

Catechetical Resources – The Moral, Ceremonial and Civil Law

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Introduction

A. The nine different Scriptural uses of the word “Law”

Scripture uses the term “Law” in at least nine different meanings, often without defining the sense exactly. One must then determine its significance either from the content or from the sentence itself or from other Scripture passages.

For example, sometimes “Law” designates God’s Word, as in Psalm 1:2 (“His delight is in the law of the Lord”). Psalm 119, that lengthy, well-known hymn of praise to the Word of our God, has similar examples. Verse 18 states: “Open Thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law.” See also vv. 51, 72, and others.

At times “Law” may refer to the entire Old Testament, as in I Corinthians 14:21: “In the law (referring to Isaiah 28:11,12) it is written . . .” Our Lord Himself asked, “Is it not written in your law. . . ?” (This was a reference to Psalm 82:6) See also John 12:34; 15:24; and others.

In several places “Law” means the Pentateuch, as in Luke 16:16 (“The law and the prophets”) or John 1:45 (Philip, speaking of Christ, said, “Of whom Moses in the law did write”).

Occasionally “Law” designated the Ten Commandments, as in John 7:19 (“Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law?” Why go ye about to kill me?”)

In Romans 3:27 the word “Law” clearly means a principle (Boasting “is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith”). In the same passage the NIV translates “principle”: “On what principle?” Romans 7:21, 23 are identical examples.

Strangely, “Law” is even used in Scripture to designate the Gospel, as in Isaiah 42:4 (“The isles shall wait for His law” -- the entire section treats the prophetic office of Christ.) Psalm 119:74 is an additional example (“I have longed for Thy salvation, O Lord; and Thy law is my delight”).

Finally, Scripture has a multitude of references to the Moral Law; to that complex, highly detailed Ceremonial Law; and to that often intricate Civil Law. Some of these laws apply to all people of all time, while others, applied to just one people during one particular period of time. Which is which? Where in Scripture do we have some clear directives in this matter? The answers to those questions is the subject of this paper. We pray the Holy Spirit, to guide us to the correct answer.

B. The use of the dogmatical terms, Moral, Ceremonial, and Civil Laws, advocated

Scripture never uses the words “Moral, Ceremonial, or Civil Laws.” (That in itself doesn’t militate against, our using them. Scripture doesn’t use such excellent terms as “Trinity” or “Sacrament” either, even though both describe Bible doctrine.

Neither does the Bible ever have a statement like this: “The following Moral Laws are forever binding upon everyone,” or “These are the Ceremonial laws, meant only for God’s chosen people for a certain period of time.” If God’s Word would thus clearly define the various classes of Mosaic laws, there would hardly be a need for a paper like this one.

Instead of differentiating between the three classes of laws in the Pentateuch, the Bible does almost the opposite. For the most part it never even suggests a distinction between any of them in the entire Pentateuch.

True, God first spoke the words of the Ten Commandments at Mt. Sinai amidst such a magnificent display of divine glory that all Israel was terrified (Exodus 19,20). Later God wrote the Ten Commandments on two tablets of stone, and they were kept in the Ark of the Covenant, the most sacred spot in all the land (Exodus

31:18; 32:19,20; 34:28). In those ways God showed that the Ten Commandments were different from all the other Mosaic laws.

Yet, shortly after thundering the Ten Commandments from the black storm on Mt. Sinai and without indicating in any way that they were different from the Decalogue, God gave Moses many additional laws for transmission to Israel (Exodus 20:22-30;28; various other chapters in the Pentateuch). There isn't the slightest indication that these myriad, often minutely-detailed laws were any less binding upon God's Old Testament children than were the Ten Commandments. They were all a part of the Mosaic Law, binding upon the Chosen Nation "forever" (Exodus 27:21; 28:43; 29:28; 30:21; Leviticus 6:18,22; 7:34; and many more).

Therefore Joseph Henry Taylor in his famous *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* wrote: "The Jews did not make a distinction as we do between the moral, the ceremonial, the civil, precepts of the law, but thought that all should be honored and kept with the same conscientious and pious regard."

Yet, if we examine the various Mosaic laws and compare what the rest of Scripture says about them, we shall notice at once that they essentially fall into three classes: Some state the eternal, immutable will of God and are binding upon everyone; many apply specifically to Israel's worship; and a third group forms the civil or political laws of the theocracy. The first group, which we call the Moral Law, is clearly defined in Scripture, as we shall see, while a few of the provisions that we generally classify in group two could also be included in group three or vice versa.

Our theologians and dogmatians (it seems) have generally recognized this three-fold division of the Mosaic Law, although they have not always used that terminology. For example, in his prefaces to the Pentateuch (really summaries, printed in his Bible translations), Dr. Luther states, among other matters, "It is to be noted that the laws are of three kinds. Some speak only of temporal things, as do our imperial laws . . . He (Moses) not only gives laws that speak of natural and true sins, such as the Ten Commandments, but he makes sins of things that are, in their nature, no sins . . . all those things that the Levitical priesthood deals with as sins—these things are not, in their nature sinful or wicked, but they become sins because they are forbidden by the law" (Holman, *Works of Luther*, Vol. VI, pp. 371, 375). There we have the clear distinction between the Moral, Ceremonial, and Civil Laws, although those terms are not used.

Dr. Luther also explains why God made no distinction between those three different classes of laws in the Pentateuch: "But why does Moses mix up his laws in such a disorderly way? Why does he not put the temporal laws together in one group and the spiritual in another, and the laws of faith and love in still another? Moreover, he sometimes repeats a law so often and uses certain words so many times that it becomes tedious to read it or listen to it. The answer is that Moses writes as the case demands, so that his book is a picture and illustration of government and life. For this is what happens when things are moving, -- now this work has to be done and now that, and no man can so arrange his life (if he is to act in a godly way) that this day he uses only spiritual laws and that day only temporal, but God disposes the laws as He sets the stars in the heavens and the flowers in the fields, and a man must be ready every hour for anything, and do the first thing that comes to his hand. The books of Moses are mixed up just this way."

Moreover, our Confessions also recognize the three-fold division of the Mosaic Law. For example, the Apology to the Augsburg Confession, Article IV (II) states: "In this discussion, by Law we designate the Ten Commandments, wherever they are read in the Scriptures. Of the ceremonies and judicial laws of Moses we say nothing at present." Later this same article three times distinguishes among the Moral Law and the "Levitical" or "Jewish ceremonies" (*Concordia Triglotta*, pp. 121, 147, 149). Thus, while not quite using the terms "Moral, Ceremonial, Civil Laws," our Confessions, nevertheless, clearly indicate that there is such a three-fold division of the Mosaic Law.

In his notes, given to his students, John P. Meyer, long-time professor of Dogmatics at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, also distinguished among the three classes of Mosaic Laws.

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod actively promoted the same usage from its early history, as a perusal of its literature from the last quarter of the nineteenth century shows.

Therefore the 1956 edition of the Wisconsin Synod Catechism has this note on page 34: "The Law, which God gave to the Children of Israel, may be divided into three parts: Civil Law, Ceremonial Law, and

Moral Law. Only the Moral Law is written in the heart of man and applies to us. “ Instead of using the word “may” in “may be divided,” the statement could very well read, “The Law . . . is divided . . .”

Yes, indeed, one is fully justified in dividing the Mosaic Law into three parts. Anything less will surely lead to confusion and to false doctrine, as has happened in various denominations and as we shall see particularly in the last two parts of this paper.

II. THE MORAL LAW

A. The Moral Law is written into everyone’s heart.

What is the Moral Law? How does Scripture define it? We know, of course, that the etymology of the term “moral” in this case implies conformity with God’s standards of right and wrong. But what are those standards, and how can one know them?

The remarkable answer to those questions is that everyone knows the provisions of the Moral Law, at least in part, by his very nature. In the beginning of time our first parents knew God’s commandments perfectly without anyone ever teaching them. No one had to tell them to love God or to avoid cursing, lying, stealing, harming one’s neighbor, and the like. Every precept of the Moral Law was written into their hearts at creation, as our Confessions state: “Our first parents before the Fall did not live without Law, who had the Law of God written also into their hearts, because they were created in the image of God, Gen. 1:26f; 2:16ff; 3:3”(Formula of Concord VI, Concordia Triglotta p. 805).

In addition to the passages listed in the previous paragraph, a *sedes doctrinae* for the Natural Law is written in Romans 2:14, 15: “Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts” (NIV). The Greek word for Gentiles in this case means everyone. An inner, God given voice tells everyone, at least to some extent, what is right and wrong in God’s sight.

True, the fall into sin dimmed and to some, even to a great, extent obscured our natural knowledge of the Moral Law, just as sin made a black mark on all of God’s lovely creation. St. Paul writes about that in Romans 7:7: “I had not known lust (by nature), except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.” Our sinful nature has so greatly dimmed the Natural Law that we no longer realize by nature that evil desires are sins; still worse, we don’t know much about the first table of Law by nature.

Yet, St. Paul could also write of the heathen who had never heard of the written Law that they knew by nature that such acts as fornication, murder, backbiting, inventions of evil things, disobedience to parents, covenant breakings, and the like, were wicked acts that would surely bring the judgement of God crashing upon the perpetrators (Romans 1:29-32). How do they know this? They “are a law unto themselves . . . (they) do by nature the things contained in the law” (Romans 2:14).

Because of that natural knowledge of God’s Moral Law, even such violent anti-Christian nations like Russia and China have stringent laws regarding theft, fraud, murder, obedience to the government, and the like. In their blind hatred of the living God they nevertheless bow before His will be keeping part of the Natural Law. What an irony! It all reminds us of Psalm 2:4: “He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.”

Since our knowledge of the Natural Law has been dimmed by sin, God graciously repeated and clarified it at Mt. Sinai about 1500 B. C. in the form of Ten Commandments. (He also repeated and elucidated the Natural Law in other Scriptural passages.) Essentially there is no difference between most of the Decalogue and the Natural Law, as our Confessions state: “The Natural Law agrees with the law of Moses, or the Ten Commandments” (Apology to the Augsburg Confession IV, 8, Concordia Triglotta, p. 121). The major difference is that the Decalogue states God’s will formally, while that is not the case with the Natural Law. (One other difference that we should just note at this point is that a few parts of the Decalogue as written in Exodus 20:1-17 are not Moral Law—more on this later.)

We have thus established one of the main characteristics of the Moral Law: It consists of those requirements that God wrote into the heart of every person and which He repeated and clarified at Mt. Sinai and at other times and places.

B. The Moral Law is everything that is required by our love toward God and toward our neighbor.

In addition to what was written in the previous section, a second point must be mentioned: Every commandment that is required by our love toward God and toward our neighbor is Moral Law. Both our Lord and His apostles repeatedly express that truth.

For example: An expert in the law once asked Jesus, “Which is the great commandment in the law?” The answer to the question is that often-quoted, well-known Bible passage, spoken by Jesus during that first great Holy Week: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matthew 22:37-40). To this should be added Mark 12:31: “There is none other commandment greater than these.” These two commandments summarize the entire Moral Law.

At another time and place our Savior reiterated the identical thought (Luke 10:25-37). In this instance an expert in the law again came to Jesus to tempt Him with this question: “Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” When Jesus, in turn, asked him what the law said, the lawyer responded with the answer that was well-known to every Jew from Deuteronomy 6:4, 5 and Leviticus 19:18: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.” Jesus answered, “Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.”

Then, on the night before He died, our Lord twice voiced this thought: “This is My commandment, That ye love one another as I have loved you” (John 15:12; see also John 13:34).

The Apostle Paul also repeatedly emphasized the same truth that God’s Moral Law is everything that the principle of love requires. He wrote, for example, in Galatians 5:14: “The entire law is summed up in a single command, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” (NIV) Romans 13:8-10 is still more explicit: “Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellow man has fulfilled the law. The commandments, ‘Do not commit adultery,’ ‘Do not murder,’ ‘Do not steal,’ ‘Do not covet,’ and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.” (NIV) And I Corinthians 16:14 states that all our acts should flow from love: “Do everything in love” (NIV).

Thus we have seen that the Moral Law includes everything that our love toward God and toward our neighbor requires. Since this is true, we should be able to understand at once that two points of the Decalogue, as written in Exodus 20:1-17, are not a part of the Moral Law. One of these two parts is the commandment regarding the Sabbath Day. The Moral Law requires that we love God and His Word. It by no means requires that we worship Him on one specific day of the week. We can just as well worship Him on Sunday or Wednesday or twice a week or every day, for that matter. In each one of those cases we would be showing our love toward Him and His Word in exactly the same manner as we would be worshipping on Saturday. (We shall discuss this point at length in the section headed “Ceremonial Law.”

Neither is Exodus 20:2-4 a part of the Moral Law, for God did not bring us up out of the land of Egypt. Nor are the prohibitions of graven images a part of the Moral Law, since a representation of Christ or of the Lord’s Supper might actually serve to increase our love toward Jesus and His wonderful works for us.

Contemporary society violates the Moral Law by condoning or even promoting frightful sins against the principle of love. For example, abortion is perfectly legal in our country in most cases. It is practiced and promoted by millions. Yet, who in all the world would claim that killing an unborn child is practicing love toward him? It really makes no difference at all if one regards a fetus as a potential human being (an unscriptural thought) or a being with potential (Scriptural), destroying a fetus is about the worst possible crime that one can commit against his neighbor. If that sin remains unrepented, then what else can one expect on

Judgment Day, except, “Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matthew 25:1)? Unrepentant murderers will not inherit the Kingdom of God (Galatians 5:19-21).

