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The New Obedience An Exegetical Glance at Article VI of the Augsburg Confession

Michael P. Middendorf

Introduction: Colloquy Interviews

Over the last decade, I have probably conducted more than forty teacher colloquy interviews. These have been through Concordia University, Irvine and the CUENet program. One of the questions these teachers usually answer for their final interview is: “What about good works?” The typical answer is brief: “Yes, we are supposed to do them,” followed by a paragraph of denunciations against thinking good works earn or merit anything before God. Thus the respondents typically spend much more time speaking against good works than defining what they are.

Laying Article VI of the Augsburg Confession before Us

When asked to write this paper I re-read Article VI of the Augsburg Confession. I found these colloquy teachers were in fine company.

In the Kolb/Wengert edition of the Book of Concord, the article begins: “It is also taught that such faith should yield good fruit and good works and that a person must do such good works as God has commanded.”¹ One wonders what would happen if the Confessors had stopped there. Would they pass muster (or doctrinal review) with words like “should” or “must?” The German even asserts we must do “all such things” (*allerlei*) as God has commanded.²

In the context of the sixteenth century and the abuses of the Roman church, the remainder of the article raises red flags against presuming these works earn or merit grace, while also reaffirming the truth of the gospel.

But we should do them for God’s sake but not place trust in them as if thereby to earn grace before God. For we receive forgiveness of sin and righteousness through faith in Christ, as Christ himself says [Lk 17:10]: “When you have done all [things] . . . say, ‘We are worthless slaves.’” The Fathers also teach the same thing. For Ambrose says, “It is determined by God that whoever believes in Christ shall be saved and have forgiveness of sins, not through works but through faith alone, without merit.”³

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The quotations of Luke 17:10 and from Ambrose counter any misunderstanding of thinking our good works deserve anything toward justification before God. To be sure, those red flags should always be flying. They remain particularly relevant in a context like Galatians,⁴ in dealing with the Pharisees of our day, or when our own academic prowess rears its head.

Yet the order of the articles in the Augsburg Confession, as we are covering them in these conferences, is pure genius. When one hears the second and third sentences here, they restate or, at least, reaffirm the previous two articles on Justification and the Ministry. Note, however, that AC VI does not swerve back into the second use of the Law, but simply reasserts the exclusive truth of the gospel, namely, that grace, forgiveness, and righteousness come through faith in Christ apart from any of our works.

Defining the Terms and Categories

Let us endeavor to hear the first part of AC VI through the theme of this conference, “The New Obedience.”⁵ So, what’s *new*? The commandments themselves are not new, something Jesus (Mt 19:19; 22:34–40; Mk 10:19; Lk 18:20) and Paul (Rom 13:8–10) make clear (see also FC Ep VI 7). Rather, the *person* has been renewed and regenerated. As Titus 3:5–6 states, “Not from works, the ones which we did in righteousness, but according to his mercy he saved us through [the] washing of rebirth and *renewal* of [the] Holy Spirit,⁶ whom he poured out upon us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior” (cf. Rom 6:4, 6; 12:2; Eph 4:21–24).

What then is biblical *obedience*? In English “obey” generally conveys the notion of something we must do. The Oxford English Dictionaries define the verb as:

- (a) to comply with, or perform the bidding of; to do what is commanded by (a person); to submit to the rule or authority of, to be obedient to.
- (b) to comply with, perform (a command, etc.).
- (c) to submit to, subject oneself to, act in accordance with (a principle, authority, etc.).⁶

However, the basic biblical sense means to *listen and respond appropriately*. The underlying Hebrew is usually *šama’ lə*, “to hearken to,” often to the word of Yahweh. The NT uses the Greek word group of *ὑπακούω* similarly. When one hears God’s condemning law, the appropriate response is to acknowledge, that is, confess, that what God says about me and all people apart from Christ is true (e.g., 1 Jn 1:8–10). At times, however, what is mistranslated “obey” is intended to be a receptive response to the gospel. For example, Hebrews 5:9 declares that Christ “became the cause of eternal salvation for all the ones who *ὑπακούουσιν* him” (Heb 5:9). To translate with a form of “obey” here, as most translations do (e.g., ESV, KJV, NASB, NIV, RSV, NRSV), makes salvation contingent upon our “obedience.” The same appears to be true with the cognate noun in 1 Peter 1:22, “Having purified your souls *ἐν τῇ ὑπακοῇ* of the truth.” Again, all the translations referenced above use forms of “obey.” But our souls could never be purified by our obedience; it happens, instead, “by the responsive hearing of the truth” of the gospel. Paul even uses the verb *ὑπακούω* as a parallel for

πιστεύω in Romans 10:16. Thus, when one hears the gospel, the appropriate response of ὑπακοή is to “listen responsively,” to “heed” or “hearken to” it with receptive faith (as in Rom 1:5; 6:16; 15:18; 16:26; cf. Rom 10:9).⁷ Well, that was law and then gospel confessed, as in Articles I–V of the Augsburg Confession). So let’s just get on with the church in Articles VII and VIII, and skip this pesky notion of the new obedience.

But to do so is to disregard much of Jesus’s teaching and, typically, the latter portion of Paul’s letters as well (e.g., Rom 12–16; Gal 5–6; Col 3–4; Eph 4–6; 1 Thes 5; see below). Article VI affirms, “It is also taught that such faith should yield good fruit and good works and that a person must do such good works as God has commanded.” Thus when we hear the Lord tell us what to do and not do, the appropriate response for the *renewed* believer is to obey, that is, to do and not do according to his word. Is there as much room for this in our teaching as there was in that of Jesus’s? Is the new obedience as prominent in our proclamation as it was in Paul’s? Does it have the same significance in our lives as it did in theirs?

Here, I think, our tendency to make all law second use in our proclamation and to be wary of most or even all third use obscures the matter of the new obedience we confess. For example, can we proclaim the parable of the Good Samaritan without changing the intended referent of the characters and, instead, affirm Jesus’s own application: “Go and do likewise!” (Lk 10:37). Can we tell sheep—who have been re-created from goat hood and who inherit the kingdom by the Father’s grace (Mt 25:34)—that they are to respond with new obedience, consciously and actively caring for the needy, unaware that they are doing it to Jesus himself (Mt 25:35–40)? I recently heard a great sermon on these two phrases from 1 Corinthians 6. “You are not your own; you were bought at a price” (1 Cor 6:19b–20a). Amen. Yet Paul reminds us of those precious gospel truths in order to lead up to this specific exhortation: “Therefore glorify God in your body” (1 Cor 6:20b).

