

# Concordia Theological Monthly



AUGUST

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1956

# Concordia Theological Monthly

VOL. XXVII

AUGUST 1956

No. 8

## Faith With Works

Galatians 5 and 6

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THE fact that Christianity's message has spread far and wide may lead to the easy assumption that knowledge equals understanding and that in place of doctrinal emphases the practical aspects demand primary consideration. It is the purpose of this paper to show that Christianity cannot be functional unless its message is presented with a constant doctrinal emphasis and that if this doctrine is faithfully presented, the message will be functional. As in the preceding paper, "Faith Without Works,"<sup>1</sup> St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians will provide the basic material for the subject "Faith with Works."

### A

#### *Freedom from the Entire Law*

In chapters 2—4 of the Epistle to the Galatians St. Paul developed the thesis that the Christian is freed from the Law. He demonstrated that the basic error of man is his attempt to set up his own criteria<sup>2</sup> of a right relationship with God. In contrast to man's futile efforts the Apostle emphasized that man cannot be saved unless he accepts God's own solution, the atonement of Jesus Christ. Under the Law man is a slave. He cannot satisfy the requirements of God's justice, nor is he free to express the will of God. Because of his sinful nature he cannot be relied on to make the right choices and decisions.

In order to carry out effectively God's program for living, man must be freed from Law (Gal. 5:1). Jesus secures that freedom. He who renounces all his own criteria of righteousness and relies entirely on the atonement of Jesus Christ for the assurance of

<sup>1</sup> See *Concordia Theological Monthly*, July 1956.

<sup>2</sup> See note 2, *ibid.*, p. 515.

pardon and release from the bondage to sin secures his freedom from the enslaving fetters of Law. Nor is this freedom limited to ceremonial and political elements in the Law of Moses. It is a freedom from *all* legal prescriptions.

The extent of this liberation from Law is apparent from such statements as Gal. 2:18f.: "If I build up again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the Law am dead to the Law, that I might live unto God." There is no limitation in this passage with regard to the Law. The same applies to chapter 5:1-3: "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Behold, I, Paul, say unto you that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised that he is a debtor to do the whole Law." The reference to the "whole Law" indicates that the Apostle emphasizes a liberty from the entire Law. In 5:13 Paul declares: "Brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another." The antithesis clearly indicates that freedom from the demands of the Law is involved in the Apostle's declaration of liberty.

The Apostle's doctrine of liberty is documented throughout the New Testament. In Col. 2:14 the Apostle declares that God has blotted out "the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross." Eph. 2:14, 15 states: "He is our Peace, who hath made both one and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the Law of commandments contained in ordinances." In Rom. 7:6 the Apostle expresses a similar thought: "Now we are delivered from the Law, that, being dead wherein we were held, that we should serve in newness of spirit and not in the oldness of the letter."<sup>3</sup>

The erroneous inferences made by certain parties in the church affirm the extent of the liberty implied in the preceding passages. The moral laxness at Corinth, for example, as indicated especially by 1 Corinthians 5, is explicable only on the assumption that Paul

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<sup>3</sup> Cp. Rom. 2:29 and 2 Cor. 3:6. Conformity with the written precepts of the Law is contrasted with the new life wrought by the Spirit of God.

proclaimed liberty from the entire Law. The Corinthians falsely inferred that liberty from Law meant license to indulge the flesh, and 6:12 suggests that certain Corinthians prided themselves on the slogan "All things are lawful to me." The description of heretics in 2 Peter and Jude points in the same direction.

The problem confronting the Apostolic Council likewise indicates that freedom from the entire Law was implicit in the apostolic message. The Jewish party appears to have expressed the fear that proclamation of liberty from the Law would lead to sexual promiscuity. Hence the decree concerning "fornication" (Acts 15:29).

The material presented in the Gospels also suggests that the apostolic proclamation of liberty from the Law includes the entire Mosaic Code. The preservation of words and sayings indicating the inadequacy of a codified Law seems to justify this conclusion. The Sermon on the Mount is especially valuable in this connection. Matt. 5:31, 32 appears to have been preserved as an antidote against the criticism that liberty would spell license, for Jesus' own declaration on marriage not only "establishes" the Law, to use the Apostle's phrase (Rom. 3:31), but exceeds its literal expression. Thus the church seems to have said to her opponents who claimed that release from the Law would lead to moral chaos: Our Lord leads us along a way that the Law in its literal precepts would never teach us. A similar inadequacy in connection with the Fifth Commandment is discussed in Matt. 5:21ff.

