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The Passive ad Active Obedience of Christ

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Doctrinal Treatise
The Passive and Active Obedience of Christ
THE PASSIVE AND ACTIVE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

A Thesis Presented to the
Faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary

in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Bachelor of Divinity

by

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Doctrinal Treatise

The Passive and Active Obedience of Christ

By Bruno Martinelli

Introduction

"I believe in Jesus Christ," the son of Mary, who was born at Bethlehem and died on the cross, is the promised Messiah, my Savior, "who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil."

In the Old Testament this Jesus was known by the name of the Messiah, the Christ, that is the Anointed, because according to the prophecy, He was to be anointed with the Holy Ghost, without measure, to accomplish the work of redemption.

When, at length, the fulness of time had come, God sent His angel Gabriel to Mary, a virgin of David's royal lineage, to tell her: "Thou shalt bring forth a Son, and shalt call His name Jesus," that is, Savior; "for" added the angel to Joseph, "He shall save His people from their sins." Hence, by giving the name Jesus to the child of Mary, God declared this child to be the promised Christ. Jesus, the Savior of mankind. How simple, how plain in this brief sentence, clear its sense, and unmistakable its meaning. Jesus is my Savior, and saves me. Even a child can see Jesus as his Savior. Jesus is the name that a Christian parent teaches his child at

first opportunity; it is Jesus Whom that child learns to love. Jesus as the humble servant, who "being and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Phil. 2:8.

What unfathomable depths of divine wisdom and power are hidden in that one word Jesus! "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." Is. 9:6. That is Jesus. A Savior so simple that a child can grasp Him and believe on Him and through faith be eternally saved.

Isaiah calls Jesus, the mighty God. When Christ had asked His disciples, "Whom say ye that I am?" Peter answered, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." John says: "The Word," the eternal Son of God, "was made flesh."

"We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only Begotten of the Father full of grace and truth; and of His fulness have all we received and grace for grace." John 1:14,16.

Such is our Savior, and He is able to save us. As true Man He was capable of being made under the law and of suffering and dying. As true God He was sufficient to appease the wrath of God, and to overcome sin, death, and the devil. In Him the prophecy is fulfilled: "He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace bruised for our peace was upon Him and with His stripes we are healed."

Jesus as the Servant obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, Jesus in His beauty as our Savior and Redeemer, this Jesus we would see. And this obedient servant, not so much in His suffering and death, as in His unflinching determination to fulfill all righteousness, to obtain for man's redemption, justification and sanctification a perfect fulfillment of God's holy Law, an immaculately perfect righteousness. We shall see Jesus in His active and Passive obedience.

Thesis I

In describing the manner in which the God-Man Christ Jesus performed the mission for which God sent Him and to which the Son consented in willing obedience, Scripture speaks not only passive obedience of Christ, but just as clearly of His active obedience.

The Scripture very frequently speaks of the Obedience of Christ. Hebrew 10:7. Then said I, Lo, I come, (in the volume of the book it is written of me.) to do Thy will, O God. Matthew 5:17. Think not that I am come to destroy the Law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. Luke 2:51. And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them.

Gal. 4:4-5. But when the fullness of the 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.

In the Old Testament in the word of prophecy we hear the Savior solemnly dedicating Himself to His appointed work by

exclaiming: Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of Me. I delight to do Thy will, O my God; yea, Thy Law is written in My heart. Ps. 40:7-8.

Again when John the Baptist hesitated to baptize Jesus, He insisted on being baptized by John, charging him. Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness. Matt. 3:15.

The Passive Obedience of Christ

The plan of redemption as conceived by the Triune God in eternity and as it was to be carried out in due time by the Son of God imposed a twofold duty on the Redeemer, that of rendering to God passively and willing obedience.

In the first place He was to take upon Himself the sins of the entire world and in His own person to suffer all the penalties which the justice of God had threatened to all who would transgress the holy law of God and which all men, all human beings, had called down upon themselves, since all had sinned.

The counsel of God toward salvation of man demanded of the Redeemer a willingness to suffer all penalties that sinful man had deserved. This willingness to suffer all that was required to pay the guilt and bear the punishment of man is called the passive obedience, from the word passion, suffering. "And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Phil. 2:8. And in Gal. 3:13. "Christ hath redeemed us from

the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us:." Scripture is filled with references to this passive obedience. The very first promise given in Paradise after the fall of Adam and Eve speaks of this passive obedience, when it foretells the bruising of the heel of Him who was to bruise the head of the serpent.

Without the passive obedience of Jesus, without His willingness to bear our sins, our griefs and our sorrows, there could be no salvation for mankind.

Thesis II

The active obedience of Christ was a perfect obedience. Not only did Christ and His friends claim perfection for Him, but the witness of many enemies, of His own life, of God Himself bears out this claim. Being the Son of God, His perfection was not merely a human, but divine, perfection.

Perfection

There can be no doubt as to Christ's claim to perfection in keeping the Law. "I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart." Psalm 40:8. Coming to John's baptism He declares that it is His aim to fulfill all righteousness, Matthew 3:15. And in His majestic sermon on the mount He makes that solemn, truly amazing statement. "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."

And to His disciples at Sychar He says, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work." John 4:34.

