

The Third Use of the Law

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Preface

During the sessions of the 1974 Convention of the Church of the Lutheran Confession President Robert Reim requested the undersigned to prepare a paper on THE THIRD USE OF THE LAW, to be presented at a specially called Pastoral Conference of the CLC. Since this doctrine had been under discussion for more than a decade in some conferences of the CLC, a resolution of the problems that had arisen was imperative. The first matter of concern was to isolate the *status controversiae*. I endeavored to do that by reading all the papers that had been written by the leading protagonists of the conflicting points of view. Thereafter I submitted tentative theses and leading questions to these same men and also the Board of Doctrine, for they had become involved in the discussions. I solicited responses to determine whether or not I was on the right track and received the cooperation of all concerned. I then sent my findings to all the clergy members of the CLC to prepare them for the forthcoming conferences I also sent to all two study papers, CONCERNING THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE REFORMED AND LUTHERAN CONCEPT OF THE SO-CALLED THIRD USE OF THE LAW by August Pieper (Theologische Quartalschrift, April 1916), translated by Pastor Arthur Schulz and Dr. Martin Luther's Sermon on I Timothy 1:3-11 (St. Louis Edition, Vol. IX, 858-883), translated by Pastor Robert Wehrwein, assisted by Miss Ruth Schaller. Members of the clergy continued to supply valuable materials and insights into various facets of the doctrine. The writing of the paper was not completed until the end of the year. The paper was read before the Special CLC Pastoral Conference, which met at Immanuel Lutheran Church, Mankato, Minnesota, January 7-9, 1975. By the grace of God and through the working of the Holy Spirit the paper served the purpose of restoring and reaffirming our unity in this vital area of law and gospel. Because of the length of the paper and the shortage of time the discussion was limited. I have responded to the major points raised in the discussion with three "Inserts." The minutes of the conference record the following disposition of the paper: "A motion to print the paper on THE THIRD USE OF THE LAW for study was adopted." The paper is herewith presented to the brethren for that very purpose.

Paul F. Nolting

Outline

1. Introduction
2. The "Lawful" Use of the Law
3. Insert: "The Holiness of God"
4. The Dynamics of the Faith-Life of the Christian
5. "Freedom" or "Liberty"
6. Life in the Spirit and Living that Life
7. Insert: "The Law Accuses"
8. Insert: "Sanctification"
9. Special Facets:
 - I. Terminology: Will of God, Law, and Commandment
 - II. Calvinism and the Third Use of the Law
 - III. Question: Does the new man have complete knowledge of God's will?
 - IV. Question: Is there a difference between the "mirror" and the "rule" use of the law?
 - V. Question: Is the Christian ever told to do things in order that he do them?

Introduction

The issue of the “third use of the law” is a law/gospel issue. As such it strikes the very heart of our God’s message to us. Error in this area blinds the mind and heart to an understanding of Holy Scripture and inevitably tends to undermine and destroy the gospel. On the other hand clarity in the proper distinction between law and gospel serves as a beacon to open up the Scriptures and so serves to set in ever sharper relief both the consuming glory of our God’s holiness and the glorious good news that our God has had mercy, has shown grace in forgiving mankind, in and through His Son, our Lord Jesus.

Specifically, error in the area of the “third use of the law” leads to antinomianism, which reduces the holiness of God to human moral possibilities by the device of moral relativism, that is, by dethroning God and enthroning man as the moral standard maker. This cannot but lead to antigospelism, for, if holiness is scaled down so that it is within human capabilities, of what need is a Savior from sin? On the other hand error in this area fosters synergism. Man believes that he possesses spiritual capabilities, which in fact he does not and cannot possess. This also leads to antigospelism, for the individual who imagines himself possessed of spiritual powers feels the need only for a moral guide, not for a Savior from sin. Antinomianism attempts to evade the demands of holiness, while synergism attempts to discount the effects of indwelling sin. Both undermine the gospel. A third error is a distinct possibility. If the law is imposed upon the Christian, inasfar as he is new man, the flesh quickly suggests that the sure and proper formula for salvation is faith in Christ + good works. Thus again grace is disavowed and Christ cast away.

In some of the discussions on these matters in our midst the issues have been reduced to specific questions concerning commandments directed to Christians in Holy Writ, as to the difference between the “mirror” and “rule” uses of the law, as to the extent of the knowledge of God’s will that the new man possesses. It is possible to present and discuss all these issues in a catechetical format. This method has the advantage of pinpointing specific facets of the problem, but it may also lead to a mole hole, rather than a vista-view of the problem.

A word of warning is in place. We need to be aware always of the effects of sin upon the intellect. The flesh within us never ceases to suggest that we can become as wise, yea wiser, than God. In pursuing this end, there is a tendency to fragment Scriptures rather than see the whole, to create pet phrases and expressions and then attempt to straitjacket the Holy Spirit in them or rape the godly discipline of exegesis and history in order to establish one’s preconceived position. We need also beware of traditionalism. We are never to turn our backs upon the teachers which the Lord of the Church raised up in years before us. We are to sit reverently at their feet and learn from them, but we are not to use their forms and expressions of doctrine without grasping the scriptural truths beneath and behind those forms. We must constantly endeavor to make our own that which we have inherited from our fathers. Above all, we must ever beware of the fact that the flesh tries to make listening to an argument of an opponent almost impossible, for the mind is casting about for an appropriate rebuttal rather than trying to follow the opponent’s line of thought. Let us endeavor to listen and compare what is spoken with the Word, not with the bits and pieces of our own wisdom. Let us also beware of hypocrisy that is camouflaged by piously asking for the Spirit’s guidance and by professing willingness to be corrected by the Word, while inwardly being quite convinced that no argument can possibly change one’s position. Let us beware likewise of the friction that is bound to develop as rough-hewn personalities clash in verbal exchanges, both on the conference floor and in the halls and washrooms. Let no one underestimate the enemy within and without, whose aim is to destroy that fragile creation of the Spirit, the unity of faith in the bond of peace.

The aim of your essayist will be to provide a vista-view of the problem before entering upon specific points. First we must understand the law, its proper uses and its limitations. To expect the law to produce what can only be produced by the gospel is to convert Christianity into paganism, grace into works. Second, we must seek ever anew to grasp and understand what our Savior-God has wrought for us in Christ Jesus. We must come to realize that the gospel both justifies and sanctifies. We tend to use certain phrases, as the gospel being the power of God and the motivation for sanctification, without fully grasping the glory of what we are saying and without following to the end the path on which those truths are leading us. The *opinio legis* of the flesh makes a

grasping for the law to help achieve what can only be achieved by the gospel seem so natural and so necessary. Thirdly, we have to understand the nature of Mr. Christian. He is and remains, till the moment of death, possessed of a single ego that is at all times spirit and flesh, inseparably intertwined with an interpenetration of each spiritual force in the functioning of his intellect, will, and emotions with the result that each thought, word, and deed bears the imprint of both flesh and spirit. To appeal to the flesh with the gospel is an exercise in futility. To saddle the new man with the law is to smother the Spirit of life with a blanket of death. When Scripture speaks to Mr. Christian, it sometimes clearly indicates the duality of his personality, as in Romans 7 and Galatians 5. Sometimes it speaks only of the new man, as in 1 Timothy 1:9 and 1 John 3:9. And sometimes it speaks a warning specifically to the flesh, as in Ephesians 5:5. The Word must be rightly divided and rightly applied to Mr. Christian or law and gospel will be hopelessly confused.

We need to be reminded that the message of Scripture can be reduced to three statements: You have sinned! Your sin is forgiven! Sin no more! The first is law, the second gospel, and the third evangelical admonition in which law and gospel are inseparably connected, yet dare not be mixed, which is applied to Mr. Christian who is both spirit and flesh. From the viewpoint of the law the three statements take this form: You are under the law and so damned! You have been freed from the law by the righteousness of Christ and so live! By the power of the Spirit you are to live in the law. We shall examine how the Scriptures speak in each instance, noting the terminology used and, also how the language of Scripture is reflected in the Confessions of the Church.

The “Lawful” Use of the Law

Torah, Nomos: At the end of his career on the plains of Moab, “began Moses to declare this law,” **הִזְאֵת** **הַתּוֹרָה**, Deut. 1:5. St. John summarizes the entire period of Moses’ life, from Sinai to his death, with the words, “The law (*ὁ νόμος*) was given by Moses,” John 1:17. The Torah was the instruction that the eternal and immutable Jahveh (YHWH **יְהוָה**) gave His people, according to which they were to live. In the Greek tongue this became *ὁ νόμος*, the well-known corpus of rules and regulations for living that verbalized and symbolized the holiness of God.

Insert: “The Holiness of God.”

Holy—Separate: “Holy, holy; holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.” Is. 6:3. So sang the seraphim in the vision of Isaiah. “And they (the four “beasts,” actually living ones or cherubim) rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty.” Rev. 4:8. So St. John saw and heard in the Throne Vision.

The basic meaning of “holy” is separate, removed, exalted. St. John saw a throne set in the heavens. He saw the Occupant who is described in terms of precious stones with a rainbow about the throne. Isaiah saw “the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.” Is. 6:1. In both instances the seraphim or cherubim, one of the highest order of angels, stood around or by. The scene is super-mundane, transcendent. There is nothing comparable in this world with all the glory, majesty, power, and pageantry of man. God is in a class by Himself—transcendent, infinite in all His attributes, incomparable. All gods that man makes with his hands or fashions with his mind are “nothings” in comparison with the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel. “To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One.” Is. 40:25. The rhetorical question is unanswerable!. God is in a class by Himself, not to be confused with His creation as does pantheism and not to be identified with man as does humanism.

Man, modern and ancient, likes to refer to the Holy One with vulgar familiarity as “The Man Upstairs.” In Christ Jesus the Holy One has drawn nigh to us as a loving Father to His children, so that we may with all boldness and confidence address Him as children address their dear fathers. But He is always the Holy One, before whom we are to bow our heads in reverent awe and silence. Yet as His children by faith in Christ Jesus we pray, “Our Father, Who art in heaven”—so high and lofty, who is able to help in every need. What amazing love has been shown us that the Holy One Of Israel has been made our heavenly Father by Christ Jesus.

Holy—Sinless: When Isaiah saw the Holy One of Israel sitting upon His throne and heard the song of the seraphim, he said, “Woe is me! for I am undone; because I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.” Is. 6:5. When Peter saw the miraculous draft of fishes, he cried out: “Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” Luke 5:8.

Holiness is the opposite of sinfulness. Sin is stain; holiness is the whiteness of purity. God is holy; man is sinful. The holiness of God reacts to the sinfulness of man as a “consuming fire.” Heb. 12:29. “Holiness is the absolute purity of God, according to which His affections, thoughts, will, and acts are in perfect consistency and harmony with His own nature and in energetic opposition to everything not in conformity therewith.” A. L. Graebner, old Missouri Synod theologian.

“Ye shall be holy; for I am holy.” Lev. 11:44; 19:2; 20:26. What does it mean to be holy? Leviticus 11 makes the distinction between clean and unclean animals, for sin penetrated from the mind through the body of man to the animal kingdom and to all creation. Israel was to be holy or separate unto the Lord by carefully observing the distinction between the clean and unclean. Leviticus 19 spells out the moral implications of holiness. “Turn ye not unto idols, nor make to yourselves molten gods: I am the Lord your God.” Lev. 19:4. Man is to be holy by making the Lord God the exclusive object of his worship. The conclusion of the first commandment is the Lord’s own commentary on holiness: “For I the Lord thy God am a jealous God...” Ex. 20:5-6. Man is furthermore to be holy by always placing his neighbor on a standing equal with himself: “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself; I am the Lord.” Lev. 19:18. Leviticus 20 announces the death penalty upon any breach of holiness.

What is the moral standard of holiness in the New Testament? Our Lord gave answer when a lawyer tempted Him by asking which of the 613 commands in the law was the greatest. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and prophets.” Matt. 22:37-40. Holiness demands love Godward and manward, impossible for us, achieved for us by Christ.

In Paradise: There was no “law” in the beginning, for the purpose of law is to bring outwardly into existence what isn’t there but should be there and to curb what is but shouldn’t be. In so doing law reveals transgression, accuses, and condemns. What was in the beginning was the will of God, which reflected His essential nature, love. When God created man, He created him in His own image. That is, God instilled or impressed His moral nature or image upon man. Accordingly, man’s thinking and feeling and willing reflected perfectly the moral will of his Creator. Our first parents naturally, freely, unselfconsciously, effortlessly loved God above all things and each other.

The Test, Command: The command not to eat of the fruit of the forbidden tree was not to induce man to become what he was not yet, as though he had been created imperfectly, but rather to test him to determine whether he would retain and be confirmed in what he was and had by freely using it. The command, which was

in the form of a warning, was necessary because man had no way of knowing the danger of such eating, for God had previously proclaimed His entire creation good. That warning was couched in the clearest, most forceful and unmistakable of terms, for God, the loving Father, spared no effort to warn His children against the mortal danger that threatened them.

The Effect of Sin: Sin entered and changed the nature of man from confidence towards God to suspicion of God, from love Godward and manward to unwavering selfishness, from hope to fear. Man's relationship to his God was changed from that of a child to a slave. Man's will no longer corresponded to the will of God. Sin ejected God's will from the soul life of man. God's will had become a foreign will, inexorably imposed upon stubbornly resisting, actively rebellious man.