In addition to these efforts to document the inadequacy of the Law, the Gospels are apologetic in their approach to the question of freedom from the entire Law. Thus the word of Jesus in Matt. 5:17ff. was highly valued by the church. The church was saying to her adversaries: You claim that we teach liberty from the Law. That is true. But you must understand it correctly, for our Lord said: "Think not that I am come to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law till all be fulfilled." Luke 15 and 16 suggest a similar apologetic interest. After the forgiveness of the sinner has been depicted in chapter 15, our Lord's story of the unjust steward is recorded, in order to show that though forgiveness and

liberty from the Law appear to give the sinner license, yet the moral expectations of the kingdom of God are not lower but higher than those attained under the Law (16:16ff.). Matt. 22:21 suggests that the contents of the First Commandment are not endangered by the declaration of liberty from the Law, for the Christian faith promotes a greater obedience to the respective authorities of God and of Caesar than the Jews displayed under their Law.

## B

### *Freedom, Not License*

The argumentation of Galatians, the objections of the adversaries, the misunderstandings of weak Christians, the statements concerning the inadequacy of the literal ordinance of Moses, the apologetic interests of the Gospels, unanimously testify to the fact that liberty from the entire Law was a primary article of faith in the apostolic era.

As already indicated, the declaration was subject to misunderstanding. But the fact that it could be misunderstood did not lead the apostolic church to compromise its fundamental article. On the contrary, the Apostle Paul is representative of the unremitting zeal to provide proper instruction on this point.

In 5:13 he reminds the Galatians that they have been called to liberty. But then he goes on to say in vv. 13 and 14: "Only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another, for all the Law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."<sup>4</sup> These words indicate that the Apostle takes up a challenge of the Judaizers that his doctrine of liberty will lead to moral license. In reply to their objection he says that the Christian emphasis on freedom loses nothing of the moral values of Judaism. But if he had stopped at this point, he would have proved nothing. Unless he can demonstrate that the ability to love is intimately linked with the Christian's expe-

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<sup>4</sup> The Law appears to be used here as a directive, but such is not the case. The Apostle aims to impress on the Galatians that freedom from the Law does not mean abrogation of all moral principles. Freedom from Law means freedom to love, and this love displayed by the Christian will cover all that the Law included. The Christian does not love because a commandment says he must. He loves because God has loved him in Christ, and this love achieves what is implied in the written code.

rience of the atonement, he must concede the laurels to the Judaizers.

"By love serve one another." The contrast to a life of love is life in the flesh, the Apostle suggests in v. 13. Then he proceeds. He picks up the objective he has proposed — love as the fulfilling of the Law — and connects it with the Spirit of God. "This, I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." The Holy Spirit is the guarantee of this new life in love. With that the Apostle presses his advantage. His word on liberty, Paul insists, does not mean that the Christian is liberated to live as he pleases. "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (v. 17). There are really only two possibilities, says the Apostle. The one is life in the flesh, and the other is life in the Spirit. And these two are opposed to each other. There is no third possibility. What one does is either fleshly or spiritual.

"But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the Law." The Apostle has proposed the two possibilities. Now he explains what liberty from the Law really means. Note that he does not say: "But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not in the flesh." The point here is not whether the Christian is in the flesh or in the Spirit. The question under discussion is, whether the Christian is free from the Law, and in what sense is he free. The Apostle answers: In view of the fact that only two possibilities are open to the individual, life in the spirit and life in the flesh, no man is absolutely free. But if one is led by the Spirit of God, then he is free from bondage to Law, free for God. Freedom from Law consists in being led by the Spirit of God. But since the Spirit of God opposes the flesh, freedom from Law does not spell moral license.

The Apostle's emphasis on the leading of the Spirit indicates that the Law is not necessary in order to secure the Christian's moral response. He is not dependent on external ordinances or directives to coerce a God-pleasing decision in a particular life situation. The Spirit working within him will dictate the proper response, provided he has renounced himself and relies solely on the merits of Jesus Christ.

When that Spirit-prompted response is lacking, man lives accord-

ing to the flesh. But the Judaizers would insist that the Law is necessary in order to help the Christian identify fleshly conduct. The Apostle is aware of this objection and says: "Now the works of the flesh are manifest" (v. 19). Then he gives a catalog of sin (vv. 19-21). The Spirit-guided Christian, says the Apostle, does not need a written Law to tell him that these things are wrong. If anyone should choose to debate the evil character of such conduct, he would only confess his ignorance of the meaning of the Christian faith, implies the Apostle. Therefore he adds, "They which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (v. 21b). The Apostle's choice of tense in the participle *πράσσοντες* is worthy of note. He is not thinking of a temporary triumph of the flesh over the Spirit. He is talking about a way of life, an habitual attempt to satisfy the self instead of seeking the interests of God. Such an attitude indicates the absence of the Spirit, but where the Spirit is absent, there life is not free from Law, but hopelessly entangled in bondage to the Law.

