

# How the “uses of the law . . . sweetly comply with . . . the grace of the Gospel” (2LCF 19.7)

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Neither are the aforementioned uses of the law contrary to the grace of the Gospel, but do sweetly comply with it . . . (2LCF 19.7a)

Our subject is important for at least three reasons. First, because this is what we confess as confessional, associational churches. It is, therefore, what we believe the Bible teaches. Second, because it is one of those confessional assertions that is often misunderstood and, in our day, denied by prominent evangelicals.<sup>1</sup> And third, it is important for the well-being of our churches, which are comprised of God’s dear children. This last reason will be examined more fully in the conclusion.

In addressing the issue of how the “uses of the law . . . sweetly comply with the grace of the Gospel” (2LCF 19.7), we will consider 2LCF 19.7 in its confessional context, define some technical terms utilized in discussions about the law of God, identify the “uses of the law” implied by this paragraph, and discuss how the “uses of the law . . . sweetly comply with the grace of the Gospel.” A conclusion to the whole will be our final consideration of this topic in light of the discussion.

## The Confessional Context of 2LCF 19.7

Our Confession at 19.7 assumes and builds upon the previous paragraphs. An outline of chapter 19 may help to see the progress and development of the doctrine of the law of God and how 2LCF 19.7 functions in light of what precedes it.<sup>2</sup>

- A. The Initial Revelation of the Law of God-BCF 19:1 “God gave to Adam a law of universal obedience . . .”
- B. The Subsequent Function and Revelation of the Law of God-2LCF 19.2-4
  - 1. Its subsequent function: Adam to Moses-2LCF 19.2a “The same law that was first written in the heart of man continued to be a perfect rule of righteousness after the fall”

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<sup>1</sup> It will be argued below that our Confession is applying the doctrine of what is more commonly called the threefold use of the law at 19.6-7. For an example of one contemporary evangelical who denies the third use of the law (i.e., the moral law as a rule of life for the believer), questions its legitimacy, and yet sees “the notion . . . not entirely wrong . . .” see Thomas R. Schreiner, *40 Questions About Christians and Biblical Law* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2010), 97-100. Schreiner says, “Strictly speaking, the idea that believers are under the third use of the law is mistaken, for we have seen that the entire law is abolished for believers. Still, the notion is not entirely wrong . . .” and later “Calvin and Luther had different positions on the third use of the law. Luther is closer to the truth on this matter than Calvin, for he sees more clearly that the Old Testament law is not normative for believers, and that believers are no longer under the Mosaic covenant” (99).

<sup>2</sup> I wrestled with whether or not to include this somewhat extensive outline. I decided to include it for readers to see the flow of thought, the interconnectedness of the various doctrinal assertions, and the use of technical terms and concepts either explicit or implied by 2LCF 19.1-7.