In my own teaching, I have generally moved beyond the two categories of law and gospel, to use three, law, gospel and response.⁸ I like “response” better than the third use of the law since we still seem to be debating whether such a use even exists (cf. Article VI of the Formula of Concord). But the term “response” does what AC VI does. It raises the question, response to what? Not my merits, but for God and because of Christ. This is where the new obedience comes from. It is the focus of much of Scripture’s teaching as will be highlighted briefly in the remainder of this article.

The New Obedience in the Old Testament

In his recent article in *Lutheran Forum*, Scott Ashmon affirms that, particularly in the prophets, “the judgment-restoration pattern dominates so much that it appears to be *the* proper order of prophecy,” a sequence equivalent to the “law-gospel paradigm”⁹ But Ashmon continues by observing other patterns in the OT, particularly a grace-law sequence. Genesis begins in just such a manner.

It recounts God’s gracious love toward creation in general, and humanity in particular, by giving them life, making them “exceptionally good”

(*tôb me 'ôd*), and giving them all they need for an “exceptionally good” life. It is only after God has graciously created humanity that He commands them to multiply, fill the earth, and have dominion over it, and, in Genesis 2, prohibits them from eating of the tree of knowledge.¹⁰

Similarly, he observes that in Genesis 12

God does not begin with Law in addressing Abram, even though he is a sinner, but with grace. Only later does God, based on His gracious election of and promises to Abram, obligate him to live uprightly (Gn 17:1).¹¹

This grace-law pattern exhibits itself most prominently in the exodus, culminating at Sinai. Against any works righteous notions, God does not give the law to Israel in Egypt and declare that he will save them from their slavery *if* they obey the commands. Neither, however, does Yahweh give them the law, call them to confess their failures as poor, miserable sinners, and only then come to the rescue. Instead, God just delivers them! At the *Yam Suph*, Israel responds appropriately by trusting in Yahweh and in Moses, his servant (Ex 14:31). That sounds a lot like Articles IV and V of the Augsburg Confession.

Then, at Mt. Sinai, God gives what the Scriptures exclusively call the “Ten Words.”¹² It is shocking for many people to hear that the Scriptures themselves never use the phrase, “the Ten Commandments.” Instead, whenever “ten” is used in reference to them, another noun is being modified. Exodus 34:28 identifies “the words of the covenant” appositionally as “the ten words” (*'êṭ dibrê habbārîṭ, 'ăseret haddābārîm*). The Septuagint renders the latter phrase literally as τὸὺς δέκα λόγους which produces the transliterated term “Decalogue.”¹³ Why no Ten Commandments? Because the first word is gospel, reminding Israel that Yahweh has graciously chosen them as his own and already rescued them.¹⁴ “I am Yahweh your God, who brought you out of Egypt, from the house of slaves” (Ex 20:2). Hummel affirms, “Two later Jewish usages underscore the same general point: (1) continuing the Biblical usage of speaking of ten “words,” not “commandments”; and (2) counting [Ex 20] v. 2, which plainly is indicative, as “word” #1.”¹⁵

Within the context of Israel’s salvation history as recounted in Exodus and later in Deuteronomy, the remaining nine words or, “commandments,” describe the new obedience, a way to live in response to mercies already received. The dominant use of imperfect verb forms corroborates the point. Hummel advises:

It is of utmost importance to underscore the fact that grammatically the Decalogue is in *indicative*, not imperative form (the negative *lo*, not *al*). These are statements of what the believer who has experienced God’s grace *will* voluntarily do, not commands of what he must do to deserve or earn God’s love. They represent perimeters or boundaries of God’s kingship, beyond which the believer will not stray, but *within* which He is essentially free to respond joyfully and voluntarily, as illustrated by the rest of the “laws” or “codes” of the Old Testament.¹⁶

Luther's explanations to the commandments in his Small Catechism nicely express the new obedience as well. For example, he explains the lone imperative in the Ten Words, "Honor (*kabbéd*) your father and your mother" (Ex 20:12; Dt 5:16), as follows: "We should fear and love God so that we do not despise our parents and other authorities, but honor them, serve and obey them, love and cherish them."¹⁷

Ashmon goes on to identify all of Deuteronomy, Psalm 78, and Ezekiel 36 as indicative of a similar grace-law or grace-law-grace pattern. For more information on the Old Testament, see Ashmon's article.

The New Obedience in the New Testament

As we segue to the NT, 1 Peter follows a similar grace-law pattern. Scharlemann expresses it with the catchy phrases, "Be what you already are" and "Exodus Ethics."¹⁸ Peter essentially reminds believers, "Here's who you are in Christ, so live like it" (e.g., 1 Pet 1:3-12 into 1:13-17; 1:18-21 into 1:22; 1:23-25 into 2:13; etc.). But I specialize in St. Paul and we are pretty much a Pauline church so we'll spend most of our remaining time there.

Romans

Interestingly, St. Paul references specific commandments from the Decalogue in only two letters. One of them, Ephesians, contains an echo of the command against stealing (Eph 4:28) and a direct citation of the commandment to "honor your father and mother" (6:2). The other letter is Romans whose argument the opening articles of the Augsburg Confession follows quite well. In fact, a book by Paulson titled *Lutheran Theology* simply walks through Romans!¹⁹

Walther contends that in Romans 1-3 we find "the sharpest preaching of the Law."²⁰ In Romans 2 Paul uses the Decalogue as a "second use" mirror. While addressing a Jew who relies upon the law and boasts in God (Rom 2:17), he asks,

Therefore the one who teaches another, are you not teaching yourself? The one who proclaims, "Do not steal!" are you stealing? The one who says, "Do not commit adultery!" are you committing adultery? The one who abhors idols, are you robbing temples? You who are boasting in the Law, through the transgression of the Law you are dishonoring God (Rom 2:21-23).²¹

This is "the old obedience." Walther continues:

This [sharpest preaching of the law] is followed, towards the end of the third chapter and in chapters 4 and 5, by the doctrine of justification—nothing but that. Beginning at chapter 6, the apostle treats nothing else than sanctification. *Here we have a true pattern of the correct sequence: first the Law, threatening men with the wrath of God; next the Gospel, announcing the comforting promises of God. This is followed by instruction regarding things we do after we have become new man.*²²

Note Walther's three parts. They sound like law, gospel, and response.

Romans 6:11–19

Romans contains sixty-two imperatives. But aside from 6:11–19, only one appears in the first ten chapters! And that lone form has God as its subject (“Let God be true,” γινέσθω δὲ ὁ θεὸς ἀληθής, 3:4).²³ Therefore the five imperatives in 6:11–19 are significant. They exhort those who “have become new man” by virtue of the one-time aorist act of baptism to resist sin and, instead, to walk in the renewal of life which only now is possible (6:4).

