Law & Gospel
How to Read and Apply the Bible

Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther

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<tr>
<td>AC</td>
<td>Augsburg Confession</td>
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<td>Ap</td>
<td>Apology of the Augsburg Confession</td>
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<td>Ep</td>
<td>Epitome of the Formula of Concord</td>
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<td>FC</td>
<td>Formula of Concord</td>
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<td>Halle Ed.</td>
<td>See W1</td>
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<td>LC</td>
<td>Large Catechism</td>
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<td>LCMS</td>
<td>The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod</td>
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<tr>
<td>LSB</td>
<td>Lutheran Service Book</td>
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SA  Smalcald Articles

SC  Small Catechism

SD  Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord

St. Louis Ed.  See W^2

Tr  Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope


WA  D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe. 73 vols. in 85. Weimar: Hermann Böhlau, 1883–.

There is little doubt that *Law and Gospel* is the most influential and utilized work bearing the name of C. F. W. Walther. Yet it is the result of a rather curious pedigree—Walther never saw the work in print.

*Law and Gospel* was a series of Friday evening lectures given by Walther between September 12, 1884, and November 6, 1885. As W. H. T. Dau correctly noted, there is a difference between the lecture style and its more informal use of side comments, gestures, vocalizations, etc., and the more formal, structured style of a text prepared for publication. The German text was the transcription of stenographic notes prepared by Theodore Claus, edited by Ludwig Fürbringer, which appeared in 1897, ten years after Walther’s death. This was published in 1901. Students of *Law and Gospel* have always wondered whether Walther would have permitted the publication of the lectures in the form presented.

Four English renditions followed: (1) Dau, in 1929; (2) Walter C. Pieper’s condensation of Dau under the title *God’s No and God’s Yes* in 1973; (3) Herbert J. A. Bouman’s “considerable abridgment and condensation of the original . . . dictated by the publisher’s space limitations” for the collection of Walther’s writings produced in 1981; and (4) the present translation, which omits some of Dau’s language and editorial choices and makes Walther sound more like Walther than a British academician.

Walther is often criticized as being a “citation theologian.” A glance at *Law and Gospel* and almost any other work by Walther other than sermons would seem to support this view. Walther readily acknowledged that it was true, and he made no apology for it. He was content to sit at the feet of or stand on the shoulders of those who defended biblical teaching. Walther always began with proof from the Word of God (*Beweis aus Gottes Wort*). Then followed the witness of the Church in its official confessions (*Zeugnisse der Kirche in ihren öffentlichen Bekenntnissen*). Then followed the witness of the Church in the private writings of its teachers (*Zeugnisse der Kirche in den Privatschriften ihrer Lehrer*).

Of the teachers of the Church, no one outranks Martin Luther. Walther was convinced that a knowledge of Luther was necessary for both pastors and laity in the Church. The production of the St. Louis edition, a genuine people’s edition, was promoted by Walther for that purpose. The magazine *Der Lutheraner*, presided over by Walther from its beginning in 1844 until his death, carried the motto: “Gottes Wort und Luthers Lehr, vergehet nun und nimmermehr” (“God’s Word and Luther’s teaching, endures now and evermore”).
There is a reason why the series of lectures was also known as "Lutherstunden" ("Luther Hours"). The copious citations from Luther’s writings are an indication of the thorough knowledge of Luther in the mind and thought of Walther and of his determination to let Luther speak to and enrich the thought and life of his students.

Throughout the lectures, Walther speaks as a pastor to the future pastors of the Church. This is of the utmost significance to understanding the import of what Walther is doing in these lectures. Walther is often thought of as a theologian, professor, seminary president, synodical president, author, leader among Lutherans, etc. What is frequently overlooked is that he was first and foremost a pastor. From 1841 until his death in 1887, at the same time he accomplished all the things associated with the above titles, he was the pastor of the St. Louis joint congregation—first, Trinity, then also Holy Cross, Zion, and Immanuel. While each of the four locations had its own resident pastor, Walther was the pastor, and he regularly preached in the four churches on a rotating basis. Thus much of Walther’s preaching was not of the “special occasion” variety nor in the role of guest, but as the called pastor of the flock.

In this role, Walther was a liturgical preacher; the texts he chose for preaching were the historic pericopes. In the tradition of such preaching, Walther did not consider it strange to preach frequently on the same text. In fact, there are fifteen printed sermons for Christmas Day on Luke 2:1–14, delivered between 1843 and 1873. Although Walther occasionally preached from a free text, he normally preached on either the Epistle or the Gospel for the day.

Walther’s preaching served as a model for the pastors in preparation. What Walther developed in the lecture series is what he modeled in the pulpit—a pastor caring for the sheep entrusted to his care.

May this new edition of Walther’s classic lectures enable pastors, future pastors, and the laity of the Church to learn from a genuine pastor how to properly distinguish between Law and Gospel.

William J. Schmelder
Professor Emeritus
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri
Walther’s Text

In 1878 Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther presented a lecture series based on thirteen theses about Law and Gospel. The lectures proved to be so popular that Walther decided to present a second, expanded, lecture series in 1884–85 based on twenty-five theses. These second lectures form the central message of this book.

Walther did not arrange for his notes to be published. After he died in 1887, however, Walther’s colleagues and students wanted to preserve what they had been taught for the sake of future generations. In close collaboration with Concordia Publishing House, they published many of Walther’s “literary remains.” These were his papers, sermons, and other writings that he left behind but never published in his lifetime. In 1893, Concordia printed notes from the first lecture series in German as Gesetz und Evangelium, which is translated as Law and Gospel. Yet many students remembered his second lectures to be twice as long as the first. One attendee of that second series, Pastor Theodor Claus of Elkhart, Indiana, is the reason for the existence of this book. His fairly accurate shorthand notes of the second series of lectures were transcribed and reviewed by Professor Ludwig Fürbringer of Concordia Seminary. (Fürbringer later served as the seminary’s president.) Concordia Publishing House printed this very literal account of Walther’s lectures in 1897, reprinted in 1901, again in German, as Die Rechte Unterscheidung von Gesetz und Evangelium (The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel).

In 1929 Concordia published William H. T. Dau’s English translation of Walther’s second lecture series as The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel. Dau’s book, based on the German text, is the English standard, and it forms a substantial part of this edition. However, Dau’s work is not a literal translation, because he thought that presenting class notes, which were sometimes rough, without additional explanation would not be helpful. Therefore, Dau changed Walther’s style and some of the content. Despite this intervention, Dau’s translation has been the most popular of Walther’s works.

Walther’s Style

Walther presented his evening lectures before a group of seminary students ranging in age from about eighteen to twenty-two. Walther’s lectures were both informative and entertaining, delivered in a rapid-fire manner with subtle jokes and the occasional off-color remark. At times, Walther liked to role-play to illustrate his point. He spoke in a very conversational way. Dau
wanted the written lectures to become a loftier, literary work. Therefore, he made three general decisions. First, Dau changed or deleted Walther’s language when he felt that it was necessary. Second, Dau used a flowing, literary British style that was common in the academic writing of that era. Third, Dau introduced extensive editorial changes and additions within the main text of the lectures in order to help the reader.

Walther’s oral delivery of the lectures was at times probably choppy, but it came across to the listeners as edgy and powerful. Walther typically spoke from memory, and he tended to express thoughts as they came to him. This edition of Law and Gospel brings the reader closer to the original German text, and thus to Walther’s actual lectures, letting the reader “hear” Walther’s presentations in English as German hearers would have understood them. It trusts that Walther’s original style will be more engaging for today’s readers.

Many of Dau’s helpful corrections remain, but we have chosen the original Walther text where Dau might not have. We have avoided inserting editorial matter into the body text. Footnotes include information that explains significant editorial decisions.

Although his lectures had an extemporaneous quality, Walther took a very detailed approach and put a lot of work into his preparation. Where he found errors in his first series of lectures, Walther fixed them in the second series. He was never afraid to admit and fix his mistakes. He also tried to teach this attitude of humility to his students. Walther thought and lived like a parish pastor and made that a central part of being a professor. His lectures speak to pastors, yet their intent is to be an advocate on behalf of the salvation of the laypeople. Walther knew that a pastor’s most important calling is to distinguish Law and Gospel as he brings the Word of God to the souls in his care, so that in the hour of death and on the Last Day they can say, “I shall not die, but I shall live, and recount the deeds of the Lord” (Psalm 118:17).

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1 Sometimes Dau did not agree with Walther’s phrasing of theological terms. Dau also disliked the parts where Walther became a little too rough in his language. William Dallmann reports on this human side of Walther in Dallmann’s autobiography, My Life (St. Louis: Concordia, 1945).
Concordia Publishing House offers warm thanks to the following people and organizations whose contributions have significantly enriched this book for the benefit of the Church:

The Rev. Dr. Martin R. Noland provided insights into the history and the theological method of C. F. W. Walther in several publications. He also provided information regarding the intellectual history and context of the nineteenth century.

The Rev. Marvin A. Huggins, interim director of Concordia Historical Institute, and the staff of the institute provided valuable information that helped to improve the LCMS maps and other aspects of this volume. Mrs. Laura Marrs helped to provide photographs from the institute’s collection used in this edition.

Mr. Dennis Rathert, archivist of Historic Trinity Lutheran Church in the Soulard neighborhood of St. Louis, generously provided additional photographs and documents.

Mr. Keith Lenharth, archivist of Holy Cross Lutheran Church, on Miami Street and Ohio Avenue west of Concordia Publishing House, generously provided additional photographs. Holy Cross continues to serve as an important part of the worship life at Concordia.

**User's Guide**

**Boldface type** represents emphasis in the German text called “separated type” (Sperrdruck). English typesetting conventions caused much of this emphasis to be lost in the Dau edition. When **boldface type** appears in a quotation, this indicates that Walther emphasized this material from another author.

**Italic type** is used for foreign words, technical terms, and additional points of emphasis.

Direct citations appear between quotation marks or are set in block quotes.

Square brackets [ ] contain words added by an editor for the sake of clarity.

Angle brackets < > include wording from an alternate translation, used in citations from *Concordia*.

Scripture citations come from the English Standard Version except where Walther makes a specific point using Luther's German translation of the Bible (identified in the margin note by the word “Luther” after the Bible reference). In such instances, the text is an English translation from the 1901 German edition of Walther’s lectures.

**Boldface margin notes** indicate the start of a lecture, identify topics, and provide references to Scripture, the Book of Concord, and Luther's writings. Prior editions of *Law and Gospel* divided the text into thirty-nine chapters, one for each lecture. This edition divides the text into an introduction and twenty-five theses.

Footnotes contain the German and Latin words that Walther spoke, information about sources that Walther used, and other helpful facts about people or situations mentioned in the lectures. Where Walther used a Greek word or phrase to indicate his level of education and that expected of his students, this has been replaced entirely with English. Where Walther used Greek to indicate an important New Testament word, the Greek has been retained using letters recognizable to English readers.

Editor's notes provide useful information at the beginning of each thesis to help unlock Walther's presentation for the reader and make it more applicable to the reader's life.
Thesis IV

Understanding how to distinguish Law and Gospel provides a context for understanding all of Holy Scripture culminating in faith, without this knowledge Scripture is and remains a sealed book.

Luther’s Bible: Without a summary without distinction between Law and Gospel it is not possible to understand Scripture. It is the only right way to read and apply the Bible, to prevent Scripture from being read out of context. Without a distinction between Law and Gospel, Scripture is closed to the reader. Without a distinction between Law and Gospel, Scripture is closed to the reader. Without a distinction between Law and Gospel, Scripture is closed to the reader. Without a distinction between Law and Gospel, Scripture is closed to the reader. Without a distinction between Law and Gospel, Scripture is closed to the reader. Without a distinction between Law and Gospel, Scripture is closed to the reader. Without a distinction between Law and Gospel, Scripture is closed to the reader. Without a distinction between Law and Gospel, Scripture is closed to the reader. Without a distinction between Law and Gospel, Scripture is closed to the reader. 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Walther's Place in Lutheran History
This portrait of C. F. W. Walther was made in the 1840s. It became the most well-known image of Walther. His signature and a handwritten portion of 1 Peter 2:9 often accompanied an engraved version of this image. See, for example, Ludwig Fürbringer, Eighty Eventful Years (St. Louis: Concordia, 1944), 70. Image courtesy of Concordia Historical Institute.
It probably came as little surprise that Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther became a pastor, though at his birth no one could have predicted the tremendous role that he would play in the history of American Christianity. Born on October 25, 1811, to Gottlob Heinrich Wilhelm and Johanna Wilhelmina Walther, Ferdinand (as he was known) became part of a family of Lutheran preachers. His great-grandfather Moritz Heinrich Walther, grandfather Adolph Heinrich Walther, and father all served as pastors in Saxony. Ferdinand and his older brother, Otto, also entered the ministry.

Ferdinand was reared in a traditional German Lutheran pastor’s home in the parsonage at the church in Langenchursdorf, where his father served until his death in 1841. German society was very class conscious at that time and remains so today. The family occupied an upper-middle-class position in the community, not because of wealth but because of the education that German pastors received. Likewise, Ferdinand was reared in the knowledge and respect of the Bible as God’s Word, and he was educated concerning God’s grace. One well-known account from his childhood relates that at age three he memorized a poem for Christmas:

Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness  
My beauty are, my glorious dress,  
Wherein before my God I’ll stand  
When I shall reach the heavenly land.

His father was so impressed by this memory work that he gave Ferdinand a three-penny piece. This left an indelible mark on the young boy, who determined that if knowing this text was worth so much to his father, it must contain a very important truth.

It was common in the early 1800s to leave home to attend school, even for what we would now call grade school, and Ferdinand was no exception. First, he attended a boys’ school in Hohenstein, about ten kilometers northeast of Zwickau. Walther’s uncle was the schoolmaster. At age ten, Ferdinand was sent to a Latin school in Schneeberg, some twenty kilometers southeast of Zwickau. Walther’s brother-in-law was the vice-rector. Unfortunately, Rationalism and theological liberalism were broadly accepted in the German lands of that time, and even as a child, Ferdinand was instructed that the

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1 For a fuller account of the life of C. F. W. Walther, see Martin Günther, Dr. C. F. W. Walther: Lebensbild (St. Louis: Concordia, 1890), and August R. Suelflow, Servant of the Word: The Life and Ministry of C. F. W. Walther (St. Louis: Concordia, 2000).

2 Suelflow, Servant of the Word, 15. This poem was part of a hymn written by Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, who was first a Lutheran Pietist, then a Moravian bishop. See also the entry for Zinzendorf in the Index of Persons and Groups, page 501.
Bible could not be trusted and that Christianity was nothing but simple moralistic teachings. This led Ferdinand to turn his attention away from theology, and when he graduated from Schneeberg, he planned on studying music. However, Ferdinand’s father offered to give him a Thaler\(^3\) a week to help with expenses if he studied theology. Also, his older brother, Otto, who had just finished his second year of studying theology at the University of Leipzig, gave him a biography of Pastor Jean Frédéric Oberlin.\(^4\) This book in particular motivated Ferdinand with its example of piety and humble service.

Thus Ferdinand started at the University of Leipzig as a theology student, and he quickly joined a small group of students known as the “Holy Club,” of which Otto was already a member. While most of Leipzig’s professors were thoroughgoing rationalists, the Holy Club was made up of students who were seeking something more certain, and they soon fell into a form of strict Pietism that believed one must go through great personal struggles in order to be saved. This threw Walther into great spiritual torments as he wondered if he truly was saved. This experience later contributed to Walther’s keen insights on how Christians need to distinguish Law and Gospel.

Ferdinand found the solace of the Gospel from three different sources. First, he frequented the home of Friedrich W. Barthel in Leipzig. In the Barthel home, he was reminded time and again of his redemption through Christ. Mrs. Barthel also told her young visitor that she regularly prayed for solace for him. Still looking for comfort, Ferdinand wrote to a noted Lutheran pastor in Dresden, Martin Stephan. Walther later recorded that, before opening Stephan’s reply, he prayed that God would keep him from more misleading comfort, but when he opened the letter, he was overjoyed at the words of Gospel that Stephan wrote. Thus began one of the most influential relationships in Ferdinand’s life. The third source of consolation came in the unusual form of illness during the winter of 1831–32. He was forced to take a semester off to recuperate at his parents’ parsonage, and Ferdinand busied himself with reading his father’s collection of Luther’s writings. During this time, Ferdinand became convinced of the scriptural soundness of Luther’s theology and especially of the reformer’s emphasis on the Gospel.

After completing his university education, Ferdinand could not qualify to be called as a pastor until he had completed two examinations, with a mandatory two-year interim between the tests. His father feared that Ferdinand’s conservative views of the Bible and the Lutheran Confessions would cause problems with the examining committees. However, his fears proved unfounded because Ferdinand successfully completed the examinations.

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\(^3\) At the time of Walther’s lectures, the Thaler (origin of dollar; sounds like taller) was worth three German marks. A Thaler from about 1825 would be approximately $30–$50 today.

\(^4\) Oberlin (1740–1826) was known for his works of Christian mercy in eastern France.
and received a call to serve as pastor in Bräunsdorf, Saxony, not far from his father's church. He was ordained on January 15, 1837.

Walther’s time in Bräunsdorf was difficult because he found himself squarely in the middle of the battle between the rationalists and the conservatives in Saxony. His superintendent and the schoolteacher in Bräunsdorf were rationalists, and Walther butted heads with them often. Because of the rationalist teachings that had held sway, upon his arrival Walther found the general state of the parish in terms of biblical, Christian training to be rather poor. The spiritual care of the people had been lacking, and he worked to correct this. However, when he attempted to order conservative, Bible-based books for the school, both the schoolteacher and the superintendent attempted to stop the purchase. But Count Detlef von Einsiedel stepped in. As patron of the territory, and a conservative ally, Einsiedel donated the books to the school. He also reminded the schoolteacher and the superintendent that the pastor had the right to choose the textbooks and that disputes were to be settled by the district school inspector. Despite this outcome, Walther’s struggles continued.

Walther remained in close contact with an informal group of confessional Lutherans, sometimes called Old Lutherans, headed by Pastor Stephan, who was something of a lightning rod in the struggles of the German Lutheran churches. Many of the church leaders in Saxony did not like or trust Stephan, but for others who had been comforted in the Gospel, such as Otto and Ferdinand Walther, Stephan was a hero of the faith. Once, when a prominent churchman urged Ferdinand Walther to distance himself from Stephan, he replied: “Shall I forsake a man who, by God’s grace, has saved my soul?”

Lurking behind many of the concerns of the confessional Lutherans were the events in Prussia, a neighboring German state. In 1817, on the three-hundredth anniversary of the start of the Reformation, the king of Prussia, Frederick William III, decreed that the Lutheran and Reformed churches were to be merged into a new union church, which is often called the Prussian Union. This edict greatly offended many Lutherans who still treasured their identity kindled by Luther in 1517. The king was forcing them into church fellowship with a group with whom they had obvious and long-standing theological disagreements. While this union held sway only in Prussia, the conservative Lutherans in Saxony were worried that they, too, might be forced into such a merger. Although since 1697 the rulers of Saxony had been Roman Catholic, they had supported the Lutheran church in the territory as a matter of politics and had left its administration to church officials. Now, at a time

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5 In the German Lutheran churches of this time period, a Superintendent would have been similar to a district president in the LCMS.
6 Suelflow, Servant of the Word, 53.
when Lutheran identity in all of the German lands had been so undermined by Rationalism, many church leaders were inclined to the type of union that had occurred in Prussia.

Because of concerns about the theological weakening of the church and the attempts by church leaders to enforce Rationalism, confessional Lutherans in Saxony, including the Walther brothers, were uneasy about the future of true Lutheranism in Germany. This fear was compounded when charges of fraudulent administration and sexual misconduct were brought against Stephan and he was suspended from his pastoral office. Stephan began disputing expenses and answering official hearings and inquiries. The charges produced few conclusive findings; at least one woman retracted her claims.

These actions against Stephan encouraged the long-held belief by Walther and others that they were targets of persecution. Believing that true Lutheranism was doomed in Germany, the group led by Stephan, which had already been discussing emigration, sped up the process. The actions of the emigrant company made the authorities suspicious, yet the suspicion of the authorities only accelerated the emigrants’ activities and strengthened their resolve. After considering Australia and various parts of the United States, the group settled on Missouri as the proper destination. They established the goal to set up a colony of German-speaking Lutherans in Missouri outside of St. Louis. In this new community they could worship in purity and raise their children in the faith. About seven hundred people booked passage on five ships sailing from Bremerhaven to New Orleans in November 1838. During the passage, Stephan was elected bishop of the group and a document was written for “Stephan’s Investiture.” Those on the other ships, including the Walther brothers, signed this document upon reaching New Orleans. The immigrants settled temporarily in St. Louis while looking for land on which to establish their new community. Although rules created before leaving Germany called for a communal system of ownership, Stephan lived better than the rest, paying his expenses out of the common treasury as he had been accustomed to doing as a member of the territorial church in Saxony. The group eventually purchased 4,475 acres in Perry County, Missouri (south of St. Louis), along the banks of the Mississippi River. Stephan and an initial group of settlers moved to the property on April 26, 1839, while the others stayed in St. Louis until the settlement was prepared for their arrival.

However, a series of revelations dramatically changed the situation for those who remained in St. Louis. Following a May 5, 1839, service in which Pastor G. H. Löber preached, two women independently confessed to him that they had had adulterous relations with Stephan, further claiming that he had seduced them. These confessions were shared with the other pastors among those who had remained in St. Louis. This was compounded by the
The Life of C. F. W. Walther  xxiii

fact that Stephan had left his wife behind in Germany. Not only was the immigrants’ trust in Stephan rocked, but the men also realized that he was no longer fit for a position of authority within the church. The church leaders also began to look more critically at Stephan’s leadership and even the orthodoxy of his teachings. After discussing the matter, it was decided that one pastor would have to go to Perry County and share this news with the rest of the immigrants. Perhaps because he was the youngest, this task fell to Ferdinand Walther.

Even as Stephan was upset that Walther had arrived without his permission, Walther shared his news with the rest of the immigrants. By May 30, most of those who had remained in St. Louis had traveled to Perry County to attend a “council” that accused Stephan of sexual immorality, mismanagement, and teaching false doctrine. Stephan refused to meet with the council, claiming it had no authority. The council removed Stephan from office and excommunicated him. Allowed to take a few possessions, Stephan was ferried across the river and deposited in Illinois. He continued to act as an independent pastor in the area of Red Bud, Illinois, until his death in 1846.

It is difficult to overestimate the effect of these events on Ferdinand Walther and the rest of the immigrants. After all, Stephan was not only their spiritual leader, but he also was the civil leader and organizer of the group. In fact, they had left Germany to create an ecclesiastically organized settlement based on the authority the immigrants had vested in Stephan. Thus the group was left questioning the legitimacy of their presence in North America. If they had embarked on this quest to establish a bastion of the true church, they now had to question if they were even a church at all. These questions hit Walther and the other pastors especially hard because they had left the churches to which they were properly called, and they did not actually have calls to serve this group of immigrants.

These concerns, as well as the hardships of creating a self-sufficient settlement, led to two trying years for the immigrants. They struggled to clear the land, and they suffered from sickness and death, which was compounded by the spiritual uncertainty with which they lived. The distrust of Stephan was transferred to the remaining clergy, and for a period of time the churches held their congregational meetings without the presence of a pastor. The Saxons adopted a Parish Order (Parochialordnung) that established a church council in each congregation composed of the pastor as “teaching elder” and ordained lay “ruling elders.” Both pastors and lay elders were to be treated with respect, but in a qualified sense. Because of Stephan’s misconduct and coarse sins, pastors in particular were limited in the kinds of pastoral care they could give. For example, pastors were not permitted to visit any member of their congregations without another person present. At the time, Ferdinand Walther
Pastors were limited in their authority to the preaching and teaching of the Word of God. Lay elders were given financial and civil authority within the group. The lay elders could perform all official acts of Word and Sacrament in an emergency, and no church discipline could occur without the agreement of the lay elders or the assembled congregation. The church council acted on behalf of the lay members of the congregation, whose assembly retained supreme authority as the highest court in the congregation. Even with the new Parish Order, some immigrants returned to Germany, though most either could not afford passage or did not want to return. Eventually the colony managed to stabilize in external matters, building houses and schools and establishing farms. In December 1839, the group opened a log cabin college and seminary to train future pastors.8

The turning point for the group came when an attorney, Franz Adolph Marbach (who may have helped write the Parish Order),9 challenged Ferdinand Walther to a debate over the question “Are we a church or not?” In preparation for the debate, Walther plunged himself into study of the Bible and Luther’s writings, eventually crafting eight theses. The debate was held on April 15 and 21, 1841, in the colony’s newly formed town of Altenburg. In what has come to be known as the Altenburg Theses, Walther argued that the Church, properly understood, is made up of all believers in Christ and that a local church is a place in which God’s Word is proclaimed and the Sacraments are administered, even if that body is heterodox. Based upon this reasoning, Walther then argued that even if the immigrants had strayed both in their decision to emigrate and in their doctrine, they remained Church. Therefore, being Church, this group possessed the right to call pastors and administer the Sacraments and had a duty to seek doctrinal purity. Walther clearly won the debate, as even Marbach conceded. The outcome of the debate reassured the immigrants that they were truly Church, could trust God’s grace, and could move forward in their new land with hope and faith.

7 Copies of this Parish Order still exist in the published minutes of the Buffalo Synod: Fünfter Synodal-Brief von der Synode der aus Preußen ausgewanderten evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche, versammelt zu Buffalo, N.Y. von 23. Juni bis 5. Juli 1856. (Buffalo: Druck von Friedrich Reinecke, Eck von Main- und Geneseestr., 1856), 49–52. It appears that the original documents were lost.

8 More than a seminary, the college, also a parish school, enrolled four female students.

9 Portions of the Parish Order that describe the rights of a congregation and its administration by the pastor are similar to language in the German legal tradition regarding a privately held corporation classified as a societas or Gesellschaft. As the lawyer for the emigration company (Auswanderungsgesellschaft), Marbach typically described the company’s situation in legal terms. He also applied German corporate law to the Church in his book Ein Wort über den Rechtscharakter der Actiengesellschaft (Leipzig: Teubner, 1844).
FROM MARTIN LUTHER TO C. F. W. WALTHER

A Timeline

January 17, 1463
Prince-Elector Frederick (Friedrich) III, “the Wise,” born.
Frederick, of House Wettin in Electorat Saxony, succeeded his father, Ernst, and reigned from 1486 until his death in 1525. He was a reformist prince, first, in a political sense, then as Luther’s protector. The Ernestine Wettins established the University of Jena, supported the Gnesio-Lutherans (“Genuine Lutherans”), and married leading Protestant royalty. Their descendants include the British royal family.

October 28, 1466 or 1469
Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam born.
Erasmus was a prominent scholar who supported a number of Luther’s reforms but differed with Luther on the freedom of the will, the number and nature of the sacraments, and the authority of Scripture. He died in 1536.

November 10, 1483
Martin Luther born.
Luther saw the limits and fallibility of human reason and came to hold Scripture not just as an important authority but as the sole authority in determining each person’s relationship with God. Luther rejected papal authority when it demanded belief of doctrines not found in Scripture. This included a rejection of the Roman sacramental system and its ideas of justification, sin, and grace; the worship of the saints; prayer for the dead; and other false teachings. Luther also abolished the special status of the clergy as a “spiritual” estate above the laity.

December 3, 1483
Nikolaus von Amsdorf born.
Amsdorf supported Luther throughout his career. He became an important member of the Gnesio-Lutheran (“Genuine Lutheran”) party at the University of Jena, a group that was opposed to Melanchthon. He died in 1565.

January 1, 1484
Swiss reformer Ulrich (Huldrych) Zwingli born.
Zwingli’s background in classical literature led him to state that God works immediately with the believer on the basis of predestination and that the sacraments and even Scripture are only symbols, external things that prepare the way for the Holy Spirit. He died in battle in 1531.
Johann Bugenhagen born.

Bugenhagen became a leader in the Reformation and served as pastor of the Wittenberg city church. Bugenhagen took the Reformation to Low German-speaking areas, as well as to Denmark, which at the time was united with Norway. He died in 1558.

Martin Bucer born.

Bucer tried to unify German Protestants. He worked with reformers in Strassburg who had been influenced by Zwingli. He held many beliefs in common with Luther but differed on aspects of unworthy Communion and the matter of a “double” predestination to heaven and to hell. He helped achieve the 1536 Wittenberg Concord. After 1548 he was Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge, where he helped revise the Book of Common Prayer until his death in 1551.

Johann Agricola born.

Agricola studied under Luther at Wittenberg and served as his secretary at the Leipzig Disputation. He and Luther disagreed sharply over whether Christians are still under the Law, a conflict that became known as the Antinomian Controversy. His participation in the writing of the Augsburg Interim made him an outcast among Protestants. He died in 1566.

Philip Melanchthon born.

Melanchthon was one of the youngest early leaders of the Reformation. In a 1519 disputation, at the age of twenty-two, his defense against John Eck, a passionate opponent of Luther and defender of the pope, showed Melanchthon’s commitment to the sole authority of Scripture. The high point of his career was the drafting of the Augsburg Confession and its Apology (or Defense). Some of his positions on the Lord’s Supper displeased Luther. He opposed the Augsburg Interim but wrote the softened Leipzig Interim.

Birth of Katharina von Bora.

Katharina was a nun who later converted to Lutheranism and married Luther in 1525. Luther relied on her skills to manage his household. She died in Torgau while escaping plague in Wittenberg in 1552.

John Calvin (French name: Jean Cauvin) born in Noyon, France.

Calvin received a Doctor of Law degree from the University of Orleans in 1532 and was openly Protestant by 1533. He fled Paris and settled first in Basel, Switzerland, then in Geneva, where he and Guillaume Farel advanced the Reformation from 1536 to 1538. After being expelled from Geneva, Calvin served a French Protestant (Huguenot) community in Strassburg until his return to Geneva in 1541. His theology, born of his legal training, provides much of the basis of the Reformed tradition. He died in 1564.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October 31, 1517</td>
<td>Luther sends his <em>Disputation on the Explanation of the Virtues of Indulgences</em> (the Ninety-Five Theses) to Bishop Albrecht of Mainz. Luther may have nailed a copy of his document to the church door in Wittenberg. Whether mailed or nailed, the theses are posted and spark the Protestant Reformation.</td>
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<td>April 26, 1518</td>
<td>During the Augustinian Order’s general chapter meeting, the Heidelberg Disputation takes place. This helps establish Luther’s “theology of the cross.”</td>
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<td>June 28, 1519</td>
<td>Charles V, ruler of Spain, Austria, and the Netherlands, is elected to succeed his grandfather, Maximilian I, as Holy Roman emperor. This causes France to oppose Charles and his family, the Hapsburgs.</td>
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<td>July 4, 1519</td>
<td>The name “Lutheran” is first used for those who strictly follow the writings of Luther. The name “Protestant” would arise later.</td>
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<td>July 16, 1519</td>
<td>The Leipzig Debate between Luther and John Eck ends. The two debated the fundamental tenets of Lutheranism and the Roman Church.</td>
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<td>February 24, 1520</td>
<td>Pope Leo X crowns Charles V, now king of Germany, as emperor of the Holy Roman Empire.</td>
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<td>June 15, 1520</td>
<td>Pope Leo X issues the papal bull <em>Exsurge Domine</em> condemning Luther as a heretic.</td>
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<td>January 3, 1521</td>
<td>Pope Leo X excommunicates Luther.</td>
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<td>January 28, 1521</td>
<td>The Imperial Congress opens in Worms. The Imperial Congress of the Holy Roman Empire was called as needed in different locations until it was established in permanent session at Regensburg (1663–1806). Often referred to as <em>Reichstag</em> or <em>Diet</em>, these German and Latin words mean an “imperial congress” or “parliament.” This imperial congress was convened in part to question Luther on his writings.</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 18, 1521</td>
<td>At the Diet of Worms, Luther refuses to recant his writings. He refuses because no one offers a rebuttal to them based on the clear evidence of Scripture.</td>
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<td>May 25, 1521</td>
<td>Charles V issues the Edict of Worms, condemning the Reformation and placing Luther under the “greater ban” that deprives him of all rights as a citizen.</td>
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<td>November 9, 1522</td>
<td>Martin Chemnitz born. Chemnitz was a student of Melanchthon, but he held with Luther’s confession of the Lord’s Supper against Melanchthon. Chemnitz did use Melanchthon’s humanistic methods of teaching and of studying both Scripture and doctrine throughout his career. He assisted in writing the Formula of Concord and penned other important theological works. He died in 1586.</td>
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April 20, 1529
The Second Diet of Speyer revokes earlier concessions given to the Evangelical princes. The name “Protestant” comes from the protest signed by those princes.

April 23, 1529
Luther publishes his German Catechism, called the Large Catechism.

May 16, 1529
Luther publishes the Small Catechism. With the Augsburg Confession, this forms the widest consensus among Lutherans.

October 1–3, 1529
At the Marburg Colloquy, Lutherans, Zwinglians, and others meet to settle disputes over the doctrine of the Lord’s Supper. This attempt fails. Luther writes the Articles of Marburg that outline points of agreement and disagreement.

June 20, 1530–November 19, 1530
The Diet of Augsburg tries to combat the growing religious schism. It later adjourns, renewing the Edict of Worms and prohibiting ecclesiastical innovations.

June 25, 1530
The leaders of the Reformation present the Augsburg Confession to Emperor Charles V. The Confession is the fundamental explanation of Lutheran doctrine.

August 5, 1530
Romanists present the Confutation of the Augsburg Confession.

September 22, 1530
Melanchthon’s Apology of the Augsburg Confession is rejected by the Diet of Augsburg, including Charles V.

February 26, 1531
David Chytraeus born. Chytraeus played an important role in the writing of the Formula of Concord. His death in 1600 closed the confession-making era for Lutherans.

March 28, 1531
The Smalcalcld League, named for the town of Schmalkalden, forms as a defensive alliance of Lutheran nobility.

March 30, 1533
Henry VIII of England promulgates the Act of Supremacy, breaking with the Roman Church in order to divorce his wife, Catherine of Aragon.

July 11, 1533
Pope Clement VII excommunicates Henry VIII.

August 15, 1534
Ignatius of Loyola founds the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits). This group plays a preeminent role in the Counter-Reformation and the shaping of Lutheran orthodoxy.

May 26, 1536
Martin Bucer convinces the Lutherans and the Swiss Protestants to sign the Wittenberg Concord concerning the Lord’s Supper. That does not, however, end the dispute between the Lutherans and other Protestants.

October 30, 1536
At the Diet of Copenhagen, Christian III decrees Lutheranism the state religion of Denmark and Norway. Johann Bugenhagen writes the church orders (the rules for the administration of the church and the celebration of the Divine Service).
January 31, 1537  Luther departs for Schmalkalden with the Smalcald Articles. He shows signs of becoming more distant from Melanchthon. At Schmalkalden, Melanchthon presents the Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope.

May 22, 1542  Pope Paul III calls the Council of Trent.

December 13, 1545  The first session of the Council of Trent opens.

February 18, 1546  Luther dies.

July 15 – May 24, 1547  The Smalcaldic War begins with the Lutheran Moritz of Ducal Saxony invading Electoral Saxony for political gain. Elector John Frederick defeats Moritz but loses the war. The war ends with Charles V disbanding the Smalcaldic League. Electoral Saxony goes to Moritz and the Albertine branch of House Wettin.

May 15, 1548  The Augsburg Interim creates a temporary truce between Catholics and Protestants. Lutheran princes oppose it on religious grounds. Catholic princes oppose it on political grounds because it enhances Hapsburg power.

December 22, 1548  The Leipzig Interim, based on a document by Melanchthon written at Zella, is adopted under pressure from Moritz. The interim compromised several Lutheran doctrines. This inflamed the Adiaphoristic Controversy and helped the Gnesio-Lutherans (“Genuine Lutherans”) rally around Amsdorf in Jena. Article X of the Formula of Concord settled the matter, stating that adiaphora (rites and ceremonies that Scripture neither commands nor prohibits) lose their provisional neutrality in the case of persecution, creating a “state of confession,” a state of civil disobedience known in Latin as a status confessionis.

September 25, 1555  Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand I issues the Peace of Augsburg, establishing Lutheranism as a legitimate religion in Germany.

April 19, 1560  Melanchthon dies.

January 26, 1564  The Council of Trent releases its conclusions in the Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent, making a clear distinction between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism and affirming Roman doctrinal innovations.

August 24, 1572  The St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre begins with events surrounding the wedding of Henri of Navarre (the future Henri IV of France) and Margaret of Valois. For the next two days, thousands of Huguenots are killed throughout France, most likely on the orders of Catherine de’ Médici, the queen mother.
August 24, 1854
The Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Iowa and Other States is organized. Tension between the Missouri and Iowa Synods serves as background for Walther's Law and Gospel lectures.

January 1, 1855
Walther publishes the first edition of *Lehre und Wehre*.

April 22, 1859
Johann Friedrich Pfotenhauer born.
He became the sixth president of the LCMS (1911–35).

November 13, 1867
The Missouri and Iowa Synods hold a colloquy in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, to define the term “open question.” The colloquy eventually agrees that open questions are theological questions not answered in the Bible.

September 11, 1869
The Missouri Synod establishes its own press under the Articles of Association of Concordia College. It would be incorporated in 1890 as Concordia Publishing House.

January 2, 1872
Löhe dies.
Missionaries that he sent to North America became the founders of the Missouri and Iowa Synods.

May 4, 1876
Wyneken dies.

August 1, 1876
*The Evangelical Lutheran Free Church* is printed and circulated by K. Georg Stöckhardt. He is sentenced to six months in prison but is able to take a call to Holy Cross in St. Louis to avoid incarceration.

1876–77
Matters that had been building for almost a decade move rapidly in Saxony. Dissenting Lutheran pastors and congregations form the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church in Saxony and Other States, the “Other States” being added in 1877 because of rapid growth.

November 16, 1881
Those who left the Missouri Synod after the Election Controversy hold their first organizational meeting in Blue Island, Illinois.

May 21, 1882
The first issue of *The Lutheran Witness* is printed. This continues to be an official publication of the LCMS.

March 19, 1884
John William Behnken born.
He became the seventh president of the LCMS (1935–62).

May 7, 1887
Walther dies.
Pictorial Overview: Trinity
Map of St. Louis, circa 1875

St. Louis, 1875
Includes the Gesamtkirche, the Composite Union Congregation

Numerical Key to Approximate Locations:
1. Zion  2. First location of Immanuel
3. Second location of Immanuel (after 1865)
4. First location of Trinity
5. Second location of Trinity (after 1864)
6. Holy Cross  7. Concordia College
8. Printing plant of the LCMS
Maps of the Missouri Synod, circa 1870–90
In 1849, both actual and anticipated growth of the LCMS touched off a debate on the challenges faced especially by the president of the Synod in performing his office. A five-year process resulted in the adoption of the “New Constitution” in 1854 that established a “General Synod” and, at the time, four “District Synods”: the Western District, Northern District, Central District, and Eastern District. Those districts remained virtually unchanged until 1874. Meanwhile, the size of the LCMS general convention grew to the point where, in 1872, the General Synod that had consisted of clergy and lay delegates from every congregation became the “General Delegate-Synod” made up of elected delegates representing groups of pastors and congregations in electoral circuits. Beginning in 1874 and occurring frequently thereafter, growth demanded the creation of more districts. The maps on these pages depict that growth.

Fueled by waves of German immigration, the LCMS experienced tremendous growth at the same time that Walther and his colleagues were following in the footsteps of Claus Harms and other confessional leaders of the nineteenth-century Lutheran awakening. The unflinching, counter-cultural devotion to Scripture, Law and Gospel, Luther, and historic, orthodox Lutheranism helped the LCMS stand out on an intellectual and cultural landscape that had turned its back on inerrant Scripture even before Walther was born. God’s Word never returns empty. Walther and his colleagues proclaimed that Word in all its clarity, to the glory of God and to the growth and blessing of the Church.

These maps are designed to illustrate for the reader the dynamic process of creating new districts. The maps reflect the actual state of the LCMS approximate to the times indicated.
C. F. W. Walther’s study included many Lutheran books from the sixteenth century to the nineteenth. When Walther quoted Luther, Chemnitz, Gerhard, and others, one could be sure that he had first read their writings. Walther told his students that they should always look up the facts before speaking or writing about a topic. In his lectures, Walther allowed his students to challenge him to produce his sources. See William Dallmann, *My Life* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1945), 30. Image courtesy of Concordia Historical Institute.
Law and Gospel are foundational for the message of all of Scripture. For example, when Adam and Eve fell into sin, they violated the Law God had given them and were condemned. Yet God gave the Gospel promise of a Savior who would save humanity from sin, death, and the devil (Genesis 3:15). The theme of Law and Gospel runs throughout the history of Israel in terms of human sin and God's judgment, yet God continually promises and reveals His grace. The central and dual message of the prophets is judgment and salvation, which is Law and Gospel.

Law and Gospel do not always appear in Scripture with such overt labels; the palette of language in the Scriptures is multicolored with rich hues. Passages alternate topics that commonly illustrate the broader themes of Law and Gospel. These topics can include fallen creation and new creation, darkness and light, death and life, wandering and Promised Land, exile and return, ignorance and wisdom, demon possession and the kingdom of God, sickness and healing, lost and found, guilt and righteousness, flesh and spirit, fear and joy, hunger and feast, Babylon and the new Jerusalem, or many others. But the common element is God's restoration of fallen humanity through His Son.

In Exodus 33:12, Moses asks God to show him His ways. God responds with a self-confession or creed in Exodus 34:6–7, the elements of which are Law and Gospel. This passage is drawn from the earlier explanation of the First Commandment (Exodus 20:5–6; compare the numerous cross-references to this wording throughout the Old Testament). This is the text Luther includes in “The Close of the Commandments” in the Small Catechism, which bridges the catechumen from understanding the Law to understanding the Gospel taught in the Apostles' Creed.

In Mark 1:14–15, we see the Gospel connected with the kingdom of God drawing near as Jesus' ministry in Galilee approaches its apex. Jesus accents the fulfillment of the season; God's kingdom shall break forth in a new and glorious way. Similarly, Jesus gives the promise of His Father that the disciples shall be clothed with power from on high in order to be His witnesses to the world (Luke 24:44–49). In preparing the disciples, however, Jesus points to Scripture—to the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings—that the central witness of Him from Adam, Abraham, and Moses onward should be preached to the nations for the forgiveness of sin. Here again we see Law and

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</table>
Gospel, but bound with Christ Himself, His kingdom, and His message of salvation. This seemingly “foolish” message is the wisdom that Paul preaches (1 Corinthians 1:18–25).

The following timeline will illustrate how the Law and Gospel themes of Scripture persisted in the ancient and medieval Church and how Luther brought them back to full clarity. It will help the reader appreciate the broad and deep heritage that contributed to Walther’s efforts to explain Scripture as Law and Gospel.

1 See also the research of Victor Hasler, Gesetz und Evangelium in der alten Kirche bis Origenes, eine auslegungsgeschichtliche Untersuchung (Zurich: Gottfried, 1953); Hans-Martin Barth, “Gesetz und Evangelium,” in Theologische Realenzyklopädie XIII (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1984), 126–42.

AD 48–56
Paul writes the Epistle to the Galatians at the beginning of this period and the Epistle to the Romans at the end. In addition to the Gospel according to Matthew, Paul’s Epistles provide much of the biblical grounding for the discernment of Law and Gospel. Major passages include Romans 2:14–15; 16:25–26; and Galatians 3:12.

Most important is the conviction that the content of the scriptural testimony is Jesus Christ Himself. Jesus affirms this: “The Scriptures . . . bear witness about Me” (John 5:39). The message of the Scriptures is the Good News of God’s work to reconcile the fallen world to Himself through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The Holy Spirit breathed the Scriptures in a manner that leads one to find, as Luther commonly said, “that which promotes Christ” (German: was Christum treibet) in every passage of every canonical book in contrast with fallible human reason. See WA DB 7:384; WA 3:492; 4:379; 39/1:47; and other places.

ca. 96
The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians points to faith in the blood of Christ as true repentance even for the Gentiles, pointing also to the preaching of Noah and the saving work of God beyond the covenant with Abraham (ANF 1:7).

ca. 100
The Epistle of Barnabas speaks of old and new covenants to argue against a resurgence of Jewish nationalism in the late first and early second centuries after the destruction of Jerusalem. This early Christian writing views Law and Gospel in the biblical context of sin and grace to argue that faith, not works, is the mark of the new covenant (ANF 1:39).

ca. 109
Ignatius of Antioch stresses continuity between the true prophets and the apostles in chapter 5 of his Epistle to the Philadelphians (ANF 1:82). He identifies the Gospel proclamation with this unbroken line of true believers, whereas the false prophets and false teachers do not have the Gospel of Christ.
144 The Roman Church excommunicates Marcion, who forms his own church in competition with Christianity. Influenced by Gnostic false doctrine, Marcion teaches that the Old Testament "God" of the Jews is an evil deity who created the world and established the Law. He likewise teaches that the New Testament "God" is a hidden deity of spirit, Gospel, and love revealed in a Christ who never took on human flesh but only appeared to be human.

