

Formula of Concord, Article VI: “Christians Need the Law”

By Paul A. Manthey

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When you and I were ordained into the preaching ministry, each of us promised to uphold and teach nothing contrary to the Lutheran Confessions. Solemnly we answered, “I do,” to the following two questions: “Do you believe that the Unaltered Augsburg Confession is a true exposition of the Word of God and a correct exhibition of the doctrine of the Evangelical Lutheran Church; and that the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the two Catechisms of Martin Luther, the Smalcald Articles, and the Formula of Concord, as contained in the Book of Concord, are also in agreement with this one Scriptural faith?” And, “Do you solemnly promise that you will perform the duties of your office in accordance with these Confessions and that your teaching and your administration of the Sacraments shall be in conformity with the Holy Scriptures and with the afore-mentioned Confessions?”

In those Confessional writings, specifically in Article VI of the Formula of Concord, Thorough Declaration, it is stated: “We reject and condemn as an error pernicious and detrimental to Christian discipline, as also to true godliness, the teaching that the Law ...should not be urged upon Christians and the true believers, but only upon the unbelieving, unchristian, and impenitent.” Surely, then, there ought to be no doubt among us that the Law is to be taught in church and school to both believers and unbelievers.

However, while this is a well accepted truth we firmly believe and I am confident fully practice, it was under attack in Luther’s day and is yet today. Antinomianism, that is opposition in one way or another against the Law of God, is not a new movement in the church. It is an old heresy, also in the Lutheran Church.

The leader of the antinomians in Luther’s day was John Agricola. He had been a close friend of Luther from the earliest days of the Reformation. Luther referred to him as “one of my best and closest friends.” (SL, XX, 1612). And Agricola repeatedly expressed a willingness to be guided by Luther in all matters of doctrine. Yet, in 1537, about the time Agricola became a member of the faculty at Wittenberg, he published propositions in which he attacked Luther and Melanchthon on the matter of the Law for Christians. Agricola had been accused of antinomianism before this. Luther, though, refused to believe the reports that were circulating. He regarded them as mere rumors. However, when Luther learned that the reports were true, he insisted that Agricola issue a public, printed retraction. This Agricola did. Yet he continued to teach the same doctrine. He even cited Luther’s own words in support of his antinomian position.

In answer to this slander, Luther wrote: “I am surprised how anyone can possibly say that I reject the Law or the Ten Commandments when there are extant in so many of my expositions of the Ten Commandments, and these not all of one sort. These are daily preached and used in our churches. (I say nothing of the Augsburg Confession and the Apology and our other books). Besides this, they are sung in two versions. Moreover, they are portrayed artistically, they are printed and engraved, spoken by the children morning, noon, and night, so that I do not know of any way in which they are not used, except that we (sad to say) do not practice and portray them in our deeds and life. And I myself, as old and learned as I am, daily as a child repeat them word for word. If anyone would have gained any other idea out of my writings, and yet would see and notice that I lay so much stress on the catechism, he should at least have spoken to me and said, ‘Dear Dr. Luther, how does it come that you lay so much stress on the Ten Commandments, since you teach that they are to be rejected?’ This they should have done, instead of secretly undermining my work behind my back and waiting for my death, and then make out of me what they please. Alright, I forgive those who desist from it.” (SL, XX, 1613).

Also, in order to undo the harm done by Agricola and his supporters, Luther published between December 18, 1537 and September, 1540, six sets of theses against the antinomians. In them, he made the following points among others:

First series - The Law produces contrition; the Gospel produces hatred of sin and the good resolve to do good works.

Second series - The Law serves as a curb, mirror, and rule.

Third series - The life of the Christian is one of continuous repentance.

Fourth series - It is fallacious to say that because the Law is not necessary to justification, it is not necessary at all.

Fifth series - The Antinomians lead men to carnal security. If you abolish the Law, you must abolish sin and death, and ultimately Christ, the Savior from sin.

Sixth series - September, 1540 - The Antinomians destroy all order in the world, human and divine. You can learn neither theology nor civil piety from the Antinomians. (SL, XX, 1622--1849)

Still, the controversy continued after Luther's death. It was not settled until the adoption of the sixth article of the Formula of Concord in 1580. But even this did not fully resolve the antinomian issue for the Lutheran Church. Today, opposition to the Law often takes a more subtle approach in exerting its influence. It can be seen in some printed text-books for confirmands where there is hardly any mention of sin. It is evident when we hear that we ought to remember we are preachers of the Gospel and not of the Law; that we should avoid the negative approach and the motivation of fear; that we should be careful not to arouse feelings of guilt; and that we should teach the Law in an "evangelical manner." Arguments like this seem to indicate antinomianism is a danger confronting all of us yet today. It is important, then, that we keep on reviewing for ourselves again and again the truths for which our spiritual forefathers labored so earnestly and successfully under the blessing of God.

