John Calvin balances between the unity and the antithesis of law and gospel. I want to expound Calvin’s balanced view of the law-gospel relationship by understanding the relationship within the Trinitarian framework of salvation history: creation, the fall, redemption and consummation.

In the framework of creation, the law is positive and one of God’s blessings. Because of the fall, the law became negative and functions for condemning and convicting sinners. The antithesis of the law and gospel lies in the gulf between creation and the fall. However, Calvin’s concept of redemption is the
restoration of God’s good creation including the positive role of the law in creation. The unity of the law and gospel can be explained in the framework of creation and redemption, that is, the restoration of creation. I believe that Calvin’s concept of the law should also be understood in its Trinitarian setting. The law is related to the orderly will of God the Creator, and the gospel pertains to the grace of Christ the Redeemer. The Christian life toward sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit. Distinctively, the law, the gospel, and the sanctification of the Christian life pertain to God the Law-giver, Jesus the Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit the Sanctifier respectively. This Trinitarian understanding is conspicuous in Calvin’s third use of the law. The law of the orderly will of God the Father is observed by believers who are redeemed by Jesus Christ and also are led by the Holy Spirit. Calvin’s concept of the law and his exhortation to the obedience of the law is not legalistic because the redemption of Christ and the guidance of the Holy Spirit are the motivation for that obedience.