Marcion is the first historical figure whose documents arranging the New Testament books of Scripture into a canon, a collection of authorized documents, have survived. Yet 2 Peter 3:15–16 suggests that a collection of Paul's letters was known already in the first century AD. Marcion's action does not create the canon; rather, it urges the Church to reaffirm the true canon of Scripture pointed to by Christ (Luke 24:44) and the apostles.

165 Justin Martyr speaks of an old Law and a new Law in the sense of an old covenant and a new covenant. Although he picks this up from biblical language about Law and Gospel in terms of sin and grace, he links the verses to ideas of an old covenant for the Jews alone that is inferior to the new covenant for all people. He speaks of them both as Law, a kind of divine philosophy. In that we see elements of both Law and Gospel. In Justin's writings faith is not a work, yet faith and works remain connected (ANF 1:199–202).

177–202 Irenaeus of Lyon refers to the Gospel as the message about Christ taught from God by the apostles and published in Scripture (ANF 1:414). Irenaeus believes that truth comes from God alone; departing from that truth is sin. True knowledge of God comes only through the Word (ANF 1:463). This independent truth also forms the basis of humanity's reaction to it, namely, knowledge of sin, grace in Christ, and forgiveness (ANF 1:450).

Irenaeus rejects those who scoff at the old covenant and the Jews. He sees God at work in His promises of forgiveness throughout the Old Testament (ANF 1:463ff.). Irenaeus teaches a clear, two-covenant theology with Christ as the point of unity (ANF 1:495ff.). The old covenant points the way to Christ, while the new reveals His actuality, person, and work.

ca. 200 Tertullian writes extensively against Marcion. He also writes about consulting "Scripture and apostolic law" in his Elucidations (ANF 3:94). In An Answer to the Jews, Tertullian clearly sees the Gospel in Old Testament prophets such as Isaiah (ANF 3:151–73).

His writing Against Marcion (ANF 3:237–654) defends against the Marcionites by appealing to the unity of God, the excellence of creation and its witness to God, and Christ as the revealer of the Creator. He focuses on the unity of Scripture by pointing to the unified witness concerning Christ in the Old Testament and New Testament. He argues that one must alter Paul's doctrine in order to create Marcion's false understanding of Law and Gospel (ANF 3:453).

As with Irenaeus, we see a strong appeal to Scripture, an awareness of Law and Gospel, and the focus on Christ as preeminent and true for all eternity.
Cyprian of Carthage writes three books of testimonies against the Jews in which he engages the issue of old Law and new Law. He points to the loss of a Jewish homeland as evidence against the old order and in favor of the new in Christ. He appears to equate Christian faith with a positive attribute credited to believers even as the Jews’ rejection of the fulfillment of the Law in Christ is a negative mark against them (ANF 5:507ff.).

Cyprian tends to look at a Gospel-Law dynamic, yet he does come back to the theme of Baptism and God’s forgiveness of sin, adding a final note of Gospel (ANF 5:556). One sees a free movement between Law and Gospel as Cyprian exhorts his readers to avoid falling away. We also remember that this is the era of the great persecutions under Roman Emperors Septimius Severus and Decius.

Tyconius was a layman who was excommunicated by the breakaway Donatist Christians. Nevertheless, he refused to join the catholic Christians who adhered to the Nicene Creed. About this time he writes The Book of Rules, which becomes the first text specifically on hermeneutics, the topic of biblical interpretation. (This book would become part of the Western Christian tradition through the treatise On Christian Doctrine by Augustine of Hippo.)

Tyconius openly uses the principle that Scripture interprets Scripture. He makes extensive use of the prophetic books and the Epistles of Paul. He considers some ways in which reason might engage grammar to gain a better understanding of Scripture. He used this approach to suggest that the Church, the Body of the Lord, can contain both good and evil members.

Of his seven rules, the third rule, “Concerning the Promise and the Law,” engages us here (NPNF1 2:568ff.). Tyconius uses this rule to sort out apparent contradictions between unconditional and conditional covenant statements. To those on the “right side” of the Church the unconditional covenant of the Gospel applies because (Tyconius says) they have the Holy Spirit and do of their free will what God wants. The Law, however, applies to the “left side” of the Church and shows them that they cannot be saved unless they flee to God’s mercy.

Tyconius believes sin is spread like a cold; the Donatists were intent on avoiding this disease. He believes that God gives good works as rewards for faith, but he also believes that faith is something that people create as a work, contrary to Scripture (NPNF1 2:569). Augustine sees that the rules of Tyconius confuse Law and Gospel with respect to faith, even though they help one to better understand how clear passages in Scripture illuminate more obscure ones.

John Chrysostom’s comments on 2 Corinthians 3:6 are similar to those of Augustine below. Later interpreters see “letter” as literalistic interpretation and “Spirit” as typological or allegorical interpretation. Chrysostom writes:

In the Law, he that has sin is punished. Here, he that has sins comes and is baptized and is made righteous, and being made righteous, he lives, being delivered from the death of sin. The Law, if it lay hold of a murderer, puts him to death. The Gospel, if it lay hold on a murderer, enlightens and gives him life. (NPNF1 12:307)
In this drawing of the first building occupied by Trinity at Third and Lombard in St. Louis, Walther's parsonage appears to the right, across the street. He moved from the parsonage to the Jefferson campus of Concordia College after the buildings were erected in 1850. Handwritten at the bottom of the drawing is the German name of Trinity congregation: “Die Dreieinigkeitskirche in St. Louis.” See also the map of St. Louis in the front of the book. Image courtesy of Historic Trinity Church.
It is Friday, September 12, 1884, and the auditorium of Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri, is slowly filling with students. The new building, with its loud, clear bell, was dedicated just last year. Professor Doctor Walther has served as president since 1849, before the seminary was incorporated in 1853. His colleague, Professor Pieper, will succeed Walther as president.

The official name of the school is Concordia College. The building stands on Jefferson Avenue, just south and west of the Synod's press plant on the corner of Indiana and Miami. The business office of the press is a part of the seminary, and the press is called Lutheran Concordia Publishing. The seminary campus is immediately southeast of Holy Cross Church, where Pastor Stöckhardt serves. He, like Walther, came here from Germany to avoid government interference in religious matters. Because he has a degree from the University of Leipzig, Stöckhardt is also a part-time professor of biblical theology. He and Walther, together with the editors of the St. Louis edition of Luther's writings, will shape how the Missouri Synod reads and applies the Bible for many years to come.

The three-year "theoretical" program is in good hands with the six pastors who serve as full-time or part-time faculty. Before ministerial candidates

1 See the photo of Concordia Seminary, page lxxviii. See also the maps in the front of the book.
2 In 1839, the "log cabin school" was established as a parish school and seminary of Trinity congregation in Altenburg, Missouri. The school was transferred to Trinity congregation in St. Louis in 1849. It has been incorporated as Concordia College since February 23, 1853. In 1846, J. K. Wilhelm Löhe backed the founding of a "practical" preacher's seminary in Fort Wayne, Indiana. That was incorporated as the German Theological Seminary of the German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States on January 21, 1850. The practical seminary was joined with the theoretical program of Concordia College in 1861. In 1875, the general delegate-synod of the LCMS provided for the relocation of the practical seminary to Springfield, Illinois, which happened in 1876. In 1926, Concordia College relocated to Clayton, Missouri. In 1976, the practical seminary returned to Fort Wayne. For a time, both seminaries were known as Concordia Theological Seminary. Today, Concordia College does business as Concordia Seminary, while Concordia Theological Seminary is located in Fort Wayne. In the last thirty years, both seminaries have developed programs that are both academic and practical in focus.
3 Stöckhardt received a licentiate, the general equivalent of a Doctor of Theology degree, from Leipzig because the Erlangen faculty, where Stöckhardt had studied, considered his firm confession of biblical theology to be "unscientific" (unwissenschaftlich).
4 See the photograph of the seminary faculty from 1887 to 1892 on page 354. See also the illustration of the seminary faculty around 1880 that includes Martin Günther, J. M. Gottlieb Schaller, C. F. W. Walther, and C. H. Rudolph Lange, page 68.
started at seminary, they spent six years in preparatory schools, learning classical Latin, classical Greek, biblical Hebrew, German, English, and sometimes French and Spanish. By studying these languages in addition to logic, rhetoric, mathematics, history, and other subjects, the sons of farmers, merchants, and tradesmen will receive an education similar to the rich. Even if they do not become pastors, some will become university instructors, diplomats, medical doctors, or lawyers.

The auditorium is named for Johann Wilhelm Baier, the Lutheran theologian in the early 1700s whose Latin Compendium of Positive Theology, edited by Doctor Walther, serves the students as an important textbook. Baier’s book teaches students about the categories and classes of words used to speak about the doctrines that the Bible teaches. Walther’s lectures on Baier’s Compendium are wonderful to hear. Walther’s oral exams, however, are feared. One has to memorize whole sections of Baier in Latin, and Walther knows almost the whole thing by heart.

See, here comes the good Doctor! He always walks with a spring in his step. Unlike some of his colleagues, he has remained quite thin and seems always full of energy. Walther still dresses as he did when he began teaching forty years ago: frock coat, white shirt, and parricide collar. Yet the students admire his unique style. Walther is carrying his notes with him, about six pages of outline for each of these lectures that he gives on Friday evenings. Here Walther is somewhat more relaxed than in the regular lectures, yet his eyes look right into you. Students have been up since 5:30 this morning, so Walther keeps things interesting. They know not to speak as casually in the pulpit as he does here! There will be no sleepers this evening, though the hiss and glow of the gas lamps can make one tired.

Walther knows which books he needs when he gets to the right place in his outline. Still, you should hear what the man can quote from memory! If he had his way, the students would all be able to draw on Scripture and the Book of Concord at any time. Pastors need to be ready at all times. Now Walther is taking his place behind the desk and sitting in that high-backed chair from which he thunders with his strong voice!

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5 See the photo of the aged Walther, standing, page 8.
6 These reflections on Walther’s mannerisms have been gleaned from letters and other publications by those who knew and worked with or studied under Walther, including William Dallmann, who served as president of the English Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri and Other States, as well as a tireless missionary, pastor, and first vice president of the LCMS. He had power of attorney to sign for Walther as an administrative assistant. Ludwig Fürbringer succeeded Franz Pieper as president of Concordia Seminary. He was also a part of Walther’s extended family. W. H. T. Dau served as a professor at Concordia and as president of Valparaiso University.
7 See the Walther portrait, page xviii.
Broad Context of Walther’s Lectures

The immediate, physical setting of Walther’s lectures in the Baier Auditorium serves as an important context for learning about Walther’s lectures. Yet one must also understand what people were thinking about and talking about at that time—the intellectual setting. Walther makes many passing references to people, events, and attitudes in his lectures. By considering this context briefly, one can gain a deeper understanding of the lectures and how they connect with modern reading and application of the Bible.

Europeans of the 1800s had few religious options open to them. It was difficult to maintain historic confessional religious positions—whether Lutheran, Reformed, or even Roman Catholic. The change in European society between 1650 and 1750 reduced those who adhered to historic confessional beliefs to small groups of people. The situation was so bad that, by 1817, the king of Prussia decreed a union between Lutheran and Reformed churches. His edict technically “united” these different confessional groups into one church body, the Union Church or Evangelical Christian Church. Those congregations or individuals who chose to retain their unique confessional positions were persecuted. Additionally, the intellectual elite criticized and suppressed Roman Catholics and other Christians. Open atheism and secularism began to be acceptable in society.

Pietism (1650–1750 and to the present)

To avoid persecution, on the one hand, and atheism, on the other, a person might try to be religious in the sense of individual faith and a moral life. This attitude generally coincided with a movement called Pietism that arose among Protestants, but especially among Lutherans. Such an approach generally parted ways with the historic, corporate emphasis in the teaching and piety of the Church because it was based partly on the new model of a reasoning individual: “I think, therefore, I am.” In Christian hymnody, for example, older hymns tend to speak of “we” having sinned, needing salvation, having been saved, and so on. Hymns that come from the era of Pietism tend to speak of “I” having sinned, needing salvation, having been saved, and so on.

Many European believers embraced Pietism because this movement included a diverse understanding of personal faith in different circumstances. The movement developed after the Thirty Years’ War (1618–48) as a reaction to the connection between the territorial churches and the political powers that had brought so much suffering to Europe. These institutions and leaders seemed entirely opposite of the description of Jesus found in Scripture. There,

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8 In some European countries with significant Roman Catholic populations, a similar movement called Quietism met with opposition and suppression by the papacy.
He heals the sick, makes the infirm whole again, casts out demons, and brings the kingdom of God into the midst of people. He also chastises the Pharisees, the sanctimonious establishment that knows its dogmas and yet does not follow them and has blood on its hands, including the blood of Jesus and of Stephen. That contrast in war-ravaged Europe helped to motivate believers to seek a new way of personal devotion.

Pietism tried to find an identity apart from worldly institutions, yet it became just as institutionalized and political as those it opposed. Pietism found a home at the new University of Halle under the direction of Philipp Jakob Spener and August Hermann Francke, both of whom were Lutheran pastors. Johann Jakob Rambach, the great preacher and scholar, also joined their ranks. Spener, Francke, and Rambach still influence Lutheranism today; certainly Walther and others in the early Missouri Synod knew their writings. Yet Reformed theology also influenced those at Halle, preparing them for the king of Prussia’s announcement in 1817 of the forced merger of Lutherans and Reformed—known as the Prussian Union. Because of its subjectivity and flexibility, Pietism was capable of forging ties between Lutherans and Reformed that the clear definitions in the historic confessions of both churches would mutually exclude.

Pietists embraced the understanding of natural law and human reason that was radiating out from its origins in England and France. These “works-oriented” Christians, including those at the University of Halle, received financial support from wealthy patrons eager to see new worldviews dominate religion, politics, and society. These perspectives also began to dominate mission activity.

In Pietism, as Walther says in his lectures, the focus drifted from what a Christian is according to categories defined in Scripture to what a Christian does. That shift reflects the way the modern scientific method recognizes a root cause by the careful observation of the effects. The problem with that...
approach, however, is sin. We read in John 7:43 that Jesus’ ministry brought division among the people. Romans 16:17; 1 Corinthians 11:18; Galatians 5:20; and Jude 19 speak or warn about divisions in the Church. The creeds of the Church were developed in order to answer division and heresy with Scripture. Modern expectations of evidence require the unity in Christ (John 17:11) to become a visible unity within the visible Church. During the last two thousand years, that sort of unity has remained fleeting and elusive. Therefore, Pietism puts less trust in the institutional church and more in the private, small-group study of Scripture. Although today’s small-group Bible studies may have nothing to do with Pietism, that method of Bible study originated with the development of Pietism.

Pietism’s primary focus on works stands in tension with Scripture’s teaching about the hidden and visible Church. It introduces the possibility that the meaning of Scripture depends not only on God but also on human experience. Pietism also remains challenged by the divine mandate that stands behind Holy Baptism, the Holy Supper, and Holy Absolution. The mandate and institution of Christ in Matthew 28:19–20; Matthew 26:26–29, its parallels, and 1 Corinthians 11:23–26; and John 20:21–23 establish a reality whose truth precedes the ability to measure it. Luther defends the scriptural doctrines of the Lord’s Supper and infant Baptism by pointing to the nature of the Sacrament that is established by the Word according to the authority of Christ.\textsuperscript{12} Luther’s approach is one of faith in prior truth, while Pietism depends on faith together with observation. A side effect of Pietism was a tremendous drop in the number of people who received the Lord’s Supper. This offers an example of how differences in approach are connected with changes in practice.

Within Pietism there were royalists who were reacting to the carnage of the Napoleonic era (1799–1815). The movement also included Norwegians who adopted a modern democratic constitution on May 17, 1814. The movement even included Germans who supported the 1848 socialist revolutions. Pietism was subjective and adaptable to communities that interpret the Bible according to their needs. Many different pietistic viewpoints came with immigrants to the United States, and most viewpoints had some kind of representation in the early Missouri Synod. Walther took issue with Pietism precisely because of its subjective interpretation of Scripture and its focus on works as the measure of salvation. By pointing to the proper distinction between Law and Gospel, Walther helped draw differing people with differing points of view toward a common biblical understanding that helped to define an emerging identity within the Missouri Synod.

\textsuperscript{12} See Luther’s defense of infant Baptism and the Lord’s Supper in LC IV and V (\textit{Concordia}, 428–34).
RATIONALISM (1700–1830 AND TO THE PRESENT)

Rationalism is the application of modern methods of evidence to the individual person as a thinking entity. Its roots go back to the Renaissance and Reformation eras, but it began to grow significantly after 1650. By 1700, European philosophy was using a method of evidence that focuses on effects or results and thus traces a number of possible causes. This method had been gaining ground since Copernicus published *On the Revolutions of the Celestial Spheres* in 1543. Rationalism calls into question the idea that the universe has a place for everything and that God has put everything in its place. This method looks at a situation and eliminates all but the one thing without which the event could not take place—the necessary cause of the effect. It is like Sherlock Holmes solving a mystery, eliminating all false leads until the one thing left, however unlikely, is the cause that produces the culprit.

Rationalism is concerned about the things you can observe as well as the thoughts you can think. By using the modern method of finding causes from their effects in a series of observations or controlled experiments, one compiles a library of knowledge. One uses that knowledge in the present to predict the future. Rationalism finds a ready application in the sciences, yet the Achilles’ heel of this method is the belief that somehow we can sift through all the necessary evidence. This approach, born in leading European universities, creates a problem with anything that involves God. Using this understanding of cause and effect, natural philosophers concluded that to know nature is to experience it; to know God is to experience Him. Philosophers concluded that we cannot state things as fact if they lie outside our experience.

The subtle, unspoken rule in Rationalism is that human observation runs the show by determining the context. Major philosophers have long rejected the objective ability to know about spiritual things. The result is that we either cannot know God or that we can know God only through our own intellect and experience. Using this worldview, any kind of religious teaching that goes beyond scientific observation cannot be known for certain and must be interpreted as a metaphor for the individual or the community. Creation, miracles, the resurrection of Christ, and the Last Day become hidden in doubt. Thus Rationalism runs contrary to Scripture (1 Corinthians 15).

Rationalism was all about the intellect. Reason was considered self-defining, self-critical, and aimed toward the goal of general human improvement when well guided. The downfall of this approach, however, was that no one could find a good theory about how reason comes into being. Additionally,

14 Consider the writings of René Descartes (1596–1650), Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), and Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834).
all logic and no emotion makes for a dull life. As a result, a growing reaction against Rationalism and the Enlightenment emerged after 1760.\footnote{This was the period of “seething and longing” (German: \textit{Sturm und Drang}).} By about 1830, this settled into the period of Romanticism,\footnote{Romanticism is a movement in both art and philosophy that adopts an idealized goal for humanity and finds elements of that ideal world in the present. Therefore, it ignores obvious, measurable flaws in today’s society if they can be sold as necessary sacrifices for a brighter tomorrow. This kind of thinking underlies abortion, euthanasia, world wars, Soviet ethnic cleansing, Nazi concentration camps, and racial segregation and mistreatment in the United States and elsewhere. This stands contrary to God’s command to love one’s neighbor (Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 19:19; 22:39; Mark 12:31; Romans 13:9; Galatians 5:14; and James 2:8).} in which reason, coupled with emotion and intuition, formed a model of general human advancement. With the theory of evolution popularized after 1859 by Charles Darwin, everything was supposed to get better. The descendants of Rationalism were supposed to fix everything.

Rationalism and its descendants proved to be a broken reed. The Great War (1914–19) all but erased the world order that had existed in Europe until that time. The Second World War continued the fighting left over from the first. In the nineteenth century, philosophers expressed doubt that people were rational, and this theory, especially in the form of “God is dead” Nihilism, reached a climax in the twentieth century. More recently, the community as the seat of interpretation has eclipsed the idea of the reasoning individual.\footnote{So-called postmodernism is merely the newest offspring of the motley family tree of ideas and philosophies that has arisen from Rationalism. Although some criticize the cruelty of religion and the blood that has been spilled in the name of God, it is Rationalism whose death toll rose to disastrous heights during the twentieth century and in whose name the unborn and aged are being put to death today.}

Pietism looked to individual belief in God. Rationalism took that further to mean individual piety \textit{without} God. The New World became a magnet for Europeans who had had enough of narrow, established lives and were willing to suffer great risk for the hope of a life in which they could live their faith free of a socially intrusive, bureaucratic state. North America was, however, a place in which freedom \textit{of} religion mingled with freedom \textit{from} religion. Pietism and Rationalism existed side by side. The strictness of the Puritans yielded to the Half-Way Covenant in 1662. The first Great Awakening, similar to Pietism and Methodism, arose between 1700 and 1750. A Rationalist “Christianity” then dominated the revolutionary period. A second Great Awakening after 1801 saw the explosive spread of Baptists and Methodists, which diminished the traditional Anglican, Presbyterian, Reformed, and Lutheran churches. In the eastern United States, Lutherans and Reformed mixed freely, often through language and culture, as they were woven into the fabric of a new nation.
As just noted, Pietism helped to fuel waves of Christian revivalism in the United States. The first and second Great Awakenings were connected with a new style of sermons and the way people practiced their faith. Instead of using arguments based on logic and doctrine, people began to put emotional involvement at the center of their religious experience. Preachers who embraced revivalism, with its unique style of preaching, came to be known as “new lights,” while those who retained more traditional approaches were called “old lights.” Among the laity, people studied the Bible at home in small groups while downplaying the defining role of public worship.

During Walther’s lifetime, a revival meeting happened over several days to even a week or more. It was a series of worship services designed to gain new converts and to energize Christians in faith, life, worship, and mission. When there was a strong focus on gaining converts, tents or a space that was not usually associated with a church was used.

A traveling preacher, perhaps one with an established reputation, would deliver a revival sermon or a series of sermons. Most of these sermons were intended to produce a visible response from the audience, either to make a decision to follow Jesus or to repent from past sins and renew that commitment. A prominent part of the sermon included a sort of “altar call” in which people were invited to the anxious bench. There, they became the focus of the preacher’s sermon, which usually described hell in all its terror and then offered them the hope of salvation. Others would pray with those on the anxious bench, and the result was often a very emotional moment of conversion and acceptance, accompanied by the singing, praying, and praise of the audience. Revivalism was becoming the American form of religion.

Walther strongly objected to revivals. He saw in them a way in which man was trying to control the Holy Spirit. These meetings contradicted John 3:8, which teaches about the work of the Spirit through the Means of Grace. Walther also viewed revivals as a form of works-righteousness. Finally, he perceived revival meetings as an opportunity for a kind of psychological manipulation. Having experienced Martin Stephan’s influence, Walther had firsthand knowledge of how dangerous the clergy can be if they build their message on emotion and the ability to turn people’s hearts in an irrational, highly emotional setting.

Summary

Walther’s lectures on Law and Gospel keep Pietism, Rationalism, and revivalism in mind as they engage important aspects of our salvation. The content of these lectures touches directly on how God works to save us...
through Scripture as a Means of Grace. Walther knows that hope in the resurrection is a fact established by God. It is not our work of belief. God’s unchanging truth remains central to all Christian hope in this world and to life with God in the next.

Walther repeatedly comments in his lectures about two general problems among Christians. The first problem is a “dead” adherence to the truth. Luther calls this a mere historical faith. This sort of approach suggests that the knowledge of Bible facts or doctrine can save. Luther and others observe that even Satan knows who Jesus Christ is, but that does him no good. The fact that Christ went the sad road to the cross for us, suffered the pain of hell on our behalf, and gives us forgiveness through His Means of Grace today should move us beyond mere historical knowledge. Faith is either living or it is dead, and the Gospel creates living faith because it is where the Holy Spirit works in Word and Sacrament.

The other error happens when a Christian takes his or her faith experience or individual, subjective knowledge and tries to make that knowledge a part of the objective faith (doctrine) that all believe. Walther gives a number of examples of this error. He sees parallels for this error among Romanists, Rationalists, and Pietists. Walther criticizes this approach as being doomed to failure. God’s Law condemns all human efforts to achieve salvation. God’s Gospel, however, offers immediate assurance of salvation. Anything that tries either to remove something from or to add something to Scripture changes the Gospel message and destroys the certainty of salvation.

**Immediate Context of Walther’s Lectures:**

**The Election Controversy (1872–1928)**

Having reviewed the major intellectual movements of Walther’s day, it is important to understand one other aspect of the historical setting for Walther’s lectures. His presentations on Law and Gospel engage ideas found in a large number of documents that reflect the doctrinal struggles of the Missouri Synod at that time. The Election Controversy, also known as the Predestinarian Controversy, had its beginnings in 1872 and addressed the issue of whether a person’s salvation rests ultimately on his free decision. It was far more than a dispute between Walther and Gottfried Fritschel of the Iowa Synod. Animosity between the Missouri and Iowa Synods existed.

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18 See AE 34:110; WA 39/1:46; 37:45.
19 See, for example, various discussions in Theses IX, X, XIII, and XVII.
already in the early 1850s\textsuperscript{21} and encompassed much more than just eternal election to grace.

Walther addressed the Election Controversy specifically in the 1877 Proceedings of the Western District of the Missouri Synod and later in the 1882 Proceedings of the Synodical Conference, among other sources. He wanted to show that proper discernment of Law and Gospel does not merely show a Christian how to find this or that meaning in Scripture. It shows a Christian how to read Scripture, how to weigh age-old questions of faith in light of Scripture, and how to be certain of salvation in Christ Jesus—the particular matter disputed in the Election Controversy.

**Scripture, Theology, and Philosophy**

Although the concerns about eternal predestination to grace were the most obvious point of dispute, the Election Controversy was at its core a struggle about whether and how Scripture can remain a true Means of Grace. From its beginnings, the Missouri Synod—and Walther in particular—had been sparring with the theological faculty at the Friedrich-Alexander-University in Erlangen. This group had taken traditional Lutheran language and connected it with new philosophies and ideas to make Lutheranism amenable to modern thought.\textsuperscript{22} The Erlangen faculty did not represent the more conservative, biblical position that helped shape the Missouri Synod.

Many theologians, such as those who were members of the Erlangen faculty, were influenced by Pietism and Rationalism. Philosophers and churchmen began to focus on the inner aspects of human life and the importance of the individual. At the same time, rationalist thinkers began to redefine how human beings are capable of knowing their world: “I think, therefore, I am.” As described in the section on Rationalism, this approach has tremendous difficulty evaluating anything that involves God—especially election to grace. Using the modern understanding of cause and effect, people either cannot know God or they think they can know God only through the world of their own intellect and experience. The result is that religion turns into ethics.

**Pietism and Ethics in View of Faith**

Professors Heinrich Schmid and Gottfried Thomasius of the University of Erlangen advanced the idea that God saves people in view of their faith, their

\textsuperscript{21} An important source is Pastor Carl A. W. Röbbelen’s 1855 tract \textit{Wie stehen wir zu Herrn Pfarrer Löhe}, wherein he gives an account of how events unfolded with Johannes A. Deindörfer and Georg M. Großmann, who, with Michael Schüller and Conrad Sigmund Fritschel, helped form the Iowa Synod in 1854.

ethics, and their conduct. This was but another round in the ancient discussion of whether human lives are predetermined or whether we have free will. The term “in view of faith”\(^\text{23}\) tries to steer between a universe that is totally predetermined and one of total freedom without getting snared in the problem of evil. Walther knew this quite well, so he added many Lutheran orthodox citations on conversion and election to his edition of Johann Wilhelm Baier’s *Compendium of Positive Theology* in order to forestall modern criticisms of faith, ethics, and the purpose of the Christian life and a relationship with God.\(^\text{24}\)

Walther was quite aware of Luther’s dealings with “in view of faith” language and its relationship to the doctrine of election. The meaning among Lutherans achieved its classical form during the controversy regarding conversion and predestination at the end of the sixteenth century. Many orthodox Lutherans, including Johann Gerhard, use “in view of faith” language,\(^\text{25}\) yet they use it in the sense of something that flows from the prior act of God reaching out to a lost world through Word and Sacrament. The later use among Lutherans in Germany and the United States focuses more on faith in action as the deciding factor instead of the eternal will of God. Teachings about faith and election begin to change with the rise of Pietism and continue on that path throughout the Rationalist period.

### Election and Baptism

H. U. Sverdrup’s edition of Luther’s Small Catechism helps to frame the issue of election. For Sverdrup, Holy Baptism is the backdrop for either remaining in one’s baptismal covenant or falling away from it. Yet Baptism takes a back seat of sorts to one’s conduct and will. Sverdrup emphasizes the godly life of a Christian over Scripture as proof of a loving relationship with God. This undermines the Bible’s comforting message about election in Christ. Sverdrup would not speak against Baptism, but he would speak of one’s conduct as the real indicator of whether Baptism was effective.\(^\text{26}\)

If people see one’s conduct as the real measure of faith, people can draw conclusions from that outlook that can undermine their salvation. In the matter of election, both Sverdrup and Georg Fritschel of the Iowa Synod take an almost dualistic approach to good and evil with respect to conduct. It is as if God and Satan use the Last Day to claim, respectively, good and bad people.

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\(^{23}\) Latin: *intuitu fidei*.


\(^{26}\) H. U. Sverdrup, *Explanation of Luther’s Small Catechism Based on Dr. Erick Pontoppidan*, trans. E. G. Lund (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1900), 25, 30, 74, 109–11.
and take these people to their respective eternal dwellings based on conduct.\textsuperscript{27} The focus on conduct can lead to a dualistic view of God and Satan as co-equal causes of good and evil, each content to allow the other his due, as it were.

Yet God tells us that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). If the devil is to “claim his own,” using this line of reasoning, the devil would have to take us all if the matter were decided by conduct and not grace alone. Pietists have a focus on conduct as the key to eternal outcomes. The result is not only election in view of one’s conduct but also a change in the way that Pietism understands and applies the Law. In the context of Pietism, the Law becomes less condemning. Sverdrup writes about whether we can “perfectly keep [the Law],” as opposed to whether we can keep it at all. Therefore, there is a failure to distinguish Law and Gospel in matters of salvation and election, which Walther addresses directly in his lectures.

For Pietists, Baptism became a door into the covenant, but the measure of keeping the covenant was one’s conduct. With such a heavy emphasis on works, Baptism and the preaching of the Gospel become only a doorway or an invitation to Christ, an invitation to believe and accept grace. That becomes more and more like the emphasis of revivalism. With the blending of Pietism and revivalism in American religious culture, many began to see Baptism and preaching the Gospel as acts that do not fully bring God and the believer into a state of reconciliation. This emerged as a strong theme in Scandinavian-American theology. Walther took an unrelenting stance against it because he saw it as undermining the Means of Grace. One result was the rise of the Anti-Missourian Brotherhood among Norwegian Lutherans in North America.

Yet among Norwegian Lutherans there was a great struggle over how to view the Means of Grace, conversion, faith, and predestination. The Election Controversy tore apart church bodies, congregations, and families.\textsuperscript{28} When the human element becomes the key element, that development rejects the “by grace alone” of the Reformation.

**SUMMARY: CERTAINTY OF SALVATION**

The issue in the Election Controversy comes down to what humans can know of themselves and of God. Walther engages what it means when God works doctrine into the heart. In 1855, Walther stated that he wanted to use Pietism as a kind of bridge back to orthodox Lutheranism.\textsuperscript{29} Walther


\textsuperscript{28} The reason Walther spoke against Sverdrup’s approach and so many Norwegian and Scandinavian Lutherans in North America struggled with this approach is that the truth-in-action emphasis conflicts with Luther’s two kinds of righteousness.

\textsuperscript{29} See, for example, the article “Lutherisch-theologische Pfarrers Bibliothek” in *Lehre und Wehre* (1855–58).
then developed an approach that understands how the way people thought about their world and their place in it changed during the period of Lutheran orthodoxy (from about 1580 to about 1700). Walther does not like becoming wrapped up in debates over what kind of cause something is or how much philosophical hairsplitting one can do. Walther is a pastor. He knows how philosophy can help. He knows how philosophy can harm. He also knows that laypeople are not going to devote their time to philosophy. They have their own vocations and lives with which to glorify God.

Keeping this in mind, Walther knows that one cannot simply throw seventeenth-century technical terms at nineteenth-century people. Doing so only invites confusion. During the nineteenth century, some German theologians were taking advantage of that confusion to connect old words with new ideas to make the new ideas sound as though they had been used for centuries. Pietism used a vocabulary that connected with both the older era and the modern world. The disagreements with the Erlangen theologians and the Norwegian Lutheran tradition occurred partly because the bridge formed by Pietism and its vocabulary that Walther envisioned was threatened by the Election Controversy. Some of the language that Walther wanted to use ceased to lead from Pietism to Lutheran orthodoxy; it became a one-way bridge to Rationalism.

That is why Walther’s tone in the lectures on Law and Gospel is so strident and sometimes bitter. It is not a matter of ego. Walther knew that Lutheran pastors must speak the absolutely true, infallible Word of God when they baptize, absolve, commune, and bury Christians. What happens there is the confession of God’s work to call Christians from a toilsome and troubled life in this world to an eternally blessed one in the next. To bring doubt to the working of God and to give any credit to humans does great injury to faith—an act not lightly overlooked on the Last Day.

The final two themes that Walther passed along to his students were the proper distinction between Law and Gospel and the inspiration of Scripture. Yet these were some of the first topics that he stressed as a pastor, teacher, and Lutheran leader. Similar themes on the doctrine of justification, on salvation by grace through faith alone, on the limits of human reason, and on the Word of God already appear in the 1844–45 inaugural year of Der Lutheraner. In 1855, Walther dealt with such themes in the pages of Lehre und Wehre, the periodical of Concordia Seminary. Concern for the proper interpretation of Scripture pervaded Walther’s ministry. Through him and others, this concern became a cornerstone of the Missouri Synod and remains a cornerstone for the entire, historic tradition of the Evangelical Lutheran Church.
From 1883 to 1926, this building in South St. Louis housed Concordia Seminary. The institution was started in 1839 by Trinity congregation in Altenburg, Missouri. It operated as both a parish school and a school for pastors at this Perry County location until 1849, when it was transferred to the auspices of Trinity congregation in St. Louis. The first home of the official "Concordia College" was built in 1850 and demolished in 1882. After the school moved to Clayton in 1926, the building shown here was demolished. The clocks in the seminary tower shown here are now located in the belfry of Holy Cross. Today, a parking lot occupies the site. Image courtesy of Concordia Historical Institute.
**LAW & GOSPEL THESSES**

[BASIC CONCEPTS]¹

Thesis I
The doctrinal contents of all Holy Scripture, both of the Old and the New Testament, consist of two doctrines that differ fundamentally from each other. These two doctrines are Law and Gospel.

Thesis II
If you wish to be an orthodox teacher, you must present all the articles of faith in accordance with Scripture, yet you must also rightly **distinguish** Law and Gospel.

Thesis III
To rightly distinguish Law and Gospel is the most difficult and highest Christian art—and for theologians in particular. It is taught only by the Holy Spirit in combination with experience.

Thesis IV
Understanding how to distinguish Law and Gospel provides **wonderful insight** for understanding all of Holy Scripture correctly. In fact, without this knowledge Scripture is and remains a sealed book.

[TWENTY-ONE WAYS TO CONFUSE LAW AND GOSPEL]²

[Improperly Making Christ a Lawgiver]³

Thesis V
The most common way people mingle Law and Gospel—and one that is also the easiest to detect because it is so crude—is prevalent among Papists, Socinians, and Rationalists. These people turn Christ into a kind of new Moses or Lawgiver. This transforms the Gospel into a doctrine of meritorious works. Furthermore, some people—like the Papists—condemn and anathematize those who teach that the Gospel is the message of the free grace of God in Christ.

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¹ The first four theses are the basis for all the others. This is a natural division that Walther made in the body of his lectures by stating these first theses positively.
² Walther enumerates twenty-one ways to confuse Law and Gospel. He states these remaining theses negatively.
³ To avoid the possible confusion of saying, “Thesis VI, second; Thesis VII, third;” and so on, Walther’s additional numbering scheme has been replaced with bracketed subheadings.
[Incorrect Preaching]

**Thesis VI**
You are not rightly distinguishing Law and Gospel in the Word of God if you do not preach the Law in its full sternness and the Gospel in its full sweetness. Similarly, do not mingle Gospel elements with the Law or Law elements with the Gospel.

**Thesis VII**
You are not rightly distinguishing Law and Gospel in the Word of God if you first preach the Gospel and then the Law, or first sanctification and then justification, or first faith and then repentance, or first good works and then grace.

**Thesis VIII**
You are not rightly distinguishing Law and Gospel in the Word of God if you preach the Law to those who are already in terror on account of their sins or the Gospel to those who are living securely in their sins.

[Wrongly Directing People toward Salvation by Works]

**Thesis IX**
You are not rightly distinguishing Law and Gospel in the Word of God if you point sinners who have been struck down and terrified by the Law toward their own prayers and struggles with God and tell them that they have to work their way into a state of grace. That is, do not tell them to keep on praying and struggling until they would feel that God has received them into grace. Rather, point them toward the Word and the Sacraments.

**Thesis X**
You are not rightly distinguishing Law and Gospel in the Word of God if you preach that “dead” faith can justify and save in the sight of God—while that believer is still living in mortal sins. In the same way, do not preach that faith justifies and saves those unrepentant people because of the love and renewal it produces in them.

[Improper Understanding of Contrition]

**Thesis XI**
You are not rightly distinguishing Law and Gospel in the Word of God if you only want to comfort those with the Gospel who are contrite because they love God. You also need to comfort people with the Gospel who are only contrite because they fear His wrath and punishment.
Thesis XII
You are not rightly distinguishing Law and Gospel in the Word of God if you teach that the reason our sins are forgiven is because we both believe and are contrite.

[Improper Understanding of Faith]

Thesis XIII
You are not rightly distinguishing Law and Gospel in the Word of God if you explain faith by demanding that people are able to make themselves believe or at least can collaborate toward that end. Rather, preach faith into people’s hearts by laying the Gospel promises before them.

[Improper Understanding of Faith]

Thesis XIV
You are not rightly distinguishing Law and Gospel in the Word of God if you demand that faith is a condition for justification and salvation. It would be wrong to preach that people are righteous in the sight of God and are saved not only by their faith, but also on account of their faith, for the sake of their faith, or in view of their faith.

[Improper Understanding of Conversion and Repentance]

Thesis XV
You are not rightly distinguishing Law and Gospel in the Word of God if you turn the Gospel into a preaching of repentance.

[Improper Understanding of Conversion and Repentance]

Thesis XVI
You are not rightly distinguishing Law and Gospel in the Word of God if you claim that people are truly converted when they get rid of certain vices and, instead, engage in certain works of piety and virtuous practices.

[Improper Presentation of New Obedience]

Thesis XVII
You are not rightly distinguishing Law and Gospel in the Word of God if you describe believers in a way that is not always realistic—both with regard to the strength of their faith and to the feeling and fruitfulness of their faith.

[Improper Understanding of the Sinful Human Condition]

Thesis XVIII
You are not rightly distinguishing Law and Gospel in the Word of God if you describe the universal corruption of mankind so as to create the impression that even true believers are still under the spell of ruling sins and sin deliberately.
Thesis XIX
You are not rightly distinguishing Law and Gospel in the Word of God if you preach about certain sins as if they were not damnable but only venial.

[Improper Understanding of Church, Word, and Sacrament]

Thesis XX
You are not rightly distinguishing Law and Gospel in the Word of God if a person’s salvation is made to depend on his association with the visible orthodox Church and if you claim that salvation is denied to every person erring in any article of faith.

Thesis XXI
You are not rightly distinguishing Law and Gospel in the Word of God if you teach that the Sacraments save ex opere operato, that is, merely by their outward performance.

[False Understanding of Conversion and Human Will]

Thesis XXII
You are not rightly distinguishing Law and Gospel in the Word of God if a false distinction is made between a person’s being awakened and being converted; moreover, when a person’s inability to believe is mistaken for not being permitted to believe.

[Improper Uses of the Law]

Thesis XXIII
You are not rightly distinguishing Law and Gospel in the Word of God if you use the demands, threats, or promises of the Law to try and force the unregenerate to put away their sins and engage in good works and thus become godly; and then, on the other hand, if you use the commands of the Law—rather than the admonitions of the Gospel—to urge the regenerate to do good.

[Improperly Preaching on the Unforgivable Sin]

Thesis XXIV
You are not rightly distinguishing Law and Gospel in the Word of God if you claim the unforgivable sin against the Holy Spirit cannot be forgiven because of its magnitude.

[Failing to Let the Gospel Predominate]

Thesis XXV
You are not rightly distinguishing Law and Gospel in the Word of God if you do not allow the Gospel to predominate in your teaching.
Image and signature from Martin Günther, Dr. C. F. W. Walther: Lebensbild (St. Louis: Concordia, 1890).
My Dear Friends: —

If you are to become efficient teachers in our churches and schools, there is no doubt that you need extremely detailed knowledge of every doctrine of the Christian revelation. However, that is not all. What you need to know as well is how to apply these doctrines correctly. Not only must you have a clear understanding of these doctrines, but they must also enter deeply into your heart, so they can reveal their divine, heavenly power. All these doctrines must be so precious, so valuable, so dear to you that you cannot but profess with a glowing heart in the words of Paul: “We also believe, and so we also speak,” and in the words of all the apostles: “For we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.” Although you indeed have not seen these things with your physical eyes or heard them with your physical ears (as the apostles did), you ought to experience them with the eyes and ears of your spirit.

While in our dogmatics lectures my goal is to ground you in every doctrine and make you certain of them, I have designed these Friday evening lectures to make you truly practical theologians. I wish to talk the Christian doctrine into your very heart, enabling you to come forward as living witnesses with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power. I do not want you to be standing in your pulpits like lifeless statues, but to speak with confidence and cheerful courage, offering help where help is needed.

Now, of all doctrines, the first and foremost is the doctrine of justification. However, immediately following upon it—and almost equally as important—is the doctrine of how to distinguish between Law and Gospel. Let us now focus on this distinction between Law and the Gospel—a task to which we want to apply ourselves diligently.

Luther says that the man who possesses the skill of distinguishing Law and Gospel is foremost among his peers and should be regarded as a doctor of theology. But I would not have you believe that I regard myself to be foremost among my peers or that you should regard me as a doctor of theology. It would be a great mistake if you were to believe that. While I admit that people sometimes do address me by that burdensome title of “Doctor of Theology,” I would prefer to remain a humble disciple and sit at the feet of our Dr. Luther, just as he learned the teachings from the apostles and prophets.

1 This translation uses the singular heart throughout in the manner of the Rite of Confession. (Cf. LSB, p. 151: “. . . with our whole heart.”)

2 Walther emphasizes theology as both the things that a pastor and his congregation need to know about God and His plan for us as well as the things that a pastor needs to do on behalf of his congregation. See also “theology” in the Glossary, page 487.
As often as you attend these lectures, I want you to come breathing a silent prayer in your heart that God may grant us His Holy Spirit abundantly, that you would profitably hear, and that I would effectively teach. Let us then take up our task, trusting firmly that God would bless our souls and the souls of those whom we are to rescue.

When we compare Holy Scripture with other writings, we notice that no book seems to be as full of contradictions as the Bible. And this seems to be true not only in minor points but also even in its main point, namely, regarding the doctrine of how we may come to God and are saved.

For instance, in one passage, the Bible offers forgiveness to all sinners, yet in another passage forgiveness of sins is withheld from all sinners. Or, in still another passage, life everlasting is offered freely to all people, but in yet another, people are directed to do something themselves in order to be saved. This riddle can be solved when we consider that there are two entirely different doctrines in Scripture: the doctrine of the Law and the doctrine of the Gospel.
The doctrinal contents of all Holy Scripture, both of the Old and the New Testament, consist of two doctrines that differ fundamentally from each other. These two doctrines are Law and Gospel.