Jesus never confessed any sins of His own. Not once do we hear Him plead with His Father for forgiveness of any iniquity; not once does He ask any man's pardon for any wrongdoing.

It is one of the characteristics of a child of God, a believer, that he freely confess His sins before God and man: yet this characteristic of all children of God by adoption is lacking, in the only begotten Son of God. He has no sins of His own to confess. The Fifth Petition of the Lord's Prayer He prayed not for Himself, He taught His followers so to pray. The baptism of John which He asked for was indeed a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins: Matthew 3:6, that all the people from the region round about Jordan came to John and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins. To this baptism Jesus also came and this baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins Jesus also requested. Yet not as though He were in need of repentance, as though He had any personal sins to be confessed and forgiven. Luther tells us: "Why does He come and seek baptism, as there is no sin and uncleanness in Him which baptism would remove? That will be a blessed baptism. John here is getting a sinner who in His Own person has no sin, and yet is the greatest sinner, that has and bears the sin of the whole world. For this reason He permits Himself to be baptized and confesses with this action that He is a sinner. However, not for Himself, but for us."

"For innumerable evils have compassed me about; mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head; therefore my heart faileth me." Ps. 41:4. "I said Lord, be merciful unto me: heal my soul; for I have sinned against thee." Ps. 69:5. "O God, Thou knowest my foolishness. And my sins are not hid from thee." (Luther VII, 691.) Luther continues: The Text. Is. 53:6, says that the Lord hath laid upon Him the iniquity of us all. Because He has become such a sinner, upon whom all our sins have been laid. He is truly in need of baptism and must permit Himself to be baptized for the forgiveness of sins." (692)

Men who had been in the company of Jesus for years, who had closely observed Him, watched His every action, paid closest attention to His every word, failed to find a flaw in that perfect life which Jesus of Nazareth lived. Say Peter 2:22. "He did not sin, neither was guile found in His mouth." 1 John 3:5. "He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him is no sin." John 8:46 "Which of you convinceth me of sin?"

Not only do friends and foes alike testify to the perfection of Christ's righteousness and fulfillment of God's law, not only does His own sinless, perfect life substantiate this testimony of man, God Himself bears witness to the perfection of Christ's obedience to all demands of the Law. When Christ had been baptized in Jordan, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove

and lighting upon Him: S. Matthew 3:16-17. "And lo a voice from heaven saying, This is my beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased." And again while Jesus was being transfigured, while He was speaking with Moses and Elias, Matthew 17:5. "behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." Finally in answer to Christ's words on the cross, It is finished! in answer to Christ's claim that He had accomplished that work which had been assigned to Him by His Father, that He had perfectly fulfilled the Law of God for fallen mankind, in answer to this claim what did God do? He did not suffer Him to remain dead and buried. Thereby God solemnly declared His approval of Christ's work, and that Christ had completely, perfectly fulfilled the Law of God.

However, not only His friends and disciples, but also His bitterest enemies could not find any fault in His life. The very fact that His enemies, burning with hatred against Jesus, were obliged to hire false witnesses to testify against Jesus, and that the testimony of these perjured witnesses disagreed so glaringly that even wicked Caiaphas dared not to pronounce judgment against Jesus, is a testimony to the innocence of the defendant. Pilate, the Roman governor, before whom Jesus had been charged with rebellion and sedition, with refusing to give tribute to Caesar and stirring up the people to armed resistance against the Roman government, Pilate was obliged, after a careful investigation of these charges, to pronounce Him

not guilty, and to His accusers--Pilate saying: "Ye have brought this man unto me, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him: No, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him: and lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him." Luke 23:14-15. Though Pilate delivered Jesus to be crucified knowing that he was condemning an innocent man. Pilate's wife had testified to the innocence of Jesus by sending a warning message to her husband, "Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of Him," Matthew 27:19.

The enemies of Jesus charged Him time and again with transgressing the law. They repeatedly charged Him with breaking the Sabbath laws by permitting His disciples to do that which was not lawful on Sabbath day, Matthew 12:2. and by healing the sick on the Sabbath day Matt. 12:10; by commanding the man who had for thirty-eight years lain sick with the palsy to take his bed and go home, though the same day was the Sabbath day, John 5:8-9. Yet Christ took special pains to show that these charges were unjustified. The oft-repeated charge of the Pharisees that Jesus broke the Sabbath law was due to a misinterpretation of God's law by these men. Christ repeatedly calls attention to this vicious effect of the ordinance of the scribes. Matthew 15:1-9. "Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread. But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the

commandment of God by your tradition? Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." In fact the law of God never prohibited necessary works of love even on the day of Sabbath. The Pharisees themselves did not hesitate to labor on Sabbath day when their ox or sheep had fallen into the pit. Matthew 12:11-12. "And he said unto them, What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days." And then, moved by pity for the suffering animal, and perhaps just as much by fear of financial loss, would immediately endeavor to save them.