The Characteristics of Law: For centuries, yea millennia, this situation existed, but was not brought out into the open, for there was no verbalization of the will of God. Sin was in the world with its killing effect, but there was no law and hence no imputation of sin, Rom. 5:13. Not until Moses did God reveal His will in the form of divine instruction, the Torah, for man. That instruction came in the form of statutes, judgments, and ordinances which verbalized and symbolized the holiness of God. All these laws had their appropriate penalties, always culminating in the ultimate penalty, death, being cut off temporally and eternally from the congregation of God. The law has the inescapable and unavoidable characteristics of demands, threats and condemnations. These flow from the very nature of the divine Lawgiver. As Creator, He has the right to make demands upon His creatures. As the Holy One, He must threaten all who fail to conform to His holiness. As almighty Judge, He condemns and is able to carry out His every sentence of condemnation. However, the law, glorious as it was, was not and was not intended to be God's primary revelation to man. The gospel, which reflects His essential nature of love, promising rescue for fallen man and working historically to fulfill that promise, is and always remains God's primary revelation to man. The law entered, *νόμος δὲ παρεισῆλθεν*, Rom. 5:20, as St. Paul puts it. It came in from the side, a secondary revelation to respond to the situation that had arisen when man failed to exercise his *posse non peccare*.

Use "Lawfully": We now have the law. It is a good gift of God, but like every other gift of God it is to be used, not misused. "We know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully, *νομίμως*, I Tim. 1:8. In especially two epistles, Romans and Galatians, Paul writes at length of the "lawful" use of the law. Here in the Timothy passage Paul speaks of the lawful use of the law in God's governance of the world.

Law - a Curb: When man sinned in the garden, he initiated a perpetual, unending revolution against God. Before the flood God saw "that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually," Gen. 6:5. Through the flood God destroyed that race of evildoers, but the judgment of the deluge did not change human nature. St. Paul describes the heathen nations as those who "hold, that is, hold down or suppress, the truth in unrighteousness," Rom. 1:18. Man cannot cease his rebelling against God, either by trying to declare God nonexistent by human fiat or by establishing man as the final arbiter of moral standards. But God compels man to know that He is God—through His law, which acts as a curb restraining rebellious man or failing that by working judgment upon the rebels. The man of God is to know this, "that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine," I Tim. 1:8-9. In practice God works this use of the law chiefly through what Luther called His left hand, the government. But when that fails, He interposes directly in human affairs, as in the case of the flood, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, etc.

The Law Condemns: In the first three chapters of Romans Paul tears the facade of self-justified righteousness from the face of both Gentile and Jew. The Gentile stands convicted without the law and by the law within that he has failed to live up to; the Jew by the written law, which is his boast, but which he has failed to keep, Rom. 2:11-23. This case by case, step by step, logical indictment and conviction of all mankind by St. Paul is a New Testament legal brief, restating the poetic indictment of Isaiah: “All flesh is grass and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field: The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass,” Is. 40:7. What is the instrument that makes this indictment stand? “Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God,” Rom. 3:19. The law, as the verbalization and symbolization of the eternal, immutable will of God, indicts and condemns man at his best and each man individually. The function of the law is to establish guilt. That it does, also against the modern moral relativist who presumes to declare God dead and installs man as the standard-setter for moral behavior.

The Law Works Wrath: In functioning as indicter and condemner of the entire human race, the law has the effect of working wrath. Paul wrote, “The law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression,” Rom. 4:15. The law works wrath because it exposes sin as transgression of the law of the holy God. If God is holy, He cannot tolerate defiance of His ethical standard for men. “The wrath of God is revealed against all unrighteousness of men,” Rom. 1:18. The law functions as a catalyst for that wrath.

The Law Hardens: The law, which is in itself good and holy, also works wrath in the sinner. This is the natural reaction of the self-willed sinner to the law of God, which appears to him as foreign and hostile. The law constantly forbids or demands what the flesh refuses to do or insists on doing, The law cannot and does not yield, for it is the verbalization of God’s immutable moral order. As the law pushes its claims upon the sinner, the natural response is heightened resistance and increasing wrath. This is the process of self-hardening which, unless checked by the mercy of God, carries the sinner to the point of no return, that of judicial hardening. The cases of Pharaoh and Saul are warning documentaries on this fearful process, for “it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God,” Heb. 10:31.

The Law - The Adamic Sin: The function of the law is to bring out the true nature of sin as rebellion against God. In Galatians 3:19 Paul asks the question, “Wherefore then serveth the law?” He answers, “It was added because of transgressions.” What is the relationship between the law and transgressions? The law establishes transgressions as the universal guilt of mankind. “But the scripture bath concluded all under sin,” Gal. 3:22. “God hath concluded them all in unbelief,” Rom. 11:32. But how does the law go about establishing the guilt of all? Paul doesn’t elaborate on this point in Galatians, but he does give a fuller delineation of this function of the law in his letter to the Romans.

After giving his lengthy comparison-contrast of Adam and Christ, the one factor that remained untreated was the law. How does the law fit in? Paul states the function of the law in this way, “Moreover the law entered, that the offence (*το παράπτωμα*) might abound,” Rom. 5:20. *Το παράπτωμα*, “the offence,” is the Adamic sin. Modern unbelieving theologians lightly dismiss the first eleven chapters of Genesis as mythology, as but a quaint but crude attempt. to explain the origin of evil in this world. Scripture emphasizes the offence of Adam as the historic event that had devastating after-effects upon mankind. God saw and God knew that “every imagination of the thoughts of his (man’s) heart was only evil continually,” Gen. 6:5. God knew the cause, but man, ancient and modern, dismisses this cause as insufficient to explain what is to some extent empirically knowable, but which is rejected by the sin-blinded mind of man. So God brought in the law to make matters clear to all. He verbalized His holy will in the Ten Words. He thereby made it evident that what comes out of the heart of man into his bloodstream and all his organs, affecting his relationship with his God and all his interrelationships with his fellowman, is always and only transgression of His immutable, moral will as revealed in the law.

The law serves as a prod to bring out into the open the inherited sin of Adam into which we are born “For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death,” Rom. 7:5. And again, “But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead,” Rom. 7:8. Sin is like a smoldering fire within; the law is the poker that stirs it up so that it burns brightly. As the “No, no” of a mother to her child seems to stimulate the child into experimenting with precisely that which is forbidden, so the restrictive “Dos” and “Don’ts” of the law stimulate the sinner to do precisely what is forbidden. The “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” did not prevent but rather stimulated the perverse, stubborn rebellious hearts of the men of Israel to make the golden bull and so to initiate a continuous history of seeking after other gods, which gross defiance of the law the Jews, for the most part, carry on to this day.

The Law Reveals the Nature of Sin: What did our good and gracious God have in mind by giving the law, which kept on functioning in this way that it caused the sinner to sin more and more? Paul answered that question in this way: “That sin by the commandment might become exceedingly sinful,” Rom. 7:13. The law reveals sin as what it really is, not a minor character defect in man who is allegedly evolving into ever higher moral standards and not but a deviation from current social standards, but as transgression of the eternal, immutable, moral will of God and so as insubordination of the creature to the Creator, as rebellion of the subject against his Lord. Man, because of the effects of sin on his thinking, tends to think of sin but lightly; the law is the divine corrective, revealing to man how God views his sin.

The Law Makes Sin a Reality: The negative effect of the law is to expose man to the wrath of God; the positive effect is to make sin a personally experienced reality in the life of man. “By the law is the knowledge (*ἐπίγνωσις*) of sin,” Rom. 3:20. “I had not known (*ἔγνων*) sin, but by the law,” Rom. 7:7. The forms of both the noun and verb point to a personal, experiential knowledge of sin. David knew intellectually that he had sinned with Bathsheba and against Uriah. He could not drive the fact of his sins from his memory, try as he may. Neither could he successfully camouflage them from his conscience with the motions of ritual service. But it was not until Nathan directed the accusing finger of the law at David’s conscience that his sin became a personal, condemning monster in his life. His penitential Psalms bare his soul: “Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight,” Ps. 51:4. Thus the law makes sin a real and a personal matter of rebellion against the holy God.

The Law - Justification: Associated with the biblical concept of justification are the following: faith, righteousness, Spirit, promise, life, Christ. In each instance the law is set by Paul as the antithesis. The only contribution that the law makes in the justifying of the sinner is the negative function of imprisoning the sinner in an escape-proof cell of his own making, thereby terrifying him with his guilt and the certain condemnation of the law and so forcing him to the brink of despair. This is the “schoolmaster” function (Gal. 3:24) until Christ enters the picture.

After methodically and conclusively establishing the guilt of the entire human race and then proclaiming the justification of mankind by grace “through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 3:24), Paul proceeds to the appropriation of that priceless gift by man. How does what was done on Calvary and what occurred in Joseph’s garden become the priceless possession of the sinner? What part does the good and holy law have to play? The answer is as clear as it is decisive: “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law,” Rom. 3:28. Those words flowed from the mind of a composed and calm Paul. From the agitated mind of Paul, engaged in a life/death struggle against faith-murdering errorists in Galatia, came words to the same effect: “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified,” Gal. 2:16. The law stands exposed as the antithesis to both justification and faith.

In chapter four of Romans Paul uses the revered figure of Abraham to demonstrate that the law is the antithesis of the promise and faith. Abraham is the heir of the world by faith in the promise, not through the law. Accordingly, “if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect,” Rom. 4:14.

Appealing to the personal experience of the Galatians Paul set the law over against the Spirit, the Creator of life: “This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?” Gal. 3:2. The covenant of the promise, confirmed in Christ, cannot be disannulled by the law, which came four hundred and thirty years later, Gal. 3:17, The law stands as the antithesis of the promise, also of life, for “if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law,” Gal. 3:21. Christ Himself stands over against the law, for “Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace,” Gal. 5:4. From one angle and then from another angle and then from another Paul establishes the antithesis of the law to all and everything that creates new life.

The Law – Sanctification: Justification is always complete, sanctification is a process. Justification is a series of dots, each complete in itself and touching the preceding, symbolizing the state of grace. Sanctification is a line with an arrow, continuing on to death and the new day at the end of this era. Justification is life for the condemned sinner; sanctification is living that life. What part does the law play in sanctification?

Romans 6 proclaims the necessity of death to enable life and living in sanctification to begin and continue. It is a death to sin, which is revealed in all its loathsomeness as rebellion against God by the law. Christ died and was buried for us, to take away our sin. These are historical facts, the proclamation of which is the gospel. These historical facts by baptism cause a death and create a resurrection in man—death to sin, life unto Christ. Paul concentrates the attention of his readers on these facts of salvation and their effects by using his first imperative in his letter: “Likewise reckon ye also yourselves dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord,” Rom. 6:11. Then follows, in the remainder of the chapter, encouragement to live unto the Lord by enrolling one’s body in the day by day living of this new life, which has been created in us by faith in the death and resurrection of Christ centuries ago, “for ye are not under the law, but under grace,” Rom. 6:14.

Romans 7 presents another death and resurrection, death to the law and again life with Christ. Using the example of the law’s binding a woman until death to her husband, Paul applies, “Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law—with its demands, threats, and condemnation—by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God,” Rom. 7:14. Again, death to the law is the prerequisite for the new life of obedience or life in Christ.

In his earlier letter to the Galatians Paul had scored the inability of the law to produce life: “If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law,” Gal. 3:21. The point in Galatians was to demonstrate the necessity of something better, the promise of a life-giving Savior. In the eighth chapter of his epistle to the Romans Paul again stresses the inability of the law to produce a life of righteousness, but then continues to show how this goal was achieved in and through Christ: “What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending forth his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit,” Rom. 8:3-4. What the law could not achieve in man, Christ by the power of the Spirit does achieve, a righteousness of life according to the law. Again it is evident that the law can neither create nor sustain this new life of righteousness that is the life of a child of God.

But the new life of righteousness is a life in and according to the law. Just what part the law has to play in this new life, which the law cannot bring about but which is nonetheless according to the law, will be examined a bit later.

Law – Temporary: The primary Self-revelation of God to man is the gospel, as is obvious from the very first word of God to fallen man, the Protevangelium, Gen. 3:15, and the subsequent revelation of God to Moses as

Jehovah, that is, the eternal, immutable God of all love and grace for sinners. The revelation of His holy will on Mt. Sinai in the form of the law was secondary, necessitated by the intrusion of sin and by the Lord's plan to isolate unto Himself one nation upon the face of the earth as the historical matrix from which the promise was to evolve at the God-appointed time. Paul speaks of the temporary nature of the law in the "schoolmaster" passage. Speaking historically as a Jew, Paul writes, "But when faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster unto Christ (εἰς Χριστόν) that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster," Gal. 3:24-26. Historically, the law was given to fulfill a specific need and purpose from Moses until Christ. Substantively, whenever Christ enters the soul-life of an individual, the law immediately loses its grip on that person. Yet both Christ and the holy Apostles preach the law also to the regenerate, indicating that there remains an element in Mr. Christian that is permanently bound under the law.