Another point: Sexual relations outside of marriage are everywhere condoned, practiced, and promoted. Surveys have shown that half or more of all college students fornicate. One college and university administration after another has instituted co-ed dormitories, and you can be sure that this has not been done so that both sexes can play checkers with each other.

Yet, how can any Christian possibly reconcile such acts with our love toward God and toward our neighbor? Doesn't God admonish us, to “Flee fornication”? (I Corinthians 6:18) Then how can I defile my neighbor to fulfill the lusts of my flesh? How can I possibly be loving someone, if I lead him or her into the dreadful sin of fornication?

A doctrinal aberration should also be mentioned in this connection: Devotees of Joseph Fletcher's Situation Ethics, members of the Bahai faith, and others stress love towards one's fellowman, but forget the love that we owe to our God. Joseph Fletcher, for example, maintains that lying, stealing, fornication, and the like, can be perfectly moral acts, depending on the circumstances. If lying will help one's fellowman, then, so he claims, it is good. Dr. Martin Marty also claims that he can conceive of a situation in which adultery would be in keeping with the love that we owe to our fellow women.

Yet, Moral law requires love toward both God and toward our fellowman, and how can anyone possibly claim that he, is loving God, when he deliberately sins against His clear commands? No, lying, stealing, adultery, and the like are always dreadful sins, no matter how many people deny that truth.

(Dr. John W. Montgomery once devastated Dr. Fletcher in a debate, by beginning in this way: “Dr. Fletcher, as you know, states that lying may be a good act, under certain circumstances. You must therefore always bear in mind in this, debate that everything he says may be a lie,” or words to that effect. Dr. Fletcher didn't like that approach.)

This point, that Moral Law is every requirement that flows from our love toward God and toward our neighbor, is one that needs to be proclaimed and practiced at all times.

C. Moral Law is every command of God that applies to all people of all time.

A third characteristic of the Moral Law must be added to the two described above: Moral Law is every commandment that God has said applies equally and irrevocably to all people of all times, and punishment will surely follow sins against it. That point is evident from several facts; as we shall show in the following paragraphs.

The Natural Law, which is the Moral law, already shows that the Moral Law applies to all people of all time, for why would God write those provisions into everyone's heart, if they were not to be obeyed? The Natural Law is founded upon God's immutable nature and upon what He sold are our obligations to our neighbor. Those principles therefore cannot change, as little as God can change His nature, and still remain God.

Our Lord Himself confirmed the truth that the Natural Law or the Moral Law is unchangeable in His conversation with the rich young ruler (Matthew 19:16-22; Mark 10:17-22; Luke 18:18-25). When that young man asked Jesus what he should do to inherit eternal life, our Lord replied by citing the Moral Law: “Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honor thy father and thy mother: and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” (It is significant that Jesus did not mention the Sabbath Day as a part of the Moral Law.)

Again, in that famous Sermon on the Mount, in which Jesus showed how a Christian is to live, He specifically stated that the Second, Fifth, and Sixth Commandments in all of their ramifications applied to all people of all time (see especially Matthew 5:21-37). Indeed, the keeping of the Moral Law is so essential that, when mankind could not keep it, God Himself, in the Person of Jesus, came to this earth to fulfill its every requirement. That is what Christ said in Matthew 5:17: “Think not that I am come to destroy the law . . . I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.”

At other times, too, our Lord spoke about keeping the Third Commandment (“Worship God in spirit and in truth,” John 4:24; and teach all of God’s Word, Matthew 28:20), the Fourth Commandment (“Render therefore unto Caesar . . .” Matthew 22:15-22), and of keeping the Second Table of the Law Luke 10:25-37).

(It is noteworthy that, though both Jesus and His disciples frequently mentioned the Sabbath Day, they never said that it had to be observed after the time of Christ.)

St. Paul also repeatedly wrote about various parts of the Moral Law, as applying to all people of all time. For example, in Romans 1:29-31; in I Corinthians 6:9, 10; and in Galatians 5:19-21 he listed a catalog of sins that everyone must avoid, under penalty of losing one’s salvation. If there is not repentance for sins like idolatry, lovelessness, disobedience to parents, murder, fornication, homosexuality, drunkenness; theft, coveting, and envy, its perpetrators will not inherit heaven. He showed that the prohibited degrees in marriage. (Leviticus 18) are a part of the Moral Law, when he asked the Corinthian congregation to condemn the act of the man who married his stepmother. Paul was so horrified by this act that he wrote: “Hand this man over to Satan, so that his sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord” (I Corinthians 5:5, NIV).

St. Paul also referred to the good works that the Moral Law requires of everyone. For example, “Honor thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth” (Ephesians 6:2, 3). Thereby he indicated to us the New Testament attitude toward the Fourth Commandment—the Old Testament words about “the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee” are not part of the Moral Law. Again, he wrote extensively about the relationship between employer and employee (Ephesians 6:5-9): he told us our obligation to the government (Romans 13:1-7), our duty toward our neighbor (Romans 12:9-21), and various other requirements of the Moral Law, some of which were mentioned in a previous section of this paper.

Since the requirements of the Moral Law are immutable, then it is equally true that everyone who sanctions or promotes a change in this Law is guilty before God. Woe, therefore, to all who claim that there are no standards of right and wrong, that every generation must determine these for itself. Woe be unto those who champion adultery and fornication, to those who publish pornographic literature, to all who support the killing of unborn, children, and the like.

Standards of sexual purity do not belong to a bygone age; abortion is not suddenly permissible; rebellion against one’s parents or the government is not wholesome; the standards of right and wrong, as enunciated in the Moral Law, never change.

Another point should be mentioned: Since the Moral Law is eternally valid, no one dares to substitute some other requirements for it. Yet, that is exactly what is happening in many quarters. What are the great sins of the day in the eyes of many? Not fornication (some churchmen say it’s OK if you do and OK if you don’t), not homosexuality (in some denominations confessed lesbians and homosexuals are ordained into the ministry without any qualification), not abortion (probably one and a half million unborn babes are murdered in the U. S. each year), not pornography (millions of filthy magazines are sold and read each month)

What, then, do untold numbers of people regard as the most heinous of crimes? Well, one of them is to regard a woman as having a subordinate position to a man. Consequently, if anyone still believes what St. Paul wrote about the status of women in I Corinthians 11:3-10 and in I Timothy 3:11-15, he is at best regarded as incredibly naive or at least a misogynist. Furthermore, if America does not pass the Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution, if the President does not appoint at least some women to high governmental positions, if churches refuse to ordain women as pastors -- all of these are, in the eyes of multitudes, some of the greatest injustices of the age. (At least one man has been refused ordination because he believed, correctly, that women must not become parish pastors.)

Again, if someone inadvertently casts aspersions upon another race; if parents prefer neighborhood, rather, than integrated schools; or, if anyone should ever complete the rhyme that many of us learned in our childhood, “Eenie, meenie, minie, mo . . .” -- these are all well-nigh unforgivable sins in the eyes of many. (Even though she apologized, an Ohio teacher was discharged because she used the “Eenie . . .” rhyme in class. Presumably “Old Black Joe” will never be sung again either.)

Surely, no one should ever consider himself better than the people of another race. That is Phariseism, strongly condemned by our Lord. Yet, one can quickly see from the examples just quoted how, far we have departed from the Moral Law. When that happens to any people, what else can one expect except the judgment of God crashing upon our heads, as He tells us often enough in Scripture.

D. What else does Scripture say about the Moral Law?

For the sake of completeness we shall in the following paragraphs mention a few other points about the Moral Law. Since they are well-known among us and since they are repeatedly taught in our sermons and in our instructions, we shall simply summarize.

1. The Moral Law requires complete obedience in thought, word, and deed.

The Pharisees felt that a mere outward compliance with the Decalogue was sufficient, but Jesus soon demolished that idea with His explanations of the Fifth and Sixth Commandments in His Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5). He explained that the Moral Law forbids even the faintest lust in our hearts and every bit of anger without a cause. Various other Bible passages also forbid all wrong thoughts, unjust words, and evil deeds. What Moses said Israel in his farewell address is corroborated everywhere in Scripture as applying to all people: “And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all His ways, and to love Him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul...?” (Deuteronomy 10:12)

Our Catechism three times (in questions 110, 120, and 140) uses Leviticus 19:2 to show that the Moral Law requires complete holiness of us (“Ye shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy”). Similar or identical Bible passages occur frequently in the Pentateuch. See, for example, Exodus 22:31; Leviticus 11:44, 45; 20:26; 21:6; Numbers 15:40; Deuteronomy 14:2,21 Yet, those passages are used almost exclusively in connection with the Ceremonial Law. Thus, while Leviticus 19:2 surely summarizes the Moral Law, it is not so used in most Bible passages.

2. Can we keep the Moral Law?

The answer is obvious, not only from our own lives, but from dozens of Bible passages. For example, “The imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth” (Genesis 8:21); “There is no man that sinneth not” (I Kings 8:46); “They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one” (Psalm 14:3); “But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6); “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (I John 1:8). Even the tiniest infraction of the Moral Law makes us guilty of it all, as James 2:10 tells us: “Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.” That is why St. Paul writes in Galatians 3:11: “No man is justified by the law in the sight of God.”

3. What is the result of our not keeping the Moral Law?

That, too, is evident from various Bible passages. For example, “The soul that sinneth it shall die” (Ezekiel 18:20); “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23); “For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them” (Galatians 3:10).

4. How can we escape the curse of God for not keeping the Moral Law?

That is the greatest, most important question that any poor sinner can ever ask upon this earth, and its answer is the grandest news that anyone can ever hear. Fortunately, the answer rings out, loud and clear, in many Bible passages and stories. Yes, the answer is the central message, the sum end and substance of the entire Scriptures.

Therefore let everyone hear the great, good news, as expressed in Bible passages like the following: “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us” (Galatians 3:13); “When the fullness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons” (Galatians 4:4,5); “In Whom (Christ) we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins” (Colossians 1:14); “Who (Christ) gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works” (Titus 2:14).

Yes, by His keeping of the law perfectly, by His innocent suffering and death on the cross, our Lord freed us from the threats and the curses of the law. Blessed be His holy name!

5. What, then, is the purpose of the Moral Law?

Since Christ freed us from the threats and curses of the Law, we might think that we can now conveniently forget all about the Moral Law. St. Paul answered that horribly false idea with “God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:2-5).

If we examine a few of the passages that deal with the Moral Law, we shall soon understand that it has a three-fold purpose. For one thing, that Moral Law is a mirror that shows us exactly what we are like in the sight of God. We might think of Bible passages like the following: “By the law is the knowledge of sin” (Romans 3:20); “The law worketh wrath” (Romans 4:15); “The law entered, that the offence might abound” (Romans 5:20); “I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet” (Romans 7:7); “The letter (the Commandments) killeth” (II Corinthians 3:6); “The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ” (Galatians 3:24).

The Moral Law does indeed show us our sin, our depravity, our condemnation, our lost condition. It magnifies our sin. Without the Moral Law, which demands absolute perfection in thought, word, and deed, we should never know how dreadfully wicked we really are. Without the Moral Law, we should still be living in our old, blind, pharisaical self-righteousness, certain that all is well between us and our God, because of the “good life” that we are leading. Therefore, we must preach the Moral Law in all its severity, especially to the unbeliever, so that he may realize his need for a Savior. It must be preached also to the Christian, who has a pharisaical Old Adam, so that we might ever more clearly know our sins and their curse. Thus we shall learn, again and again, to repent of our sins and to turn to Christ for forgiveness.

Our Confessions express this purpose of the Moral Law as follows: “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 (fundamentally and) 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; he begins to be an enemy of (enraged at) God, and to murmur, etc. This is what Paul says, Rom. 4:15: The Law worketh wrath. And Rom. 5:20: “Sin is increased by the Law” (The Smalcald Articles, Part III, Art. II, III., Concordia Triglotta, p. 479).

Secondly, the Moral Law acts as a curb to prevent, in some measure, the coarsest outbursts of sin. Just as the city provides a curb so that the automobile does not drive through the store window or as the government places bars between a murderer and possible victims, so the threats of the Law, the fear

of God's punishment, prevents many of the worst sins. St. Paul wrote about that in I Timothy 1; 9f: "The law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for men-stealers, for liars, for perjured persons; and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine."

The fear of hell does not, of course, stop all sins; it does not usually prevent sins of the heart and of the tongue; nor does it give one the power to live a godly life. Yet, as our Confessions state: "God wishes those who are carnal (gross sinners) to be restrained by civil discipline, and to maintain that, He has given laws, letters, doctrine, magistrates, penalties" (Apology to the Augsburg Confession, Article IV (II), Concordia Triglotta p. 127).

As a curb, the Law is to be preached primarily to the wicked, although it is surely necessary for our Old Adam also.

Finally, the Moral Law is also used as a rule for the Christian (not for the unbeliever). When we begin to understand the grace of God in Christ to us unworthy sinners, when we begin to realize the overwhelming nature of that love, then we shall surely fervently proclaim with St. John, "We love Him, because He first loved us" (I John 4:19). Out of gratitude to God for all that He did, does, and still will do for us, we will surely strive to do His will at all times. To accomplish that we need the Law to guide us.

St. John wrote, "This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments" (I John 5:3). But how can we know His commandments, if we do not have the Law to guide us?