2. Its subsequent revelation: Mosaic Law–2LCF 19.2b-4 “and was delivered by God upon Mount Sinai”
  - a. Mosaic law and the law written on the heart (i.e., Moral Law)
  - b. Mosaic law and supplemental/positive law–2LCF 19.3-4 “Besides this law, commonly called moral . . .”
- C. The Universal Obligation of the Law of God–2LCF 19.5
  1. Its Statement–2LCF 19.5a “The moral law doth for ever bind all, (Rom. 13:8-10; James 2:8, 10-12) as well justified persons as others, to the obedience thereof”
  2. Its Basis–2LCF 19.5b
    - a. Because of its content: “and that not only in regard of the matter contained in it,”
    - b. Because of its giver: “but also in respect of the (James 2:10, 11) authority of God the Creator, who gave it;”
  3. Its Strengthening–2LCF 19.5c “neither doth Christ in the Gospel any way dissolve, (Matt. 5:17-19; Rom. 3:31) but much strengthen this obligation.”
- D. The Various Uses of the Law of God–2LCF 19.6-7
  1. Uses common to believers and unbelievers “Although true believers be not under the law as a covenant of works, to be thereby justified or condemned, yet it is of great use to them as well as to others;”
    - a. It directs and binds as a rule of life. “in that as a rule of life, informing them of the will of God and their duty, it directs and binds them to walk accordingly;”
    - b. It discovers sin within. “discovering also the sinful pollutions of their natures, hearts, and lives, so as examining themselves thereby, they may come to further conviction of, humiliation for, and hatred against, sin;”
    - c. It points to a remedy without. “together with a clearer sight of the need they have of Christ and the perfection of his obedience;”
  2. Uses common to believers alone “it is likewise of use to the regenerate . . .”
    - a. It restrains our corruptions by forbidding sin. “to restrain their corruptions, in that it forbids sin;”
    - b. It shows what the sins of believers deserve and what afflictions are to be expected in this life by its threatenings. “and the threatenings of it serve to shew what even their sins deserve, and what afflictions in this life they may expect for them, although freed from the curse and unallayed rigour thereof.”
    - c. It shows believers God’s approbation of and our expected blessings upon obedience by its promises. “The promises of it likewise shew them God’s approbation of obedience, and what blessings they may expect upon the performance thereof, though not as due to them by the law as a covenant of works; so as man’s doing good and refraining from evil, because the law encourageth to the one and deterreth from the other, is no evidence of his being under the law and not under grace.”
- E. The Complementary Nature of these Uses with the Gospel for Believers–2LCF 19.7
  1. Its denial: “Neither are the aforementioned uses of the law contrary to the grace of the Gospel,”
  2. Its affirmation:
    - a. the essence of its affirmation: “but do sweetly comply with it”
    - b. the efficient cause of its affirmation:
      - 1) his person: “the Spirit of Christ”

- 2) his work: “subduing and enabling the will of man to do that freely and cheerfully which the will of God, revealed in the law, requireth to be done.”

Working our way through 2LCF 19 puts us into the context of a discussion which utilizes terms or concepts, either explicitly or implicitly, that must be understood to grasp what is and is not being asserted. This being the case, let us consider some of the terms and concepts utilized in 2LCF 19.

## Defining our Terms

Our Confession is the product of more than a century and a half of post-Reformation theological insight. It reflects the thinking of the movement sometimes called Protestant Orthodoxy. Before we identify the uses of the law as contained in 2LCF 19.6 (i.e., the uses implied by 19.7), let us define some terms utilized in this Reformed theological tradition in its discussions on the law of God. This will aid the current discussion by putting it into a recognized context of the conversation that predates us and upon which what we confess is built. It is proper to remind ourselves that doing theology involves utilizing terms and phrases that have evolved over time in an attempt to encapsulate crucial biblical teachings. We use technical terms and phrases to accommodate wide swaths of truth, putting these truths into brief, theological short-hand. Acquainting ourselves with the theological nomenclature typically utilized in discussions of the law of God will help us when coming to the specific confessional assertions about it.

### *Natural Law*

Here is Richard Muller’s entry for natural law:

**lex naturalis:** *natural law*; also **lex naturae;** *law of nature*; the universal moral law either impressed by God upon the mind of all people or immediately discerned by the reason in its encounter with the order of nature. The natural law was therefore available even to those pagans who did not have the advantage of the Sinaitic revelation and the *lex Mosaica* [i.e., Mosaic law, which includes the natural law, though in a different form] with the result that they were left without excuse in their sins... The scholastics argue the identity of the *lex naturalis* with the *lex Mosaica* . . . according to substance, and distinguish them . . . according to form. The *lex naturalis* is inward, written on the heart and therefore obscure [due to sin], whereas the *lex Mosacia* is revealed externally and written on tablets and thus of greater clarity.<sup>3</sup>

The natural law is universal because God is the Creator of all men. Natural law is “founded on the natural right of God . . . (being founded on the very holiness and wisdom of God).”<sup>4</sup> These laws are “just and good antecedently to the command of God . . .”<sup>5</sup> They are commanded because just and good in light of who God is and what man is as His image bearer. Natural law

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<sup>3</sup> Richard A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms Drawn Principally from Protestant Scholastic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985), 175.