If the Law is not necessary for the Spirit-guided Christian to identify the works of the flesh, it is certainly not necessary in order to secure what God desires; for "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no Law" (vv. 22, 23). The Law is unnecessary because the things that God desires are not evoked by compulsion or external directives, but are the silent growth of the Spirit working within. They are the produce of the Spirit. They are *fruits*. They are the way by which the Spirit makes His presence known. He who receives the Spirit, receives the fruits of the Spirit. They are a production of Grace. The external Mosaic Law at this point would be completely superfluous, for the Law opposes man's activity. It condemns, it challenges man. But the Law cannot possibly criticize what the Spirit produces. Therefore freedom from Law does not lead to license, for freedom from Law means freedom to experience the production of the Spirit's fruit.

### C

#### *Objection Answered*

In reply to the Apostle's argument thus far one is tempted to say: "This all sounds very fine. Theoretically it is a beautiful pres-

entation; actually it doesn't work out this way. We Christians know that we aren't producing the fruits of the Spirit in generous quantities. There is so much of the flesh with us." The Apostle will recognize this fact. But he will not concede that the solution is to reintroduce the Law as a means to secure what is properly the Spirit's fruit. Instead he will say: "Let us get to the bottom of this thing. What is the reason for this fleshly living? Perhaps a diagnosis will help us find a solution."

In 5:24, 25 the Apostle declares: "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." With these words the Apostle reminds the Galatians what happened when they became Christians. They crucified the flesh. The acceptance of the Gospel means that I accept not only the Christ as crucified for my sin but also the crucifixion of my inmost self, the flesh. I declare my flesh opposed to God. I die with Christ. I die to the flesh. Faith in Him means that I renounce the flesh as a principle of living and accept Him, my Savior, as my Lord and sole Master of my life. Faith in Him means that I recognize the futility of my own ways and realize that only in union with Him do I have life. If I take the Atonement seriously, I know that I have been saved from sin, not to live for sin but to live for Him who died and gave Himself for me.

If there is trouble, then, in securing the new life, it lies somewhere in this area of sin and grace. Tacking on the Law would be like trying to heal acute appendicitis with an aspirin.

The Apostle loses no time in locating the source of the problem. Unfortunately 5:26 has been orphaned from the rest of the argument by a chapter division, but the close connection between this verse and chapter 6 is vital to the understanding of the Apostle's presentation. The Apostle proceeds to examine one symptom of spiritual failure. A factional spirit has developed among Galatia's Christians. Pride and censoriousness have frustrated the production of love and peace and humility. Self-righteousness is evident in their relations with the weaker brethren (vv. 1, 2). But self-righteous attitudes are symptomatic of a failure to understand the grace wherein they stand. The Galatians' problem is their failure to consider seriously enough what it means



to be rescued from sin; otherwise they would not be uncharitably critical of one another. Therefore the Apostle says, "Consider thyself lest thou also be tempted" (6:1).

The Apostle is saying: As long as we are in this world we shall not be free from the hindrances of the flesh. Sins will occur. The flesh will ever attempt to reassert itself. But when the flesh triumphs over the Spirit, it is due to the fact that we have failed to rely on the all-sufficient power of Christ's atonement. When that happens, you who are spiritual, who see that a particular deed or attitude is not prompted by the Spirit, ought to restore one another. You who are living in the Spirit should help the erring brother realize that his faith calls him not to life in the flesh but to life in the Spirit of God. Thus you bear one another's burdens and fulfill the Law of Christ (6:2). At the same time you must remember that your salvation is dependent not on your own achievements but on the grace and mercy of God. You yourself, if you shift your confidence from Christ, will also fall into the sins of the flesh. And there is a great danger that you have already fallen, since you appear to be making your brother's failure the standard of your own walk in the Spirit. Therefore remember that every man shall bear his own burden. That is, God does not judge us by comparing our behavior with that of others. Remember, therefore, that you can walk securely only when you reflect that you are not sufficient to yourself and that without the power of Christ and His Spirit you can do nothing.

Such is Paul's first answer to the question: How shall one approach the symptoms of fleshly living? Face the Christian with the symptoms, diagnose the disease as an attempt to live by one's own criteria. Urge the Christian to rely entirely on the atonement of Christ and to accept the guidance of the Spirit.

