers' head the notion that they must always look for and
find something in themselves ere they may appropriate unto
themselves God's gift of grace. Thereby they deprive them
of the comfort of the Gospel and hinder faith. For whoever
does not believe that God freely, without cost, justifies the
ungodly, but deems some sort of preparation necessary for
the gift of God, will nevermore believe in the Gospel and lay
hold on the gift of God. Especially if he is in earnest, he will
always be in doubt and uncertainty as to whether he has
really met those preliminary conditions.

Nay; the terror of the Law, the preaching of condemna-
tion, and the comfort of the Gospel, the preaching of salvation
must stand closely beside each other if the sermon is to have
effect. Of course, the pastor must never forget that not the
terror and damnation but comfort and salvation are the real
end of his sermon, that he is to reprove and terrify only in
order that he might raise up, comfort, reform, and save those
who hear him. Whatever stern, harsh, bitter truths he speaks
from the Law are to prepare the way for the Gospel. An
evangelical pastor will never take comfort in the thought that
for once he has really told the people the unvarnished truth.
What is the use of such reproving if the sinner is not re-
formed? In order to renew sinners, to help the condemned,

an evangelical pastor will first unmercifully, without regard
and sparing, scourge and wound his hearers with the inex-
orable severity and the cutting edge of the Law of Moses.
Then he will at once change his voice, turn the leaf, and open
heaven and all its blessedness in the name of Christ to the
very ones on whom he has just pronounced the verdict of
hell, so that they through hell might enter heaven and, as
redeemed children of God, henceforth avoid and put away
from themselves those sins for which they have been reproved.
Then too when his sermon is chiefly reproof (as is the case
in sermons of repentance and confessional addresses) the
pastor will close with the Gospel and emphasize this con-
clusion especially. Otherwise he will work nothing but wrath.

On the other hand, a Gospel minister who would like to
save his hearers will never begin with the Gospel; his lips
will not pour forth sweet, soft words only. Not as though
such words were perhaps overstating the truth. But the good
which alone reforms and brings eternal salvation, the Gospel,
will be split, will fall by the wayside; the good seed will not
sprout and take root unless the Law has first plowed its fur-
rrows in the heart. A pastor who preaches only the Gospel
bolts and barricades for his hearers the door to the Gospel,
to grace and salvation, to faith, and to godliness. A pastor who
in his sermons treads all too softly, who deals all too tenderly
with his hearers, comforting himself with the thought of
having made heaven very attractive to his hearers, of having
brought the grace of Christ very close to them, deceives him-
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self with a false comfort. Because he has spared himself and his hearers the bitter things, because he did not care to touch upon the disagreeable matter of sin, he has spoiled their taste for grace, for the sweetness of the Gospel. What is the use of all sweetness and salvation if one is not able to taste and enjoy it, if it does not enter into the heart? However, only an alarmed, terrified, bruised heart is able to grasp up and retain the comfort of God. No; a pastor who is not fully in earnest with the Law is not in earnest with the Gospel either.

Just another example how Law and Gospel can and should go hand in hand in the work of preaching. Perhaps an honest pastor is saddened by his congregation's unwillingness to sacrifice and seeks to bring about a reform. If he begins correctly, he will attack the matter at the source and reprove the love of money with holy indignation. Nothing will be accomplished here with a few sighs that things in this congregation are not all as they should be and a few weak appeals to Christian love to give more liberally. Nay; one must rather bear down firmly on the sore spot with the Word of God and the Law and show such Christians that the love of money is the root of all evil, that this snare of Satan has already caused many to err from the faith, that out of the love of money will grow all sorts of harmful lusts, which bring men into perdition and damnation. But a Gospel minister will not stop here. He knows that mere reproof will cause resentment among the people and will, at best, drive them to sacrifices of hypocrisy. Hence he will at once also add the Gospel and speak to his hearers of the boundless love of God, who spared not His only-begotten Son, who spared no pains to save souls, and will admonish and plead for the sake of God's mercy to bring sacrifices of gratitude; and he will experience with joy that at least some become fruitful unto good works. Such evangelical pleading alone makes no impression upon hearts ensnared by the love of money; mere reproof, on the other hand, indeed makes an impression, but does not have the desired result, changes nothing in the matter.

A pastor will always be mindful of the different effect of Law and Gospel also in his care of souls. There is indeed a difference between preaching and the care of souls. Public preaching is designed for the whole group. In the care of souls the pastor applies the Word to the individual. And there he must take into consideration the spiritual condition of the individual, as far as he is able to form an opinion about it from his words and acts, and apply the rule of preaching the Law to hardened sinners but the Gospel to the terrified and sorrowing. However, a pastor who has in mind nothing but the salvation of the individual will never operate wholly one-sidedly, neither altogether with the Law nor only with the Gospel. He will never keep silent regarding the Gospel, which alone brings salvation; but he will first apply the Law in order to be able to apply the Gospel.