A word about terminology. Generally speaking when we use the term "the third use of the Law," which is also used in the heading to Article VI of the Formula of Concord, we usually understand this to refer to the use of the Law as a rule for Christian living. In our teaching it is certainly very useful to distinguish carefully between the use of the Law as a curb, a mirror and a rule. But in everyday life such uses are not so sharply divided. And Article VI of the Formula of Concord is not limited to the consideration of the Law as a rule. Instead, under this heading, Article VI deals with the use of the Law among converted children of God. In that sense we will also deal with it in this paper.

I don't know exactly what the program committee had in mind when it assigned this paper to be presented on the Formula of Concord's Article VI. No specific instructions were given. So I hope the approach to this subject that is going to be used will meet with approval and be of benefit to the members of our conference.

The heading of this presentation will be: "CHRISTIANS NEED THE LAW." We intend to point out that it is needed first, I TO AROUSE FEAR, then, II TO CHECK SIN, next, III TO REVEAL SIN, and finally, IV TO SERVE AS A GUIDE.

I. If we as preachers and teachers of the Law are to use it correctly, it is important that we know what we intend to accomplish by the Law. In part III of the Smalcald Articles, article II entitled, "Of the Law," Luther says: "The chief office or force of the Law is that it reveal original sin with all its fruits, and show man how very low his nature has fallen, and has become utterly corrupted; as the Law must tell man that he has no God nor regards (cares for) God, and worships other gods, a matter which before and without the Law he would not have believed. In this way he becomes terrified, is humbled, desponds, despairs, and anxiously desires aid, but sees no escape."

Here Luther was proclaiming only what has been stated by the inspired apostle, Paul, in his epistle to the Romans. "Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin." Romans 3:20. "Law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression." Romans 4:15. "The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more." Romans 5:20. And, "In order that sin might be recognized as sin, it produced death in me through what was good, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful." Romans 7:13.

A strange phenomena in the church today is the person who agrees that the Law must be taught so that people can be brought to a knowledge of sin; but who then goes on to say that it should never be taught in such a way that individuals are made to be fearful. But the Law is there to terrify and condemn. Luther indicates that the Law which does not condemn is a fabricated and a painted Law. He says, "God has given His Law just for this purpose that it should bite, cut, beat, kill, and sacrifice the old man. For it should frighten the proud, unwise, and secure old Adam, punish him, and show him his sin and death that he may be humbled and despair, so that he may become desirous of grace." (SL, XX, 1657). We can be sure that Satan does not want us to have a law that mortifies, angers, accuses, terrifies or kills.

Luther's Small Catechism speaks about the terror and fear that is to be created and aroused by the Law. In the explanation of each commandment it is written, "We should fear and love God." If anyone says that this does not mean we should be afraid of God, we need only point him to Luther's explanation of the conclusion to the commandments. There he has written, "Therefore we should fear His wrath."

Of course, there is a difference between the fear of the Christian and the fear of the unbeliever. Both are real. But the Lutheran Confessions call one filial fear, the other servile fear. These terms are defined this way: "Filial fear can be clearly defined as such anxiety as has been connected with faith, i.e., where faith consoles and sustains the anxious heart. It is servile fear when faith does not sustain the anxious heart." (Trig. p. 261).

In the pastor's adult and confirmation classes, we are used to defining fear of God in the case of the believer as reverence or awe. And we can do so correctly. But then there also is a tendency to remove from the word reverence all thought of being afraid. So we do well to remind ourselves that Luther and the Confessions not only use the word "fear" or "furcht" in this regard. They also use the words "terror" or "schrecken," and "anxiety" or "angst."

And Holy Scripture uses the word "fear" in the same way. The Biblical picture of fear is one of anxiety and terror. Indeed, it is removed and overcome by the "fear not" of the Gospel. Nevertheless, it is anxiety or terror. For example, the Bible speaks of trembling before the Lord. Sinful Adam hid in the garden of Eden because he was afraid. In the Psalms David speaks of the terrors of death. Hebrews relates that all their lifetime men are subject to bondage through the fear of death. Paul admonishes that we are to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. Jesus tells us not to fear those who kill the body, but rather fear Him Who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. So it becomes evident that the picture of fear in the Bible is one of anxiety and terror. Again, to be sure, it is anxiety and terror which for the Christian is conquered by the comforting message of the Gospel. But it is anxiety and terror nevertheless.

