

# **ILLINOIS LUTHERAN CONFERENCE**

## ***Topical Bulletin, September 2019***

Continuing our review of the Ten Commandments, this month we will consider the 5<sup>th</sup> Commandment:  
**“Thou shalt not kill.” (Exodus 20:13)**

Interestingly, the original Hebrew word translated into English as “kill” refers specifically to HUMAN LIFE. The Hebrew root-word is *raw-tsakh'* which Strongs' Hebrew/English lexical dictionary defines as follows: “a primitive root; properly, to dash in pieces, i.e. kill (a human being), especially to murder.” Hence, the 5<sup>th</sup> Commandment does NOT forbid the slaying of animals, insects, fish, or plants; rather, the commandment forbids the taking of human life, albeit there are Scriptural exceptions as we will note a bit later.

Therefore, in accord with Holy Scripture, Luther's Small Catechism states:

**THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT**  
HUMAN LIFE AND WELL BEING  
**Thou shalt not kill.**

*What does this mean?* We should fear and love God that we may not hurt nor harm our neighbor in his body, but help and befriend him in every bodily need.

As we proceed with this Topical Bulletin and examine various Scripture passages, it will be plainly evident that Luther's explanation of the 5<sup>th</sup> Commandment is in full accord with the Holy Bible.

**God forbids murder, taking the life of a fellow human being.**

“Thou shalt not kill.” (Deuteronomy 5:17 KJV) *Comment: same wording as in Exodus 20:13.*

“Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness.” (Matthew 19:18 KJV) *Comment: observe that Jesus states the 5<sup>th</sup> Commandment using the term “murder” as a correct definition for the term “kill”.*

“And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.” (Genesis 4:8 KJV) *Comment: Cain's killing of his brother Abel is the first murder by man in history, and there have been many more since.*

“Ye are of *your* father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.” (John 8:44 KJV) *Comment: the devil murdered Eve and Adam spiritually, and their sin brought temporal death, spiritual death, and never-ending death in hell upon all people, “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.” (Romans 5:12 KJV)*

“For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if *there be* any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended

in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” (Romans 13:9 KJV) *Comment: perfect love to our neighbor, perfect love to all our fellow human beings, would result in no murders being committed. However, since we are all sinners none of us loves our neighbor perfectly at all times as we should, “For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.”* (Ecclesiastes 7:20 KJV)

*Further comments: it is NOT murder when the civil authority – government of the state – inflicts the death penalty and wages just wars, for civil authorities are God’s servants rendering His justice in such cases, as the following Bible verses make abundantly clear.*

“Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.” (Genesis 9:6 KJV) *Comment: to inflict capital punishment upon a murderer is government’s God-given duty. “Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.”* (Matthew 26:52 KJV) *Comment: Peter had no authority to kill, for he was called to be a preacher, not a soldier or policeman; therefore, if Peter’s sword had struck a death blow on that servant of the high-priest’s, Peter would have committed murder and the civil authorities would have been duty-bound to execute him.*

“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.” (Romans 13:1-4 KJV) *Comment: note that civil rulers are God’s ministers who have been placed in their position to keep order and render just punishments upon evildoers— punishments which include the death penalty for capital crimes.*

### **God forbids murder as in taking one’s own life, that is suicide.**

*Comment: Judas Iscariot committed suicide and sinned by so doing, for by committing self-murder he was no longer in a position to sincerely repent and consequently he went to hell as the following Bible passages reveal. “Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.”* (Matthew 27:3-5 KJV) *Observe that although Judas “repented himself” he did not have repentance toward God since Judas had contrition but no faith, as his suicide proves. “Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus. For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry. Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. ...Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.”* (Acts 1:16-18, 25b KJV) *Note that Judas did NOT go to be with the Lord in paradise; Judas went to “his own place” – hell – for, “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.”* (John 3:36 KJV)

### **Involuntary manslaughter is not murder.**

“And this *is* the case of the slayer, which shall flee thither [*to a city of refuge; a prison city*], that he may live: Whoso killeth his neighbour ignorantly, whom he hated not in time past; As when a man goeth into the wood with his neighbour to hew wood, and his hand fetcheth a stroke with the axe to cut down the tree, and the head slippeth from the helve, and lighteth upon his neighbour, that he die; he shall flee unto one of those cities, and live: Lest the avenger of the blood pursue the slayer, while his heart is hot, and overtake him, because the way is long, and slay him; whereas he *was* not worthy of death, inasmuch as he hated him not in time past.” (Deuteronomy 19:4-6 KJV) “The LORD also spake unto Joshua, saying, Speak to the children of Israel, saying, Appoint out for you cities of refuge, whereof I spake unto you by the hand of Moses: That the slayer that killeth *any* person unawares *and* unwittingly may flee thither: and they shall be your refuge from the avenger of blood. And when he that doth flee unto one of those cities shall stand at the entering of the gate of the city, and shall declare his cause in the ears of the elders of that city, they shall take him into the city unto them, and give him a place, that he may dwell among them. And if the avenger of blood pursue after him, then they shall not deliver the slayer up into his hand; because he smote his neighbour unwittingly, and hated him not beforetime. And he shall dwell in that city, until he stand before the congregation for judgment, *and* until the death of the high priest that shall be in those days: then shall the slayer return, and come unto his own city, and unto his own house, unto the city from whence he fled.” (Joshua 20:1-6 KJV) *Comment: notice that the death-penalty was not to be carried out by the avenger-of-blood {law enforcement officer} upon a person who committed involuntary manslaughter.*