Summary: When is the law used "lawfully"? When it is remembered that there was no law in the beginning, that sin necessitated the law, that because of sin the law serves as a curb to maintain outward order in the world, that the essential characteristics of the law are demands, threats and condemnation, that the law therefore accuses and establishes the guilt of mankind and so works wrath, that the law reveals the devastation wrought by the sin of Adam by revealing the effects of sin in man and the true nature of sin as rebellion, that the law makes sin a personal reality in the life of the sinner, that the law in no way can either justify the sinner or create and sustain the new life of obedience, and that hence the law is historically and in the life of each individual only temporary—until Christ comes. However, without and apart from Christ the law stands there with its unyielding demands, unmerciful threats, inescapable accusations, and certain condemnation.

The Dynamics of the Faith-Life of the Christian

"The just shall live by faith," Hab. 2:4 and Rom. 1:7. Faith is the quintessence of the life of a child of God. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," Mark 16:16. "For we walk by faith, not by sight," II Cor. 5:7. "Without faith it is impossible to please God," Heb. 11:6. The entire life of a Christian flows from faith, which the Spirit of God creates and sustains.

Faith changes the relationship of the individual to his God. It makes the guilty innocent: "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law," Rom. 3:28. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus," Rom. 8:1. It restores alienated man to fellowship with his God: "Having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself...And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled," Col. 1:20-21. Justification is the legal term, reconciliation the social term. Together they convey the changed status of the sinner to his God: from guilty to forgiven, from at enmity to at peace. By virtue of this change, effected by our Lord's fulfilling the law for us and suffering the penalties of that same law for us, our God no longer looks upon us as Judge, but as loving Father. By faith the blessings of these changes are ours.

Faith restores sonship. "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons," Gal. 4:4-5. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God," Rom. 8:14 Through faith we reenter the relationship to our God, in which man was originally created. God is once again Father; believers are children. The relationship of loving Father and trusting child has been restored.. The Father encourages and sustains His children; the children respond with loving and willing obedience.

Faith and love are simultaneously and inseparably intertwined. Faith is the invisible, love the visible side of the new life. "Faith...worketh by love," Gal. 5:6. Faith is not first given its proper form by love, but faith

and love are simultaneously created by the Spirit of God. Faith stands ever with open hand Godward to receive the continued assurance of the divine grace that forgives sin for Christ's sake and simultaneously reaches toward God and man in love. "God is love," I John 4:8. That love is self-giving, for God spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all. That selfless love is reflected in the faith-life of the believer. "We love him, because he first loved us," I John 4:18. That love cannot but reach out to one's fellowman, for "this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also," I John 4:21. Love, which is the inseparable companion of faith, is the potential solution to every moral problem, for "love is the fulfilling of the law," Rom. 13:10.

Faith recreates the individual. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things have passed away; behold, all things are become new," II Cor. 5:17. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them," Eph. 2:10. What is the nature of this new creation? Jeremiah spoke of it: "After these days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people," Jer. 31:33. The position of the law of God has been changed from an external, coercive and constraining force imposed upon a rebellious subject to an inner attitude or way of thinking in the child of God. Insofar as the child of God is new man, the image of God has been restored. Ezekiel foresaw the same blessing: "I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh: That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God," Ez. 11:19-20. By working faith and so giving forgiveness of sin and restoring fellowship with God, the Spirit restores the image of God, that gyroscope of love that cannot but move man to walk in love according to the will of God.

By faith we are taught of God. In the new covenant prophecy Jeremiah revealed that God Himself would write His law in the hearts of His people and "they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord," Jer. 31:34. Isaiah spoke of the future age of the Spirit when "all thy children shall be taught of the Lord," Is. 54:14. Our Lord referred to these prophecies in His Bread of Life sermon at Capernaum: "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me," John 6:45. St. Paul speaks of the glorious gospel truths that "God hath revealed...unto us by his Spirit," I Cor. 2:10. In first Thessalonians he indicates that love is immediately taught, "But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another," I Thess. 4:9. St. John assures all believers, "But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things," I John 2:20. Faith is the chief means by which our God teaches believers what they must know. Some of the fathers use the word "intuitive" to describe this way of receiving knowledge.

Faith is evidence of the indwelling Spirit. "No man can say that Jesus Christ is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost," I Cor. 12:3. The moment the Spirit of God creates faith in the heart, he indwells that person, making him a temple of the Holy Ghost. No one can have Christ without the Spirit, but only by the Spirit. "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of him," Rom. 8:9. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God," Rom. 8:14. Which way does the Spirit of Christ, who is the Spirit of truth, lead? Never into darkness, error, or lawlessness of any kind, but only into light, truth, and life according to the immutable moral will of love. The antithesis of the Spirit is the works of the flesh, as Paul contrasts in Galatians 5. Thus the Spirit ever functions as the unchanging counter force to sin and positive force for righteousness.

By faith Christ dwells in the believer. "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me," Gal. 2:20. Christ came to remove sin and restore righteousness; that was the goal of His mission to earth. Faith rests on His objective acts to remove both the guilt and the power of sin and to

restore righteousness. When Christ comes, by the working of the Spirit, into the life of an individual, He brings the dual blessings of His righteousness to cover our unrighteousness and His strength and guidance to lead us in the path of righteousness.

By faith we are united with the God of our salvation. In His sacerdotal prayer our Lord pleaded, “that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us,” John 17:21. By faith we are mystically united with the God of our salvation, in whom is all holiness without spot or blemish. St. Peter refers to this source of spiritual strength in his second epistle when he assures the saints that our Lord Jesus “according to his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature...,” II Peter 1:3-4.

By faith we walk in the light. “In him was life; and the life was the light of men,” John 1:4. “That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world,” John 1:9. The holiness of God was in Old Testament times manifested to man in the form of light, as in the burning bush and the pillar of fire. Light is the visualization of holiness, purity, sinlessness according to the immutable will of God that reflects His love. St. John picked up the light theme, with which he began his Gospel, and used it in his first epistle, “This is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin,” I John 1:5-7. As children of the Light, we walk by the power of that Light in the light, but never perfectly because of the drag of the flesh. So it is that we always need the blood of Jesus Christ to cleanse us from lapses into darkness.

By faith we are free. This is a tremendous biblical concept, the implications of which can easily escape us. We would, therefore examine the New Testament use of this concept of freedom or liberty.

“Freedom” or “Liberty”

The Word of Our Lord: Our Lord said to the Jews that believed on Him: “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” Any truth frees or liberates to a certain extent, but our Lord wasn’t speaking of philosophical or historical or judicial or medical truth. No, He was speaking of THE TRUTH, the central, all-important Truth in the history of mankind. That Truth is that God has had mercy upon fallen and helpless mankind, that God did remain faithful to His promise to send His Son as the Messiah, that the Son did solve the human problem by entering the human race and fulfilling all demands of the law and by enduring the punishment prescribed by the law. This Truth, commonly called the gospel, frees or liberates.

This statement of our Lord that “the truth shall make you free,” presupposes that man is not born free, but rather born enslaved, bound in invisible chains. What is the nature of this invisible, escape-proof prison house into which we are born? We can learn to perceive the nature of our natural bondage by contrasting our first parents before and after the fall into sin. God created man in His own image. Thus man was a copy or an impress of God, not physically to be sure, but morally. Man reflected the eternal, immutable, moral will of God perfectly in his intellect, emotions and will. And he did that spontaneously, freely, unselfconsciously. Man was created to live in fellowship or communion with God. The relationship was one of complete and absolute trust, a Father-son relationship. Man was completely free, morally and spiritually, to love God and his fellowman. A marital conflict was impossible because love prevailed. As long as simple, wholehearted trust in God remained, nothing could mar the relationship between the Creator and His rational creatures. To put it otherwise and concisely: Man’s whole life and being was theocentric, that is, his life revolved about God, his Creator.

Then came the fall into sin and with it a complete change in man and his relationship to God. Man was no longer theocentric, but anthropocentric or egocentric. That is, man's whole being and life began to revolve about himself. Fellowship with God was replaced by alienation, childlike trust by doubt and fear, love by evasiveness, self-justification, and accusations which amounted to blasphemy. This is the nature of man that is passed down from "sire to son," as we sing in one of our hymns.

The result is that man is by nature born into and lives in a spiritual prison house that has no visible bonds or bars, but that holds each victim hopelessly chained unless the victim is liberated by a higher spiritual power. By nature man is unable to love God, but can only fear, curse, and condemn God. By nature man cannot break the chains of self-love to love others freely and unselfishly.

"The truth shall make you free." The Good News of full and free and unconditional pardon from the Judge of all flesh liberates, frees internally and spiritually. In the moment faith is created in a human heart by the power of the Holy Spirit the individual is liberated. He is freed to love his God and his fellowman—automatically, spontaneously, freely, unselfconsciously. What accounts for this liberation? This—that faith immediately changes the status of the individual from a slave to a son, replaces doubt and anxiety with trust, and restores communion and fellowship with God.

Now such freedom is not static, but dynamic. It is not a hiatus, a pause, but movement, the movement of love towards God and man. Faith worketh by love! It cannot but so work! It needs no prompting nor instruction. It simply loves. What an amazing release of spiritual power that is!

The liberated virgin Mary burst forth with the words of "The Magnificat." "My soul doth magnify the Lord"—spontaneous, free-flowing praise, released by the Spirit. Who could silence Zacharias after his tongue had been loosed? He could not but bless the Lord. Think of the jailer of Philippi—cold, hardened, calloused, unfeeling, unmerciful, rough and tough. But the moment he was brought to faith, he was liberated from those years of callousness to human suffering. Without instruction or prompting he poured forth his love upon Paul and Silas. Thus the Truth frees to love both God and one's neighbor.

Epistle to the Galatians: The Epistle to the Galatians has been called the "Magna Carta" of Christian liberty. Although the word, liberty, occurs only four times in the epistle, the entire letter is a development of the concept of liberty from the law of Moses.

After Paul had done the spadework in the Galatian cities, some false prophets followed after him, bringing "another gospel, which is not another," (1:6-7). These men suggested that the way to salvation was through Moses to Christ. They wanted all to be bound by the law of Moses, to which faith in Christ was to be added. Their formula would be "under the law" + faith in Jesus Christ = salvation, or Moses + Christ = salvation.

In refuting these people Paul referred to an incident which occurred fourteen years after his conversion. He had gone up to Jerusalem with Barnabas—taking Titus, a Greek, along with him. While there, Paul quite naturally conferred with the leaders of the church of Jerusalem. You recall that Paul had circumcised Timothy, but not Titus. On that occasion in Jerusalem some "false brethren" had been brought in "who came in privily to spy out our **liberty** which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage," (2:4). How did Paul react to this attempt to compel him to circumcise Titus, thus making Judaism the door through which the Gentiles must come into the Christian Church? Paul reports: "To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you," (2:5). The opposite of liberty is subjection or bondage. There is no compromise. The Old Testament believer was under bondage to the law—altogether, no exceptions. The New Testament believer is free from the law—altogether, without exception. He is free from the demands, threats, curses, controls of the law, the whole law, which was known and spoken of and recognized as one integrated whole. The law can make no positive contribution to reestablishing fellowship with God, since "a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ." So also in sanctification or the Christian life the law makes no positive contribution, but only a negative one in relation to the flesh.

In chapter 5 Paul begins exhortations in regard to the life of the believer. He exhorts: “Stand fast therefore in the **liberty** wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage,” So completely and irreconcilably opposite are liberty and bondage that yielding to but one demand of the law, circumcision, would make a person a debtor to the whole law and a lose of Christ.

In verse 13 Paul calls for the proper use of liberty in sanctification: “For, brethren, ye have been called unto **liberty**; only use not **liberty** for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.” Liberty is never to degenerate into license. Liberty is to be active by love which serves, and then Paul continues: “For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” On the surface this may seem confusing—as though after insisting that we are completely free from the law, Paul turns around and reimposes the law. What Paul is doing is distinguishing the permanent in the law of Moses from the temporary. He distinguished the moral law from the ceremonial and civil law of Moses. There is in the law of Moses a concise verbalization of God’s eternal, immutable will which governs man’s relations to God and his fellowman—in a word, love. This eternal, immutable moral will of God antecedes the law of Moses, formed the basis of that law, and succeeds it. It is identical in content, yet opposite as regards its relation to a child of God. The concepts of constraint, coercion, compulsion cannot be removed from the law of Moses, which applies only to the flesh. In contrast the law of God or the law of Christ is an expression of the free, liberated new life of faith, which works by love. Faith works by love, which is the fulfilling of the law. Note carefully that faith does not work through the law to produce love. That would be a violation of liberty. Paul was writing to Christians, whose new man was in constant tension with the flesh. He uses the words of the law as the holy will of God, but in a sense totally different than the preaching of the law.

Epistle to the Romans: St. Paul made his most systematic presentation of Christian doctrine in his letter to the Romans. He treats in order the law, the gospel, then the new life of the child of God. Chapters 6-8 bring us a thorough discussion of sanctification, the life in the Spirit.