Our Confessions have much to say about this so-called third use of the Law. That is good and necessary, since there has always been a certain amount of controversy within the Lutheran Church about the Law being used as a rule for Christians. We shall quote one section from the Formula of Concord, Thorough Declaration, V, The Law and the Gospel: "Therefore (we shall set forth our meaning:) we unanimously believe, teach, and confess that the Law is properly a divine doctrine, in which the righteous, immutable will of God is revealed, what is to be the quality of man in his nature, thoughts, words, and works, in order that he may be pleasing and acceptable to God." (Concordia Triglotta, p. 957)

Article VI, "Of the third use of God's Law" has this excellent statement: "Since the Law of God is useful, 1. not only to the end that external discipline and decency are maintained by it against wild, disobedient men; 2. likewise, that through it men are brought to a knowledge of their sins; 3. but also that, when they have been born anew by the Spirit of God, converted to the Lord, and thus the veil of Moses has been lifted from them, they live and walk in the Law, a dissension has occurred between some few theologians concerning this third and last use of the Law. For the one side taught and maintained that the regenerate do not learn the new obedience, or in what good works they ought to walk, from the Law, and that this teaching (concerning good works) is not to be urged thence (from the Law), because they have been made free by the Son of God, have become temples of His Spirit, and therefore do freely of themselves what God requires of them; by the prompting and impulse of the Holy Ghost, just as the sun of itself, without any (foreign) impulse, completes its ordinary course. Over against this the other side taught: Although the truly believing are verily moved by God's Spirit, and thus, according to the inner man, do God's will from a free spirit, yet it is just the Holy Ghost who uses the written law for instruction with them, by which the truly believing also learn to serve God, not according to their own thoughts, but according to His written Law and Word, which is a sure rule and standard of a godly life and walk, how to order it in accordance with the eternal and immutable will of God.

"For the explanation and final settlement of this dissent we unanimously believe, teach, and confess that although the truly believing and truly converted to God and justified Christians are liberated and made free from the curse of the Law, yet they should daily exercise themselves in the Law of the Lord, as it is written, Ps. 1:2; 119:1: Blessed is the man whose delight is in the Law of the Lord, and in

His Law doth he meditate day and night. For the Law is a mirror in which the will of God, and what pleases Him, are exactly portrayed, and which should (therefore) be constantly held up to the believers and be diligently urged upon them without ceasing.

“For although the Law is not made for a righteous man, as the apostle testifies I Tim. 1, 9, but for the unrighteous, yet this is not to be understood in the bare meaning, that the justified are to live without law. For the Law of God has been written in their heart, and also to the first man immediately after his creation a law was given according to which he was to conduct himself. But the meaning of St. Paul is that the Law cannot burden with its curse those who have been reconciled to God through Christ; nor must it vex the regenerate with its coercion, because they have pleasure in God’s Law after the inner man.”

Thus we have seen that the Moral Law has a three-fold purpose, a doctrine amply enunciated in both Scripture and in our Confessions.

It would be difficult to find a simpler, more succinct, more beautifully written summary of this entire section on the Moral Law than that written by Philipp Melanchthon in his Apology to the Augsburg Confession, Article XII (V): “For the two chief works of God in men are these, to terrify, and to justify and quicken those who have been terrified. Into these works all Scripture has been distributed. The one part is the Law, which shows, reproveth, and condemns sins. The other part is the Gospel, i.e., the promise of grace bestowed in Christ, and this promise is constantly repeated in the whole of Scripture, first having been delivered to Adam (I will put enmity, etc., Gen. 3, 15), afterwards to the patriarchs; then, still more clearly proclaimed by the prophets; lastly, preached and set forth among the Jews by Christ, and disseminated over the entire world by the apostles. For all the saints were justified by faith in this promise, and not by their own attrition or contrition” (Concordia Triglotta, p. 265). And the finest summary of the Moral Law is Dr. Luther’s Catechism, Part One, The Ten Commandments.

III. THE CEREMONIAL LAW

A. What is a definition of the term “Ceremonial Law”?

The Old Testament Ceremonial Laws were all those precepts, given by God through Moses, that dealt in any way with Israel’s worship. They all served to impress upon the Israelites that they were a holy people unto the Lord. In fact, that very thought is repeated many times in the Pentateuch (see, for example, Exodus 19:6; Leviticus 11:44; 19:2; 20:7; Deuteronomy 7:6; 14:2). In those passages these ideas are emphasized again and again: “Ye shall be holy; for I the Lord your God am holy; the Lord has chosen you to be a special people unto Himself; you are kings and priests unto Me.” Therefore every phase of their worship, yes, almost every phase of their lives, was regulated with an almost unbelievably great mass of detailed laws.

B. Some of Israel’s Ceremonial Laws were loosely connected with their worship.

1. Laws regarding the firstborn

All of the male firstborn children (and also all firstborn male animals) were to be dedicated to the Lord for His service at the sanctuary. This was to be done in remembrance of their deliverance from the last Egyptian plague. The reason is cited in Numbers 3:13: “On the day that I smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt I hallowed unto Me all the firstborn in Israel, both man and beast: Mine shall they be: I am the Lord.” Drs. Keil and Delitzsch state the meaning of this act thus: “Inasmuch as the first birth represented all births, the whole nation was to consecrate itself to Jehovah, and present itself as a priestly nation in the consecration of the first born” (*Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament*, Vol. 2, p. 36). The firstborn sons were to be redeemed by the payment of five shekels to the priests, because the

tribe of Levi had been chosen to minister at the sanctuary in place of the first-born. The firstborn of the unclean animals were to be redeemed by the payment of 120% of their value; the blood of the clean animals (firstborn) was to be sprinkled against the altar, its fat burned, and the flesh given to the priests.

The first fruits of the field and of the press (wine and oil) were also to be dedicated to the Lord. Thereby Israel acknowledged that God gives the harvest out of His grace to mankind. These first fruits (“All the best of the oil; and all the best of the vine, and of the wheat,” Numbers 18:12) were symbolically dedicated to the Lord by waving them before the altar and then giving them to the priests.

For a detailed description of these firstborn and first fruit offerings, see Exodus 13:2, 11-16; 22:29,30; 23:19; Leviticus 23:9-14; 27:26,27; Numbers 3:11-13; 8, especially vv. 16-18; 18:12-19; Deuteronomy 26:2-11).

2. Dietary Laws

Every day Israel had to observe detailed and complicated dietary laws that clearly differentiated between allowable clean and forbidden unclean food.

Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14:1-21 lay down the general rules: Eat only meat from animals that have a cloven hoof and chew the cud, fish that have scales, fowl that do not eat carrion, etc. Eat no fat from certain portions of the sacrificial animals (sheep, goats, oxen), for that belongs to the Lord (Leviticus 3:17; Numbers 7:23-26; Deuteronomy 12:15, 21-28). Never eat any blood, for, as Keil and Delitzsch explain, Vol. 2, p. 410), “God had set apart the blood, as the medium of expiation for the human soul, for the altar.” “The life of the flesh is in the blood” and “It is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul” (Leviticus 17:10-14).

3. Laws regarding clothing

Israel had special laws regarding its clothing also. According to Numbers 15:37-41 and Deuteronomy 22:12, they were to wear tassels on the four corners of their outer garments, fastened with blue thread, “That ye may remember, and do all My commandments, and be holy unto your God.” (The Pharisees loved to make these tassels large to impress the people with their scrupulous obedience of the law, Matthew 23:5.)

Again, “The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman’s garment: for all that do so are an abomination unto the Lord thy God” (Deuteronomy 22:6). There is a divine distinction between the sexes and everyone should avoid anything that will vitiate that distinction. There dared be no unisex clothing among the Israelites.

Neither could they make a garment of wool and linen (Leviticus 19:19; Deuteronomy 22:11). By these and similar laws, as Drs. Keil and Delitzsch state in their Commentary, Vol. 2, p. 422, “The observance of the natural order and separation of things are made a duty binding upon the Israelites, the people of Jehovah, as a divine ordinance founded in the creation itself.”

(The laws regarding the priests’ and the high priests’ garments were much more extensive than those for the laity, as we shall hear, when we discuss Exodus 28.)

4. Laws regarding purification

These laws are written primarily in Leviticus chapters 12-15 and in Numbers 19:11-22. They tell how various acts made people unclean from one to 66 days. From this uncleanness they could be cleansed by various washings or sacrifices or both. The people particularly involved were women during and after menstruation and childbirth, the lepers (two chapters are devoted to this dread disease, including the banning of the leper from society), those who had a natural or diseased secretion from their sex organs, and, particularly those who came into contact with a corpse.

The reasons for these stringent laws was undoubtedly to show the Israelites their sinfulness that causes all evils, to move them to abhor sin in all its forms, and especially to keep awake in them their longing for a Redeemer from sin and its curse.

C. Most of Israel's Ceremonial Laws were directly connected with their worship

1. Laws regarding the Tabernacle, the place of worship.

The most extensive, often amazingly precise and detailed instructions, covering chapter after chapter in the Bible, deal with various phases of Israel's worship. That is true, for one thing, of the directions for building the Tabernacle, where God dwelt with His people (Exodus 25:8) and instructed them (Exodus 25:22) for some 500 years. Those directions extend from the plan to the materials, to the tiniest details of the furnishings, like the loops on the curtains, the door of the tent, the size and height of the altar, and the oil for the lamps. There are even instructions from God regarding the manner in which the work was to be done. (See Exodus 25-27, 31, 35-40)

In their Commentary, Vol 2, pp. 161 and 162 Drs. Keil and Delitzsch state the reasons for the Tabernacle and for the elaborate instructions regarding, its construction: "To give a definite external form to the covenant concluded with His people, and construct a visible bond of fellowship in which He might manifest Himself to the people and they might draw near to Him as their God." And: "If the sanctuary were to answer its purpose, the erection of it could not be left to the inventive faculty of any man whatever, but must proceed from Him, who was there to manifest Himself to the nation, as the Holy One, in righteousness and grace."

500 years later, when Solomon built that splendid, costly Temple, he followed the plan of the original Tabernacle in all its essential parts, except the dimensions were doubled. As was the case with the Tabernacle, the detailed description of the Temple is nothing short of amazing (see I Kings 5-7). (God gave King David the plan for the Temple, I Chronicles 28, esp. v. 19).

2. Laws regarding Israel's priesthood, the mediators between Jehovah and His people.

Like the Tabernacle, its officiants' lives were also regulated in minute detail. There were instructions regarding their beautiful, elaborate, pure white (symbolizing holiness), plus other colors, vestments. Exodus 28:2 tells us that these holy garments were "for glory and for beauty." Drs. Keil and Delitzsch in their Commentary, Vol. 2, p. 192 tell us: "Before they (the priests) could draw near to Jehovah the Holy One (Lev. XI 45) it was necessary that their unholiness should be covered over with holy clothes." There were instructions regarding their consecration, repeated daily for a week; their washings, anointing, threefold sacrifice (Leviticus 8, 9); their marriage to a woman of irreproachable character (Leviticus 21:7-15), for, as Drs. Keil and Delitzsch explain, anyone else "would be irreconcilable with the holiness of the priesthood"; their physical characteristics (Leviticus 21:16-22), for no one who was blind, lame, mutilated or had a physical blemish could be a priest. Again Drs. Keil and Delitzsch explain, "Only a faultless condition of the body could correspond to the holiness of the priest," Vol. 2, p. 432.

The priests had to avoid any contact with a corpse, except it be a close relative, for that would make them unclean, unfit for work in the sanctuary (Leviticus 21:1-6); they dared not use any strong drink before they entered the Tabernacle, under penalty of death (Leviticus 10:8-11); they were allowed parts or all of the sacrifices (Leviticus 10:12-15; Numbers 18:8-14); they had to take care of the Tabernacle, work done primarily by the Levites (Numbers 3, 4, 18); they taught the Word, inquiring also of the Lord by Urim and Thummim (Leviticus 10:11; Deuteronomy 31:9; 33:8-11 (this is mentioned, but seemingly not stressed nearly as much as their sacrifices, of which more will be said later, although

Moses did mention it in his blessing of the tribe of Levi, Deuteronomy 33:10). Finally, there are also a number of verses that deal with their wages (Leviticus 27:26-33; Numbers 18:8-32).

To pursue a study of each part mentioned in the previous paragraph would take us too far afield, yet the wages of the priests and Levites, decreed by God, are interesting. For one thing, they received no hereditary land like the other tribes, except for 48 cities in which to live with their suburbs for pasturage of their cattle, and they included the six cities of refuge (Numbers 18:20; 35:1-8). Outside of that they were to depend entirely upon the Lord for their sustenance, as befitted their office. And God provided for them liberally, even magnificently. They received tithes of all the other tribes, which they in turn had to tithe. This meant, using the figures for the second census, Numbers 26, that they received probably five times as much income as the average Israelite, if all the people tithed. (There were over 600,000 other adult Israelites as compared with 23,000 Levites from the age of one month and upward. So there were at the most some 12,000 adult Levites receiving tithes from 600,000 people.) In addition the Levites received many perquisites, such as special offerings, parts of various sacrifices, the firstfruits, and the redemption money. See Numbers 18:8-32 for the details. (Let no contemporary pastor start making comparisons, but rather let him pray with Solomon, Proverbs 30:8, 9: "Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.")

3. Laws regarding Israel's times of worship

a. The Sabbath Day

Israel's times of worship were also rigidly controlled, and nowhere is this more evident than in their laws regarding the Sabbath Day. This most holy day had been instituted a short time before the giving of the Decalogue (Exodus 16:22-26). Then, when God thundered the Ten Commandments from Mt. Sinai, He commanded the Israelites to "remember" the Sabbath Day, using more words to do so than He used for any other Commandment (Exodus 20:8-11). Besides that, the Old Testament refers to the Sabbath Day repeatedly.

On the Sabbath Day that began at sundown on Friday and lasted till sundown on Saturday (Leviticus 23:22), everyone in the land, Israelite and stranger, servant or slave, had to rest from all physical labor (Exodus 20:10). There must be no harvesting (Exodus 34:21), no wood gathering (Numbers 15:32-36), no fire built (Exodus 35:3), or manna gathered (Exodus 16:23). Even Israel's cattle (oxen and asses) were to rest on this holy day (Exodus 23:12).