Thus you also count (λογίζεσθε) yourselves to be dead to sin (6:11). . . . Continually resist the reign (βασιλευέτω) of sin in your mortal body (6:12) . . . and do not continue to present (μηδὲ παριστάνετε) your bodily members to sin [as] instruments of unrighteousness; instead, present (παραστήσατε) yourselves to God as living from [the] dead and your bodily members to God [as] instruments of righteousness (6:13). . . . Now present (παραστήσατε) your bodily members as slavish to righteousness leading to sanctification (6:19).²⁴

In keeping with AC VI, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession cites verse 19 to affirm that “after penitence (that is, conversion or regeneration) must come good fruits and good works in every phase of life” (Ap AC XII 131–32).

My commentary on Romans asserts the following:

The 18 indicative statements which permeate [the last half of Romans 6] counter the notion of viewing it predominantly as imperative commands. . . . But to exclude Paul’s exhortations to continually resist sin and, instead, to present one’s entire self to God in righteousness which has fruit for sanctified living also obscures Paul’s purpose. To choose either indicative or imperative presents a false alternative. The key, of course, is to consider both fully, with proper balance, and in the right order. The indicatives of God come first, as in 6:1–11, and also throughout 6:12–23. They are passively received. But Paul also calls for, indeed, even commands, a response which entails active resistance against sin, as well as the offering of one’s bodily members in righteous service and for fruitful holy living to God.

Both Paul’s indicatives and his imperatives are . . . not properly comprehended if one adopts a “God-does-it-all” attitude toward sanctified living. Yes, “God-does-it-all” in our justification (e.g., Rom 3:21–26, 28). We do well to reject all moralism and legalism. At the same time, we ought to confess that a “God-does-it-all” attitude in sanctification is not what Paul teaches. As the Formula of Concord states,

From this it follows that as soon as the Holy Spirit has initiated his work of regeneration and renewal in us through the Word and the holy sacraments, it is certain that we can and

must cooperate by the power of the Holy Spirit, even though we still do so in great weakness. (FC SD II 65)

Christian living is “our responsibility,” yet, thankfully, not ours alone. It is possible only “in Jesus Christ our Lord” (6:23) and empowered by the Spirit who baptized us into his Name “so that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, thus also we might walk in life’s renewal” (6:4).²⁵

Romans 7:14–8:4

Of course, sin throws a wrench into our new obedience. As a result, Romans 7:14–25 vividly depicts how the law performs a double function in the Christian’s life.²⁶ Paul’s portrayal of his own experience fits squarely within his theology of the “now” and the “not yet.”²⁷ The believer is “now” no longer under the dominion and condemnation of the law (6:14; 7:4), but belongs, instead, to the age to come through the mercies of God. Therein, the *renewed* mind joyfully delights to enslave itself in obedience to the good which the law commands (7:22, 25). Yet believers also still live in the “not-yet” world into which sin entered and spread to all people (5:12). As a result, Paul the believer continues to admit, “I am fleshly, sold under sin . . . Sin dwells in me . . . this is, in my flesh” (7:14, 17, 18). Here the formula observes how Paul “himself learns from the law that his works are still imperfect and impure” (FC SD VI 21). The frustration expressed by Paul in 7:14–25 employs the first person singular to give *his own perspective* regarding himself, the law, and sin.

But what really counts is *God’s perspective*.²⁸ God’s declaration regarding Paul’s and our reality is that “nothing is condemnation for the ones in Christ Jesus” (8:1). This change of perspective explains why Paul moves away from first person language to speak authoritatively of God’s view in 8:1–4, rather than his/our own. The decisive change happened by virtue of “God sending his own Son” whose Spirit sets us free (8:2–3). This is why, even in the midst of the ongoing not-yet reality, all who know how God regards them in Christ can join Paul in declaring *all* of Romans 7:25. “But thanks to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! Consequently, then, on the one hand, I myself am a slave to the law of God with my mind. But, on the other hand, with my flesh [I am a slave] to the law of sin.”

Because sin continues to reside in our flesh (*simul peccator*; e.g., Rom 7:14, 17, 20), “the law always accuses” (*lex semper accusat*, Ap AC IV 128, 295). Indeed, to some degree, any standard reveals if one measures up or not, and to what degree; when one falls short, as is the case for all people (Rom 3:9, 22), the law properly exposes the shortcoming (Rom 3:19–20; 7:7–11, 14–25). But while the law may still function to accuse those in Christ for continuing to do what is wrong and failing to do what is right (7:14–25), it cannot condemn. Surely God does not use the law to condemn those in Christ either. Instead, God sent Christ who has fully fulfilled the law for us (8:3–4a; cf. Mt 5:17).²⁹ If the gospel is proclaimed clearly, repeatedly, and powerfully, as Paul does in Romans, his and our hearers will understand they are no longer subject to the law’s condemnation. Christ who fulfilled the law is its τέλος (Mt 5:17; Rom 10:4).

Therefore, they can then hear the imperatives of Romans 6 and 12–16 as exhortations to live out the new obedience while walking “in accord with the Spirit” (8:4).

The exhortations of Romans 12–16³⁰

Romans 5–8 largely gives theological expression to the renewal of life God gives (e.g., 6:4); chapters 12–16 then offer practical guidelines for the life a believer lives.³¹ Paul fleshes out the new obedience in great detail in Romans 12–16 where, in marked contrast with the earlier chapters, he uses forty-nine imperatives.³² Raabe and Voelz point that out:

Paul’s intent in paraenesis is not to accuse the Romans as sinners. He does that in chapters 1–3, where the tone is notably different. Paraenesis uses the language of urging, appealing, and beseeching rather than that of harsh demanding and condemning.³³

Paul’s opening appeal in chapter 12 comes through the mercies of God (12:1) which have been expounded at great length thus far in the letter. These mercies are for all (11:32) and graciously renewed for us each and every morning (Lam 3:23). *What follows is the new obedience.* Here, the Formula of Concord says, the Holy Spirit “employs the law to instruct the regenerate out of it and to show and indicate to them in the Ten Commandments what the acceptable will of God is” (FC SD VI 12).