In general, the evangelical practice of a pastor will show itself in his dealings with individuals. He does not seek them out only if and when he has some special reproof to administer to them. If a pastor is seen in the houses of his members only at such times when he has to reprove the inmates, he will soon be generally considered a moralist, and he plays the role of a servant of Moses. A Gospel minister will use his visits above all things as opportunities directly and indirectly to remind his members that they are most happy humans in that they have Christ and are Christians, and to encourage them and to strengthen their faith. But that does not exclude that on suitable occasions, as, for example, when they announce for Holy Communion, he will also call the attention of his members to sins common to the times, of which Christians too are guilty, as, e.g., spiritual slothfulness, materialism, worldliness. Whatever serves to vex the Old Adam also serves to strengthen the new spiritual life of the new man.

True, a pastor must exercise care of souls especially with regard to such as have strayed on wrong paths. Here saving love demands prompt action lest error fasten itself upon heart and mind, lest sin become a habit. As long as he is dealing with such as in Christian charity he can still call brethren, he will in a friendly manner and with all humility appeal to Christian love to give more liberally. The Law, alone bringing knowledge of sin, is always stern and strict and conscience. But oftentimes a gentle reminder suffices to induce Christians, who still have the Holy Ghost, to judge and reprove themselves, and to press the thorn into their heart. And after the erring one has confessed his error, he stands in special need of strong evangelical encouragement for the strengthening of the weak will, enabling it henceforth to deny, leave, and avoid that which is displeasing to God. A pastor is seen in the houses of his members only if one has confessed his error, if he has thereby done his duty. Even though he has unreservedly told the truth to the ungodly and now tells himself: Animam salvi, yet he has not salved his conscience thereby. He must first do everything to save the soul of the sinner. However, by the Law alone no sinner is converted and saved. It is a fatal mistake to try to preserve the Gospel for a later declaration, say, when the heart has been hardened and broken by the preaching of the Law. Only the Gospel
is able to break and so soften the heart and to make willing men of unwilling ones. By operating solely with the reproof of the Law, the opposition is intensified. It is the Gospel which is able to break down opposition. Therefore, if we desire to convert and save sinners, we must combine Law and Gospel from the very beginning, not so much comforting with the Gospel, but rather inviting and attracting. In order that as soon as the conscience of the sinner has been struck by the Law, the Gospel may be at hand in the same moment, ready to render its service and unfold its regenerating power. And when we notice but a spark of contrition and desire for forgiveness and renewal, it is especially important to apply the Gospel forthwith, in order that the renewal, now begun, may be firmly established.

The story, which Fresenius relates of his own practice, is well known, namely, how he reproached a dying general, whose conscience was thoroughly aroused over his former sinfulness, with the awful consequences of his sins and the severity of God’s wrath. Continuing to dig deep with the Law of God even when the poor sinner sighed over his burden, some debt and was close to despair, Fresenius waited from day to day ere he dared to add a mite of comfort to his renewed hope. The story, which Fresenius relates of his own practice, is an important example of the proper application of Law and Gospel, the essential role of preaching the Word of God even when the poor sinner sighs over his burden.

So far we have presupposed normal congregational conditions. But the ecclesiastical, pastoral practice must be essentially the same when the pastor has to deal with special difficulties. Conditions are not to determine the Word of God, but God’s Word is to determine conditions. A pastor should preach and apply God’s Word, both the Law and the Gospel, under all circumstances. In a comparatively new,
untrained, and ignorant congregation a beginning must as a matter of course be made with the penitential preaching of John and of Moses. The Law of God must first cut into the wild flesh before any spiritual fruit may be expected. But from the very outset also the Gospel of the grace of the Savior of sinners must peal forth clearly and loudly. Christ must follow immediately upon John. Otherwise censure will only make matters worse. Untilled soil, if properly plowed, will often quickly sprout the heavenly seed and produce fruit beyond expectation.

A much more difficult field is an old congregation, long trained in Christian knowledge and practice, but now sated, among whom the Gospel no longer seems to take hold and to produce effect. If anywhere, then it is here that the hammer blows, the thunder and lightning of the Law must strike the hearts. To these sated, slothful, proud spirits it must be shown and proved that in the sight of God their pharisaism is the greatest abomination of all. However, in the end we dare not overlook the fact that all evil exposed by the Law, even the greatest of all evils, dislike of, and satiety with, the Gospel, is actually healed and improved alone through the preaching of the Gospel; that is, as long as there still is hope for improvement. However, praise to God! an incorrigible, completely impenitent congregation, no longer worthy of the office of the ministry, has hardly fallen to the lot of any of our pastors. Hence we can confidently continue our labors in the Word and persevere with teaching, reproving, comforting, trusting God that both the rebuke of the Law as well as the comfort of the Gospel will have its desired effect.

The Law commands and makes us know
What duties to our God we owe.
But 'tis the Gospel must reveal
Where lies our strength to do His will.

The Law discovers guilt and sin
And shows how vile our hearts have been;
The Gospel only can express
Forgiving love and cleansing grace.

What curses doth the Law pronounce
Against the man that falls but once!
But in the Gospel Christ appears,
Pard'ning the guilt of numerous years.

My soul, no more attempt to draw
Thy life and comfort from the Law.
Fly to the hope the Gospel gives;
The man that trusts the promise lives.

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Amen


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