Editor's Note: In this thesis, Walther shows that the Law and the Gospel share some characteristics but also have important differences, which make it necessary to distinguish the two. He uses extensive quotations from Scripture and Luther to define the doctrines and to show agreement from Scripture through Luther's time to Walther's era and even to the present day.

It is not my intent to give a systematic treatment of the doctrine of Law and Gospel in these lectures. Rather, my aim is to show you how easily we can inflict great damage on our hearers when we mingle Law and Gospel—despite their fundamental differences—and thus defeat the purpose of both doctrines. But you cannot begin to appreciate this point until you grasp the differences between Law and Gospel.

The difference between Law and Gospel is not that the Gospel is a divine doctrine and that the Law is a human doctrine, resting on the reason of man. Not at all. Whatever of either doctrine is contained in the Scriptures—all of it is the Word of the living God Himself.

Nor is this the difference: that only the Gospel is necessary and not the Law—as if the latter were a mere afterthought that could be done away with if necessary. No, both doctrines are equally necessary for us humans. Without the Law, we cannot understand the Gospel; and without the Gospel, the Law is of no benefit to us.

Nor can we permit this uninformed distinction: that the Law is the teaching of the Old Testament, while the Gospel is the teaching of the New Testament. By no means. There is Gospel content in the Old Testament and Law content in the New Testament. Moreover, in the New Testament, the Lord opened the seal of the Law by purging Jewish rules from it.¹

¹ In the 1865 doctrinal proceedings (Lehrverhandlungen) of the Northern District, Pastor F. A. Ahner asserted that the Old Testament is Law and the New Testament is Gospel. This position was corrected in 1867 by the theses on biblical interpretation in the Proceedings of the Northern District. The 1867 theses defined Missouri Synod biblical interpretation for at least seventy years. For a synopsis of the subdivision of the general Missouri Synod into smaller district-synods (German: Distriktssynode, a synod defined by geographic bounds),
Nor do Law and Gospel differ regarding their final aim, as though the purpose of the Gospel were salvation, while the purpose of the Law were condemnation. No, the purpose of both is the salvation of humankind—except that ever since the fall, the Law has not been capable of leading us to salvation. It can only prepare us for the Gospel. Furthermore, it is only through the Gospel that we are able to fulfill the Law to a certain extent.

Nor is the difference between Law and Gospel that they somehow contradict each other. No, there are no contradictions in Scripture. Law and Gospel are distinct from each other, yet they coexist in the most perfect harmony.

Nor is the difference between the two that only one of these doctrines is meant for Christians, while the other is not. Even for Christians the Law still retains its significance. Indeed, when a person ceases to employ either of these two doctrines, he is no longer a true Christian.

Rather, the true points of difference between Law and Gospel are as follows:

1. They differ as to how they were revealed to humans.
2. They differ regarding their contents.
3. They differ regarding the promises held out by each doctrine.
4. They differ regarding their threats.
5. They differ regarding the function and the effect of either doctrine.
6. They differ regarding the persons to whom each of them is to be preached.

Any other differences can be grouped under one of these six headings.

Now, let us use Scripture to prove these claims.

First, Law and Gospel differ as to how they were revealed to us. The Law was created along with humans and was written on our heart. While the fall has caused what was written on our heart to become dull, God's writing has not been completely erased. So when the Law is preached to even the most ungodly persons, their conscience will tell them: “That is true.” Yet when the Gospel is preached to them, their conscience does not react the same. In fact, the preaching of the Gospel might even make them angry. The most immoral persons admit that they ought to do what is written in the Law. Why is that? Because the Law is written on their heart.

Now, when we preach the Gospel, we are dealing with a different situation. The Gospel proclaims and reveals nothing but free acts of divine grace, though they are not at all self-evident. God did not have to do what He did according to the Gospel. He was not forced to act, as if He could not choose to act otherwise, should He wish to remain a righteous and loving God.
No, even if He had allowed all men to go to the devil, God would still have remained eternal Love.

Romans 2:14–15 reads as follows:

For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them.

Here we have the apostle’s [Paul’s] testimony that even blind unbelievers bear the moral Law in their heart and conscience. No supernatural revelation was needed to inform them of the moral Law. The Ten Commandments were given only for the purpose of bringing out in bold letters the dulled script of the original Law that had been written on mankind’s heart.

On the other hand, we have from the same apostle—and in the same Epistle—this statement concerning the Gospel, namely, Romans 16:25–26:

Now to Him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith.

In clear terms the apostle testifies here that—since the beginning of the world—it has been impossible to discover the Gospel. It became known only through an act of the Holy Spirit, who inspired sanctified men to write His message.

Please note this important distinction! Every religion contains portions of the Law. In fact, some unbelievers, by their knowledge of the Law, have advanced so far that they realize that their souls need to be cleansed, that their thoughts and desires need to be purified. But only in the Christian religion will you find the Gospel. Other religions do not contain even a speck of it.

Had the Law not been written on the human heart, no one would listen to the preaching of the Law. Rather, everybody would turn away from it and say, “That is too cruel; nobody is able to keep Commandments such as these.”

But, my friends, do not hesitate to preach the Law! People may despise it, yet they do so only with their mouths, because the things you say when preacing

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2 Walther includes “sanctified” on the basis of the 1865 and 1867 Proceedings of the Northern District, in addition to other documents. The early Missouri Synod was clear that God shaped the lives of the biblical holy authors (“die heilige Schreiber”) to make them—and no others—His perfect tools for the unique task of divine inspiration. He breathed His words through them onto the pages of Scripture.
the Law are the same things that their own conscience preaches to them every day. Nor could we convert anyone by preaching the Gospel to them, unless we preached the Law to them first. It would be impossible to convert anyone if the Law had not already been written on his heart. Of course, here I am talking about God, about how He has revealed Himself, and about how He has devised His own order of salvation. Needless to say, God was able to save all men by a mere act of His will.3

The second point of difference between Law and Gospel is indicated by the particular contents of each. The Law tells us what to do. No such instruction is contained in the Gospel. Rather, the Gospel reveals to us only what God is doing. The Law speaks about our works, whereas the Gospel speaks about the great works of God. In the Law we hear the tenfold summons: “You shall.” Beyond that, the Law has nothing to say to us. The Gospel, on the other hand, makes no demands whatsoever.

What if someone says, “But the Gospel demands faith!” Well, just picture someone who is hungry. You tell him: “Come, sit down at my table and eat.” That hungry person would hardly reply, “Who are you to boss me around?” No, he would understand and accept your words as a kind invitation. That is exactly what the Gospel is—a kind invitation to partake of heavenly blessings.

Galatians 3:12: “But the law is not of faith, rather ‘The one who does them shall live by them.’” This is an exceedingly important passage. The Law has nothing to say about forgiveness or about grace. The Law does not say: “If you are contrite, if you begin to make amends, the remainder of your sins will be forgiven.” Not a word of this is found in the Law. The Law issues only commands and demands. The Gospel, on the other hand, only offers. The Gospel does not take anything. It gives.

Accordingly, we read in John 1:17: “For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.” The Gospel contains nothing but grace and truth. How important this is! When we read the Law, when we think about it, when we measure our conduct against its teaching, we are terrified by the multitude of demands it makes upon us. If that were all we ever heard, we would be hurled into despair and would be lost. But God be praised! There is still another doctrine: the Gospel. And to that we cling.

Third, Law and Gospel differ by the promises held out by each doctrine. What the Law promises is just as great a blessing as what the Gospel promises, namely, everlasting life and salvation. But there is a huge difference: All the promises of the Law are made on certain conditions, namely, that we fulfill the Law perfectly. Accordingly, the greater the promises of the Law, the more

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3 The Dau edition adds: “But He has not revealed to us that He intends to do so, and the definite order of salvation which He has appointed for us does not indicate any intention of this kind.”
disheartening they are. The Law offers us that food, but not close enough for us to reach it. The Law offers us salvation in about the same manner as refreshments were offered to Tantalus in the hell of the pagan Greeks. Indeed, it says to us, “I will quench the thirst of your soul and satisfy your hunger.” But the Law is not able to accomplish this because it always adds: “All this you will have, but only if you do what I command.”

How different is the lovely, sweet, and comforting language of the Gospel! It promises us the grace of God and salvation—without any condition whatsoever. It is a promise of free grace. And it asks nothing of us but this: “Take what I give, and you will have it.” This is not a condition, but rather a kind invitation.

Leviticus 18:5 reads: “You shall therefore keep My statutes and My rules; if a person does them, he shall live by them.” This means that only the person who keeps the Law, and no one else, will be saved by the Law.

When [questioned] by the self-righteous scribe in Luke 10:26–28, Christ raises the counterquestion: “What is written in the Law? How do you read it?” The scribe answers correctly: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.” And then Christ says to him: “Do this, and you will live.” On this particular occasion the Lord testifies that, were salvation to come by way of the Law, the only way to obtain salvation would be to keep the Law perfectly. But even if people were to do the will of God and were to receive salvation as a reward for their merit, that, too, would be thanks only to the goodness of God. But those “strings” attached to the Law hurl us into despair.

When the Lord wished to instruct the disciples as to what they should preach, He said, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved” (Mark 16:15–16). Thus no condition whatsoever is attached to the Gospel; it is solely a promise of grace. Furthermore, we read in Romans 3:22–24: “For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”

Ephesians 2:8–9 states: “For by grace you have been saved, through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.” Unconditional promises of grace and salvation—that

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4 In Greek mythology, King Tantalus angered the gods. He then killed his son Pelops and made a stew of him for the gods. Because of this and other atrocities, his spirit dwells in Tartarus, the deepest realm of Hades. Tantalus stands forever thirsty in water that he cannot reach, forever hungry below a fruit tree that he cannot reach, with a great stone always over his head. Walther drew on classical Greek and Latin literature because he was educated in the classical humanist tradition of the Gymnasium. The Missouri Synod largely retained this tradition until the late 1930s.
is what we find in the Gospel. What a precious difference! When the Law lays us low, we can cheerfully walk upright again because there is another doctrine beyond the Law that makes no demands of us whatsoever. If we were to ask Christ, “What is expected of me so that I may be saved?” He would answer: “Certainly not works! I have already accomplished all the works that had to be done. You need not drink one drop of the cup I had to drink.”

And if you would only reflect on this, my dear friends, you, too, would jump for joy that these glad tidings have been brought to you as well. But anyone who continues to despair—despite this message—anyone who keeps on brooding and says, “I am a despicable person; there is no forgiveness for me,” does nothing less than reject the Gospel. This person rejects Christ. And even if I had committed the most dreadful sins and had to say like Paul, “I am the foremost sinner,” even if I had committed the sin of Judas or the sin of Cain,6 nevertheless I need to receive the Gospel because it demands nothing of me.

The fourth difference between Law and Gospel relates to threats. The Gospel does not contain any threats whatsoever—only words of consolation. Whenever you come across a threat in Scripture, you may be assured that the passage is Law. Anyone who realizes this comforting truth is truly blessed! The Holy Spirit produces this knowledge in every believer. In fact, no one can have this knowledge without the Holy Spirit. If the Holy Spirit does not work this knowledge in people, they remain unbelievers.

However, do not incorrectly assume that the Gospel makes people secure just because it has no threats to hurl at them. No, the Gospel removes believers’ desire to sin. The Law, on the other hand, is nothing but threats. Just as Abraham sent Hagar into the desert with a loaf of bread and a jug of water,7 in the same way the Law hands us, too, a piece of bread and then thrusts us into the desert.

Deut. 27:26  In Deuteronomy 27:26 God says through Moses: “‘Cursed be anyone who does not confirm the words of this law by doing them.’ And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’” Indeed, we humans are invited by the Law to pronounce a curse upon ourselves. Only people engulfed by hellish darkness can believe that they have a grip on the Law.

1 Tim. 1:15  In contrast, the Gospel proceeds in an entirely different fashion. Paul says in 1 Timothy 1:15: “The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.” Therefore, even the foremost of sinners is not threatened but hears only the sweetest promise.

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5 See 1 Timothy 1:15.
6 That is, betrayal and fratricide.
7 See Genesis 21:8–21.
Luke 4:16–21 records the following:
And [Jesus] came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as was His custom, He went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and He stood up to read. And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to Him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” And He rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

On this occasion the Lord announced the contents of His doctrine—the Gospel. This is what He means: “I have not come to bring a new Law, but to proclaim the Gospel.” His sermon is overflowing with comfort and salvation for sinners. Blessed is the person who realizes this! May God help us all to this effect!

My Friends: —

A person may pretend to be a Christian though in reality he is not. As long as he is in this condition, he is quite content with his knowledge of the mere outlines of Christian doctrine. Everything beyond that, he says, is for pastors and theologians. To understand as clearly as possible everything that God has revealed—all of that is irrelevant for non-Christians. However, the moment someone becomes a Christian, there arises in him a keen desire for the doctrine of Christ. If they have not yet been converted, at the moment of their conversion even the most uncultured peasants are suddenly awakened and begin to reflect on God and heaven, salvation and damnation, etc. They start to wonder about the deepest problems of human life.

Just take the Jews who flocked to Christ—or the apostles. All those people heard Christ with great joy and were astonished because He preached with authority—in contrast to the scribes. But the majority of those hearers never advanced beyond a certain feeling of delight and admiration. The apostles, too, were uneducated people, but they acted differently. They did not stop where the rest stopped but posed all kinds of questions to Christ. After hearing one of His parables, they said, “Explain to us the parable” (Matthew 13:36). The conduct of the Bereans who searched the Scriptures daily (Acts 17:11) was similar. It is, therefore, quite true what the Apology says: “Men
of good conscience are crying for the truth and proper instruction from the Word of God. Even death is not as bitter to them as when they find themselves in doubt regarding this matter or that. Accordingly, they must seek where they can find instruction” (Müller, p. 191).  

Striving to obtain truth and divine assurance is a necessary requirement even of an ordinary Christian. However, with a theologian this is even more so the case. A theologian who does not have the greatest interest in Christian doctrines would be unthinkable. Even someone with only a budding faith in his heart regards even the smallest point as of great importance. To such a one every doctrine is as precious as gold, silver, or gems. God grant that this may be true for you too! If it is, you will not come in a self-satisfied manner to these lectures but will ask over and over, “What is truth?”—not in the spirit of Pilate but like Mary, who sat at Jesus’ feet and listened raptly to every word He spoke. Then, too, every one of these lectures will be of great blessing to you, even though the instrument through which the truth is to be conveyed to you is inferior. 

Now, the first matter that you need to consider is the differences between these two doctrines. We have already reviewed four of these differences. Let us move on to the fifth one. 

The fifth difference between Law and Gospel regards the effects of these two doctrines. What are the effects of preaching the Law? There are three. In the first place, while the Law tells us what to do, it does not give us the strength to carry out its commands. Rather, the Law prompts in us an unwillingness to keep the Law. True, some do treat the Law as if it were a rule in arithmetic. But, for the most part, once the Law forces its way into a person’s heart, that heart tends to strain with all its might against God—with that person becoming furious at God for demanding such impossible things of him. In fact, such people will even curse God in their heart. They would slay God if they could. They would thrust God from His throne if that were possible. The effect of preaching the Law, then, is to increase people’s lust for sinning. 

In the second place, while the Law uncovers a person’s sins, it offers him no help to free himself from sin and thus hurls him into despair. 

Here is the third difference: On the one hand, the Law does indeed produce feelings of contrition by conjuring up the terrors of hell, death, and of the wrath of God. But it has not one drop of comfort to offer the sinner. Consequently, if the Law is the only teaching that is applied to people, they

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8 See also Triglot Concordia, 290; Concordia, 176. Walther uses the German version of the Apology; see the appendix, “Walther’s Book of Concord,” pages 467–68. For more information on the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, see Concordia, 69–72. 
10 Walther refers to himself as the “inferior instrument.”
must despair, die, and perish in their sins. Ever since the fall, this is the only effect the Law can produce in people. Romans 7:7–9 makes this clear:

I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, “You shall not covet.” But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. For apart from the law, sin lies dead. I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died.

Pagans do not realize that the evil lusts deep down in our heart are actually sin. The greatest moralists have said, “It is not my fault that I sin; I cannot help it; I cannot prevent myself from sinning.” But divine Law shouts: “You shall not covet! You shall not lust!” In fact, we are told that we must get rid of even the lust resulting from original sin!

When a person gives no thought to the Law, sin moves about freely throughout his heart and he does not realize he is sinning. Ask worldly people about this matter, and they will look up in surprise and state: “We have done no evil. We have killed no one. We have not committed adultery. We have not been thieves,” etc. They do not notice at all that sin is a constant visitor. Ask worldly people about this matter, and they will look up in surprise and state: “We have done no evil. We have killed no one. We have not committed adultery. We have not been thieves,” etc. They do not notice at all that sin is a constant visitor. But when the Law strikes them like a bolt of lightning, they recognize what great sinners they are, what horribly ungodly thoughts they are harboring. This is what the apostle means when he says, “Sin came alive” when the Law arrived. The Law uncovers sin, but it offers us no comfort. If we had only the Law—the kind of Law we have today—and nothing else, we would have to perish forever and go to hell. The punishing effects and the curse of the divine Law will not be felt until we are in hell—for the Law must be fulfilled; it must preserve its divine authority.

Take 2 Corinthians 3:6, where we read: “The letter kills.” The apostle calls the Law “the letter” because God inscribed it in the form of letters on stone tablets. Even pagans have observed that the Law produces an effect opposite to that which it commands. The statement of the immoral poet Ovid is well-known: “We strive after the forbidden thing and always lust after those things that are denied us.” Ovid himself was a swine, and so he says bluntly, “See, this is what I do: I always do things that others regard as forbidden.”

When the Israelites were given the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai, they all trembled. Their behavior revealed the condition of their heart. On that occasion, God intended to point out for all time to come: “Behold, this is the effect of the Law!” Accordingly, when the rich young man came to Christ, asking how he might be saved, and was so utterly blind that he did not perceive his sinful corruption at all, we are told: “He went away sorrowful.”

11 Latin: Nitimur in vetitum, semper cupimusque negata. This is from Ovid’s Amores (III.4.17). Throughout the centuries, many authors have used this as a catchphrase. One sees widespread citation in the nineteenth century.
Christ knew it was too early to apply the Gospel to this young man because He first had to convince him that he was utterly incapable of fulfilling the Law. Again, when Paul preached to Felix, the governor, concerning righteousness, temperance, and the judgment to come, we read that Felix trembled and answered, “Go away for the present. When I get an opportunity I will summon you” (Acts 24:25).

But the governor never did call for Paul again; he wanted to be rid of the thunder and lightning of the Law. Similarly, when Peter preached the Law to his hearers at Pentecost, we are told [that] “they were cut to their heart.” They asked him and the rest of the apostles: “Brothers, what shall we do” in order to be saved? Then Peter said to them: “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38).

The effects of the Gospel are of an entirely different nature. In the first place, while the Gospel demands faith, at the same time it also offers and gives us faith. When we preach to people: “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ!” God gives them faith through our preaching. We preach faith, and any person not willfully resisting obtains faith. It is indeed not the mere physical sound of the spoken Word that produces this effect, but rather the contents of the Word.

Fifth difference; Effects of the Gospel

The second effect of the Gospel is that it does not rebuke sinners at all, but rather takes all terror, all fear, all anguish from them, filling them with peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. At the return of the prodigal son, the father does not mention the son’s horrible, unspeakable conduct with a single word. He says nothing—nothing whatsoever—about it. Rather, the father embraces the prodigal, kisses him, and prepares a splendid feast for him. This is a glorious parable that demonstrates the effect of the Gospel. It removes all unrest and fills us with a blessed, heavenly peace.

In the third place, the Gospel does not require people to furnish anything good—neither a good heart nor a good disposition nor an improvement of their condition, neither piousness nor love—whether toward God or men. The Gospel issues no orders. Rather, it changes people. It plants love into their heart and makes them capable of all good works. It demands nothing, but gives all. Should not this fact make us leap for joy?

Acts 16:30–31

These effects of the Gospel are exhibited in Acts 16, in the case of the jailer in Philippi. He asks Paul and Silas: “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” and receives this answer: “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.”

Acts 16:34

The jailer does not reply to the apostles: “How should I go about this?” No. He promptly believes, for the apostles’ words have spoken faith into the man’s heart.

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heart. As such, immediately “he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God.” Note that the Gospel bestows the very faith that it urges. But this urging for faith is not like a demand of the Law. Rather, it is an urging of love.

Romans 1:16: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.” This is a glorious thing. Can there be anything more glorious, more beautiful, more blessed, more precious than what the Gospel gives, namely, eternal salvation?

Ephesians 2:8–10: “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

Here we have a brief description of the effects of the Gospel.

The Gospel does not say, “You must do good works.” Rather, it fashions us into human beings, into creatures who cannot help but serve God and fellow human beings. Without a doubt, a precious effect!

Galatians 3:2: “Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?” They probably answered something like: “Hearing faith preached gave us a new heart, for prior to that we could do no good. We have now been made into new creatures.” You do not need to tell the sun to shine. By the same token, it would be just as useless to say to one of these new creatures, “You must do this or that.”

Finally, there is a sixth difference between Law and Gospel, relating to the persons to whom either doctrine is to be preached. In other words, there is a difference in the objects, that is, the people, to whom Law and Gospel must be applied. The persons on whom either doctrine is to work are completely different—just as the goals of each doctrine are different. Preach the Law to “secure” sinners, yet preach the Gospel to alarmed sinners. While at other times both doctrines must indeed be preached, at this point the question is: To whom must I preach the Law rather than the Gospel, and vice versa?

In 1 Timothy 1:8–10, Paul writes:

Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine.

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13 Walther intends the theological meaning of object as the passive recipient of an action or cause. God is the only subject, the mover and shaker, in this passage. Walther’s use of objects refers to people whom God moves with the Gospel.
To all persons who fit this bill, then, preach only the Law—and not one drop of the Gospel. As long as people are at ease in their sins, as long as they are unwilling to quit some particular sin—in this situation you must preach only the Law, which curses and condemns them. However, the moment they are frightened about their condition, administer the Gospel to them promptly, for from that moment on they can no longer be classified as secure sinners. Conversely, as long as the devil still keeps you in bondage with even one individual sin, you are not yet a proper object upon which the Gospel can operate. In this situation, as pastors, you should preach only the Law to such a person.

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to grant to those who mourn in Zion—to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit.

The "day of vengeance of our God" is the judgment that God will execute on hell and the devil, as Christ explained. Can there be a more glorious message than this? The devil has horribly disfigured the human race and hurled mankind into deep distress. Christ avenged this and proclaimed to the devil: "I have conquered over you. Therefore, mankind, created in the image of God, will not be lost. I have procured salvation for them." Only those who absolutely refuse to be saved will perish, for God coerces no one in this matter.

Now—I repeat—to such poor, sad-hearted sinners not a word of the Law must be preached. Woe to the preacher who would continue to preach the Law to a starved sinner! On the contrary, to such a person the preacher must say, "Please come! There is still room! No matter how great a sinner you are, there is still room for you. Even if you were a Judas or a Cain, there is still room. Oh, do, do come to Jesus!" Persons of this kind are proper objects on whom the Gospel is to work.

Let me now cite to you a passage from Luther's Sermon on the Distinction between Law and Gospel. He writes:

By the term "Law" nothing else is to be understood than a word of God that is a command, that enjoins upon us what to do and what to avoid, that requires from us some work of obedience. This is easily understood when we look only at the form of speech in which God expresses a certain word of His, but it is very difficult in the exe-

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14 Latin: in causa formalis.
Now, there are many kinds of laws or commandments that refer to works that God requires of each person individually, according to his natural disposition, his standing in society, his office, and according to the particular season and other circumstances that have a bearing on the doing of such works. Therefore, the Commandments tell each man what tasks God has laid on him and what He requires of him, in keeping with his natural disposition and his office. For instance, a wife must tend her children and let the master of the house do the governing, etc. That is the task required of her. A servant is to obey his master and do all other things that are proper for a servant to do. In like manner a maidservant has a law to govern her conduct. However, the universal law that pertains to all of us is this, [Matthew] 22:39: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Give him advice and aid in any emergency; if he is hungry, feed him; if he is naked, clothe him; and so on. This is rightly distinguishing Law and Gospel. Law is anything that refers to what we are to do. On the other hand, the Gospel, or the Creed, is any doctrine or word of God that does not require works from us and does not command us to do something but bids us simply to accept as a gift the gracious forgiveness of our sins and the everlasting bliss offered us. In accepting these gifts, we surely are not doing anything; we merely receive what is given and presented to us by the Word, such as when God gives you a promise such as this: I give you this or that, etc. For instance, in Holy Baptism, which I have not ordained and which is not my work, but the word and work of God, He says to me, “Come here. I baptize you and wash off all your sins. Accept this gift, and it shall be yours.” Now, when you are thus baptized, what else do you do than receive and accept a gracious gift? . . . The difference, then, between Law and Gospel is this: The Law makes demands of things that we are to do; it insists on works that we are to perform in the service of God and our fellow human beings. In the Gospel, however, we are summoned to a distribution of rich alms that we are to receive and take: the loving-kindness of God and eternal salvation. Here is an easy way of illustrating the difference between the two: In offering us help and salvation as a gift and donation of God, the Gospel bids us to hold the sack open and have something given to us. The Law, however, gives nothing. It only takes and demands things from us. Now, these two, giving and taking, are surely far apart. For when something is given to me, I am not contributing anything toward that. I only receive and take; I have something given

15 Latin: *in causa finali.*
to me. Again, when in my profession I carry out commands, likewise when I advise and assist my fellow man, I receive nothing but give to another whom I am serving. Thus Law and Gospel are distinguished as to their formal statements: the one promises; the other commands. The Gospel gives and bids us to take; the Law demands and says, “This you are to do.”

We note that Luther does not develop this doctrine scientifically but proclaims it like a prophet. That is why he had such a great impact. If he had written a scientific treatise in Latin on this subject with headings A. a. a. b. a. c. a. α. B. α., etc., systematically presented, the people would have marveled and said, “That man is a great scholar.” But if he had done it that way, he would not have had the impact he did.

In the writings of the Church Fathers we can barely find anything concerning the distinction between Law and Gospel.

My Friends: —

Christ Himself describes the way to heaven as a narrow path. The path of pure doctrine is just as narrow. For pure doctrine is nothing less than a teaching on how to get to heaven.

It is easy to lose your way when you are taking a narrow and rarely traveled path through a dense forest. Without intending to do so and without being aware of it, you might make a wrong turn to the right or left. It is just as easy to lose the narrow way of pure doctrine, which likewise is traveled by few people and leads through a dense forest of false teachings. You may land either in the bog of fanaticism or in the ravine of rationalism. This cannot be taken lightly. False doctrine is poison to the soul. If people at a large banquet drink from wine glasses to which arsenic has been added, they can drink physical death from their wine glasses. In the same way, an entire audience can be subject to spiritual and eternal death when they listen to a sermon to which the poison of false doctrine has been added. People can be deprived of their souls’ salvation by a single false comfort or a single false rebuke administered to them. [And this is all the more true because of] the fact that we are all by nature more attracted to the glaring and glittering light of human

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16 Latin: *in causa formali.*

17 When Walther delivered this lecture, he had recently given an essay on "how reprehensible it is" to base doctrine on the writings of the Church Fathers, however treasured and valuable these writings might be. One will, however, find a great deal under "old Law/new Law," "old covenant/new covenant," "Law/Promise," and "Law of Moses/Law of Love." See the Law and Gospel timeline, pages lv–lxiii.
reason than to God’s truth. For “the natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14).

Thus you can gather how foolish it is—in fact, how terribly deceived so many people obviously are—when they ridicule pure doctrine and say to us, “Enough already with your ‘Pure doctrine, pure doctrine!’ That can lead only to dead orthodoxy. Focus on pure living instead. That way you will plant the seeds of righteous Christianity.” That would be like saying to a farmer, “Stop fretting about good seed! Be concerned about good fruit instead.”

On the contrary, if you are concerned about pure seed, you will also be concerned about good seed. In the same way, if you are concerned about pure doctrine, you will at the same time also be concerned about genuine Christianity and a sincere Christian life.

Spreading false doctrine is like sowing weeds. The enemy does this. This in turn produces offspring of wickedness.

On the other hand, pure doctrine is like wheat seed; from it spring the children of the kingdom, who even in this present life belong in the kingdom of Jesus Christ and in the life to come will be received into the kingdom of glory. May God even now instill in your heart a great fear—even a real hatred—of false doctrine! May He graciously give you a holy desire for the pure, saving truth revealed by God Himself! That is the chief goal of these evening lectures.

Let us move on with our study. Even tonight we cannot take leave of our thesis so quickly. We have indeed observed the differences between Law and Gospel. By hearing two testimonies of Luther on the subject we have also been strengthened in our conviction that what we have heard about these differences is true. Now, let me give you a practical example of how these two doctrines must be proclaimed—without mingling the one with the other. To this end, let me submit a passage from Luther’s exposition of chapters 6, 7, and 8 of the Gospel of John, written between 1530 and 1532.18

There is a general tendency among young people to value the beautiful language and style of an author more than the content of his writings. That is a dangerous tendency. You must always have a greater regard for the what than for the how of a treatise.19 The Law must be preached in all its severity so the hearer will understand: “This sermon moves those still secure in their sins toward salvation.” Yet you need to preach the Gospel in such a way that the hearer will understand: “This sermon applies only to those who have been struck by the Law and who are in need of comfort.” Those are the key elements of a sermon.

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18 Before getting to Luther, however, Walther offers a few more thoughts.
19 Walther adds the Latin for “what” and “how”: quid and quomodo.
On the words of Christ in John 7:37 ("If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink"), Luther offers this comment (St. Louis Ed. 8:81): "These are the two subjects on which we preach. The Law produces thirst; it leads the hearer to hell and kills him. The Gospel, however, refreshes him and leads him to heaven." Luther speaks of this difference not only when explaining passages in which the terms "Law" and "Gospel" occur but also wherever he has an opportunity to preach these "two subjects."

The Law tells us what to do and charges us with not having done it, no matter how holy we are. Thus the Law makes us uncertain; it chases us about and thus makes us thirsty. Now, when Christ invites those who thirst, He means those who have been crushed under the hammer blows of the Law. These persons Christ invites directly to come to Him; of course, indirectly He invites all people. A person who is thirsting like this only needs to drink—and receive the consolation of the Gospel. When a person is really thirsty and is handed even a small glass of water, how greatly refreshed he feels! But when a person is not thirsty, you can hand him one glass of water after another—it will do him no good; it will not refresh him.

[The Law] says, “You shall not kill.” Its whole urging is directed toward what I am to do. It says, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and your neighbor as yourself. You shall not commit adultery or swear or steal.” And then it says, “Make sure that you have lived or live according to My commandments.” When you reach this point, you will find that you do not love God with your whole heart as you should, and you will be forced to confess: “O my God, I have not done what I should; I have not kept the Law, for neither did I love You with all my heart today nor will I do so tomorrow. I make the same confession year after year, admitting that I have failed to do this or that.” There seems to be no end to this confessing.

When will your soul ever find rest and be fully assured of divine grace? You will always be in doubt; tomorrow you will repeat the same confession you made today; the general confession will always apply to you. Now, where will your conscience find rest and a foothold because you assuredly know how God is disposed toward you? Your heart cannot tell you, even though you may be doing good works to the utmost of your ability. For the Law remains in force with its command: “You shall love the Lord your God and man with all your whole heart.” You say, “But I am not doing it.” And the Law replies, “You must do it.” Thus the Law puts you in anguish. You have to become thirsty and terrified; you have to tremble. Then you exclaim, “What should I do for God to lift His gracious countenance upon me? They say I will obtain
God's grace, but only if I keep the Ten Commandments and have good works and many merits to show for [it]!"

But that will never happen. I am not keeping the Ten Commandments. Therefore, no grace is extended to me. The result is that man can find no rest trusting in his good works. He wants to have a good conscience. He yearns for a good, cheerful, peaceful conscience and for real comfort. He thirsts for contentment. That is what we mean by “thirst.” That thirst will continue until Christ comes and asks: “Would you like to be at ease? Would you like to have rest and a good conscience? I would advise you to come to Me. Forget Moses, and ignore your own works. There is a difference between Me and Moses. The thirst that is plaguing you comes from Moses. He has done his job. He has scared you and made you thirsty. Now try Me. Come to Me. Believe in Me. Listen to My teaching. I am a different Preacher; I will give you to drink and refresh you.”

Anyone who has not been put through this experience reverberates without meaning,20 like a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.21 But if a preacher has experienced this personally, he can really speak from the heart. What he says will go into the heart of his hearers. It is by mere coincidence if someone is awakened from sin and converted by a preacher who is himself unconverted.

Accordingly, when he is getting ready to deliver his sermon, the preacher must draw up a battle plan in order to win his hearers for the kingdom of God. Otherwise, the hearers may say of his sermon only, “Oh, that was nice!” and that will be all. They will leave the church with empty hearts.

If any of you are well versed in this art, I mean, if any of you can rightly make this distinction, he would deserve to be called a doctor of theology. For Law and Gospel must be distinguished from each other. The role of the Law is to terrify men, to drive them crazy and to despair—especially rude and vulgar people—until they realize they can do neither what the Law demands nor achieve God's favor. That will make them despair of themselves. For they can never accomplish that goal—to obtain God's favor by their own efforts—and keep the Law. I recall when Dr. Staupitz said to me on a certain occasion: “More than a thousand times I have lied to God, promising that I would become godly. But I never did what I promised. I will never again resolve to become godly, for I see that I cannot carry out my resolution. I want to quit lying to God.” That was also my experience under the papacy: I was very anxious to become godly, but how long did it

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20 Latin: sine mente sonans.
21 See 1 Corinthians 13:1.
last? Until I had finished reading the Mass. An hour later I was more evil than before. This state of affairs goes on and on until a person becomes quite weary and is forced to say, “I have had it up to here with being godly according to Moses and the Law. I am going to follow another Preacher, who says to me, ‘Come to Me, if you labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.’”

Let this phrase, “Come to Me,” be soothing to your ears.

This Preacher does not teach that you can love God or that you must act and live a certain way. Rather, He tells you how to be godly in God’s eyes and how to be saved, despite the fact that you cannot do as you should. This kind of preaching is wholly different from the teaching of the Law of Moses, which deals only with works. The Law says, “You shall not sin. . . . Go and be godly. . . . Do this, do that . . . .” But Christ says, “Accept the fact that you are not godly. But I have been godly in your stead.”

. . . These two sermons must be preached simultaneously and urged on the listeners. You should not stick to one doctrine; for all the Law does is make people thirsty, and it does this only to terrify people’s hearts. But only the Gospel satisfies people, makes them cheerful, revives them, and comforts their conscience. To prevent the Gospel from producing only lazy, irreligious Christians who think that good works are not necessary, the Law says to the old Adam: “Do not sin; be godly; avoid that; do this; etc.” And when our conscience feels these blows and realizes that the Law is not mere smoke and mirrors, we humans become terror-stricken. This is when we need to hear the teaching of the Gospel, namely, whenever we sin. Hear Christ, our teacher, who says to you, “Come, I will not let you die of thirst. Come, quench your thirst.” If these facts had been preached to me, Dr. Luther, back when I was young, it would have spared my body much grief, and I would not have become a monk.

But now—even though these truths are being preached—the people of this godless world despise them. For they did not have to endure the sweat bath that I and others had to while we were under the papacy. Not feeling the agony of their conscience, these people despise the Gospel. They have never felt the pangs of thirst; therefore, they start all manner of sects and fanatical doings. This saying is true: “He who has not tasted bitter things does not remember sweet things.”

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22 The Dau text includes the following sentence from this Luther citation: “Take from Me what I give thee—thy sins are forgiven thee (remissa sunt tibi peccata).”

23 Latin: Dulcia non meminit, qui non gustavit amara.
who has never been thirsty has no taste for a cool drink. Thirst is a
good waiter, and hunger is a good cook. But where there is no thirst,
even the best drink is not enjoyed.

The doctrine of the Law, then, was given for this purpose: that a
person would be stuck in a sweat bath of anguish and sorrow under
the teaching of the Law. Without the sweat of the Law, men become
fat and comfortable and lose all desire for the Gospel. If you meet such
people, pass them by. We are not preaching to them. This preaching is
for the thirsty. To them we bring the message: “Let them come to Me; I
will give them cool water to drink and will refresh them.”

Luther states that “Law and Gospel must be proclaimed, and the two
must not be mingled.” A pastor who is not focused in his preaching preaches
himself rather than Christ. But anyone preaching himself preaches people
into hell, even when they say of his preaching: “Ah, that was beautiful! That
man is an orator!” Even a true, righteous preacher is tempted by vain thoughts
that spring from his sinful flesh. But as soon as he notices this, he will cast
these cursed thoughts of vanity aside and will cry to God to rid him of them.
He enters his pulpit a humble man. People can tell whether his preaching
comes from the heart or not.

Of course, you cannot preach like a Luther. Yet you still need to consider:
“How can I preach the Law to the secure and, at the same time, the Gospel
to crushed sinners?” Every sermon must contain both doctrines. As soon as
one of them is missing, the other is wrong. For any sermon is wrong that does
not present all that is necessary for a person’s salvation. Do not think that you
have done rightly if you generically preach Law in one part of your sermon
and Gospel in the other. No. A topical division of this kind is worthless. Both
doctrines may even be contained in one sentence. But everyone in your audi-
ence must have the impression: “He is preaching to me!” Even the most com-
forting and cheerful sermon must contain the Law as well.

Let me cite a passage from Luther’s exposition of Psalm 23:3 (St. Louis
Ed. 5:275): “He restores my soul.” What Luther is saying is: “Inasmuch as the
Lord, our God, has a twofold Word—namely, Law and Gospel—by the words
‘He restores my soul,’ the psalmist indicates quite clearly that he is not speak-
ing of the Law but of the Gospel.”

Any statements in the Bible that contain threats of punishment pertain
to the Law. However, words that comfort, words that speak of giving and
offering something—these belong to the Gospel. Yet you will not find a single
Gospel reading from which you could not preach both Law and Gospel.

Luther proceeds:
The Law cannot restore the soul, for it is a word that makes demands upon us and commands us to love God with our whole heart, etc., and our neighbor as ourselves. The Law condemns every person who fails to do this and pronounces this sentence upon him: “Cursed is every one who does not do all that is written in the book of the Law.” Now, it is certain that no person on earth can do this. Therefore, in due time the Law approaches the sinner, filling his soul with sadness and fear. If no relief is provided from its blows, it continues its onslaught, forcing the sinner into despair and eternal damnation. Therefore, St. Paul says (Romans 3:20), “Through the law comes only knowledge of sin.” Again, “The Law works nothing but wrath” (Romans 4:15).

The Gospel, however, is a blessed word; it makes no demands on us but only proclaims everything that is good, namely, that God has given His only Son for us poor sinners. This good news also includes that He is to be our Shepherd, seeking us starving and scattered sheep, giving His life for us, redeeming us from sin, everlasting death, and the power of the devil.

At this point we might raise the question as to why the Law leads people into the horrible sin of despair. That is merely a coincidental feature. In and of itself, the Law, too, is good.

Let me follow up with a passage from Luther’s Commentary on Galatians. Regarding Galatians 2:13–14, Luther says:

Accordingly, when your conscience is terrified by the Law and you are wrestling with the judgment of God, do not consult your reason or the Law. Rather, take your stand solely on the grace of God and His word of consolation. Cling to this, and act as if you had never heard a word of the Law. Enter into that darkness (Exodus 20:21) where neither the Law nor human reason give their light, but only the dark word of faith. Here the believer relies with certainty on being saved in Christ—without the Law and regardless of it.

Thus the Gospel—without and regardless of the “light” of the Law and reason—leads us into the “darkness” of faith, where Law and reason exercise no authority. We must indeed hear the Law as well, but only in its proper place and at the proper time. When Moses was on the mountain, speaking face-to-face with God, he did not have the Law; he did not legislate and administer the Law. But once he had come down from the mountain, he became a legislator and governed the people with the Law. In this manner, our consciences are to be exempt from the Law, while our bodies are to obey the Law.
... Therefore, anyone who understands how to rightly distinguish the Gospel from the Law should thank God and realize that he is a theologian. Needless to say, however, in times of tribulation I do not know how to do this as efficiently as I should.

You should distinguish both teachings in such a manner that you place the Gospel in heaven and the Law on earth. In this way, we can call the righteousness that the Gospel proclaims a heavenly and divine righteousness, while the righteousness that the Law proclaims is an earthly and human righteousness.

Be careful to distinguish the righteousness of the Gospel from the righteousness of the Law with the same great care as when God separated heaven from earth, light from darkness, day from night. One of these doctrines is like the light of day; the other, like the darkness of night. If only God could let us separate them even further!

Therefore, when you are speaking of faith and conscience, leave out the Law; it must remain on earth. However, when you are dealing with human works, light the lamp of works or the righteousness of the Law at night. Thus the sun and the immeasurable light of the Gospel and of grace should shine during the day, whereas the lamp of the Law should shine at night. A conscience that has been thrown into terror because it has felt the sting of its sin should argue like this: "I am now engaged in earthly tasks. This is where you should let the donkey labor, slave, and carry the burden that is laid upon it." That is to say, "Let the body with its members be subject to the Law." But when you ascend to heaven, leave the donkey and its burden on earth. For the conscience has nothing to do with the Law, its works, and the righteousness of this earth. Thus the donkey stays in the valley, while the conscience, with Isaac, goes up onto the mountain—ignoring the Law and its works, keeping an eye only on the forgiveness of sin, on nothing but the righteousness that is exhibited and given to us in Christ.

... We need to know this point of doctrine, that is, the distinction between Law and Gospel, because it contains the sum of all Christian teaching. Let everyone who would work diligently toward true piety strive with the greatest of care to learn how to make this distinction—not only in speech but also in truth and in experience, that is, in

24 German: Anfechtung. Here and subsequently, this means to be plunged into deep fear, like that of losing one’s life. It assumes that your opponent is out to get you, and you are helpless to stop him.


26 Latin: affectu.
heart and conscience. It is easy enough to make that distinction in words. But when you are struggling with sin, you will realize that the Gospel is a rare guest in a person's conscience, whereas the Law is a familiar and daily companion.

For, by nature, human reason understands the Law. Therefore, when your conscience is terrified by sin—which the Law points out and magnifies—you should speak like this: There is a time to die, and there is a time to live. There is a time to hear the Law, and there is a time to ignore the Law. There is a time to hear the Gospel—and a time to pretend that you are ignorant of the Gospel.

At that moment, let the Law be gone and let the Gospel come; for now is not the time to hear the Law but the Gospel. You have not done anything good. On the contrary, you have committed serious sins. I admit that, but I have the forgiveness of sins through Christ, for whose sake all my sins have been forgiven.

On the other hand, when your conscience is not engaged in this conflict; when you have to discharge the ordinary functions of your office; when you must act as a minister of the Word, a magistrate, a husband, a teacher, a student, etc.—that is not the season to hear the Gospel but the Law. Because those are the times when you are to perform the duties of your vocation, etc.

Our own righteousness serves us for this life, but the righteousness that the Gospel brings us is a heavenly righteousness. At a later point in time we will hear that Law and Gospel must be kept distinct not only in our sermons but also, above all, in our own heart.

If a theologian is asked to yield and make concessions so that peace may at last be established in the Church, yet if he refuses to budge on even a single point of doctrine—to human reason this looks like excessive stubbornness, even like downright evil intent. This is why such theologians are rarely loved or praised during their lifetime. On the contrary, they are scolded as disturbers of the peace or even as destroyers of the kingdom of God. They are regarded as men worthy of contempt. But at the end of the day it becomes clear that the very determined, unfailing tenacity of these theologians as they cling to the pure teaching of the divine Word by no means tears down the Church. On the contrary, it is this very attitude that—even amid the greatest dissension—builds up the Church and ultimately brings about genuine peace. Therefore, woe to the Church if it has no men of this stripe—men who
would stand watch on the ramparts of Zion, sounding the alarm whenever a foe threatens to rush the walls, men who would rally to the banner of Jesus Christ, ready for a holy war!  

Imagine what would have happened if Athanasius had made a slight concession regarding the doctrine of the deity of Christ. What if he had compromised with the Arians and had put his conscience at ease? After all, the Arians declare that they, too, believed that Christ is God—just not from eternity. They had added that little caveat: “There was a time when He did not exist,” meaning, He had become God. Yet they added: “Nevertheless, He is to be worshiped, for He is God.” What would have happened if they had made a concession? If Athanasius had yielded back then, the Church would have crashed from the one Rock on which it was founded, which is none other than Jesus Christ.