Jesus' love towards His fellowman, His neighbor, was a perfect love. "Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart, with all thy soul and with all thy might." Deuteronomy 6:5. Thus had the Lord God of Israel commanded His people, and thus did Christ love His heavenly Father. He loved God, and God only, and God with all the energy of His body and soul, and God at all times. The supreme test of His love and trust in God came in Gethsemane and on Golgatha. What perfect submission to God's will did He show in the garden of Gethsemane. When during the three hours of darkness Christ hung on the cross, forsaken of God; when His own Father

had turned away from Him, had made Him a curse who had ever been faithful, had surrendered to the powers of hell to the fury of Satan, to the heartless cruelty of the princes of darkness, Him who had never failed to do the will of God, even in that acid test He did not fail, His love toward God wavered not, even then He did not curse God and die in despair. He did not complain against God and find fault with His judgments, though momentarily He could not understand why He should be so forsaken, yet that God who had forsaken Him and cast Him away was, and remained, still His God. "My God, my God," so He exclaimed. Though His heart and His flesh failed, yet God was the strength of His heart and His portion forever. That is indeed love past understanding, trust beyond comprehension.

Are there not, certain incidents in the life of Christ which, disprove our contention that Jesus perfectly fulfilled the law and all its demands, and which cast a shadow on His perfect life? To mention only two such incidents: Did Christ not wrong the owners of that herd of Swine when He permitted the devils to enter into them, so that the whole drove, as with one accord, plunged down the mountain into the sea and were drowned? Did not Christ, by permitting this to the devils, actually transgress the Seventh Commandment? instead of improving and protecting His neighbor's property. And did not Christ in denouncing the Pharisees in Matthew 23. use language entirely too harsh and vindictive? Saint Matthew 23:13-33.

"But woe unto, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourself, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in."
 "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?"

In answer, let us state that Christ, far from transgressing the law of love in either of these instances, rather was strictly within the law and even on these occasions showed His love and solicitude for their eternal welfare. In fact, Jesus applied the law of God both to the Pharisees and to the owners of the herd of swine: to the Pharisees by expounding the true meaning of the law to them and threatening merely those penalties which the law provided for all transgressors, and from which they felt completely immune, and He applied the law to the Gadarenes by sending them for their neglect and contempt of the Word of God temporal punishments, loss of their property. Therefore Jesus in both instances, exercised His authority as the Judge of the world, not destroying the law but establishing and applying it. And the ultimate purpose in both instances was to bring these people to the knowledge of their own sinfulness, of the need of a Savior, and to the resolution to cease their careless security and enmity against Christ and His Word.

Jesus was not only sinless, He was not only perfectly holy and righteous, there was in Him not even the possibility of sinning. He could possibly do only that which was right and good and holy and perfect. Christ, was not a mere man, He was

the God-Man. Though He left His throne in heaven, though as true man "He humbled, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." and became subject to the Law, yet He never for one moment ceased to be that what He had been from eternity--true God with the Father and the Holy Ghost.

The Lord of the Law became obedient to the Law and kept its every demand. Jehovah fulfilled the will of God and thus became our righteousness. Romans 5:19. "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

Thesis III

Since Christ the God-Man is the Lord of the Law according to His human nature also, He was under no personal obligation to keep the Law. His obedience to the Law of God is a vicarious obedience, rendered in the place and in the stead of all mankind.

Vicarious

Scripture teaches beyond possibility of doubt or misunderstanding that the Law of God binds not God but Man. Though given by the Lord, it is given not to Himself but to mankind. We read Deuteronomy 6:1-2: "Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the Lord your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it: That thou mightest fear the Lord thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the

days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged." God commands, man must do what God tells him to do; God legislates, man must keep the laws and statutes of the divine Lawgiver. Therefore Paul very aptly describes man as being under the Law. Gal. 4:5, bound by its unchanging obligation of perfect fulfillment. Since such perfection is impossible to sinful mankind, man is subject to all the penalties which the Law provides for all that fail to keep it to the letter. While man is subject by his very nature to the Law of his Creator, Christ is the Son of God, being the brightness of God's glory the express image of God's person, Hebrews 1:3. Himself the true God and Eternal Life, 1 John 5:20. Being the second person in the Trinity, He is for His person as little subject to the Law as is the Father and the Holy Ghost.

Christ was not under personal obligation to keep the law of God. Who is He that insisted on being baptized, telling John, "Thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness? It is He Whom God Himself immediately proclaimed to be His Own Son and hence under no personal compulsion to fulfill the Law; "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye Him." And Who is He, Who in the sermon on the Mount declares the purpose of His coming into the world to be, not to destroy the Law, but to fulfill them? It is Jesus Who in this very connection claims to be the King of heaven, having the right decision as to who shall be called great or little in the Kingdom of heaven, Jesus Who declares Himself to be the Lawgiver.

"I say unto you," who proclaims Himself to be the Judge of the world, before whom men at the last day will plead their cause and receive their final everlasting judgment. Matthew 7:22-23.

"Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." The Son of God, the King of heaven, the Lawgiver, the Judge of the living and dead, He is not under the Law.

Christ is the God-Man. As such He is above the Law which was given to men. Nevertheless it is true that "from His conception to His death He" was made under the Law. He Himself testifies, saying: "I am come to fulfill the Law."

When the Pharisees charged Him with having broken the Law of the Sabbath, because He had permitted His disciples to pluck the ears of corn and eat them on the Sabbath day, He tells them: "The Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath day." Matt. 12:8: and "In this place is one greater than the temple." Matt. 12:6. The Son of man, the man Christ Jesus, is above the temple, above the Sabbath, above the Law, under no personal obligation to keep it, because this Son of Man is at the same time the Son of God, the Lawgiver.