But there is another answer suggested by the Apostle, related to the first. Inasmuch as the Christian's conflict with the flesh is a constant one, he needs the atonement of Christ brought to his attention at all times. The Word of God serves this purpose. "Let him who is taught in the Word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things" (6:6). Unfortunately, this verse is often divorced from its context and used exclusively as a proof-text for support of the ministry of the Word. What concerns the

Apostle is this, that the Christian's lack of concern for the minister's material needs is symptomatic of a profound spiritual problem. The Galatians are failing to recognize the important bearing the ministry of the Word has on their production of the fruits of the Spirit. The Apostle aims to emphasize that through the Word of the Gospel the Christian's spiritual life is nurtured and maintained. The minister's task is to call the Christian's attention continually to the implications of the Gospel, so that he may constantly be urged to shift dependence from self and rely always on the atonement of Christ. In that atonement, and only in that atonement, is the Christian's spiritual walk a possibility. Because the flesh is always with the Christian, the Gospel must always be with him to remind him continually of his saved condition. For this reason the Gospel must never be taken for granted. It is not something heard once, agreed to, and confessed by the lips only. The Gospel is a fuel required constantly to produce and promote the life of the Spirit, within the Christian. The fruits of the Spirit grow only where the Gospel is sown tirelessly and unremittingly. The practical life of the Christian is never something merely tacked on. It is faith active through love. It is love activated by faith. It is *faith with* works.

When the Christian's faith is so activated by the Gospel, he is in a position to fulfill the Law of Christ (6:2). It is not a Law issued by Christ as a code of letters, like the Mosaic ordinances, but a way of life that Christ communicates to His believers in His atonement. It can be called a Law because this way of life is not "lawless." He who lives according to the Spirit's dictates, prompted by the atonement of Christ, will not pass by one jot or one tittle of the Law of Moses. Along the Christian way all that is in the Law of Moses finds fulfillment. The ceremonial elements of the Law find their highest expression in the worship of God in Spirit and in truth. The political and moral elements are fulfilled to a degree not approximated by the Jews living in dependence on its literal directives, through love manifested toward "all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (6:10).

The Epistle to the Galatians provides the basic material for the Christian minister's approach to the proclamation of a practical

Christianity. A full appreciation of the Apostle's approach, however, can be gained only by reading and rereading the New Testament writings, to determine what resources the sacred writers employ to secure the new life in the Spirit.

The Apostle Paul, writing to his beloved Philippians, takes note of a symptom of fleshly living in the congregation, namely, pride. He points out their sin, but in order to secure the fruit of the Spirit, instead of saying to them, "You *must* recognize Jesus as Lord, and lay aside this pride, because it is sinful," the Apostle brings out the heavy artillery of the *genus maiestaticum*, the *status exinanitionis*, and the *status exaltationis*: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation" (Phil. 2:5-7). He says: You believe that Jesus spent His whole life for you in humble self-giving. You believe that He has returned to His Father's right hand. You confess that He is your Lord. Ask yourselves, then: Is this self-seeking spirit and conceit in harmony with such a profession? "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed . . . now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Everything hinges on the ὥστε. In view of your profession of faith, says the Apostle, humility is your only course. Then, lest there be any misunderstanding as to his meaning, he says, "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (2:13). The Gospel is the sole source of the power to walk in the Spirit.

In Thessalonica the Apostle observes sloth and indolence as the symptoms of fleshly living. How does he help his Christians? He uses the doctrine of Christ's second advent as a lever. But he does not want to produce works of fear. Therefore he tells the Thessalonians: "Ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that Day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light and the children of the day" (1 Thess. 5:4,5). He reminds them of their condition as redeemed people of God. He locates them inside the Gospel. Then follows his beloved ἄρα οὖν: "Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober" (v.6).

Even in the case of the Corinthians the Apostle knows no other

approach. The symptom is a refusal to exercise church discipline, a toleration of sin. To free them from this sin he aims the most powerful weapon in his doctrinal arsenal — the death and resurrection of Christ. “Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ, our Passover, is sacrificed for us.” Now note that unobtrusive particle, ὄσπε. Unobtrusive, but mighty for the destruction of satanic strongholds: “Therefore let us keep the feast not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Cor. 5:6-9).