As preachers and teachers of God's Law, our purpose is to lead people really to believe that God is a jealous God, jealous of His words. He means everything He has told us, not only the sweet message of a Savior from sin and hell, but also His stern message that the soul that sins it shall die. And, that everyone is cursed or damned who does not continue to do all things that are written in the book of the Law. What the Bible says about the wages of sin is frightening and terrifying in itself. We do not have to embellish our presentation with emotional tricks or lurid details of the horrors of hell in an effort to terrify or frighten. What is needed is a clear, straightforward, honest teaching of what Scripture reveals about man's sinfulness and God's righteous wrath when sin is committed. At times, perhaps, our teaching of the Law is somewhat ineffective because we are afraid of causing people to be afraid. Yet, that is what the Law is supposed to do.

As we conclude part I of this presentation, a word of caution from the pen of the sainted Dr. Siegbert Becker: "There is a type of teaching of the Law that borders on sadism, that feels none of the terror of sin itself, and shows no sympathy for the sinner. There is one kind of preaching of the Law that reminds me of the depraved delinquent who pulls out a switch-blade knife and finds joy in the pain which he inflicts and laughs at the fear of his adversary as he runs down the street, screaming in terror. There is another kind of teaching that reminds me of one of the members of my congregation who took his knife out of his pocket and cut off his uncle's arm which was caught in a corn picker, because they both knew that if it was not done he would bleed to death. If ever we need to come down from the teacher's rostrum and stand with our children in sympathetic love, it is while we are teaching them to know the wrath of God, and we will do it as it ought to be done if we have ourselves recognized our own sin for what it is and what it has done to us; if we have ourselves learned

what it really means to stand before God and smite upon our breast and say, ‘God be merciful to me, a sinner.’ Our teaching of the Law must never become a playing with words. It must be a wrestling for souls. And if it is this, it will never become a matter of depraved delight in the torments of a terrified soul, nor a timid toning down of the severity of God’s Word out of sentimental sympathy.”

II. We go on to discuss that the Law in the life of the Christian serves to check sin or act as a curb.

The Law as a curb is usually spoken of as the first use of the Law. We are accustomed to saying that the Law is a curb when through the threat of punishment it to some extent keeps in bounds the person who is inclined to do wrong. But since punishment is regarded as the payment for doing evil, then it follows that freedom from punishment is also a payment or reward for doing what is right and good. This is the principle followed by the government in maintaining law and order in the world. Therefore the use of the Law as a curb is sometimes called the political use of the Law.

However, we are interested in our use of the Law as we carry out our pastoral ministry. Is it proper to use the Law as a curb when dealing with Christians? Some are of the opinion that any motivation which does not come completely and solely from the love of God, is unworthy of a believer. They say it is not right to drive Christians to obedience by threats of punishment. They also object to the use of any kind of reward to encourage a Christian to do what is pleasing in God’s eyes. And they insist that Christian preachers and teachers should refrain from such motivation.

Surely we all agree and teach that as Christians we are moved to do good and avoid evil because that is the will of our gracious God Who has done so much for us both physically and spiritually. Out of love and gratitude we now strive to please Him more and more. But it does not necessarily follow that every other motivation is wrong in every instance. The principle that love of God is the chief reason for true Christian living does not automatically forbid or exclude the use of every other motivation. The question of the use of the Law as a curb in the life of a Christian must be answered on the basis of Holy Scripture and not on the basis of human reasoning or emotion.

It can be demonstrated that the Bible uses threats of punishment to produce obedience of God’s will from Christians. Paul wrote to believers in Rome that they were to obey the government and pay taxes. We note he does not say they were to be obedient only and solely because their conscience, their sense of responsibility to God prompted them to act that way. He took for granted that their fear of punishment would be part of the motivation force that urged them to do that which is right. He wrote: “But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God’s servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience.” Romans 13:4-5.

In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus urged His disciples to watch and pray. He did not merely say, “I want you to do this willingly because you love Me and desire to please Me.” Instead He reminded them of the danger that was a real threat to them. He told them, “Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak.” Mark 14:38. Or when Jesus spoke to His disciples about the end of the world, He once more encouraged watchfulness. Not only did He remind them to look up because their redemption was drawing near. Jesus also reminded them that the individual who was not watching, like that master in His parable, He would “cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Matthew 24:51.