Chapter 6 presents the Christian as free from sin. Paul expresses this liberty in a radical manner. He speaks of the child of God as being dead to sin. Remember that sin is spoken of as a personified power at work within the individual. But sin has no power or influence or control over a corpse. Sin cannot suggest an evil thought to a brain that is no longer functioning but is disintegrating. Sin cannot force a blasphemous word or just one more juicy bit of gossip through lips that have been sealed in death. Sin cannot cause an organ of the body to respond to its promptings by committing some evil act. A corpse is immune to the most furious assault of sin.

After presenting the glorious grace of forgiveness in Christ in contrast to the ruin brought into this world by Adam (chapter 5), Paul opens this chapter with a question: “What shall we then say? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?” As long as God has provided such an unlimited supply of grace, should we make profuse use of that grace by multiplying our sins? Paul answers with a swift “God forbid,” followed by a rhetorical question: “How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?” Through the creation of new life in us, we are dead to sin. Farther on in his presentation Paul uses his first imperative in his letter: “Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord,” v. 11. Notice that this is a kind of death that is actually life!

Moving on, Paul reexpresses the matter by using the paradoxical concepts of freedom and slavery. He writes: “Being then made **free** from sin, ye became **servants** of righteousness...For when ye were the **servants** of sin, ye were **free** from righteousness,” vv. 18 and 20. We have here a paradox: freedom is slavery, slavery is freedom, just as death is life. When the Spirit created new life in us and so freed us from sin, He didn’t leave us in a vacuum. He simultaneously enslaved us to righteousness. So freedom from sin is one side of the coin, slavery to righteousness the other side. Or we can put it this way: Freedom from sin manifests itself in the life of a Christian by slavery unto righteousness, which slavery is most willingly and eagerly embraced as the “yoke” of our Lord.

Chapter 7 pictures the child of God as free from the law. Paul used the illustration of marriage. When a woman’s husband dies, “she is free from the law” (v. 3), which binds her to her husband. Applying this to the

Christian Paul says that freedom from the law does not result in living lawlessly, but in being married to Christ. So again, liberty from the law does not breed license, for that same freedom makes the love, that the law demands, immanent in the faith-life of the Christian.

Chapter 8 pictures this new life of freedom from sin and slavery to righteousness, of freedom from the law and marriage unto Christ, as a life in and of and by the Spirit. “For the law (principle) of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me **free** from the law of sin and death,” v. 2. “The wages of sin is death.” Those few words hang over all mankind. No one escapes, as the daily death notices in all newspapers testify. Yet there is an escape from the dread power of sin, from the tyranny of the law which condemns and sentences to death. It is the life of the Spirit which in and through Christ Jesus frees us from the law of sin and death. That ultimate freedom is not only for man, but for all of God’s creation, which shall one day be delivered “from the bondage of corruption into the glorious **liberty** of the children of God,” v. 21.

What an amazing life the Spirit grants us—freedom from the seemingly invincible power of sin, freedom from the oppression of the law, and freedom from the consequences of both, death. Yet this same freedom produces righteousness, fulfills the law, and lives on to glory. What a glorious liberty this is, liberty to be what we were originally created to be—human images or reflections of our holy Creator-God.

II Corinthians 3:17: This verse appears in the section in which Paul refers to the veil of Moses, which symbolized the temporary nature of the law. The problem that Paul had was with Jews who insisted on making the law the permanent guidepost for or spiritual force over all men. What was the cure for this suicidal tendency towards law-mindedness? Paul wrote, “Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away,” v. 16.

And then follows our passage: “Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is **liberty**.” Paul isn’t identifying the Second and Third Persons of the Holy Trinity, but he is rather indicating that one cannot have the Lord without the Spirit. The two belong together and go together. Our Lord made that so very clear in His solemn words the night of His betrayal: “It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you,” John 16:7.

As inseparable as the Lord and the Spirit are, so inseparable are the Spirit and His gift of liberty: “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty!” What kind of liberty is Paul talking about? His entire discussion had revolved about the law. When He speaks of liberty, he cannot but be speaking of liberty from the law, which he had described as an instrument of death: “The letter killeth!” The law curbs, exposes sin, establishes a rigid rule of law which man cannot follow, and so kills. The concepts of condemnation, coercion, constraint, compulsion, and conformity cannot be separated from law. All this belongs to law—essentially and intrinsically, unavoidably and unalterably. So it is that the law has a straitjacket or handcuff effect. It was designed for rebels, for the unwilling. There is a heaviness, an oppression, and a weariness in the law. How can the sinner get out from under this burden? Here is the answer: “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty!”

What does such liberty imply in a positive sense? What direction does this liberty cause us to take? St. Paul indicates this in the verse following: “But we all with open (unveiled) face beholding (reflecting) as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of God,” What a tremendous thought! Paul had referred to the historical incident when the face of Moses shone, after he had been given the law, which glory—both of Moses’ face and the law—was temporary. In contrast all believers, not just one, reflect the glory of the Lord with unveiled faces, even as a mirror reflects light. But more! By turning to the Lord and thus being freed or liberated from the curse of the law, we are “metamorphosed,” that is, changed into the image or likeness of our Lord. That is a continuing process, “from glory to glory,” until it is completed when we are “metamorphosed” from “natural bodies” to “spiritual bodies.” All the spiritual energy, which causes us to radiate and reflect the glory of our Lord and become more and more like Him, comes from “the Lord the Spirit.”

Note carefully the intimate, inseparable connection between the Lord, the Spirit, and the gift of liberty. But notice also that the gift of the Lord and His Spirit is liberty, not license in the form of lawlessness. This gift of liberty has transforming power. Paul used this same thought and very same word when he wrote to the

Romans: “Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed (metamorphosed) by the renewing of your mind...,” Rom. 12:2. Writing to the Galatians he used the simple form of the verb: “My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be **formed** in you,” Gal. 4:19.

How does a person who reflects the glory of his Savior and who is being changed into the image of his Lord live? He trusts his Savior-God as his Savior clung to His Father on the cross. He hallows the Name of his Lord by prayer and witnessing. He treasures the Word of his Savior, as the Savior lived by that Word. He submits to human authority, giving “Caesar” his due. He values life, honors the divine institution of marriage, is concerned about the things of others, guards his tongue, and purifies his heart. In brief, he does what the law demanded, but could not compel to be done. He does what he could not do before his Savior and Sanctifier liberated him from invisible but very real chains so that he could make a beginning of freely loving God and his neighbor.

“Law”: What does St. James have in mind when he uses the expression, “the perfect law of liberty”? James 1:25. Did he make a slip? Impossible, for the Spirit of God was guiding both his mind and his pen. Nonetheless, it would seem as though James joined contradictory terms into a single expression. We associate, and that rightly, coercion and the loss of liberty with the concept “law.” It must be that James is not using “law” in the sense of a verbalization of the immutable moral will of God. And so it is. James uses “law” in the sense of a principle, as we speak of the “law” of gravity. Apples keep falling from trees; they don’t float away into the sky. So it becomes a “law” that they fall. So liberty has within itself a “law” that never changes. “Liberty” always connotes lack of restraint, freedom, absence of compulsion, spontaneity. To impress this concept on the mind James coined the expression, “the law of liberty,” thereby doubling the emphasis on “liberty.”

Moral Acts: Any moral deed must be freely done to have or possess any moral value. Constraint and compulsion destroy liberty and when applied to moral acts destroy their value as moral acts. If a child is compelled to be good by threat of punishment or promise of favors, there is no moral value in its good behavior. If a person obeys the speed laws only when he sees a patrol car in the rearview mirror, there is no moral value in that obedience. On the other side, a rape victim is guilty of neither fornication nor adultery because participation in the act was compelled. So also, only that which is freely thought, spoken, or done according to the will of God is morally good in His sight. Compelled obedience is a contradiction in terms.

The Primeval Test: This is why God put the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the Garden of Eden. God created man in His own image, which Scripture defines as the state of perfect holiness and righteousness in the knowledge of God. Putting it otherwise, God created man so that he was intellectually, emotionally, and volitionally in moral tune with his Creator. God created man *posse non peccare*, not *non posse peccare*, that is, able not to sin, not unable to sin. If God would have created man unable to sin, He would have created a worthless moral robot. It was in order to determine whether man would render free obedience that God gave the command not to eat. Had man passed that test, he would have been confirmed in his state of moral perfection.

The Law Constrains; The Spirit Frees! Sin caused the loss of moral freedom; man is now born into moral bondage. Sinning comes naturally for man; free moral acts presuppose a miracle in man. God’s law can in no way produce freely done moral deeds; it simply manifests man’s complete and total inability to live according to the will of God. So God sends His Spirit to liberate the individual so that he can freely and willingly do that which is morally good before God.

Examples: Such willingness is an amazing achievement, wrought in man through the Spirit. Consider this verse reporting the offering for the temple: “Then the people rejoiced, for they offered **willingly**, because with perfect heart they offered **willingly** to the Lord.” David reacted to this amazing moral achievement by exclaiming in prayer, “But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so **willingly** after this sort?” I Chron. 29:9, 14. What thrilled the people and amazed David was the working of “the law of liberty” in the

hearts of the people. One of the greatest messianic Psalms describes the New Testament believers in these words: “Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power,” Psalm 110:3.

Application: Think of what this means! If you attend Holy Communion because you think you “hafta,” lest you be classified as an “inactive member,” you need forgiveness for attending. If you give of your time or talent or money for the Lord’s work because you are shamed into it, desire honor or praise of men, feel it’s your duty, there is no moral value in what you do! If you pray from a sense of duty, your prayer is tainted! If you remain unstained by sin simply because circumstances prevented you from sinning, your purity has no moral value. We are to “look into the perfect law of liberty and continue therein,” so that our life, with divine forgiveness, has moral value in the sight of God.

By faith we keep the law. After revealing the impotence of the law to justify the sinner and after extolling faith as the way of justification, Paul concludes with a question, “Do we then make void the law through faith?” He denies any such thought vigorously with a “God forbid!” But then he continues with an astounding thought, “Yea, we establish the law,” Rom. 3:31. Faith establishes the law, confirms it, and so fulfills it. The law could not bring into existence the righteousness that it demands. What the law demands but was unable to produce the gospel achieves. “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit,” Rom. 8:3-4. Through faith the believer perceives God once more as the Giver of every good gift. Faith beholds God as the highest Treasure, the greatest Good, the Source of every blessing, the very present Help in every trouble, the Refuge and Fortress in all distress, Life in the midst of death, Salvation from condemnation. So it is that faith creates precisely that relationship towards God that the very first and chief commandment demands—that God be first in our lives. All obedience to the commandments flows from the proper relationship to God, the fear and love of God, which faith establishes in the heart.

Faith, working by love, solves moral problems. Think of Abraham, the father of believers. His faith moved him to obey the command to leave his homeland and take up residence in an unknown land. His faith moved him to give Lot the choice of the land, thereby showing loving concern for the welfare of his brother. His faith moved him to risk his life and the lives of the men of his household and his allies to rescue Lot, thereby showing loving concern for the life and limb of him whom he had every reason to consider as nothing more than an ingrate. His faith moved him to respond to the unreasonable command to sacrifice his son. At times his flesh did overpower his faith as when he acquiesced to Sarah’s solution for her barrenness by taking unto himself her maid and when in fear for his personal safety he exposed the honor of Sarah by passing her off as his sister. By faith Joseph withstood the charms of Potiphar’s wife and honored the marriage of his master. By faith Rahab risked her life to hide the spies. So faith solved moral problems centuries before God revealed the guidelines of His immutable moral will in the Ten Words from Sinai. For the will to love is the potential solution of all moral problems.

Faith, which by love fulfills the law, loves the law. How could it be otherwise? How could it not be that the believer loves and delights in the law which is the verbalized revelation of the same law that the Spirit of God has inscribed in his heart. The psalms are replete with such expressions of love for the law, both for the revelation of God’s plan of salvation and His moral precepts. The man of God is described as one whose “delight is in the law of the Lord,” Ps. 1:2. The statutes of the Lord are “more to be desired...than fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb,” Ps. 19:10. “How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth,” Ps. 119:103. “Therefore I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold,” Ps. 119:127. The entire 119th Psalm is a paean of praise for the law of the Lord. So also the epistles contain their hortatory sections which delight the believer and which are the object of his careful study and meditation,

for he sees in the exposition and application of the ethical will of his God a verbalization of that will of love that the Spirit has created and so implanted in his own heart.

Faith, which by love fulfills the law, also freely submits to the law. Mr. Christian is freed from the law, but that freedom is not complete unless it is freedom freely to submit to the law! Thus St. Paul circumcised Timothy, but refused to circumcise Titus. In order to defuse the charge of being a law-breaker St. Paul sponsored the purification rites of four Nazarites in the temple, Acts 21:21-26. So also, after systematically and conclusively exposing the weakness of the law in justifying and sanctifying the sinner and after revealing the temporary service of the law in the economy of God, in both his epistles to the Galatians and Romans, Paul feels completely free to use the language of the law to express the nature and direction of the new life of obedience of those who are led by the Spirit. Paul did not make the law a taboo. What he did do was to establish man's new relationship to the law—freedom from for the purpose of living freely according to the law of love which reflects the unchanging essence of our Savior-God.