<sup>4</sup> Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 3 vols., ed. James T. Dennison, Jr., trans. George Musgrave Giger (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1992-97), 2.11.1 (II:2).

<sup>5</sup> Turretin, *Elenctic Theology*, 2.11.1 (II:2).

is “the practical rule of moral duties to which men are bound by nature.”<sup>6</sup> Due to man’s created constitution, this law is written on his heart (2 LCF 4.2-3), though now obscured by sin (2LCF 6). Natural law is not acquired by tradition or formal instruction. This law was, however, promulgated (i.e., formally published) on Sinai, which differs from the natural law in form though identical to it in substance. Protestant Orthodoxy taught that the Decalogue summarily contains the moral law and is the inscripturated form of the natural law, as to its substance. A distinction was made between *substance* and *form*. *Substance* is one; *form* (and function) may vary. For example, when the Westminster Larger Catechism Q.98. says, “The moral law is summarily comprehended in the ten commandments,” it refers to the fact that the *substance* (i.e., the underlying substance) of the moral law is assumed in the propositions of the Decalogue as contained in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5. The *form* (and function) fits the redemptive-historical circumstances in which it was given. The *substance*, or underlying principles, are always relevant and applicable to man because he is created in the image of God. The application may shift based on redemptive-historical changes, such as the inauguration of the new covenant, but the *substance* and utility never changes. For example, the application of the second commandment under the inaugurated new covenant is different from its application under the Mosaic covenant but its substance is the same. We must worship God as God has revealed, and since the fall into sin, through a mediator and in accord with His revealed will.

### *Moral Law*

Muller defines moral law in Protestant Orthodox thought as follows:

[S]pecifically and predominantly, the *Decalogus*, or Ten Commandments; also called the *lex Mosaica* . . . , as distinct from the *lex ceremonialis* . . . and the *lex civilis*, or civil law. The *lex moralis*, which is primarily intended to regulate morals, is known to the *synderesis* [i.e., the innate habit of understanding basic principles of moral law] and is the basis of the acts of *conscientia* [i.e., conscience—the application of the innate habit above]. In substance, the *lex moralis* is identical with the *lex naturalis* . . . but, unlike the natural law, it is given by revelation in a form which is clearer and fuller than that otherwise known to the reason.<sup>7</sup>

As noted above, the moral law is summarily comprehended in the Decalogue, not exhausted by it. Though the formal promulgation of the Decalogue had a unique redemptive-historical context and use, it is nothing other than the natural law incorporated into the Mosaic covenant in a new form. This is one of its uses in the Bible, though it does not exhaust its uses (e.g., Jer. 31:33).

### *Positive Law*

Positive laws are those laws added to the natural or moral law. They are dependent upon the will of God. These laws are “good because God commands them.”<sup>8</sup> They become just, because commanded by God. The first revelation of positive law was delivered to Adam in the Garden

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<sup>6</sup> Turretin, *Elenctic Theology*, 2.11.1 (II:2).

<sup>7</sup> Muller, *Dictionary*, 173-74.

<sup>8</sup> Turretin, *Elenctic Theology*, 2.11.1 (II:2).

(Gen. 1:28; 2:17; cf. 2LCF 4.3; 6.1; 7.1-3; 19.1). Subsequent positive laws are spread throughout the Old and New Testaments. Positive laws can be abrogated for various reasons. They are not necessarily universal or perpetual. Some obvious examples of positive law in the Old Testament are circumcision and the laws of sacrifice and two New Testament illustrations are baptism and the Lord's Supper. Neither circumcision, sacrifices, baptism, or the Lord's Supper are universal or perpetual. The ceremonial laws of the Old Testament, as well as the judicial law of old covenant Israel, are also examples of positive law. Ceremonial law is not based on creation but conditioned upon God's purpose to remedy the plight of man due to sin. It is positive law, law added to the natural or moral law and, in this case, for the purposes of redemption. The judicial law refers to the civil laws revealed through Moses for ancient Israel as God's nation in the land of promise. Though the underlying principles of these laws (i.e., their general equity) are still of moral use (2LCF 19.7), the laws as universal, positive laws for God's covenant people have expired along with the theocracy.