In addition to Paul’s move from indicative toward imperative, his use of the ἀγάπη word group in Romans also provides helpful validation. Thus far, except for 8:28, every use speaks of the love of God and Christ *for* us (5:5, 8; 8:35, 37, 39; 9:18, 25). But that changes in 12:9 where Paul begins a description of the believer’s authentic love in action *toward others*, a topic which runs all the way through Romans 13:10. In keeping with AC VI, the Formula of Concord refers to Romans 13:5, 6 and 9 as evidence that “good works are necessary”; these passages indicate “what we are bound to do because of God’s ordinance, commandment, and will” (FC SD IV 14). Then, in 13:8–10, “when Paul admonishes those who have been born anew to do good works, he holds up before them precisely the Ten Commandments” (FC VI 21) by citing four of them. In this way, the law reaches the loving “fullness” God lovingly intends. According to Schreiner,

Paul sees love and law as compatible in a wider way. . . . The specific commands cited help Christians discern how love expresses itself in specific situations, but the other moral norms of the law also help believers define love. . . . If love is cut free from any commandments, it easily dissolves into sentimentality, and virtually any course of action can be defined as “loving.”³⁴

Then, in Romans 14:1–15:7, Paul deals with a situation where believers have different convictions about foods and holy days. As a result of the work and words of Christ, these OT regulations have now become *adiaphora*. Interestingly, the Augsburg

Confession mirrors the sequence of Romans here as well. Article VI on the new obedience (cf. Rom 12:1–13:14) leads into AC VII’s assertion that having the same rites and ceremonies in worship is neither necessary for nor determinative of unity.³⁵ The Lutheran Confessions do not insist upon, and Paul does not even seek, uniformity of practice as a desired outcome (see the Formula of Concord, Article X). In the new obedience, Dunn describes how “the liberty of the Christian assembly should be able to embrace divergent views and practices without feeling that they must be resolved or that a common mind must be achieved on every point of disagreement.”³⁶ In addition to what he writes in Romans 14:1–15:7, the conduct of Paul’s ministry further exemplifies his incredibly flexible behavior, even in regard to the law, and all in service to the gospel (e.g., Rom 9:13–14; 15:15–21; 1 Cor 9:19–23).

Ephesians

As indicated above, the only other letter where Paul cites the Decalogue is Ephesians (6:2; cf. 4:28), probably the most generic or least contextual of his letters. In keeping with the creation account, the Ten Words, and Romans 1:1–17, Paul starts off with glorious gospel throughout Ephesians 1. Then the familiar chapter 2 concisely and universally articulates a classic expression of law and gospel. In so doing, it depicts who we were (past tense) apart from God’s loving kindness—dead in trespasses and sin; by nature children of wrath, as are all people (2:1–3). To be sure, it is always helpful to be reminded of who we were and where we would be apart from God’s rich mercy and love. But we are so no longer! God made us alive in Christ and saved us by grace through faith (2:4–10a). The remainder of chapters 2 and 3 affirm the eternal inheritance which belongs to all those who have been brought into God’s household. Jews and Gentiles alike are now one people in the body of Christ.

What then do we do with the second half of Ephesians? AC VI points us in the right direction: “It is also taught that such faith should yield good fruit and good works and that a person must do such good works as God has commanded.” But, as the rest of AC VI reminds us, as soon as one loses sight of “by grace through faith” as a gift of God (2:8), Ephesians 4–6 will likely be misunderstood and misapplied. Yet one should also not lose sight of the fact that God’s love and kindness call forth a certain lifestyle in response. Ephesians 5:8 summarizes the entire letter and all of Paul’s theology well: “For you were formerly darkness; now [you are] light in the Lord; walk as children of light!” (ἦτε γὰρ ποτε σκότος, νῦν δὲ φῶς ἐν κυρίῳ· ὡς τέκνα φωτὸς περιπατεῖτε). There we have it—law in the past tense, gospel in the Lord, and response with an active imperative. To walk as children of light is the new obedience.

Ephesians 4 begins, “I urge you, therefore . . . to walk worthy of the calling of which you were called” (Παρακαλῶ οὖν ὑμᾶς ἐγὼ ὁ δέσμιος ἐν κυρίῳ ἀξίως περιπατήσαι τῆς κλήσεως ἧς ἐκλήθητε). Later in the chapter, Paul adds:

You . . . were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed (ἀνανεοῦσθαι) in the spirit of your

minds, and to put on the new self (τὸν καινὸν ἄνθρωπον), created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. (Eph 4:21–24, ESV)

So don't walk and talk like the old. Walk like a new person! Talk like a new person! To offer an analogy, are we like an inert bicycle sitting there until the Spirit puts us in motion? Or, are we more like a hiker who has been given life and lungs, body and breath? The Spirit implores, "Get up and walk with me!"

Ephesians' imperatives

In the rest of the letter, Paul is not at all shy about giving specific directions and repeatedly commanding us where to walk. As with Romans, indicatives dominate the first half of Ephesians which has only one imperative; but then, in the second half, after the gospel has been proclaimed, further indicatives are joined by lots of "new obedience" imperatives. In fact, the lone imperative in Ephesians 1–3 issues an appeal to "remember" μνημονεύετε (2:11), sort of like to "hearken to." In Ephesians 4–6, however, Paul uses forty imperative forms! These tell believers how to respond properly to the gospel in their lives.³⁷ Is this what we typically do with these imperatives?

For example, Ephesians 5:1 states, "Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children" (Γίνεσθε οὖν μιμηταὶ τοῦ θεοῦ ὡς τέκνα ἀγάπητᾶ). In my own formation, I was taught to shape a text like this into a proclamation of the second use of the law followed by the gospel. The malady would be: "All of you fall short and fail miserably at living up to imitating God." Then the gospel: "But you are God's dearly loved children anyway. Amen." At this point in Ephesians, however, that is not Paul's point. You *were* dead in trespasses and sin; formerly you *were* darkness. By grace you are now dearly loved children. Respond intentionally to that gospel! Imitate the Father who loves you dearly because of who you now are in Christ (cf. Mt 5:44–48).

In verse 2, Paul similarly pleads: "And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" (καὶ περιπατεῖτε ἐν ἀγάπῃ, καθὼς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς καὶ παρέδωκεν ἑαυτὸν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν προσφορὰν καὶ θυσίαν τῷ θεῷ). The law/gospel tendency is to admonish our hearers for failing to walk in love, but then to assure them that Christ loves us anyway. Yet the past tense indicatives proclaim that Christ loved us and gave himself up for us. In response to having been so loved, Paul exhorts us to live love!

Later in chapter 5, verse 21, Paul writes, "Submitting to one another in reverence for Christ" (ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις ἐν φόβῳ Χριστοῦ). The second use of the law accuses our hearers for failing to submit to their parents, spouse, boss, dean, president, pastor, and one another. But that does not communicate Paul's point. Instead, he presumes our reverence for Christ because he gave himself up for us (5:2). As a result, he urges us to respond submissively to others. My colleague Mark Brighton points out that the governing verb here is an imperative in Ephesians 5:18: "But be filled with the Spirit" (ἀλλὰ πληροῦσθε ἐν πνεύματι). From that point on, Paul describes how the Spirit's filling is actively displayed in our lives by singing (5:19), giving thanks (5:20), and submitting (5:21).