Similarly, imagine what would have happened if Augustine had made even a slight concession regarding the doctrine of free will, if he had denied the total incapacity of man for all matters spiritual. He, too, could have made a compromise with the Pelagians and put his conscience at ease since the Pelagians declare: “Yes, indeed, without the aid of God’s grace no one can be saved.” But by “the grace of God” they meant the divine gift that is imparted to every person. What would have happened if Augustine had yielded back then? The Church would have lost the core of the Gospel. There would have been nothing left of it but the empty, hollow shell of the Gospel. If Augustine had yielded, the Church would have had the Gospel in name only.

For the doctrine of the Gospel—namely, that man is made righteous in the sight of God and is saved by nothing but the pure grace of God through the merits of Jesus Christ—that is, as everybody knows, the most important doctrine, the marrow and substance of Christian teaching. If this doctrine is not proclaimed, there is no Christ, no Gospel, no salvation. There people perish, and, according to this false teaching, the Son of God would have come into the world in vain.

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27 Walther strikes a note that may have considerable cultural dissonance today. One could try to soften it by pointing to the arms and armor “of the Spirit” (see Ephesians 6:10–20) and not to physical bloodshed. Yet before the First World War, society had a more positive view of warfare.

28 Athanasius (ca. 293–373) held strongly to the formula that Christ was of the same substance (homousios) with the Father. The First Council of Constantinople (381) officially adopted the term.

29 See the Index of Persons and Groups, page 489.

30 Walther used Greek in his lecture and these words and phrases appear as Greek in the editions of Claus/Fürbringer and Dau. Greek words have been included rarely in this edition, and then usually in a transliterated form.

31 Augustine originally taught the freedom of the will, but, after diligent study of Paul’s Epistles and while serving as a pastor and bishop, he publicly rejected this position as false. See also the Law and Gospel timeline, page lviii.
Finally, imagine what would have happened if Luther had made a slight concession regarding the doctrine of the Holy Supper. What if, at the Marburg Colloquy, he had compromised with Zwingli and put his conscience at ease, since the Zwinglians did declare: "We, too, believe that the body and blood of Christ are somehow present in the Lord’s Supper—just not in the presence of Christ’s human substance, since God does not provide such exalted, incomprehensible things for us to believe.” By claiming this, Zwingli turned Christianity in its entirety into a questionable matter, and even Melanchthon, who was usually greatly inclined to make concessions, declared that Zwingli had relapsed into paganism. Had Luther yielded, the Church even back then would have become prey to rationalism, which places man’s reason above the clear Word of God.

Let us, therefore, bless all the faithful champions who have fought for every point of Christian doctrine, uncomcerned about the favor of men and disregarding their threats. Their worldly disgrace, though it often was great, has not been borne in vain. People cursed them, but they continued to bear their testimony until death, and now they wear the crown of glory and enjoy the blissful communion of Christ, of all the angels and the elect. Their labor and fierce battling has not been in vain. For even now, some 1,500 years or—in the latter case—some several centuries later, the Church is reaping what these faithful champions sowed.

Let us then, my friends, likewise hold fast the treasure of pure doctrine. Do not consider it strange if on that account you must bear reproach just as they did. Consider that the word of Sirach 4:33, “Even unto death fight for justice, and God will overthrow your enemies for you,” will come true in our case as well. Let this be your slogan: “Fight to the death on behalf of the truth, and the Lord will fight for you!”

Let us move on to a thesis that tells us that since the two doctrines of Scripture—Law and Gospel—are so different from each other, we must keep them distinct in our preaching as well.

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32 At the urging of Landgrave Philip of Hesse, a colloquy, or conference, of theologians met at Marburg in 1529 in hopes of uniting the various reformers. See also Ulrich Zwingli in the Index of Persons and Groups, page 501.

33 See Revelation 2:10; 7:13–17.

34 Luther’s translation of the Bible usually contains the apocryphal writings, among which is the book known as Ecclesiasticus or Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach—or simply as Sirach. Luther did not include the apocryphal writings because they are God’s Word but as helpful writings of pious men. Some of these writings are important for understanding the Book of Revelation and are even cited in the New Testament.
You are not rightly distinguishing Law and Gospel in the Word of God if you preach that “dead” faith can justify and save in the sight of God—while that believer is still living in mortal sins. In the same way, do not preach that faith justifies and saves those unrepentant people because of the love and renewal it produces in them.

Editor’s Note: In this thesis, Walther rejects both Roman Catholic and Reformed sources that claim godless people can have faith, albeit for different reasons. Walther’s opponents in the Election Controversy had called him a Calvinist, while he responded by calling them Papists. Walther takes aim at the Canons of Dort to distance himself and the Missouri Synod from the charge of Calvinism. He does the same with the Puritan Oliver Cromwell (1599–1658) for the same reasons.

Lutherans have always affirmed that sin, even minor sin, is very dangerous and that one cannot continue to embrace evil thoughts, words, and deeds and still retain a living faith. Walther takes the stricter position that even a minor willful sin causes one to lose salvation. He states that immediate repentance restores grace. This argument rests on a 1544 opinion of Luther, Johann Bugenhagen, and Philip Melanchthon against a commentary on 1 John by Thomas Naogeorg that claims a Christian can commit premeditated murder and other coarse sins yet not lose faith. The reformers correctly see this as contrary to Scripture.

The Missouri Synod, however, did not affirm Walther’s opinion about falling in and out of grace. This opinion only appears in these lectures, which may suggest that it was not a central part of Walther’s teaching. The main point of this thesis nevertheless

1 The Synod of Dordrecht (Dort) established a summary presentation of the basic points of Calvinism.
2 The best source of this opinion is D. Martin Luthers Werke: Briefwechsel (Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1947), 10:509–15. Perhaps in haste, the reformers paraphrase citations from Scripture and these paraphrases are presented in several editions of Luther’s works as direct quotations. At one point, the reformers claim that one of these paraphrases is the clear word of Scripture. This shows how all Christians are human and can err. Everyone must look carefully to Scripture as the source, standard, guide, and measure of faith.
3 Neither Franz Pieper’s Christian Dogmatics (St. Louis: Concordia, 1950–57) nor any doctrinal resolutions between 1880 and 1918 show that Walther’s position on falling in and out of grace was accepted. This aspect of Walther’s thought was quietly set aside.
remains based on Scripture. The Missouri Synod did affirm that Walther is correct when he states that mere intellectual or historical knowledge of Jesus cannot save, for it is not true faith. Missouri Synod doctrinal resolutions affirm from Scripture that true faith is both knowledge and action; faith cannot help but produce good works. Walther correctly shows that one cannot preach Gospel comfort to those who have only an intellectual or historical knowledge of Jesus and who continue in sinful lives.

This evening we wish to consider the first part of this thesis, once again referring to how people mingle Law and Gospel. This problem occurs chiefly in the papacy and is the principal reason they reject Luther and his doctrine.

As you know, Luther taught that only faith—apart from good works—saves a person. Correspondingly, he taught that good works do not save. Based on Luther’s rejection of good works, Papists draw the conclusion that he must have been a wicked man. They have claimed that Luther said that, in order to get into heaven, you need only believe and not do any good works. But this is not Luther’s doctrine at all. In fact, Luther taught the exact opposite. He did not say, “You need faith—but also good works and love.” Rather, what Luther said was that “you need faith that is so strong that it will produce love on its own, generating an abundance of good works.”

This does not mean that faith saves on account of the love that springs from it. What it means is that the faith which the Holy Spirit creates cannot help but do good works. This faith justifies because it clings to the gracious promises of Christ. It justifies because it lays hold of Christ. This faith is active in good works because it is genuine faith.

There is no need to urge believers to do good works. Their faith generates good works automatically. Believers engage in good works—not from a sense of duty, in return for the forgiveness of their sins, but chiefly because they cannot help but do them.

It is completely impossible for genuine faith not to gush forth from the believer’s heart in works of love. This is a point that the Papists simply do not grasp. They imagine that a person may have true faith and still live in mortal sin. This is why they sneer at the teaching that “faith saves.” They call this a “fine religion,” meaning that it is the worst and most wicked religion that has ever been invented. This is what they teach about Luther.

However, it never entered Luther’s mind to teach only a kind of faith that merely believes what the Church believes. The Papists claim that faith is the

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4 See “sin, mortal and venial” in the Glossary, page 486.
firm belief that the teaching of the Church is correct. Therefore, in their view, as long as anyone has that belief, they also have the true faith. Nevertheless when believers in the Roman version of faith die, they do not immediately go to heaven, Rome claims. This is why, as far as Rome is concerned, people can be fornicators, adulterers, drunkards, thieves and at the same time be good believers.

In Galatians 5:6 we read: “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.” If faith is lacking love, the reason it is not effective is not because of its lack of love but because it is not genuine, righteous faith in the first place. It is not that love must be added to faith. Rather, love must grow out of faith.

A fruitful tree does not produce fruit because someone ordered it to grow fruit but because, as long as there is still some life in it and it is not dried up, it cannot help but produce fruit spontaneously. Faith is like that tree. If it fails to bring forth fruit, it is obviously withered. In the same way, the sun does not need to be told to shine. It will continue shining until the Last Day—without anyone commanding it to do so. Faith is like the sun.

Acts 15:9 documents the effect of the mission work of the early Church: “And [God] made no distinction between us [Jews] and them [Gentiles].

having cleansed their hearts by faith.”

A person who claims to have a firm faith that he will never abandon—but who still has an impure heart—must be told that he is in great darkness. For, in reality, he has no faith at all. For instance, you may regard all the doctrines preached in the Lutheran Church as true, but if your heart is still in its old condition, filled with the love of sin—if you still act contrary to your conscience—then your whole faith is a mere sham. Then you do not have the faith of which the Holy Spirit speaks when He uses the word “faith” in the Scriptures. For real faith purifies the heart.

Christ says in John 5:44: “How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?” What a terrible verdict! What the Savior is saying is: “Anyone who would be a believer yet accepts honor from people really has no faith.” From the moment faith begins to grow up in a person’s heart, one of the first fruits of faith is that he gives all honor to God alone. But if a believer does happen to receive honor from his neighbor, then that person is inwardly convinced that he does not deserve it. Then he says to God:

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\text{Whate'er of good this life of mine} \\
\text{Has shown is altogether Thine.}^5
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5 German: Ist etwas Gut am Leben mein / So ist es wahrlich lauter dein.
Thus a true believer returns to God any honor given to him. In the same way, if a person without faith finds himself looked down upon or despised, he at once becomes depressed and miserable because he is not getting what he seeks.

Preachers who are conquered by this faithless mind-set step into the pulpit full of ambitious passion: "Now the folks are going to see what a real preacher is!" They are flattered by the admiration of people who may be completely unqualified to evaluate them: "Oh, that was so beautiful! Oh, the young man presents it all so well! Someday he is going to be somebody!" These preachers prefer such flattery to being slipped, say, ten dollars, though they would probably take the money too.

But seriously, all of us are haughty, proud, and ambitious. And only the Holy Spirit can drive this harmful vice from our heart. But we can never get rid of it entirely. An evil root remains in our heart. When a believer notices this nasty tendency within himself, he detests it, rebukes himself, feels ashamed of himself, and asks God to deliver him from these disgraceful ideas of pride.

That this statement is true is beyond question. For the Savior is asking a rhetorical question, saying, "How can you possibly think that you could receive honor from one another?" There is no way that "looking for honor" and "faith" can be compatible with each other. Rather, when faith enters a person's heart, this should make the believer humble in the presence of God and other people.

We should despair when we occasionally eavesdrop on our own heart because we must remember that a poisonous root of vanity is still in our heart. And as soon as our heart begins to stir up those vain thoughts in us, we must fight it. This will keep us from despair. Yet a person who does not fight his vanity has no faith and thus is not a Christian. Or he has already lost his faith.

First John 5:4 says: "For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith." Accordingly, a person who is still in his old nature and is not born of God, a person who still loves the world and seeks to satisfy his heart with foolishness and vanity, that person has no faith. For faith overcomes the world.

In James 2:1, the apostle says: "My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory." If you prefer the rich over the poor because of their wealth, this means you are focusing on the person and thus have no faith. That is an attitude that faith will not tolerate, as James says quite correctly.

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6 Here Walther mimics what people might say to the preacher or about the preacher after the service.

7 Walther's ten dollars would buy perhaps as much as $200 worth of goods today.
This means that where there is faith, this kind of attitude must disappear, because faith does not focus on the person but on the relationship that person has with God. Faith thinks: “This poor beggar has been redeemed by the blood of the Son of God. As far as I am concerned, this makes this man worth as much as a king or an emperor.” These are the kind of huge miracles that faith works in our hearts.

Now, if you say that faith is merely the lifeless mental act of regarding certain matters as being true—even if that person sins habitually—that means you are treating faith as a work that a person can produce in himself and preserve in himself even while sinning. That would be like claiming: “Well, I might have stumbled into this or that sin, but I want to believe, so I will get to heaven.” True faith is a treasure that only the Holy Spirit can give us.

Now listen to what the Papists taught in the Council of Trent. As you know, it convened a few months before Luther’s death, with the purpose of healing the wounds that the Reformation had dealt to the papacy. The council put its seal of approval on all the errors that had been adopted by the Roman Church over time, but it presented them in a subtler manner than most of the theologians of that age had done. This is what the council passed in its sixth session, as translated by the Roman theologian Smets: “We must claim that salvation can be lost by other means than simply by unbelief, through which faith itself is lost.” They admit that someone can lose faith by unbelief. This is an extremely important truth! They start with this in order to blind and mislead people. “Salvation can also be lost by any other mortal sin, though faith itself is not lost by it.”

As such, they teach that salvation may be given up, while faith is retained. This is quite correct when applied to the religion of Papists. For the most depraved Catholic can be the best member of the Catholic Church. They teach that “the Gospel, grace, justification, and forgiveness of sins can all be lost in defense of the divine Law—which excommunicates not only unbelievers but also believers, namely, fornicators, adulterers, pederasts, drunkards, robbers, and all who commit mortal sin.”

So, according to the religion of Rome, there are such things as believing thieves, believing fornicators, believing adulterers and child molesters, believing misers, drunkards, blasphemers, and robbers. Note that these unfortunate people have no concept of what faith is. If they had but an inkling of it, they would see that wicked people cannot have genuine faith. On the other hand, they would see that the Lutheran Church does not believe

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8 Walther uses the Latin: Concilium Tridentinum.
9 Wilhelm Smets, ed., Des hochheiligen, okumenischen und allgemeinen Conciliums von Trent Canones und Beschlusse (Bielefeld: Velhagen & Klasing, 1851).
10 Walther means the Papists.
what they think we believe. Far from placing good works on the back burner, the doctrine of Luther points to the true source from which good works must spring. For a person who by the Holy Spirit and the grace of God has obtained a living confidence in Christ cannot live in sin. His faith changes and purifies his heart.

Calvinist error

One can barely believe it, but the Calvinists have fallen into the same error—from a different angle. We read in the Decrees of the Synod of Dort,¹¹ chapter V, articles 3–8:

> Because of the remnants of sin living in them—moreover, because of the temptations of the world and Satan—the converted cannot persevere in grace¹² when left to their own natural resources. But God is faithful and mercifully confirms them in the grace given to them and keeps them powerfully in the same until the end.¹³ Although the power of God that confirms and keeps true believers in grace is too great to be overcome by their flesh, nevertheless the converted are not always urged and moved by God in such a manner that in certain, particular actions they do not depart from the guidance of grace, are not seduced by the lusts of the flesh and obey them. For this reason they must continually watch and pray that they not be led into temptation. If they fail to do this, they may not only be dragged into serious and awful sins by the flesh, the world, and Satan, but also occasionally they are dragged into such sins by a just, permissive providence of God. Instances of this kind are the sorry fall of David, Peter, and other saints, which are recorded in Scripture. By such dreadful sins, however, they greatly offend God, bring mortal guilt upon themselves, grieve the Holy Spirit, interrupt the exercise of their faith,¹⁴ grossly violate their conscience, and sometimes lose the consciousness of their faith for a season—until they return to the right way by earnest repentance, and God again makes His fatherly face to shine upon them. For because of His unalterable decree of predestination, God, who is rich in mercy, does not entirely take His Holy Spirit away from His own in such sorry instances in cases of sin, nor does He permit them to

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¹¹ In this confession, a number of subpoints are organized under five chapters or “heads” that define the five main doctrines of Calvinism, which can be identified by the acronym TULIP: total depravity of man, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and perseverance of the saints.

¹² Taken from chapter V, this material speaks about the Calvinist doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, the P in TULIP. Lutherans regard this teaching on perseverance, which goes together with the Calvinist doctrine of predestination, to be contrary to Scripture.

¹³ This is another way of saying, “Once predestined, always saved.”

¹⁴ Walther comments here: “They only interrupt the exercise of their faith! So they keep it!” Walther is speaking with sarcasm. He means, of course, that they do not keep their faith.
lapse to a point where they would fall from the grace of the adoption to sonship and from the state of being justified. . . . For, in the first place, He preserves in them that imperishable seed of His out of which they were born again, so that it cannot be lost or driven out from them.

The first proof\(^{15}\) cited for this view is taken from 1 John 3:9: “No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed lives in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God.” This is not to say that converted people cannot lose the seed. It means that, while the seed is in them, the effect it has on them keeps them from living in mortal sin.

Second, He renews them certainly and powerfully to repentance by the Word and His Spirit, in order that in conformity with God they may heartily grieve over the sins they committed (by His permission); may with contrite heart pray for, and obtain by their faith, forgiveness in the blood of the Mediator; recover the feeling of the grace of God reconciled with them; worship His mercy by faith; and thereafter show forth greater enthusiasm in working out their salvation with fear and trembling. So it is not by their own merit and strength, but through the gracious compassion of God, that they do not entirely fall from faith and grace nor remain in their fall until the end and be lost.

Thus Calvinists claim that, when David committed adultery and even murder, he lost neither his faith nor the grace of God. Rather, his faith merely withdrew somewhat, so that he could not exercise it. That was all. He did not fall from grace or lose his faith, they claim, and so would not have gone to hell if he had died in that state.

This is a horrible doctrine because people who believe this will not worry about repenting if they commit crimes such as adultery and murder. When Cromwell, the miserable person who had sentenced his king to death and launched murderous and bloody trials throughout England, was on the verge of death, he became alarmed. Summoning his chaplain, Cromwell asked him whether a person who had once been a believer could lose his faith. That miserable chaplain replied, "No." Cromwell thus concluded that all was well with himself because he knew that once upon a time he had been a believer. Remembering the deep impressions that the Word of God had made upon him at certain times in his life, Cromwell relied on the comfort of this shameful chaplain, namely, that since he had had faith at one point in time, he still had it. This example shows the awful effect of this doctrine.

Let me now present a testimony from our own Confessions, namely, from the Smalcald Articles, Part III, Article III, paragraphs 42–44:

\(^{15}\) Walther disagrees with these proofs. He is relating the Calvinist position.
On the other hand, certain sects may arise; some may already exist. During the peasant rebellion, I encountered some who held that those who had once received the Spirit or the forgiveness of sins or had become believers—even if they later sin—would still remain in the faith. Such sin, they think, would not harm them. They say, “Do whatever you please. If you believe, it all amounts to nothing. Faith blot out all sins,” and such. They also say that if anyone sins after he has received faith and the Spirit, he never truly had the Spirit and faith. I have seen and heard many such madmen. I fear that such a devil is still in some of them.16

So this is what Luther calls the devil!

The Smalcald Articles continue: “So it is necessary to know and to teach this: When holy people—still having and feeling original sin and daily repenting and striving against it—happen to fall into manifest sins”—manifest sins are those that are not only in your heart—“(as David did into adultery, murder, and blasphemy), then faith and the Holy Spirit have left them.”17

When he fell into sin, David had ceased to be a prophet enlightened by the Holy Spirit and a child of God. Had David died during that period in his life, he would have gone to hell. Yes, that could have happened to him that entire year before Nathan came to preach repentance to him. David condemned the man who had committed the crime narrated by Nathan. When Nathan told him, “You are the man,” that showed David that he had declared his own sentence: if he did not repent, he would go to hell and be damned.

The Holy Spirit does not permit sin to have dominion, to gain the upper hand so it can be carried out, but represses and restrains it from doing what it wants. If sin does what it wants, the Holy Spirit and faith are not present.18

Not only coarse sins but also any willful, intentional sin can snuff out the light of faith.19 Accordingly, people fall from the faith far more often than we

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16 Concordia, 276.
17 Concordia, 276, 278.
18 Concordia, 278. See also Müller, 324; Triglot Concordia, 491.
19 See also Pieper, Christian Dogmatics, 1:367, which draws on the Loci Theologici of Martin Chemnitz. The understanding of willful sin does not necessarily include what one does when the rational will recedes in favor of emotion, such as fear, passion, partisan fervor, and ignorance. Christians may also have sins of weakness, meaning the wicked thoughts that may arise suddenly from the sinful flesh but are not acted upon. In contrast to this we have the conscious, premeditated sins of Judas (Matthew 26:14–16) and Absalom (2 Samuel 15). One can group together murder, rebellion, adultery, robbery, and any sin that requires planning. A true believer cannot plan and do evil acts. Those evildoers stand condemned, each by his own conscience. That puts one very near to committing the sin against the Holy Spirit and thus falling into a state of living death. See additional points.
imagine. Faith dies in those who lead a life of shame, but it also dies when people permit themselves to be led astray against their better knowledge and the warning of their conscience. They plan to do a certain sinful thing and carry it out, even though they know that it is contrary to God’s Word. In such instances faith simply evaporates.

However, people caught in this snare can quickly recover their faith, if they immediately quit their wrongdoing, as the example of Peter shows. 20 Peter did not harden his heart. When Jesus looked him in the eyes, Peter went out and wept bitterly. That look of the Savior made Peter repent of his sin, causing him to realize the enormity of his offense and the unspeakable greatness of his Lord’s mercy. Jesus’ look seemed to say, “Poor Peter, repent! I have forgiven you all your sins.” That was like a sword run through the heart. Blessed is the man who—after falling—immediately gets up and repents, so he does not reach a stage when his heart is hardened.

St. John says in 1 John 3:9: “No one born of God makes a practice of sinning .... and he cannot keep on sinning.” This is also the truth that St. John speaks in 1 John 1:8: “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”

In conclusion, I will submit a testimony of Luther from his private writings. In 1536 a certain preacher sent a commentary that he had written on the First Epistle of John to the faculty at Wittenberg, requesting that it be reviewed for publication. 21 The commentary contained the error that the elect supposedly do not lose the Holy Spirit even when they lapse into conscious sinning and coarse vices. Luther opposed the publication of the commentary and wrote a theological opinion on that point, signed by the other members of the faculty. It can be found in his works, St. Louis Ed. 10:1706ff.

When a person sins against his conscience, that is, when he knowingly and intentionally acts contrary to God, such as an adulterer or any other criminal does who knowingly does wrong, he is without repentance and faith and does not please God—as long as he consciously persists in this intent.

Or, for example, when a man keeps the wife of another man, it is obvious that he lacks repentance, faith, and sanctification. For the faith by which we are made righteous must be associated with a good conscience.


21 The actual date of the document is Jan. 25, 1544. All editions of Luther’s works available to Walther date the document uncertainly to 1536.
How dare I come before God with an evil conscience and say, “Oh, dear God, You have forgiven me my sins. Praise be to You eternally!” No, God will reject you if you say that. If you care nothing for God, you will remain in sin.

Suppose someone who has treated you shamefully came to you and said, “I treated you in a disgraceful manner. I beg you, forgive me. But I intend to keep on doing it.” Would you forgive him? No! Only a madman would say, “Pardon me, but I am just going to keep on doing it. Furthermore, every time I see you, I will insult you.” Yet I still want you to forgive me.” People who want to be comforted by His mercy yet keep on sinning treat God in just this manner.

Luther continues: “It is absolutely impossible for these two things to coexist in a person, that is, to have faith in God while at the same time having a wicked intent or, as it is also called, an evil conscience.” Conscience is a damaging witness, preventing us from keeping our mouths shut—no matter how hard we try. Of course, we are all poor sinners. But if we attempt to sin, our conscience tells us: “Do not try it. You are God’s enemy and want to remain His enemy. You do not really want to go to God!”

Thus Luther: “Faith and calling out to God are very tender things.” They can be easily wounded. Furthermore: “If your conscience is damaged even a little bit, it will push away faith and calling out to God.” It is not the external outrageousness of their sin that casts such people out of their state of grace and snuffs out the heavenly light of their faith, but rather the attitude of their heart toward that sin.

Yet if you are suddenly overtaken by sin, God forgives you. He is not angry with you and does not charge that sin against you. These acts do not snuff out faith. Or you might be tossed into sin by your temperament. You do not want to sin but have been angered to such an extent that, before you know it, you sin. That would not be a mortal sin, which would remove you from the state of grace. But when a person persists in a sin against his conscience—even though he knows it to be a sin, even though he deliberately continues to sin for a long time—he no longer has faith and cannot truly pray to God.

In this situation, the Holy Spirit leaves one’s heart because another spirit, an evil one, rules in it, [a spirit] whom the sinner has admitted into his heart. The Holy Spirit yields His place to this evil spirit and departs, as Luther says, “something every tried-and-true Christian frequently encounters.” Christians notice that, when they yield to sin in the smallest detail, their trust in God is immediately diminished. They also feel that, if they do not turn away from that sin on the spot, sin will rule over them, and they will be unfit to believe. In moments such as these, Christians fall to their knees and call upon God with tears—though that is not an essential part of repentance—crying,

22 German beleidigen means “to offend, slight, bad-mouth, talk trash,” and so on.
“You know, O God, that I do not want to sin.” Likewise, Peter declared to Christ: “Lord, You know everything; You know that I love You.” Peter was able to call upon the Lord as his witness. With a good conscience, he could say to Christ: “You can look into my heart, is that not so? Why, then, do You ask me?” That is the language every Christian must be able to use when speaking to God: “My God, You know that I do not want to sin, and yet I am sinning. You know that I have become an enemy to sin.”

Thus Luther: “Accordingly, Paul joins the following two pieces: 1 Timothy 1:5, ‘This is the summary of doctrine: Love from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith;’ and 1 Timothy 1:19, ‘Hold faith and a good conscience.’” The only true love is the love that is made up of sincere faith. Sincere faith means faith that does not just look like faith but which is living, active, and really faith of the heart. Luther continues: “And again in 1 Timothy 3:9, ‘They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience,’ etc. These and similar passages, to be cited further below, indicate that where good consciences are lacking, there is neither faith nor sanctification.”

Faith and good conscience must go hand in hand. Where there is faith, there a good conscience is too. But a person who does not have a good conscience certainly is without faith, because the two belong together. The apostle in 1 Timothy 1:19 says that such people have suffered a shipwreck of their faith. Whoever does not have a pure conscience also has not maintained the precious treasure of faith.23

Therefore, only faith in our Savior, Jesus Christ, obtains the grace of justification, that is, only a believer has forgiveness of his sins and is accepted by God. Nevertheless, this person must drop his former evil intentions so that a good conscience will start to grow in him. Now, where there is faith and a good conscience, there the Holy Spirit certainly is as well. Yet those who are justified do not build their confidence on their own worthiness or good conscience, but on Christ. Therefore, we conclude from Christ’s promise that we have been received into grace for His sake and may offer our prayers to God acceptably, as John says in 1 John 3:20: “For whenever our heart condemns us, yet we may confidently address God, and what we ask, we will receive from Him.”

Luther continues: “Sin remains in the saints: hereditary misery and evil tendencies, that the heart does not seriously fear God, trust God, etc.” Because even after we are converted, we are not truly able to fear God, nor are we able to fully trust Him. [Luther says:] “All of these are not unimportant problems, but rather huge sins.” All sins are huge sins. Even the so-called sins

23 The Dau text adds: “They have cast the precious treasure of faith overboard.”
of weakness, which justified people cannot avoid, are not to be regarded as
unimportant. Even though these sins of weakness do not snuff out one’s faith,
they should not be treated lightly.

Thus Luther: “Nevertheless, this weakness should be distinguished greatly
from conscious assent and evil intent, which pollute one’s conscience.” That is
the big difference! [Luther continues:] “These latter sins do not coexist with
sanctification. In this context we must not discuss predestination, but the
wrath of God that is revealed in His Word, and then seek grace.”

What Luther is saying is we should not assume that, just because we are
predestined, we are guaranteed to go to heaven. To be sure, anyone who is
predestined will certainly go to heaven. But the key issue is: Are you really
predestined? Any person living in sin and continuing that kind of lifestyle
makes it clear that he is not predestined. God does not insist on keeping that
person out of heaven. Rather, He had foreseen that this wicked person would
abuse His grace. No, if you are such a person, you are not in His grace. And if
you stay like that, you are condemned!

The sins into which the elect fall strip away their sanctification and
drive the Holy Spirit from them. This is quite evident, first, in Adam
and Eve, who were elect but who nevertheless lost their holiness and
the Holy Spirit in a miserable way, so that by the wounding of these
first people all their descendants have become feeble and sinful by
nature.24

Nobody can deny that Adam and Eve were elected, and yet they fell, lost the
image of God, the Holy Spirit, their holiness—in short, everything. But they
repented and were thus restored to a state of grace.

Had they not been raised up again, they would have remained con-
demned forever. In the meantime, they were truly under the wrath
of God. These are not fake events. For in clear terms Paul says in
Romans 5:12 that through one man sin came to all men to damnation.
Everybody knows what damnation is. Likewise, when David slept
with the wife of Uriah and had caused her godly husband to be killed,
etc., he was under the wrath of God and had lost his sanctification
and the Holy Spirit until he was converted again. We could list many
similar examples.

Once faith is lost through some mortal sin, the grace of God is also lost,
and that person becomes a child of death and condemnation. He may return
to faith and ultimately be saved, but in the meantime he is not blessed, but
rather a completely miserable, lost creature.

24 See Genesis 3:1–19.
The truth of what I have stated is clearly established from the following passages: 1 John 3:7, “Do not be deceived! Whoever does righteousness is righteous. Whoever does sin is of the devil.” For instance, when David permitted his heart to be set on fire with the flames of wrong desire and lost his footing, he was whipped up by the devil. After conquering David with that first sin, the devil drove him to still greater sins, namely murder, etc. That the Holy Spirit had been driven out of David’s heart is evident from the words of Paul in Galatians 5:19: no adulterer is an heir of the kingdom of Christ.25

Paul is clearly speaking of the adultery that is still taking place. When adulterers persist in their sin, they are not heirs of the kingdom of Christ.

Consequently, he is not righteous and holy and does not have the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, because of these things, the wrath of God comes upon the disobedient.26 In Romans 8:13 Paul introduces a distinction that we must make among sins. He says, “If you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.”

Now, it is clear that in this passage Paul is preaching to saints, teaching them how they may remain holy, namely, by resisting their evil tendencies. On the other hand, he says, “If you live according to the flesh you will die,” that is, if you yield to your evil desires, you will again be under the wrath of God. For that is what he calls dying. Ezekiel 33:12: On the day a righteous person does evil, I will forget all his righteousness, etc., and on the day the godless one repents and does good, I will forget his sins.27 This is a clear text: it proves that if righteous people knowingly and intentionally fall into sin, they are no longer justified.

In Revelation 2:14 the Holy Spirit rebukes the church at Pergamum for tolerating false doctrine and fornication, and He says with clear words, “What I hate.”28 When God is angry with someone, that person is not holy and accepted by Him, etc. And among those there were, without a doubt, elect and nonelect.

When God is angry with someone—for when He hates someone, His wrath burns against them—that person is not acceptable. There may have been elect persons in the congregation at Pergamum, but God also hated

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25 This is a paraphrase that combines Galatians 5:19 and 5:21.
26 The Dau text has a reference to Galatians 5:6.
27 This is a paraphrase of Ezekiel 33:12. Luther’s text attributes it to Ezekiel 33:13.
28 Luther’s text attributes the content of Revelation 2:6 to 2:14, referring to the Nicolaitans, a Gnostic sect also tolerated at Pergamum, as indicated in Revelation 2:15.
those elect persons and was angry with them because, for the time being, they
had driven out of their hearts His grace, faith, and the Holy Spirit.  

Based on these and many other testimonies, the Church has always
taught unanimously that when saints knowingly and deliberately act
contrary to God’s command, they are no longer saints. Rather, they
have lost the true faith and cast away the Holy Spirit. But if they turn
again, He will keep the gracious oath that He has sworn, saying: As
surely as I live, I have no desire for the sinner to die, but to repent and
remain alive.  

Accordingly, for Christ’s sake God once again takes
back into His grace those people who turn to Him and rekindles in
their hearts the true faith through the Gospel and His Holy Spirit.
He has not commanded us to ask first whether we are predestined.
Rather, it is enough for us to know that whoever perseveres to the end
in repentance and faith is certainly elect and will be saved, as Christ
says, “Blessed are those who persevere to the end.”

MY FRIENDS:—

The world of unbelievers regards the doctrine of the Christian religion—
that salvation is brought about solely through a person’s faith—to be impos-
sible. The world discredits this concept. To them this teaching seems to be
complete nonsense. In fact, they regard it as proof that even the Christian
religion—like all the other religions that claim to have been revealed super-
naturally—is intent on deceiving people.

They claim that Christianity is not superior to Hinduism, which requires
faith in the Vedas, the sacred books of the Hindus.  

Or they would cite Muhammad—that prophet of lies, as everyone knows—who demands faith
in the Qur’an, the holy book of Muslims, claiming that only it contains
the true religion of salvation. The world equates these two religions with
Christianity because, according to the world, Christianity states that it, too,
is a religion that has been supernaturally revealed and that it, too, demands
faith in its doctrines as the only way to salvation.

29 Scripture states that God “has something against” the congregation in Revelation 2:14,
not that His hatred is directed against them as a whole. Only some in the congregation
accept the ways of the Nicolaitans (Revelation 2:6, 15). Yet it is clear that the congregation
in Pergamum displeases God because it tries to serve both God and pagan ways (the sin
of Balaam). If the members of the congregation do not repent, God will act on His wrath
against them. See Louis A. Brighton, Revelation, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis:
Concordia, 1999), 78.

30 See Ezekiel 33:11.

31 This was popularized by Friedrich Max Müller, a professor of Sanskrit at Oxford.

32 Walther speaks of the Qur’an in a sharply negative light in his writings.
The world’s argument is that the Father in heaven does not care what a person believes or disbelieves, since true religion consists only of leading an upright life, exercising virtue, and doing good works. Why should it be a sin, they say, if a person fails to believe something that is completely contrary to his God-given reason? The world claims that if there is such a thing as God and final judgment, on the Last Day people will not be asked what they have believed, but what kind of lives they have led.

Others wish to dig deeper into these matters. They claim that if the Father in heaven is especially pleased with a person’s faith, it is because that faith is such a glorious work and such a beautiful virtue. Thus they can see no reason whatsoever why He should not be equally well pleased, say, with a person’s love, patience, bravery, justice, impartiality, truthfulness, and similar qualities.

What causes these objections to the role of faith in Christian doctrine? Without question, coarse ignorance is the primary source. People simply do not know what faith is according to the Holy Scriptures. Far from regarding saving and justifying faith as nothing else than stubbornly sticking to certain religious teachings (as the Hindus and Muslims do), Christian doctrine declares that simply sticking to the teachings revealed in Holy Scripture is useless. In fact, this approach leads straight to hell.

Christianity says that anyone who builds on those teachings is building on sand. While these other religions claim that we Christians lift up faith and say it is a glorious work and a precious virtue, on the contrary, we teach that faith does not justify and save a person because it is such a good work. Rather, what saves is the redemption accomplished by Jesus Christ, which faith grasps. This reflection takes us back to our tenth thesis.

A week ago we discussed that faith is not dead and lifeless, but something that transforms and renews the heart. It regenerates a person and brings the Holy Spirit into his soul. Tonight we will focus on the second part of the tenth thesis, which states that the Word of God—Law and Gospel—is not rightly distinguished, but mingled, when one preaches that faith justifies and saves because of the love and renewal it produces.

The Holy Scriptures emphatically testify that there can be no genuine faith without love, without a renewal of heart, without sanctification, or without an abundance of good works. But at the same time Scripture testifies that the renewal of heart, love, and the good works that faith produces is not the justifying and saving element in a person’s faith. Innumerable passages of Scripture could be cited to prove this statement. We will focus only on the principal passages.

Romans 4:16 states: “That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring.” Here Paul
declares that the very reason we teach righteousness by faith is because we teach that a person is saved by grace, which justifies him before God. Now, if faith were to make us righteous because of some good quality inherent in us, it would be wrong to conclude that the reason we teach that people are justified by faith is because they are justified and saved by grace.

Justification takes place by grace through faith—not because of any good qualities inherent in faith. In justification, it is not the person's faith that is taken into consideration, but the fact that Jesus Christ has redeemed the entire world. Justification is based on the fact that Jesus has already done what was necessary and has suffered all that mankind ought to have done and suffered, and that people merely have to accept this.

Therefore, the way to salvation is this: We contribute nothing—absolutely nothing—toward our salvation. Rather, Christ has already done everything for us, and we must merely cling to what He has done, drawing consolation from His finished work of redemption and trusting in it for our salvation. This passage in Romans is a precious text, a text that deserves to be remembered. If something that we ourselves must do belonged to the justifying quality of faith, the apostle would be drawing a false conclusion here. In that case Paul should have said, "By faith, insofar as it enables us to accomplish something good." But that is not the reason faith justifies. It justifies because it accepts the merit of Christ. Faith is only the hand with which we grasp what God offers. Philippians 3:8–9:

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\text{Phil. 3:8–9} \\
\text{Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith.}
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This is another precious passage! As bright as the sun, it sheds bright light on the real essence of faith. The apostle declares that he is indeed righteous. However, the righteousness that he has obtained by faith is not at all his own righteousness, but the righteousness of Christ. Accordingly, when we become righteous by faith, we are made righteous by an "alien righteousness." God sees in us absolutely nothing that He could credit to us as righteousness. The righteousness that we have by faith is foreign to us; it is from another. We have not purchased it or contributed anything toward it. Had we contributed love toward it, and were God to justify us on that account, our righteousness would not be an alien righteousness, or at least it would be only half alien, to supplement our own imperfect righteousness. For the apostle declares: "I
have no righteousness of my own, but only the righteousness that God credits to faith.”

Romans 4:5: “And to the one who does not work but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness.” When a person is justified, though he was previously a godless—not a godly—person, he is now made godly by faith. Anyone having genuine faith acknowledges that he has been godless, deserving hell and damnation, lost, contaminated with sin from head to toe, and that a divine miracle of grace was performed on him when God said to him the moment he believed in His Savior: “You are counted as righteous. I see in you no righteousness of your own, yet I am covering you with the righteousness of My Son. From now on, I will see in you nothing but righteousness.” Whoever does not come to Christ as an ungodly person does not come to Him at all.

Ephesians 2:8–9: “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.” This almost sounds as if the apostle felt he was not saying enough to keep the reader from falling into self-righteousness, because he first says, “By grace you have been saved.” Next, he adds “through faith.” Lest people think they had achieved this feat by their faith, the apostle continues: “and this is not your own doing.” Well, from where does it come, if not from us? “It is the gift of God.” And completely to ward off any thought of a person’s own merit, he adds “not a result of works,” such as a person’s love, or charity, would be. He concludes with the statement “so that no one may boast.”

Now, a person who claims that faith justifies on account of the love that follows it could say, “I have been justified by faith, but that was because I also loved, because I had also performed good works, because I had also become a different person. That is why God regards me as righteous.” The apostle tosses out this thought in his concluding remarks. Anyone who imagines that there is a little “halo,” a little glory, that he might claim as his own is still without the faith that justifies. These people are still blind and are not walking in the way of salvation. Rather, they are headed straight for hell.

Romans 11:6: “But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.” The apostle cannot emphasize strongly enough that this is all by grace. He invites his readers to reflect that, when they admit that their salvation is “by grace,” it cannot be by merit, for that would destroy the idea of grace. As soon as one adds merit to grace, that cancels out grace. That makes all talk of grace complete nonsense. “If salvation is by the merit of works, grace does not count either—or merit would not be merit.”33 There is no alternative, then, for a person other than to believe

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33 Walther demonstrates his classical education by taking the essence of Romans 11:6 (“if grace, then not works”) and, following Paul’s meaning, declaring the contrapositive: “if
firmly that he has been made righteous solely by God’s pure, everlasting mercy—by the gift of faith.

Even when one’s faith bears good fruit, these follow later—after that person has received all that is necessary for salvation. First a person is saved, then he becomes godly. First he must be made an heir of heaven, then he becomes a different person.

Here we have the wonderful quality of the Christian religion in particular. If a person wants to do everything on his own to get to heaven, he is lost. No, first you must be made an heir of heaven and be saved; after that you begin to thank God.

That is why Luther says that the Christian religion is—in a nutshell—a religion of gratitude. All the good that we Christians do is not done to merit something. We would not even know how to acquire merit. Everything has been given to us: our righteousness, our everlasting heritage, and our salvation. All that is left for us to do is to thank God.

In fact, God is so gracious that, for the person who is especially faithful in this life, He even adds to his salvation an additional, eternal glory. That is not an unimportant matter for eternity. For when God gives extraordinary gifts, He is outrageously generous. That is why there will be such a great difference among Christians in the life to come. In heaven, even a trifling “more” becomes infinitely great throughout eternity.

For this reason we must be truly grateful to God—not only for receiving eternal life but also for all that we are and have. Only works that proceed from gratitude are genuinely good works. Even in our secular relationships, when a person is very willing to render services to another and hope for a reward, we accuse that person of being a miserable cheat. They pretend to love us while speculating on financial gain. We find out later: “That guy just did it because he wanted to be paid.” That is when we say, “What a rotten guy! I thought he was doing it out of kindness—and now I see that he was just eyeing my wallet! I thought he was being helpful and selfless, but he just wants to be paid! That lousy creep can take a hike!” Such people nauseate us; they do us some service not because we are especially dear to them, but they figure they will get more from us than they do for us. And they become nasty and hostile to us when their hopes are dashed.

works, then not grace.” Doing so makes grace and works mutually exclusive in classical logic.

34 Walther emphasizes his point through role-playing. He does that more often in this thesis than elsewhere. Perhaps after moving so carefully through Thesis IX, Walther had to “loosen up.” When he resorts to role-playing—such as the church ladies complementing the pastor, the Jesuit insulting the Lutherans, the angry person telling his false friends to get lost, and so on—Walther tends toward dramatic excess. He takes advantage of being “among the boys” to make his point.
Truly “good” works, therefore, are works that we do out of thankfulness toward God. True believers would never think of earning or obtaining good for themselves. They cannot help but express their gratitude by love and good works. Their hearts have been changed, softened by the richness of God’s love that they have experienced. On top of it all, God is so gracious that He rewards even the good works that He accomplishes in us. For the good works done by Christians are God’s works.

Some people object that in the matter of sanctification a person must add at least something of his own to it. Yet a person can never really begin any good work of his own ability. God must prompt him and work in him even to want to do the good work that he is to perform. Accordingly, whenever Christians seem to be doing something good, it is only by the power and operation of God in them that they are doing it.

The Papists occasionally say that a person is justified and saved by faith, but they add: “provided love is added to faith.” They do not mean to say merely that a person who has no love has no faith. That is what we teach too—just as Scripture does. What they mean is this: A person may have true faith created in him by the Holy Spirit. But if love is not added to it, they claim that faith is absolutely worthless. That is why they call love the forma of faith. In theological terms, as you know, forma makes matter what it is—its essential quality. The Papists declare that if love is not added to faith, such faith may be genuine, but it is not justifying faith. Love is the forma of faith, which they say makes justifying faith what its name indicates. Such faith they call fides formata, faith that has received the proper form. However, if love has not been added, they call that faith fides informis, that is, faith without its proper form.

The Decrees of the Council of Trent, ch. VII, canon 28: “When love is not added to it, faith neither forms a vital union with Christ, nor does it make a person a living member of the Body of Christ.” The Papists do not speak of “faith from which love does not proceed.” That would be correct. If faith does not produce love, it is a mere fake. Rather, what they mean is this: You might have good faith, but that does not justify you if you do not add love to it. Love should not flow from one’s faith; that is something altogether impossible according to their teaching. They understand faith to be mere lifeless agreement with the doctrines of the Church. Love, they say, must be added to faith. Then faith will justify you.