Summing it up: Faith changes the relationship of the individual to his God from guilty to innocent, from at enmity to at peace; restores the trusting relationship of a child; functions inseparably with love; recreates the individual by establishing the will of God in his will; makes God the direct teacher of the Christian; is mighty by the power of the indwelling Spirit and Christ the Savior; reunites the individual with His God and so restores the image of God; causes the individual to walk in light; frees the individual from the spiritual power of sin, death, Satan, and the accusing and condemning law, thereby enabling him to serve the God of his salvation freely and willingly “in holiness and righteousness” all the days of his life, Luke 1:75; moves him by the power of the Spirit and the imputed righteousness of Christ to keep the law; works by love and so solves moral problems; loves the very law from which it has been freed and so freely submits to that law.

Life in the Spirit and Living that Life

Scripture teaches that the fall into sin has left mankind utterly and equally captive under sin so that no one has any spiritual power by nature that is capable of initiating or sustaining spiritual life. Scripture likewise teaches that the Word of God to man in the law was not given either to initiate or sustain spiritual life but rather to expose man in his sin, uncover him to the wrath of God, and so kill him. Scripture likewise teaches that the sole source of spiritual life is the gospel, the history of what God has wrought in sending His Son to earth to rescue mankind from the prison house of his own sin and guilt. We are justified, reconciled, sanctified, and preserved in faith alone by the power of the Spirit, who works all these blessings in us by the power inherent in the gospel of our Savior-God's mighty acts in history for our salvation. Through faith the Spirit gives us the righteousness of Christ that serves as a protective shield from the ever accusing and condemning law. For we have been redeemed from the law, Gal. 3:13. There is now no condemnation of the law against us, Rom. 8:1. The power of the law which made sin strong against us has been broken by the victory of our Champion, I Cor. 15:56-57. The Spirit always and ever directs us to Christ, not to Moses, not to Himself, and not to ourselves, for in Christ we have both the imputed righteousness and the source of strength for the righteousness of life. So it is “that no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord,” I Cor. 1:29-30.

We are to treasure above all things the new life of faith that the Spirit has created within us. We are to live that life. But when we consider our own faith life, we find that there is a gap between what we are by the power of the Spirit and how we actually do live, between the gift given us and our performance, between our being and our acting, our willing and doing. The experience of St. Paul in finding such a performance failure when measuring his performance by his will to perform is the experience of all of us. Our Lord taught us to pray that His Father's will be done among us. Our lives are a struggle to submit our wills to the will of our Savior-God in all things, whether that be taking our reason captive under the Word, walking in the paths of

righteousness, or submitting to a cross. The contrast, however, always remains between what a Christian is or has been made by the power of God's grace and his acting or living accordingly. The Spirit of God does not create moral robots. As little as the creation of faith is an act of violence upon the personality of the individual, so little is his subsequent faith life a matter of coercion or compulsion by the Spirit. The Spirit ever leads; He never drives. He ever leads and enables the Christian to make successive decisions by which the Christian willingly submits his will to the will of his God.

How are these things expressed in Scripture? We find that the Holy Spirit used the indicative to express what the Christian is or has been made by the Spirit's power and some form of the imperative to indicate how the Christian should act according to his new nature. In the Sermon on the Mount our Lord told His disciples, "Ye are the light of the world." They were not that naturally but had been made lights by Him through the power of the Spirit. Yet they were not made mechanical lights to be but switched on and left burning. No, they were to act out and so live their new nature. So our Lord added the imperative, "Let your light so shine before men," Matt. 5:14 and 16. So also He said, "Ye are the salt of the earth." That's what I've made you; now function accordingly! In this instance the imperative is implied in the threat of being cast out if the individual fails to function as salt, Matt. 5:13. The tension is between what we have, by the grace of God, been made and our calling and responsibility to exercise ourselves in that gift. Faith is a gift of the Spirit, yet we are called upon to believe, as was Jairus: "Be not afraid, only believe!" Mark 5:36. To His disciples our Lord said, "Ye believe in God, believe also in me," John 14:1.

In that same night of His betrayal our Lord used an example from nature to convey to His disciples what newness had been created in them and what potential they thereby had: "I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit," John 15:5. Faith in Christ cannot but manifest itself in love, which exercises itself in acts of worship of God and service to man. This is not by conscious design, but by inner necessity. It is not contrived, but spontaneous. Faith and love are the inner and outer sides of the same spiritual life. Love is never an afterthought of faith, but rather the moment faith is kindled it spontaneously manifests itself in love that acts. So we see in numerous biblical examples: the woman in Simon's house, Mary of Bethany, Zacchaeus of Jericho, the malefactor on the right, the jailer of Philippi. Luther loved to use illustrations from nature to picture the spontaneous production of works by faith. Fruit trees need neither instruction nor compulsion to bear fruit; they just do!

In Article IV: Of Good Works the Formula of Concord quotes from Luther's Preface to St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans (Triglotta, page 941) as follows:

Thus faith is a divine work in us, that changes us and regenerates us of God, and puts to death the old Adam, makes us entirely different men in heart, spirit, mind, and all powers, and brings with it the Holy Ghost. Oh, it is a living, busy, active, powerful thing that we have in faith, so that it is impossible for it not to do good without ceasing. Nor does it ask whether good works are to be done; but before the question is asked, it has wrought them, and is always engaged in doing them. But he who does not do such works is void of faith, and gropes and looks about after faith and good works, and knows neither what faith nor what good works are, yet babbles and prates with many words concerning faith and good works. (Justifying) faith is a living, bold trust in God's grace, so certain that a man would die a thousand times for it (rather than suffer this trust to be wrested from him). And this trust and knowledge of divine grace renders joyful, fearless, and cheerful towards God and all creatures, which (joy and cheerfulness) the Holy Ghost works through faith; and on account of this, man becomes ready and cheerful, without coercion, to do good to every one, to serve every one, and to suffer everything for love and praise to God, who has conferred this grace on him, so that it is impossible to separate works from faith, yea, just as impossible as it is for heat and light to be separated from fire.

However, our Lord did not let the matter rest with a simple positive declaration of the new relationship between Him and His disciples that gave them the potential to bear fruit. Bearing fruit would be completely

spontaneous were it not for the fact that there remains within the Christian an obstacle to his acting upon the basis of what he has been made. So the Christian is ever and again called upon to act on the basis of the potential given him; he is responsible for the gift given. Accordingly we find our Lord continuing, after He had spoken of the imagery of the vine, the branch, and the fruit, with a commandment: "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you," John 15:12. And again: "These things I command you, that ye love one another," John 15:17. Our Lord called for acts of love in the lives of His own. Translate into deeds the spiritual power given you. Let no one imagine that our Lord turned into a second Moses or a New Lawgiver in these last hours before His passion, for what He commands He gives. But let no one also imagine that he can with impunity fail to use the gift given, for the Lord who gives had something against the church at Ephesus, "because thou hast left thy first love," Rev. 2:4.

We find that the apostles likewise used the indicative to name the divine power active in the Christian and the imperative to indicate the Christian's responsibility for making use of that power. So Paul wrote to the Philippians: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure," Phil. 2:13. The power is given, but it doesn't work mechanically; the will of the Christian is enlisted. So also St. John wrote in his first epistle, "We love the brethren," 3:14. He could have written, "We cannot but love the brethren, for we have been recreated by God to love the brethren." Loving the brethren is a spontaneous, natural attitude of the heart for one who has been taught by the Spirit of God to trust the forgiveness which comes from God's love in Christ Jesus. Yet John also used a form of the imperative, "For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, 3:11 Thus Christians are enjoined to do the very thing that they were recreated to do naturally and spontaneously. Why? Because there is within the Christian that which impedes his doing what comes naturally.

In this connection we do well to remind ourselves that the fall in Paradise was occasioned by the failure to make use of or act on the basis of the image of God in which man was created. When our first parents failed to use their ability not to sin or their ability to worship God in the obedience of faith, they lost that ability.

The question arises as to the nature of the commands to act on the basis of what we are or have become by the power of the Spirit, that is, to carry out the assignment implied in the gift of the Spirit. In the Scriptures God gives both law and gospel commands. There is a third group that have the content of the law but are made with the creative, impelling power of the gospel. Law commands are demands upon natural man or the Christian, insofar as he is flesh, that he perform moral deeds that he is not capable of performing, except outwardly. Such commands simply demand without supplying the spiritual energy necessary for complying. The ten commandments or the summary thereof, the command to love God and one's neighbor, are such law commands when directed to natural man or the flesh of the Christian. Compliance is impossible since there is no source of energy to comply in the law. However, in gospel commands the creative power of the God of all grace accompanies the command and effects in us precisely what God wills in the command. For example, when the imperative is given, "Repent and believe the gospel," the creative power of God achieves the conversion of the sinner. If this distinction between moral commands that man cannot respond to and moral commands that are accompanied by the creative power of God to effect what is commanded is ignored, the result is synergism that errs in assuming that because God commands, man must be able to respond to that command. A second error that follows from the failure to keep this distinction in mind is the conversion of the gospel into a new law, Christ from Savior to Lawgiver.

All commands of God, whose aim in accordance with the eternal decree of God before the foundation of the world is to change the relationship between God and the person to whom the command is directed, are not imperatives of the law directed to man's natural ability and strength in spiritual matters, which is in fact nonexistent, but rather commands that contain within themselves the creative will of God to effect what is commanded. When ethical commands to love God and one's neighbor are directed to natural man, they incite rebellion and reveal sin or produce hypocrisy. But when these same commands are directed to persons who have within them that creation of the Holy Spirit, the new man, who unfailingly wills to do the will of God, those commands do not have the intention that the flesh do the impossible, but rather that the new man do what he is capable of doing by the Spirit's power, Thus the same command is law to the flesh, but a gospel-

implemented exhortation to the new man. When this is understood, one can perceive the meaning of Paul's words to Timothy: "The law was not made for a righteous man," I Tim. 1:9.

This is also the key for understanding all the many ethical imperatives directed to believers. Thus St. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." Our sanctification is not but a pious wish on the part of God. Behind that will for our sanctification is the eternal decree of our election by our God, "who worketh all things after the counsel of his will," Eph. 1:11. We are to understand "what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power," Eph. 1:19. We are to realize always that it is the will of our God who "worketh all in all," I Cor. 12:6. God willed the sanctification of the Thessalonians, as He from eternity wills the sanctification of all believers, of all His elect. Accordingly, God wasn't demanding of the Thessalonians that they do what by nature they were incapable of doing, but that they do by the power of His Spirit what they were empowered to do. Paul continues by spelling out to these believers, who were influenced by the spirit of the times as are all believers, the nature of sanctified living in specific instances, the proper relationship of the male to the female outside of and inside marriage and the curbing of greed. "For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness." When he continues on to brotherly love, what is there to say since the moment they were brought to faith, love of the brethren was created within their hearts. "Ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another." The entire encouragement is not on the level of the law, which under penalty of death or promise of life, demands what the sinner cannot produce and so ever accuses and condemns. That is behind, yet always present in the background. How so? Because the Christian has been created by the Spirit of God to love and is urged to love by commands which carry with them the divine creative energy to love, yet because of his flesh he never fully succeeds in "possessing his vessel in sanctification and honor" or in rooting out innate greed and covetousness. Thus behind the ethical commands, appealing in the power of the Spirit to the new man to put into action by the power of God what he has been created to do, stands the immovable law, ever accusing and condemning and thus driving the Christian back to the protective shield of Christian's righteousness for the reassurance of forgiveness and for renewed strength to try once again to live in righteousness. So we sing: "Be of sin the double cure, Cleanse me from its guilt and power."

The difference between the ethical commands directed to natural man or the flesh of the Christian and ethical commands directed to the regenerate, insofar as he is new man, can be observed in Peter's use of the summary demand of the law, "Be ye holy; for I am holy," I Peter 1:16. That command originally gave the character and name to one particular section of the Torah, the Holiness Code, as found in Leviticus 19 and 20, as well as elsewhere. As the Holiness Code is expounded in individual commandments and statutes, it is accompanied by the threat of death, "that soul shall be cut off from among his people," 19:8. The law of retaliation is inseparably connected with the expounding of what it means to be holy unto the Lord, for example: "The soul that turneth after such as have familiar spirits, and after wizards, to go a whoring after them, I will even set my face against that soul, and will cut him off from among his people," 20:6.

The use of the same words, the command to be holy, by Peter is a contrast that reveals the difference between law commands and gospel-implemented commands. The same command is given, but in the former instance as a demand under penalty of death for failing to comply. In the case of Peter's use the command is made to those who have been made capable of complying by the creative power of God and the forgiving grace of Christ, who in effect bids His new creations act according to that they have been created to be and who are promised that divine forgiveness will cover their failures along the way. Peter begins by calling the strangers the "elect," the beneficiaries of God's eternal love, which also bestows sanctification. He continues by showing how that eternal decree had become fact and reality in their lives through regeneration and the continuing operation of the power of God. What a future they have—looking forward to "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away," v. 4. Surely their day to day life should reflect their future glory! "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation: Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy," vv. 14-16. And what follows after this encouragement? The

beautiful passage of our being redeemed not “with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers: But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot,” vv. 18-19. The gospel-implementation is always the past, present or future grace of God in Christ Jesus, our Savior. Are we to understand that Peter interrupts this beautiful gospel passage with an interjection of the law to make sure the desired behavior would be forthcoming, as though the law were capable of so assisting the believer? Are we to believe that the scattered strangers needed information from the law and direction for godly living? That ignores the fact that love, which is the fulfillment of the call for holiness, is concreated with faith. What was needed was the encouragement to act in life according to the principle of love to which they were chosen from eternity and called in time. This comes in the form of a gospel-implemented command directed to the Christian, insofar as he is new man, while at the same time remaining a rebuke to the flesh. As a gospel-implemented command it is given to reborn people who are capable of complying with the command and who through the command are stimulated and enabled to act upon the command and so continue in complying. But why is the command necessary? Because, though we have been created anew, made new creatures, given the Spirit, and so are led by the Spirit, we are not and will never in this life be wholly new. The flesh is ever active, hindering our acting upon and commensurate with what we are by the power of the Spirit. Therefore the commands are given and with them the spiritual energy to respond with the action requested in the command. The content and form are from the law, the strength and energy and will to comply from the gospel.