In all three of these cases, Paul formulates his appeal as “walk this way,” followed by a gospel reminder of what God or Christ has already done. This is precisely what AC VI does. After affirming that a person must do such good works as God has commanded, the rest of the article reaffirms the gospel as a gift from God. But neither Paul nor AC VI revert to the second use of the law, accusing us of falling short. Rather, the forty imperatives in Ephesians 4–6 function positively to identify and to call forth the new obedience by telling us what to do and what to avoid. We should, therefore, proclaim these imperatives as they are meant to be heard, as exhortations to respond actively and intentionally to the gospel.

Concluding Thoughts on the New Obedience

Homiletical Implications

In his article “Freedom of Form: Law/Gospel and Sermon Structure in Contemporary Lutheran Proclamation,” Schmitt observes,

Recently, “Law” and “Gospel” seems to summarize the predominant form of Lutheran preaching. It defines how the sermon is structured. This new type of sermon consists of two major divisions: the first part Law and the second part Gospel. . . . We might appropriately call it “Law then Gospel” preaching.³⁸

He demonstrates that this fixed form is neither “Waltherian” or “Caemmererian,”³⁹ and asserts,

Lutheran preaching can embrace much more. It is not bound by a formulaic “Law then Gospel” pattern but recognizes and utilizes the freedom of sermon form for the sake of Gospel proclamation. . . .

Within such broad homiletical horizons, “Law and Gospel” referred to how one offered a proper distinction of Law and Gospel in both the content and function of the sermon while using a variety of forms.⁴⁰

So which form to use? Ashmon advises, “let Scripture direct the form and function of the sermon, rather than placing Scripture and the sermon into a fixed form-critical straightjacket. In other words . . . let exegesis predominate in interpretation and proclamation, not eisegesis.”⁴¹ So if a law text is intended as second-use accusation, “Let ‘em have it!” preach it to the *peccator* (e.g., Rom 1:18–3:20; Eph 2:1–3). But if a passage describes the new obedience (e.g., Rom 12–15; Eph 4–6), neither Paul, nor AC VI, nor Walther calls us to turn it into second use. Instead, proclaim it as intended—God calling his *simul justus* children to live in ways “well-pleasing” (εὐάρεστον) to him (Rom 12:1, 2).

As demonstrated above with Romans and Ephesians, Paul’s regular sequence is not so much imperative accusations of the law followed by gospel. Instead, he generally articulates law and gospel indicatives followed, in Walther’s words, “by instruction regarding things we do after we have become new man.”⁴² A similar use of “new obedience” imperatives occurs in a number of Paul’s other letters as well.⁴³ Colossians 1–2

has only four imperatives (2:6, 8, 16, 18), while chapters 3–4 add twenty-six more. Philippians 1–2 has seven; chapters 3–4 contain eighteen. Galatians 1–4 has seven (four of them in OT quotes; 4:27[3], 30), and then thirteen in chapters 5–6. There is only one in 1 Thessalonians 1–4 (4:18), while chapter 5 has eighteen.⁴⁴ According to Paul’s regular pattern, these imperatives should be used to instruct and exhort believers to respond properly to the gospel. In summary, they urge us, and sermons on these sections should urge parishioners: “Be imitators of God, as his beloved children” (Eph 5:1).

An Analogy: “Children of the Heavenly Father”⁴⁵

The father/child relationship is dominant in Jesus’s teaching and prominent in Paul’s portrayal of our relationship with God (e.g., “father” occurs fifteen times in the Sermon on the Mount, thirteen of which are “your father”; also Jn 5:36–37; 17:1–5; 20:17; Lk 6:39; 11:1–13; Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6).⁴⁶ What does this relationship tell us about the new obedience?

When earthly parents give commands to their children, they do not generally make rules and demand obedience in order to repeatedly convince children that they are disobedient and unworthy of anything good from their parents. Nor do they intend for such rules to drive their children to continually confess their failures or to despair of their unworthiness to even belong in the family. If so, or if they were perceived as such, a child would probably want to stay distant from such a parent and the relationship would become stunted. A child’s perception of this kind of parents’ love would likely degenerate into seeing it mainly as something which tolerates failures and which is forced, again and again, to deal negatively with disobedience and somehow love the child anyway. The goal, from the child’s perspective, might be to obey, but primarily the goal is to avoid anger and punishment. That’s the *old obedience*.

At least in healthy families, this is not generally the case. Good, though imperfect, parents tend to give their children good rules to obey. When appropriate, they also impose loving discipline so that children see and suffer the consequences of their disobedience. But parents do this to benefit their children so that that they will become happy, healthy, content, and fulfilled as they mature to live a disciplined, godly life. Once children perceive this to be the purpose of the rules and even the reprimands, their relationship with their mother and father, established by birth and maintained by loving provisions freely given by their parents, will grow and deepen as the loving intention behind the laws is acknowledged. Eventually, a “new obedience” to parental commands will come out of gratitude and respect, rather than fear of punishment.

If we continually assert that God’s law is always, or even predominantly, his instrument to catch and convict unruly children for their mistakes, how will people respond? Instead of drawing near, they may want to keep their distance from such a demanding and demeaning father. Or they may come to do their religious duty, and then try to obey mainly to keep their father from getting mad. Will a growing and maturing relationship likely develop with a father who makes such demands?

But does *God* continue to see his children *in Christ* as lost and condemned people who still deserve the full fury of his eternal wrath? Or does our heavenly Father

assure us that we are eternally his redeemed and dearly loved children because Christ has fully and completely finished (τετέλεισται) suffering our punishment (Jn 19:30) so that in him “nothing [is] condemnation” (οὐκ ἔστιν κατακρίμα) (Rom 8:1)? Thank God that the latter has become our reality. God, the Father of lights who graciously bestows “every good gift and every perfect gift . . . determined to give us birth by his word of truth” (Jas 1:17, 18; cf. Jn 3:3, 5; Ti 3:5). Through the renewing and adoptive work of the Holy Spirit we now call him “Abba, Father!” (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6).