35 In Aristotelian philosophy, matter (the material cause) changes form as the result of thought (the formal cause) acting on it.
36 One finds this language already in Bonaventure’s commentary on the Sententiae of Peter Lombard and the Summa Theologiae of Thomas Aquinas.
Well, if that is the case, then what does justify? Only love, only a person’s good works. They do not say this in plain terms, but any person who reflects even a little on what they are saying cannot help but draw out of their remarks this meaning: If faith does not justify in the first place, then something must be added that on its own achieves justification.

“Catechumens receive the faith that obtains eternal life, which faith without love cannot obtain.” By “catechumens” the Papists mean those who want to join their church. See, without love this so-called “faith” cannot attain eternal life! “Therefore, they hear the word of Christ: If you want to enter into eternal life, then keep the Commandments.” Here we have the Papists’ real faith! Faith, though admittedly necessary, does not obtain everlasting life. They say: If a person does not keep the Commandments, faith is of no help to him. After he has satisfied the one command of Christ to believe, another is added, namely, to keep the Commandments.

In Matthew 19, a rich young man asked the Lord, “What good deed must I do to have eternal life?” His question was not “What must I do?” but “What good deed must I do?” Accordingly, Christ had to tell him: “Keep the commandments.” That did not mean that the rich young man would really be able to keep them. The Lord was simply answering the question of this man who was drowning in self-righteousness. When the Lord failed to cure him of his awful blindness—even after telling him that he had to love God above all things and his neighbor as himself—He gave him an additional lesson. He told him to sell all that he had and to give the money to the poor. That lesson sent the young man away sorrowful. Without a doubt, he was cut to the heart because he now realized that he did not love God above all things. He had to acknowledge that Jesus had judged him correctly.

Yet [the young man] was not seriously concerned about his salvation. If he were, he would have admitted that he was unable to do what the Lord commanded and that he would be lost if that was the only way to obtain everlasting life. Had he admitted that, the Lord would have told him: “There is One who can save you. Believe in Me—and even though you are a despicable man and break the Commandments, you will be saved.” But the young man went away. Without a doubt, if he had become a believer, Scripture would have recorded that fact.

Someone might think that—at the end of the day—the Papists just mean that dead, superficial faith does not justify a person, which is exactly what we ourselves teach. But no, what they mean to say is: “No matter how good a person’s faith is, it will not save him unless love is added to it.” That is about as wise a saying as “No matter how good the apple tree, unless you add the fruit to it, it is not an apple tree.” Why, the opposite is true. Apples do not make an apple tree. Rather, the apple tree produces apples.
However, the Papists have been quite clear on this matter. In the chapter and canon of the Council of Trent mentioned earlier, it says: "If anyone claims that when grace is lost because of sin, faith is lost in the process as well; or that the faith that remains in a sinner is not genuine faith, even though it may not be a living faith; or that the person who has faith without love is not a Christian—let him be accursed."

They claim, then, that a person who falls into mortal sin does not lose faith. We would say that a person living in mortal sin may have a perfect historical faith but that such faith is not genuine—just a mere sham. The Papists, however, declare that it is genuine faith. They speak of faith as something apart from love. In their view, love must join faith in order to make that faith valid. They regard faith as a fine container that has no worth beyond storage. Love is the treasure to be added. When that happens, the treasure chest becomes far more precious than it had been. Thus the Papists maintain that faith is made precious when Christians add love. They say, "Faith justifies," but only if it has love.

In the days of Johann Gerhard, the theologians of Cologne—at that time Rome's best theologians—published the Censura Coloniensis. In this treatise they state: "People who are justified live by faith. But this is not solely because of Christ or His work. In fact, the forma or power of faith does not stem from Christ, whom it apprehends and possesses, but from our love." Not only does this statement declare that a person must add love to faith, but it also declares that love is the only reason justification does what it does.

Let us now hear a few testimonies from Luther on this so-called faith. Its Roman Catholic champions claim that it is the true essence of faith, thus true faith, but not justifying faith. On Galatians 3:11 (St. Louis Ed. 9:357f):

The Sophists, as they are always prepared to distort Scripture, make these hair-splitting remarks on this passage: "The righteous one lives by faith," certainly, but by faith that operates, does works, or has obtained its proper form through love. If faith lacks this form, it does not justify. This gloss is pure invention. With this statement they are doing violence to the prophet's words.

37 Decrees of the Council of Trent, ch. VII, canon 28.
38 Latin: fides formata as opposed to fides informis.
39 Walther notes: "By which he [Luther] means the Papist theologians."
40 Luther speaks of this as one passage, but he refers simultaneously to Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 1:17; and Galatians 3:11.
41 Latin: efficax.
42 Latin: formata caritate.
43 Latin: informis.
44 Ancient and medieval Bibles were written in Greek and Latin. Monks and other learned churchmen would write study notes between the lines of text and in the margins. These
They have twisted and distorted this precious, comforting passage. Indeed, they do admit that both the apostle Paul as well as the prophet Habakkuk stated: “The righteous one lives by faith.” But what faith does he mean? An active faith that does good works, that has love, and that has renewed the person. This alone is the faith that he means—and only for this reason does man live by faith.

Luther continues: “I would not mind their gloss if by ‘faith properly formed’ they understood genuine, theological faith or what Paul calls sincere faith.” Please note that Luther permits the phrase “properly formed faith,” only if it means genuine faith of the heart. He knows that faith that does not purify the heart does not justify, but keeps that person in sin. But the Papists always present it in this manner: “Oh yes, the Lutherans say that a person is justified by faith without good works. That is an entirely shameful doctrine. It is calculated simply to repel and discourage people from doing good works. They would like no one to do good works anymore. They always say, ‘Believe, believe, believe, believe!’ Then, from that moment onward, one will go to heaven.”

Of course, the better-informed Papists say this, knowing that this is not so. However, there are so many Papists, even among the priesthood, who actually believe that the Lutheran Church is a disgraceful mob that says, “The mere act of admitting something to be true makes a person righteous and saves him,” so that he goes to heaven—no matter what kind of life he leads.

Luther says that if they understand fides formata to be faith created by the Holy Spirit and now the source of all good works, if they claim that this faith justifies, then Luther is in full agreement with the Papists. But they should not add a statement such as: “Faith saves because it has a wonderful quality.” No, faith first justifies and saves a person. Then it also produces fruit. Luther continues:

For in this case, faith would not be set up over against love, but it would be in opposition to a useless opinion that people may have of faith. We, too, distinguish between fake and genuine faith. “Fake faith” exists in people who have heard about God, Christ, and all the mysteries of the incarnation and redemption and who have understood these matters intellectually—knowing how to talk about them beautifully. Yet it all remains useless imagination. What these people have heard

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notes were often in the language of the people, not of the Bible text. Thus the notes were called glosses because they translated and explained the text for more common use. Later, glosses were compiled in books to guide the interpretation of Scripture. The word gloss comes from the Greek word that means “language.”

45 Latin: fides formata.
46 German: Glaube! Glaube! Glaube! Glaube!
has merely left an echo of the Gospel in their hearts—and they babble about it. But it is not really faith, for it does not renew and transform their heart or produce a new person. Rather, it leaves them stuck in their former opinions and behavior. Such faith is actually extremely harmful. It would be better for this person not to have it at all. A moral philosopher of this world is better than a hypocrite who has this kind of faith.

It would be better if such a person had never found out about the Gospel, were he only to grasp it with mere intellectual understanding. Yes, he can chatter about it, he can preach on it—he can even preach on it in a meaningful way. Yet he is only a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. It would be better for him if he had not had that faith.

Accordingly, if they were to distinguish “properly formed faith” from false or fake faith, this distinction would not be so offensive to me. But they speak of faith that receives its proper form through love. Thus they establish two kinds of faith: “unformed faith” and “properly formed faith.” I must reject this harmful and devilish gloss in the strongest terms. For they say: Even where there is infused faith—which is a gift of the Holy Spirit—and, in addition, acquired faith, which we produce ourselves by many acts of believing, yet both kinds are unformed and only receive their proper form when love is added.

Oh, take care to remember that! The Jesuits have snared countless people, and when Lutherans rebuke them for not teaching justification by faith, they reply: “Your Lutheran preacher is just making false claims. We do not teach that doctrine at all. We are teaching a better doctrine than yours. You Lutherans say, ‘All you have to do is believe, and you will go to heaven.’ We Catholics say, ‘A person is justified by faith, namely, by faith that works through love. That is what the apostle Paul teaches.’

Now, if a person did not realize that the Jesuits are just talking nonsense, he could think that he had been misinformed about the doctrine of the Catholic Church. However, let no one be deceived. The Jesuits do not speak of faith as a source of love, but of faith that has love existing alongside of it. Thus they are lying when they seem to agree with us and say that a person is justified by faith. When they add the term formata [“properly formed”] to fides

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47 See 1 Corinthians 13:1.
48 Latin: fides formata.
49 Latin: informis et formata.
50 Latin: fides acquisita.
51 Latin: informis.
52 The Jesuits, or Society of Jesus, is a religious order founded by Ignatius of Loyola. For more information, see the Index of Persons and Groups, page 496.
[“faith”], what they really mean is works. For they say that a person is justified by faith only if he has works in addition to faith.

That is just as if I had some play money and thought: “If I had dollars in addition to that, I could really buy something.” If I went to the store, the merchant might take the play money along with the real money, but he would give me nothing for the play money. He would only exchange the real money for his products. I really could buy nothing at all with the play money. The Papists turn faith into play money while giving true worth to love. They say, “Faith has to be there; it is necessary for the doctrine to be true. But if it is to save, then love, then good works, must be added, and they are the real things that buy my way into heaven.”

Thus the Roman doctrine of justification is nothing less than a complete denial, total destruction, and condemnation of the Gospel. Any sect is incomparably better than the papacy, the Roman Church, because even though sects worry a lot about their works of piety, their wrestling for grace, and their prayers, they still hold fast to the teaching that faith in the Lord Jesus alone justifies and saves a person. When poor Methodists or Baptists are in their final agony, they realize that faith alone saves, and they die saved—taking refuge in the Lord Christ.

But when Papists die, they are forced to think of purgatory and how long they might be stuck there because they lack love and good works. They would have to consider themselves lost. That was the devil’s aim when he founded the papacy; he wanted to destroy the redemption of Christ by this damnable doctrine53 that faith does not justify and save—except when you add another element that acquires salvation.

Luther writes:

Thus [the Sophists] dream up the idea that faith without love is just like a painting or something beautiful to behold that is placed in the dark and cannot be seen until light, that is, love, is added to it. And in this way they claim love is the form [or essence]54 of faith, while faith itself is only the material55 on which love works. That means one puts love ahead of faith and credits a person’s righteousness to love instead of faith.

German: *diese verdammte Lehre*. Walther cursed in order to make a strong point. Yet he would not advise church workers to follow his example of cursing and of casual reference to the devil. Nor do the doctrinal theses and their discussions in the Missouri Synod during Walther’s time follow this example. The literature on the Antichrist clearly points to papal abuses, papal wealth, the political power of the papacy, and the end-time biblical prophecies regarding a universal Christian leader who has been co-opted by Satan in order to persecute true Christians. Of all the Christian bishops, the papacy ultimately stands out because of the amount of blood that it has spilled in Jesus’ name.

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54 Latin: *forma*.

55 Latin: *materia*.
of to faith. For whatever gives a certain quality to something has that quality in a higher degree. Therefore, they really give no credit at all to faith because they attribute righteousness to faith only on account of love.

The Papists do not say that if you could create your own faith, it would not save you—because they claim that even if you had true faith created by the Holy Spirit in your heart, that faith would not save you if you did not add love. They hold to the Council of Trent, which states you can have true faith but still be drowning in mortal sins.56

Moreover, these people who distort the Gospel of Christ say that infused faith, which has not been obtained by preaching or some other activity57 but is worked in a person by the Holy Spirit, can exist in a person guilty of a mortal sin and can be found in the worst scoundrels. For this reason they declare it to be a lifeless and useless thing when it is alone, even if it works miracles. Thus they rob faith entirely of its function and attribute it to love, declaring faith to be completely worthless unless we add to it love, which is what gives faith its proper form.58

On Galatians 2:19, Luther writes (St. Louis Ed. 9:218):

When I have thus grasped Christ by faith, I become dead to the Law, justified from sin, and freed from death, the devil, and hell by Christ. Then I begin to do good works, to love God, to show Him gratitude, and to practice love toward my neighbor. But this love, or the works that follow from faith, neither give the proper form to faith nor do they adorn it. Rather, faith gives love its proper form and adorns it.

Love is not the form of faith; rather, faith is the form of love.59 Why? It is not that love creates faith, but that faith creates love. It is not love that gives faith its true essence. Rather, faith gives love its true essence.

56 Here Walther makes an important point, but he communicates only part of his thought process. He knows that the Church rejected Pelagius and salvation by works at the Council of Ephesus in 431. Therefore, if the Papists were true to the ecumenical councils, they would affirm that one cannot be saved by trying to work or create one’s own faith. Roman Catholic sources tend to limit Pelagian issues to the Greek Church. Pelagius argued a “faith alone” doctrine (sola fides) in which faith alone grasps justification, but this merely opens the external path to God that works and sanctification must complete internally. Luther argued for “by faith alone” (sola fide), in which Christ justifies, faith receives, and works flow from justification. Before Vatican II, Roman Catholic sources such as the Catholic Encyclopedia slandered Luther by calling his doctrine Pelagian. It is the papacy that has remained truly faithful to the Pelagian heresy.

57 Latin: *operatione*.

58 Latin: *forma*.

59 Walther uses the Latin: *Caritas non est forma fidei, sed fides est forma caritatis*. 

W\^2 9:218

(cf. AE 26:161)
Galatians 5:6 states: “In Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.” The Papists argue that this verse supports their thesis, yet these words say something completely different. This is why **Luther** comments on this text (St. Louis Ed. 9:632ff.):

The Sophists force this text to support their view that we must be justified by our love and good works. For they declare that even faith infused into a person by God does not justify unless it is given its proper form by love, because they call love “grace that makes a person acceptable in the sight of God”—what we with our words, yet more so with those of Paul, would call justifying grace. At this point I do not wish to say anything about the faith that a person obtains by his own effort.

Moreover, [they say that] love is obtained by our own merit, which God rewards according to His good pleasure, etc. In fact, they even maintain that infused faith can exist in a person living in mortal sin. Thus they completely remove justification from faith and attribute it (in this manner) to love alone. They would establish this doctrine of theirs by St. Paul: “faith that works through love,” as if Paul meant to say: See, faith does not justify; it amounts to nothing unless works-producing love is added to it, which gives faith its proper form.

This is the error of the Antichrist.

However, unspiritual men have made up all these strange, horrible ideas. Could anyone tolerate the doctrine that faith—the gift of God that is poured into people’s hearts by the Holy Spirit—can exist alongside mortal sin? We could tolerate such teaching if they were referring to faith acquired by one’s own effort or to historical faith or to the natural opinion that comes from historical matters. Indeed, they would be speaking correctly about historical faith.

But since they speak of infused faith, they plainly reveal that they have no true understanding whatsoever of faith. Besides, (as one is careful to say) they read this passage in a mirror dimly. They corrupt the text and twist it according to their fancy. Paul does not say: faith that

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60 Latin: *gratia gratum facientem.*
61 Latin: *iustificatione.*
62 Latin: *de acquisita.*
63 Latin: *nosto merito congrui.*
64 Latin: *operatrix.*
65 Latin: *acquisita.*
66 An allusion to 1 Corinthians 13:12.
justifies by love” or “faith that makes a person acceptable by love.” They falsify such a text and forcibly declare for it that meaning. Even less does Paul say, “Love makes a person acceptable.” No, this is what the apostle says: “Faith working through love.” He states that works are performed by faith through love—not that people are justified by love.

They get it backward. The text does not state what faith makes happen in God’s eyes, but what faith does within itself. For it is active through love, after it has obtained righteousness before God and everlasting salvation for the believer.

The Papists invariably teach this error. Among so-called Protestant churches, many teach this point incorrectly as well. Even though they declare that everything is received by grace through faith, many Protestants add: “Of course, faith must also produce good works,” because they are afraid that the above statement might offend people. As soon as they add this, however, they falsify and undermine their whole preaching. For with that one qualification all their preaching about grace and faith is useless and a wasted effort. That makes it sound as if faith were not enough for justification and needed love to be added to it.

This is how you must preach on this issue: “Of course, if a person does not have love, then let him understand that he does not have faith either. Therefore, he cannot be righteous in God’s sight.” Not because love justifies a person in God’s sight, but because faith is only genuine when it is worked by God through the Holy Spirit, which flows forth in love of God and one’s neighbor.

My friends, it is an undeniable fact that there are more believing theologians today than when I was young—some fifty years ago. In those days, basically only vulgar Rationalists occupied the ecclesiastical offices and pulpits created by the government. Back then, the small number of believing theologians were tolerated—provided they behaved and kept quiet, made no serious attempt to confess their faith, and, above all, did not passionately oppose the forces of unbelief.

What a change has taken place since then within the so-called Protestant Church! Those vulgar Rationalists turn the Bible into a code of ethics and specifically declare Christian doctrines to be “magic carpet” myths and fantasies—valuable only as far as moral lessons may be drawn from them. These men appear to have left the scene and fizzled away.
These days the so-called “intelligentsia” refuses to be classified as vulgar Rationalists. True, the so-called Society of Protestants\(^\text{67}\) has made an attempt to reintroduce and rehabilitate vulgar Rationalism, but without success. Even the spokesmen of that society declare that vulgar Rationalism is outdated. These days, if you want to be regarded as a person of intelligence, it is absolutely necessary to acknowledge that the Christian religion is supernaturally revealed. Yet they still have watered down the authority of the Bible, maintaining that it only contains God’s Word.

By what process did these new “believers” attain their “faith”? Was it by personally recognizing the misery of their sinful condition? Or was it by clearly recognizing their damnable condition and their need of redemption? Alas! There is pitifully little evidence of that. A careful observer can barely help but get the impression that they arrived at their faith by rationalist speculation. That is why nearly all of them reject the verbal inspiration of the Bible. They subject all books of the Bible to criticism, such as would be engaged in only by enemies of the Bible. Of course, they are not aware that they are enemies of the Bible. They have turned the Christian religion into a religious philosophy.

Regarding its essential qualities, modern theology is something entirely different from what theology used to be. It does not pretend to be a system of faith. Rather, it wishes to be a system of science. Starting with the principles of human knowledge, modern theologians propose that they are able to prove as absolute truth what the common people merely believe.

Accordingly, modern theologians do not have that fear that drove David when he said, “My flesh trembles for fear of You.” These days, such reverence for Holy Scripture is hard to find. They treat nearly everything in the Bible as they would the fables of Aesop. I am telling you the truth when I say this. And later on, when you compare the old and the modern theologians, you will see that I am not exaggerating. Science has been placed on the throne, and theology is made to sit at her feet and await the orders of philosophy. Accordingly, as soon as someone becomes prominent in a new field of science, he is also immediately awarded a doctorate of theology, as if science and learning were identical with theology.

My dear friends, if you do not keep the light of the pure Gospel shining in this land of the West, which was recently devastated by God,\(^\text{68}\) it will not be possible to delay the Day of Judgment. In our day we are down to the dregs of the cup. The end is at hand. May God help us to remain faithful in this part of the world that has been the last region to be penetrated by the Gospel.

\(\text{67}\) German: Protestantenverein. See “Protestants, Society of” in the Index of Persons and Groups, page 498.

\(\text{68}\) This is likely a reference to the U.S. Civil War.
Do not forget, my dear friends, that there is only one way to arrive at true faith. God did not provide several ways to salvation—one for the learned and the other for common folk. God is not a respecter of persons. If the learned scholar wants to become a believer and be saved, he must come down from his lofty perch and sit with poor sinners, regardless of whether they are cowboys or other regular folk. There is no other way to faith than through a person’s knowledge of sin and his damnable condition and through the inward crushing of the heart in contrition and sorrow. A person who has not come to faith in this way is not a believing Christian—much less a theologian.

I hope you will not misunderstand me when I say that this is the only way to faith. If this statement is not understood correctly, it may lead to a horrible mingling of Law and Gospel. In these “Luther Lessons” of ours, this reflection leads us to consider the next thesis.

The church building of the Dreieinigkeitskirche (Trinity Church) in St. Louis was dedicated on December 3–4, 1865. On May 27, 1896, the tornado that damaged or destroyed 8,000 buildings in St. Louis and East St. Louis severely damaged this structure as well as Holy Cross. Both church buildings were rebuilt. Trinity’s steeple is lower today and less ornate and does not have a clock in the belfry. Image courtesy of Concordia Historical Institute.
Emilie (pronounced like “Amelia”) Walther died before her husband, Ferdinand, completed lecturing on this thesis. Her death would underscore for Ferdinand the eternal consequences of properly distinguishing Law and Gospel. This engraving comes from Martin Günther, *Dr. C. F. W. Walther: Lebensbild* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1890), 152.
Thesis XX

You are not rightly distinguishing Law and Gospel in the Word of God if a person’s salvation is made to depend on his association with the visible orthodox Church and if you claim that salvation is denied to every person erring in any article of faith.

Editor’s Note: In this thesis, Walther steers a course between two great errors: unionism and sectarianism. Unionism errs by claiming that Protestants are all basically the same. In its worst form, unionism turns into universalism, that is, the belief that all paths to God are basically the same. This approach throws out basic truths proclaimed in Scripture concerning the particular origin of the Gospel in the one, true God. Humanity is the god of the false, universalist faith, and hell is its doom (Romans 1).

Sectarianism errs by claiming that only the people in a particular organization will be saved. This ignores the universal goal of the Gospel (Matthew 28) and the fact that God will call His people out of all groups by the action of the Spirit through the Means of Grace. The judgment on sectarianism is also hell (Matthew 23). By avoiding these errors, Christians properly read and apply the Bible.

It seems so bizarre that, after such a long time during which Rationalism and the greatest religious indifference were widespread, these men should have devised the doctrine that the visible Lutheran Church is the Church par excellence, outside of which there is no salvation. However beyond understanding it first seems to be, it is just as easily explained.¹

They stumbled into this mistake by means of a different false belief. Every error bears much fruit.² The mother of that terrible false idea [that this thesis addresses] is the doctrine that the Church is a visible institution that Christ has established on earth—differing in no way from a kind of religious state. The authority and governing offices are, indeed, not in the hands of kings,

¹ The Dau edition adds: “by the prolific nature of error.”
² This is yet another proverb that Walther picked up from orthodox Lutheranism.
emperors, generals, and mayors. Rather, they are in the hands of superintendents, bishops, church commissions, pastors, deacons, synods, and the like.

Everyone who is at least somewhat familiar with God’s Word knows that this view is in error. Does the Savior not say, “And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”? This rock is Christ. No one is a member of the Church except the person who is built on Christ. Being built on Christ does not mean connecting yourself mechanically with the Church, but placing your confidence in Christ and hoping to receive righteousness and salvation from Him alone. Whoever fails to do this is not built on this rock. Therefore, this person is not a member of the Church of Jesus Christ.

Paul says in Ephesians 2:19–22:

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In Him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

The only people built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets are those who believe and cling to the word of the apostles and prophets. Therefore, a person without a living faith cannot be a member of the Church.

Furthermore, the Savior calls Himself a bridegroom. Let no one who is not betrothed to Christ with the innermost affection of his heart claim to be a true Christian and a member of the Church. Regarding their relationship to Christ, these people are strangers. The Church, however, is the Bride of Christ.

Again, Christ is called the Head of the congregation. Therefore, you can be a member of the Church only when Christ—as the head, light, life, strength, and grace—flows into you. If someone does not have that spiritual connection with Christ, Christ is not his Head. Whoever is his own ruler and is not governed by Christ does not belong to the Church.

In another place the apostle calls the Church the Body of Christ. This has motivated many of even the most faithful Lutherans to say that, since a body is visible, the Church, too, must be visible. But that is a shameful piece

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3 German: *Kirchenkollegien*. This is a supervisory board similar to a consistory. August Hermann Francke envisioned a church commission working with the Prussian court to enforce Pietism in the Lutheran Church and duplicate the program at Halle in other cities. See also the introduction to Pietism, beginning on page lxvii.

4 See Revelation 19:7; 21:2, 9.

5 See, for example, Ephesians 1:22–23; 4:15; Colossians 1:18; 2:18–19.

of exegesis! The point of comparison in this phrase is not the visibility of the Church. Instead of being made up of many dead members, the Church is a living organism of members through whom one faith and one life of faith is pulsating. This proves beyond contradiction that the Church is not visible, but invisible. Only a member of the Church can experience this constant radiation from Christ, the Head of the Church.

Again, Christ calls the Church His flock. Therefore, no person who is not a member of the Church can belong to the flock of Christ, can be one of His sheep, can come to His pasture, and can obey His voice.

Some might raise the objection that Christ compares the Church to a field in which wheat and weeds are growing. But this objection is based on a wrong interpretation of that parable. Christ has given us the key that unlocks its meaning. He does not say, “The field is My kingdom.” If that were true, the Church would be a society made up of good and evil members. But He says, “The field is the world.”

The Apology of the Augsburg Confession emphasizes this fact. The Savior compares His Church to a field in which weeds grow among the wheat, to a net in which good and bad fish are caught, to a marriage feast that foolish virgins join along with wise virgins and to which, according to another parable, people gain entrance even though they are not dressed in the proper wedding garment. But with these parables Christ does not mean to describe the essence of the Church, but rather the outward form in which it appears in this world and how it appears among the people of this world.

Although it is composed only of good sheep, only of reborn persons, the Church never appears in the form of a congregation that is made up of only true Christians. In its visible form the Church can never purge itself of the hypocrites and ungodly persons who worm their way into it. Not until life eternal will the Church appear triumphant, entirely purified, and without blemish, separated from those who are not honestly and sincerely joined to it but only drawn to their own secular interests in an outward union with the Church.

While hypocrites and false Christians profess Christ with their lips, their heart is far from Him. They serve their carnal lusts and not the Lord alone. In Luke 14:26, the Lord says: “If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, 

7 Latin: tertium comparationis.
8 See, for example, John 10:26–28; 21:15–16.
9 This was the position of Tychonius in the fifth century AD. See the Law and Gospel timeline, page lvii.
10 For example, Ap VII and VIII (IV) 1 (Concordia, 143).
and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple." In this passage, Christ passes judgment on all who do not want to renounce what they have. But not until all are gathered before the judgment seat of Christ will these people become known as hypocrites. **We may see people going to church, but we cannot see whether they belong to the Church.** It is impossible to declare whether individuals are true members of the Church. No person knows if he is or if he is not. Only God knows. The Church is visible to the eyes of God alone. To human eyes it is invisible.

The error that we are now discussing is the primary falsehood of our time. It is indeed a horrible error! For those who surrender to this error pretend to be good Lutherans, opposed to the Papists—and yet the only difference is that they use different weapons than the Papists do. There was a time when it was the Papists who were the ones defending this false doctrine now under review. Now it is Lutherans—yes, Lutherans!—claiming that they are the Church outside of which there is no salvation. Such Lutherans become an object of mocking to the Papists. They play the part that the pope and his rabble used to play. The only conclusions that can be drawn from this sorry state of affairs are: either the pope's church is the true Church, or the true Church had stopped existing before Luther came.

But Scripture says that the true Church cannot stop existing. It will continue until the end of time. Yet until the sixteenth century there was no "Lutheran" Church. Still, since the days of the apostles there has not been a single church with doctrine as pure as that of our [Lutheran] Fathers. This is the difficult problem that all those maintaining this false doctrine concerning the Church bring upon themselves: either Scripture must be full of lies, or the Roman Church was indeed the true Church and Luther's Reformation was rebellion.

The main thing, however, is undeniably this: when you make a person's salvation dependent on membership in the visible orthodox Church and communion with the visible orthodox Church, that means you are overthrowing the doctrine of justification by faith. This cannot be denied. People joining the Lutheran Church already have true faith before they come.

It would be a fatal mistake to think that Luther did not have the true faith before becoming a Lutheran. Regardless of how highly we honor our church, may this shameful, fanatical idea be far from us: that our Lutheran Church is the only church that saves! The true Church extends around the globe.

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12 The German notes have: "fifteenth and sixteenth century." Walther probably said something similar to "fifteenth—uh—sixteenth century." English versions give the corrected text.

13 The Dau text adds a Latin phrase not in the original notes: *sit venia verbo*, "please pardon the expression." Walther did not ask for pardon.
and is found in all sects. For the Church is not an external organism with its own special arrangements, to which a person must adapt himself in order to become a member. Anyone who believes in Jesus Christ and who is a member of His spiritual body is a member of the Church. Moreover, this Church can never be torn apart. Although its members are separated from one another by space and time, the Church will always be one.

Now, in order to keep people from imagining that the pope is the Church, Luther renders the Greek *ekklesia* as “congregation,” which is a correct rendering. People could draw a false conclusion from the fact that Scripture speaks of external church communities, such as those at Rome, Corinth, Philippi, Thessalonica, in Galatia, and those in Asia Minor to whom the Lord issued letters through John. All these visible communities are called “churches.” Therefore, they claim that the Church is visible. As a rule, to apply the word *ekklesia* to local churches would be to draw a wrong conclusion, because the Scriptures regularly use this word not when referring to a local congregation but to the Church in the absolute sense.

The Church is an invisible community. The term is applied to local organizations because the invisible Church is contained in them. In a similar manner, we speak of a stack of wheat, though it is not all wheat, but rather a good deal of hay and straw is in the pile as well. Or we speak of a glass of wine, though water has been mixed with it. In such instances the object is named according to its principal content. Thus visible communities are called “churches” because the invisible Church is in them, because they contain a heavenly seed.

False Christians and hypocrites are called “members of the congregation,” even though in reality they are not members. Since they claim to confess the name of Jesus, we give them this title charitably, assuming that they believe what they confess. We cannot look into their hearts. We leave that to God. We do not judge them, except when they are obviously ungodly persons. In that case we stop calling them members, but exclude them and call them heathen and tax collectors.

Now, as a visible community, in synecdoche the Lutheran Church, too, is called a “church.” Therefore, it is an awful mistake to claim that people can be saved only in the Lutheran Church. No one should be forced to join the Lutheran Church because it is believed to be the only way to get into God’s Church. There are still Christians in the Reformed Church, among the Methodists—yes, even among the Papists.

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14 German: *Gemeine*, that in which all are (or have) in common.
15 Walther uses the Latin: *a potiore parte*.
16 Synecdoche is a figure of speech in which a part substitutes for the whole or the whole for the parts. For example, one may refer to a sports car as “hot wheels.”
We have this precious promise in Isaiah 55:11: “So shall My word be that goes out from My mouth; it shall not return to Me empty.” Wherever the Word of God is proclaimed and confessed or even recited during the service, the Lord is gathering a people for Himself. The Roman Church, for instance, still confesses that Christ is the Son of God and that He died on the cross to redeem the world. That truth is enough to bring a person to the knowledge of salvation. Whoever would deny this fact would also be forced to deny that there are Christians in some Lutheran communities into which errors have crept. But there are always some children of God in these communities because they have the Word of God, which is always bearing fruit by converting a number of souls to God.

This false doctrine regarding the Church mingles Law and Gospel in a most horrible way. While the Gospel requires faith in Jesus Christ, the Law makes all sorts of demands on people. Anyone who would demand additional requirements for salvation besides faith is mingling Law and Gospel. I belong to the Lutheran Church for the sole reason that I want to side with the truth. I would leave any denomination if I discovered that it harbors errors with which I do not wish to be contaminated. I do not wish to become a partaker of the sins of others. By leaving that heretical community, I would be confessing the pure and untainted truth. For Christ says, “So everyone who acknowledges Me before men, I also will acknowledge before My Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies Me before men, I also will deny before My Father who is in heaven.” Furthermore, Paul writes distinctly to Timothy: “Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God.”

But just because people may be saved in all the sects and despite the fact that there are children of God in all sectarian churches, by no means does it follow that we can remain in communion with a sect. Many people cannot understand this. They imagine it is a completely unionist principle to hold that a person can be saved in any of the sects. But it is true, and the reason is that we are saved by faith, which some members of sectarian churches may have. However, if I recognize the error of my heretical community and do not forsake it, I would be lost because, even though I saw the error, I did not abandon that sect.

I can still remember the time when I became a believer. At that time, I also joined the Union Church. Some people approached me with the intention of bringing me into the Lutheran Church. But I told them that I was a believer and did not want to belong to a church that claimed to be the only church that saves. Later, I found some good writings that showed me that this is not true after all. The Lutheran Church claims to be the only church that has pure

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17 That is, the forced union of Lutheran and Reformed Churches.
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doctrine, yet it does not claim to be the only church that saves. At the same
time, those documents admitted that people can be saved even in sects, if they
are not aware of that sect’s error.

As soon as I understood this, I left the unionist community and joined the
Lutherans. I had long known that the Lutheran Church has the truth, but I
refused to endorse the above Papist principle. Then I understood that it is not
necessary to condemn anyone who is in error regarding some article of the
Creed, but only those who have seen their error and still want to stick to it.

Let me show you that this is indeed the doctrine of our church. In the
Preface to the Book of Concord\textsuperscript{18} we read:

Now, about the condemnations, censures, and rejections of godless
doctrines, and especially about what has arisen concerning the Lord’s
Supper. These had to be clearly set forth in this, our declaration, thor-
ough explanation, and decision about controversial articles. This
was done not only so that all may guard against these condemned
doctrines, but also for certain other reasons that could in no way be
ignored. So it is not at all our plan and purpose to condemn people
who err because of a certain simplicity of mind, but are not blas-
phemers against the truth of the heavenly doctrine. Much less,
indeed, do we intend to condemn entire churches that are either
under the Roman Empire of the German nation or elsewhere. Rather,
it has been our intention and desire in this way to openly criticize and
condemn only the fanatical opinions and their stubborn and blas-
phemous teachers. (We judge that they should in no way be tolerated
in our dominions, churches, and schools.) For these errors conflict
with God’s clear Word. They do so in such a way that they cannot
be reconciled with the Word. We have written condemnations also
for this reason: that all godly persons might be diligently warned to
avoid these errors. For we have no doubt whatsoever that—even in
those churches that have not agreed with us in all things—many
godly and by no means wicked people are found. They follow their
own simplicity and do not correctly understand the matter itself.
But in no way do they approve the blasphemies that are cast forth
against the Holy Supper as it is administered in our churches, accord-
ing to Christ’s institution. With the unanimous approval of all good
people, the Lord’s Supper is taught according to the words of Christ’s
testament itself.\textsuperscript{19} We are also in great hope that, if these simple people
would be taught correctly about all these things—the Spirit of the Lord

\textsuperscript{18} Concordia, 9 (Walther’s emphasis). See also Müller, 16–17; Triglot Concordia, 19, 21.
\textsuperscript{19} See Matthew 26:28.
aiding them—they would agree with us, and with our churches and schools, to the infallible truth of God’s Word.20 And certainly, a duty is laid especially upon all the Church’s theologians and ministers. With such fitting moderation,21 they should also teach from God’s Word those who have erred from the truth,22 either from a certain simplicity or ignorance. They should teach about the peril of their salvation. They should fortify them against corruptions lest all may perish while the blind are leaders of the blind.23

Remember this passage well! If you meet with people who reproach you and say that the Lutheran Church claims to be the only church that saves, point them to this section of our Confessions!

While the Formula of Concord condemns Reformed doctrine, this condemnation does not refer to those who err in the simplicity of their hearts. It applies only to obstinate false teachers and blasphemers. These are people who admit that Christ said this or that, yet who refuse to believe. Such people who speak shocking blasphemies against pure doctrine are not to be regarded as children of God. They say things such as: “Christ says this or that, yet we choose to ignore it.” These [people who follow the simplicity of their hearts] are people who have been reared from childhood in a certain error, but who nonetheless hold fast to their Savior. These are not wicked persons, even though they may immediately turn away a Lutheran who approaches them.

The preface [to the Book of Concord] continues:

Therefore, by our writing, we testify in the sight of almighty God and before the entire Church that it has never been our purpose, by means of this godly formula for union, to create trouble or danger to the godly who are suffering persecution today. We have already entered into the fellowship of grief24 with them, moved by Christian love, so that we are shocked at the persecution and most painful tyranny that is used against these poor people with such severity. We sincerely detest it. In no way do we agree to the shedding of that innocent blood,25 which undoubtedly will be required with great severity from the persecutors at the Lord’s awful judgment and before Christ’s court.26 They

20 See John 17:17.  
21 See Philippians 4:5.  
22 See 2 Timothy 2:18.  
23 See Matthew 15:14.  
24 See Romans 12:15.  
26 See Romans 14:10.
will then certainly render a most strict account and suffer fearful punishment. Calvinists said, namely: “See, now they want to do in Germany what they did in France! Another St. Bartholomew’s Night is sure to come!” The Lutherans insist in this passage that they are not planning to persecute anybody. The blood of the Huguenots will be on only Papist hands. Lutherans condemn no one except those who condemn themselves!

Based on Luther’s preface to the theses against indulgences published [before the Formula of Concord], we can see what a difficult task it was for him to work his way to the true knowledge. He writes (St. Louis Ed. 14:452f.):

Of the many sufferings and trials through which I passed that first year and the year following, of the great humiliation that I had to undergo—and that was genuine and not put on, for it reached the degree of despair—of all these things little is known to these self-confident spirits who, after me, have attacked the majesty of the pope with great ranting and audacity. Still, with all their skill they would not have been able to harm a hair on the pope’s head if Christ through me, His puny and unworthy instrument, had not previously caused [the pope] to suffer a deep, irreversible wound. Nevertheless, they carry off the glory and the honor as if they had done it—to which honor they are welcome, for all I care.

But while they were looking on at my loneliness and jeopardy, I was not very cheerful, confident, and certain of my situation. For many things that I know now—God be praised!—I did not know at that time. For certain, I did not understand, nor did all the Papists together understand, the character of an indulgence; it was honored merely on account of long-established usage and custom. My object in inviting men to a disputation concerning it was not to reject it, but really to find out its effectiveness from others, since I knew absolutely nothing about it myself. Since the dead and dumb masters—I mean, the books of theologians and [canon] lawyers—could not give me enough information, I desired to seek counsel from the living and to hear the Church of God itself, asking such godly persons as might be

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27 See 1 Peter 4:5.
28 Concordia, 9. See also Müller, 17; Triglot Concordia, 21.
29 See the entry for the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre in the Luther to Walther timeline, page xxxvii. The Vatican would like the world to forget this event, so it has tried to acquire the medallions struck by Protestants in memory of the mass murder of many Huguenots in the name of Roman Catholicism. Concordia Historical Institute in St. Louis, Missouri, has one of these medallions in its collection.
30 The Dau text adds: “by resisting the known truth.”
enlightened by the Holy Spirit regarding this matter to take pity on me—and not only on me but also on the entire Christian Church—and give us a true and trustworthy account of indulgences.

Many godly men were greatly pleased with my theses and thought highly of them. But I found it impossible to regard and acknowledge them as members of the Church, endowed with the Holy Spirit. I only regarded the pope, the cardinals, bishops, theologians, [canon] lawyers, monks, and priests and was waiting for the Spirit from them. So eagerly had I taken in their doctrine—or, I might say, devoured it and guzzled it—that I had been filled to bursting with it and was not sure whether I was awake or sleeping.

To this day, Papists try to keep the people within the Roman Catholic Church by teaching them: “You know that only we are the true church. No matter what the church teaches, if you want to be a true follower of Christ, you must hear the church. If the pope decrees that he is infallible, or that Mary was conceived without sin, or that the saints must be adored, you must accept these dogmas. Do not consult your reason. The true church has set up these dogmas, and it cannot err. If you fall away from the Roman Catholic Church, you fall away from the true church.” This is the horrible bait with which they try to hook people.31

Luther continues: “When I had disproved all the arguments against me with Scripture and thus overcome them, I scarcely succeeded, by the grace of Christ, in overcoming—with great anxiety, trouble, and work—this one final argument: that I must hear the Church.”

Luther had already discovered that nearly every Papist teaching is on shaky ground, except for that one point that, as he says, troubled him greatly at the beginning and that kept him from becoming truly certain of the truth and being cheerful. The Papists had built the trap that they themselves later fell into. God’s hour had come for revealing the Antichrist.

For with all my heart I sincerely, reverently thought that the pope’s church is the true Church—as opposed to these shameful and blasphemous twisters of the truth who are now opposing me boastfully and claim to have the pope’s church backing them. If I had hated the pope as much as those people hate him who these days pretend to praise him highly with their lips, I would have been afraid that the earth would open up and devour me as it did Korah and his mob.32

31 Walther uses yet another fishing metaphor. Walther likely had an interest in fishing, particularly in fly fishing.

32 See Numbers 16:1–35.
May God keep you from becoming entangled with this false teaching regarding the Church, namely, that the Lutheran Church is the true visible Church of Jesus Christ in the sense that you can be saved only in this church! The Lutheran Church is indeed the true visible Church, however, only in the sense that it has the pure, untainted truth. As soon as you add the qualification “the only church that saves” to the Lutheran Church, you detract from the doctrine of justification by grace through faith in Jesus Christ and mingle Law and Gospel. May God keep you from this error for the sake of your own soul and those who will be entrusted to your care!

Error’s Note: The thirty-second lecture was the last given in the 1884–85 academic year. Emilie Walther fell ill about six weeks after this lecture. Ferdinand Walther called in the family doctor, who prescribed opium to combat Emilie’s increasing heart pain and difficulty breathing. The opium relieved the pain, but contributed to a high fever and progressive kidney failure that started on August 14. On Friday night, August 21, Emilie suffered a series of “attacks” that lasted into Saturday morning; her body was failing. Ferdinand heard his wife’s confession and administered the Lord’s Supper. Emilie slipped into a coma on Saturday evening and died Sunday afternoon, August 23, 1885. Ferdinand was at her side, weeping freely, and expressing his wish that he could have done more for her amid his busy schedule. He remembered the total devotion that she had for him, and he described as his “absolution” the selfless love in her eyes that she always had for him.

Walther gave the remainder of these lectures on Law and Gospel as a widower who had a poignant awareness of the shortness of this life and of the urgent need to properly discern Law and Gospel in preparation for the world to come. Walther began his thirty-third lecture with the opening of the 1885–86 academic year and with some introductory thoughts for his students. The following remarks will take on a deeper meaning in light of Walther’s loss.

It goes without saying, my friends, that the first and the necessary qualification of a theologian is a complete, accurate, and clear knowledge of every single doctrine of divine revelation.
It would be contradictory to call any person a theologian who does not have this knowledge. As you know, theologians are to be caretakers of people’s souls. A doctor must know, above all, the cures that nature provides for the healing of bodily ills. Similarly, the doctor of souls, that is, the theologian, must have a good knowledge of the spiritual cures that the Word of God provides for the ills of the soul. These spiritual cures, however, are nothing other than the doctrines that God has revealed for our salvation.

However, while an accurate, complete, and clear knowledge of every single doctrine of God’s revelation to man is absolutely necessary for a theologian, this does not by any means define his entire need. There are mainly two additional requirements that he still needs.

First, he needs a good knowledge of how individual doctrines relate to one another. That will enable him to make the proper application of each doctrine. Second, he needs courage, love, and a liking for his theological calling. A doctor may know all sorts of medications that have healing properties, but by ignorantly mixing them in a wrong way he may neutralize their strengths. So, instead of curing the physical ailment of his patients, the doctor may actually be speeding up their death. Similarly, a theologian who does not know which doctrines he may combine and which doctrines he must carefully keep separate may easily do a soul more harm than good.

Lastly, a doctor will properly carry out his difficult duties only when he is motivated by love and a passion for his special work and is unconcerned about the filthy money that he may gain for his work. Even so, a theologian will be faithful in his calling only when he is filled with enthusiasm for it and finds his chief reward in the way God uses him to save souls, destroy the kingdom of Satan, build up the kingdom of God, and increase the number of those who are in heaven.

I have always considered it my sacred duty not only to present pure doctrine in my dogmatics lectures, according to the grace that God has given me, but also to find an hour at least once a week to gather the entire student body of our beloved Concordia and show them the importance, meaning, and the practical applications of the doctrines that are studied in dogmatics. Above all, however, I wish to cheer your hearts for your difficult calling.

We call these Friday evening lectures—which are also the conclusion of the week’s instruction—“Luther Hours,” chiefly because in these lectures I let our beloved Father Luther, the God-appointed reformer and our common teacher of the Church, speak to you.

33 German: Lutherstunden.
34 Even though Walther was at the point in his career where he was most wary of the Church Fathers, nevertheless he always embraced the fact that God has provided true teachers of doctrine during every period of the Church’s life. Walther always gives thanks when these
Until now, God has graciously blessed these lectures because my beloved students have gladly attended them, and many of them have solemnly assured me that they have benefited from them. Not only have they gained a clearer knowledge of Christian doctrine, but [they] have also been made more certain of the forgiveness of their sins, of their adoption by God as His dear children, and of their salvation.