What, then, did the Israelites do on the Sabbath Day? Well, the priest prepared and brought the sacrifices to the sanctuary, as Numbers 28:9 and other Bible passages tell us (anything done for God's service on this day was not considered work). In later times joyous meals were eaten on this day (Luke 14:1) -- the food had been prepared on Friday and kept warm in ashes or otherwise. In New Testament times services were held regularly in the synagogues with singing and prayer, reading and explaining of the Scriptures (Mark 1:21, 22; 6:2-6; Luke 4:16-32). Yet, strangely, in the Pentateuch there is hardly any reference to gatherings of the people or preaching of the Word on the Sabbath Day, the exception being Leviticus 23:3: "The seventh day is the Sabbath of rest, an holy convocation."

The punishment for breaking the Sabbath Day laws was severe indeed: "Every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein shall be cut off from among his people" (Exodus 31:14). That punishment was actually inflicted, as Numbers 15:32-36 tells us, although in later times the Sabbath Day laws were widely disregarded (Nehemiah 13:15-22; Jeremiah 17:19-27; Ezekiel 20:10-26).

Still later, the laws that the Jewish elders formulated to define "work" on the Sabbath Day became almost quixotic, as our Lord experienced again and again (Matthew 12:1-8; Luke 13:10-17;

14:1-6). Yet, God never intended His law to forbid works of mercy on the Sabbath Day, as Jesus amply demonstrated.

b. The three great annual festivals

The first of the three great annual festivals was the Passover. It commemorated the miraculous deliverance of the Israelites from their slavery in Egypt, particularly the sparing of their firstborn when the angel of death slew all the firstborn among the Egyptians. It was a joyful, week-long festival of thanksgiving that really marked the beginning of Israel as a nation. It was celebrated by eating the Passover lamb without blemish (Exodus 12:15), for it was intended as a sacrifice (Exodus 12:12, 27); by eating unleavened bread (leaven was regarded as producing impurities and would therefore defile the sacrifice); and by eating bitter herbs (to recall their bitter life in Egypt, Exodus 1:14; 12:8).

The Passover, observed in the first month of the Israelite Church Year, called Abib or Nisan; is well known to us from its celebration by our Lord and His disciples on the night before He died. Since the festival was such an important one for God's Chosen Nation, Scripture has much to say about it in Exodus 12:3-28; 23:15; Leviticus 23:4-14; Numbers 28:16-31; and Deuteronomy 16:1-8.

The second great annual, one-day festival was the joyous Feast of Weeks (Exodus 34:22) or the Feast of Harvest (Exodus 23:16), later called Pentecost, because it occurred 50 days after Passover (Leviticus 23:15; Acts 2:1). It was purely a harvest-home festival, commemorating the firstfruits of the grain harvest (Exodus 23:16; Deuteronomy 16:9). The people had given the first sheaf of the grain harvest to the Lord at Passover (Leviticus 23:10,11). Then they returned home to harvest the grain and at the end of that harvest they celebrated the Feast of Weeks. On that day two loaves of bread made from "fine flour" were symbolically dedicated to the Lord: They were also to offer seven yearling lambs., one young bullock, and two rams with their appropriate food and drink offerings as a burnt offering plus a male kid and two lambs for peace offerings. For further details one might wish to consult Exodus 34:22; Leviticus 23:15-21; Numbers 28:26-31; and Deuteronomy 16:9-12.

Drs. Keil and Delitzsch provide the significance of the Feast of Weeks in Vol. 2 of their Commentary., p. 443: "Through the increased burnt offering they were to give practical expression to their gratitude for the blessing of harvest . . . whilst through the peace-offering they entered into that fellowship of peace with the Lord to which they were called. . . . In this way the whole of the year's harvest was placed under the gracious blessing of the Lord by the sanctification of its commencement and its close; and the enjoyment of their daily food was also sanctified thereby."

Note that the New Testament Pentecost fell on the same day as did the one in the Old Testament (Acts 2:1).

The third and final, great, annual festival in Israel's Church Year was the Feast of the Tabernacles (Leviticus 23:34), also called the Feast of the Ingathering (Exodus 23:16). It too was a joyous (Deuteronomy 16:14) harvest-home festival, held for seven days in the seventh month (Tisri) at the close of the oil-, wine-, and fruit-harvest (Exodus 34:22b; Leviticus 23:39). With all of the harvest work behind them and with the harvest safely gathered, all Israel paused to give thanks to Him from whom all blessings flow (Leviticus 23:34-43).

The reason for calling this the Feast of the Tabernacles (or Booths) is that at its celebration Israel was commanded to make booths of goodly tree branches in which to live for this week (Leviticus 23:44-42). In Nehemiah's time these booths were placed on roofs, in the streets, and in various courtyards (Nehemiah 8:16); All this was done "That your generations may know that I (God) made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt" (Leviticus 23:43). When the Israelites compared that dreary desert wandering with the land of milk

and honey and the bountiful crops that the Lord had given them, their joy surely ought to have been enhanced.

The huge number of burnt offerings, double the number of rams and lambs and quintuple the number of oxen offered at the other two major festivals, also show the joy of this occasion. Special offerings consisted of a male goat each day for a sin offering plus burnt offerings of 70 oxen (13 on the first day, 12 on the second, etc., and seven on the seventh), two rams and 14 yearling rams each day, plus the necessary food and drink offerings, plus any offerings that individuals or families might bring (Numbers 29:12-40).

Attendance at these three, great, annual festivals was mandatory for men (Exodus 23:14-17; 34:18-24; Deuteronomy 16:16), and “they shall not appear before the Lord empty.” For obedience to these commands the Lord promised protection for the land from its enemies (Exodus 34:24). From later references in the Scriptures it appears that Israel did keep these commands, although not in all details, except, of course, in times of apostasy.

c. The Great Day of Atonement

This most solemn of all Old Testament festivals, when an atonement or a general expiation had to be made for the sins of priests and people and for cleansing the sanctuary, is discussed especially in Exodus 30:10; Leviticus 16:1-34; 23:26-32; and Numbers 29:7-11. It was a day of repentance and sorrow, held five days before the Feast of Tabernacles (Leviticus 23:27, 34). On that day all Israel was to refrain from work (Leviticus 23:28) and to “afflict your souls” (Leviticus 23:29, 32), that is, to fast, under pain of death. (Drs. Keil and Delitzsch in their Commentary Vol. 2, p. 406, state that the Hebrew word “is the early Mosaic expression for fasting. “ Dr. William Beck translates, “When you eat not.”) It was the only fast required in all the year. (Imagine, then, how easily the Pharisee could boast, “I fast twice in the week, “ really 100 times more than required, Luke 18:12.)

Since this festival represented the culmination of the high priest’s mediation between God and the people, Leviticus 16:1-34 and other Bible passages give minute (again) instructions for keeping it. The high priest had to wash himself, put on special white, linen garments, and make an atonement for himself and for his household with a bullock as a sin offering and a ram as a burnt offering. After slaying the bullock, he entered the Holy of Holies with fragrant incense to cover the mercy seat -- incense was a symbol of prayer, in this case a prayer that God would accept the blood of the sin offering. (No one, except the high priest dared enter the Holy of Holies, and he could enter only once each year on this day, Exodus 26:23; Leviticus 16:2; Hebrews 9:7. A splendid heavy curtain separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies.) Thereafter the high priest went out to get some of the blood of the bullock to sprinkle it against and before the mercy seat. He went out again to the court to kill one of the two kids that he had chosen, and, walking through the empty Holy Place, he reentered the Holy of Holies to sprinkle the blood upon and in front of the mercy seat to “Make an atonement for the holy place . . . for himself, and for his household, and for all the congregation of Israel” (Leviticus 16:16, 17).

This most important of all Old Testament expiatory sacrifices was imperfect, since it had to be repeated annually. It was, however, a beautiful picture, a prophecy, a type of Christ who with His own blood entered the Holy of Holies once to make a perfect atonement for all mankind (see Hebrews 7:26, 27; 9:6-15, 24-28; 10).

Another important part of the ceremony had to do with the scapegoat. The high priest returned to take the second kid, lay both hands on it, symbolically transferring all of Israel’s sins to it, and have a man lead it into the desert to die, a sure sign that Israel’s sins were not only covered (by the blood of the first kid in the Holy of Holies), but actually removed, symbolically, from God’s sight.

The ceremonies were concluded when the high priest removed the special vestments, bathed, put on the usual high priest's vestments, and offered burnt offerings. Also the man who had led the scapegoat into the desert and the men who had burned the sin offering had to wash their clothes and bathe, "because they had been defiled by the animals laden with sin" (Keil and Delitzsch, Vol. 2, p. 405).

d. Other festivals

Other Israelite festivals included that of the New Moon, the Sabbatical Year, and the Year of Jubilee. Strictly speaking, these were not in the same classification with the other Church festivals, but they did have some religious features. So they will be discussed here briefly.

The New Moon was observed at the beginning of the Hebrew lunar month (Numbers 10:10; 28:11-15). It was celebrated with the blowing of trumpets and larger numbers of burnt offerings with their food and drink offerings plus a kid for a sin offering. Drs. Keil and Delitzsch write in their Commentary, Vol. III, p. 220, "If the congregation was to sanctify its life and labor to the Lord every day by a burnt-offering, it could not well be omitted at the commencement of the larger division of time formed by the month; on the contrary, it was only right that the commencement of a new month should be sanctified by a special sacrifice."

The Sabbath Year, celebrated every seventh year, also had its special instructions (Exodus 23:10, 11; Leviticus 25:1-7; Deuteronomy 15:1-18; 31:10-13). Dr. Beck translates Exodus 23:10, 11 as follows: "For six years sow your land and gather its crops, but in the seventh leave it alone and let it lie so that the poor of your people can eat and what they leave the wild animals may eat. Do the same with your vineyards and your olive trees." Also Deuteronomy 31:10-12: "Every seventh year, at the time of the year when debts are canceled, at the festival of booths, when all Israel comes to visit the LORD your God at the place He chooses, read this law to Israel and let them hear it. Gather the people, men, women, and children, and the foreigner who is in your towns, have them listen and learn to fear the LORD your God and carefully do everything this law says." There were also civil regulations, mentioned in Deuteronomy 15 regarding payment of debts and freeing of slaves, which we shall refer to later.

Drs. Keil and Delitzsch point out in their Commentary, Vol. II, p. 457, that the Sabbath Year was instituted, not so much to secure physical recreation for both land and people, but the land was to keep Sabbath to the Lord. It was to observe a period of holy rest to the Lord, just as the congregation did on the Sabbath Day. The land, owned by God, was to be saved from the hand of man exhausting its fertility. Israel was also to learn that the Lord gave them their daily bread through their labors and without them. (In the sixth year the Lord so blessed the land that it produced a crop sufficient to last for three years, Leviticus 25:21, 22.)

Finally, Israel was also to observe the Year of Jubilee, celebrated every half century (seven times seven Sabbath Years; Leviticus 25:8-55). At its beginning the trumpets sounded to "proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof," Leviticus 25:10, a phrase familiar to all of us from its inscription on the Liberty Bell. The Year of Jubilee began on the great Day of Atonement (Leviticus 25:9) to show that "liberty" could truly begin only with the forgiveness of sins. In this year Israel was to sow no seed, for God would provide the necessary food (Leviticus 25:20-22); land that had been sold (really leased), as well as some houses, was returned to the original owners; Israelites who had sold themselves as slaves were released.

Drs. Keil and Delitzsch wrote of this Year of Jubilee in their Commentary Vol. II, p. 466 and 467: "In the year of jubilee . . . the land of Jehovah was to enjoy holy rest, and the nation of Jehovah to be set free from the bitter labour of cultivating the soil, and to live and refresh itself in blessed rest with the blessing which had been given to it by the Lord its God. In this way the year of jubilee became to the poor, oppressed, and suffering, in fact to the whole nation, a year of festivity and

graces which not only brought redemption to the captives and deliverance to the poor out of their distresses, but release to the whole congregation of the Lord from the bitter labour of this world . . . a foretaste of the times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord, which were to be brought to all men by One anointed with the Spirit of the Lord, who would come to preach the Gospel to the poor, to bind up the broken-hearted, to bring liberty to the captives and the opening of the prisons to them that were bound, to proclaim to all that mourn a year of grace from the Lord (Isa.. lxi. 1-3; Luke iv 17-21); and who will come again . . . to restore everything that has been destroyed by sin from the beginning of the world . . . (Acts iii. 19, 20; Rom. viii 19sq; Matt. xxv. 34; Col. i. 12; I Pet. i. 4)”

Yes, at first reading these laws regarding the times of worship sound tremendously complicated, yet, if we study them, they do make sense. They really were a wonderful blessing of God for His Chosen People, as is every other part of the Ceremonial Law.

4. Laws regarding Israel’s sacrifices

a. Codified in Leviticus 1-7

Sacrifices date from the dawn of history. We recall Cain’s and Abel’s sacrifices (Genesis 4), that of Noah after the Flood (Genesis 8:20-22), of Abraham (Genesis 22), of Jacob (Genesis 31:54 and 46:1), and of Israel before Sinai (Exodus 5:1-3). In all of these sacrifices, however, there seems to be no reference whatsoever to expiation for sin, but primarily a desire to thank God for His blessings and to implore His future help (therefore they are called “burnt offerings,” which were primarily thank offerings).