### *The Threefold Division of the Law*

The threefold division of the law understands the moral law as based on creation and, therefore, perpetually binding on all men (though in differing ways) and the ceremonial and judicial law of the old covenant as supplemental to the Decalogue under the Mosaic covenant (cf. 2LCF 19.1-4 and the outline of 19.1-7 above). The ceremonial and judicial law of the Mosaic covenant is positive law, law added to the moral law for temporary redemptive-historical purposes. The threefold division of the law is based on the fact that the Bible makes distinctions between different types of law functioning under the Mosaic covenant (and prior to it) and views the principles of the Decalogue as pre-dating its formal promulgation at Sinai, going back to the creation of man.<sup>9</sup> In one sense, the Decalogue under the Mosaic covenant is positive law, law for ancient Israel as God's covenant nation to be obeyed as such in the land of promise.<sup>10</sup>

### *The Threefold Use of the Law*

The threefold use of the law and the threefold division of the law are not one and the same thing. Concerning the doctrine of the threefold use of the law, Muller says:

**usus legis:** *use of the law*; as distinguished by the Protestant scholastics, both Lutheran and Reformed, there are three uses of the *lex moralis*. (1) . . . the political or civil use, according to which the law serves the commonwealth, or body politic, as a force for the restraint of sin. The first *usus* stands completely apart from any relation to the work of salvation and functions much as *revelatio generalis* . . . in bringing some knowledge of God's will to all mankind. (2) . . . the elenctical or pedagogical use; i.e., the use of the law for the confrontation and refutation of sin and for the purpose of pointing the way to Christ. . . . (3) . . . the *tertius usus legis*, the third use of the law. This final use of the law

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<sup>9</sup> For the best contemporary discussion on the threefold division of the law see Philip S. Ross, *From the Finger of God: The Biblical and Theological Basis for the Threefold Division of the Law* (Ross-shire, Scotland: Mentor Imprint by Christian Focus Publications Ltd., 2010).

<sup>10</sup> See the discussion "The Concept of Abrogation in Owen and others" in Nehemiah Coxe and John Owen, *Covenant Theology: From Adam to Christ*, eds. Ronald D. Miller, James M. Renihan, and Francisco Orozco (Palmdale, CA: Reformed Baptist Academic Press, 2005), 325-31.

pertains to believers in Christ who have been saved through faith apart from works. In the regenerate life, the law no longer functions to condemn, since it no longer stands elenctically over against man as the unreachable basis for salvation, but acts as a norm of conduct, freely accepted by those in whom the grace of God works the good. This normative use is also didactic inasmuch as the law now teaches, without condemnation, the way of righteousness.<sup>11</sup>

The threefold use of the law refers to various functions of the moral law. The first use of the moral law applies to all men. The second use applies to all men who come in contact with the written Word of God. The third use applies to believers alone. Chapter 19 paragraph 7 concentrates on the use of the moral law for believers. It functions, among other things, as a *pattern for life*,<sup>12</sup> that is, it functions as a guide for the sanctification of believers.

### The “Uses of the Law” Implied by 2LCF 19.7

What are the uses of the moral law implied by 2LCF 19.7, “the aforementioned uses of the law”? Here is 2LCF 19.6 with a list of the uses of the law contained in it.