Christ is under no personal obligation to fulfill the Law, but above, the Law. However, He, obliged and pledged Himself

to keep the Law, to which He was no wise personally subject, He willingly undertook, as part of His redemptive work of fulfilling the entire Law in the stead and in the place of man, who was held under obligation to God's Law. The Formula of Concord therefore is merely repeating what Scripture teaches, when it says. "Since Christ is not man alone, but God and man in one undivided person, He was as little subject to the Law (that is, obligated to keep the Law) because He is the Lord of the Law, as He had to suffer and die, as far as His person is concerned. He in our stead was voluntarily made under the Law and fulfilled it by His obedience."

The perfect obedience of Christ, was a thoroughly unselfish life on this earth. His energy, all his powers of body and a painful and shameful death, the death on the cross, and He laid down His life that we might have life and have it more abundantly. What a splendid example of pure, unselfish love toward God and man. May God help us with true singleness of purpose to give ourselves to Christ.

Modern and ancient theologians have denied the doctrine that Christ was under no personal obligation to keep the Law. They concede that the Son of God as such is above the Law and under no obligation to fulfill it. They say that Christ is also true man, and hence according to His human nature personally subject to that Law which was given to all men, Christ as true man not excepted, and since He was born a Jew, He was personally

subject to all those special laws and ceremonies which God had given to His covenant nation. Anselm of Canterbury says: "Every rational creature owes this obedience to God. Christ's human nature is a creature, hence Christ as a human being owes obedience to God's Law for His own sake, by virtue of being a rational being." ¹⁾ This same argument was advanced by the Lutheran theologian Parsimonius, and by the Reformed theologian Piscator, and by all modern theologians denying that the active obedience of Christ is part of His redeeming work.

Romans 5:12-21. These passages are taken from that parallel extending from verse twelve to end of the chapter. (verse 21.) "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come."

Paul draws a comparison between the guilt of Adam, the first man, and Christ, the second man from heaven, as the apostle calls him in 1 Corinthians 15:47. "The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven."

Throughout the entire passage Adam is regarded as the representative of all mankind. That becomes evident if we read such statements as in verse 15: "Through the offence of one many be dead," verse 16: The judgment was "by one to condemnation;"

Verse 17: "By one man's offences death reigned by one;"

Verse 18: "By the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation." If anything is clear it is this, that the apostle means to teach that Adam was the representative of all men, their proxy, standing in the place, taking the place of all his posterity, so that his sin was their sin, in him they all sinned.

And now we must bear in mind that the apostle, in verse fourteen, calls Adam the figure, the type of Him that was to come, of the Messiah, our Savior Christ Jesus. As Adam in his sin and transgression, in his breaking the law, was the representative, the proxy of mankind, so Christ in His fulfillment of the Law was the representative, the proxy of all men; standing in their stead and in their place, doing what was their duty, but what they could not do, rendering for them a perfect obedience.

Adam and Christ were the two representatives of the human race, standing in the place of mankind. The obedience of Christ was a representative obedience. His righteousness a representative righteousness. And since Christ was under no personal obligation to fulfill the Law, and in this respect differing from Adam, Christ's obedience was one which He rendered in no wise for Himself; it was entirely a vicarious, a substitutionary, obedience and righteousness, for man, in the stead of man, in the place of man.

Thesis IV

By His perfect vicarious obedience to the Law of God Christ has redeemed them that were under the Law. He has forever abolished the ceremonial Law of the Old Testament, and has procured for all men the adoption of sons. This liberty is offered in the Gospel to all men, and is appropriated by all who in true faith accept the merits of, as active obedience of their Savior as their own.

This thesis points out the importance of the truths brought out in the third thesis. It shows the urgent necessity of unwaveringly confessing and adhering to the substitutionary character of Christ's active obedience. ("As soon as we lose sight of Christ's vicarious fulfillment sight of Christ's vicarious fulfillment of the Law, we are deprived of a very essential portion of the comfort and consolation, the encouragement and admonition to be found in Christ's redemptive work." And if Christ had not been our substitute in His fulfillment of the Law, if Christ had been obliged to keep the Law of God for Himself, for His own justification, then He could have been no more than an example to us a model of perfection after which we would have to pattern our life." Then Christ would indeed have been the one ideal man, the standard of righteousness and holiness. He would have been all that, but no more. "Then the fact that Christ had fulfilled the Law perfectly would not

be to us sweet Gospel, comforting us in our need, holding out most glorious promises. No, His very example of perfection would rob us of any comfort and consolation that we might gather from His fulfillment of the Law and plunge us into the deepest abyss of doubt, despondency, despair. True had Christ been under personal obligation to keep the Law, He would have earned heaven for Himself by His perfect obedience."

God would have been obliged to open heaven to Christ. Yet of what avail would that fact have been for us? Christ fulfilled the Law and was accepted into heaven. Where is our perfection, our righteousness, our obedience? Would not Christ's perfect obedience by the background of heavenly light against which our transgressions, our own imperfection would stand out the darker? Would not the perfect righteousness of the Son of God be a model in comparison with which our own actions, our own works, our most sincere efforts at righteousness and good living would appear only the more glaringly in their true character of sin and iniquity and guilt? Would not the divine perfection of Jesus show up our utter helplessness, the futility and uselessness of our efforts, and render altogether visionary, illusory every whit of hope of life and salvation?"