### **Taking a human life in a matter of government approved self-defense is not murder.**

“If a thief be found breaking up, and be smitten that he die, *there shall no blood be shed* for him.” (Exodus 22:2 KJV) *Comment: observe in old time Israel that if a thief was breaking into one’s home and the homeowner killed the thief, the homeowner was not guilty of murder. Similar laws exist today in America in that self-defense is permitted in one’s home if one’s life is being threatened.*

### **Taking a human life by means of abortion is murder even though civil government has declared it legal.**

“As thou knowest not what *is* the way of the spirit, *nor* how the bones *do grow* in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all.” (Ecclesiastes 11:5 KJV) *Comment: note that in the womb of its mother a fetus is a child, a real person, a human being that is not to be murdered! Just because the government approves of abortion in various instances does NOT make the practice right in God’s sight, and when governmental representatives approve of such murder, “We ought to obey God rather than men.” (Acts 5:29 KJV) Hence, Christians are not to condone murder by supporting candidates for civil office when those candidates approve of murdering unborn human beings.*

### **God forbids hurting or harming our neighbor in his (or her) body— doing anything which may destroy, shorten, or embitter our neighbor’s life.**

“Be not a witness against thy neighbour without cause; and deceive *not* with thy lips. Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me: I will render to the man according to his work.” (Proverbs 24:28-29)

“Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but *rather* give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance *is* mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.” (Romans 12:17-19 KJV) “Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all *men*. See that none render evil for evil unto any *man*; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all *men*.” (1 Thessalonians 5:14-15 KJV) *Comment: it’s obvious that the foregoing Scripture verses instruct us not to harm our neighbor in thoughts, words, or deeds.*

“Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers.” (Acts 7:52 KJV) *Comment: the Jews broke the 5<sup>th</sup> Commandment by mistreating prophets and by betraying and murdering Jesus, for they demanded that the Roman governor Pontius Pilate sentence the innocent Jesus to be crucified.*

### **God forbids bearing unholy anger and unholy hatred in our hearts against our neighbor.**

“Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.” (Matthew 5:21-22 KJV) *Comment: note that anger without a cause is forbidden. All anger is NOT forbidden, for there is holy anger of which we read in Psalm 139:21-24, “Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies. Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if *there be any* wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” For example, Jesus never sinned, Jesus was angry with a cause when such holy anger was warranted, for we read in Mark 3:1-5, “And he entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand. And they watched him, whether he would heal him on the sabbath day; that they might accuse him. And he saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth. And he saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace. And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched *it* out: and his hand was restored whole as the other.” *Let us therefore be sure that we practice holy anger and holy hatred, NOT unholy anger and unholy hatred.**

“For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.” (Mark 7:21-23 KJV) “Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice.” (Ephesians 4:26-27, 29, 31 KJV) “Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.” (1 John 3:15 KJV) *Comment: we sinners are prone to unholy hatred and murder in thoughts, words, and deeds, for such things proceed from our evil hearts. Oh, how we need Jesus Christ our Savior!*

### **God requires that we help and befriend our neighbor in every bodily need.**

“If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee.” (Proverbs 25:21-22 KJV) “But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.” (Matthew 5:44-45 KJV) “Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.” (Romans 12:20-21 KJV) *Comment: the Lord demands that we render help and aid to our enemies, for even they are fellow human beings, our neighbors.*

### **God requires that we be merciful, kind, and forgiving towards our neighbor.**

“Blessed *are* the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed *are* the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed *are* the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.” (Matthew 5:5, 7, 9 KJV) “If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” (Matthew 6:14-15 KJV) “And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.” (Ephesians 4:32 KJV) *Comment: notice that Jesus would have us be merciful and forgiving, for we should consider how very merciful and forgiving God is toward us.*

“Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison.” (Matthew 5:25 KJV) *Comment: we are to desire peaceful relations with all our fellow human beings, even our enemies. Christians are not to be trouble-makers; Christians are to strive to be peace-makers.*

**Conclusion:** When we seriously ponder the 5<sup>th</sup> Commandment and all that it entails, we have to admit that we have broken God’s commandment in thoughts and words even if we have not actually committed the deed of murder by taking a human life. We have failed to do what God commands, and we have at least in some manner done what God forbids. Hence, we all need our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; [and] the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (Romans 3:23; 6:23; John 3:16; 1 John 1:8-9 KJV)

m.e.l.