6. Although true believers be not under the law as a covenant of works, (Rom. 6:14; Gal. 2:16; Rom. 8:1; 10:4) to be thereby justified or condemned, yet it is of great use to them as well as to others, in that as a rule of life, informing them of the will of God and their duty, it directs and binds them to walk accordingly; (Rom. 3:20; 7:7ff.) discovering also the sinful pollutions of their natures, hearts, and lives, so as examining themselves thereby, they may come to further conviction of, humiliation for, and hatred against, sin; together with a clearer sight of the need they have of Christ and the perfection of his obedience; it is likewise of use to the regenerate to restrain their corruptions, in that it forbids sin; and the threatenings of it serve to shew what even their sins deserve, and what afflictions in this life they may expect for them, although freed from the curse and unallayed rigour thereof. The promises of it likewise shew them God’s approbation of obedience, and what blessings they may expect upon the performance thereof, though not as due to them by the law as a covenant of works; so as man’s doing good and refraining from evil, because the law encourageth to the one and deterreth from the other, is no evidence of his being (Rom. 6:12-14; 1 Pet. 3:8-13) under the law and not under grace.

There are six uses of the law contained here: three common to both believers and unbelievers and three common to believers exclusively.<sup>13</sup> Notice carefully what is asserted: “. . . yet it [i.e.,

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<sup>11</sup> Muller, *Dictionary*, 320-21.

<sup>12</sup> Muller, *Dictionary*, 321, terms this as the didactic use of the law under *usus didacticus*. “. . . this latter didactic or normative use is referred to simply as the *tertius usus legis*, the third use of the law. This final use of the law pertains to believers in Christ who have been saved through faith apart from works. In the regenerate life, the law . . . acts as a norm of conduct . . . This normative use [*usus normativus*] is also didactic inasmuch as the law now teaches, without condemnation, the way of righteousness.” Calvin also referred to the third use as *usus in renatis*, which means the use of the law for the regenerate.

<sup>13</sup> See Chad Van Dixhorn, *Confessing the Faith: A reader’s guide to the Westminster Confession of Faith* (Edinburgh and Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2014), 251, n. 1, where he acknowledges that the ordering of the uses of the law in the Confession differ from Calvin’s. The form is different from Calvin but not the concepts.

“The moral law,” cf. 2LCF 19.5] is of great use to them [i.e., “true believers”] as well as to others [i.e., unbelievers], in that . . .” Then notice the shift to believers exclusively: “. . . it is likewise of use to the regenerate . . .” The fact that believers and unbelievers have uses of the moral law common to them implies that they have something else in common that is the ground or basis for these uses. Believers and unbelievers are both creatures, “being made after the image God, . . . having the law of God written in their hearts” (2LCF 4.2; see 4.3; 6.1; 19.1, 2, 5). Here is an outline of the uses stated in 2LCF 19.6 and implied by 19.7.<sup>14</sup>

### Uses Common to Believers and Unbelievers

1. it directs and binds as a rule of life: “in that as a **rule of life**, informing them of the will of God and their duty, it **directs** and **binds** them to walk accordingly; (Rom. 3:20; 7:7ff.)”
2. it discovers sin within: “**discovering** also the **sinful** pollutions of their natures, hearts, and lives, so as examining themselves thereby, they may come to further conviction of, humiliation for, and hatred against, **sin**;”
3. it points to a remedy without: “together with a clearer sight of **the need they have of Christ and the perfection of his obedience**;”

### Uses Common to Believers Alone

4. it restrains corruption in believers by forbidding sin: “it is likewise of use to the regenerate **to restrain their corruptions**, in that it **forbids sin**;”
5. it shows what the sins of believers deserve and what afflictions are to be expected in this life by its threatenings: “and **the threatenings** of it **serve to shew** what even their **sins deserve**, and what **afflictions** in this life they may **expect** for them, although freed from the curse and unallayed rigour thereof.”
6. it shows believers God’s approbation of and expected blessings upon obedience by its promises: “The **promises** of it likewise **shew** them **God’s approbation of obedience**, and **what blessings they may expect** upon the **performance** thereof, though not as due to them by the law as a covenant of works;”