Christ is not merely our example, the ideal Man, He is more than that. He is our Substitute, fulfilling for us the Law and thereby redeeming us from this very Law. That is not

a human deduction, a man-made conclusion, that is the verdict of God Himself. Gal. 4:4-5.

Christ's object in placing Himself under the Law was to redeem them that were under the Law. To be under the Law means, as we already stated, to be subject to the Law, to be under its power and authority, under obligation to do as it commands, bound to fulfill its every requirement or suffer the consequence. That is the obligation under which all men are held by the Law, Jews and Gentiles.

The Law as given to the Jews was threefold: The Moral Law, governing man's relation to God and his fellowman, and agreeing with that Law which God had at creation written into the heart of man, the Ceremonial Law, governing the public worship of the Jews the time, place, manner of sacrifice; and the Political Law, governing the civic commonwealth of Israel. In redeeming us from the Law, Christ redeemed us also from the power and obligation of the ceremonial and Civic Laws which had been given to Israel, the Old Testament people of God. The purpose of these special Laws was to keep Israel a separate nation, distant from all other peoples. At the same time, this Law should its many requirements governing frequently the slightest detail of the Israelite's private life, serve to create in a realization of his own sinfulness, a conviction of his need of a redeemer, a desire for redemption.

"Peter had in mind this ceremonial Law given by the Lord to His Old Testament people when, at the Council of Jerusalem,

Acts 15:10, he spoke of a yoke which neither their fathers nor they themselves were able to bear and from which the Lord Jesus Christ had freed them. It was, indeed, a grievous yoke that had been placed upon the believing children of God of the Old Testament and we have every reason to be grateful that we are no longer under this yoke of bondage, that we are no longer minors, but that Christ has made us free from the burden of the Ceremonial Law.

The apostle says. Romans 10:4. "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." The Law proposes to man certain demands, on the fulfillment of which depends the justification of man and his eternal happiness and communion with God. When all these demands and conditions have been fulfilled, the Law can make no further demands upon that person. It must pronounce him righteous and just and worthy of eternal life because of his perfect fulfillment of the Law. Now we have learned that Christ has perfectly fulfilled the Law. As far as Christ is concerned, the authority of the Law to which He had voluntarily subjected Himself is ended. We have learned that Christ's perfect fulfillment acknowledged as such by God Himself, was not rendered in His own behalf, but was a vicarious righteousness, an obedience in the stead and in the place of all mankind. Hence Christ's fulfillment is the end of the Law not merely for Himself, but for all those that He represented.

True, "Christ did not perform every detail that the Law demanded of every individual." Christ lived the life of only one person and His was a rather short life of only thirty-three years. And His childhood was spent in the home of poor parents. His profession was that of a carpenter during the greater part of His early manhood and during the last three years of His life that of a preacher and teacher. Yet that is not to be construed as though He fulfilled the Law perfectly only for poor people, for carpenters, for teachers and preachers, while all other professions and all rich people would be without the comfort of His vicarious obedience. No, Christ faithfully and continuously fulfilled the duties of the profession into which His heavenly Father had placed Him. And by this faithfulness, which He exercised in the performance of the duties and details of His special vocation. For His fulfillment is the all-comprehensive obedience and perfection of God, embracing all professions, making complete amends for all faults, whether they be in the form of a harsh word by the employer to his employee, or any other neglect in the performance of one's duties.

This perfect fulfillment which Christ has procured for all men is now offered freely to all men in the Gospel.

The apostle says in Romans 10:6-8. "But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is to bring

Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach;"

In order to obtain the righteousness and fulfillment of the Law procured by the Savior, we need not descend into the deep, as anything unfinished in His work of redeeming us from the Law. Neither need we ascend to heaven and plead with Christ that He would come down to us and grant us an opportunity to obtain His righteousness. That would not only be altogether impossible, but, that is also altogether unnecessary, for Christ has not only perfectly finished His work, He has also placed the liberty procured for mankind at their disposal in such a manner that everyone may easily obtain for himself, and fully enjoy, this liberty. For St. Paul says in verse 8, the word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart, that is, the word of faith which we preach. In the word of the Gospel, in the Bible, there alone, and there most assuredly we may find the liberty which Christ has procured for us. This Word tells us not only of the perfection obtained by our Savior, it does not only describe the model life of Jesus, our Substitute, His righteousness and His immaculate fulfillment of God's Law.