Consequently, Leviticus 1-7 (and various other Bible passages) does not introduce something entirely new, but this section codifies and greatly expands an important part of Israel’s worship that was somewhat known before this time. Again, these laws, the very first ones that God spoke to Moses from the Tabernacle after it was consecrated, are minutely detailed. (Although the laws mentioned in these seven chapters were to order the spontaneous sacrifices by individuals and by the congregation, they applied also to the prescribed offerings at the various festivals.)

b. The unbloody sacrifices

Normally, when we think of sacrifices, we almost automatically picture to ourselves a lamb burning on the altar with the smoke rising to the sky. Actually, there were also various meat (King James’ terminology) or food (Dr. Beck’s word) offerings. They always accompanied the daily burnt offerings (Exodus 29:38-40) and the regular peace offerings (Leviticus 7:11-14), but were also offered independently (Leviticus 2 and 6:14-23; Numbers 28 and 29). They consisted of fine wheat flour or of cakes made of this flour (Leviticus 2:1-6) or of roasted ears of the first grain (Leviticus. 2:14-16) together with olive oil and incense. Part of these food offerings were burned on the altar, while the rest was given to the priests (Leviticus 2:7-10). The high priest also brought pieces of bread made from one-tenth of an ephah of flour as a sacrifice to be burned completely, one-half in the morning and one-half in the evening, (Leviticus 6:19-23).

The bloodless sacrifices included the 12 loaves of showbread (one for each tribe), made of fine flour, perpetually placed upon the specially prepared table in the sanctuary every Sabbath Day, and finally eaten by the priests in the Holy Place (Exodus 25:23-30; 40:22,23; Leviticus 24:5-9; Numbers 4:7; I Samuel 21:6; Matthew 12:34): The significance of this ordinance is not mentioned in Scripture, but it must have told the Israelites that all their daily bread came from God and that all the fruits of their labor must be consecrated to God. For us it also points to the Bread of Life (John 6:48) who alone satisfies all our spiritual hunger.

The first fruits at the beginning and at the end of the grain harvest also belonged to the food offerings (Leviticus 23:10-21; Deuteronomy 26:1-11). At the beginning of the grain harvest a sheaf was brought to the priest who symbolically dedicated it to God by waving it before the altar (on the second day of Passover); at the close of the grain harvest or the Feast of Harvest, two leavened loaves of fine flour were likewise symbolically dedicated to God. In both cases these offerings were given to the priests to eat. The significance of this statute is stated in Deuteronomy 26:1-11: Israel was to acknowledge in their prayers that day that both their land and their harvest came from the Lord who had rescued them from slavery in Egypt and brought them to their fertile country.

Finally, there were also the drink-offerings that always accompanied the daily burnt offerings, the giving of the first fruits, the Passover sacrifices, and others, but never the sin- or trespass-offerings, and never alone. (See Exodus 29:40; Leviticus 23:13, 18; Numbers 15:1-12; 28:7-10). It consisted of a half gallon ($\frac{1}{4}$ hin) or more of wine, depending on the type of animal that was slaughtered (more for an ox than for a lamb); and it was apparently poured out at the base of the altar.

c. The bloody (or animal) sacrifices

Most important of all were the huge numbers of animal sacrifices all without blemish, as Leviticus and Numbers stress again and again (nothing less was suitable for a sacrifice to the Lord). These animals (only “clean” ones could be brought) were bullocks, offered particularly in connection with the sacrifices for the priests (Exodus 29; Leviticus 4 and 16) and at the Feast of the Tabernacles (Numbers 29:12-40); heifers, used only in the case of unsolved murders (Deuteronomy 21:1-9); and to cleanse one from defilement of death (Numbers 19); goats, particularly kids, in connection with all types of sacrifices (burnt, peace, sin, and trespass; Leviticus 1:10; 3:12; 4:23; 5:6; etc.); rams, also for all types of sacrifices and festivals and consecration of priests (Leviticus 5:15; 8; 9:4; 23:18; Numbers 28:11, 20; 29:2 13; etc.); turtle doves or young pigeons, in cases of poverty and for people who had been cleansed from various bodily defilements (Leviticus 5:7; 12:6; 14:22; 15:14, 29); and, above all, lambs.

The number of lambs sacrificed annually was almost unbelievably large: two daily (Exodus 29:38-42; Numbers 28:1-8); an additional two on the Sabbath Days (Numbers 28:9, 10); seven more at the New Moon (Numbers 28:11-15); 49 more at Passover time (Numbers 28:16-25); seven more at Pentecost (Leviticus 23:15-22; Numbers 28:26-31); seven more at the seventh New Moon (Numbers 29:1-6); seven more at the Great Day of Atonement (Numbers 29:7-11); and 105 more at the Feast of the Tabernacles, 14 daily for seven days and then seven on the eighth day (Numbers 29:12-40). By our count that is almost 1100 lambs that had to be sacrificed annually.

But that is only part of the story; for individuals brought many lambs for various kinds of offerings (Leviticus 1, 3, 4). Special occasions called for additional offerings, like the dedication of Solomon’s Temple, when an almost incredible 120,000 sheep were offered (I Kings 8:62-64). Small wonder that thousands of Levites were consecrated for the Lord’s service, although they did not work at the Temple the year round (I Chronicles 24:1-19; II Kings 11:5, 9; Luke 1:5).

There were three major kinds of animal sacrifices; burnt-, peace-, and trespass- (and sin-) offerings. Burnt offerings are described particularly in Leviticus 1. They were brought by individuals at various times and by the congregation at the daily morning and evening sacrifices, on the Sabbath Day, at festivals, and at other occasions. The animals were bullocks, sheep, goats, and fowl (young pigeons and turtle doves).

The method of sacrificing was essentially the same for all three kinds of offerings, so we shall describe just the one for the burnt offering: The offerer placed his hand upon the head of the victim thereby symbolically transferring his feelings (dedication to God, gratitude, or desire for forgiveness) to the animal. The offerer then killed the animal (the priests and Levites did this for the

festive offerings), skinned it, and cut it in pieces. The priests had meanwhile collected some of the blood, then took it and sprinkled it on the four sides of the altar in the courtyard of the Tabernacle (except in the case of the sin-offering, to be discussed later, Leviticus 4). After the legs and the intestines of the sacrificial animal had been washed, all of the pieces were laid upon the altar, where the fire burned perpetually (Leviticus 6:12, 13) and every part was burned “with a fragrance pleasing the Lord” (Leviticus 1:9, Beck). The flesh of the animal possibly burned for some hours (this was different from the peace and sin offering, when only parts were burned). A food offering always accompanied the burnt offering, as was stated previously.

The significance of the burnt offering, whose history goes back to the dawn of history (see III, c, 4a) is that with it the offerer was totally dedicating himself to the Lord, including thanking God, praying for forgiveness, and asking for future blessings. St. Paul must have had the burnt offerings in mind when he wrote, “Give your bodies as a living sacrifice to God” (Romans 12:1, Beck) out of gratitude to Christ who “gave Himself for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God” (Ephesians 5:2, Beck). Even though the idea of expiation was not entirely absent from the burnt offerings (Leviticus 1:5; 14:20), this was by no means its primary purpose.

Secondly, there were the peace offerings, carefully described and regulated in Leviticus 3 and 7:11-38. They were of three different kinds: praise-, vow-, and voluntary-offerings; they consisted of unblemished oxen, sheep, or goats; they included food offerings, part of which was dedicated to the Lord; and they culminated in the sacrificial meal when the rest of the meat was eaten by the offerer and his family. The separable fat was burned on the altar, while the breast and the right thigh (Beck’s translation) were symbolically dedicated to the Lord and then given to the priests. (In the beginning Israel could eat no fat, for it was the Lord’s, or blood, for the life was in the blood, Leviticus 3:16-17; 17:11; but later the prohibition apparently applied only to blood, Deuteronomy 12:16, 23.) Then the family took part in the happy, sacrificial meal, but eating the rest of the meat only on the first and second day; thereafter “it is garbage and not acceptable” (Leviticus 19:7, Beck). Drs. Keil and Delitzsch tell us the significance of the peace offerings, Vol. II p. 330, stating that it “became a holy covenant meal, a meal of love and joy, which represented domestic fellowship with the Lord, and thus shadowed forth, on the one hand rejoicing before the Lord (Deut. xii. 12, 18), and on the other, the blessedness of eating and drinking in the kingdom of God (Luke xiv. 15, xxii, 30).”

Finally, there were the sin offerings, described in Leviticus 4-5:10; 6:24-30. (At the end of this section we shall discuss the trespass offerings Leviticus 5:14-26; 7:1-10, which some commentators regard as a fourth type of offering but which we shall include in the discussion of the sin offering.)

The sin offering was brought to expiate sins of weakness, done unintentionally or in ignorance. The hardened sinners who willfully transgressed God’s commandments were to be cut off from their people (Numbers 15:30, 31).

Leviticus 4 treats the offerings for the sins of weakness on the part of the priests (vv. 2-12), the entire congregation (vv. 13-21), the rulers (vv. 22-26), and the laity (4:27-5:13). Essentially there was little difference in the sacrifices of these four classes of people. The repentant sinner brought the animal to be sacrificed (an ox for the priests, since they filled the most important position, and for the entire congregation; a kid or a lamb for rulers and for the laity; or a pair of turtle doves or young pigeons, or even one-tenth of an ephah of flour, in cases of poverty). The offerer placed his hand upon the animal, thereby symbolically transferring his sin to another, and slaughtering it. Meanwhile, the priest collected the blood, sprinkled it seven times toward the curtain of the sanctuary, poured the rest out at the altar of burnt offering (located in the courtyard), burned the separable fat and the kidneys on the altar, and had the rest of the body taken to a clean place to be burned, thus letting it suffer the results of sin—complete destruction. In this way a substitute died for the sinner, and his sin was expiated.

The trespass offering (Leviticus 5:14-6:7; 7:1-8; and others) belonged to the same general category as the sin offering, but there were differences (commentators do not agree on the differences). It seems that they applied particularly to those cases in which one had unjustly taken to himself something that belonged to others. The major difference in the sacrifices was that the offerer also had to make restitution plus 20% of the value of the thing taken, and the priests ate those parts of the sacrifice that were not burned. Drs. Keil and Delitzsch write, Vol. II, p. 316: “The idea of a satisfaction for a right, which had been violated but which was about to be restored or recovered, lay at the foundation of the trespass offering.”

D. Israel’s Ceremonial Laws had various purposes.

1. In general, the Ceremonial Law served Israel’s temporal and spiritual welfare.

That is evident, on the one hand, in the regulations for Israel’s Church Year. Psychologists tell us that one day’s physical rest in seven is exactly what our bodies need, for regular sleep alone is not sufficient to restore the body’s physical and mental powers. A day a week for rest is advisable, and that is exactly what the Sabbath provided.

Regular spiritual rest and refreshment for the soul is even more necessary; and that was provided through the preaching of the Word and the bringing of sacrifices (on the Sabbath Day). (The Ceremonial Law says little about preaching the Word.)

Rest for the land was also mandatory, if it was not to lose its fertility, and that was provided by the Sabbath Year, when all the land lay idle.

Still other blessings that Israel derived from the Ceremonial Law have been mentioned previously. For example, the gift of the first fruits reminded the people that our Heavenly Father is the Giver of every good and perfect gift; the regulations regarding various kinds of unclean things impressed upon them that they were a holy people unto the Lord; the directives regarding the holy days and the sacrifices provided them with an Agenda for their church services; the rules regarding the burnt offerings allowed them to show their devotion, their self-surrender, to God, while the peace offerings gave them an opportunity to live in holy communion with God.

What we are trying to say is that the Ceremonial Law was good for Israel, just as all of God’s Commandments of the Moral Law are good for us. Keeping His Commandments always leads to blessings; disobeying them always produces evil in some form (Deuteronomy 28).

2. Various parts of the Ceremonial Law vividly portrayed sin and grace, the two major truths of the Christian faith.

That is true particularly of the sin and trespass offerings and of the important ceremonies on the Great Day of Atonement. Even a sin of weakness is so frightful that it was punished with nothing less than death. “The soul that sinneth, it shall die” (Ezekiel 18:4, 20), a punishment that every one deserves. Yet, God in His mercy provided a ransom for us, an expiation for our sin and its dreadful consequences. By placing his hand on the head of the animal the sinner transferred his sin to it, symbolically, and from that moment on it was doomed to die. Its blood, which contained its life (Leviticus 17:11,14), was offered to God at the altar as a substitute for that of the sinner, one life for another. And since the body of the animal was still filled with the offerer’s sin, it had to be burned outside of the camp, a vivid portrayal of the truth that everlasting destruction is the wages of sin.

At the same time the sinner was assured that his transgressions were truly forgiven -- the giving up of a life in the form of shed blood on the altar was proof for that. That assurance was reinforced on the Great Day of Atonement, when the blood sprinkled on the mercy seat and the scapegoat led into the wilderness to die vividly pictured to the sinner that “all their sins” (Leviticus 16:30, 34) “for all the

congregation” (Leviticus 16:33) were atoned for. (The usual sin offering applied only to those sins that were committed out of weakness, Leviticus 4, but the sacrifices on the great festival specifically mentions all sins.) Thus the sinner was freed from damnation and reconciled to God by a substitute.