We find that our Confessions likewise faithfully reflect what is naturally to be expected from a Christian and what must be according to the grace given. Article VI: Of New Obedience of the Augsburg Confession (Triglotta, p. 45) reads:

Also they teach that this faith is bound to bring forth good fruits, and that it is necessary to do good works commanded by God, because of God’s will, but that we should not rely on those works to merit justification before God.

The German original, reads:

Auch wird gelehrt, dasz solcher Glaube gute Früchte und gute Werke bringen soll, und dasz man müsse gute Werke tun, allerlei, so Gott geboten hat, um Gottes willen, doch nicht auf solche Werke zu vertrauen, dadurch Gnade vor Gott zu verdienen.

The above development is what is generally called “evangelical admonition.” This is a concept which, considered superficially, appears to be a mixing of law and gospel. It is, however, an application of both law and gospel, unmixed with each retaining its distinctive characteristics, to Mr. Christian, who is and remains both flesh and new man. Evangelical admonition or encouragement is directed to Mr. Christian, the need for such admonition or encouragement being due to the flesh and the response coming from the new man by the power of the gospel. If Mr. Christian were not encumbered with the flesh but were completely renewed, there would be no need of evangelical admonition, which is the evangelical application of the law as the verbalization of the eternal immutable moral will of God.

Article VI of the Formula of Concord expresses this ideal, but never real, situation as follows:

And, indeed, if the believing and elect children of God were completely renewed in this life by the indwelling 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, the moon, and all the constellations of heaven have their regular course of themselves, unobstructed, without admonition, urging, driving, force, or compulsion, according to the order of God which God

once appointed for them, yea, just as the holy angels render an entirely voluntary obedience. Triglotta, pp. 963-965.

The content of evangelical admonition is always an expression of application of the call for love Godward and manward, that is, a reflection of the immutable will of God who revealed it and so verbalized it in the Ten Words, the Decalog, the moral law, the commandment, or however it is named. As such, it invariably and unfailingly finds a favorable response in the Christian according to his new man, for the Christian delights in the law of God after the inner man and has had that law written in his heart by the Spirit of God from the moment of his new birth. The Christian, insofar as he is new man, characteristically meditates upon the law of the Lord, seeking its application to every new situation and relationship in life.

The form of the evangelical admonition is the imperative. The command or exhortation is directed to Mr. Christian, insofar as he is new man, but not because of any deficiency or lack or need on the part of the new man, but always and ever because the flesh stonewalls every such exhortation or admonition and so prevents the new man from acting according to his nature of willing to love in every situation and relationship.

When the immutable will of God is thus brought to bear upon Mr. Christian, providing him with a guide for his life of new obedience, the necessity for such a guide can only arise from the flesh since the new man has no need of a guide, but is by the Spirit's power a guide unto himself. In all cases of applying the call to love to specific situations or relationships, the flesh stonewalls with rationalizations, extenuating circumstances, excuses, and what not. Think of how feverishly active the flesh of Peter must have been, as he frantically tried to rationalize his repeated denials of his Lord in the courtyard of the high priest. So the flesh operates, always trying to foist its own rules for living upon the Christian, always creating its own forms of worship. It is this corporate activity of the flesh, stimulated by Satan himself, that characterizes the Great Antichrist, the Papacy, as foretold in II Thess. 2:4. A goodly part of Luther's work was devoted to applying the law of God to matters of worship and morals to clear away the accumulated rubbish of the church's self-chosen worship and self-instituted holy works.

Article VI of the Formula of Concord also scores this point:

So, too, this doctrine of the Law is needful for believers, in order that they may not hit upon a holiness and devotion of their own, and under the pretext of the Spirit of God set up a self-chosen worship, without God's Word and command, as it is written Deut. 12, 8.28.32: "Ye shall not do...every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes," etc., but "observe and hear all these words which I command thee. Thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish therefrom."

Triglotta, p. 969.

Despite the fact that the evangelical commands, exhortations, admonitions, and encouragements find an immediate, positive response in the new man and are backed by the creative power of the Holy Spirit, yet the response of Mr. Christian never corresponds to the command. We are urged to love our enemies, be holy, love our wives as our own bodies, be kind to one another, tenderhearted, and forgiving, seek first the Kingdom of God, and so on and on and on. The new man within instinctively, automatically, spontaneously, joyously responds with a "Yes" to each exhortation. The Spirit backs each such exhortation with another thrust of creative power. But the results never measure up to that which is exhorted. It is always but an imperfect beginning. The flesh without fail frustrates the effort. There remains a gap between the willing and the performance. And so it is that each and every such use of the content and form of the law, though empowered by the gospel, keeps on revealing how far we fall short, with our very best efforts, of the standard of love Godward and manward that the law demands. Thus the accusing and condemning power of the law is ever at work, demonstrating ever and again that "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags," Is. 64:6, and that all flesh, yea "all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it; surely the people (the very people of God) is grass," Is. 40:7. This is the theological or

“schoolmaster” use of the law that boxes us in and reveals that there is no escape from our own utter vileness and guilt.

Article VI of the Formula of Concord expresses this function of the law in this way:

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, as in a mirror, that in this life they are still imperfect and impure in us, so that we must say with the beloved Paul, I Cor. 4,4: “I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified.” Triglotta, p. 969.

We are not to think of the several uses of the law as so many pigeonholes into which various Bible passages are to be placed. It is the nature of law, any law, be that the “No, no” of a mother to her child or the statute books of the state, or the law of God to restrain and guide, thereby to reveal transgressions, and so either to accuse and condemn or commend. When we speak of uses of the law, we are speaking of the application of the law to people, whose relationship to the law differs. The first or civic use of the law is God’s enforcement arm to maintain outward law and order on earth. It is to be administered through His left hand, as Luther was wont to put it, that is, through the government. Its use is to curb the lawless, as Paul states in I Tim. 1:9-10, also Mr. Christian, inasmuch as he is flesh. The second use of the law, which is and ever will remain its principal and proper use, is to accuse and condemn—relentlessly, mercilessly, always baring the sinner to divine inspection in the light of the holiness of God and so exposing him to the fury of God’s wrath. This use of the law applies to the unregenerate and the regenerate also, inasmuch as he is flesh. The third use applies only to the regenerate, who remain until death of a dual nature with the flesh ever contending against the new man. The law appears as the divine standard according to which the new man constrains, coerces, and compels the flesh to conform outwardly to the divine norm for worship and morals. As far as the new man is concerned, the law appears as a verbal reflection of his own nature—that of love to God and man. The third use or function of the law is not independent of the second, for wherever the divine standard of love is raised in any form or application, it cannot but condemn Mr. Christian for his failure to think, speak, and act according to it. Article VI of the Formula of Concord bears witness to this interrelationship of the law in its several uses.

Reducing this to thesis form, the truths involved can be stated in this way: **The law in all its uses—as curb, mirror, and rule—applies to the Christian only inasmuch as he is flesh. Inasmuch as the Christian is new man, the law in all its uses—as curb, mirror, and rule—does not apply.**

Insert: “The Law Accuses.”

Always, but not Only: In the foregoing presentation the fact that the law **always** accuses was demonstrated. However, the question has arisen as to whether the law **only** accuses, that is, whether its exclusive function is to accuse. Both Scripture and the Confessions say “Yes” to the **always**, but “No” to the **only**.

Scripture: When Paul wrote to Timothy (I, 1:9-10) that the law is for the lawless and disobedient, he was teaching the curbing effect of the law upon the lawless and the Christian, inasmuch as he is flesh. When the law cries “Halt” to anyone who insists on doing the forbidden or leaving the commanded undone, it curbs the coarse outbursts of sin and simultaneously accuses the doer or the one who leaves undone. When the law, Rom. 3:20 and 7:7, brings the sinner to the personal knowledge that he has sinned, it functions as a mirror, but again simultaneously accuses the sinner. When the law serves as a guide or a map to the Christian, because of his flesh, Ps. 119:9, it again simultaneously accuses him, for if there were no deviation from the law in the new life of the Christian, there would be no need whatever for a guide or a rule. So it

is that when the law functions as curb, mirror, and rule, it **always** accuses and condemns. To say that the law **only** accuses would be to deny the functions evident in the passages cited.

Smalcald Articles: In The Smalcald Articles, Part III, Article II “Of the Law,” Luther spelled out the curb and mirror uses of the law, as follows:

Here we hold that the Law was given by God, first, to restrain sin by threats and the dread of punishment, and by the promise and offer of grace and benefit. But all this miscarried on account of the wickedness which sin has wrought in man. For thereby a part were rendered worse, those, namely, who are hostile to the Law, because it forbids what they like to do, and enjoins what they do not like to do. Therefore, wherever they can escape punishment, they do more against the Law than before. These, then, are the rude and wicked men, who do evil wherever they have the opportunity.

The rest become blind and arrogant, and conceive the opinion that they observe and can observe the Law by their own powers, as has been said above concerning the scholastic theologians; thence come the hypocrites and false saints.

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 utterly corrupted; as the Law must tell man that he has no God nor regards God, and worships other gods, a matter which before and without the Law he would not have believed. 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, etc. This is what Paul says, Rom. 4,15: *The Law worketh wrath.* And Rom. 5,20: *Sin is increased by the Law.*

The Formula of Concord Epitome—Article VI: After the death of Luther a controversy developed over the so-called “third use of the law.” The Epitome defines the three uses of the law as follows:

Since the Law was given to men for three reasons: first, that thereby outward discipline might be maintained against wild, disobedient men; secondly, that men thereby may be led to the knowledge of their sins; thirdly, that after they are regenerate and the flesh notwithstanding cleaves to them, they might on this account have a fixed rule according to which they are to regulate and direct their whole life, a dissension was occurred between some theologians concerning the third use of the Law, namely, whether it is to be urged or not upon regenerate Christians. The one side has said, Yea; the other, Nay. Triglotta, p. 805.

Summary: When you combine the three uses of the law, as taught in the passages cited and as confessed in Article VI of the Formula of Concord with Melancton’s “The Law always accuses” in the Apology, Article IV, as Scripture consistently teaches, you arrive at the truth that the law **always**, but not **only** accuses.

Insert: “Sanctification.”

Work of God: Sanctification, that is, the work of making the unholy holy, the unrighteous righteous, the ungodly godly, the sin-prone sin-free, the dying living, is from beginning to end the work of God, in no way the work of man. Man is the object of the sanctifying work of God; there is no such thing as self-sanctification. Scripture knows of no do-it-yourself-sanctification.

From Eternity to Eternity: God began the work of sanctifying us when He chose or elected us unto salvation, for our sanctification was and is the divinely ordained way by which the decree of election is carried out here in time. The holy apostles trace the origin of our sanctification back to eternity:

We are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation **through sanctification of the Spirit** and belief of the truth. II Thess. 2:13.

Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, **through sanctification of the Spirit**, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. I Peter 1:2.

“Sanctification” is used in these passages in the wide sense, including everything that the Spirit of God does from snatching us from the power of sin to remaking us sin-free in the world to come. This would include what we commonly call conversion, justification, renewal, sanctification in the narrow sense, that is, the doing of good works, preservation in the faith, the granting of a blessed end, the resurrection of the body, and the bestowal of glory everlasting. All of this was given unto us already in eternity in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, for we were elected or chosen unto salvation “through sanctification of the Spirit.”

God puts His eternal decree of election into effect in the case of each individual the moment that person is called to faith by the gospel through the power of the Spirit. The working of faith, which is basic for and the basis of all sanctification, is entirely the work of God. Our Lord said, “This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.” John 6:29. In the intra-trinitarian economy it is the Holy Spirit who has been given the responsibility for sanctification. So Paul wrote to the Corinthians: “No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.” I Cor.12:3.

The moment faith is kindled the person is justified, for “a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.” Rom. 3:28. In that same moment he is renewed. “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.” II Cor3 5:17. His renewal manifests itself in a daily putting “off...the old man” and putting “on the new man.” Eph. 4:24. That, in turn, manifests itself in the doing of good works, “for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” Eph. 2:10.