Then, to paraphrase Jesus, if you who are evil know how to give good rules to your earthly children, how much more will your Father in heaven give positive, maturing guidelines for his children to obey (Lk 10:13)? Such a Father gives instructions and commands, as well as loving discipline when we fall short (Heb 12:5–11), for our ultimate good. He does so in order to build us up and mature us, as Paul describes it six times in Ephesians 4:12–16.⁴⁷ As we grow in our faith relationship with him, we join with St. Paul in willingly and joyfully doing his holy, righteous and good commands (Rom 7:12, 16, 21, 25b), while also being increasingly frustrated by our failures to live according to his Law (Rom 7:14–15, 18–20, 23–24, 25b).⁴⁸

Nevertheless, with the confident assurance that we remain his children by grace and in Christ, we persist in the new obedience, striving to live out his “good, well-pleasing and perfect will” (Rom 12:2) for the benefit of our neighbor (Rom 13:8–10), for our own good, and all to the glory of our gracious God. Indeed, those who really “get” the gospel eagerly join the psalmist in crying out,

Teach me, O Lord, the way of your statutes; and I will keep it to the end. Give me understanding, that I may keep your law and observe it with my whole heart. Lead me in the path of your commandments, for I delight in it. (Ps 119:33–35; cf. Ps 86:11)

Divine Causation and/or Human Cooperation?

All of this perhaps raises the question, “Does this new obedience happen apart from the conscious intent of our will, without any effort on our part?” The notion that a sanctified life of good works consists solely of God’s work was rebutted in the discussion of Rom 6:11–19 above. Yet it seems to have been popularized in Lutheran circles through an essay by Gerhard Forde.⁴⁹ There Forde defines “a truly good work” as being “free, uncalculating, spontaneous.”⁵⁰ While commenting on Romans 12:1, Douglas Moo responds, “That God’s mercy does not automatically produce the obedience God expects is clear from the imperatives in this passage.”⁵¹ This is because appeals based upon grace and mercy are resistible and not coercive.

The active imperatives Paul addresses to Christians throughout his letters indicate that willing human involvement remains necessary. Thus the notion that a sanctified life of good works is totally the work of God or done solely by the Holy Spirit should be rejected. The Formula of Concord observes,

After the Holy Spirit has performed and accomplished this [conversion] and the will of man has been changed and renewed solely by God’s power

and activity, man's new will becomes an instrument and means of God the Holy Spirit, so that man not only lays hold on grace but also cooperates with the Holy Spirit in the works that follow. (FC Ep II 18; cf. FC SC II 65 cited above)

But the believer without any coercion and with a willing spirit, in so far as he is reborn, does what no threat of the law could ever have wrung from him. (FC Ep VI 7)⁵²

In order to explain the new obedience, I have used this musical analogy with students. Are we like a trumpet which can only sit lifeless in a case until the Spirit irresistibly picks it up and blows life into and through it? Or is the new obedience more like a singer to whom God has given life, breath, talent, and even songs to sing; who then says, "Sing for me!" or, better yet, "Sing with me!" The latter more accurately depicts the Christian. It also aligns with the "very basic and practical [Pauline] anthropology" articulated by Raabe and Voelz.

The hearers are assumed to be ordinary, concrete human beings who actively participate in their everyday living. They seem to be in a position to make decisions, to be led astray, to be reminded, to be encouraged, and to be persuaded, just as we all are. Paul addresses them as if they are a third party standing before two powers, sin and the Spirit, and he exhorts them to pay attention to the impulses of the Spirit and to resist those of sin. He urges them, for example, to be transformed by the renewing of their mind [Rom 12:2], to present their hands and feet, their intentions and actions, as weapons for God's service, and to offer their bodies as living sacrifices to God.⁵³

Paul urges us to respond actively and freely on the basis of mercies graciously given and already received (Rom 12:1).

Various definitions of the words used to label categories have caused some of the confusion. For example, Pieper defines sanctification in the following ways:

- (1) In its wide sense, sanctification comprises all that the Holy Ghost does in separating man from sin and making him God's own, so that he may live for God and serve Him.
- (2) In its narrow sense, sanctification designates the internal spiritual transformation of the believer or the holiness of life which follows upon justification.
- (3) In another respect good works are identical with sanctification, since sanctification in concreto takes place through the performance of good acts.⁵⁴

Sanctification is commonly understood as the new obedience, namely, the Christian life of good works which flows from the gospel in the lives of believers (i.e., the end of definitions 1 and 2, as well as definition 3 above). Forde, however, defines the term this way: "Sanctification is *Die Heiligung*—which would perhaps best be translated as 'being

salvationed.’ . . . Sanctification is thus simply *the art of getting used to justification*. . . . It is the justified life.”⁵⁵ By his definition, sanctification belongs within the gospel category of justification and we are no longer talking about the new obedience at all.

The confusion in terminology is understandable. On the one hand, the Bible’s use of “holiness” language predominantly expresses the gospel, rather than the new obedience. For example, Paul uses “justification” and “sanctification” in parallel fashion, asserting in 1 Corinthians 1:30 that Christ Jesus has become for us “righteousness and also sanctification and redemption” (δικαιοσύνη τε καὶ ἀγιασμός καὶ ἀπολύτρωσις). And in 1 Corinthians 6:11 he reminds believers of what sets us apart: “But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were declared righteous in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God” (ἀπελούσασθε, ἀλλὰ ἡγιασθητε, ἀλλὰ ἐδικαιώθητε ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ ἐν τῷ πνεύματι τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν). Although such passages use “sanctification” language, they are articulating the gospel (so also in the OT; see Ex 31:13; Lv 20:8; 21:8).

At other times, however, believers are in fact called to live holy or sanctified lives (e.g., Lv 19:2; 20:7; 1 Thes 4:7; 1 Pt 1:17; 2 Pt 3:11; cf. Mt 5:48). Such passages express the new obedience; in Pieper’s words they depict “the holiness of life which follows upon justification.”⁵⁶ But such a life always and only flows from holiness already freely given by our sanctifying God and Father.

Jesus’s Promise

It’s always good to end with Jesus. The passage from Luke 17 in AC VI describes slaves who work all day for their master out in the fields or with his sheep. Then they come in and, as expected, serve their master his dinner before receiving their own. Jesus asks,

Does [the master] have grace (χάρις) for his slave because he did all the things which were ordered? No! Thus also you, when you might do all the things ordered to you, say, “We are unworthy slaves, we have done what we ought to do.” (Lk 17:9–10)⁵⁷

No, we do not deserve grace, mercy, or forgiveness. But Jesus, in the way of the gospel, flips things on their head. At the Lord’s Supper, he is the master who serves his servants (Lk 22:27–30). Indeed, he came not to be served but to serve (Mt 20:28) and tells his disciples, “Whoever would be great among you must be your servant” (Mt 20:26). To serve as we have been served, to love one another as he has first loved us (Jn 15:12; cf. 1 Jn 4:11)—this is the new obedience. Thus Jesus identifies his family members as those who both hear *and* “do” (ποιέω) the Lord’s word (in Lk 6:47; 8:21; also Mt 7:21, 24); similarly in John 10:27, he characterizes his sheep as those who both hear his voice *and* actively follow him (ἀκολουθοῦσιν).