Now, everyone knows that the blood of an animal does not inherently have the power to make an atonement for sin (Hebrews 10:4). Yet, in this instance, God gave it that power “in anticipation of the true and perfect sacrifice which Christ, the Son of man and God, would offer in the fullness of time through the holy and eternal Spirit, for the reconciliation of the whole world (Heb. ix. 14)” (Drs. Keil and Delitzsch Commentary, Vol, II, p. 277). One simply cannot understand the sin-, trespass-, and Day-of-Atonement-sacrifices without Christ, as the great prophet Isaiah pointed out beautifully in his famous chapter 53. Christ is truly the “Lamb of God, Who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29, NIV), prefigured by the sacrifices of the various clean animals in Old Testament times (Hebrews 9:11-14). He is the only perfect High Priest, foreshadowed by the many Old Testament high priests (Hebrews 8:5), wonderfully described in Hebrews 5-10. He is the One who gives us mercy, as was foretold by the Old Testament mercy seat (Hebrews 6:16). Yes, the Ceremonial Law, as well as every other part of the Old Testament, points forward to and bears witness of the Messiah, the Coming One. That very fact should have moved Israel to long for the day of the Messiah who would free them from the heavy yoke of the Ceremonial Law, as the Psalmist prayed, “Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion” (Psalm 14:7; 53:6).

E. The Ceremonial Law has been completely abolished in New Testament times.

1. The Ceremonial Law was only temporary.

For centuries before Sinai there was no Ceremonial Law, and ever since our Lord’s death on Calvary there is no Ceremonial Law in effect for us, not a single one. In other words, all of the provisions of the Ceremonial Law were in effect only for a certain nation for a certain period of time. Consequently, when we today hear of people celebrating the Passover or the Sabbath Day, when they avoid certain kinds of meat as being unclean, and the like, we have to know that none of these laws is in effect today—they have all been abolished.

2. The Old Testament indicates that the Ceremonial Law applied to Israel only and only until Christ came.

For example, Exodus 31:17 tells us that the Sabbath Day was a sign between God and the children of Israel. Leviticus 26:46 reads as follows: “These are the statutes and judgments and laws, which the Lord made between Him and the children of Israel in Mount Sinai by the hand of Moses” (this was said in connection with the Ceremonial Laws). And the last verse of Leviticus (27:34), the very book in which most of the Ceremonial Laws are written, stresses the thought that they were for “the children of Israel.” There is, finally, the well-known promise of a new covenant which God would make with His people to replace the old one with its various laws given at Mt. Sinai (Jeremiah 31:31-34). He made it through Christ.

Yes, the Old Testament already indicates the temporary and transient character of the Ceremonial Laws. That is true, despite the fact that various parts of it are declared ordinances for ever. Examples are the Passover (Exodus 12:14, 24), the altar for burnt offering (Exodus 27:21), regulations regarding the high priest (Exodus 28:43), the Sabbath Day (Exodus 31:17), the food offerings (Leviticus 6:18), the Great Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:29), and the like. Yet, the term “for ever” in these cases, as elsewhere in the Old Testament (see Leviticus 25:46; Deuteronomy 15:17; I Kings 12:6,7; etc.) means simply a long time or as long as Israel exists as God’s people.

3. The New Testament repeatedly indicates that the Ceremonial Law has been abolished forever.

a. Christ fulfilled the Ceremonial Law.

Christ's first great purpose in coming to this earth was to fulfill perfectly every part of the Law, including the Ceremonial. Our dogmaticians call this His "active obedience," a doctrine that is based upon Bible passages like Matthew 3:15, where Christ said, "It is proper for us to do this (submit to baptism) to fulfill all righteousness" (NIV); Romans 5:19 points to Christ's perfect obedience also, whereby "many will be made righteous" (NIV); and especially Romans 10:4: "Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes" (NIV). In other words, the Law ends with Christ.

Melanchthon expressed those thoughts in the Apology of the Augsburg Confession in this way: "The law of Moses, with the ceremonial statutes concerning what is clean or unclean, do (sic) not at all concern us Christians.... For the Gospel frees us from these Levitical impurities (from all the ceremonies of Moses, and not alone from the laws concerning uncleanness)" (*Concordia Triglotta* p. 375, 41, 42).

b. The Epistle to the Galatians shows our freedom from the Ceremonial Law.

The entire Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians has just one major aim: To bear witness to our justification through faith in Christ without the deeds of the Ceremonial Law. The Epistle became necessary, because false prophets had crept into those congregations, teaching that one must keep the Old Testament ceremonies in addition to having faith in Christ, if one is to be saved. (Therefore we call them Judaizers.) They had begun to demand the keeping of the Old Testament Church Year (4:10,11), circumcision (5:2; 6:12); and other of "those weak and miserable principles" (4:9, NIV) of the Ceremonial Law. For those false teachers and for the Galatians who believed them, St. Paul reserved some of the most stinging words that he ever wrote: "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you?" (3:1); "I could wish the men who upset you would castrate themselves" (5:12, Beck); and, since you are again observing the Sabbath Day and other Jewish holy days (4:10), "I'm afraid for you, lest I have labored among you to no avail" (4:11, literal translation).

In other words, one just doesn't understand Christ's work at all, if he believes that one is still required to keep the Ceremonial Law: "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (5:1).

c. The Epistle to the Hebrews shows that the Ceremonial Law was only a shadow of Christ, the Body, and they are now abolished.

The Epistle to the Hebrews clearly and emphatically bears witness to the end of the Ceremonial Law. It was written to Hebrew Christians who were in danger of relapsing into Judaism with all of its ceremonial rituals. The author was aghast at such a dreadful idea. He therefore wrote them; in effect: In Christ you have Someone infinitely greater than Moses or the high priests or even than the angels (chapters 1-3) -- how can you even think of leaving Him? Don't you understand that all of your animal sacrifices can never in themselves take away sin (10:4), but that they simply foreshadowed Christ's infinitely greater sacrifice (ch. 9), for He was both perfect Priest and holy Victim? You must know that your sacrifices were never meant to be perpetual, but Christ's one sacrifice made atonement for all people of all time (7:22-28; 10:14). Now that Christ has come, He established the New Covenant foretold long ago by our great prophet Jeremiah (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:8-12). Christ is now the only true Mediator between God and us; He ever lives to make

intercession for us (Hebrews 7:18-28). The old Covenant made at Sinai will vanish away (Hebrew 8:13); in fact, God has set it aside (Hebrews 10:9, NIV). Therefore, don't ever leave Christ, Whose priesthood is infinitely superior to that of the Old Testament high priests (Hebrews 7:11-10:25).

d. Other New Testament Bible passages also tell us that the Ceremonial Law has been abolished.

Many other New Testament Bible passages tell us repeatedly and clearly that the Old Testament Ceremonial Laws are forever abolished. For example, Matthew 27:50,51 reports, "At the moment (of Christ's death) the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom" (NIV), a sure indication that every Christian now has direct access to our Heavenly Father without the need of any priest as mediator. Acts 15 records the decision of the very first church council, called to decide if circumcision and other Old Testament Ceremonial Laws had to be enforced. It spoke an emphatic, "No!" It is not necessary or recommended to place that heavy yoke "upon the neck of the disciples." "The Ceremonial Law was indeed a yoke so heavy that "neither our fathers nor we were able to bear it," as St. Paul confessed, Acts 15:10.) Even before this church council God Himself had commanded Peter to kill and to eat meat from animals that were unclean according to Leviticus 11 (Acts 10:9-16). Thereby He proclaimed for all the world to hear that in New Testament times "no food is unclean in itself" (Romans 14:14). Romans 14:5 shows that all Old Testament holy days, including the Sabbath Day, have been abolished. In I Corinthians 9:19-23 St. Paul tells us that he did at times live according to the Ceremonial Law, but only to give no offence to the Jews whom he was trying to win for Christianity, even though "I myself am not under the law" (NIV). Colossians 2:16; 17, an often quoted Bible passage, shows conclusively that much of the Ceremonial Law simply foreshadowed Christ; now that the body (Christ) has come, the shadow (the Ceremonial Law) is surely no longer needed. The Sabbath Day is specifically mentioned as being abolished forever. Scripture even tells us that in the last days false prophets will arise and order people "to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and those who know the truth" (I Timothy 4:3, NIV).

On the basis of these many Bible passages, our Confessions rightly state: The Ceremonial laws do not concern us.

4. The New Testament does not require worship on the Sabbath Day or on any other specific day of the week.

We must say a word on this point, since many Christian bodies teach falsely regarding it. Some, for example, like the Seventh-Day Baptists and especially the Seventh-Day Adventists regard the keeping of the Sabbath Day as one of the most important tenets of their faith, yes, even superior to all other Commandments of God. In their thinking anyone who worships on Sunday thereby indicates his allegiance to the beast, the express opponent of God. (Revelation 13).

Other Churches contend that in the New Testament God has changed the Sabbath Day (Saturday) into the Lord's Day (Sunday), and has commanded its observance. For example, the familiar Roman Catholic Baltimore Catechism states, "By the third Commandment we are commanded to keep holy the Lord's day and the holy days of obligation, on which we are to give our time to the service and worship of God . . . The Church commands us to keep Sunday holy instead of the Sabbath because on Sunday Christ rose from the dead, and on Sunday He sent the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles" (p. 144).

The United Methodist Church has as one of its articles of faith: "We believe the Lord's Day is divinely ordained for private and public worship, for rest from unnecessary work, and should be devoted to spiritual improvement, Christian fellowship, and service." The Greek Orthodox Church believes that God ordained one day of the week for worship and other days which the Church determines. The

Heidelberg Catechism lists all of Exodus 20:8-11 as its Fourth Commandment., but regards the Sabbath Day as Sunday.

Yet, all of this is manifestly false doctrine, totally unscriptural: The Sabbath Day is gone forever, as we amply demonstrated in section 3 of the previous part of this paper. The Sabbath Day was simply a shadow of things to come (Colossians 2:16, 17; Hebrews 10:1) with Christ being the body—why do we need the shadow, when we have the body? The Sabbath Day prefigured the perfect spiritual rest and rest in heaven that Christ provides for everyone who believes in Him (Hebrews 4:1-11); it is therefore no longer needed. It is a sign (Exodus 31:17) or a type of the Heavenly Canaan “the timeless, heavenly state, established and intended for men in their glorious union with God” (Lenski, Commentary on Hebrews and James, p. 131). Since we have Christ, we no longer need the sign that points to Him.

Furthermore, insistence on keeping the Sabbath Day actually endangers our souls’ welfare, as Galatians 4:10,11 tells us. (One of our pastors therefore calls the Seventh Day Adventists the modern Judaizers.)

Nor is there a single New Testament Bible passage that requires worship on any specific day of the week. The day on which we worship our God is a matter of Christian freedom (Galatians 5:1). We are free to worship daily, twice a week, on Sundays, or whatever.

Well, then, if the Sabbath Day part of the Third Commandment has been abolished, if it is no part of the Moral Law, and if no other day has been commanded by God to replace it, all of which is true, why do we observe Sunday and other festivals? Answer: In order to give us time and opportunity for public worship, something that is repeatedly asked of us in Scripture, and something that we long to do in order to express our devotion to God.

In the beginning the first Christian congregation at Jerusalem worshipped God daily (Acts 2:46), then weekly on Sundays (Acts 20:7; I Corinthians 16:2; Revelation 1:10, where it is already called the “Lord’s Day”). The Didache, dating from about 100 A.D. , states that the Christians worshipped God on both the Sabbath Day and on Sunday, the Sabbath Day in commemoration of the creation and Sunday in commemoration of the resurrection of our Lord. Justin Martyr (died 163 A.D.) and other early writers tell us that the Church then worshipped on Sundays. So it has remained to this day for most Christian churches, in commemoration of Easter with its sure promise of our resurrection.

Dr. Luther, genius that he was, understood the difference between the Moral and the Ceremonial Laws perfectly, also in this matter of the Sabbath Day. That is why the Third Commandment in both of his Catechisms became: *Du sollst den Feiertag heiligen*, which the *Concordia Triglotta* correctly translates: Thou shalt sanctify the holy-day. Yet, for some reason the Latin translation has: *Memento, ut diem sabbati sanctifices*. The *Concordia Triglotta* accordingly has in parentheses (Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy), a custom that is still followed in the Missouri Synod’s 1943 edition of the Catechism, only it reverses the procedure and places the “Thou shalt sanctify the holy day” into parentheses, a practice that seems difficult to justify. Their 1912 edition, on the other hand, in a translation adopted by the Synodical Conference, has only: “Thou shalt sanctify the holy-day.”

Dr. J. M. Reu, well known catechetical scholar, in his 1917 edition of the Catechism has “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy,” but in a note states: “Liberal translation: Thou shalt sanctify the holy-day.”

The 1956 edition of the Wisconsin Synod Catechism has only “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy,” but that isn’t what Dr. Luther wrote.

The Evangelical Lutheran Synod has, “You shall keep the day of rest holy.”

Really, what the Third Commandment asks of us is to hold God’s Word sacred, gladly hear, and learn it. Dr. Luther wrote in his Large Catechism, “Know therefore, that you must be concerned not only about hearing, but also about learning and retaining it in memory... that is God’s commandment, who will require of you how you have heard, learned, and honored His Word.” He also wrote, “This commandment, therefore, according to its gross sense; does not concern us Christians; for it is altogether an external matter, like other ordinances of the Old Testament” (*Concordia Triglotta*, pp. 609, 603):

Our Augsburg Confession agrees exactly with Dr. Luther's thoughts: "Those who judge that by the authority of the Church the observance of the Lord's Day instead of the Sabbath-day was ordained as a thing necessary, do greatly err. Scripture has abrogated the Sabbath-day; for it teaches that, since the Gospel has been revealed, all the ceremonies of Moses can be omitted. And yet, because it was necessary to appoint a certain day, that the people might know when they ought to come together, it appears that the Church designated the Lord's Day for this purpose; and this day seems to have been chosen all the more for this additional reason, that men might have an example of Christian liberty, and might know that the keeping neither of the Sabbath nor of any other day is necessary" (Concordia. Triglotta pp. 92, 93).