God’s Work in Man: Sanctification in the wide sense includes the total activity of the Spirit of God for and in man, but sanctification in the narrow sense, that is, renewal which manifests itself in the doing of good works, is the work of the Spirit in man. When the Spirit justifies a person, He creates faith in Jesus Christ in the heart of that person and thereby gives him the righteousness of Christ. That righteousness, which is foreign, alien, and outside of man, is imputed or credited or accounted to man. Even as the sin of Adam is imputed to man, so the righteousness of Christ is imputed to man by the faith that the Spirit of God works. But sanctification in the narrow sense is the work of the Spirit within man. It consists in this that the Spirit creates something new in man, faith, “the inward man.” That something is not an equal or an associate but rather an agent of the Spirit of God. St. Paul calls believers “laborers together with God” (I Cor. 3:9) and “workers together with him” (II Cor. 6:1), but these terms are not to be understood as a team of horses of equal strength pulling a load, but of One supplying the spiritual power and graciously using the other as His agent, for it is always “God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” Phil. 2:13.

The Law—The Norm of Good Works: God works in the Christian both the willing and the doing of His good pleasure. What is the norm for His good pleasure? It is simply the law of God. Our Lord warned against “teaching for doctrines the commandments of men,” Matt. 15:9. But it is not the law, as given in its entirety to Moses, that is the norm because the ceremonial features of the law have been specifically disavowed in the New Testament (Col. 2:16-17) and the

political laws fell with the dissolution of the Jewish State. What remains is what is called the moral law, which is simply the basic moral will of God, which demands love Godward and manward. If the Christian were entirely and perfectly renewed in this life, he would have no need of an external norm for doing good works, for the law is inscribed in his heart by the power of the gospel. Because his flesh constantly is active sabotaging the new man, the law is necessary as a norm lest the Christian become guilty of self-chosen works or “will worship,” Col. 2:23. Luther’s “Treatise on Good Works” (Luther’s Works, Vol. 44, pp. 21-114) is an excellent example of using the law in this way.

The Implementation—The Gospel: The law prescribes, but is unable to implement or produce. It remains forever true of all Christians that to will is present, but how to perform is lacking (Rom. 7:18). The spiritual energy to do anything good in the sight of God must come from without the Christian, from the God of all grace. The source of this spiritual energy is the God of all grace, who elected us unto sanctification. When Paul wrote to the Thessalonians (I, 4:3) that “this is the will of God, even your sanctification,” he was referring to the gracious, good will of God that chose them already in eternity unto salvation through sanctification. The Spirit of God puts that will of God into effect when He calls persons out of the darkness of sin and guilt into the light of forgiveness. In that instant the person is renewed, becomes a new person, receives the law written in his heart, receives the gift of the new man whose every thought, emotion and expression of will corresponds perfectly with the immutable, ethical will of God that demands love Godward and manward. Once the Spirit has created the new man, He does not abandon him, but supplies continuing energy so that the Christian continues to will and to do His good pleasure, Phil 2:13.

Gospel-Implemented Commands: Scripture is full of them. Their content is the law; their implementation comes from the gospel. They are directed to the Christian, who needs such commands because of his flesh, but who can respond only because of the new man who is created and sustained by the gospel. “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness” (Matt. 6:33) is such a command from our Lord urging life according to the first table of the law. “Be ye kind to one another” (Eph. 4:32) is such a command of Paul, urging the second table of the law upon the Ephesians. In such commands the exhortation is to live in love Godward and manward, which is impossible for natural man, but possible for the gospel-created man.

Our Works—Always Imperfect, Perfect Only in Christ: Whatever good the Christian does is the product of the gospel working in him by the power of the Holy Spirit. His flesh, without fail, puts its imprint on all the good works of a Christian. So it is that the Christian also sins in the performance of good works. How then can such works be called good? They are good only because they are covered with the shield of Christ’s righteousness. We make an offering unto the Lord, but thoughts of reluctance, censure of others, self-satisfaction accompany our offering. The blood of Christ must wash those stains away; the righteousness of Christ must cover that unrighteousness. We need to pray, “And forgive us our trespasses,” also when we do our good works.

Imputed Righteousness, Inherent Righteousness: We become Christians when the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us. In that moment we are renewed. We begin to live a life of new obedience, doing works of righteousness, but never perfectly. Daily the righteousness of Christ, which is ours by faith, covers our unrighteousness and impels us to live in righteousness. In this way we are daily sanctified.

Special Facets

I. Terminology: Will of God, Law, and Commandment.

Paul's most extensive and intensive discussions of the law are to be found in his letters to the Galatians and Romans. In both epistles he most decisively places the law in antithesis to the gospel. The law is negative, unable to produce righteousness or sanctification or life, but ever and only accusing and condemning and so provoking the wrath of God and bringing death to the sinner. But in each epistle, after having exposed the law as the death of the sinner, Paul continues by using language from the law in his exhortations to the righteousness of life. He urges the Galatians that they should "by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," 5:13-14. So also in Romans, after he had systematically and conclusively disavowed the law as instrumental either for righteousness or the new life, he urges: "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law." Then follows a citing of the commandments of the second table of the law with the summary of loving the neighbor as one's self, and a repeating of the fact that "love is the fulfilling of the law," Rom, 13:8-10.

We might well ask, "What's going on here"? Is Paul contradicting himself? How can he so emphatically disavow the law in the area of producing a righteousness that will stand before God and in creating the righteousness of life and then turn right around and quote from the law in urging the life of new obedience?

We observe that in using the term law in the paranetic sections of his epistles St. Paul uses the content of the law, which is always love Godward and manward, and the form of the law, which is the imperative, but without the distinctive characteristics of demand, threat, and condemnation that characterize the law in its antithesis to the gospel. and that are inherent in it as given by Moses, and—be it noted—that are never completely absent. What accounts for this change? When the protective shield of the righteousness of Christ is cast over the believer, he is shielded from the accusing force of the law. He has been redeemed from the curse of the law. The Spirit of God indicates that fact by the terms He caused the holy writers to use.

We observe the amazing use of the term, "the law of Christ," shortly after Paul has said, "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace," Gal. 5:3. Then in 6:2, Paul exhorts, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." Lovingly restoring someone who has been overtaken in a fault is fulfilling the law of Christ. Is Paul utterly contradicting himself by making Christ a new Lawgiver? God forbid! But the question persists: "What is the relationship between the 'law of Moses' and the 'law of Christ'?" In the ninth chapter of his first letter to the Corinthians Paul was speaking of his love for all men and his adapting himself to their conditions in the free use of his liberty that he might gain some. He wrote, "Unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are without the law, as without the law." He then inserts a parenthetical statement: "being not without law to God (*ἀνομος θεοῦ*), but under the law to Christ (*ἐννομος Χριστοῦ*)." What is the difference between "the law" or the "law of Moses" and the "law of Christ"? The content (love) and the form (imperative) are the same, but the spirit is entirely different. For the former appears in an adversary relationship to the sinner, as the imposition of a foreign, hostile will upon a rebellious subject, the latter as a harmonious relationship—the law of Christ finding its reflection in the soul life of the sinner become saint in whose heart the law of God has been written by the Spirit of God.

Three times Paul uses the expression, "law of God." The phrase appears twice in the seventh chapter, where the duality of the Christian is bared. After confessing the conflict and contrast between his will and his performance, Paul makes the statement, "For I delight in the law of God after the inward man," 7:32. In his final summary statement Paul says, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin," 7:25. In both instances the substitution of "the law," which always means the law of Moses, for the law of God would have created an emotional dissonance, for after having exposed the law as accusing and condemning mankind, working God's wrath upon the sinner, exposing the true nature of sin as rebellion, and so effecting the death of the sinner, it would have come as a jar to delight

in and serve that same law. Continuing in chapter eight Paul scores the antithesis between the Spirit and the law. The Spirit succeeds where the law fails. But this success does not change the fact that flesh remains flesh ever, at enmity against God and “not subject to the law of God,” 8:7. It would appear that with the term “law of God” Paul is pointing to the eternal content of the immutable will of God in contrast to its revelation in the law that functions, because of sin, as the accuser and condemner and so executioner of the sinner. Again, the protective shield of the righteousness of Christ tempers the terms used by Paul.

When the apostles speak of the new life of obedience in the regenerate, they use terms other than the law, namely the will of God, sanctification, and the commandment. We have observed the change in Paul’s terminology in both Galatians and Romans. When Paul urges sanctified living upon the Romans, he sums up the whole of that life as “proving what is the will of God,” 12:2. In Colossians Paul assures his readers that he has been praying “that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding,” 1:9. There is no mention of the law in either of the letters to the Thessalonians. When Paul urges Christian living, he urges putting into action the gracious will of God, “for this is the will of God, even your sanctification,” I, 4:3. Sanctification is living in the holiness of love Godward and manward. Amidst the individual exhortations in chapter five Paul refers to the will of God that reflects His nature of love: “In every thing giving thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you,” 5:18. There is no reference to the law in II Corinthians. In Ephesians the law appears once as “the law of commandments in ordinances,” 2:15, which has been abolished.

In first Peter the term “law” is completely lacking, Peter repeatedly referring to the “will of God,” for example: “For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men,” 2:15, and Christ suffered that he, the one for whom Christ suffered, “no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to .the lusts of men, but to the will of God,” 4:2.

The book of James has two unusual phrases, “the royal law,” 2:8 and “the perfect law of liberty,” 1:25, The former describes the law of love as coming from the King whose king-subjects have received power to live royally in love. They have been saved by their King to live as kings under their King and to serve Him in works of love The latter is a play on words, a paradox, that reminds the believer that he is now at liberty to do freely what he was once under bondage to do.

First Corinthians contains an enlightening passage, 7:19: “Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God.” The new life of the Spirit is described as “keeping the commandments of God,” that is, living a life of love Godward and manward. Again there is an equality in content and form with the law, yet a complete dissimilarity in spirit.

The book of Hebrews uses the term “law” only in reference to the Old Testament law, which achieved its goal or *τέλος* in Christ. Christians are to do the will of God, 10:36 and 13:21: “Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ.” The term “law” occurs in the quotation of the Jeremiah 31:33 passage: “I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts,” 8:10, the fulfillment of which finds its echo in the phrase “under or in the law to Christ,” I Cor. 9:21, and in the twice used phrase “law of God” in Romans 7.

St. John consistently uses the term “law” to signify the “law of Moses.” The will of God or Christ for the new life of faith is invariably expressed by “commandment,” not by “law,” Especially significant is the use of the term “commandment” in the words of our Lord spoken in the night of his betrayal, John 14-16. In the book of Revelation the term “law” does not appear at all. Christians are described as “those who keep the commandments of God,” 12:17 and 14:12. Again we observe that the protective shield of the righteousness of Christ covering the believer moves the Spirit of God to use terminology befitting his redemption from the curse of the law.

Scripture uses terms in what we call a proper and improper or narrow and broad sense. For example, repentance at times means contrition alone and at times contrition and faith; sanctification has its broad and narrow sense; church is used in its proper sense as the Congregation of Saints and its improper sense as the visible congregation of confessors gathered about the Word and sacraments. So also Torah is used to convey not only the legal precepts but also the gospel promises. So also we find that the term “law” is used in Scripture and

in the language of the church, when referring to commands, precepts, laws, in both a broad and a narrow sense, or what may be called a proper and improper sense.

In the economy of God the term “law” did not appear until Moses. In the beginning there was no law, for there was no need of law since Adam and Eve were created in the image of God. But the immutable will of God, which reflects His essential nature, that is, love, was there. It found expression in the creation of man according to the image of God. After the fall God did not reveal or convey His moral will to man in verbal form until Sinai. At that time the eternal immutable moral will of God took a definite form in “The Law,” “The Torah,” the “Law of Moses.” That form endured until Christ. After Christ we find the content and form of the law enduring in expressions like “commandment” and “will of God.” This part of the law has been called the moral law, that is, the Decalog, understanding that the matter of images, the Sabbath, and other elements were forms that passed away. Summing up this historical evolution we find that the eternal immutable moral will of God antecedes the giving of the law on Mt. Sinai, forms the basic content of that law and so parallels the period from Moses to Christ, and continues on thereafter as the command to love God and neighbor into eternity where love will reign supreme and unchallenged and where there will no longer be a curse.

It was St. Paul who was chosen by the Spirit of God especially to set in sharp antithesis the law as the unrelenting accuser and condemner of man and the gospel as the bestower of justification and sanctification and so life to man. The antithesis was brought out most sharply by Paul in his brief statement, “The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life,” II Cor. 3:6. However, the same Paul makes use of the content (love Godward and manward) and the form (the imperative) in urging and teaching the new life for believers. Thus Paul distinguishes between the temporary and the abiding in the law. He distinguished between the form that the eternal immutable moral will of God took in the period from Moses to Christ and the form which that same will continues to take until the end of time. The accusing and condemning, and hence killing function of the law, which is essential to the concept of law when placed in antithesis to the gospel, always and without exception stops when and where Christ comes. The protective shield of the righteousness of Christ wards off the accusing force of the law from the Christian, inasfar as he is new man. Inasfar as the Christian is flesh the full force of the accusing law is felt. As far as the new life of obedience of the Christian is concerned the content of the law (love) and the form (the imperative) continue on, the former because neither the nature of the unchanging God nor His moral will for man can change and the latter because of the dual nature of the believer.