I cherish the hope that God will also help our students who have just enrolled at Concordia, and whom we welcome tonight, to have the same helpful experiences. I pray to God that He would grant me grace to speak to you as I should and that what I say will be well received by you.

Keep in mind, however, that, if my prayer is to be heard, you will have to pray as well that you would receive His insight. For you are not here for the purpose of acquiring knowledge of secular sciences, but for the purpose of being taught how to become familiar with a doctrine that, in the first place, brings you salvation—and also to many others through your ministry.

This requires great earnestness. You will have to remove the shoes of your earthly, carnal mind and—just like Mary, [the sister of Martha]—sit down at Jesus’ feet to hear from Him what the one thing is that is necessary.35 May God grant this and let me be a helper to you for all time!

Based on twenty-five theses, last year we began discussing the distinction between Law and Gospel. We still have five theses left—and they are quite important.

We must wrap these up before taking up another subject. I hope that our first-year students—even though they will hear only a fragment of this topic—will nevertheless get some food for their spirits in these lectures. We pray that their faith would be strengthened, and that they would be encouraged to withdraw from the world and their service to sin, and that they would be drawn to Christ. For if we who are here assembled are not true Christians, then we are completely lost, and God cannot help but look down on us in anger. For what can be a more horrible prospect than not being a Christian and yet drawing pay for the time you serve as pastor of a congregation?

I hope that you are all true Christians or that the blessed Word of God has drawn you and that its divine power has made a deep and lasting impression on you. I hope that some day, when you leave this institution, you will go forth prepared not only with a fine foundation of theological knowledge but also with a heart burning with enthusiasm to proclaim the great things that the Lord has done for humanity.

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[At the same time,] I hope that our students who were here last year will not consider it tedious if I read all the theses that have already been discussed, so that our new friends may know what the discussion has been about and how important the remaining theses are.

(The first twenty theses were read, and some brief comments were made.) True faith does not grow spontaneously out of any person. It is so firm that, even if the heavens were to cave in and hell were to open its jaws, we believers could cry out: "Let heaven fall down and hell open up! Who cares? I believe in Jesus Christ, true God, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, with His precious blood." No devil and no hell can snatch this away from me." The faith of hypocrites, however, is like spring snow melting in the sun.

Some think that they are Bible Lutherans simply because they declare that only Lutherans can be saved. At any rate, they claim that people need to confess Lutheran doctrine, even if only on their deathbed—and if they do not, they will go to hell.

But in reality this claim stamps them not as genuine Lutherans but as apostates from Lutheranism. The Lutheran Church does not make such claims, but it does indeed teach people how to be justified and how to be saved by grace. But there are persons living among the sects who love the truth and may be better Christians than some Lutherans. Christ rules everywhere, even among His enemies.

36 The Dau text adds: "and secured him against the ravages of all the devils of hell." Compare with the explanation to the Second Article of the Apostles' Creed (Concordia, 329).
Thesis XXV

You are not rightly distinguishing Law and Gospel in the Word of God if you do not allow the Gospel to predominate in your teaching.

Editor’s Note: In this thesis, Walther offers concluding remarks that could just as easily introduce and even sum up the whole lecture series. Neither Walther nor others in the early Missouri Synod were trying to be mere lawgivers. On the one hand, early LCMS literature repeatedly speaks of a willingness to die for the truth revealed in God’s Word. Yet this willingness does not arise from the fact that God’s Word is true; rather, it comes from the fundamental principle that God’s Word is saving truth. The stakes are eternal life and death.

As firm as they were in defending the truth, Walther, Franz Pieper, and their colleagues knew that Scripture is the source of all infallible testimony about everything that the Church does in its saving work. God’s Word cannot die. Jesus, the Christ, did not remain dead. People made one in Him through Baptism, teaching, preaching, Absolution, and the Lord’s Supper will one day say that they cannot die.

The Gospel will predominate entirely in the next world. Walther brings into the pulpit the reality of heavenly citizenship, of a life that continues and grows richer in eternal communion with God. It is finally for this reason that we read and interpret the Bible. Walther knew that he and his beloved Emilie would awaken one day, never to die again. May all who read this book, holding fast to the Bible as they distinguish Law and Gospel, join with them before God’s everlasting throne.

This is an exceedingly important subject that we are taking up in this, our concluding, study. This thesis tells us that Law and Gospel are mingled and corrupted for listeners of the Word when the Law predominates in a sermon. But this is also true when Law and Gospel, as a rule, are equally balanced and the Gospel does not predominate in a sermon. I have to say: as precious as this topic is, that makes me all the more afraid that I will spoil it for you. The longer I meditate on it, the less I can find the right words for it. What
is presented here is simply too important! Let us now turn to Holy Scripture and convince ourselves that, in general, the Gospel must predominate.

The first preacher who spoke immediately after Christ was born into this world gives us the first proof for this claim. Who was that? It was an angel. What did he preach? He preached to the shepherds who were terrified by his heavenly splendor, Luke 2:10: “Fear not; behold, I proclaim to you great joy that will be to all people.” Here we do not find the slightest bit of the Law, not a trace of commands, not a trace of demands that God makes on mankind. Rather, he preaches the exact opposite: about the goodwill and mercy of God to all people. He is joined by the heavenly host, who exult: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, and to people, goodwill!” Again, we hear nothing but a sweet, pleasant message of joy.

Our Father in heaven has had His honor restored to Him. He had created a race of humans of whom He knew that they would fall, yet He did everything possible to save them. The infant born in the stable at Bethlehem established peace between God and mankind. The only thing that God requires is that we humans be pleased with His arrangement for our salvation and take comfort and rejoice in this infant.

This heavenly preacher gave us an illustration of how we are to preach. True, we have to preach the Law too—but only as a preparation for the Gospel. Our ultimate aim when we preach the Law must be to preach the Gospel. Whoever does not adopt this aim is not a true servant of the Gospel.

Mark 16:15–16: “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.” When these words were spoken, the time had arrived for Christ to proclaim in clear and distinct terms the basic facts of His religion. For He was about to ascend to heaven and now had to give His apostles instructions concerning how to continue His work. What did He say to them? He told them to go into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature. The very word Gospel made it clear that their message was to be a message of joy.

But so they would not think that this message was so big that no one would understand it, He immediately added these words: “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved.” This was to let them know that this was what He understands by the word Gospel. Then He added: “But whoever does not believe will be condemned.” This, too, is a sweet word. He did not say, “Whoever has sinned much—over a long period of time—will be condemned.” He states that unbelief is the only reason for condemnation.

Humanly speaking, you might say that these last words are the sweetest and most comforting. Think about the meaning of this statement: “But

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1 Greek: euangelizomai.
whoever does not believe will be condemned." No matter what a person's character is and how badly he has sinned, nothing in his past will condemn him. But, of course, if a person refuses to believe the words—the message of Jesus—he has to go to hell. When the Lord terrifies [people] with hell, He does it only to bring people to heaven. So He does that here only to urge people to accept His gracious message and not to thrust it away from themselves.

These words of the Lord should not be read this way: “Whoever does not believe will be condemned,” but rather: “Whoever does not believe will be condemned.” What He is saying is this: “Your condemnation has already been removed from you. Your sin has been taken away. Hell has already been overcome for you. I have provided enough atonement for everything. It is now up to you to believe this, and you will be saved forevermore.”

Second Timothy 4:5: “As for you, always be sober, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelical preacher [equals the work of an evangelist], fulfill your ministry.” Despite the fact that the word “evangelist” may refer to a special office, that does not weaken our argument. Those who were not apostles but [were] evangelists were such because they were to preach nothing but the Gospel, that is, only the doctrine by which they were to save their fellow human beings.

True, if you meet people steeped in self-righteousness, in sins, [in] vices, and in carnal security, you must first crush their stony hearts. But that is merely preparatory work. The waters of grace cannot penetrate a stony heart. The Law is merely an auxiliary doctrine. It is not the real doctrine of Christ. “For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.” Christ brought only grace, the Gospel, not a new Law, as the miserable, blind Papists claim. He preached the Law merely to prepare people for the sweet comfort that He had to offer them.

Second Corinthians 3:5–6: “Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.” Here, the apostle speaks of himself as [being] an apostle. Preachers of our Christian era must remember that they are not Old Testament preachers but New Testament preachers. Why does the apostle say it? “The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.” The letter is the Law of God. A New Testament preacher as such should preach nothing else but the Gospel. He is really carrying out an alien function when he preaches the Law. It is a horrible blindness when the Papists state that the two doctrines that must be distinguished in Scripture are the Old Law and the Law of the Gospel.
But "Law of the Gospel" is a contradiction in terms. How can there be any good news in the Law? Add to this the fact that the Antichrist claims that the Law of the Gospel is the more difficult of the two because the Mosaic Law had been satisfied by external obedience. He claims that the Law of the Gospel targets people's innermost heart.

First Corinthians 2:2: "For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified." It is remarkable that during his stay at Corinth, day and night St. Paul wrestled with the problem of how to bring Christ into people's hearts and how to lay a solid foundation for their faith in Christ and their joy in Him. Jesus Christ was the marrow and substance of Paul's entire preaching, the golden thread that ran through all his sermons. He wrote down this fact for our benefit. So, when you say good-bye to your congregation, you can do so with a good conscience only if you also can say, "For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified." Woe to the preacher who preaches other things! Woe to him if, in order to make people God-fearing, he had preached the Law because he thought that the pure, untainted grace of God would not save them! If he has done that, he has been an unfaithful servant.

First Corinthians 15:3: “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures.” The apostle says 'of first importance.' He regarded all other matters as subordinate to his primary subject for preaching, namely, the Gospel concerning Christ.

Now, do not merely listen to this statement of the apostle, but think of the time when you will be the pastor of a congregation, and make a vow to God that you will adopt the apostle's method, that you will not stand in your pulpit with a sad face (as if you were asking people to come to a funeral), but like men who are wooing a bride or who are announcing a wedding.

If you do not mingle Law with the Gospel, you will always step up to your pulpit with joy. People will notice that you are filled with joy because you are bringing the blessed message of joy to your congregation. Furthermore, they will notice that wonderful things are happening among them. Alas! Many pastors do not experience these wonderful things. Their listeners remain sleepy; their parishioners remain stingy.

Why is that? They did not have enough Gospel preached to them. The people who go to church in America really want to hear the Word of God. We live in a free country, where it is nobody's concern whether you go to church or not. In accordance with God's will, it should be the preacher's goal to proclaim the Gospel to his listeners until their heart melts, until they give up their resistance and confess that the Lord is too strong for them and that from

that point forward they wish to remain with Jesus. It is not enough for you simply to be aware of your correct teaching and your ability to present pure doctrine correctly. These are indeed important matters. However, no one will benefit from them if you mingle Law and Gospel.

The most subversive way of mingling both occurs when the Gospel is preached along with the Law, but does not predominate in the sermon. That preacher may think that he has proclaimed the evangelical truth quite often. His listeners, however, only remember that on some occasions he preached quite comfortingl and told them to believe in Jesus Christ. But how should they believe if the preacher does not tell them how to have faith? As soon as you do not let the Gospel predominate, many of your listeners will die of spiritual starvation. They will be spiritually half-starved because the bread of life is not the Law, but the Gospel.

Second Corinthians 1:24: “Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, for you stand firm in your faith.” This is a fine text for your first sermon. Remember this word of the apostle well: When you become pastors, you become helpers of Christians’ joy. Do not become pastors who irritate and torture people, filling them with uncertainty and causing them to go home from church heavyhearted. Write your sermons in such a way that you can say, “If anyone hears this sermon and is not converted, it is his own fault if he goes home from my church unconverted and hardened.”

Do not worry; no harm will come to you if fanatics come and say, “The pastor is still not yet converted; otherwise, he would let loose in a completely different way. He preaches his people straight into hell.” Let the fanatics judge you however they please. But you take comfort! This is nevertheless the correct way: Your job is to be assistants in bringing joy to Christians, not to subject them to the torture of the Law.

The longer you preach to your people in the way [Scripture describes above], the more they will praise God for giving them such a pastor. If you should comb through all of church history—trust me on this—you will see that, despite its weaknesses and its defects, there are few church bodies that have seen the successes that our synod has. That is not because of our cleverness. It is not because of our hard work. It is not because of our self-denial. No, the true reason is that we have preached the genuine Gospel to the people.

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4 German, here and following: Schwärmer. The Latin-based “fanatic” or even “fan” has the same root meaning as the Greek-based “enthusiast.” The German word comes from the violent image of a person driven by a swarm of bees.

5 The Dau text adds: “you would come down on your people with the Law much more forcefully.”

6 German: Kirchengemeinschaften.
As soon as a desire for God's grace and mercy bubbles up in the heart of listeners, when they think: “Yes! I, too, can still go to heaven,” they are believers. Many remain stuck in their sins because they think: “I cannot get to the point where I can go to heaven. The pastor is such a godly man. I could never be that God-fearing.” Do not hesitate to preach the Gospel of the grace of God in Christ Jesus frankly and cheerfully. Then such gloomy thoughts will vanish from the heart of your listeners.

Now, hear two quotations from the Book of Concord that show that our church, too, in its confessional writings has declared that the doctrine of the grace of God in Christ Jesus is a matter of primary importance.

**Augsburg Confession**, Article IV:

Our churches teach that people cannot be justified before God by their own strength, merits, or works. People are freely justified for Christ’s sake, through faith, when they believe that they are received into favor and that their sins are forgiven for Christ’s sake. By His death, Christ made satisfaction for our sins. God counts this faith for righteousness in His sight (Romans 3 and 4 [3:21–26; 4:5]).

**Smalcald Articles**, Part II, Article I:

Nothing of this article can be yielded or surrendered, even though heaven and earth and everything else falls. For there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. (Acts 4:12)

And with His stripes we are healed. (Isaiah 53:5)

Upon this article everything that we teach and practice depends, in opposition to the pope, the devil, and the whole world. Therefore, we must be certain and not doubt this doctrine. Otherwise, all is lost, and the pope, the devil, and all adversaries win the victory and the right over us.

Now, hear a word from Luther that you should memorize and that you should use diligently. It is found in his *Preface to the Epistle to the Galatians* (St. Louis Ed. 9:8) and reads: “In my heart there reigns, and will ever reign, this one article, namely, faith in my dear Lord Christ. This alone is the beginning, middle, and end of all spiritual and godly thoughts that I may have at any time, day or night.”

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7 *Concordia*, 33. See also Müller, 39; *Triglot Concordia*, 45.
8 See Mark 13:31.
9 *Concordia*, 263. See also Müller, 300; *Triglot Concordia*, 461.
Luther might as well have said “in my sermons and writings,” instead of “in my heart,” for so it is indeed.\(^\text{10}\) No one can preach the Gospel more sweetly and gloriously than our dear Luther.\(^\text{11}\) Not only does he offer great comfort in his sermons, but he preaches in such a way as to lay hold of any doubting listener and drag him out of his doubts, compelling him to believe that he is a child of God and would die saved if he were to die that night.

Praise God, if only that testimony were given about you when you enter the ministry! Pray to God on your knees for His help in order that you may repeat Luther’s confession. If only all pastors could repeat this confession, and—alas—I sadly must add: “all pastors in the Missouri Synod!” For even here [in our synod], pastors are not all alike. Some have a legalistic tendency, which does great harm to their own soul and those of their listeners. Some do not carry out their office with genuine cheerfulness and do not make their people cheerful Christians. But that is what you will have to do to achieve wonderful results. If you preach the Gospel abundantly, you need not fear that your people will leave your church for some spiritual snake oil salesman\(^\text{12}\) who comes along and puts on a big show in his pulpit. Your people will say, “Our pastor gives us what we could not get anywhere else. He is a true Lutheran pastor and pours out a great treasure for us every Sunday.”

Luther on John 17:10 (St. Louis Ed. 8:798):

Let everyone, then, see for himself how Christ is glorified in him. For there are many who boast of the Gospel and know how to talk a great deal about it. But having Christ glorified in yourself is not so common that it happens to everybody.

For, as we were told, glorifying Christ, or believing in Him, is nothing else than being certain that whoever has Him has the Father and all grace, divine blessings, and life eternal. The saints of this world, the pope, and the sectarian spirits cannot achieve that. For, though some talk about Christ and manage to speak words that He is the Son of God, that He has redeemed us, etc., they never learn by their own experience how a person must receive Him, use Him, seek Him, find Him, and hold fast to Him, and how to take hold of the Father in and

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\(^{10}\) The Dau text adds: “for his sermons and writings conform to the above rule.”

\(^{11}\) The Dau text speaks of “our beloved Luther.” As the Missouri Synod made the transition to English, professors and church officials began to translate the German adjective lieb as “beloved.” Thus unsere liebe Synode became “our beloved Synod.” “Our dear Luther” and “our dear Synod” are the appropriate translations for the present.

\(^{12}\) Walther’s term is Marktschreier, something like a Barker, hawker, or front man in an open-air market or on a carnival midway. “Snake oil salesman” is of that same genre, but it is more familiar. Think again of Walther’s references to nineteenth-century quacks selling false cures off the back of their wagons at the farmers’ market.
through Him. Meanwhile, they soar up into the clouds and busy themselves with their own imaginations.

You can see this in some of our sectarian spirits, who have learned from us to speak of Christ and of faith. Yet how rarely they promote this doctrine, yes, how cold and inept they are whenever they have to touch on this chief point of doctrine. How they rush over texts such as these and merely skim their surface, regarding this matter as an unimportant thing that everybody is able to do quite well. When you examine your sermons to see how much you used the Law and how much you used the comfort of the Gospel, you may find: “Oh, there is barely any room for the Gospel!” Now, [I say to] the preacher who steps out of his pulpit without having preached enough Gospel—so that some poor sinner who may have come to church for the first and the last time is not saved—woe to him! [That sinner’s] blood will be required of [that preacher]! To sum up, these people are full of other thoughts, and even when they hit on something worthwhile, as will happen occasionally, they have no real understanding of it and immediately skip on to their dreams. A true pastor, however, urges this article most of all, yes, without stopping, since on it is based everything that pertains to the knowledge of God and our salvation, as you see in the Gospel of John and throughout the Epistles of Paul.

It is most important that your heart be full of this topic and that you speak of it from personal experience. When you reach this point in your sermons, you are forced to confess to your listeners that you cannot fully express all that you have experienced, that it frustrates all efforts to describe it in words, and that you can only stammer a few inadequate words about it. A preacher of this sort will soon notice that streams of the Holy Spirit are poured out on his congregation and that even the most hardened sinners are brought to Christ by the comforting preaching they have just heard.

We must not assume that saving knowledge is always produced in hearers by powerful preaching of the Law. Many people are convinced that they would go to hell if they were to die immediately. But when they hear a real Gospel

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13 Compare this statement with L.C.II.66 (Concordia, 406). The statement has the same grammatical structure and makes a similar argument as the passage in the Large Catechism. This point is important for understanding both Luther and Walther as one properly distinguishes Law and Gospel. See also One True God: Understanding Large Catechism II 66 (St. Louis: Concordia, 2006).

14 The German treiben can mean to treat or discuss in an applied sense. It can also have the sense of making the doctrine a part of one’s life and practice. “Promote” is an umbrella word for these various interpretations.

15 This portion of Luther’s sermons on John appears also in AE 69 (St. Louis: Concordia, 2009).
sermon, full of the richest consolation, it may readily happen that some of them are brought around to Christ.

Luther's *House Postil* on Psalm 68:18 (St. Louis Ed. 13:2014): 16

What a King is this who has ascended on high, sat down above the clouds, at the right hand of Majesty in heaven, and has made captivity [itself] captive! While on earth, He was not engaged in child’s play and busy work, 17 but captured an everlasting enemy and a great prison. Sin and the devil had made captive the entire world. He in turn made them captive. Even if sin and the devil are against me and want to torment me, nevertheless they cannot harm me in the least if I hold fast to Christ.

How foolish pastors are who preach for a long time without any success and then decide to preach nothing but the Law for a while, in order to awaken their people from their spiritual sleep! If they use that method, they will accomplish nothing.

This does not mean preached [in such a way] that the people become lazy and do no good works, as the Papists condemn us [of doing] and call us “sweet preachers.” 18

Luther would rather hear that he preaches too sweetly—sweetly preaching, that is, full of comfort—for that is the least of accusations, I would [also] happily bear this criticism. And if people were to say that my preaching prevents people from doing good works—well, it is just the opposite. I preach the very thing that alone can change their hearts so that they will do good works.

However, they would change their tone if they landed in this prison. When they stand at the left hand of the Judge, and anguish and terror get hold of them, they will experience what this prison means. Therefore, this is not a sermon for people’s flesh and blood, as if they were given freedom to do according to their desires. But the point of Christ’s ascension and His rule is to make sin captive, to prevent eternal death from putting us in shackles and keeping us there.

Now, if sin is to be made captive, I—a believer in Christ—must live in such a way that I am not overcome by hatred and envy of my

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17 Literally, “child’s play and crap [work].” German: *Kinderspiel und Dreck[werk]*. The first and second Walch editions handle Luther’s earthiness with slight differences. Social standards and sensibilities differed in Luther’s time. In Walther’s time, sensibilities were already changing. Luther’s language is not appropriate today.

18 In Luther’s time, as in Shakespeare’s, to call a man “nice” or “sweet” would be like calling him a “fairy.”
fellow humans or by other sins. Rather, I must fight against sin and say: "Listen, sin! You want to stir me up to become angry, to envy, to commit adultery, to steal, to be unfaithful, etc. This I will not do."
Likewise, if sin wants to assault me from another angle and fill me with terror, I must say: "No, sin. You are my servant, and I am your lord. Have you never heard what David sang about my Lord Jesus Christ: 'You ascended on high,' etc.? Until now, you have been a hangman and a devil to me. You have taken me prisoner. But now I believe in Christ, and you will be my hangman no longer. I will not permit you to accuse me, for you are a prisoner of my Lord and King, who has put you in the stocks and cast you beneath my feet."

Understand this matter correctly: By His ascension and by the preaching of faith, Christ does not mean to rear lazy and sluggish Christians who say, "We will now live according to our pleasure, not doing good works, remaining sinners, and following sin like captive slaves."

People who talk in this way do not have a right understanding of the preaching of faith. Christ and His mercy are not preached so that people should remain in their sins. On the contrary, this is what Christian doctrine proclaims: The prison should release you—not so you may do whatever you desire, but so that you will sin no more.

Luther is telling us to preach the real Gospel with its comfort without hesitation, and not to fear that we would preach people into hell with the Gospel. True, some may take carnal comfort from our Gospel preaching, but we must not think that they will have an easy death with their false comfort. In the presence of death their comfort will vanish like snow in a March sun. We are not responsible for any false comfort that a listener might draw from our preaching. Such listeners live in security and imagine that they are not so awfully wicked, that they have many good traits. Even though they drink occasionally and curse, these are merely bad habits that still cling to them, etc. They will undoubtedly go to heaven, so they think. Such people have never received into their hearts the Gospel that was preached to them.

Do not allow occurrences of this kind to disturb you. You must cheerfully preach the Gospel, since Christ commanded His disciples to "go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation."

Sometimes all hope seems to vanish from those who have lived in false comfort because they had imagined that they were basing their confidence on what their faithful pastor had preached. A pastor may have an awful time with such people when he prepares them for their departure from this world; they seem to despair of salvation. God grant that someday people may say about you that you are preaching well, but much too sweetly! Do not spend

Mark 16:15
too much time on the Law. Let the Gospel follow immediately. When the Law has made the iron red hot, immediately apply the Gospel and shape it into a proper form. Because once the iron has cooled, you can do nothing with it.

Lastly, Luther writes in his *House Postil* (St. Louis Ed. 13:800ff.):19

Now this is the second rule that the Lord gives: we are to let go of external appearances and look for fruits. He says, "You will recognize them by their fruits." He offers a parable to show this.20 No one among you is so foolish as to go into a field full of thorns and thistles and look for grapes and figs. Such fruit we seek on a different plant, which is not so prickly and thorny. The same thing happens in our gardens. When they see a tree full of apples or pears, everybody exclaims: "Ah, what a fine tree that is!" Again, where a tree bears no fruit or when the fruit is worm-eaten, cracked, and misshaped, everybody would say, "That tree is worthless, good for nothing except to be cut down and thrown into the oven so that a better tree may be planted in its place." The Lord says that if you apply these same principles to the false prophets, you will not make a mistake—no matter how good their appearance may be. Even if a wolf puts on twenty sheepskins, you still need to recognize that he is a wolf, so he will not deceive you.

Now, what is the fruit of a true prophet or preacher by which we can know that he is not a wolf, but a good sheep? It is not his way of living, his title and office, nor his special gifts and graces. For our Lord Himself testifies, along with what our experience teaches, that people are often duped and deceived by these external marks. The genuine fruit—as the Lord states at the end of His parable—is doing the will of the Father in heaven.21

Note here that the Lord is not speaking of Christians in general, but of prophets. But, of course, *all* Christians are to do the will of the Father and are to be saved by doing it.

We are frequently misunderstood. People imagine they can recognize a true prophet by the fruit of his godly life and by his great success in the ministry. But Christ says, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of My Father who is in heaven."

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Now, “doing the will of the Father” refers not only to the will that one does in the Ten Commandments, of which God requires obedience. Since we cannot do this will of God completely in the present life, it would be impossible for us to glory in having done the will of the Father. Therefore, we could not go to heaven. But the Father’s will [also] means what Christ says in John 6:40: “For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in Him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.” That is the only way in which we all, preachers and listeners, are to walk if we are to be saved. Now, in this passage the Lord speaks, in particular, of preachers or prophets, whose real and proper fruit is nothing else than this: that they diligently proclaim this will of God to the people. They should teach them that God is gracious and merciful and has no pleasure in the death of sinners, but wants them to live. Moreover, they should teach that God has revealed His mercy by having His only-begotten Son become man.

Now, whoever receives Him and believes in Him, that is, whoever takes comfort in the fact that, for the sake of His Son, God will be merciful to them, will forgive their sins, and grant them eternal salvation, etc.—whoever is engaged in this preaching of the pure Gospel and thus directs people to Christ, the only mediator between God and people, he, as a preacher, is doing the will of God. That is the genuine fruit by which no one is deceived or duped. For even if the devil himself were to preach this truth, this preaching would not be false or made up of lies—and a person believing it would have what it promises.

After this fruit, which is the principal and most trustworthy one and which cannot deceive, there follow in the course of time other fruits, namely, a life in beautiful harmony with this doctrine and in no way contrary to it. But these fruits should be regarded as genuine fruits only where the first fruit, namely, the doctrine of Christ, already exists.
Until the middle of the nineteenth century, the Evangelical Lutheran Church determined its confessional position based on the 1580 German text and 1584 Latin text of the Book of Concord. (See, for example, the 1851 English edition of the Book of Concord by S. D. Henkel and his brothers.) Toward the latter part of the nineteenth century, Johann Tobias Müller's edition of the Lutheran Confessions became the standard reference work. The Müller edition would form the basis for all modern editions.

The influence of Müller includes the 1880 Anniversary Edition of the 1580 German Book of Concord printed by Concordia Publishing House. This edition and its revised print run in 1881 included page references to Müller in the margins. Yet Walther and the Missouri Synod followed only the German text of Müller. Walther preferred the German text of the 1580 Book of Concord, of which Walther had an original copy. In its Articles of Incorporation from 1894 to the present, the Missouri Synod has declared the 1580 German text to be its confessional standard.¹

Henry E. Jacobs produced both scholarly and lay English editions of the Book of Concord in 1911 based on Müller with additional research.

In 1917, Concordia Publishing House published the Triglot Concordia, a Latin-German-English edition based on a corrected eleventh Müller edition. Its Latin title is also well-known: Concordia Triglotta. Unlike the 1880 edition, the Triglot Concordia uses both the Latin text and the German text where its editors, William H. T. Dau and G. Friedrich Bente, believe such use to be important. Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions, a reader's edition of the Lutheran Confessions published in 2006 by Concordia Publishing House, is based on the Triglot.

In 1930, the Müller edition was replaced by the Bekenntnisschriften, which in turn was revised in 1952 and has been reprinted since as a standard critical edition. Other editions based on the Bekenntnisschriften include the 1959 edition edited by Theodore Tappert and the edition edited by Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert that was published in 2000.

Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions has a conscious awareness of the 1580 German text, though it is based on Triglot Concordia. English texts of the Book of Concord—from the Jacobs and Triglot editions to that of Kolb and Wengert—have taken various positions on what Latin or German editions to translate. The result is that the Dau translation of Walther's Law and Gospel,

¹ See, for example, the 1924 Synodalhandbuch, 99; and the 2007 Handbook, 202.
because it picks up the English text from the *Triglot*, sometimes uses Latin texts where Walther uses the German. This does not change much in terms of meaning, but it can make the text sound awkward. Where possible, the choice for this edition of *Law and Gospel* is to cite *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions*. When that conflicts with Walther’s language, a translation has been made of Walther’s German text.
The first lecture in Walther’s series on Law and Gospel was delivered on September 12, 1884, which followed shortly after Walther presented an essay at the 1884 assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America. In the essay, Walther rejects entirely the notion of deriving doctrine from the Church Fathers and takes aim at the popular Anglo-American idea of “common sense,” the idea that people are basically good when given enough freedom. Walther used the English phrase in his German text.

The presentation given at the Synodical Conference is important because it explains why there are few quotes in the Law and Gospel lectures from any Lutherans other than Luther himself. Walther occasionally includes material from Johann Gerhard and Martin Chemnitz, but from few others. Yet Walther includes a greater proportion of quotes from various Lutherans and other Church Fathers in the 1875 edition of Church and Ministry.

The more extensive use of the Church Fathers in Walther’s mid-career work on church and ministry reflects his changing attitude regarding the Church Fathers. At the start of his career, he uses only the citations of the Church Fathers included in the Book of Concord. Later, Walther was encouraged by the works of orthodox Lutheran authors to study the Church Fathers more extensively. However, beginning in 1881, because the antagonists of the Missouri Synod claimed that Walther was using the Church Fathers instead of Scripture as a source of doctrine, Walther became sharply critical of using their works. That criticism emerges at several points in the Law and Gospel lectures.

1 Several English and French philosophers helped form the idea that people, left in their natural state, tend to be good. That premise helps to form American political identity.

2 In the pages of Lehre und Wehre, F. A. Crämer translated the 1605 Compendium of Patristic Theology by Heinrich Eckhardt from Latin into German. This translation ran serially from 1875 to 1883. It was never finished. It shows that the Missouri Synod viewed the Church Fathers through a Lutheran lens.
APPENDIX THREE

OTHER PRIMARY SOURCES

Walther wrote several articles published in Lehre und Wehre that oppose both pietistic and rationalist positions. These articles include “Is It Really Lutheran Doctrine, That the Salvation of Mankind Finally Rests on Man’s Own, Free Decision,” which ran from July to December 1872. From 1875 through 1878, an unsigned article in Lehre und Wehre, “What About the Progress of Modern Lutheran Theology in Doctrine?” sparred mainly with the theologians of the University of Erlangen to show how their theology may sound Lutheran but differs from that of Luther, Chemnitz, and other orthodox Lutherans.


Walther includes in his lectures on Law and Gospel a number of arguments made in these and other sources, including Walther’s 1881 pamphlet, Dispute Concerning the Doctrine of Predestination, That Is, Simple, Proven Advice for Pious Christians That Would Greatly Desire to Know Who, in the Current Controversy Over the Doctrine of Predestination, Teaches in a Lutheran Manner and in an Un-Lutheran Manner. Other materials published in 1881 by Walther through Concordia Publishing House include: The Doctrine of Predestination in Question and Answer Drawn from the Eleventh Article of the Formula of Concord of the Evangelical Lutheran Church and the essay Illumination of Stellhorn’s Tract on the Dispute Concerning Predestination.

1 “Ist es wirklich lutherische Lehre: daß die Seligkeit des Menschen im letzten Grunde auf des Menschen freier, eigener Entscheidung beruhe?”
2 “Was ist es um den Fortschritt der modernen lutherischen Theologie in der Lehre?”
3 Der Concordienformel: Kern und Stern (St. Louis: M. C. Barthel, 1877).
4 “Dogmengeschichtliches über das Verhältniß des Glaubens zur Gnadenwahl.”
5 C. F. W. Walther, Gnadenwahlslehrstreit, das ist, einfacher, bewährter Rath für gottselige Christen, welche gern wissen möchten, wer in dem jetzigen Gnadenwahlslehrstreit lutherisch und wer unlutherisch lehre (St. Louis: Concordia, 1881).
6 Two sources include Die Lehre von der Gnadenwahl in Frage und Antwort dargestellt aus dem elften Artikel der Concordienformel der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche and Beleuchtung des Stellhorn’schen Tractats über den Gnadenwahlslehrstreit.
Later publications include Carl Manthey Zorn’s presentation in two parts about conversion and election and Franz A. O. Pieper’s book on finding unity amid the opposing positions concerning predistination.7

Appendix Four

Reading Key
for God’s No and God’s Yes

God’s No and God’s Yes (hereafter No and Yes) was a student edition of Walther’s Law and Gospel lectures in greatly condensed format. It was published by Concordia Publishing House in 1973. The table below provides a reading key for those who want to use this reader’s edition in a classroom setting in which No and Yes might previously have been assigned reading.

The introduction to No and Yes on page 6 describes the condensed text as “hazardous,” yet the intent was to make Walther’s lectures accessible to a wider audience. This reader’s edition offers some of the same helpful approaches as No and Yes without condensation. No and Yes says that it deletes “the extensive quotes from the Lutheran Confessions, Martin Luther, and the dogmaticians,” yet it also deletes Scripture texts that Walther used and refers to only a few Bible passages, sometimes without quoting them. In contrast, both the original German notes and the Dau translation show that Walther intended to speak with the very words of Scripture, the Book of Concord, Luther, and the writers of the Lutheran dogmatic tradition.

The reader and teacher using No and Yes will notice that Walther uses the pronoun “I” in places where this edition uses “you.” That occurs as a result of Walther’s particular literary device of setting himself on the same level as his students with respect to Law and Gospel. Walther was trying to communicate to his hearers that he, like they, was a sinner who needed the pure proclamation of Law and Gospel. For Walther, “I” plus “you” equals “we.” Since Walther has passed on, it is often clearer to render this dialectic, this wechselseitige Redensart, as “you” except where Walther specifically makes the point that he needs to stand under both Law and Gospel.

This reading key will enable students and professors to use this reader’s edition of Law and Gospel in the same helpful manner as No and Yes without the drawbacks of the condensed text.

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Absolution, Lutheran history of. In accord with AC XI (Concordia, 35–37), the Lutheran Church retained private confession and Absolution until around 1670. The rise of Pietism and Rationalism dealt a blow to the practice, but because of the confessional renewal efforts of Claus Harms and J. K. Wilhelm Löhe, Absolution experienced a resurgence in the nineteenth century. Walther did not favor private confession and Absolution, yet he did not oppose it, as the LCMS Proceedings of 1848 and section 16 of Walther’s Pastoraltheologie indicate. The issue emerged again in the 1860 Proceedings of the LCMS. The 1875 Proceedings of the old Northwestern District (Wisconsin and Minnesota) have a Waltherian congregational model for generally public confession and Absolution, while the 1880 Proceedings of the Eastern District use Löhe’s model and require pastors to teach and retain private confession and Absolution. From 1880–85, an article by G. Gößwein in Lehre und Wehre and the 1885 Nebraska District Proceedings appear to have settled the issue by finding a basis in Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions for both approaches. Practical concerns related to the topic concerned the Office of the Holy Ministry. Already in the LCMS Proceedings of 1847, the pastors and laity sent by Löhe approached issues with a general attitude of trust for the pastoral office, while the Saxon pastors and laity show a general mistrust of fallible human pastors in the wake of Martin Stephan’s moral collapse. The LCMS did not divide during this fifty-year debate because all involved, while earnestly committed to Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, understood the benefits of a united synod and therefore extended to each other a full measure of patience and Christian love as they carefully worked through the theological issues. See also absolve; confession.

Absolve. To set free from sin. By virtue of his office, in the name and stead of Christ, a pastor absolves those who have confessed their sins, affirmed their faith in Christ, and promised to amend their lives (Matthew 16:19; 18:18; John 20:19–23). The Lutheran Church retains private confession and Absolution as “the very voice of the Gospel,” declaring that it would be impious to abolish it (AC XI; Ap XI 2; SA III VIII; SC V). Absolution may be called a Sacrament (Ap XIII 4). See also Absolution, Lutheran history of; confession.

Accident. In philosophy, an attribute or property that may or may not belong to the subject of reference without affecting its substance. For example, the colors of a person’s eyes, hair, and skin are “accidents” because they do not make that person any more or less human than all other people. They do help make that particular individual the special person that God intended.

Anfechtung. This German word means much more than simply being afraid. In Luther’s usage, Anfechtung is the all-consuming fear for one’s life and salvation in light of God’s right to condemn all sinners and in light of the unceasing attacks of the devil, the world, and the sinful flesh. Without the Gospel, someone experiencing this fear has no way of escape from certain doom and no hope.

Antinomianism. From Greek for “against the law.” Adherents maintained that a Christian is free from all moral law and that the Gospel causes knowledge of sin and repentance. Some in this movement denied the third use of the Law and the role of the Law in good works. See also Antinomians (p. 489).

Anxious bench. Seat near the speaker at some revivals. Designated specifically for those who are concerned about their spiritual condition. Also called “anxious seat” and “mourner’s bench.” See also revival.

Apology. A public defense or clarification of stated belief.
apostasy. From Greek for "departing from a former state." A total lapsing from principles or faith. The New Testament mentions as causes of apostasy: the putting away of faith and a good conscience (1 Timothy 1:19–20), listening to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils (1 Timothy 4:1; 2 Timothy 4:4), shallowness (Luke 8:13), lack of spiritual insight (John 6:63–65), and love of the world (2 Timothy 4:10; Matthew 19:22). The Old Testament gives, among others, the following reasons: absence of spiritual leaders (Exodus 32:1), evil company (1 Kings 11:4), worldly success (Psalm 78:57; Hosea 6:4; Zephaniah 1:6).

apostle. One of the Twelve, or St. Paul, who was chosen by Jesus to guide the mission of the early Church.

Arianism. See Arians (p. 489); Arius (p. 489).

Arminianism. Term embracing in general the teachings of Jacobus Arminius, a minister in Amsterdam in the late sixteenth century. His theological views are: (1) From all eternity, God predestined to eternal life those whom He foresaw would remain steadfast in faith to their end. (2) Christ died for all mankind, not only for the elect. (3) Man cooperates in his conversion by free will. (4) Man may resist divine grace. (5) Man may fall from divine grace. The 1618–19 Synod of Dordrecht condemned Arminian doctrines, but the new view spread rapidly, moving into the Church of England and into French Calvinist theology. Much of what passed for Arminianism was in fact Pelagianism—synergism in some form. A modified Arminianism arose again in England in the Wesleyan Reformation of the seventeenth century; its ablest expositions may be found in the works of John Wesley and others. See also Methodism.

atheism. Denial of the existence of God. In its widest sense, it denotes the opposite of theism (the belief in a personal God) and includes pantheism (God is in and throughout creation) and Deism (an impersonal God that drives natural phenomena). In a more restricted sense, it denotes the denial of the Deity above and outside of the physical universe. In the most commonly accepted sense, it is a denial of anything that may be called "God." The materialism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, together with Charles Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection, have given strong impetus to atheistic trends of thought. In France, the eighteenth century produced many writers opposed to the idea of a personal God, among them the encyclopedists Denis Diderot and Voltaire. The nineteenth-century German materialists—among them Karl Marx—were equally outspoken. Of the great religions of the world, Buddhism, Jainism, and a strain of Brahman philosophy deny the existence of a personal God. Despite claims to the contrary, no amount of reasoning can erase from the human heart the God-given conviction that there is a Supreme Being; those who theoretically deny God's existence replace Him with something else. Likewise, no people group has ever been found entirely devoid of religious belief. See also encyclopedists (p. 492).

atonement. Consider the word: at-one-ment. It properly reflects a mutual exchange or a drawing together of parties previously separated. From the Old Testament sacrifices to the cross, the sins of God's people were laid on a blameless victim who took their place and bore God's wrath. God's action of obedience and sacrifice in Christ to forgive sin restored the relationship between Himself and His fallen creatures.

attrition. Term used by Roman theologians. Hatred of sin arising from love of the offended God is called "perfect contrition," while other motives—such as fear of hell and of punishment, or realization of the heinousness of sin—are called attrition. The Roman Church teaches that attrition alone does not justify, but that it prepares the penitent to receive grace and that if people properly receive the sacrament of penance, they are justified. See also contrition.

audible Word. See under Means of Grace; Word of God.

Calvinism. See Calvin, John (p. 491)

carnal. Of the body; earthly, fleshly, sinful, temporal, worldly. This word often has a negative meaning of following the temptations of the sinful flesh in the present world.

catechism. Primarily a manual of religious instruction, often published in question-and-answer format. For example, see Concordia, 307–48.

catechumen. A person receiving instruction and examination in the basics of the Christian
faith and life, leading either to Baptism and/or confirmation.

**cause.** A Greek philosophical term used in scholastic theology also used during the period of Lutheran orthodoxy. A system of cause and effect describes how the world changes and remains the same. Tangible matter is the passive, *material cause* that an agent or subject (*efficient cause*) shapes through the structure of his thought (*formal cause*) toward a specific goal (*final cause*). For example, when speaking of the operation of the Holy Spirit through Scripture to create faith, the *material cause* is Scripture: human words written down. Yet those words do not come from human agents but are the inspired Word of God (*formal cause*) flowing from the Holy Spirit (*efficient cause*) in order to create faith and new life in a Christian (*final cause*). For an English explanation of the Latin terms, see also Richard A. Muller, *A Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995).

**chrism.** In Roman Catholicism, this mixture of olive oil and balm is applied after Baptism, at confirmation, and at the conferring of holy orders.

**Christology, kenotic.** Along with Gottfried Thomasius, Karl Kahnis believed that Jesus Christ emptied Himself of such operative, or relative, divine attributes as omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence. Johann C. K. von Hofmann, as well as W. H. C. F. Gess, went further to say that Christ emptied Himself of all divine attributes or that a human personality replaced the divine.

**church.** In the simplest modern sense, a building in which believers gather for worship. The basic sense in the New Testament is an assembly of people. It can refer to a local congregation and to the universal Church (Ephesians 1:22). In combination, the word “church” carries much theological meaning. The Church is the Body of Christ created and sustained by God (1 Corinthians 12), the new Israel (Galatians 6:16). Because of human sin, Lutherans speak of the *invisible* Church as all true believers that God sees to be part of the Body of Christ as compared with the *visible* church—those whom people see as calling themselves Christians but whose true heart, whether believing or hypocractic, remains hidden. One may also refer to “church” with respect to a given place or time.

Many speak of the Church Militant that is still engaged in fighting the powers of this world (Ephesians 6:12) and the Church Triumphant, those who rest from their labors and celebrate their victory in Christ before the throne of God in heaven (Revelation 14:13).

**closed Communion.** Biblical practice (Matthew 18:15–20; 1 Corinthians 11:18–34) of administration of the Sacrament whereby Communion fellowship is limited to members of a common confession of faith, usually a synod or denomination, including also groupings of denominations that formally recognize their common faith. Part of that confession is the loving pastoral practice of keeping at willful sinners and those having false beliefs regarding the Lord’s Supper from receiving it to their judgment.

**concupiscence.** The material element of original sin (AC II 4), which seeks and loves carnal things (not only sinful lusts of the body but also carnal wisdom and righteousness), ignores and despises God, lacks fear and trust in Him, hates His judgment and flees it, is angry at Him, despairs of His mercy, and trusts in temporal things (Romans 7:7, 23; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Ap II). The Roman Church regards concupiscence as the tendency to sin, but not itself to be actual sin.

**condign merit.** According to Roman Church teaching, the reward people gain for themselves by grace. This kind of merit is rewarded for a good deed that fulfills its goal. Its premise is that God rewards the actions of believers out of a sense of justice, as holding a debt, for the work performed. The Roman Church teaches that extra amounts of goodness produced by works having condign merit flow into a treasury that can be tapped by, for example, indulgences. The Lutheran Confessions reject the distinctions of condignity and congruity as screens for Pelagianism (Ap IV 19), robbing Christ of His honor, giving it to people (Ap V 195–97), and leading eventually to doubt and despair (Ap V 200). See also congruent merit; indulgences.