By one I agree and desire the righteousness procured by God and instead goes about to establish his own righteousness." Dr. Luther says, O. F. M. Vol. I. Page 350:

This Word does not merely tell us on what conditions we may obtain this perfect righteousness, and enjoy this liberty. This Word does infinitely more. It is the Word of faith that we preach, says St. Paul. And the righteousness which is revealed in this Word is a righteousness of faith, which comes through faith in Christ Jesus. Hence, Christ our Substitute has placed Himself and the fulness of His perfection into the Gospel. Here in the Gospel we have, and we hear the glad tidings of joy. Everyone that needeth righteousness come hither and ye shall find it here. Come, receive as a free gift, without money,--perfection, righteousness, justification, the adoption of children, eternal life. And by such preaching, the Savior works faith and acceptance in the hearts of men. The Word, as it were, is received by the heart of man, and together with this Word Christ Himself and His righteousness begin to dwell in the heart and in the mouth of every believer. This liberty and this righteousness are very near to us. Dr. Stoeckhardt in his Commentary on Romans says, on page 481, with reference to this passage, (Romans 10:8.) "This is the clear summary of the Gospel of God, the unfailing shibboleth of the true religion. Hence it is inexcusable folly if now any still does not know where to seek righteousness, salvation and life, if anyone ignores and denies the righteousness procured by God and instead goes about to establish his own righteousness." Dr. Luther says, C. T. M. Vol. I. Page 896:

"Now, here sets in the joyful exchange and strife. Since Christ, the God-Man, who never committed a sin and possesses a holiness which is invincible, eternal, and almighty, takes over the sins of the believing soul, faith being her wedding-ring, as His own, altogether as if He had committed them, all sins are devoured and drowned in Him. For His invincible righteousness overpowers all sins. Thus the soul is absolutely cleared and freed of all her sins by virtue of her dowry, that is, through faith, and is endowed with the eternal righteousness of her Bridegroom, Christ. A happy householdry indeed: The rich and noble and good Bridegroom Christ wedding the poor, despised, wicked wench, freeing her from all evil and endowing her with all goods! Thus it becomes impossible that her sins should condemn her, for they are now lying on Christ and destroyed in Him. On the other hand, she owns through her Husband such a rich righteousness that she can again stand in the face of all sins, though she had committed them." And again, Luther says, in page 812: "He satisfied the Law, He fulfilled the Law in every way; for He loved God with all His heart, with all His soul, with all His strength, with all His mind, and His neighbor as Himself." "Therefore, when the Law comes and accuses you that you have not kept it, bid it go to Christ and say:" "There is the Man who has kept it; to Him I cling: He fulfilled it for me and gave His fulfillment to me! Thus the Law is silenced." (Luther C. T. M. Vol. I page 812.)

An objection is made by such as deny that the active obedience of Christ is necessary for our redemption. Insisting on the necessity of the active obedience, we are told, conflicts with all those Scripture passages that ascribe our redemption to Christ's vicarious suffering and death, to His passive obedience. Scripture clearly teaches, so we are told, that "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." That "we are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ" as of a "Lamb without blemish and without spot." 1 Peter 1:19 that in Christ "we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins." Col. 1:14. If, then, we are redeemed by the blood of Christ, so runs the argument, the active obedience is unnecessary, and salvation on the basis of such active obedience contradicts the well established doctrine of salvation by the blood of Jesus.

Let us briefly examine these objections. We admit that our justification and salvation are ascribed by Scripture to the passive obedience, and we have not the least intention to deny the efficacy of the blood of our Savior, nor the saving power of His death. That is too clearly taught in Holy Scripture. However, the self-same Scripture tells us that Christ has redeemed us by His active obedience, as we have brought out in a previous thesis. Scriptures therefore ascribes our salvation and justification to both the passive and active obedience of Christ. We are saved by the blood of Jesus, and we are saved by His perfect fulfillment of the Law.

We are justified by the passive obedience, we are made children of God by the active obedience. Neither excludes the other, for both are stated in Scripture, and one cannot conflict with, nor contradict, the other statement. 1 Tim. 2:6. "Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. 2 Cor. 5:21. "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Galatians 3:13. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree."

Gerhard says: "Although in many passages of Scripture the work of redemption is ascribed to Christ's death and the shedding of His blood, yet this must be accepted by no means exclusively, as though by it the holy life of Christ were excluded from the work of redemption; but it must be regarded as occurring for the reason that nowhere does the fact that the Lord has loved and redeemed us shine forth more clearly than in His Passion, death, and wounds, as the devout old teachers say, and because the death of Christ is, as it were, the last line and completion, the end and perfection, of the entire obedience, as the apostle says. Phil. 2:8. "Why, it is altogether impossible in this merit to separate the active from the passive obedience." (C. T. M. Vol. I. page 894.)

Both the active and passive obedience of Christ are essential to our salvation. In order to be saved, we must not only be freed from the penalty which the Law inflicts, upon all transgressors. The Law also demands perfection. The psalmist, art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with thee. Ps. 5:4. Unless we are justified before God, unless God will declare us righteous, we cannot enter eternal life. Says Dr. Engelder: "We call attention to the Scriptural meaning and use of the term "righteousness" First, who has that quality which "the Law of righteousness," Rom. 9:31, demands? The Law requires righteous deeds, the rectitude of behavior and the rectitude of disposition. He is a just, a righteous man who "doeth them," Gal 3:12, Who performs all the deeds prescribed by the Law.

(Rom. 8:4) The righteousness demanded by the Law is a positive quality. He is a good citizen who lives up to the law of the land. The lawbreaker is not a good citizen. He may become a good citizen, but that only through abiding by the law. Equally so the Law of God recognizes no one as righteous unless he abides by the Law. God requires this righteousness of all who would enter into eternal life. According to God's own statement no man will be granted entrance into heaven unless it can be shown that he has fulfilled every single commandment.