While we have no warrant to place any obligation on Christ (Lk 17:9–10), our ascended Lord does speak of his return as a time when he will reward us for all we do in his name. In Matthew 16 Jesus predicts his passion and resurrection (16:21), and then describes the self-denial and forfeiting of life necessary for those who would follow after him (16:24–26). But he adds this blessed assurance in Matthew 16:27, “For the Son of

Man is about to come in the glory of his Father with his angels and then he will give back to each one according to his work” (καὶ τότε ἀποδώσει ἑκάστῳ κατὰ τὴν πρᾶξιν αὐτοῦ). Revelation 22:12 draws the NT toward its close with these words from Jesus, “Look! I am coming suddenly and my reward is with me to give back to each one as is his work” (καὶ ὁ μισθός μου μετ’ ἐμοῦ ἀποδοῦναι ἑκάστῳ ὡς τὸ ἔργον ἐστὶν αὐτοῦ). (See also Mt 25:14–23; Lk 14:14; 19:12–19; 2 Cor 6:9–7; 1 Tm 4:8; Ps 62:12; Dan 12:3.)

It is always appropriate to remind ourselves and our hearers, as AC VI does, that Scripture always teaches that God’s grace, the forgiveness of sin, righteousness, and salvation come “not through works but through faith alone without merit” (AC VI). There is nothing to apologize for here and, fittingly, the Apology says nothing explicitly on AC VI. But, in closing, the Apology to Article 4 confesses this about the new obedience:

We teach that rewards have been offered and promised to the works of the faithful. We teach that good works are meritorious—not for the forgiveness of sins, grace, or justification (for we obtain these only by faith) but for other physical and spiritual rewards in this life and in that which is to come, as Paul says (1 Cor 3:8), “Each shall receive his wages according to his labor.” (Ap AC IV 194)⁵⁸

Or, as Jesus will say, “Well done, good and faithful servant” (Mt 25:21, 23). And that’s how our new obedience turns out in the end.

Endnotes

¹ According to the *Concordia Triglotta* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), 44–46, the Latin reads, *Item docent, quod fides illa debeat bonos fructus parare, et quod oporteat bona opera mandata a Deo facere propter voluntatem Dei*. Note: citations from the Book of Concord other than AC VI are from *The Book of Concord*, trans. and ed. Theodore Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981); it is the version used in the *Concordia Electronic Theological Library in Logos* and by the Concordia Commentary series.

² *Concordia Triglotta*, 44.

³ Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 40; Tappert, 31–32, translates as follows: It is also taught among us that such faith should produce good fruits and good works and that we must do all such good works as God has commanded, but we should do them for God’s sake and not place our trust in them as if thereby to merit favor before God. For we receive forgiveness of sin and righteousness through faith in Christ, as Christ himself says, “So you also, when you have done all that is commanded you, say, ‘We are unworthy servants’” (Lk 17:10). The Fathers also teach thus, for Ambrose says, “It is ordained of God that whoever believes in Christ shall be saved, and he shall have forgiveness of sins, not through works but through faith alone, without merit.”

⁴ See “The Situation in Galatia” in Andrew Das, *Galatians*, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2014), 1–19.

⁵ The title, “The New Obedience,” is a later insertion. While titles were put in place as early as 1532, they were not included in the 1580 edition of the Book of Concord. Kolb and Wengert, 36, n. 26..

⁶ J. Simpson and E. Weiner, *The Oxford English Dictionaries*, 2nd ed., 15 vols (New York: Oxford University, 1989), 10:637. Though largely lost in contemporary usage, the English “obey” stems from the Latin verb “to hear” (*audio*). According to Simpson and Weiner, 10:637, “obey” is derived from the Latin *ob audire*, “give ear, hearken, obey.”

⁷ See Michael Middendorf, *Romans 1–8*, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2013), 60, 66–67, 500–501; material in this paragraph has also been adapted from the author’s forthcoming commentary on Romans 9–16, to be published by Concordia Publishing House.

⁸ See Michael Middendorf and Mark Schuler, *Called by the Gospel* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2007), 155–156, 322–324.

⁹ Scott Ashmon, "Preaching Law and Gospel in the Old Testament," *Lutheran Forum* 47:4 (Winter 2013): 12; he adds that this aligns with "the motives of the Formula of Concord and Walther" (see the section on "Homiletical Implications").

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹² This paragraph and the next were developed in relation to Romans 13:8–10 and are adapted from the author's forthcoming commentary on Romans 9–16.

¹³ The title "The Ten Words" is also present in Deuteronomy 10:4 (as well as in Philo, *Heir* 168; *Decalogue*, 32; Josephus, *Ant.* 3.138).

¹⁴ Middendorf, *Romans* 1–8, 200.

¹⁵ Horace Hummel, *The Word Becoming Flesh* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1979), 75.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 74; though he continues by affirming an ongoing "second use of the Law" for those who remain "sinners as well as saints."

¹⁷ *Lutheran Service Book* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 321–322.

¹⁸ Martin Scharlemann, *God's Word for Today: 1 Peter, God's Chosen People* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1994), 73; the slogan, "Be what you already are," is also adopted by Paul Deterding, *Colossians*, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2003), 138, in commenting on Colossians 3:1–4, citing also 1 Corinthians 5:7a; Ephesians 5:8. See also Martin Scharlemann, "Exodus Ethics," *Concordia Journal*, 1976: 165–170; he rephrases the overall sentiment later, 169, as "God has already declared you to be His saints; now show it."

¹⁹ Steven Paulson, *Lutheran Theology* (New York: T&T Clark, 2011).

²⁰ C. F. W. Walther, *Law and Gospel* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, n.d.), 93.

²¹ Translation from Middendorf, *Romans* 1–8, 190.

²² Walther, *Law and Gospel*, 93, emphasis added. For a discussion of the "old" and "new" man, see Middendorf, *Romans* 1–8, 459–462.

²³ Romans 11 then contains seven imperatives. Yet three of these occur in the citation from Psalm 69 in Romans 11:10–11. The other four are addressed primarily to Gentile believers, stating how they ought and ought not to regard their own in-grafting into the people of God over and against Jewish believers and unbelievers (11:18, 20 [2], 22).

²⁴ Translations from Middendorf, *Romans* 1–8, 443, 486.