In chapter 6 of 1 Corinthians, the Apostle’s approach to the problem of immorality is the same. How does he help his Christians to overcome this sin? He does not say to the congregation: “The Sixth Commandment forbids fornication, therefore stop it.” No, he recognizes their freedom from the compulsion of the Law. “All things are lawful unto me” (1 Cor. 6:12). But he goes on to say, “All things are not expedient.” With foods it may be immaterial whether you abstain or eat. But in the case of fornication, you are involving not only yourself but another person and, in addition, the Lord, with whom you are joined by one Spirit. What you do in your body, then, must satisfy that relationship which you claim to enjoy with God in Christ Jesus. “What, know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?” And now note the significant particle γὰρ. “For ye are bought with a price. Therefore glorify God in your body and in your Spirit, which are God’s” (vv. 12-20).

Many more examples might be adduced, not only from the Apostle Paul’s writings but from other epistles as well, to show how the doctrines of the Christian faith need not remain embalmed in a dogmatic mortuary, but can be effectively employed as triggers for Christian action. Is it a problem of stewardship of material goods? The apostolic approach guarantees results. It might pursue the following pattern.

“Brothers and sisters in Christ. Surely you realize that a covetous man shall not inherit the kingdom of God. And there is covet-

ousness in our midst. There is a lack of love for the Lord's work. There is a lack of vital concern for the spreading of His Word. Are you perhaps making the things of this world your primary concern? Beware lest the devil ensnare you with a love for the world. You have not been brought up that way in Christ. You know that He renounced His heavenly realms and was made poor for your sakes. For what other reason do we celebrate Christmas? But that is not all. He who is Life itself gave up His life for you on the cross so that you might share the riches of His glory. With the priceless blood of His own Son God bought you when you had no price to pay for your soul. He has given you all things. And now He stands before you and points to the four corners of the earth and opens your eyes to the vision of souls that are still to be reached with the Gospel. This will take money — much money. But it will not be hard for you to give it; for when you acknowledged Him as Lord, you cast everything down at the foot of His cross. You are not under Law but under grace. But even those who were under the Law in the Old Testament period gave generously. Shall we fall behind them in using our bounties for our Lord's purposes? Ultimately each one of us gives a percentage to the Lord. From one the Lord gets 1%; from another 5%; from another 10%; from another 20%; from another 50%. Look at the Cross once more, and regardless what your percentage has been, think it out all over again, and let His love unlock your purse. Judge yourself by no one else's performance. Let the love of Christ fill you with the joy of giving, for God loves a cheerful giver. And if your flesh prompts you to pride yourself upon your generosity, then say, I have only given what belongs to my Lord who bought me. Glorify God with your possessions." Any preacher worth his salt can improve on this presentation, but it is the apostolic method that we wish to parade, not homiletical art.

What about the problem of segregation versus antisegregation? This might be the apostolic word concerning one of its aspects: "You know that you have been called with one hope of your calling. In Christ there is neither Jew nor American, Negro or white, poor nor rich. But there is a spirit of lovelessness in our midst. You are perfectly willing to accept the Christ who died for all, but you wish to make a difference when it comes to some-

one of a different race or color. There are even some who have threatened to quit this church if the minister encourages Negroes to worship with us. Need I warn you that God is no respecter of persons? You know that full well; for when you were nothing, in the same shoes as the ones you despise, God saved you. Did God save you because you were white? Did he save you because you were rich? How, then, can you, who claim to know God as not respecting persons, display such loveless attitudes toward a brother for whom Christ died? Brethren, I fear that some of you are falling back under the Law. But hear what the Law says: Thou shalt not kill. But he who hates his brother is a murderer. Is the Law the basis on which you want to be judged? I think not. That is why you believed on Jesus Christ, because you knew that you could not be saved by the Law. You want to be judged by His mercy. And you have received His Spirit, if indeed you believe in Him who was raised from the dead by the Spirit of God. Did you, I ask you, receive a spirit of lovelessness and bigotry? God forbid, but it was the Spirit of love and mercy and compassion and concern. Brethren, let us love not only in word but also in deed, considering our Lord who gave His life for all that all might be His own. Consider this, you who despise another because of the color of his skin. Consider that all who believe in Christ Jesus shall share the inheritance of the saints in light. People from every race and country under heaven will be there. If this, then, is your hope, review your attitudes and let the Spirit determine what is right. Let not the flesh with its lovelessness and pride quench the Spirit within you. Look to the Cross that was erected by God so that the hands of Christ might reach out in blessing over every man."

It should not be inferred that this particular presentation endeavors to solve every problem connected with the issue. But the apostolic pattern provides the material for a Christian solution to the immediate situation, whatever it may be, whether it is the problem of Negroes moving into a white community, intermarriage of whites and Negroes, etc.