Where is Scriptural warrant for the claim that this provision of the Law has been abrogated? "The Gospel certainly bears the good message that the Law has been abrogated. But how? By this, that Christ made an end of the Law by fulfilling it in our stead. But where is Scriptural warrant for the claim that in the fulfilling of the Law for the purpose of abrogating it Christ looked only to its minatory provisions and had no need to pay attention to its mandatory provisions? The provision: "Cursed is every one: etc. Gal. 3:13: cannot be annulled. It must be executed--and it has been executed on Christ.

Only thus could it come to an end. The provision This do and thou shalt live; Gal 3:12; Rom. 10:5, can just as little be annulled. This demand must be met--and Christ has met it for us." Conc. Th. Mthly, Vol. III, p. 892. Thank God that we can so believe and confess, else we would be lost forever. If Christ had not become our righteousness by His active obedience, if He had not fulfilled the Law of God for us, how could we hope to stand before the judgment throne of God? "How could we, with a nature dead in trespasses and sins, with a carnal mind which is enmity against God, with a heart that is by nature steeped in self-love and self-satisfaction, how could we ever endeavor to fulfill the Law of God, which demands above all that we love God with all our heart and all our soul, and all our might, and love our neighbor as ourselves? Would it not be folly and foolishness supreme for man to try to

establish a righteousness of his own? Would that not be endeavoring the impossible? Why try what man cannot do, what Christ has done for us, why not acknowledge the futility of our own efforts, confess that we are all as an unclean thing, and that all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags? Yea, all our righteousnesses, call them character, call them virtue, call them personality, call them by any other name, all our righteousnesses, no matter how proud we are of them, no matter how our fellowmortals may praise them, all our righteousnesses in the sight of God are as filthy rags. - And who would be so foolish as to endeavor to make himself presentable before a judge by covering his dirty, filthy body with rags, and rags not washed clean, but dirty, filthy rags, reeking with evil odors? What a hopeless undertaking, what folly supreme! Yet why commit this folly by endeavoring to cover our own innate sinfulness and depravity by the rags of our own good works, of our own character, our own righteousnesses, which by the Lord Himself are declared to be mere filth and an abomination to Him? Why not confess, I do not speak to Thee because I have ever justly kept Thy laws and dare to meet thy face. I know that sin and guilt combine to reign o'er every thought of mine, and turn from good to ill; I know that, though in doing good I spend my life, I never could atone for all I've done. Why not come to Him Who has for all men, for you and me, by His perfect obedience, fulfilled the Law, made an

end to its demands, and redeemed us who were under the Law, under obligation to keep it, under its curse and damnation, had He not come to be our Redeemer? Why not permit Him to give us for our imperfection His perfection, for our unrighteousness His righteousness, for our sins and iniquity His divine fulfillment, for our disobedience and rebellion His willing submission and perfect obedience to God's Law?"

"Thy righteousness, O Christ,
 Alone can cover me;
 No righteousness avails
 Save that which is of Thee,
 To whom, save Thee Who canst alone
 For sin atone, Lord, shall I flee?"

(Hym 329 v. 4)

Thesis V

This perfect obedience of Christ is of God made unto us, sanctification; since from it we obtain strength and willingness to walk in His footsteps and follow His example, and while we shall never in this life attain perfection, yet His spotless righteousness covers up our failings.

The vicarious obedience of Christ is together with the suffering and death of our Savior, the well-spring of sanctification. 1 Cor. 1:30.

"Christ Jesus of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification." As our justification is based

not only on His suffering and death, but just as surely on His perfect fulfillment of God's Law so our sanctification rests not only on the passive obedience, but just as certainly on the active obedience of our Lord. Again, that is not merely a man made conclusion: this doctrine is clearly and expressly revealed in Holy Writ, as we shall see.

In Romans 10:4. St. Paul calls Christ the end of the Law. Yet Paul does not proceed to say that therefore we can live and do as we please. That is far from his mind. What he does say is that Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness; not for lawlessness, not for sin-service, not for living according to the lust of the flesh.

No, Christ has not for such a purpose made an end of the Law. His purpose in fulfilling the Law was quite a different one. On the basis of His perfect fulfillment in our stead we who could not possible keep the Law, were to be justified, declared righteous not because of a self-made righteousness, but solely because of the perfect righteousness procured by Him. Again this justification on the part of God, this declaration of God that because of Christ's perfect obedience man now stood justified, righteous, in His sight, this justification is not a license for loose living. It is a righteousness to every one that believeth, a righteousness which is accepted only by faith. The apostle in Romans 10:6. "But the righteousness which is of faith." Only by faith in Christ's

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is not accompanied by any improvement.

"On the contrary, faith is a divine work in us, which transforms us, gives us a new birth of God, John 1:13; Slays the Old Adam, makes us altogether different men in heart, affection, mind, and all powers, and brings with it the Holy Spirit. Oh, it is a living, energetic, active, mighty thing, this faith. It cannot but do good unceasingly. There is no question asked whether good works are to be done, but before the question is asked, the works have been done, and there is a continuous doing of them. But any person not doing such works is without faith. He is groping in the dark, looking for faith and good works, and knows neither what faith is nor what good works are, although he indulges in a lot of twaddle and flummery concerning faith and good works.