Down through the ages the church has wrestled with the terminology of this basic distinction. Thomas Aquinas introduced the threefold division of the Mosaic law, as civic, ceremonial and moral. That division has become part of the language of the church but has wrought confusion in understanding the antithesis between law and gospel and has converted Christ into a new lawgiver. Distinguishing the moral law from the rest of the Mosaic code, as the abiding will of the unchanging God, suffers because the command to love is intertwined in the Decalog with elements that apply exclusively to the Jews. What must be kept in mind is that the law of Moses, all of it, came to an end with Christ, but the eternal immutable will of God, as revealed and expressed in the law of Moses, continues on. Thus the terminology could be law and will of God, or law in its proper sense as always accusing, condemning and so killing and law in its wider sense as the verbalization of the eternal immutable moral will to love God and man.

We should be aware of the fact that this distinction is made by our Confessions. In the Apology, Article IV: Of Justification Melancthon speaks of the law in its proper sense, repeatedly using the expression, *Lex semper accusat*, Triglotta pp. 130, 156. When the Formula of Concord, Article VI: Of the Third Use of the Law distinguishes between works of the Law and those of the Spirit, it carefully indicates that it is using law in its wider sense:

But in order that, as far as possible, all misunderstanding may be prevented, and the distinction between the works of the Law and those of the Spirit be properly taught and preserved, it is to be noted with especial diligence that when we speak of good works which are in accordance with God’s Law (for otherwise they are not good works), then the word *Law* has

only one sense, namely, the immutable will of God, according to which men are to conduct themselves in their lives. Triglotta, p. 967.

However, we dare not imagine that this distinction is consistently used. Of greater importance is it to realize the relationship of the individual to the law and the relationship of the law to the flesh and new man of the Christian. Paragraph 6 of Article VI, Epitome, makes this point:

Thus the Law is and remains both to the penitent and impenitent, both to regenerate and unregenerate men, one (and the same) Law, namely, the immutable will of God; and the difference, so far as concerns obedience, is alone in man, inasmuch as one who is not yet regenerate does for the Law out of constraint and unwillingly what it requires of him (as also the regenerate do according to the flesh); but the believer, so far as he is regenerate, does without constraint and with a willing spirit that which no threatenings (however severe) of the Law could ever extort from him. Triglotta, p. 807.

II. Calvinism and the Third Use of the Law.

John Calvin developed a theological system with the sovereignty of God forming the keystone. The key attribute of God was not love, but omnipotence. Accordingly God predestinated some to everlasting life and some to eternal reprobation. Since God's power, whether it be sheer force to move mountains or the power of grace, is irresistible, grace is also irresistible. It is also immediate, since no means are necessary to convey God's irresistible call. The call is simply implementing the eternal decree. Since God's grace is irresistible, it follows also that no one can fall from grace, though he may appear to do so for a time. This is the doctrine of eternal security that is popularly called "once saved, always saved."

In the area of ethics the sovereignty of God becomes evident in the ethical imperative of the law. In his "Institutes of the Christian Religion" (1535) Calvin defended the position that the gospel and the law share in substantial unity with each other. In Calvin's view the Decalog is the "one everlasting and unchangeable rule" for our Christian life, possessed with innate power to compel obedience." Instead of the law standing in the service of the gospel, the gospel is made to serve the law. Whereas Luther called the theological use of the law its principal and proper use, Calvin made the didactic use of the law "the principal use, which pertains more closely to the proper purpose of the law." Luther emphatically contended that Christ is no new Moses, whereas Calvin makes Him just that.

What are the results of this imposition of the law upon the new man? Sabbatarianism is consistent Reformed teaching and practice, along with the blue laws. The first commandment's prohibition against images remains in force. Tithing is the divinely ordained measure of giving, also for the New Testament, with members complying receiving an asterisk of recognition behind their names in the church yearbook. Faith is converted from trust to obedience. Worship becomes the fulfillment of a duty rather than a means for being spiritually recharged by the gospel and responding with prayer and praise. The concept of the means of grace is unknown, yet baptism and the Lord's Supper are observed as legally established New Testament rites. Prayer likewise is the discharge of a duty, rather than an exercise of faith in petition or thanksgiving, The "handbook of discipline" becomes the daily guide for living. The life of the individual Christian becomes burdened with endless rules and regulations regarding food, drink, dress, use of tobacco, entertainment, and so on and on and on. The result is frequently a double standard, outward conformity in public but violation in private.

When the law in its didactic use is thus imposed upon the new man of the Christian, it is inevitable that grace is destroyed and replaced by faith in Christ plus the prescribed good works. This becomes evident, especially in funeral sermons when the deceased is praised for having "accepted Christ as his or her Savior" and for having made his or her salvation sure by performing the works prescribed or approved by the church This, of course, destroys Christ and introduces an element of subjective uncertainty in the mind and heart of the individual.

A further consequence of this converting the gospel into a new law is the blinding of the hearts to the dangers of or a conditioning of hearts for the many work-righteous, character-building organizations in society, whether that be the Scouts on the youth level or Masonry on the adult level. Reformed polemics against Masonry tend to emphasize the blasphemy of the initiation oaths and the secretiveness of the organization rather than the essential issue of work-righteousness, which destroys faith in Christ Jesus

A theological consequence is viewing the kingdom of Christ as a spiritual totalitarian state run according to Christ's commands. The fervently awaited Millennium is to be the Lord's rule with the rod of iron, suppressing opposition until the final uprising before the end of all things.

A further consequence is the inability to perceive the papal system, which has pronounced its official anathema on the central doctrine of justification by faith alone in Christ Jesus, as the Great Antichrist foretold in Scriptures. Instead untold effort is expended in examining prophecy in the light of current events to find clues to determine the identity of the expected international statesman, who will befriend the State of Israel and then turn upon them, thus revealing himself to be the antichrist.

Any preaching, teaching, or counseling that makes or tends to make the law a burden or obligation of the Christian undermines the gospel and leads to work righteousness.

III. Question: Does the new man have complete knowledge of God's Will?

In itself the question is academic since it presupposes an ideal situation that never occurs in the life of a Christian, since the new man never functions without the constant opposition of the flesh. By virtue of love, which is simultaneously created in the heart of the Christian with faith, the Christian possesses the potential answer to every moral problem, for love is always the fulfilling of the law and the reflection of the moral nature of God. However, indwelling sin prevents that potentiality from ever becoming a reality in the life of a Christian. For that reason the key word in sanctification is growth. The Spirit is given as the "earnest," (*ἀρραβών*) of our inheritance, Eph. 1:14. We have been anointed by God "who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts," II Cor. 1:22. St. Paul speaks of Christians as having "the firstfruits (*την ἀπαρχην*), of the Spirit," Rom. 8:23. "Believers are not renewed in this life perfectly or completely, *complete vel consummative* (as the ancients say)." Article VI, Formula of Concord, p. 965.

The concept of "earnest" indicates a beginning but implies a continuance. The concept of "firstfruits" implies continued maturing until the full harvest has ripened. Scripture again and again emphasizes the growth concept in sanctification. St. Peter speaks of Christians as newborn babes who desire the pure milk of the Word "that ye may grow thereby," I Peter 2:2. He concludes his second epistle with the exhortation, "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ," II Peter 3:18. St. Paul teaches that the ascended Lord of the Church supplies ministers of the Word to the end that "we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," Eph. 4:13. In Paradise our first parents were to grow by using their ability not to sin by obeying. We are to grow in knowledge and understanding of the Word, in our struggle against the lusts of the flesh, in using the organs of our bodies to love more and more, ever putting off the old man and putting on the new. We await future growth, for "now I know in part; but then I shall know even as also I am known," I Cor. 13:12. Certainly every Christian has experienced such growth and looks forward to continued growth, for there is either growth or withering away and dying.

Such growth is achieved by the power of the gospel, which has freed the Christian from the demands, curses, and condemnation of the law. In so doing it has freed him to live in the law. For the law is not made void by faith, but is rather established by faith, Rom. 3:31. Freedom from the law does not mean despising the law, but living in it freely, willingly, spontaneously, eagerly. So it is that the Christian "delights in the law of God after the inward man," Rom. 7:22. So it is that he is exhorted to be constantly, in every situation and relationship, proving or testing "what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God," Rom. 12:2. So it has always been. The psalmist speaks of the blessedness of the man whose "delight is in the law of the Lord;

and in his law doth he meditate day and night,” Ps. 1:2. The law of the Lord contained both the promise of the Savior with all the rites of worship pointing towards the fulfillment, as well as the moral will of God. The psalmist speaks of the law of the Lord and His statutes as “more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb,” Ps. 19:10. How could it be otherwise? The new man is the creation of the Spirit of God, who revealed the eternal immutable will of God that man should live in love toward God and his fellowman. He sees in every revealed and inspired verbalization of the will of God a reflection of the moral values that the Spirit has created within him, although the flesh prevents him from responding fully to these values.

We are to be warned against using the analogy of the Son of God in His humiliation here upon this earth. He “increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man,” Luke 2:52. His increasing was a gradually increasing awareness of who He was and what He had come to earth to do. This is the mystery of His person and His humiliation, a matter which we cannot explore but before which we must kneel in worshipful silence. He was true man, but without sin. We are conceived and born in sin and never get rid of our flesh until death. Any deduction from His experience to ours collapses on the factor of our indwelling sin.

IV. Question: Is there a difference between the “mirror” and the “rule” use of the law?

In considering this question we do well to remember that we easily become victims of our “Greek” taught minds, which divide and subdivide and then compartmentalize the Word of God. When we speak of the uses of the law, we are attempting to give names to functions of the law as we see it operative in the Scriptures. That is a pedagogic device, excellent for teaching but dangerous if it becomes a straitjacket by which we in our minds attempt to restrict and confine the Holy Spirit, cataloging passages that fit into the “mirror” pigeonhole and others that fit into the “rule” pigeonhole.

The law forbids and it demands. It says, “This is the wrong way; stop!” And then again: “This is the right way; go!” In so doing it always has the power and function of revealing transgressions when someone goes when he should stop, or stops when he should be going. But the matter does not end here. The next question to be considered is - To whom is the law speaking? Is it addressed to lawless or law-abiding? Is it speaking to those who know and feel no sin or to those who have been crushed by its demands? The lawless need the law, not the righteous. That is elementary, yet also not the answer in its entirety. For when we consider the righteous, the child of God, Mr. Christian, we know that he is righteous by imputation, not by way of life. He is *simul iustus et peccator* and ever remains such. Because of his flesh he needs the law in all of its functions.

Error can arise when we think of the several uses of the law as unrelated, compartmentalized functions of the law. Now this to the exclusion of that. Now the other to the exclusion of the first. No, God has revealed His will in the law. No man can escape that law. How it strikes him depends upon his relationship to God. Whenever the will of God is revealed to the Christian, it cries out a “Halt” to his flesh. It erects a barrier; this far and no farther, or else! At the same time the same directive of the will of God finds a ready and willing response from the new man. How could it be otherwise, for what God creates in us cannot be against His will! The new man finds in that revelation a divine standard by which to coerce and constrain the flesh to obedience. He uses it as a mother uses soap to wash the tongue of a boy who has used a dirty word, because this is not what God wants. He uses it as cattlemen use a loading chute to guide steers into a truck. But simultaneously that same verbalization of the will of God reveals one’s sin and leads to a deepening awareness of the sin within, because when my God tells me to be loving, kind, tenderhearted, humble, or whatever, I know I never measure up, for my heart convicts me.

So the several uses of the law are not independent of each other. Rather they work simultaneously in the Christian, saying “Stop” and “This is the way you have to go” to the flesh with the new man concurring one hundred percent, while at the same time causing grief over failures and so being driven to Christ for forgiveness for those failures and renewed strength, drawn from the cross and the empty tomb, to strive yet again.

V. Question: Is the Christian ever told to do things in order that he do them?

What God tells man He wants done, He wants done or else! The situation is this that man cannot do anything that God wants him to do except outwardly, that is, the performance of civic righteousness. So it is that when God issues moral commands to natural man, no results corresponding to those commands happen. God says, "Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not," but man continues doing the forbidden and leaving the commanded undone. What was God to do? Continue repeating His commands and threats and then acting upon them? That would have meant the consignment of the human race into hell.

So God devised another way. He sent His Son to do and leave undone all that He commanded man to do and leave undone. Then on the basis of what His Son had done He gave new commands and with those commands supplied the creative power necessary for man to comply to these commands. God commanded man to "repent and believe the gospel." Of himself man can only react with, "No, no, a thousand times no; I'd rather go to hell than say yes!" But God wills that His command to repent and believe produce the desired effect, and so it is that sinners are brought to repentance and faith.

Then God continues to make His moral commands known to man, in whom He has restored His image. By virtue of God's own creation in man, man now possesses a will to obey the command that is accompanied by the creative power of God. Does God want these commands obeyed? Certainly He does, for He supplies the creative power from without and from within man to see to it that His moral commands are obeyed.

But God does not overpower man and convert him into a moral robot, so God's commands to love, forgive, be patient, trusting, humble, and so on and on are only partially fulfilled. But that doesn't satisfy God. He wants perfection, and He achieves that by covering the Christian's imperfect, flesh marred obedience with the righteousness of His Son, so that the imperfect works of the Christian are accounted perfect for Christ's sake.

So it is that some commands of God, because man has not the ability to respond, serve only to reveal man's sin, while others are accompanied by the creative power of God and so effect a change in man according to the will of God.