IV. THE CIVIL LAW

A. What is a definition of "Civil Law"?

Old Testament Israel was a theocracy. The word "theocracy" was coined by Josephus (contra Apion II, 17), that brilliant, first-century Jewish historian. He used the term to designate a state in which God possessed all authority. He derived it from two Greek words: Theos (God) and kratos (rule). In a theocracy God rules every phase of a nation's life, spiritual and temporal, civil and ceremonial, through laws that He Himself has given. The laws that God gave the governmental authorities in Israel are called the "Civil Law." As is the case with the Moral and the Ceremonial Law, this term too is never used in Scripture, yet the Pentateuch lists a number of laws that pertain especially to the civil government. We shall discuss them in the rest of this paper.

B. Why were the Civil Laws necessary?

Civil Laws were necessary for Israel, because the nation was, as God had said, "A peculiar treasure unto Me above all people" (Exodus 19:5). Israel was God's first-born son (Exodus 4:22), among whom He would walk (Leviticus 26:12), a special people chosen "unto Himself above all people that are on the face of the earth" (Deuteronomy 7:6; 14:2). When Israel asked Gideon to rule over them, he refused, saying, "The Lord shall rule over you" (Judges 8:23). When Israel called upon a reluctant Samuel to give them a king like other nations; God said, "They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them" (I Samuel 8:7). The great Prophet Isaiah summarized the entire matter by writing, "The Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Law-giver, the Lord is our King; He will save us" (Isaiah 33:22). If God were thus to rule over the theocracy directly, He had to promulgate civil laws. This He did in various parts of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

God gave His people those Civil Laws, in order that they might be completely dependent upon Him in every phase of their lives. This had been the case in the past. For example, God told Israel when to leave Egypt; He protected them from Pharaoh's Vengeance with a-startling miracle; He guided and provided for them during the forty years of wilderness wanderings; He would conquer Palestine for them, and He would divide the land among the twelve tribes. He made the priests the highest authorities in the land (Deuteronomy 17:8-13); He even settled difficult cases for the entire nation by that enigmatic Urim and Thummim (Exodus 28:30; Numbers 27:21; Deuteronomy 33:8). To continue that complete dependence upon God in what we would call purely secular matters, God gave His people various statutes to cover this area of their lives.

C. Where are the Civil Laws written?

For Israel there was, as we have said previously, no essential difference between the Moral, the Ceremonial, and the Civil Laws. It is not surprising, then, that the Civil Laws are scattered throughout Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy together with the Moral and Ceremonial Laws. There is no single place in all of the Bible which says: "The following are the Civil Laws for Israel." Deuteronomy, chapters 18-25, does present a summary of the Civil Laws, yet even here a few other matters are also included. If we wish to

obtain a comprehensive picture of the Civil Laws, we must search through the last four books of the Pentateuch. Even then it is sometimes difficult to determine which laws belong in each one of the three categories.

D. How may the Civil Laws be classified?

No classification of these laws is indicated in Scripture. Nor was any needed. The devout Israelite learned these regulations from childhood, and they thus became a part of his every-day life. (This, of course, was not the case during times of apostasy, something that happened a great deal of the time, especially in later years.)

Yet, for us who have not learned these laws from childhood and indeed may seldom have read them later in life, some system of classification is needed. Otherwise it will be difficult to obtain a clear picture of them and to understand or to remember them.

Although various arrangements of the old Testament Civil Laws have been suggested, a good method would seem to be one that groups them according to their relationship to the Ten Commandments. That is the arrangement suggested by Dr. William Smith in his *A Dictionary of the Bible*; N. Y. Fleming H. Revell (no date). (Dr. Luther, while not specifically advocating this arrangement, did write that both the Ceremonial and the Civil laws flowed from faith and love.) Except for the laws mentioned in the next part we shall follow the method suggested by Dr. Smith.

E. A few Civil Laws are not directly connected with the Ten Commandments.

Although most Old Testament Civil Laws flow from the Ten Commandments, a few of them do not. They are the ones that deal with Israel's relationship to the plant and animal kingdoms.

As far as the plant world is concerned, Leviticus 19:19 tells us, "Don't sow your field with two kinds of seed" (Bible quotations in sections E through M are from William Beck, *An American Translation*, except the wording of the Commandments). Again, "Don't sow in your vineyard another crop" (Deuteronomy 22:9); and, "When you besiege a town a long time as you fight against it, don't destroy its fruit trees... because you can get food from them" (Deuteronomy 20:19).

As far as the animal world was concerned, the Israelites were never to mate two different kinds of animals (Leviticus 19:19), nor even to work a field with two different kinds of animals (Deuteronomy 22:10). These laws undoubtedly arose from the order that God established at creation. "After its kind" meant for Israel no intermingling of crops or kinds of animals.

Three different times Israel was commanded, "Don't boil a kid in its mother's milk" (Exodus 23:19; 34:26; Deuteronomy 14:21). The reason may have been to teach God's people not to treat the relationship between a mother animal and her offspring with contempt. Indeed Israel was to be kind to animals, as Exodus 23:5 and Proverbs 12:10 state: "When you see your enemy's donkey lying helpless under its load, don't leave him alone with it, but by all means help him set it free"; "A righteous person is concerned about the life of his animals." The passage, "Don't muzzle an ox when it's treading out grain" (Deuteronomy 25:4) is familiar from the New Testament (1 Corinthians 9:9; 1 Timothy 5:18).

Outside of these few Civil Laws, however, almost every other one is directly derived from one or the other of the Ten Commandments, as we shall see in the following paragraphs.

F. Some Old Testament Civil Laws flow from the First Commandment, "Thou shalt have no other gods" (Exodus 20:3).

These laws included the command "utterly (to) destroy" those dreadfully wicked Canaanite nations, "The Hittites, and the Amorites, the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites... that they teach you not to do after all their abominations, which they have done unto their gods" (Deuteronomy 20:16-18, King James Version). "Don't keep anyone alive" (Deuteronomy 20:16). "Destroy them completely, and don't make any treaty with them or begin favoring them. Don't intermarry with them: don't let your daughter marry

his son or your son marry his daughter, because they will turn your sons away from Me to serve other gods. Then the Lord will get very angry With you and quickly destroy you” (Deuteronomy 7:2-4). “Completely destroy all the places where the people you’re driving out serve their gods... tear down their altars, smash their pillars, burn their sacred Asherah posts, cut down the images of their gods, and wipe out their names from their places” (Deuteronomy 12:2, 3). “Be careful not to ask about their idols and say, ‘How did these people serve their gods?’” (Deuteronomy 12:30).

If, however, the towns “are far away... (and) don’t belong to these people nearby” (Deuteronomy 20:15) and, “If it (the town) submits peacefully... then all the people found there should be made your slaves and should, serve you” (Deuteronomy 20:11). “If it will not submit peacefully’ . . . kill every male in it . . . but the women and children, the cattle and everything else in the town, all its goods, take as your spoils, and live on your enemies’ goods that the Lord your God gives you” (Deuteronomy 20:12-14).

If a prophet or a dreamer suggests, “Let us follow other gods, “even if he “offers you a miracle or a wonder and the miracle or wonder he promises you happens . . . that prophet or that man with his dreams must be killed because he told you to desert the Lord your God.... Get rid of such wickedness” (Deuteronomy 13:1,2, 5). (The Word of God had been confirmed with many signs, as Dr. Luther observes; therefore Israel was to keep it without adding or subtracting even one syllable from it, Deuteronomy 12:31.)

The penalty was to be no different, even if the tempter was a good friend or a close relative: “Don’t yield to him or listen to him, don’t pity him, spare him, shelter him. Kill him—your hand should be the first that is laid on him to kill him and afterwards the hands of all the other people. Stone him to death because he tried to mislead you to leave the Lord your God” (Deuteronomy 13:6-10).

Should an entire Israelite city become idolatrous, “Then, ask, inquire, and thoroughly investigate. If you prove it to be true that such an abominable thing was done among you, then kill the people of the town with the sword, destroy it completely with everything in it, including its cattle. Gather all its goods into the middle of its square and burn everything” (Deuteronomy 13:12-16).

“If any Israelite or any stranger who lives in Israel gives any of his children to Molech, he must be killed” (Leviticus 20:1). Finally, if an individual “goes and serves other gods and worships them . . . and you are told of it, inquire thoroughly, and if it proves to be true . . . then take that man or woman who did this wicked thing, and stone that man or woman to death” (Deuteronomy 17:2-5). However, that capital punishment was to be inflicted only “on the statement of two or three witnesses... the witnesses shall be the first to raise their hands to kill him, then all the other people” (Deuteronomy 17:6, 7). Thus the witness would either be completely sure or utterly depraved.

To the twentieth century mind these Civil Laws may seem to be harsh indeed. Some may even call them unwarranted. Yet; one must remember that God had chosen Israel to be His very own (Exodus 19); Israel had agreed to serve Him only; and there consequently must never be even a trace of idolatry in the land. Otherwise the covenant would be ruined.

These laws were also a powerful warning to every Israelite, telling him clearly and vividly what would happen to him in this world and in the world to come, if he fell into idolatry. (Unfortunately, in later years, these statutes were largely disregarded. Israel did leave the true God to serve creatures of their own imagination; the people forgot about God’s all-consuming hatred of idolatry.)

G. Some Old Testament Civil Laws flowed from the Second Commandment, “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain” (Exodus 20:7).

For example, “When anyone curses his God... he... must be killed. The whole congregation should stone him” (Leviticus 24:15). Likewise, “A medium or a wizard must be killed” (Leviticus 20:27), and “Don’t let a witch live” (Exodus 22:18).

The Civil Law decreed no specific punishment for fortunetellers, yet God specifically warned against “anyone who makes his son or daughter pass through the fire, one who uses divination or soothsaying, one who can tell good or bad luck by signs, one who uses sorcery or words to cast a spell, one who is a medium, one who

is a wizard, or one who consults the dead. The Lord detests all Who do these things, and for such abominable things the Lord your God is driving them out ahead of you” (Deuteronomy 18:9-12).

That threat applied also to those who sought the advice of mediums and wizards: “I will oppose the person who turns to mediums and wizards to lust after them, and I will cut him off from his people” (Leviticus 20:6).

If a person made a vow to give or do something for the Lord out of gratitude to Him or in view of a petition, that vow normally had to be kept. The only exception was that the father or the husband had the privilege of canceling the vow of a daughter or a wife, if he did it on the very day that he first heard about it (Numbers 30). Provisions were also made for redeeming something that had been given to the Lord with a vow (Leviticus 27:1-24).

H. Some Old Testament Civil Laws flow from the Third Commandment, “Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it Holy” (Exodus 20:8).

These laws were extensively treated in III, C, 3.

I. Some Old Testament Civil Laws flow from the Fourth Commandment, “Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee” (Exodus 20:12).

These laws were designed first of all to uphold God’s ordinance regarding the family. For example, “If anyone strikes his father or his mother (or curses them), he must be killed” (Exodus 21:15, 17; Leviticus 20:9). “If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who refuses to obey his father and mother and will not listen when they correct him, his father and mother must take him and bring him to the elders of this town in the public square and say to the elders of his town, ‘This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious. He refuses to obey us. He eats too much and drinks too much.’ All the men of his town should stone him to death; you must get rid of such wickedness among you. And when all Israel hears about it, they will be afraid” (Deuteronomy 21:18-21).

If there were slaves in the family (Israelites might sell themselves as “hired men,” but not as “slaves”), they must be treated humanely; they were freed in the Sabbath or Jubilee Years, if they desired, or they could be redeemed by relative (Exodus 21:2-11; Leviticus 25:39-55). Nor might an employer take advantage of a hired man: “Pay him on the same day, before the sun goes down, because he, being poor, has set his heart on it” (Leviticus 19:13; Deuteronomy 24:15).

As far as the government was concerned, Moses, upon the advice given by his father-in-law, Jethro, “chose able men from all parts of Israel and made them heads over the people, overseers of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, of tens. These men judged the people at all times. They brought the difficult cases to Moses, but the easier ones they decided themselves” (Exodus 18:24-26). God required Israel to continue that custom when the nation entered the Holy Land: “In all your towns that the Lord your God is giving you appoint judges and officials for your tribes to judge the people with justice” (Deuteronomy 16:18). “If there is a case too hard for you to decide... then go to the place the Lord your God chooses (and let the priest make the decision)... If anyone is so rebellious as not to listen to the priest . . . that man must die; get rid of such wickedness in Israel. When all the people hear about it, they will be afraid and not show such rebellion again” (Deuteronomy 17:8-13).

Corporal punishment was to be humanely inflicted: “If the guilty one deserves to be beaten, the judge should make him lie down and have him beaten, the judge should make him lie down and have him beaten before him as many times as he deserves for his wrong. He may be struck forty times but no more. Otherwise if you strike him more times than this, your fellow Israelite will be disgraced too much” (Deuteronomy 25:2-3; see also II Corinthians 11:24).

In the event that Israel would ask for a king, instructions for his conduct were also given. He was especially to “Make himself a copy of this teaching.... He must keep it with him and read it all his life to learn to fear the Lord his God and carefully do everything... these laws tell him” (Deuteronomy 17:14-20). (In later

years this command was so completely forgotten that the Book of the Law was actually lost for years, II Kings 22).

Furthermore, the government must make no treaty with any of the ungodly Canaanite nations, lest they turn the people away to serve other gods (Exodus 34:12,13; Deuteronomy 7:1-5).

In the beginning there were no taxes, except the tithe paid to the Temple, the firstfruits, and the holy shekel. The holy shekel was paid at the time of the census (Exodus 30:11-16). At that time every male enrolled in the army had to pay one shekel as “a ransom for his life,” to remind “the people continually, that by nature it was alienated from God, and could only remain in covenant with the Lord and live in His kingdom on the ground of His grace, which covered its sin” (Keil and Delitzsch, Vol. 2, p. 212).