The Bible also uses, in addition to threats of punishment, the promises of reward to encourage people of God to do what is right. God urged His Old Testament believers to bring the tithes to the temple and promised that if they did this He would give them a bountiful harvest. Through the prophet Malachi God said: “Test Me in this and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it. I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit.” Malachi 3:10-11. Through Haggai God told His people that a drought and harvest failure had come because they had not rebuilt the temple in Jerusalem. “Therefore, because of you the heavens have withheld their dew and the earth its crops.” Haggai 1:10. We also think of passages like Paul’s admonition to

the Christians in Corinth, “He that sows bountifully shall reap also bountifully.” Or his promise to Timothy, “Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is and that which is to come.”

The Lutheran Confessions also echo this teaching. Luther, in his Small Catechism, says: “God threatens to punish all who transgress these commandments. Therefore we should fear His anger and not disobey what He commands.” In simple terms Luther explains here what we mean when we say that the Law should be used also by the believer as a curb. And then in the following words of the conclusion to the commandments Luther sets forth the positive side of this principle. “But He promises grace and every blessing to all who keep these commandments. Therefore we should love and trust in Him, and gladly obey what He commands.” In the Large Catechism Luther writes: “Thus He demands that all our works proceed from a heart which fears and regards God alone, and from such fear avoids everything that is contrary to His will, lest it should move Him to wrath.” (Trig. p. 673) And the Formula of Concord states: “The truly believing, elect, and regenerate children of God need in this life not only the daily instruction and admonition, warning, and threatening of the Law but also frequently punishments.” (Trig. p. 965)

Why, one might ask, do Christians need punishments and threats to move them to do what is right, when they ought to out of love and gratitude to God freely carry out His will? The answer is obvious. If we were perfect Christians and did not have the Old Adam constantly with us, we would no longer need the threats of the Law. If we loved the Lord perfectly, threats of punishment would be unnecessary. But because we still have and always will have here on earth a sinful nature, for that reason we need the Law as a curb. So the Formula of Concord says, “As far as the old Adam is concerned, which still clings to them, he must be driven not only with the Law, but also with punishments, nevertheless he does everything against his will and under coercion, no less than the godless are driven and held in obedience by the threats of the Law ...For the old Adam, as an unmanageable, stubborn mule, is still a part of them, which must be coerced to the obedience of Christ, not only by the teaching, admonition, force, and threatening of the Law, but also oftentimes by the club of punishments and troubles, until the body of sin is entirely put off, and man is perfectly renewed in the resurrection, when he will need neither the preaching of the Law nor its threatenings and punishments, as also the Gospel any longer.” (Trig. pp. 969-971.)

While all this is true, may we always remember that the highest motivation for believers will never come from the Law but only from the Gospel. Grateful Christians are well aware of all that their gracious triune God has done for them. He is their Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier. There will never be any better reason for doing what is right and good than that this pleases Him Who is the source of every blessing we enjoy.

III. As we continue focusing our attention on the premise Christians need the Law, we emphasize next that God’s Law shows or reveals sin in a believer’s life. This is usually referred to as the second use of the Law.

In Prof. David Kuske’s exposition of Luther’s Small Catechism, question 32 asks: “What purpose does God’s Law serve in the hearts of all people?” The answer given is: “God’s Law shows all people their sin and their need of a Savior. (The Law as a mirror).” In essence this is what Paul stated when he wrote to the Romans: “Through the Law we become conscience of sin.” (3:20) And, “I would not have known what sin was except through the Law.” (7:7)

Yet, there are some who say that when speaking to Christians, we must remember they are children of God who know they are sinners. To them we are to proclaim the Gospel, not the Law. But if that reasoning is to be considered valid, we ask, “Do not Christians also know that their sins are forgiven? And if they know their sins are forgiven, why should we keep on telling them this?” The point is, how long will Christians believe their sins are pardoned, how long will they desire the salvation freely offered in the Gospel, if they are not reminded or told over and over again that they are lost sinners? Luther said, “If Christ is preached, the Law must be preached.” (SL, XX, 1617). And again he said, “How can one preach about forgiveness if there are not first some sins to forgive? And how can one know that there is sin, if the Law does not show us our sin?” (SL, XX, 1659). We also are reminded here of the words of our Savior: “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. - I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.” Luke 9:12-13.