The Apostle's method, if it is carefully examined and studiously employed in homiletical presentations, will achieve the Christian life as no other method can. A concordance study of εὐχαριστέω

and its cognates proves that thanksgiving is a dominant note in the Christian's response to the saving mercies of God. But this concept of thanksgiving has sometimes been misunderstood, and the result is a weakening of the apostolic approach, for the Christian may be led to believe that because God has done something for him, he ought now return the favor by expressing his gratitude toward God through a godly life. What the Christian should be led to realize is this, that his very ability to produce the fruits of the Spirit is a cause for thankfulness. Thus he will not be tempted to divorce his practical Christian living from the total salvation he finds in Christ. It is best therefore to avoid formulations like this: God has saved you; therefore in return you ought to express your gratitude by living a God-pleasing life. The Apostle would suggest the following: God has saved you richly, and through His Son Jesus Christ He sends the Spirit into your life. Rejoice in the Spirit. Rejoice in this new power for holy living that God has given you, and continually gives you, through His means of grace. Walk in the Spirit as redeemed children.

## D

### *We Establish the Law*

The validity of the preceding discussion depends on a consideration of what appears to be a legalistic element in certain New Testament passages. Intimately connected with this problem is the so-called "third use of the Law."<sup>5</sup>

At times the Apostle Paul expresses himself in a way that appears to contradict his declaration of liberty from the Law. A careful examination of the passages indicates, however, that they substantiate his basic proposition. In 1 Cor. 14:34 the Apostle declares that women should keep silent in the churches, "as also saith the Law." In the original the phrase reads *καθὼς καὶ ὁ νόμος λέγει*. The RSV renders, "as even the Law says," bringing out the exact point made by the Apostle. The Christian is freed from the Law. A superior power comes into play, the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God does not lead one contrary to the Law. Therefore the Apostle is actually documenting the

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<sup>5</sup> See FC, VI.

superiority of life in the Spirit and treats the Law with an almost patronizing air. It is as though he said, "Even the Law takes consideration of this matter."<sup>6</sup> Thus the women are exhorted to remain silent not *because* the Law says so but because the attitude they should display is in accord with their understanding of God's purpose. Cp. 1 Tim. 2:12 ff.

Rom. 7:1 is not a passage in point because the Apostle here uses an illustration. The context does not suggest an exhortation, as in the parallel passage of 1 Cor. 7:39. In the latter case the word νόμος is omitted. The inferior variant reading indicates the failure in certain areas of the church to grasp the implications of the apostolic doctrine on freedom from the Law.

Eph. 6:2, which introduces the Fourth Commandment, is in line with 1 Cor. 14:34. The commandment is not made the reason for the child's obedience, but the commandment is adopted as a beautiful expression of that which the Christian faith itself promotes and urges and exerts. Indeed, the Christian faith estimates the value of the Fourth Commandment. It is a commandment pre-eminent in promise.

1 Cor. 9:8 is an interesting example of St. Paul's attitude toward the Law. If someone should challenge his spiritual deduction regarding the right of the ministers of the Word to sustenance, he will show that even the Law expressed such a fine insight. This is in line with his thought that the Spirit's fruits are not opposed by the Law.

What we observe in the Apostle's presentation is an interpretation of the literal precepts of the Mosaic code by the Christian's experience or identification of what is right and wrong through the operation of the Spirit of God in view of the Atonement. The Law's commandments are evaluated in terms of the Christian faith. Thus the Christian's liberty from the Law is emphasized. But at the same time it is made clear that Christianity does not lead to substandard morality.

Freedom from Law, then, does not mean the abrogation of the Law. It means release from dependence on the precepts of the

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<sup>6</sup> Cp. the discussion in *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, ed. G. Kittel (Stuttgart, 1949), IV, 1070. The range in Paul's use of the word *Law* is readily apparent.



Law as a code of specific ordinances in order to achieve the plans and purposes of God in one's daily life. The Mosaic code, or any code, in its outward, literal form is but a general presentation of what a godly life really means. Law can only prescribe, it cannot promote obedience. The Spirit of God, however, links man with God and directs the life of man. This direction of the Spirit embraces all that the Law expressed. Therefore Christianity is never lawless. It lives by a Law, but that Law is not something external to the Christian, but something internal. His Law is at the same time an expression. It is Christ living in him. On account of his flesh the Christian is not always able to give expression to His experience in Christ. Alien thoughts and deeds becloud the Spirit's activity. The Spirit's production is frustrated for the nonce. The flesh is saying to the Christian, this deed is the thing to do. Should the Christian detach his gaze from the Cross, his sight becomes blinded, and he fails to discriminate properly.<sup>7</sup> In the moment that his flesh seeks to gain utterance, he is in danger of going under the Law. Then he must be warned of the danger. He must be shown what it means to be under the Law. Thus the passages in the New Testament which warn the Christian of the wrath to come and the hazards of following the flesh are to be understood. These warnings are not designed to motivate the Christian's God-pleasing behavior, but to call him back to his senses and alert him to the danger of living according to his own criteria, instead of depending entirely on the atonement of Christ. For fleshly living means that one ceases to take sin seriously. But if sin is not taken seriously, then salvation is also underestimated. The Christian is indeed free from the Law, but his freedom consists in being rescued from sin and being led by the Spirit.