**confession.** Has two general meanings: (1) Acknowledgment, admission, or disclosure of one’s own sins. Confession is beneficial and should be embraced as an opportunity to renew the rejection of Satan made at Baptism and to receive forgiveness in Christ through the Gospel. Confession is necessary when a believer has
committed a coarse, premeditated sin (see the discussion in Thesis X, pp. 229–42). The Lutheran Confessions reject both the requirement and even the possibility of enumerating all sins in confession (AC XI; Ap XI; SA III III) but insist on retaining private confession, though they grant that it is a human establishment of the Church. The Absolution that follows confession is the “living voice of the Gospel” (Ap XI; SC V). (2) Speaking in unity with others of the same faith (John 9:22; Romans 10:9; Philippians 2:11; 1 Timothy 3:16; 1 John 4:3; 2 John 7; Revelation 3:5). See also confession, history of.

confession, history of. In the Old Testament, confession of sin is both formal (Leviticus 5:5; Numbers 5:6–8) and personal, private, or spontaneous (Psalm 32; 51). In the New Testament, confession of sins is prominent in the ministry of John the Baptist (Matthew 3:6), as well as in the early Church (Acts 19:18; James 5:16; 1 John 1:9). The mode of confession or the person to receive it is not dictated in the New Testament or in the writings of the early Church. We do, however, see both a private and a public element of opportunities to confess sin (Leviticus 16:21; 26:40; Numbers 5:7; Matthew 18:15–17; James 5:16; 1 John 1:8–9). Tertullian and Cyprian associated acts of reparation with the act of confessing mortal sins—notably murder, idolatry or apostasy, and coarse sexual offenses. That became part of the basis for the threefold Roman Catholic sacrament of penance: heartfelt contrition, oral confession, and satisfaction of works. The Western Church tended to focus on satisfaction and restitution by the offender to the one offended (cf. Numbers 5:7). The Eastern Church tended to focus on healing between the sinner and God (cf. Psalm 32:5). In the Western Church, private confession of sins before a priest replaced public discipline of coarse offenders. Eastern Orthodoxy speaks of the mystery of reconciliation. Lutheran can refer to Absolution as a sacrament. Other Christians see confession as merely symbolic. See also Absolution, Lutheran history of.

Confessions, Lutheran. Statements of faith gathered in the 1580 Book of Concord that are intended for public use and that set forth with authority certain articles of belief. The documents identified by the catch-all phrase “Lutheran Confessions” or, simply, “the Confessions” include: the Augsburg Confession, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles, the Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, the Small Catechism, the Large Catechism, and the Formula of Concord. Lutherans consider these documents to be expositions of the Bible passages that pertain to articles of belief. Thus while Lutherans refer to the Confessions for doctrinal positions, the true source of these positions is always God’s Word.

confessor. A pastor who hears private confession and pronounces Absolution. See also Absolution, Lutheran history of; absolve; confession.

congruent merit. According to Roman Church teaching, the reward people gain for themselves by their own power, even if the work of merit does not succeed in its goal. Similar to an “E” for effort, this merit is based on the understanding that God rewards the actions of believers on the basis of His own liberality. See also condign merit.

consistory. An administrative board consisting entirely, or chiefly, of clergy.

corrubtion. Movement of the heart prior to conversion, namely, “that the heart perceive sin, [and] dread God’s wrath” (FC SD II 70). Scripture teaches two truths about contrition: (1) Contrition always precedes genuine conversion (FC SD II 70). Fear of God’s wrath and damnation always precedes faith (Joel 2:12; Mark 1:15; Luke 15:18; 18:13; 24:47; Acts 2:37; 16:29; FC SD II 54, 70). True contrition is not active, that is, fabricated remorse, but passive, that is, true sorrow of the heart, suffering, and pain of death (SA III III 2). It should not be concluded from this that contrition is a cause of forgiveness (Romans 3:28). (2) Contrition in no way brings about, implements, or occasions justification through faith (FC SD II 30–31). See also attrition.

conversion. In the wider sense, this term designates the entire process whereby man is transferred from his carnal state into a spiritual state of faith and grace and then enters, and under the continued influence of the Holy Spirit continues in, a state of faith and spiritual life. Conversion in the narrower sense is essentially the bestowal of faith in God’s promise of salvation for Christ’s
sake. It takes place in the heart and consists in this: that a heart, broken and contrite because of sin, comes to faith in Christ and trusts in Christ for grace and forgiveness (Acts 11:21). It takes place when the Holy Spirit engenders faith in the hearts of penitents through the Word of God (Law and Gospel) and the Sacraments (Isaiah 55:10–11; John 1:45–50; 6:63; Acts 8:34–38; 16:13–34; Romans 1:16; 10:17).

**Council of Trent.** See Trent, Council of.

decision theology. Belief that one must make a conscious decision to accept Christ. Stands in contrast to the biblical teaching about sin and faith affirmed by the Council of Ephesus in 431. Augustine, Luther, and Calvin all rejected forms of decision theology like the ideas of Pelagius, who spoke of faith as a decision to unlock a path of righteous works that leads to God. Evangelical and Fundamentalist Protestant preachers, such as Billy Graham, have popularized the altar call, a moment of decision based on confrontation with one’s sin and need for salvation. It is thus a form of Arminian theology that affirms cooperation between man’s free will and the grace of God in salvation. It opposes the doctrine of regeneration that says the Holy Spirit must first kindle faith in the heart of sinful man. Infant Baptism tends to be neglected by believers of decision theology. See also Arminianism.

**Divine Service.** The worship opportunity to be forgiven by God for sin. At the time of the Lutheran Confessions until around 1670, the Divine Service (German: *Gottesdienst*) included the celebration of the Mass or Lord’s Supper at least every Sunday (Ap XV 40; XXIV 1). Pietism reduced the celebration of the Lord’s Supper to about four times per year. The Divine Service in the Lutheran tradition normally includes confession and Absolution, the reading of Scripture, the sermon that properly distinguishes and applies Law and Gospel, prayer, and the Lord’s Supper.

doctrine. The teachings, principles, or tenets held and spread by a group.

dogma. A doctrine or doctrines (usually of the Church) considered authoritative on their own merits.

Donatism. A fourth-century movement that believed persecution was a mark of the Church and that sin is a disease that is passed from one infected person to another. By this thinking, Sacraments administered by a priest who fell away from faith or deserved excommunication were invalid. A church failing to excommunicate such leaders ceased to be the true Church, and its Baptism became invalid. See also Donatists (p. 492).

Dordrecht, Synods of. Gatherings of the Reformed churches of Holland and Zeeland (now the Netherlands). The first meeting was in 1574 and established church structure and doctrine, specifically determining that ministers and teachers would subscribe only the Belgic Confession and use only the Heidelberg Catechism. Adherence to the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism were reiterated at the subsequent gathering in 1578 and in the assembly that met from November 13, 1618, to May 1619. This latter synod also rejected Arminianism. See also Arminianism.

Dort, Synod of. See Dordrecht, Synods of.

ecclesiastical. Having to do with the Church, its leadership, ritual, or members.

efficient cause. See under cause.

elder. Term derived from the Old and New Testaments (Exodus 3:16; Luke 7:3). The Greek word *presbyteros*, “elder,” is a synonym for *episkopos*, “bishop” (Acts 20:17, 28), “ruler” (1 Timothy 5:17), and “pastor” (1 Peter 5:1–4). Large congregations had a number of presbyters or elders (James 5:14; Acts 15:4, 6, 23; 20:17, 28; 21:18). At least some elders preached and taught (1 Timothy 5:17).
elect, the. In theological terms, those whom God knew from eternity as His chosen saints who will live forever with Him in the new heaven and earth. This election does not presuppose the fall, nor is it based on any merit or faith of the saints. It is the purely gracious act of God toward humanity.

Election Controversy. In Lutheran history, at least two events with this name occurred. The first controversy occurred from 1592–94 when Wittenberg professor Samuel Huber taught that a Christian must make his eternal election certain by repentance and faith. He was opposed by Wittenberg professor Aegidius Hunnius. A second controversy began to escalate from the early 1870s until it reached a climax between 1880 and 1910. It began to subside until 1928. The question involved the pietistic view that faith is confirmed by ethical deeds. Some—such as several Norwegian groups, the Ohio Synod, and the Iowa Synod—saw Baptism as an entry to the covenant relationship that is repeatedly confirmed by a righteous life. They did not take the position of decision theology that practically excludes Baptism, but they confused Law and Gospel by making it necessary for people to confirm God’s free, gracious act of election. Walther and the remainder of the Synodical Conference stood firmly opposed to the popular views of Pietism on this matter.

ens. From Greek philosophy, this Latin term refers to infinite intellect, a kind of divine mind, the One in All. See also finens; nonens.

Enthusiasm. Belief that Christians should expect special revelations or experiences from the Holy Spirit. Enthusiasts expect God to draw, enlighten, justify, and save them without the Means of Grace (Word and Sacraments). See also Fanaticism; Schwärmer.

Epicureanism. A movement founded by the Greek philosopher Epicurus (ca. 341 BC–ca. 270 BC), who followed the materialism of Democritus. The goal of this philosophy is the absence of pain and the attainment of tranquility with modest pleasure. Classified as a restrained form of hedonism, Epicureans believe that physical pleasure is the greatest good. Adherents opposed Platonism, Stoicism, and Christianity, and the movement was considered heretical by Christians and Jews in the Middle Ages. Its popularity surged in the Enlightenment among French and English Rationalists. Thomas Jefferson considered himself to be an Epicurean.

ethics. (1) A discipline with such concepts as good, bad, duty, and obligation. (2) A set of moral principles or values. (3) The philosophical study of behavior and principles of conduct.

ex opere operato. Latin: “for the sake of the work performed.” In the Roman Church, sacraments, simply based on their technical performance, confer grace so long as the recipient does not put an obstacle (usually mortal sin) in the way. According to this view, faith in the heart of the recipient is not required.

faith. (1) The body of truth found in creeds (objective). (2) The human response to divine activity (subjective); the personal appropriation of divine truth (itself a “gift,” not a “work,” Ephesians 2:8–9).

Fanaticism. Irrational zeal that prevents deliberation or consideration on the basis of either Scripture or reason (see Luke 9:53; John 19:15; Acts 7:57; 9:1). See also Enthusiasm; Schwärmer.

fides formata, fides informis. Roman Catholics distinguish between fides informis (mere faith, dead faith, unformed faith, faith that lacks life because it lacks works, especially love) and fides caritate formata (faith permeated by formative love, faith with works).

final cause. See under cause.

finens. From Greek philosophy, this Latin term refers to finite intellect, such as the kind that human beings possess. See also ens; nonens.

formal cause. See under cause.

Gnesio-. From the Greek for “genuine.” Lutherans used the term for those “genuine” Lutheran pastors and laypeople who did not accept the changes that Melanchthon and his followers adopted, both before and after Luther’s death. Those changes, for example, allowed for understandings of the Lord’s Supper and of the human will that contradicted Scripture. The great achievement of Gnesio-Lutheran theology is the Formula of Concord.

Gnosticism. From Greek gnosis, “knowledge.” This religious movement has its roots in pre-Christian times, though it flowered during the second and third century AD and has experienced a modern revival after discoveries at Nag Hammadi, Egypt. Gnosticism draws on many
ancient traditions and often emphasizes occult lore, magic words, and secret names so that adherents may be redeemed from the material world and escape into the *pleroma*, the fullness of God. See also *Gnostics* (p. 494).

**Gospel.** (1) The Gospel of Jesus Christ, in its proper and narrow sense, is the glad tidings of forgiveness, peace, life, and joy; the eternal divine counsel of redemption, of which Christ Himself ever was, is, and will be the living center, the very heart and soul. The Gospel (a) imparts the forgiveness of sin; (b) produces true joy and the zeal to do good works; and (c) destroys sin both outwardly and inwardly. (2) In the broad sense, the term *Gospel* may also refer to the sum of Christian teaching, including both Law and Gospel.

**grace.** God’s goodwill and favor in Christ toward sinners who can plead no merit. Grace implies mercy or compassion for one who has by every right forfeited his or her claim to love. God’s grace to the sinner is “free” because it is not grounded in any worthiness of mankind (Romans 11:6). In the Roman Church, grace is more of a power given by God to do good works (“infused grace”) so as to earn righteousness. In Christian theology, saving grace has been distinguished in its various operations as *prevenient*, inasmuch as by means of outward circumstances and associations, particularly through the outward hearing of the Word, the Holy Spirit would prepare the heart for conversion; as *operative*, inasmuch as it generates faith; as *cooperative*, inasmuch as it is active in the Christian, jointly with the regenerated will, to produce good works.

**heresy.** Stubborn error in an article of faith in opposition to Scripture.

**heterodox.** From the Greek for “other teaching,” the term describes in the Christian context those who claim to be a part of the Church, yet whose teachings depart from the teachings revealed by God in Scripture. Opposite of orthodox.

**historical criticism.** Term used to designate a variety of methods using rationalist assumptions to guide historical research. Instead of believing that the Scriptures are the inspired, inerrant, and normative Word of God, which reveals objective, unchanging, and eternal truths, such methods presume that the Scriptures are the result of human communities that wrote about their religious ideas and experiences. As a result, historical-critical methods consider Scripture to be subjective and relative. Instead of focusing on the existing text, critical scholars attempt to reconstruct the supposed history of the text, including the life of the religious community and the literary sources, forms, and editorial activity that they assume were part of the production of the text. Enlightenment-era rationalists regarded Scripture as a kind of fairy-tale used for moral application. The nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw archaeology confirm many details formerly dismissed as false. In reaction, some historical critics sought to affirm the psychological value of Scripture while setting aside the discussion of whether the events in the text, such as miracles, really happened. They spoke of a text whose symbolic language of miracle and mystery created a psychological, religious event that was central to the community. This approach still rejected the Scriptures as the factual Word of God and replaced biblical truth with human psychology and sociology, where any sort of “good news” could serve as a religious moment. That kind of religion cannot save.

**imputation.** Synonym of “credit” used by some dogmaticians with reference to Adam’s sin and Christ’s righteousness. Adam’s sin is credited by God to every person, so that his sin becomes each person’s own and makes him guilty in the eyes of God. Additionally, each person embraces this original, “alien sin” in his natural state and proceeds to make it his actual, “proper sin.” The righteousness of Christ is similarly credited to a believer as his own; it justifies him. The Christian, so converted and reborn, follows in that righteousness by doing good works.

**indulgences.** Roots of the Roman doctrine of indulgences reach back to the ancient practice of penitential discipline. As the Crusades helped the Roman sacrament of penance to evolve, penance changed from an expression of sorrow for sin or a kind of restitution to the offended to an act of merit that is pleasing to God, a payment for sin. People were offered merits of indulgence either by going on a crusade or by supporting crusaders with money and acts of piety and charity. This concept developed into merit that could remove, by degree, a portion of that temporal punishment (chiefly purgatory) that could not be removed by absolution. Indulgences became
commutations of divine punishment gained by giving money to churches and monasteries, by pilgrimages, and sometimes by direct payment to the priest. Contrition, or at least attrition, was in theory necessary to gain indulgence. See also attrition; contrition.

infused grace. See under grace.

Interim. The provisional agreement in religious matters until the next Church council.

Islam. Arabic for “submission.” This religious movement arose in seventh-century Arabia under the leadership of Muhammad (570–632). Originally peaceful, it became warlike after Muhammad fled from Mecca to Medina in 622. Islam separates the world into the “domain of Islam” and the “domain of war” and emphasizes submission to God (Allah). One who submits to God is called a Muslim. The sacred book of Islam is the Qur’an, which is regarded as God’s revelation through Muhammad. Unlike the Bible, the Qur’an was not written by a prophet or an apostle but was compiled at least twenty years after Muhammad’s death. Unlike the Bible, the Qur’an contains only sparse historical references. By 732, Islam spread throughout North Africa, Spain, and France to claim half of the former Roman Empire. Later, Islam spread toward India and the Far East. It destroyed the Byzantine Empire in 1453 and threatened Vienna in Luther’s lifetime.

Judaism. This religion is based on the Pentateuch, the five books of Moses, which adherents interpret as a record of how God made Israel His people and how He gave ordinances for faith and life. After the return from Babylon, the Pharisees added many legalistic regulations. The name “Jew” comes from this period and means “one from Judah or Judea.” The Sadducees opposed the Pharisees and embraced Greek and Roman culture. Sadducees were more liberal in matters of sexuality (Mark 6:16–21) and rejected core beliefs such as the resurrection of the dead (Acts 23:6–8). The conquest of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple by the Romans in AD 70 marked the rise of the Talmud. In the twelfth century, Maimonides helped codify the previously disorganized teachings of Judaism under thirteen principles. Modern Judaism has three main groups: Orthodox Judaism tries to hold on to tradition. Conservative Jews respect the Torah and traditional laws of Judaism but have made some changes. Reform Judaism has its basis in German Rationalism and largely departs from historic Judaism.

justification. Judicial act of God where He charges our sin to Christ and credits Christ’s righteousness to us. This justification is received through the gift of faith. The Lutheran Confessions call the doctrine of justification the most important teaching of divine revelation (Ap IV 2, 3; FC SD III 6). Justification is both objective (won by Christ for all people) and subjective (applied personally through the Means of Grace).

Keys. The peculiar, special, unique spiritual authority given by Christ to the whole Church to forgive the sins of repentant sinners but to withhold forgiveness from the unrepentant as long as they do not repent (John 20:22–23; Matthew 16:19; 18:15–20; Revelation 1:18). In particular, the Office of the Keys, administered by pastors (AC V) by the call of the Church (AC XIV), is the office Christ has given to His Church to administer forgiveness and discipline by rightly distinguishing Law and Gospel. The Christian congregation, by the command of Christ, calls pastors to carry out the Office of the Keys publicly in His name and on behalf of the congregation.

Law. God’s will, which shows people how they should live in order to please God (e.g., the Ten Commandments), condemns their failure to fulfill His will (sin), and threatens God’s wrath because of sin. The preaching of the Law is the cause of contrition. Although the ceremonial laws of the Old Testament have been abolished (Colossians 2:16–17), the moral Law (the Ten Commandments) is in force until the end of time (Matthew 5:18).

lectionary. Book containing Scripture readings as lessons for the church year.

loci/locus. From the Latin word for “topic.” A standard category that helps gather passages of Scripture in order to help people better understand a subject or word in Scripture. Theological works entitled Loci were produced in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by Philipp Melanchthon, Martin Chemnitz, Johann Gerhard, and others. Over time, the phrase loci communes (“common places [or topics]”) came to mean any summary of Christian doctrine, while the phrase loci theologici (“theological topics”) came to denote the content, and thus
the main passages of Scripture as included in individual loci.

**Manichaeism.** This dualistic religious movement blended religious elements into a system of light and darkness in which good and evil were in perpetual war. Respective powers supposedly led each side. Within humans, the body was said to be evil and the soul good. Manichaeism became popular in the Roman Empire and a threat to Christianity in the third century. See also Mani (p. 496).

**Marburg Colloquy.** As the political situation encompassing the princes and territories of Germany deteriorated in the early years of the Reformation, Evangelical princes, led by Philip of Hesse, tried to build political alliances between the Swiss and the Saxons. This brought about a colloquy, or theological discussion, between Ulrich Zwingli (leader of the Reformation in Switzerland) and Luther to resolve disagreements between the two camps. At this gathering in 1529 at the Marburg Castle, Luther gave Zwingli and his followers "the hand of peace and charity" and found agreement with them in fourteen points of controversy, but he could not agree with them on the question of the sacramental union in the Lord's Supper. As a result, confessional Lutherans continue to believe that unity and fellowship must be based on agreement in all points of doctrine—not just a majority.

**Mass.** An older name for the Lord’s Supper, which in the Middle Ages became the most common name for the Divine Service in the Western Church. The name comes from the dismissal after the distribution of the Eucharist: *Ite, missa est* ("Go, you are dismissed"). Lutherans kept the Mass, though purified from certain abuses (AC XXIV 1, 40; AP XXIV 1).

**material.** Having to do with matter or physical substance; not spiritual.

**material cause.** See under cause.

**materialism.** Theory originating in Greek philosophy that regards matter as the original cause of all, even psychic, phenomena. Asserting that all psychic processes are caused by changes of material molecules, it denies the existence of the soul. Developed by French encyclopedists, this philosophy became prominent in Germany in the nineteenth century.

**Means of Grace.** This term denotes the divinely instituted means by which God offers, bestows, and seals to people forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. Properly speaking, there is only one Means of Grace: the Gospel of Christ (Romans 1:16–17), but because in the Sacraments the Gospel appears as the *visible* Word (Ap XIII 5; Augustine of Hippo, Tract 80 on John 15:3) in distinction from the *audible* Word, it is rightly said that the Means of Grace are the Gospel and the Sacraments. The Sacraments have the same effect as the spoken or written Word because they are nothing else than the visible Word, that is, the Gospel applied in sacred action in connection with the visible signs. There are Means of Grace because there is, first, Christ's objective justification or reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:19–21) and, second, Christ's institution. In other words, there is forgiveness for all through Christ's active and passive obedience. Christ wants this forgiveness to be offered and conveyed to all people through the Gospel and the Sacraments (Matthew 28:19–20; Mark 16:15; AC V, VIII). The Means of Grace have an offering or conferring power—by which God offers to all people forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation (Matthew 18:20; 26:28; Acts 2:38; 20:24; FC SD II 57)—and an operative or effective power, by which the Holy Spirit works, strengthens, and preserves saving faith (Romans 1:16; 10:17; 1 Corinthians 4:15; 2 Corinthians 2:14–17; 3:5–6; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; I Peter 1:23; FC SD II 56). See also sacrament.

**Methodism.** Grew from the religious experiences of John Wesley, Charles Wesley, and their co-workers through the Holy Club at Oxford (1729 onward). Their personal piety contrasted with the indifference in Anglicanism of the time. Their missionary activity resulted in the first Great Awakening in England and America. Methodism had its greatest expansion in the United States and was tied closely to Revivalism. Wesley stressed Christian perfection. He rejected Calvin's double predestination, saying that Christ died for all. He held that all who are obedient to the Gospel according to their individual ability are in God's kingdom. Wesley spoke of a free decision to accept salvation and the direct communication of the Holy Spirit. This led, on the one hand, to Holiness churches and, on the other, to the adoption of Rationalism and the Social Gospel. See also Holiness churches (p. 495).
morganatic marriage. Latin: *matrimonium ad morganaticum*. A second marriage to a spouse of lower social rank in which the offspring of the union has no legal right of dowry or inheritance beyond any specific gifts of (usually) the husband to the wife. A morganatic union technically does not violate bigamy laws because of the inequity of social status, but it does forbid subsequent breaking of the marriage vows. While English law has forbidden all such unions, the practice was most common in Germanic countries, though France allowed the practice of the "openly secret" marriage. Such practices by European nobility reflect the centuries-old tendency to violate the biblical doctrine of marriage. Regardless of long-standing tradition and even churchly "approval," morganatic marriage displeases God.

nonens. Also written *non-ens*. From Greek philosophy, this Latin term refers to the absence of intellect, the irrational world of dreams at the edge of existence. See also *ens; finens*.

office. A particular position or area of responsibility having certain prescribed duties.

Office of the Holy Ministry. An office established by God (Matthew 28:16–20; John 20:21–23) to proclaim and teach the Word of God, specifically the Gospel, and to administer the Sacraments. This office does not exist apart from the Church. It exists to serve the Church, as Christ became a servant (John 13:1–20; Philippians 2:5–11). In doing so, holders of this office are worthy of double honor (1 Timothy 5:17), not because of their personal attributes but because of the Gospel and of Christ.

Office of the Keys. See Keys.

omnipotence. An attribute of God by reason of which He can and does perform whatever He pleases (Psalm 115:3).

omniscience. An attribute of God by which He exhibits an ever-present knowledge, one that directly knows things that exist and come to pass; not progressive knowledge, but total and perfect knowledge (Psalm 139:1–4; John 21:17). He and His knowledge had no beginning (Psalm 90:2; Ephesians 1:4).

ordination. Solemn public rite whereby the Church confirms the call of God that is extended to a man to serve in the Office of the Holy Ministry in a given location. Ordination itself comes from the example of Christ (John 20:22) and the apostles (1 Timothy 4:14; 5:22; Hebrews 6:2). The laying on of hands is also connected with Baptism and the gift of the Spirit (Acts 8:17–19; 19:6). There is no specific mandate from Christ to lay on hands in the rite of ordination. Yet, beginning with the Eleven onward, some form of ordination has accompanied the call as an affirmation of God's will (Acts 6:6; 1 Timothy 4:14; 5:22).

orthodox. Implies conformity to a certain standard; used especially in a religious sense of correct doctrine and worship.

pagan. A religion, or nonreligious person, opposed to Christianity.

pantheism. Religious and philosophical view that God and the universe are one. This belief denies the personality of God and ascribes to Him only an existence that is woven throughout the fabric of the universe, identifying Him with it. Besides destroying the personality of God and reducing Him to a lower object of worship, pantheism destroys the individuality and personality of man, who becomes merely a part of the whole. Individual responsibility and the moral world order are destroyed. Pantheism does not explain the existence of evil or it embraces the eternal duality of good and evil as necessary opposites. According to this belief, Christ's redemptive work becomes an illusion.

papacy. The office of the Roman pope. Having to do with the pope, his authority, or the Roman Church in general.

Papists. In light of Scripture and its truth, those who support the false teachings of the papacy.

Peasants' War. This uprising of German peasants in 1525 was brought on by the oppression of powerful landowners. Luther first sided with the peasants, but when they refused to refrain from violence and murder, he called on the rulers to suppress the peasants. The authorities violently overreacted, disregarding Luther's admonition for mercy toward innocent peasants. This war deepened Luther's understanding of the sinner-saint and caused him to depart from an earlier idea (ca. 1523) that the Gospel could cause a person to stop sinning.

Pelagianism. In this religious system attributed to Pelagius and his followers, man's nature is not deprived since the fall but is still in its original
state of moral indifference and depends on the individual will to develop the moral germ of his nature and be saved. Irresistible grace and absolute predestination do not fit this system. But according to the view of Pelagius, neither was grace or salvation by Christ necessary (a view incompatible with the essence of Christianity). Positions that affirm some ability of man to refrain from sin or respond on his own to grace have been called Pelagian or semi-Pelagian. Modern Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, decision theology, Methodism, and Holiness churches related to Pentecostalism all contain elements of Pelagianism.

Penance. See confession, history of.

Pietism. This religious movement developed after the Thirty Years’ War (1618–48). At the University of Halle, Philipp Jakob Spener helped form the following central points of this movement that was then carried on by August Hermann Francke and Johann Jakob Rambach: (1) Church based on small-group Bible studies. (2) Governing right of the universal priesthood of believers. (3) Essential requirement of both Christian knowledge and its practice. (4) Sympathetic attitude to those adhering to false doctrine. (5) Centrality of the devotional life in Christian university training. (6) Preaching style that emphasized conversion, implanting doctrine into the new man, and reaping the fruit of faith. The positive results of this movement include stress on the role of biblical interpretation and the proper rules used to interpret a passage. Among its negative results are a confusion of justification and sanctification, the dominance of individualism, and a legalistic emphasis on ethics. Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf and other nobles helped finance Pietism. It in turn helped to pave the way for Rationalism and the Enlightenment.

Piety. Conforming to a certain belief or standard of conduct, especially in religious matters.

Postil. A sermon based on an annual cycle of Bible readings. The name comes from medieval Scripture notes where one sees: “the text affixed to this word” (Latin: post illa verbum textus). These notes became the basis for sermons organized on Scripture readings instead of those based on themes. Luther produced both a series of church postils and of house postils. Walther published two volumes of postils—one based on the Gospel readings and one on the Epistle texts. They were a beloved pair of books in the early Missouri Synod.

Predestinarian Controversy. See Election Controversy.

Predestination. The doctrine that God, before the foundation of the world, chose us in His Son, Jesus Christ, out of the mass of sinful mankind unto faith, the adoption of sons, and everlasting life (Ephesians 1:4; 3:11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 1:9). This election is not based on any good quality or act of the elect (those predestined), nor was it made in view of those who eventually would come to faith. Rather, our predestination in Christ is based solely on God’s grace, the good pleasure of His will in Christ Jesus. While the Bible does teach the predestination of the elect, it does not (as opposed to Calvin) teach the predestination of the damned, nor does it solve the problem of the human intellect seeking to understand universal grace and predestination (see FC Ep XI 5–7; FC SD XI 14–23). See also Election Controversy.

Presbyter. See elder.

Prevenient Grace. See under grace.

Purgatory. In Roman Catholic teaching, all who have not been thoroughly perfected in this life will be “purged” by fire in an intermediate state of existence between earth and heaven. Masses, prayers, and good works by the living aid those suffering in purgatory and reduce its sentence. Those who die with mortal sin unconfessed and unabsolved do not enter purgatory, but hell.

Rationalism. This philosophical-religious movement went beyond supranaturalism by seeing no reason for a supernatural order. It interpreted the universe through the reasoning individual. In England and France, empirical philosophy produced English Deism and a French cult of reason that set aside traditional belief and established a system of natural law and religion based on analytical philosophy. Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin promoted this sort of thinking. The Reign of Terror in France (1793–94) produced a reaction in German and other Continental thought that tried to preserve traditional language about religion and other institutions but introduce modern philosophical meanings. Because of the work of Friedrich D. E. Schleiermacher (1768–1834), this stream
has formed much of mainline Christian thought today. See also supranaturalism.

**real presence.** Term applied to the Lord’s Supper. It was first used in the thirteenth century to claim the ongoing presence of the body of Christ in the consecrated wafer held in the monstrance and carried about in the Corpus Christi procession. Anglican clergy used it to argue against Luther’s doctrine of the Lord’s Supper. American Lutherans started using the term around the 1820s to make a clear statement in support of the scriptural doctrine of the sacramental union held by Lutherans. This was partly in response to the American Reformed environment that stressed the symbolic and spiritualizing interpretations of the Eucharist almost to the point of absence. The term then traveled back to European Lutherans. It is not an improper way to speak, but its different meaning among different groups makes careful definition necessary. Lutherans have always spoken of the sacramental union between the elements and the body and blood of Christ. See also sacramental union.

**repentance.** In a wide sense, change from a rebellious state to one of harmony with God’s will, from trusting in human merit to trusting in Christ’s merit. Embraces contrition and justifying faith; sometimes the fruit of repentance are included (Ap XII 28). In the narrow sense, faith and fruit are not included. The means to repentance is God’s Word (see Jeremiah 31:18; Acts 5:31). Sometimes taken as an equivalent to penance and penitence. See also confession, history of.

**revival.** The phrase “revivals of religion” commonly indicates renewed interest in religious subjects or, more generally, religious awakenings. In its best sense it may be applied to the work of Christ and the apostles and to the sixteenth-century Reformation. But the term is often applied also to enthusiastic outbursts of religious emotion. The term “revival” is most often associated with an increase of spiritual activity in English-speaking Protestant churches. In the American context, there was a revival at Northampton, Massachusetts, beginning in 1734 and throughout New England in the early 1740s (most famously led by Jonathan Edwards the Elder). Another period of revival in the United States occurred at the turn of the nineteenth century, when Lyman Beecher and Timothy Dwight began their remarkable work. Other revivalists include Asahel Nettleton (1783–1844), Charles Grandison Finney (1792–1875), and Dwight L. Moody (1837–99). Modern revivals have been led most notably by Billy Graham. A similar kind of radio preaching occurred with preachers such as Billy Sunday. See also anxious bench.

**righteousness.** God’s righteousness is the essential perfection of His nature. The term “righteousness” is applied to Christ not only in view of His essential righteousness but also in view of the righteousness that He gained for mankind (Jeremiah 23:6; see also justification). The righteousness of the Law is the obedience that the Law requires (see Gospel; Law). The righteousness of the Christian is the righteousness of faith (see faith; justification).

**sacrament.** A sacrament is a sacred act instituted by God in which God Himself has joined His Word of promise to a visible element, and by which He offers, gives, and seals the forgiveness of sins earned by Christ. By this definition, there are two sacraments: Holy Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Sometimes Holy Absolution is counted as a third sacrament, even though it has no divinely instituted element (LC IV 74; Ap XIII 4). See also Means of Grace.

**sacramental grace.** Grace received when one receives the Sacraments. Zwingli argued that a person who desires to receive a Sacrament already possesses grace and that the Sacraments are just an outward sign of what the Holy Spirit has worked in the heart of that person. Against that position is 1 Peter 3:21: “Baptism now saves you.” See also grace.

**sacramental union.** The Lord’s words (Matthew 26:26–29; Mark 14:22–25; Luke 22:19–20; 1 Corinthians 11:24–25) unite His body and blood with bread and wine for the purpose of distribution to Christians who can examine themselves with regard to their need for the Sacrament, their contrition, and their resolve to live in accord with the body and blood that they receive spiritually and into which they are incorporated.

**sanctification.** In a wide sense, sanctification includes all effects of God’s Word (Acts 26:18; Ephesians 5:26; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Hebrews 10:14; 1 Peter 1:2). In a narrow sense, sanctification is the spiritual growth (1 Corinthians 3:9; 9:24; Ephesians 4:15; Philippians 3:12) that follows justification (Matthew 7:16–18; John
3:6; Ephesians 2:10). By God’s grace (Galatians 5:22–23; Philippians 2:13), a Christian cooperates in this work (2 Corinthians 6:1; 7:1; Philippians 2:12; 1 Timothy 4:14; FC SD II 65–66). Through the Holy Spirit’s work, faith is increased daily, love strengthened, and the image of God renewed but not perfected in this life.

satisfaction. According to Roman Church teaching, temporal punishments (justly due because of sin) can be paid through works of penance, the third component of the Roman Catholic sacrament of penance. See also confession, history of.

schism. From Greek; the ch is silent or pronounced like k. Used of divergent opinions (John 7:43; Acts 14:19). The Church uses the term in the sense of dissension, division, or discord (1 Corinthians 1:10; 11:18; 12:25). Schismatics disrupt Church harmony and unity.

Scholasticism. This movement became dominant in the later Middle Ages and lasted into the Renaissance (1100–1500). It was a tool that built on ancient attempts to harmonize theology and Greek philosophy. The influence of Aristotle became stronger than that of Plato in the thirteenth century, as did the use of deductive arguments based on an accepted body of first principles. Islamic, Jewish, and Christian philosophical influences mingled in their interpretation of ancient Greek texts on religion, mathematics, logic, and other sources. A result, especially among the Dominican monks, was that dialectics and speculation was used to discuss, comprehend, harmonize, and prove doctrines rationally. The Renaissance emphasis on returning to the source texts and Luther’s application of that emphasis by going back to Scripture posed a strong challenge to the deductive approach.

Schwärmer. Related to the English word swarm, in the Middle Ages, Schwärmer could mean someone who lives wildly, without self-control—imagine a person chased by a swarm of bees. Luther applied this word to those who follow false teachers and then become wrapped up in an extremely emotional, even violent, way of living.

security, carnal. The belief regarding oneself that “I am not really a bad person.” Accompanies a lack of terror when confronted with the Law. A person in such a state can receive no good from the Gospel because the Law must first cause contrition. See also contrition.

sign. From Latin signum. Technical term for a physical element, such as water, bread, and wine, to which a divine word of Scripture attaches a gracious, Gospel promise, such as the affixed seal of the name of God, the sacramental union of the body and blood of Christ, and the promise of sin forgiven, salvation, strengthening of faith, and eternal life. The sign is thus a visible Word, a concrete instance of the promise. See also Word of God.

sin. The breaking of God’s Law (Romans 4:15; 1 John 3:4). Sin may be divided into original sin (the inherited tendency to sin and God’s resultant condemnation) and actual sin. Actual sin (every thought, emotion, word, or act conflicting with God’s Law) may be involuntary or may be done ignorantly (Acts 17:30) and includes sins of commission (Matthew 15:19; James 1:15) and sins of omission (James 4:17). Sin arouses God’s righteous wrath and deserves His punishment. Willful sin sears the conscience; repeated, it hardens the heart and may lead to, but is not identical with, the unpardonable sin against the Holy Spirit.

sin, mortal and venial. The Lutheran Confessions speak of sin that is deadly, that is, irreconcilable with faith (Ap IV 48, 64; 109, 115). When believers fall into open sin, faith has departed (SA III III 43–44). One who obeys his lusts does not retain faith (Ap IV 144). Original sin is mortal; it brings eternal death on those who are not born again (AC II 2 [Latin]). One who is dead in sin is insensitive to sin (LC V 77–78). Sins remain in believers (SA III III 40; FC SD II 34). In harmony with Scripture, Lutherans believe that all actual sin is mortal, deserving of death, until it is made venial by the washing of Christ’s blood that is offered through the Means of Grace (SA III III 36–38; Matthew 3:18–19; Galatians 3:10; James 2:10; Ezekiel 18:4; Romans 6:23; 8:1; 1 John 1:7; 9, 2:1–2). Lutherans also teach that premeditated sin is mortal sin because the planning and doing of a sinful act is, in fact, a rejection of the Gospel and an active participation. Scripture does not class sin by degree of evil in terms of how God sees sin; rather, Scripture speaks of sin according to its ability to sever one from faith and the Gospel. Departing from Scripture, Roman Catholic
theology views mortal and venial sin as differing by degree. A mortal sin is said to deprive the soul of sanctifying grace and supernatural life (thus causing death to the soul). By its degree of evil, one claims that a mortal sin makes a person an enemy of God, takes away the merit of all good works, deprives one of everlasting happiness in heaven, and makes one deserving of hell. It is an intentionally evil thought, word, and deed, or an intentional failure to do good. Venial sins are said to be less evil and do not deprive one of sanctifying grace. Based on Genesis 3, Scripture clearly shows this view to be false. All sin is infinitely evil because it offends an infinitely good God. Yet some sins have worse temporal effects than others.

Socinianism. A forerunner of modern Unitarianism, this sect denies the deity of Christ and His vicarious atonement, original sin, and the resurrection of the flesh. Adherents also reject the doctrine of hell and believe that the wicked will be annihilated. They reject Baptism and Holy Communion and believe that people save themselves. This movement became fashionable among the Polish aristocracy and also among some in England. It served as the forerunner of Rationalist Christianity. See also Socinians (p. 499); Sozini, Fausto Paulo (p. 499); Sozini, Lelio (p. 499).

Sophistry. Subtle reasoning or argumentation designed to deceive.

Substance. The essential nature of a thing; that which exists by itself essentially. The created human nature is a “substance” defined as the human body and a rational soul (FC Ep I 23: FC SD I 21, 54). See also accident.

Supranaturalism (also “supernaturalism”). Term that came into prominence especially in England and Germany between 1780 and 1830 in theological discussions arising especially from the tensions created by Deism and Rationalism. Supranaturalists held that the authenticity of divine revelation is attested, in part, by prophecies and miracles. After Immanuel Kant and Georg W. F. Hegel, the term “supernaturalist” was applied to those who held the absolute transcendence of God; later, the name supranaturalism was applied to many systems within Christianity that rejected reason as an absolute norm and held authoritarian, inner, emotional, or other criteria.

Synecdoche. A figure of speech in which a part substitutes for the whole or the whole for a part. For example, one may refer to a sports car as “hot wheels.”

Synod. From the Greek word for “gathering together.” The term arose among caravan traders whose beasts and drivers stretched out in long lines during the day, yet gathered together for mutual support and protection at night. The early Church adopted this language to mean a conference where an important point of doctrine needed to be discussed for the mutual benefit and protection of believers. Issues discussed include questions affecting the faith and discipline of the Church. In Lutheran teaching, the theological basis for synods is found in Acts 15. In the modern Lutheran understanding of the term “synod” (developed during the confessional Lutheran renewal in the nineteenth century), either pastors by themselves or pastors and representatives of congregations meet according to a system of jurisdiction in order to converse with one another about the doctrine and the business of that jurisdiction. They strive to find a scriptural basis for unity in doctrine, order, and life. The authority of synods derives from the activity of the Holy Spirit, yet that authority always stands under Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions.


Tetrapolitan Confession. Consisting of twenty-three articles, this confession is the oldest Reformed symbol in Germany. Martin Bucer, Wolfgang Capito, Caspar Hedio, and Jakob Sturm prepared the document quickly in 1530 for the Diet of Augsburg. Presented at the Diet by representatives from Konstanz, Lindau, Memmingen, and Strasbourg, the Tetrapolitan Confession tried to effect a compromise between Lutherans and the Reformed, especially concerning the Lord’s Supper.

Theocracy. A form of government, such as that of ancient Israel or modern Iran, in which either God or those claiming divine authority govern the nation.

Theologian. From the Greek word for “one who speaks about God” or “one who speaks the words of God.” John was called “the Theologian” because he wrote about the divine mysteries in a simple yet profound way that penetrated
beyond reason into the revelatory unveiling of God. Those who study or practice theology may be called theologians, yet they must be held accountable to Scripture.

**Theology.** Includes the words that God reveals about Himself in Scripture and the words that we use to teach and confess Him to others. Traditionally, theology is divided into four general categories. The interpretation of the Bible is called *exegetical* theology. *Historical* theology studies the people, places, developments of thought, and other aspects of the Church’s life and work through the ages. *Practical* theology speaks to how one goes about doing the actual work of the Church. *Dogmatic* theology engages the dogmas of the Church, that gather Scripture passages together around principal proof texts called “seats of doctrine” (Latin: *sedes doctrinae*). Walther opposed the “modern” approach of using philosophical systems to organize the Church’s teachings as “systematic theology.” In *Lehre und Wehre*, Walther referred to people who reduced theology to human systems of thought as being wrong to the point of getting it all backward (German: *verkehrt*).

**Trent, Council of.** This council met in reaction to some of the issues raised by Luther and the other sixteenth-century reformers with the specific intent of restoring order to the Roman Church. Church leaders gathered three times over an eighteen-year period in the Italian city of Trent to discuss topics as far-ranging as the canonical Scriptures, original sin, justification, sacraments, purgatory, and indulgences. The council enacted various reforms, the most prominent of which concerned the education of the clergy, the conferring of benefices, and the administration of property.

**Tribulations.** See *Anfechtung*.

**Unionism.** Religious unionism consists in joint worship and work of those not united in doctrine. Its essence is an agreement to disagree. In effect, it denies the doctrine of the clearness of Scripture.

**Unitarianism.** Belief that God has only one person and essence. Ancient forms include modalism. Modern forms arose among Anabaptists, Socinians, and other radical sects. See also *Socinianism*.

**Visible Word.** See under *Means of Grace; Word of God*.

**Word of God.** In the general sense, this is synonymous with Holy Scripture because the formal content of Scripture consists of the actual words that the Holy Spirit inspired through the chosen human authors of Scripture. In particular, one may speak of the *audible* Word, the word that one reads or hears, and the *visible* Word that is united to a sign and produces a sacrament. The power or efficacy of the Word of God is categorized into three main senses: the *representative* power, the *excitative* power, and the *collative* or *collective* power. The representative power deals with Scripture’s ability to speak clearly about God, to teach divine matters. The excitative power is motivational; it “excites” people to hear and to do what Scripture says. The collative power is associated with the distinction between Law and Gospel. It refers to Scripture’s ability to exhibit and deliver what it says to its hearers and readers. Scripture delivers both the sting of the Law and the refreshment of the Gospel. See also *sign*. 
Antinomians. From Greek for "against the law." Those who maintain that a Christian is free from all moral law, a position first promoted by Johann Agricola (1492–1566) in 1527 against Melanchthon, who stressed the Law to counter the abuse of free grace. Agricola argued that the Gospel causes knowledge of sin and repentance. In 1556, followers of Melanchthon denied the third use of the Law and the role of the Law in good works. See also Antinomianism (p. 474).

Arians. Followers of the early Church heretic Arius. The most radical Arians (after 357) rejected any likeness in substance between the Father and the Son and used the slippery term "similar" (Greek: *homoios*). Moderate Arians preferred the term "of similar substance" (Greek: *homoioios*). Radical Arians became too extreme, thus helping orthodox Eastern theologians to convince moderate Arians to accept the term "of the same substance" (Greek: *homousios*), which has been used since that time to describe what Scripture says regarding Christ. Today, Jehovah's Witnesses hold to Arian beliefs by considering Jesus divine but not equal to the one God. See also Arius.