During His ministry on earth, Jesus frequently preached the Law to His followers. Think of His Sermon on the Mount recorded in Matthew 5-7. The Law is there from beginning to end. That discourse speaks of judgment and the fire of hell (5:22); of eternal punishment in prison (5:25-26); of being cast into hell (5:29-30). Jesus also told His disciples that those who hear His words but do not put them into practice will fall, will go down to ruin, like a house built on sand. (7:24-29). And there are many other examples of Jesus' use of the Law when dealing with His disciples that are recorded in Holy Scripture.

That the Law is to be proclaimed to Christians so that their sin might be revealed is likewise evident in the epistles of Paul. His letter to the believers in Rome begins with a clear statement of the sinfulness of all individuals and a pronouncement of God's judgment. He wrote two letters to the Christians in Corinth and both contain words of condemnation. Toward the end of his second epistle he admonished his hearers to examine themselves to see whether they were still in the faith. (13:5). And a reading of his letter to the Galatians and his two epistles to the Thessalonians indicates the same.

To be sure, as it is written in 1 Timothy 1:9: "We also know that the Law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious." But again remember that the best Christian is not only a saint, justified and forgiven by faith in Jesus Christ. He is also a wretched sinner, with all the weaknesses that are common to his human nature. He is not only a redeemed heir of heaven born of the Spirit. He is also flesh born of flesh in which there is no good. Paul put it well when he wrote: "For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want." Galatians 5:17. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. Christians need the law to reveal again and again that sin is in their lives.

Yes, sin is and remains in the Christian all the days of his life. So he is in need of life-long repentance. In the first of the Ninety-Five Theses, Luther wrote: "When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, Repent ye, He intended that the whole life of the believer should be one of repentance." It is an attitude of the heart, a sense of sin which recognizes the need to change. It is ongoing and continuous or it become impenitence. In order to keep such an attitude alive in the heart, the Law must be proclaimed. For a person so easily can fall into a false sense of security. Again Luther said: "When the Law is preached, we learn that we are all debtors to the Law and children of wrath, the godless completely, in body and soul, through and through the godly insofar as they still are and live in the flesh. Therefore, the teaching of the law is necessary and by all means must be kept in the church, for without it Christ cannot be kept." (SL, XX 1646).

It is vital, then, that we be aware and troubled by sin in our lives. For then the glorious message of the Gospel can bring hope, peace, comfort and joy. Luther once said that the closest step to faith is despair. When the Holy Spirit through the Law has done what the confessions call His "strange work," then He can through the glorious news of God's boundless grace bring consolation to hearts burdened with sin. The Apology of the Augsburg Confession says: "He terrifies ...that there may be a place for consolation and quickening, because hearts that are secure and do not feel the wrath of God loathe consolation." (Trig. p. 265).

To show or reveal sin in human lives, whether that be in the lives of believers or unbelievers, ought always be our goal when teaching the Law. And when we have by our teaching convinced our fellowmen that they are condemned sinners, then it is also our great privilege to bring them God's own assurance that through Christ they have forgiveness of sins and the sure hope of everlasting life in heaven.

IV. In the concluding portion of this paper it is our intention to review that the Christian needs the Law to serve as a guide or rule.

If you are anything like me, you no doubt have at one time or another purchased a Christmas or birthday gift for your wife only to learn that it was the wrong size or color. Or perhaps it was something she did not even want or need. So my practice now is to ask her directly what she would like to receive or have me do.

The same question arises in the heart of a believer. The inspired psalmist asked: "How can I repay the Lord for all His goodness to me?" Psalm 116:12. And the prophet Micah wanted to know what he could do in order to please his God. His question was: "With what shall I come before the Lord and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased

with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" Micah 6:6-7.

This is a common reaction of grateful people of God. To be sure, the Law does not give the power or strength to do what is right in the eyes of the Lord. Only the Gospel creates love of God in the heart. But when the sunshine of God's grace shines forth with its life-giving warmth through the Gospel, when the heart is touched by God's loving kindness so wonderfully revealed in Christ Jesus, then a person is filled with gratitude. Now he wants to serve and do those things in his daily life which please the Lord.

And the Lord has not left us without guidance and a reply. The prophet Micah, who was quoted a moment ago, answers his own question with these inspired words: "He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." Micah 6:8. In His holy, verbally inspired, inerrant Word, and specifically in the portion of His Word called Law, God reveals to us what He would have us do and not do. There we have a clear, sure and certain guide for godly living.