The preceding discussion involves a question concerning the term "third use of the Law." The term "Law" as a directive for the Christian life is not wholly unequivocal, for the apostolic teaching includes the declaration of the Christian's freedom from the Law. This doctrine on freedom includes the consideration of

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<sup>7</sup> Paul's favorite expression is *δοκιμάζω*. The need for evaluating the proper course of conduct is due precisely to the fact that the Christian cannot be guided by an explicit written directive in each specific life situation. The Spirit is his guide. Cp. Gal. 6:4 and the Apostle's commentary in Eph. 5:8ff. and Phil. 1:9ff.

the fruits of the Spirit. Since these fruits are not secured by confronting the Christian with a legal "must," the term "third use of the Law" is to be understood as "the doctrine of the fruits of the Spirit." The Formula of Concord enlarges on the concept thus: "Wann aber der Mensch durch den Geist Gottes neugeboren und vom Gesetz freigemacht, das ist, von diesem Treiber ledig worden und von dem Geist Christi getrieben wird, so lebet er nach dem unwandelbaren Willen Gottes, im Gesetz begriffen, und tuet alles, soviel er neugeboren ist, aus freiem, lustigem Geist; und solchs heissen nicht eigentlich Werk des Gesetzes, sondern Werke und Früchte des Geistes." (SD VI 17.)

The qualification that the Christian cannot be approached with a legal "must" is important because the letter of the Law must be interpreted through the Spirit's guidance. But even when it is interpreted under the Spirit's guidance, care must be exercised lest the decision dictated by the Spirit in a particular instance be made the standard for every apparently similar situation throughout time. The decision that women ought not to pray publicly with uncovered heads (1 Corinthians 11) is illustrative of the Spirit's solution to a particular problem. But this decision in a particular social situation cannot be made binding on the church throughout the ages. The law of love is the ultimate law. This ultimate law embraces far more than any literal statement can possibly comprehend. Hence, whereas in ancient Corinth, the covering of the head was a practical expression of love, to insist on it now as mandatory because a decision once made under the guidance of the Spirit found literal expression in an apostolic writing, would spell bondage under Law.

The ultimate will of God, then, must not be identified in its scope with the individual decisions which Christians or groups of Christians may make at particular times and in particular situations under the guidance of the Spirit. Unless this precaution is taken, the church is in danger of promoting a formal ethic and reverts back to the slavery from which the Apostle strives to liberate the church. For the ultimate will of God is reflected in that action or thought which under the Spirit's guidance is exactly right and appropriate in a particular circumstance and corresponds completely with God's intention and desires in that particular mo-

ment.<sup>8</sup> Since God alone can be the ultimate judge of the rightness of that decision or action, no outward conformity with a legal demand can be the criterion. It is for this reason that Sacred Scripture emphasizes the thought that God shall judge the secrets of men's hearts. Cp. Rom. 2:16. "One shall be taken, and the other shall be left" (Luke 17:34). Two apparently exactly similar situations. What spells the difference? God, who searches the heart, alone knows. But the Christian is not in doubt of God's mercy. For his relationship with God is not determined by conformity with a legal criterion but by faith in the atoning merits of Jesus Christ. And this faith is active in love.

The Law of God in its highest sense, then, is not a formal ethical code, but another term for the way in which the Christian is privileged to walk. That way of life is the spontaneous outgrowth of the Christian's faith in the atonement of Jesus Christ. Because it is completely dependent on that atonement, in order to secure this spontaneous growth, the Atonement must continually be presented as the generating power of the Christian's walk in the Spirit. If the new life of the Christian is not continually connected with the redemptive work of Christ, the ethical imperatives will become another legal code, tacked on to the Christian's faith. Such presentation must ultimately lead to a sterile moralizing type of Christianity, where the breath of the Spirit is no longer felt and conformity with ecclesiastical regulations becomes the criterion of righteousness.