"Faith is a living, daring confidence in the grace of God, of such assurance that it would risk a thousand deaths. This confidence and knowledge of divine grace makes a person happy, bold, and full of gladness in his relation to God and all creatures. The Holy Ghost is doing this in the believer. Hence it is that a person, without constraint, becomes willing and enthusiastic to do good to everybody, to serve everybody, to suffer all manner of afflictions, from love of God and to the praise of Him who has extended such grace to him." (Theol. Mthly., pp. 326,327. Dau's translation of Luther's Preface to the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans.)

The very fact that Paul says that Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to every one that believeth, clearly

and unmistakably shows that far from advocating and encouraging lawlessness, the doctrine of Christ's vicarious fulfillment of the Law is in fact one of the strongest arguments for holiness in life, yea, part of the very foundation on which our sanctification rests.

This is stated with even greater directness and clearness in the passage from Galatians. "But when the fulness of the 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. The very purpose for which Christ redeemed us from the Law was to make us children of God; that we might receive the adoption of sons. On the basis of the fulfillment of the Law by His own Son God is willing to adopt every human being as His own child at the moment that he accepts in faith the vicarious obedience of His Savior and appears before God trusting not in his own work, but in the perfection of Jesus. And at that very same moment that the believer accepts Christ's righteousness, his whole relation and attitude toward God is changed.— No longer does he look upon God as the unrelenting Lawgiver who threatens every transgressor eternal punishment, though he offend only in one point. No longer will he obey the Law of this God only as a slave obeys the command of his taskmaster, merely for fear of punishment or hope or reward, while in his heart he hates his master and longs to be freed from his authority. All this has been changed at the moment that one has become a child of God. He knows and believes and trusts

in that Son of God who loved him and for his sake left His throne in heaven and permitted Himself to be made under the Law in order that man, held hopelessly under obligation to a Law which he could not even begin to fulfill, might be redeemed from this Law and become a beloved child of God. He knows and believes and trusts in that Holy Ghost, who in word and sacrament offers, grants, seals to every believer this perfect righteousness obtained by the holy, spotless life of Christ, the Son of God.

And this knowledge, this faith, this trust in the triune God, based on the vicarious obedience of Christ, changes

completely his attitude toward God. It expels from his heart all hatred and enmity toward God; it removes from his mind and soul all selfishness and fills his heart and soul and mind with true sincere love, with childlike affection toward his heavenly Father. For here is love which no longer regards the will and command as an infringement upon one's liberty: No, here is love, sincere, free, that makes Christ's word its own: "I delight to do Thy will, O my God: Yea, Thy Law is within my heart: I know Thy Law, I love Thy Law. And gladly and willingly I do "Thy Law."

We have already in the Second Thesis, speaking of the perfect obedience of Christ, had occasion to see how thoroughly unselfish the life of Christ on this earth was. His energy, all the powers of body and soul were devoted not to His own glory, but to the service of God and His fellowman. We have heard of His untiring love toward His fellowmen, all of whom He came to seek and to save, for all of whom He laid down His life that they might have life and it more abundantly. As we lifted up in prayer.

"O teach me, Lord to Thee truly

With soul and body, head and heart,

And grant me grace that I may duly

Practice fore'er love's sacred art:

Grant that my every thought may be

Directed e'er to Thee."--Hym 349. V. 7.

We have already pointed out the implicit trust which Christ placed in His God even in that darkest of all hours when God, His own Father, had forsaken Him, cast His away. From that trust of our perfect Example we learn and from that trust of our Redeemer we receive strength to exclaim even when it seems to us as if God had cast of as off. Psalm 43:2. Thou art the God of my strength: Psalm 43:5. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why thou disquieted within me? hope in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God."

"My Jesus, as Thou wilt!

O may Thy will be mine:

Into Thy hand of love

I would my all resign,

Thro' sorrow, or thro' joy,

Conduct me as Thine own;

And help me still to say,

My Lord, Thy will be done.--Hym 387; V. 1.

Conclusion

What a comfort for us to know that He, our blood brother, our Redeemer, is "Lord over all." Hence, no matter from which viewpoint we study the life of Christ no matter which phase of His manifold righteousness we consider, always we shall find a model of perfection, an unparalleled example of obedience to

God's Law, the one flawless pattern of holiness, the Son of Righteousness, in which there are no spots or blemishes, whose fulfillment of the Law surpasses in glory and excellence the efforts of His most devout followers. The perfection of Jesus is more than a mere pattern. "Thanks and praise be to Thee, Lord Jesus, that Thou didst live for us and die for us, manifesting both in death and life Thy marvelous love to us. All that have obtained peace and rest in Thee praise Thee: all who by Thee come to God glorify Thee, all whose trespasses are forgiven through Thee give thanks to Thee. Thou art the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."—He gives us power to let our light shine before the people, by "teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world. Titus 2:12-13.

We must realize that without Him we can do nothing. Let Him be unto us both Righteousness and Strength, Justification and Sanctification. As the ransomed of the Lord, redeemed by Him, let us walk on the highway of holiness. Let us make Paul's confession: "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but doing, that I may win Christ. And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ the righteousness which is of God by faith. That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made

conformable unto his death. If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehend of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded:" Philipians 3:8-15a, until that happy day arrives when we shall behold His face in "righteousness; when we shall awake and be forever satisfied with His likeness." Psalm 17:15.

May God help us with true singleness of purpose to give ourselves to Christ.

Bruno Martinelli