Sad to say, for many in the world today there are no absolute moral values, no fixed principles of right and wrong. It is said that if it feels good, do it. If no one is harmed, a particular action or conduct is permissible. If the majority of people believe something is right, it must be right. It is also said that as society changes and becomes more mature and sophisticated, what may have been wrong in years gone by is now right in our present day. This is the so-called new morality which leaves modern man with no morality, no sure and certain guide for life.

It is, therefore, of utmost importance that as spiritual leaders we continue to direct our people to the truth. And again, God has revealed His unchanging will for us in His inspired Word, the Bible. We want our members to be firmly grounded and rooted in that truth. It ought to be one of our foremost purposes to give them a rock-solid guide for life, as summed up in the Ten Commandments, and set forth in detail in numerous passages of Holy Scripture.

We Christians live in a world where the concept of right and wrong is sorely lacking. And because of our inborn sinfulness with which we must constantly contend, we can easily be misled to follow our own ideas regarding what is correct and proper. We can be diverted by the argument that everybody is doing it. And we will be tempted to justify our actions as we are influenced by human reason and sentiment. So we need God's Law to remind us He has given us definite rules, that He is the Judge of our actions, that in His Law He has provided the norm for true Christian living.

That truth is stated in the Formula of Concord this way: "This doctrine of the Law is needful for believers, in order that they may not hit upon a holiness and devotion of their own, and under the pretext of the Spirit of God set up a self-chosen worship, without God's Word and command." (Trig. p. 969). And then is quoted as Scriptural proof this passage from Deuteronomy 12:8, 28, 32: "You are not to do...everyone as he sees fit...(but) be careful to obey all these regulations I am giving you...Do not add to it or take away from it."

While the Law of God is to serve as guide or rule for the Christian, that does not mean that God has given us directives for every situation that may arise in our lives. We are not told exactly what to do in each circumstance. There are also specific responsibilities that parents and others have who serve as God's representatives in positions of authority. There are other duties given to children and persons who are to submit to their God-appointed leaders. As preachers and teachers of God's Word our responsibilities differ from those that might be expected from individuals in other vocations or occupations.

Then, too, we Christians are not to obey the Law in a mere mechanical manner. There are times when two of God's commandments seemingly conflict with each other. The fifth commandment tells us not to kill. The fourth commandment indicates we are to obey the government which God's Word also reveals has the right to punish a murderer by putting him to death and to wage just wars. When a soldier or other agent carries out a directive of the government and kills the enemy or executes a murderer, he acts as a servant of God. He serves God by killing. In the eighth commandment the Law of God says we are not to give false testimony. What will a Christian do when he is called upon to act as a spy in defense of his country when lying and deceit are demanded of him? To cut off a man's arm would appear to be contrary to the fifth commandment. But if

circumstances indicate that to cut off his arm will save his life, it becomes clear what the choice must be. Obviously, there may be times when choosing between two commandments will be difficult. Then we are to pray earnestly for God's guidance and be moved to a more in depth study of His Word where His will is revealed to us. If in our human weakness and ignorance we choose incorrectly, we have the assurance of forgiveness through Christ's redemptive work.

In this connection it might be well to underscore one final truth. Question 24 of our Catechism asks, "What is the simplest summary of God's Law?" The answer, "Love God and your neighbor." Love is to remind us that our obedience to the ten commandments is not to be a mere outward action. God requires obedience not only in the letter but also in the spirit. To keep the Law in the spirit means that we keep it inwardly, that we do what is right because we want to do so out of love for God. To keep the Law in the letter means that a person complies outwardly with the demands of the law without the proper attitude in the heart. As Paul wrote in I Corinthians 13:3: "If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing."

When we, therefore, proclaim and teach the Law to the members in our congregations, we ought never be satisfied with mere outward obedience. Rather we will always be aware of the fact that the Law is truly obeyed only if the obedience comes from a willing heart that loves the Lord. That kind of obedience the Law will never bring forth in men. It can only come as a result of preaching the Gospel of God's undeserved love in Christ Jesus. Thus we will always be driven in our teaching to the cross of our Savior as the only source for living a truly obedient life. We conclude this presentation with the words of hymn 287 in Christian Worship:

The Law of God is good and wise;
It sets His will before our eyes,
Shows us the way of righteousness,
But dooms to death when we transgress.

The Law is good, but since the fall
Its holiness condemns us all;
It dooms us for our sins to die
And has no power to justify.

Its light of holiness imparts
The knowledge of our sinful hearts
That we may see our lost estate
And seek relief before too late.

To Jesus we for refuge flee,
Who from the curse has set us free,
And humbly worship at His throne,
Saved by His grace through faith alone. Amen.