Arius (ca. 280–336). A priest in a suburb of Alexandria, Egypt, this arch-heretic in the early Church taught that Jesus was divine but not equal to God the Father. Arius argued that the Son of God must have a beginning if He is "begotten" of the Father. The Council of Nicaea (325) refuted and rejected the heresy of Arius and his followers in the Nicene Creed, but the aftermath of the controversy troubled Christendom for two centuries. See also Arians.
Athanasius (ca. 296–373). This attendee of the Council of Nicaea (325) became bishop of Alexandria, Egypt, in 328. Against the heresy of Arius, Athanasius adopted the formula that Christ was of the same substance (Greek: *homoousios*) with the Father. His efforts united Greek and Latin theologians regarding the three persons and the one essence of God and led to the present form of the Nicene Creed, which was adopted at the Council of Constantinople in 381. He did not write the Athanasian Creed, but it is based on his teaching. See also Arians; Arius.

Augustine (Aurelius Augustinus; 354-430). Influenced by Ambrose, bishop of Milan, this renowned North African teacher and philosopher converted to Christianity in 386 during study of the Book of Romans. Baptized the following year, Augustine returned to North Africa, sold his family inheritance, and founded a monastery with a clerical school. He served as bishop of Hippo Regius, near Carthage (396), and vigorously fought the heresies of Pelagius, the Donatists, and others. His writings were the basis of Western theology until overshadowed by Scholasticism. Augustine taught justification by grace, but only for the elect. Luther studied Augustine’s writings, but broke with him to emphasize Scripture alone. Augustine’s views on predestination greatly influenced Calvin and Reformed theology. See also Calvin, John; Donatists; Pelagius.

Baier, Johann Wilhelm (1647–95). Born in Nürnberg; died in Weimar. Professor and rector at Jena and Halle; general superintendent, court preacher, and city pastor at Weimar. His chief work, *Compendium theologiae positivae*, went through many editions; that of Walther (1879) included a rich collection of extracts from earlier Lutheran theologians and served as the scholarly dogmatics text of the LCMS.

Bellarmine, Robert (1542–1621). An Italian Jesuit, cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church, and prominent participant in the Counter-Reformation, Bellarmine was an able scholar and controversialist. His chief work, the *Disputationes* (1581–93), is a systematic apology for the Roman Catholic position and one of the earliest systematic responses to Protestantism. It emphasizes the necessity of the papacy and church hierarchy to teach the faith and interpret tradition. The Lutheran response included the equally significant *Loci Theologici* of Johann Gerhard. See also Gerhard, Johann.

Bogatzky, Karl Heinrich von (1690–1774). Born in Silesia, Bogatzky studied law at Jena, then theology at Halle under August Hermann Francke. Poor health limited his activities to writing. He spent the last twenty-eight years of his life at the Halle orphanage. His writing included pietistic meditative and devotional works, as well as hymn texts.

Breithaupt, Joachim Justus (1658–1732). Professor of theology at Halle; later, general superintendent in Magdeburg; a colleague of August Hermann Francke and a leading Pietist.

Bucer, Martin (1491–1551). German Protestant reformer. Born in Sélestat, Alsace, Bucer studied at Heidelberg and came under the influence of Erasmus and Luther. He introduced the Reformation at Strassburg in 1523, but after 1525 sought Protestant unity by avoiding specific language in doctrinal statements and refusing to take sides. Although he generally agreed with the Augsburg Confession, Bucer helped draw up the Tetrapolitan Confession among the Zwinglians. He also worked with Johann Bugenhagen and Luther, eventually agreeing on the 1536 Wittenberg Concord. After refusing to sign the Interim (1548), he was invited by Archbishop Thomas Cranmer to teach theology at Cambridge, where Bucer influenced the *Book of Common Prayer*. He died in Cambridge. See also Tetrapolitan Confession (p. 487).

Bugenhagen, Johann (1485–1558). After becoming a follower of Luther in 1520, Bugenhagen served as Luther’s pastor in Wittenberg from 1522–28. He then served in Pomerania, Denmark, and as general superintendent of the church in Saxony. He organized Lutheran churches throughout northern Germany and, with Melanchthon, made great contributions to education. As Luther’s pastor, Bugenhagen heard Luther’s confession.

Calixt, Georg (Calixtus; Callisen; 1586–1656). This professor in Helmstedt was influenced by humanism, Melanchthon, and his study of the Church Fathers. He tried to revive the unity of the ancient Church by distinguishing fundamental and nonfundamental doctrines. Calixt incorporated ideas from Calvin and Nicolaus Hunnius (son of Aegidius). He influenced liberal Anglican theology. In the name
of compromise, Calixt rejected the Formula of Concord and combined some Reformed positions with Lutheran ones, thus he came under the charge of syncretism. Johann Hülsemann, Johann Konrad Dannhauer, and Abraham Calov all regarded his positions as heresy, based on Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions.

Calov, Abraham (Calovius; 1612–86). Born in East Prussia and educated in Königsberg and Rostock, Calov served as professor and pastor in Königsberg, as well as superintendent of schools and churches. He shepherded churches in Danzig and Wittenberg, where he also served as general superintendent and head professor and dean of faculty at Wittenberg. In addition to his administrative and writing talents, Calov wrote prolifically on every area of theology. His greatest work, the Biblia illustrata (1672–76), is a commentary.

Calvin, John (1509–64). Influenced by humanism, by 1533 Calvin had joined the Reformation in France, but he had to escape to Basel, Switzerland. The early editions of his Institutes of the Christian Religion (first published in 1536) show great affinity to Luther's theology. Calvin reformed Geneva in 1536, but was exiled to Strassburg in 1538 before returning to Geneva (1541–64). His legalistic approach to Christianity emphasized God's sovereignty, honor, and glory. Other key features of his theology include accepting only Christ's spiritual presence in the Lord's Supper and the belief that God chose some people for heaven but others for hell (double predestination).

Carthusians. Strict order of reclusive monks that grew out of a community of hermits in the Chartreuse Mountains in France founded by Bruno of Cologne in 1084. Their life blends Western monastic tradition with the solitude and self-denial of the older Egyptian hermitic style of monasticism.

Chemnitz, Martin (1522–86). A student of Melanchthon, Chemnitz stressed the importance of the proper distinction between Law and Gospel. Ordained in 1554 by Johann Bugenhagen, Chemnitz tried to bring peace between the Philippists and Gnesio-Lutherans. He worked closely with other “second-generation” Lutherans, such as Jacob Andreae and Nicholas Selnecker, and was the driving force behind the theological precision of the Formula of Concord. His writings include Concerning the Lord’s Supper (1560), Examination of the Council of Trent (1565–73), Concerning the Two Natures in Christ (1570), and his posthumous Loci Theologici (1591).

Chrysostom (John; ca. 347–407). This Greek title, which means “Golden-mouth,” was given to John after his death in recognition of his gift for preaching. John came from a rich family but led a life of poverty. He served as bishop of Antioch, then patriarch of Constantinople (398). He initiated a reform program in the clergy that stressed helping the poor and attacked luxury.

Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150–ca. 215). As leader of the catechetical school of Alexandria, Clement united Greek philosophical traditions with Christian doctrine and helped to create a Christian form of Platonism. He mentored Origen.

Cordatus, Conrad (ca. 1476–1546). Educated in Vienna and Ferrara, later deposed and repeatedly imprisoned for evangelical preaching in Hungary, Cordatus spent some time in Wittenberg and became a teacher, pastor, and eventually superintendent in Stendal (1540). He gathered a collection of Luther’s table talks and opposed Melanchthon and his followers on the issue of human cooperation with grace, rejecting the false belief of human cooperation held by the Philippists. Nicknamed “Blockhead” (Quadratus) by Melanchthon.

Crell, Paul (Crellius; Krell; 1531–79). Pastor in Meissen and Wittenberg; also taught at Wittenberg. With Paul Eber he rejected the ubiquity of Christ but still taught the sacramental union of Christ with the elements in the Lord’s Supper. He participated in the development of the Torgau Book, which led to the Formula of Concord. He took a middle position between Philippists and Gnesio-Lutherans, causing him difficulty from both sides.

Cromwell, Oliver (1599–1658). An “Independent” Puritan, Cromwell advocated local congregationalism against church hierarchy and opposed the English monarchy with force. He supported the 1649 execution of King Charles I and became lord protector (1653–58) of the Commonwealth of England.

Cruciger, Caspar (the Younger; Creutziger; 1525–97). Born in Wittenberg, Cruciger embraced Antinomianism, writing that the Gospel has a
stronger terrifying force than even the Law, a position similar to the Roman Catholic view of the Evangelical Counsels. Imprisoned and eventually banished from Saxony as a Philippist, Cruciger became a Reformed pastor and president of the consistory in Kassel, near the Rhine valley.

Dallmann, Charles Frederick William (1862–1952). Born in Neu Damerow, Pomerania (Prussia), Dallmann came to the United States in 1868. He graduated from Concordia Seminary in 1886 and served parishes in Missouri, Maryland, New York City, and Wisconsin. He was president (1899–1901) and vice president (1901–5) of the English Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri and Other States and first vice president of the LCMS (1926–32). In addition to his administrative and missionary efforts, Dallmann was a prolific writer and served as editor of The Lutheran Witness (1891–95).

Dannhauer, Johann Konrad (1603–66). Born in Köndringen, Germany, and educated in Strassburg, Marburg, Altdorf, and Jena, this theologian of the Lutheran orthodox tradition served as professor in Strassburg. He opposed Roman Catholic and Reformed theology and rejected the theology of Georg Calixt as syncretism. He influenced Philipp Jakob Spener.

Dau, William Henry Theodore (1864–1944). Born in Lauenburg, Pomerania, Dau came to the United States in 1881. He graduated from Concordia Seminary in 1886 and served as a pastor in Tennessee and Indiana, as well as president of Concordia College, Conover, North Carolina; professor at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis; and president of Valparaiso University. Dau also served as editor of The Lutheran Witness and three other LCMS periodicals, coeditor of Triglot Concordia, translator of The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel, and wrote or edited numerous other projects.

Delitzsch, Franz (1813–90). Born in Leipzig, this prominent theologian of the Erlangen school served as professor at Rostock, Erlangen, and Leipzig. An enthusiastic Lutheran, Delitzsch was acquainted with the founders of the LCMS. Later, he fell under the influence of modern scientific theology and opposed a literalistic use of the Formula of Concord. His specialty was exegesis and his works include commentaries on Old Testament books (with Johann F. K. Keil).
and would save them without the Means of Grace.

**Erasmus, Desiderius** (ca. 1467–1536). This great Christian humanist scholar produced editions of the New Testament in Greek and Latin. Luther used Erasmus’s second Greek New Testament (1519) for his German translation. Although sympathetic toward Luther, Erasmus considered the reformers to be too extreme. Among his many books are *In Praise of Folly* and *On the Freedom of the Will*. Luther responded to the latter with *On the Bondage of the Will* (1525). Erasmus drew the anger of both Roman Catholics and Protestants, thus his reputation declined after the Reformation, though it rose again with the Enlightenment.

**Eutyches** (ca. 378–ca. 454). Although he opposed Nestorius (who denied the communion of the two natures in Christ), Eutyches taught that Christ’s human nature was swallowed up in the divine after the incarnation. Eutyches was condemned at the Council of Chalcedon (451). See also **Nestorius**.

**Evangelical Church.** Also known as Albrechtsbrüder or Albrechtsleute, this group arose in 1803 from the work of Jacob Albrecht (Albright) of Pottstown, Pennsylvania. Of German Lutheran origin, Albrecht converted to Methodism. Language and cultural issues kept his German-speaking group from merging with English-speaking Methodists. The Evangelical Church spread as its members began to speak English, and it eventually joined the United Methodist Church.

**Evangelical Synod of North America.** As members of the Prussian Union immigrated to the United States, they organized in Gravois Settlement, near St. Louis, Missouri (also near the present location of Eden Seminary in Webster Groves, Missouri). The name Evangelical Synod of North America was adopted in 1877, and in 1959 the group merged into the United Church of Christ.

**Fanatic.** See **Enthusiast**.

**Flacius, Matthias** (1520–75). A star pupil of Luther and Melanchthon, Flacius stressed the natural depravity of man by making sin part of the *substance* of human nature since the fall into sin. This position must conclude that God and sin join in Christ because no component of a substance may be removed without the substance being destroyed or changing completely into something else. If Christ cannot have a human nature like us, we cannot be saved. Article 1 of the Formula of Concord (*Concordia*, 474–77) rejects this error. Nevertheless, Flacius helped fundamentally to shape the study of church history and biblical hermeneutics with the *Magdeburg Centuries* and the *Clavis*.

**Francke, August Hermann** (1663–1727). Born in Lübeck, Germany, Francke was a philanthropist, preacher, educator, and the leader of Pietism. He studied philosophy, theology, and languages, especially Hebrew. In 1686 he co-founded an association devoted to closer, devotional Bible study. Through Philipp Jakob Spener’s influence, Francke became a professor at Halle in 1692 and the guiding spirit of Pietism after Spener’s death. Francke’s school for poor children, founded in 1695, expanded into a cluster of educational and charitable institutions. Under his leadership, Halle became the center of the Danish-Halle mission to India, which became connected with Zinzendorf and, through him, the Moravians at Herrnhut.

**Frederick William III** (Friedrich Wilhelm; 1770–1840). King of Prussia, 1797–1840. After suffering repeated defeats at the hands of Napoleon, Frederick lost his kingdom in 1807, though Prussia was restored by victory in 1813–15. Frederick joined the Holy Alliance that emerged as the first modern international peacekeeping organization. Its task was to uphold the 1815 Congress of Vienna. He used Pietism and unionism to create social unity in Prussia. After decreeing the use of a common church agenda in 1798, Frederick promulgated the Prussian Union and the takeover of Wittenberg by Halle in 1817. He persecuted those who opposed his religious programs.

**Frederick William IV** (Friedrich Wilhelm; 1795–1861). King of Prussia, 1840–61. Forced by the 1848 socialist revolutions to grant a constitution, Frederick was more tolerant than his father. On July 23, 1845, he issued the *Generalkonzession*, which permitted Lutherans who remained separate from the Prussian Union to organize free churches, though they were prohibited from displaying any public likeness to a church. These “old Lutherans” did not gain equal rights until 1930.
Freethinkers. People who recognize no other authority in religion than their own reason. In England the term was applied to deists. French freethinkers (e.g., Rousseau, Voltaire, and other encyclopedists) were usually pantheists, agnostics, or atheists. German Enlightenment thought led to the organization of Freie Gemeinden (Free Congregations). Free thought is reflected in the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, which held that no one should be interfered with because of his views, also in religion, provided these views do not lead to disturbance of public order. Famous freethinkers include Charles Darwin, Denis Diderot, Thomas Painé, Anthony Ashley Cooper (third Earl of Shaftesbury), and Herbert Spencer. Closely associated with them are Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson.

Fresenius, Johann Philipp (1705–61). A student of theology at Strassburg, Fresenius clashed with Jesuit Johann Nikolaus Weislinger, resulting in flight to Darmstadt in 1731. Called by Landgrave Ernst-Ludwig of Hessen-Darmstadt to be castle preacher in Giessen, Fresenius was given an administrative post in Darmstadt and a professorship in Giessen. In 1743 he became the senior and consistorial director in Frankfurt am Main. He opposed the Moravians and was respected by Goethe.

Freylinghausen, Johann Anastasius (1670–1739). Theologian, composer, and poet, Freylinghausen was born in Gandersheim, Brunswick, and educated at Jena, Erfurt, and Halle. He became August Hermann Francke's pastoral assistant, married Francke's daughter, and (with brother-in-law G. A. Francke) headed institutions founded by Francke. Freylinghausen edited collections of hymns and composed several hymn tunes.

Gerhard, Johann (1582–1637). Severe illness and depression at the age of fifteen shaped the later theology of this native of Quedlinburg, Germany. Johann Arnd, a forerunner of Pietism, urged Gerhard to study theology, and he received his doctorate from Jena in 1606 before being ordained and made superintendent at Heldburg. Gerhard later served as general superintendent of Coburg, as a professor at Jena, and as a political advisor. One of the most influential Lutheran theologians of his time, Gerhard participated in the broad intellectual renewal of Aristotelian thought around 1600 that coincided with the rise of the Counter-Reformation and the need for a common intellectual framework in German universities. His careful study of the Church Fathers influenced many later Protestant theologians. His Loci theologici are cited in this volume.

Gnesio-Lutherans ("Genuine Lutherans"). After the death of Luther, so-called genuine Lutheranism was represented by men such as Nikolaus von Amsdorf, Matthias Flacius, Wigand, Gallus, Judex, Mörlin, Hesbuis, Timan, Westphal of Hamburg, Aegidius Hunniius, Poach, and E. Sarcerius. This group was based at Jena beginning in 1557. Their opponents were called Philippists. Based on Scripture, the Gnesio-Lutherans rejected the tendency to seek compromise on fundamental doctrines with Roman Catholics and the Interim, on one hand, and with Calvinists regarding the Lord's Supper, on the other hand. Some members, such as Flacius, became too extreme in their opposition and themselves fell into error.

Gnostics. From Greek gnosis, “knowledge.” These followers of Gnosticism adopted a matter/spirit dualism of good and evil. Some believed that the “savior” is a spirit that possessed Jesus of Nazareth from His birth to shortly before His death. This reduces Jesus to a legalistic teacher of secret knowledge. The Gnostic ethical system based on this dualism tried to destroy the flesh either by rejecting all worldly comfort or by engaging in extreme depravity.

Grabau, Johannes Andreas August (1804–79). Born in Olvenstedt, near Magdeburg, Germany, Grabau studied theology at Halle and served as pastor at St. Andreas, Erfurt. Imprisoned twice for refusal to use the official Agenda (because he opposed its Reformed tendencies), Grabau was permitted to emigrate with supportive Prussian Lutherans in 1839. Grabau and his group settled in the region of Buffalo, New York, where he served as pastor for about forty years. He founded Martin Luther College in Buffalo and the Synod of the Lutheran Church Emigrated from Prussia (the Buffalo Synod).

Harms, Claus (1778–1855). Born in Fahrstedt, Schleswig-Holstein, Germany, Harms was educated in Meldorf and Kiel. Impressed by J. F. Kleuker, a Pietist professor who believed in supranaturalism, and influenced by Friedrich D. E. Schleiermacher’s Speeches on Religion,
(Reden Über die Religion), Harms eventually turned from rationalism to Lutheranism at Kiel. He served as a deacon, archdeacon, chief pastor and provost, and counselor of the high consistory. In 1817, Harms issued Martin Luther’s Ninety-five Theses together with ninety-five of his own against rationalism and the Prussian Union. Thus Harms sparked the Lutheran confessional awakening of the nineteenth century and is considered to be the father of all modern confessional Lutheran churches.

heavenly prophets. See Zwickau prophets.

Heerbrand, Jakob (1521–1600). Born in Giengen, Germany, and educated in Tübingen and Wittenberg, Heerbrand served as deacon in Tübingen and pastor at Herrenberg. A signer of the Württemberg Confession in 1551, he was selected by Christoph of Württemberg as a delegate to the Council of Trent. Heerbrand participated in the process that generated the Formula of Concord.

Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich (1770–1831). The philosophical system of this Berlin professor (1818–31) rests on the triad: Idea–Nature–Spirit. Idea (God) properly exists when it passes into Nature (the antithesis of Idea). Nature passes into Spirit as mind awakens to the idea of Self as the unity of Idea (logic) and Nature (space). This occurs as history. Hegel thus builds on earlier ideas to speak of process theology, the idea that mankind is where the truth of God is developing and emerging. This evolutionary motif underlies the leftist ideologies of socialism and communism. It also stands behind fascism on the right. Hegel’s thought influences much secular opposition to Christianity and its witness to unchanging divine truth in Scripture.

Hengstenberg, Ernst Wilhelm (1802–69). Born in Fröndenberg, Westphalia, Germany, the son of a Reformed pastor, Hengstenberg was educated in Bonn. Through private study he found Christ in the Bible and became Lutheran. He opposed rationalism, unionism, and the “mediating theology” of Friedrich D. E. Schleiermacher and his followers. The founder of Evangelische Kirchen-Zeitung (1827), Hengstenberg also authored numerous Bible commentaries.

Herrnhuters. See Moravians.

Holiness churches. After the United States Civil War, many Methodists and others began a general holiness movement. Evangelistic societies were formed to promote the doctrine of complete perfection and related views. This movement spawned dozens of church bodies, including the Church of God, Church of God in Christ, Church of the Nazarene, various Pentecostal bodies, and the Wesleyan Church. Holiness bodies differ greatly on biblical interpretation. Some believe all forms of luxury to be sin. Others require a manifestation of their understanding of the charismatic gifts, such as speaking in tongues and miraculous healing. All are millennialists. Their common Arminian beliefs include free will, human responsibility, and the ability to reach perfection—all of which rest on false teaching about the nature of sin and the requirements of the Law. See also Arminianism (p. 475).

Huber, Samuel (ca. 1547–1624). In 1586, this Reformed pastor rejected the Calvinist doctrine of double predestination at the Colloquy of Montbéliard (Mömpelgard). Deposed in 1588, he subscribed to the Formula of Concord at Tübingen in the same year. In 1592 he became a professor at Wittenberg and taught that man must make his eternal election sure by repentence and faith. He was deposed again in 1594 and exiled in 1595. See also Hunnius, Aegidius.

Hülsemann, Johann (1602–61). Born in Esens, Ostfriesland, Germany, this Wittenberg professor represented Lutheranism at the Colloquy of Thorn in 1645, where he opposed Calixt and syncretism.

Hunnius, Aegidius (1550–1603). Born in Winnenden, Württemberg, Germany, and educated at Tübingen, Hunnius served as an assistant pastor and as a professor. He tried unsuccessfully to win support for the Formula of Concord in the University of Marburg and the territorial church of Hesse. He opposed Calvinism and sparred with Samuel Huber, who insisted that a person makes his election sure through repentance and faith. The presbyterian controversy that Huber created caused his rejection by both Reformed and Lutherans. Hunnius was the main Protestant spokesman at the 1601 Regensburg Colloquy, where the Jesuit Adam Tanner defeated him. Hunnius helped compose the Saxon Visitation Articles.

Hus, John (Jan; 1369–1415). This Czech reformer and forerunner of the Reformation taught the sole authority of Scripture and held that the
Hutter, Leonhard (1563–1616). Born in Nellingen, near Ulm, Germany, Hutter was educated at Strassburg, Leipzig, Heidelberg, and Jena and served as a professor in Wittenberg. This champion of Lutheran orthodoxy was called redonatus Lutherus (Latin: "Luther given back"), an anagram of "Leonardus Hutterus." His works include Compendium locorum theologorum, a standard textbook in Saxony until shortly before Walther’s birth. He also authored Concordia concors, referred to by Walther.

Jerome (Sophronius Eusebius Hieronymus: ca. 345–420). A rhetorician and philosopher, Jerome was baptized in Rome and, after traveling, settled in Bethlehem and turned to theology. He served as secretary to Pope Damasus I of Rome. Jerome’s works include the revision of the Latin Bible (the Vulgate), as well as commentaries on books of the Bible. For his work on the Vulgate, Jerome used the Hebrew Old Testament instead of the Greek (the Septuagint), which caused an outcry in the Church regarding the use of the Psalms in worship. Jerome seems never to have clearly understood Christ’s redemptive work.

Kahnis, Karl Friedrich August (1814–88). Born in Greiz, Germany, and educated at Halle, Kahnis taught at Berlin, Breslau, and Leipzig. At first he defended confessional Lutheranism—even joining the Old Lutherans in 1848. Later, he adopted a subordinationist view that Jesus Christ was not equal to the Father as touching His divinity. He also developed different views on Scripture and the Lord’s Supper.

Keil, Johann Friedrich Karl. See under Delitzsch, Franz.

Kromayer, Hieronymus (1610–70). Born in Zeitz, Germany, Kromayer was educated in the orthodox Lutheran centers of Leipzig, Wittenberg, and Jena. During Kromayer’s lifetime, the theologians mentored by Georg Calixt at Helmstedt argued for a Lutheranism effectively cut loose from the Lutheran Confessions, especially the Formula of Concord.

Lange, Joachim (1670–1744). Born in Gardelegen, Altmark, Germany, this professor at Halle was a prominent Pietist and controversialist who opposed orthodox Lutherans, especially Valentin Ernst Loscher, who saw in Pietism the encroachment of the Enlightenment. Lange also opposed rationalists, including Gottfried Thomasius and Christian Wolff, forerunners of Immanuel Kant. Lange stood against the Wertheim Bible, a version of the Pentateuch that was edited on the basis of coarse Enlightenment rationalism that was more extreme than historical-critical thought.

Luthardt, Christoph Ernst (1823–1902). Born in Maroldsweisach, Lower Franconia, Germany, and educated at Erlangen and Berlin, Luthardt taught at the Gymnasium at Munich 1847–51, at Erlangen 1851–54. He became a professor at Marburg 1854–56 and at Leipzig 1856–1902. He belonged to the so-called Erlangen School, whose criteria were Scripture, the Lutheran Confessions, and personal experience. He
edited the *Allgemeine Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchenzeitung*; other works include books on dogmatics, ethics, and apologetics.

**Manes.** See Mani.

**Mani** (Manes; Manichaeus; ca. 216–276). Born in Persia (modern Iran), Mani allegedly received divine revelations; claimed to be the last and highest prophet; and traveled probably to India and perhaps China. He became acquainted with Buddhism, returned to Persia, and perhaps suffered a cruel death in prison. See also *Manichaeism* (p. 481).

**Melanchthon, Philip** (Schwartzerd; 1497–1560). Born in Bretten, Lower Palatinate (Baden), Germany; educated at Heidelberg and Tübingen in classics. He became known as a humanist, published a Greek grammar (1518), and was recommended by Johannes Reuchlin for a professorship at the University of Wittenberg. He arrived on August 25, 1518, and Luther encouraged him to study theology. The rise of the Zwickau prophets and the Peasants’ War in the 1520s emphasized the need for an education program to implement the Lutheran Reformation. Melanchthon planned an educational process using classical languages and philosophy as the basis for specialized vocational studies. His reforms eventually were promoted throughout Germany, which garnered him the title *Praeceptor Germaniae*, “the teacher of Germany.” Melanchthon was prominent in the preparation of the Saxon Visitation Articles, but his later theological career was clouded in controversy. See also *Antinomians; Philippists*.

**Methodists.** See *Methodism* (p. 482).

**Moravians** (Herrnhuter). This group has roots in the Czech movement sparked by the execution of John Hus. In 1433, victorious followers of Hus were permitted to receive Communion in both kinds. Moderate Utraquists, from Latin for “both-kinders,” helped Roman Catholics to suppress Hus’s radical followers. In 1457, the Unity of Brethren (Latin: *Unitas Fratrum*) arose from this conflict and eventually influenced early Lutheranism. The Brethren later fell under Calvinist influence and helped to form the Moravian Church, in which Lutheran and Reformed doctrine often coexisted. Through the support of Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, the Moravians established ties with pietistic Lutherans and expanded into Pennsylvania. Current Moravian beliefs generally correspond to Calvinism.

**Münzer, Thomas** (ca. 1489–1525). This German Enthusiast was born in Stolberg, Saxony, and educated in Leipzig and Frankfurt an der Oder. A preacher in Zwickau in 1520, Münzer tried to surpass Luther as a reformer, but he became a fanatical ascetic Anabaptist. He built his religion on direct revelation and claimed enlightenment by inner light through visions, dreams, etc. A leader in the Peasants’ War, Münzer was defeated at Frankenhausen and beheaded.

**Muslims.** See *Islam* (p. 480).

**Naogeorg, Thomas** (Kirchmeyer; 1508–63). A playwright, Protestant theologian, and pamphleteer, Naogeorg became a Lutheran pastor and was at first on good terms with the Wittenberg faculty. In 1544, Luther and Melanchthon refused him permission to print his commentary on 1 John because he believed that the elect retain the Holy Spirit despite their coarse sins. After Luther’s death, Naogeorg developed problems in his doctrine of the Lord’s Supper. Defrocked, he remained a popular author who wrote against the papacy.

**Nestorius** (ca. 381–451). A monk who studied in Antioch, Nestorius became patriarch of Constantinople in 428—though he was sent back to the monastery at Antioch and in 436 banished to Upper Egypt. The Council of Ephesus condemned him in 431 for denying the communion of the divine and human natures in Christ. For Nestorius, Mary was only the mother of a human Christ, not the mother of God (Greek: *Theotokos*), and Christ is only God by adoption according to His human nature. See also *Eutyches*.

**Neumann, Kaspar** (Caspar; 1648–1715). This Lutheran hymnist was born in Breslau, Germany, and educated at Jena. Among other positions, he served as court preacher at Altenburg and as a professor at Breslau. His hymn "*Mein Gott, nun ist es wieder Morgen*” was a favorite of Walther’s in difficult times.

**Origen** (ca. 185–ca. 254). The successor of Clement of Alexandria as head of the school for catechumens (202), Origen sought to set forth all the science of the time from the Christian point of view and to elevate Christianity to a theory of the universe compatible with Hellenism. In this context he interpreted Scripture in an allegorical
manner. His commentaries are marred by his highly fanciful interpretations. The Fifth Ecumenical Council of Constantinople condemned Origen as a heretic in 553.

**Osianer, Andreas** (the Elder; ca. 1496–1552). This co-worker of Luther introduced the Reformation to Nürnberg and sided with Luther against Zwingli. He supported Luther at Augsburg in 1530 and reformed many areas of Germany. Later, Osianer taught that being declared righteous for Christ’s sake in the Gospel (forensic justification) was overemphasized. He claimed that God makes the sinner to be just not by crediting the righteousness and obedience of Christ to the sinner, but by sending Christ to dwell in the sinner. He also claimed that Christ is our righteousness only according to the divine nature and that God does not judge sin. Article III of the Formula of Concord rejects Osianer’s positions.

**Pelagians.** See Pelagianism (p. 483).

**Pelagius** (354–420). This educated layman led a life of poverty. After fleeing the sack of Rome by Alaric’s Goths in 410, Pelagius arrived in Carthage, where his teaching that man has free will to refrain from sin flourished. He was opposed by Augustine. See also Pelagianism (p. 483).

**Pezel, Christoph** (1539–1604). Born in Plauen, Germany, and educated in Jena and Wittenberg, Pezel was a professor and preacher in Wittenberg. He was banished in 1576 for Crypto-Calvinism (claiming to be Lutheran while holding to the teachings of John Calvin). Pezel openly accepted Calvinism after 1577.

**Pharisceus.** See under Judaism (p. 481).

**Philippists.** The later editions of Melanchthon’s _Loci Communis_ increasingly reflected his growing synergism. The Colloquy of Worms (1540) revealed Melanchthon’s tendency to make concession. His alterations of the Augsburg Confession in 1540 generated controversy over the Lord’s Supper, especially after Melanchthon’s death in 1560. His most harmful compromise was his personal involvement in preparing and supporting the Leipzig Interim (1548). Calvinists felt comfortable with the Augsburg Confession according to the changes made by Melanchthon. Those who espoused these alterations, in addition to those who rejected the third use of the Law and those who allowed a Calvinist understanding of the Lord’s Supper, were later called “Philippists.”

**Pieper, August Otto Wilhelm** (1857–1946). Brother of Franz and Reinhold Pieper, he received the same education as Franz. He shepherded congregations in Wisconsin before becoming a professor at the Wisconsin Synod seminary in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, in 1902.

**Pieper, Franz August Otto** (1852–1931). Born in Carwitz, Pomerania, Prussia. Pieper came to the United States in 1870 with his mother and brothers (August and Reinhold) after his father’s death. He was educated at Northwestern University, Watertown, and Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. Pieper’s clear, concise defense of Scripture during the Election Controversy made him the premier theologian of the LCMS. He followed Walther as president of Concordia Seminary (1887–1931) and as president of the Missouri Synod (1899–1911). His book _Christliche Dogmatik_, posthumously translated as *Christian Dogmatics*, shaped Missouri Synod doctrine in the twentieth century.

**Pieper, Reinhold** (1850–1920). Brother of August and Franz Pieper, he received the same education as Franz. He served as pastor in Wisconsin and Illinois, and as president of Concordia Seminary, Springfield, Illinois (1891–1914).

**Pietists.** See Pietism (p. 483).

**Propst, Jakob** (Praepositus; 1486–1562). Born in Ypres, Belgium, Propst was prior of the Augustinian monastery in Antwerp. After studying in Wittenberg in 1521, he returned to Antwerp and preached against indulgences. In 1522, he was imprisoned and recanted. He resumed evangelical preaching, was arrested again, escaped, and ended up in Wittenberg in 1523. A friend of Luther, Propst served as a pastor and later as superintendent of Bremen, replaced by Tilemann Hesshus.

**Protestants, Society of.** In 1863 the _Protestantenverein_ was formed in Germany to promote the union and progress of established Protestant churches on the basis of a “culture over Christ” approach. A number of clergy and lay leaders founded the organization in Frankfurt am Main. It represented liberal parties of the various German Lutheran and Reformed churches. It addressed the problem of the increasingly conservative nature of Germany following the exodus of
German liberals to the United States and elsewhere after 1848. The society's interests suffered defeat in a number of church elections. Nevertheless, the society continued to exist as a liberal German Protestant organization.

Rambach, Johann Jakob (1693–1735). Born in Halle, Germany, and educated in Halle and Jena, Rambach was a Pietist who taught at Halle and Giessen. Influenced by English theologians and philosophers, Rambach helped create an understanding of the “heart” that would do the right thing, given the chance. He believed in supranaturalism and the harmony between the natural and the supernatural order. He authored books on hermeneutics and ethics that influenced both Walther and those whom Walther opposed. He also translated the hymn “Baptized into Your Name Most Holy.”

Rationalists. See Rationalism (p. 484).

Reformed. The beginnings of Reformed churches may be traced to Switzerland, France, Holland, Scotland, and England. The name “Reformed” came into general use by the end of the sixteenth century in reference to followers of Calvin, Zwingli, Martin Bucer, Johann Heinrich Bullinger, and Johannes Oecolampadins. Followers of Luther were called Lutheran especially after the Colloquy of Marburg (1529). Reformed churches divided into Calvinist and Arminian groups (see Arminianism [p. 475]; Calvin, John; Holiness churches). Today, the word "Reformed" is used commonly of Calvinists and rarely of Arminians. Calvinists in England and Scotland tend to be Presbyterian. In its strictest sense, "Reformed" refers to Calvinist churches on the European continent. The main difference between Presbyterian and Reformed churches is their polity (human organization) and related nomenclature.

Sacramentarians. During the Reformation, this term identified those who rejected both transubstantiation and the sacramental union of the body and blood of Christ with the elements of bread and wine. It was applied especially to Zwingli and his followers. The position of the followers of Wolfgang Capito, Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt, and Martin Bucer eventually drew closer to the Lutheran position. The term has been used for the Reformed in general. It has recently been used by those with a symbolic or spiritualizing view of the Lord’s Supper to disparage those with a "high" view of the Eucharist, such as Lutherans, Roman Catholics, and Eastern Orthodox.

Sadducees. See under Judaism (p. 481).


Smets, Wilhelm (1796–1848). Born during the brief marriage of Johann von Ehrenstein, a criminal judge in Bonn who became an actor, and his second wife, Sophie, an actress, Smets endured a turbulent childhood before embarking on a brief military career and ending up as an author and teacher. He studied Roman Catholic theology and was ordained in 1822. Much of his remaining career involved publishing.

Socinians. These followers of two members of the Sozini family rejected the doctrine of the Trinity; denied the deity of Christ and His vicarious atonement, original sin, and the resurrection of the flesh; rejected the doctrine of hell and believed that the wicked would be annihilated; rejected Baptism and Holy Communion; and believed that people save themselves.

Socinus. See Sozini, Fausto Paulo; Sozini, Lelio.

Sozini, Fausto Paulo (1539–1604). The nephew of Lelio Sozini, Fausto became firmly established in Antitrinitarianism while studying theology. He held court positions at Florence, Italy; lived in Basel, Switzerland, went to Transylvania in 1578, but left amid theological turmoil and an outbreak of the plague. Fausto ended up in Poland, where he freed scattered Antitrinitarians from Anabaptists and chiliastic groups and organized them. He lived mainly in Krakow, under abuse and opposition, until driven from the city in 1598.

Sozini, Lelio (1525–62). A student of theology, Lelio came to doubt the Trinity and other doctrines that reason rejects. He traveled widely in
Reformation lands and became acquainted with Melanchthon and Calvin.

**Spalatin, Georg** (Georg Burckhardt; 1482–1545). Born in Spalt, near Nürnberg, Spalatin, like Luther, studied at the University of Erfurt. Johann von Laaspehordoth both Spalatin and Luther. Spalatin served as the tutor of future elector John Frederick, then as tutor to the nephews of Frederick III. He also was librarian, court chaplain, and secretary. He lived at the Saxon court in Torgau from 1511 until the death of Frederick III in 1525. Spalatin then lived in Altenburg and administered the doctrinal government of Lutheran churches in Saxony.

**Spangenberg, Cyriacus** (1528–1604). This pastor and hymnologist lost his vocation in 1575 because he supported the heretical position of Matthias Flacius regarding original sin. Spangenberg also taught that sin corrupts essential parts of the human nature, thus making it impossible for Christ to be without sin.

**Spener, Philipp Jakob** (1635–1705). Influenced by reformist voices in Lutheranism and an emphasis in practical theology that he received in Strasbourg and Geneva, Spener helped to form Pietism. He alienated orthodox theologians in Wittenberg, Dresden, and Leipzig, but was warmly received in the rationalist atmosphere of Berlin in Prussia. In 1694, Spener helped found the University of Halle as a center of Pietist learning. His 1675 *Pia Desideria* emphasized central points of Pietism.

**Spurgeon, Charles Haddon** (1834–92). Born in Kelvedon, Essex, England, Spurgeon joined the Baptists in 1851. He served as a pastor in England and established a preachers' college. He rejected the doctrine of baptismal regeneration and withdrew from the Baptist Union (1887), though he remained a nonconformist Baptist.

**Starck, Johann Friedrich** (1680–1756). Born in Hildesheim, Germany, and educated in Giessen, Starck was a preacher and pastor. Unlike many other Pietists, he believed that Baptism does have divine power. His version of Pietism embraced historic Lutheran doctrine that the Enlightenment rejected, which made his prayer book and book of devotions universally popular among believing Lutherans. His devotional books continue to shape Lutheranism today.

**Staupitz, Johann von** (ca. 1468–1524). The head of the German Congregation of Augustinians from 1503–20, Staupitz received his doctorate from Tübingen and was a charter faculty member of the University of Wittenberg. He guided Luther into an academic career and in 1518 released Luther from his monastic vows, simultaneously protecting the Augustinian order and freeing Luther to act on his reforming ideas. Staupitz retired to Salzburg, became a Benedictine monk, and repudiated the Protestant Reformation.

**Stephan, Martin, Sr.** (1777–1846). Born in Stramberg, Moravia; studied theology at Halle and Leipzig. Stephan became a pastor in Haber, Bohemia (today: Czech Republic) in 1809 and Dresden, Germany 1810–37. He opposed rationalism and was widely known as a spiritual adviser. Stephan resolved in the 1830s to emigrate to the US with his followers. He was placed under temporary suspension in 1837 and led the Saxon emigration to Missouri in 1838/39. He was deposed for maladministration and scandalous behavior. Stephan was taken to Illinois in 1839. By 1841 he was living in or near Kaskaskia, Illinois, and preaching there in the courthouse every 2 weeks. He served a congregation at Horse Prairie, southeast of Red Bud, Illinois, 1845–46.

**Stephan, Martin, Jr.** (1823–1884). Born in Dresden, Germany, he came to Missouri with his father while his mother and siblings were left behind in Germany. He then studied architecture in Dresden, later traveling to New York City in 1847 where he worked for a lithographer until 1849. He was a private tutor in Brattleboro, Vermont, in 1849. He then moved to St. Louis, where he designed the first building of Concordia College. The younger Stephan became a student of Walther, a parish pastor 1853–84, and also designed the teacher’s seminary at Addison, Illinois, in 1864.

**Stiemke, Timotheus** (1847–1908). Stiemke served as a pastor in Texas, Louisiana, and Maryland, as well as president of the Southern District (1882–88).

**Storch, Nicholas** (Nikolaus; d. 1525) A weaver by profession, Storch claimed prophetic power. He influenced especially Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt. See also Zwickau prophets.

**Stubner, Markus.** See Zwickau prophets.
Thomasius, Gottfried (1802–75). This Lutheran theologian was born in Egenhausen, Middle Franconia, Germany, and educated in Erlangen, Halle, and Berlin. He was a pastor, professor at Erlangen, and university preacher. He adopted a form of kenotic Christology that said Christ not only regularly refrained from using His divine attributes during His state of humiliation but also that He emptied Himself altogether of some divine attributes. Similar to the historical-critical desire to affirm Jesus’ full humanity while retaining something intelligible of His divinity, Thomasius and others helped to develop a new theory of interpretation according to “the whole of Scripture” and not to any particular passage, lest critics disprove that passage using rationalist methods. The result was a psychological religion that Franz Pieper strongly rebuts in Christian Dogmatics.

Turks. See Islam (p. 480).

Wislicenus, Gustav Adolf (1803–1875). After studying at Halle, Wislicenus became a pastor. He joined “Friends of the Light” (Lichtfreunde) in 1844 and attacked the authority of the Bible, which led to his defrocking in 1846. He continued to publish as a preacher of the Free Congregation in Halle, though in 1853 he was sentenced to two years in prison for aggravated idolatry. Wislicenus fled to the United States to avoid prison, but returned to Europe and settled near Zurich. He continued to publish rationalist interpretations of the Bible. See also Freethinkers.

Woltersdorf, Ernst Gottlieb (1725–61). A Lutheran pastor in Bunzlau, Silesia, Woltersdorf founded and directed an orphanage designed according to the model of the orphanage in Halle. A tireless worker with young people, Woltersdorf also wrote many poems and hymns in the pietistic style.

Zinzendorf, Nikolaus Ludwig von (1700–1760). After studying at Halle and Wittenberg, in 1722 Zinzendorf allowed persecuted members of the Moravian or Bohemian Brethren to build the Herrnhut community on part of his Berthelsdorf estate. He supported the printing of many pietistic books and tracts and the sending of missionaries through connections with the Danish crown. He broke with the Lutheran Church and was consecrated as a Moravian bishop in 1737, though he continued to present himself as a Lutheran in his bid for unionism. During his journey in the United States, Henry Melchior Muhlenberg opposed him. He died in 1760.

Zoroaster (Hellenistic name of Zarathustra). The founder of Zoroastrianism and alleged author of Zend-Avesta, Zoroaster lived before the sixth century BC in Persia. He claimed revelations from Ahura Mazda regarding a new monotheism that he was to preach in opposition to contemporary polytheism. After eleven years of failure, he converted King Vishtaspa (ca. 618 BC), through whose influence the new religion spread. Zoroaster spoke of both an eternally good spirit, Ahura Mazda, and an eternally evil spirit, Angra Mainyu or Ahriman. Between these two spirits are human beings, who have a free will to choose between good and evil and who will be rewarded or punished accordingly. Characteristic of the system is a well-developed doctrine of angels and the afterlife.

Zwickau prophets (heavenly prophets; Bilderstürmer). This name was given to a group of radical Anabaptists from Zwickau, Saxony, led by Nicholas Storch. The group stressed rigid conformity to New Testament rules; advocated separation of a believer from an unbelieving spouse; and rejected infant baptism, the use of oaths, use of civil power, and military service. Some members of the group destroyed statues, paintings, and other images. Storch and others came to Wittenberg in December 1521, influenced Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt and even Melanchthon for a time, and caused Luther to return to Wittenberg from the Wartburg in March 1522.

Zwingli, Ulrich (Huldrych; 1484–1531). This Swiss theologian denied God’s work through means and focused on divine providence and the direct communication of the Holy Spirit with man. Zwingli also said that the elements in the Sacraments were merely symbols. Luther opposed Zwingli by defending God’s work through means and maintaining the sacramental union in the Lord’s Supper between the elements and the body and blood of Christ. Luther affirmed that the personal union of Christ allows His human nature to have the attributes of the divine, such as being present where the divine is present or being present in the Lord’s Supper. Zwingli rejected this view and limited Christ’s human nature to a physical body present at a fixed location. Luther saw this limitation as rejecting the union of natures in Christ. Thus Luther believed that Zwingli was not truly Christian.
RESOURCES

The following resources by C. F. W. Walther are available at www.cph.org


Selected Writings of C. F. W. Walther. Edited by August R. Suelflow. St. Louis: Concordia, 1981. Volumes in the series are:

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