### The Sweet Compliance of these Uses “with the Grace of the Gospel”

The specific issue we are focusing on is how these uses “sweetly comply with” “the grace of the Gospel.” What is meant by “sweetly comply”? I take this to mean *assuredly agree with or not to contradict in any fashion*. The assertion is that the uses of the moral law stated in 19.6 do not in any way contradict “the grace of the Gospel.” To what is “the grace of the Gospel” in this context referring? Notice it does not say “the Gospel.” The “grace of” refers to that which comes to believing sinners as a result of the gospel believed.<sup>15</sup> It is “grace” which comes by virtue of the gospel believed. Recall that the Confession is dealing with present believers in 19.7. The “grace of the Gospel” refers not to redemption accomplished (or the announcement of it), but to redemption applied (i.e., the benefits of Christ). This “grace of the Gospel” refers not to the message to be believed; it refers to the grace which comes to believers, those having believed. In other words, “the grace of the Gospel” is that which comes to believing sinners and is given to

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<sup>14</sup> Bold text in the confessional quotations indicates where and why I identified each use as I did.

<sup>15</sup> This is not to deny that the initial act of saving faith, justification, etc. are not graces or gifts which come to us.

them. This is referring to the Spirit-enabled obedience of believers and unique to them.<sup>16</sup> This should become clearer as we continue the discussion. Let's take a closer look at the paragraph.

The paragraph has a denial and an affirmation, as noted in the outline above. Here is 2LCF 19.7 again:

7. Neither are the aforementioned uses of the law (Gal. 3:21) contrary to the grace of the Gospel, but do sweetly comply with it, the Spirit of Christ subduing (Ezek. 36:27) and enabling the will of man to do that freely and cheerfully which the will of God, revealed in the law, requireth to be done.

The paragraph denies that the uses of the moral law for believers mentioned in 19.6 are "contrary to the grace of the Gospel." It affirms that the various uses "do sweetly comply with it." The denial is explained by the affirmation. We know that the uses of the moral law mentioned in 19.6 are not "contrary to the grace of the Gospel" because of the work of the Holy Spirit in the souls of Christ's people as that relates them to the law of God. In other words, "the grace of the Gospel" in this context is concentrating on "the Spirit of Christ subduing and enabling" believers as they are related to the law of God. It is the Spirit of Christ who changes the people of Christ that they might obey the law of Christ. I ask again, to what does "the grace of the Gospel" refer in its context? It refers to benefits brought to us by the Spirit of Christ. The "grace of the Gospel" includes, though is certainly not exhausted by, what the Spirit of Christ does to and in believers to relate them to the law of God. This means that believers do not relate to the law of God like unbelievers in all senses. Recall 2LCF 19.6, where we confess, ". . . true believers be not under the law as a covenant of works, to be thereby justified or condemned." That this is the intent of the words under consideration seems clear from the reference to Ezekiel 36:27, which reads, "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances" (NAU 1995). By virtue of the citation of Ezekiel 36:26-27 in 2LCF 7.2, we learn that our framers viewed Ezekiel's words as part of that which is promised in the covenant of grace.<sup>17</sup>

This paragraph is a wonderful testimony to the doctrine of the work of the Holy Spirit in the application of redemption in relating believers to the moral law of God. The Spirit of Christ empowers the people of Christ to do the will of Christ. As A. A. Hodge asserts, "In respect to regenerate men, the law continues to be indispensable as the instrument of the Holy Ghost in the work of their sanctification."<sup>18</sup> This comports with other assertions of our Confession. For example, 2LCF 16.3 says of the good works of believers, "Their ability to do good works is not at all of themselves, but wholly from the Spirit of Christ . . ." In 16.5, we read of the good works of believers, ". . . because they are good they proceed from his Spirit . . ." The reason why the uses of the moral law stated in 19.6 are not "contrary to the grace of the Gospel" is due to the work of the Spirit of Christ in believers, "subduing (Ezek. 36:27) and enabling the will of man to do that freely and cheerfully which the will of God, revealed in the law, requireth to be done."

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<sup>16</sup> See Van Dixhorn, *Confessing the Faith*, 257. He uses the phrase "Spirit-enabled obedience" as a heading while commenting upon WCF 19.7.