But when the apostolic method is followed—there Law and Gospel truly kiss each other. There faith is found *with* works, and faith grows up to manhood in Christ as it realizes that which it already possesses. The Christian becomes more and more what he is and shall be. Then that which was envisaged by the ancient prophet (Jer. 31:31-34) finds fulfillment, and the Son indeed hath made us free.

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### *Iustus et simul peccator*

A word remains to be said concerning the classic formulation of the problem suggested by the Apostle's discussion concerning

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<sup>8</sup> SD VI 18.

the Christian's constant battle with the flesh. Lutheran dogmatists have employed the phrase *iustus et simul peccator* to characterize the Christian's condition in the present aeon. This phrase is helpful in safeguarding the apostolic doctrine against a compartmentalization of the Christian's personality. The Christian, though he is just, completely righteous before God, is at the same time a child of Adam. That is, he still has the flesh, as St. Paul indicates in Gal. 6:8. Nor is this fleshliness merely a dogmatical chimera. This fleshliness expresses itself in fleshly living. Cf. Gal. 6:26ff. Fleshly living means, however, to live independently of God, to assert oneself. Life thus lived is life under the Law (Gal. 5:18), not inside the Law,<sup>9</sup> for the Law is spiritual and can be fulfilled only by one who is prompted by the Spirit of God.

Since the flesh is a constant menace, the Christian requires the Law in order that he might be shown his sin and reminded of the wrath of God on sin. That wrath rests continually on the flesh. It never ceases. The flesh is under a constant interdict (Gal. 5:21). *Lex semper accusat*. The Christian is *peccator*.

Yet he need not despair, for the atonement of Jesus Christ guarantees the fellowship of God despite the fact that the Christian is *peccator*. But God does not leave the Christian in a hopeless condition. The Christian is *iustus et simul peccator*, but he is also *peccator et simul iustus*. Because he is declared just by God through the atonement of Jesus Christ, the Spirit of God makes His way into the Christian's life. The Spirit of God aims to frustrate the counterclaims of the flesh (Gal. 5:17). This activity of the Spirit is one of the primary purposes of the Atonement. It is here that a rationalistic approach must be carefully avoided. It is quite easy to assume that since the Law is required to alert the Christian to the perils of the flesh, therefore the Law also produces the new life of the Christian.

The phrase *iustus et simul peccator* must, however, be taken seriously. The Christian never ceases to be wearied by the flesh. Therefore, since he never ceases to have the flesh, he must always hear out the Law. But when he hears out the Law, recognizes his creatureliness, and bows in humble contrition before his Creator,

<sup>9</sup> The expression is appropriated from SD VI 18: "dergestalt sie denn nimmer ohn Gesetz und gleichwohl nicht unter, sondern im Gesetz sein. . . ."

renouncing all his own criteria of righteousness, he must hear the Gospel as persistently as he has heard the Law. Therefore it is a serious perversion of apostolic doctrine to assume that the Christian ceases to have the flesh and that a life pleasing to God can be achieved through the Law. The Apostle protests most vigorously against such compartmentalization of the Christian's personality (Gal. 3:2, 3).

But if such rationalization is disastrous, still more perilous it is to assume that the Holy Spirit activates the Christian's life via the Law. The Holy Spirit does not promote the new life by confronting the Christian with God's moral expectations. The Holy Spirit does not come via ethical prescriptions or legal specifications, in the strict sense of the term, whether found in the Old or the New Testament. But if the Holy Spirit does not come through these prescriptions, neither do the Spirit's fruits. Cp. Gal. 3:5. The Spirit and therefore also His fruits come only via the Gospel.<sup>10</sup> Via the Gospel He leads the Christian into the life that is always lawful and within the boundaries of all that might be called the Law of God.<sup>11</sup> For the Gospel signals the kingdom of God, the acceptance of the lordship of God and His Christ, the rejection of the counterclaims of the devil, the world, and the flesh. The believer is one who recognizes his creatureliness and surrenders himself to the will of the Creator. That will finds expression in the fruits the Spirit aims to produce. These fruits cannot be codified so as to cover every possible situation of life, for they are the responses to the Christian's opportunity to display the love of God he has experienced in Christ in his reaction to life situations and relations with his fellow men. No two situations are exactly alike. The giving of alms may in one instance be a fruit of the Spirit, in another instance a product of the flesh. But selfishness is always a product of the flesh. A legal code as such is no certain guide, but the Spirit of God never fails, and against His fruits there is no Law. *Peccator, sed non peccator!*

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<sup>10</sup> SD VI 11f.

<sup>11</sup> SD VI 17. Cp. Gal. 6:2.