²⁵ Middendorf, *Romans* 1–8, 509–511. A portion of the omitted section, at the beginning of the second paragraph here, states: "Paul's exhortations make no sense to an unbeliever; they make no sense to those who are still slaves to sin, even if that slavery is cleverly masquerading itself as slavery to some supposed autonomous self. The ongoing struggle expressed in 6:12–23 also betrays the notion that holiness of living is somehow completely attainable, rather than on enduring struggle. Yet they also do not make sense if our struggle against sin and our efforts to live for God are a matter of complete futility and, therefore, not to be energetically pursued. This is an improper misunderstanding of Luther's 'sin boldly' and a simplistic misapplication of *simul justus et peccator*."

²⁶ See Middendorf, *Romans* 1–8, 567–576. James Dunn, *Romans*, Word Biblical Commentary 38, 2 vols (Dallas: Word, 1988), 392, calls it a "two-dimensional character."

²⁷ See Middendorf, *Romans* 1–8, 441–442.

²⁸ See Middendorf, *Romans* 1–8, 49; this paragraph is adapted from the author's forthcoming commentary on Romans 9–16.

²⁹ Brian Rosner, *Paul and the Law* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2013), 124; he adds, "In Romans 13 and Galatians 5 Christ fulfils the law through us." Unfortunately, this would seem to imply a second or ongoing fulfilling of the law by Christ, something he has finished "once for all" (Rom 6:10; 8:3).

³⁰ A significant portion of this section is abridged and adapted from the author's forthcoming commentary on Romans 9–16.

³¹ Paul Raabe and James Voelz, "Why Exhort a Good Tree?," *Concordia Journal* 22 (1996): 161, develop their analogy "by comparing two different approaches to physics, that of Newton and that of Einstein. There is an everyday sort of experiential and phenomenological understanding of the universe (= Newton), and there is a deeper, more theoretical, and ontological understanding (= Einstein)."

³² Granted, sixteen of these imperatives occur in Romans 16 in requests to "greet" (□σπ□σασθε) various members of the Roman house churches. Additionally, all of Romans 1–11 contains only two hortatory subjunctives. Both are notions Paul vehemently rejects by responding to them with μ□ γ□ νοιτο (Rom 6:1, 15). However, in chapters 12–16, Paul uses three or four hortatory subjunctives positively to call forth proper conduct in response to God's mercies (13:12, 13; 14:13; probably 14:19). See Daniel Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics* (Grand

Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 464–465.

³³ Raabe and Voelz, “Why Exhort a Good Tree?,” 160; they previously, 158–160, also assert the following: “The first point that needs to be stressed is that Paul’s exhortations are addressed to Christians, to those in Christ who want to and are able to live for God. Second, it is clear that, although the addressees are Christians, they cannot live for God by their own power and abilities. The power comes from the Spirit working through the Gospel. Therefore, Paul’s exhortations are based on Gospel indicative statements. Third, Paul exhorts his hearers to live out their lives practically and experientially in a way that conforms with what they are already by virtue of Baptism. He calls for their new status to be actualized in their daily life. Fourth, Pauline paraenesis exhibits a twofold character of negative warning and positive encouraging. This is necessary because . . . sin remains an ever-present threat.”

³⁴ Thomas Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, vol. 6 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 694; C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, International Critical Commentary, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975), 679, states this similarly by utilizing the metaphor of seeing both the forest and the trees. “We most certainly need the summary to save us from missing the wood for the trees and from understanding the particular commandments in a rigid, literalistic, unimaginative, pedantic, or loveless way. We are equally in need of the particular commandments, into which the law breaks down the general obligation to love, to save us from resting content with vague, and often hypocritical sentiments.”

³⁵ Article VII of the Augsburg Confession states, “For it is sufficient for the true unity of the Christian church that the Gospel be preached in conformity with a pure understanding of it and that the sacraments be administered in accordance with the divine Word. 3 It is not necessary for the true unity of the Christian church that ceremonies, instituted by men, should be observed uniformly in all places. 4 It is as Paul says in Eph. 4:4, 5, ‘There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism.’”

³⁶ Dunn, *Romans*, 799; later, 820, he properly states that Paul views different convictions regarding clean and unclean foods “not as a boundary dividing one group from another and preventing communion, but as an issue affecting the expression of liberty within a community which embraces diverse viewpoints.”

³⁷ For a similar use of imperatives in Paul’s other letters, see the statistics under “Homiletical Implications;” see also Middendorf, *Romans 1–8*, 441–442, 484–485.

³⁸ David Schmitt, “Freedom of Form,” *Concordia Journal* 25 (1999): 42.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 46; see 45–50.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁴¹ Ashmon, “Preaching Law and Gospel in the Old Testament,” 14; Schmitt, “Freedom of Form,” 50, further contends, “Using a variety of forms for a variety of hearers, pastors preach from a variety of texts and avoid boring their hearers or misinterpreting the texts with a repetitive ‘Law then Gospel’ form.”

⁴² Walther, *Law and Gospel*, 93.

⁴³ If one takes the verbal forms in the Ten Words/Commandments as imperatives and prohibitions, their rhetorical force is intended to function in much the same way as the imperatives Paul typically utilizes in the latter portion of his letters (Ex 20; Dt 5; see “The New Obedience in the Old Testament”).

⁴⁴ These statistics were developed for and have been adapted from the author’s forthcoming commentary on Romans 9–16.

⁴⁵ The title is from the song by Carolina Sandell Berg, *Lutheran Service Book*, 725.

⁴⁶ For example, see Middendorf and Schuler, *Called by the Gospel*, 369–370; Middendorf, *Romans 1–8*, 644–646. Jesus also contrasts God’s perfect fathering (e.g., Mt 5:44–48; Heb 12:5–11) with the imperfect parenting of our earthly fathers (Lk 11:12–13).

⁴⁷ Note these phrases: εἰς οἰκοδομὴν τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ (Eph 4:12), εἰς ἄνδρα τέλειον (Eph 4:13), ἵνα μηκέτι ὄμεν νήποι (Eph 4:14), αὐξήσωμεν εἰς αὐτόν (Eph 4:15), τὴν αὐξήσιν τοῦ σώματος . . . εἰς οἰκοδομὴν (Eph 4:16).

⁴⁸ The exasperation expressed in Romans 7:14–25 is not present in an unbeliever or characteristic of a “weak” Christian, as so often asserted, but signals the maturity evident in the Apostle himself; see Middendorf, *The “I” in the Storm* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1997), 175–84; 201–25; also Middendorf, *Romans 1–8*, 582–583, 590–597.

⁴⁹ Gerhard Forde, “The Lutheran View” in *Christian Spirituality: Five Views of Sanctification*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988), 13–32; cf. also Adolf Koberle, *The Quest for Holiness* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1964); Senkbeil, *Sanctification: Christ in Action* (Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1989).

⁵⁰ Forde, “The Lutheran View,” 30.

⁵¹ Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, New International Commentary on the New Testament