<sup>17</sup> 2LCF 10.1 also cites Ezekiel 36:26 and 27.

<sup>18</sup> A. A. Hodge, *The Confession of Faith* (1869; reprint, Edinburgh and Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1983), 258.

## Theological and Practical Conclusions

*Understanding the terms and concepts assumed by our Confession in this discussion helps our understanding of the doctrinal formulation contained in 2LCF 19.7.*

We must recognize that the use of technical language is important. All subjects of inquiry utilize such. Our Confession utilizes terms and concepts which must be understood in order to grasp its meaning as intended. Doing the work of opening up Muller's *Dictionary* and reading various entries can pay off dividends for years to come. Not only will it stock our minds with the technical language utilized in (and often assumed by) our Confession, it will help us understand its intent more clearly. For example, contemporary readers might take the word "law" in 19.7 and assume it means the Mosaic covenant. A little work behind the scenes will help to keep us from falling into idiosyncratic or anachronistic interpretations of our Confession.

*Understanding 2LCF 19.7 properly should help us preach the law sweetly to our people.*

Listen to Turretin:

It is one thing to be under the law to acquire life by it (as Adam was) or as a schoolmaster and prison to guard men until the advent of Christ; another to be under the law as a rule of life, to regulate our morals piously and holily. It is one thing to be under the law inasmuch as it is opposed to the gospel as to rigid and perfect exaction of obedience and the terrible curse with which it threatens sinners; another to be under the law inasmuch as it is subordinated to the gospel, as to sweet direction.<sup>19</sup>

As our Confession makes careful distinctions between types of biblical law and the various uses of the moral law following the Bible, so should we do the same in our pulpit ministries. On the one hand, we must not confuse law and gospel; on the other hand, we must preach in such a way as to assume the various uses of the moral law of God in the hand of the Spirit while we preach. As I once read in (I think) Thomas Watson, "We must preach the law most killingly," but *not* to God's people. The law's maledictory, cursing, condemning function no longer applies to believers. "Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). As shepherds of Christ's sheep, we ought to guide them into safe pastures, giving them the "sweet direction" of the law sweetly. This leads to another related consideration.

*While preaching, we ought to assume these uses of the moral law.*

These uses of the moral law (for believers and unbelievers) do not become true or actuated only if the text we are preaching contains one of the ten commandments. This, along with all other divinely revealed theological facts, ought to be assumed by us as true at all times. We can know that something is true but do not know how or when the Spirit of Christ is wielding the preached word while we deliver it and which uses of the law are being experienced in the souls of our listeners. There is no need to have a list of "uses" in our sermons that seek to apply the various uses of the moral law to the types of hearers under our preaching. No biblical text exists

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<sup>19</sup> Turretin, *Elenctic Theology*, 2.11.23 (II:143).

where the moral law cannot be used by the Spirit of God in the souls of hearers. All individual biblical texts come in the context of the entire biblical text, which we know canonically as the testaments of the Bible. Everything that is true in light of God's written word is true while we are preaching from any individual text. Add to that the fact that our hearers normally know more about the Bible than what we tell them in our sermon. Whether we assume the uses of the moral law consciously or not, the Spirit of Christ takes the word of Christ to the souls of men.

*Our understanding of the sweet compliance of these uses of the law with the grace of the Gospel is fertile ground for humility, both in us and in our people.*

When we see progress in sanctification, either in ourselves or our people, we must remember that it is due to "the Spirit of Christ subduing and enabling." Growth in us and growth in our people, sweet conformity to the moral law of God, is due, not to the preacher of the word, but to the Spirit breathing upon the word, bringing its truth to sight. The sanctifying light is not ours to produce or manufacture or force into our hearers by powerful illustrations or fits of emotionally-charged rhetoric. We are to preach the word as accurately as possible and leave the efficient work of the sanctifying of souls to the Spirit of Christ, who enables "the will of man to do that freely and cheerfully which the will of God, revealed in the law, requireth to be done."