All Israel had to respect its leaders; no one dared to “curse a leader of your people” (Exodus 22:28). Young David undoubtedly remembered that Bible passage, when he at least twice had an occasion to kill King Saul, his enemy, “The Lord forbid,” David told his men, “that I should raise my hand against him, since he is the one the Lord anointed” (I Samuel 24:6; 26:9). Shimei forgot that command (II Samuel 16:5-13; 19:18-23; I Kings 2:8,9,38-46).

Finally, there were also some special regulations regarding service in the army (Deuteronomy 20). A priest was to encourage the soldiers before a battle. Anyone who had built and not yet dedicated a house, planted and not yet enjoyed the fruits of a vineyard, became engaged and was not yet married, married and had not yet lived with his wife for a year, and even one who was timid and afraid—all were excused from military service.

J. Some Old Testament Civil Laws flowed from the Fifth Commandment, “Thou shalt not kill” (Exodus 20:13).

For example, if anyone was convicted of murder in the first degree by two or more witnesses (Numbers 35:30), that crime was always to be punished by death of the criminal. Nor did it matter if the person used an iron weapon, a stone, a wooden weapon, or his fist, or if he pushed the victim or threw something at him (Leviticus 24:17; Numbers 35:16-21). In every such case, “the avenging relative must kill the man” (Numbers 35:19). Such a criminal could not flee to a City of Refuge and be safe (Deuteronomy 19:11).

Unpremeditated, unintentional, or accidental killing were different matters (Exodus 21:12,13). Such killers could flee to a City of Refuge and be safe from the avenging relative. For that purpose the Israelites were to choose six cities, three east of the Jordan River and three west of it, as “Towns of refuge,” where the unintentional murderer could live in safety until the high priest died. Thereafter he was allowed to return to his home (Numbers 35:9-29). “The community should decide according to these regulations (mentioned in the previous verses) whether the man who struck the blow or the avenging relative is right. And the community should rescue the man who did the killing from the avenging relative and bring him back to the town of refuge where he fled, and he should live there till the high priest, anointed with the holy oil, dies. But if the killer goes out of the limits of the town of refuge he fled to and the avenging relative finds him outside the limits of the town of refuge and the avenging relative kills him, then he’s not a murderer, because the man should stay in the town of refuge till the high priest dies; but after high priest is dead, the killer may go back to his own home” (Numbers 35:25-28). (Drs. Keil and Delitzsch state, “The death of the earthly high priest became thereby a type of that of the heavenly One, who, through the eternal holy Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God, that we might be redeemed from our transgressions, and receive the promised eternal inheritance, Heb. ix. 14, 15.”) In other words the death of the high priest symbolically expiated the unintentional killing.

Moses mentioned an example of the accidental or unintentional type of killing in Deuteronomy 19:4-10; it was the example of a man whose axe head slipped and hit someone on the head so that he died.

“If someone injures his neighbor, then” the *lex talionis* went into effect: “a broken limb for a broken limb, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, as he injured the other one so should it be done to him” (Leviticus 24:19, 20; Exodus 21:24, 25; Deuteronomy 19:21). Please note that this provision was a part of Israel’s Civil

Law and it applied only to a free Israelite, not to harming a slave. Yet, destroying the eye or a tooth of a slave was cause for giving him his freedom (Exodus 21:26, 27).

Owners were responsible for dangerous animals (Exodus 21:28-36) and for dangers on their property. Deuteronomy 22:8, for example, required a parapet around the edge of one's roof.

There were Civil Laws that forbade mistreatment of foreigners, widows, and orphans: "Don't mistreat a foreigner or oppress him, because you were foreigners in Egypt. Don't mistreat any widow or orphan. If you mistreat such a one and he cries to Me, I will certainly listen to his cry and get very angry and kill you with the sword, and then your wives will be widows and your children orphans" (Exodus 22:21-24; see also Exodus 23:9; Leviticus 19:33, 34).

The poor were to be helped (Deuteronomy 15:4) by lending to them when they needed it (Deuteronomy 15:7, 8); by canceling debts for fellow-Israelites (not foreigners) every seven years (Deuteronomy 15:1-3, 9-11); by not gleaning grain or grapes or olives, let "the stranger, the orphan, and the widow (and the poor) have the rest" (Deuteronomy 24:19-22; Leviticus 19:9, 10; 23:22). "When you go into your neighbor's vineyard, you may eat as many grapes as you like till you have enough, but don't put any in your container. When you go into your neighbor's grainfield, you may pick the heads of grain with your hand, but don't use a sickle to cut your neighbor's grain" (Deuteronomy 23:24, 25). (We recall the beautiful story of Ruth, the gleaner, Ruth, chapter 2, and of the disciples who picked grain on the Sabbath Day, Mark 2:23-28).

K. Some Old Testament Civil Laws flow from the Sixth Commandment, "Thou shalt not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14).

There were, for example, strict laws forbidding seduction. "If a man seduces a virgin who isn't engaged and has intercourse with her, he must pay the bride-price and marry her. If her father absolutely refuses to give her to him, he must pay in silver an amount equal to the bride-price for virgins" (Exodus 22:16, 17).

Capital punishment was inflicted for adultery with another man's wife, with a stepmother, and with a daughter-in-law; for homosexuality; for marriage to a mother and her daughter; or for having sexual relations with an animal. Lesser penalties were inflicted for having sexual relations with other close relatives (Leviticus 20:10-21).

Divorce was allowed (Deuteronomy 24:1-4), but "Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so," said Jesus (Matthew 19:8, King James Version). Divorce was also allowed for a man who had married a war prisoner (Deuteronomy 21:10-14).

If a husband suspected a wife of adultery, both came before a priest for a special ceremony in which the wife swore to accept a curse upon her body, if she was perjuring herself (Numbers 5).

The Levirate Marriage provided for a man who had been living close to his brother to marry his brother's childless widow and having a child for his brother's family by her. The purpose of this arrangement was "so that his name isn't lost in Israel," so that no family would lose the blessing of the Promise (Deuteronomy 25:5-10). With that law God reinforced a custom of the ancient Israelites (see Genesis 38 with its sad account of the relations among Judah, his son (Onan), and Tamar). The Levirate Marriage played an important part in the marriage of Ruth and Boaz. It was also the law with which the Sadducees tempted Christ (Matthew 22:23-33).

L. Some Old Testament Civil Laws flow from the Seventh Commandment, "Thou shalt not steal" (Exodus 20:15).

As we might expect, God gave Israel various laws that are closely connected with the Seventh Commandment. For example, as far as inheritance was concerned, Israel was, at least to some extent, to practice the principle of primogeniture. The first-born son received a double portion of the inheritance (Deuteronomy 21:15-17). Other inheritance laws provided that the daughters were to inherit the estate, if there were no brothers; the father's brothers would inherit it, if there were no daughters; then, if there were no brothers, the

father's closest relatives would be the beneficiaries. (Deuteronomy 27:5-11). However, daughters who were heiresses were required to marry someone of the same tribe so that their land did not pass on to members of another tribe (Numbers 36).

There were also strict laws regarding the sale of land: "The land must never be sold permanently, because the land is Mine, and you're only foreigners staying with Me. In all the land you possess you must allow for a way to buy, it back. When an Israelite gets so poor he has to sell some of his property, his nearest relative should come to him and buy back what he sold. If a man has nobody to buy it back, but he himself prospers and earns enough to buy it back, he should count the years after he sold it and pay back the rest to the man he sold it to, and then he can go back to his property. But if he can't earn enough to get it back, what he sold stays in the hands of the man who bought it till the year of jubilee; then it is his again, and he can go back to his property" (Leviticus 25:23-28). Regulations regarding the sale of a house were more complicated (Leviticus 25:29-34).

Honest weights and measures were required in trading (Leviticus 19:35,36; Deuteronomy 25:13-16). "Don't change the boundary-stone between you and your neighbor" (Deuteronomy 19:14; 27:17). "The thief must certainly pay back; if he has nothing, he must be sold to pay for what he stole" (Exodus 22:3).

The thief must restore as much as four or five for one that he stole, a law that applies also to something left in someone else's hands (Exodus. 22:1-15). "When you happen to find your enemy's ox or donkey going astray, be sure to bring it back to him" (Exodus 23:4; Deuteronomy 22:1-4). "Don't take a handmill or an upper millstone to guarantee paying a debt, because you would be taking life as your security" (Deuteronomy 24:6). (This law applies also to taking your neighbor's outer garment, Deuteronomy 27:12,13.) "If anyone is caught kidnapping another Israelite, treating him tyrannically or selling him, the kidnapper must die, and so you must get rid of such wickedness among you" (Deuteronomy 24:7). "If you lend money to My people, to any poor person... do not charge him interest" (Exodus 22:15; Leviticus 25:35-38; Deuteronomy 15:7-11). However, "You may have a foreigner pay interest" (Deut. 19:20).

M. Some Old Testament Civil Laws flow from the Eighth Commandment, "Thou shall not bear false witness against thy neighbor" (Exodus 20:16).

We have previously mentioned that two or more witnesses must agree in cases of capital punishment (Numbers 35:30; Deuteronomy 17:6), a regulation that was embarrassing to the Sanhedrin at Jesus' trial (Matthew 26:57-66). "A single witness should not get up to testify against anyone about any wickedness, sin, or wrong he may have done. Each case should be settled on the evidence of two or three witnesses" (Deuteronomy 19:15). If someone proved to be a false witness, "then do to him what he planned to do to his neighbor, and so get rid of such wickedness among you" (Deuteronomy 19:19).

There were, of course, no Civil Laws that flow from the Ninth and Tenth Commandments. One's thoughts are private.

N. The Old Testament Civil Laws were meant for Israel only during a certain period of its history.

None of the Civil Laws was in effect before the time of Moses, about 1500 B.C. All of them were given by God to Israel when He chose these people out of all the nations on earth to be His very own. When "Moses went and told the people everything the Lord said, including all the regulations (the Ceremonial and Civil laws given him on Mt. Sinai, Exodus 20:18-23:33)... all the people answered as one man: 'We will do everything the Lord has told us to do'" (Exodus 24:3). The covenant was then sealed with blood; therewith Israel became a theocracy; and God gave it various Civil Laws in addition to the Ceremonial and Moral Laws, all of which Israel promised to obey.

Those Civil Laws governed Israel to a greater or lesser degree for a number of centuries. However, as we know from the Books of Kings and from the denunciations of the prophets, Israel in later times often neglected, ignored, or entirely forgot God's Civil Laws. Some 700 years after the days of Moses the Northern

Kingdom was led away into captivity by Assyria because of the wickedness and was never heard from again. The Southern Kingdom was likewise led into captivity into Babylon about 125 years later, because it too became desperately wicked. Thus the theocracy practically disappeared from the pages of history. With those captivities the Civil Laws also were no longer in effect, since Israel was dominated by a foreign government.

True, a remnant that returned to Palestine under Ezra and Nehemiah was zealous about keeping all the laws of Moses (Nehemiah 8:9). Not long thereafter, however, Israel ceased to be a nation. For some 400 years it was dominated, by Persia., by Greece, and then by Rome. Those rulers allowed Israel more or less freedom to follow its own laws, but the theocracy with its Civil Laws was gone forever.

In New Testament times God requires all of His children to obey the statutes of the lawfully constituted government (Romans 13:1-7; I Peter 2:13-16), whether it be nominally Christian or completely pagan, so long as it does not require us to sin (Acts 5:29).

True, there is no single Bible passage (to this writer's knowledge; see John 18:36, Act 1:6,7) which definitely states that the Civil Laws are no longer in effect (excepting Romans 13 and I Peter 2). In that respect the Civil Laws are different from the Ceremonial, since there are many passages that tell us the Ceremonial Laws have been abolished.

Yet, there has never been more than one true theocracy in all history, despite efforts of men like Calvin in Geneva and Carlstadt in Wittenberg to institute a New Testament theocracy. And that one true theocracy has long ceased to exist. (In connection with the Ceremonial Law we pointed out that "Christ is the end of the law to give righteousness to everyone who believes," Romans 10:4, a passage that applies also to the Civil Law. Also like everything else in the Old Testament, the Civil Law pointed forward to Christ, especially in its provisions for Cities of Refuge, Jubilee Year, and the like.

O. Even though the Old Testament Civil Law no longer applies to us, yet every ruler could well "keep it with him and read it all his life..." (Deuteronomy 17:19).

Those laws protected Israel's citizens from thieves, murderers, kidnappers, rapists, false witnesses, and the like, as our statutes should also do. There weren't a great many Civil Laws in comparison with our huge statute books, but they accomplished their purpose.

They also provided for swift, fair, humane, sure justice in keeping with the nature of the crime. One cannot help but contrast the various instances of capital punishment, for example, with our lenient treatment of vile offenders. No wonder that crime in America is unbelievably huge and dangerous. (A particularly vicious murderer was sentenced to 199 years in prison—he could become eligible for parole, and naturally for continuing his life of crime, after seven years.) It may be interesting to note that the Massachusetts Bay Colony in its early years had few laws. When the judges were in doubt, they consulted the ministers or the Bible. However, by the 1640's a code of laws was gradually adopted based on Israel's Civil Laws. Those laws of the Colony even mentioned chapter, and verse in the Bible (the references were placed in the margins). They were in effect until about 1700. Those Massachusetts laws were milder and more humane than England's.

Thus we have seen again how portions of Scripture that are sometimes little known are indeed "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God maybe perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (II Timothy 3:16, 17). May God use this paper to that end.