

says in Romans 3 [:21], "But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from law, although the law and the prophets bear witness to it."

Therefore there is one answer that can be made to all attempts to cite passages from the Old Testament to support [monastic] vows. One need merely ask, "Do you Christians want to be Jews?" Prove your case from the New Testament! The Old Testament has been set aside through Christ and is no longer binding. If it is binding, then you do not have Christ and you must observe the entire law. The attempt to distinguish between judicial, ceremonial, and moral laws³ does not support their case either. I pointed this out in my book *Against the Heavenly Prophets in the Matter of Images and Sacraments*,⁴ which I wrote against Dr. Karlstadt. Furthermore, Moses' laws about vows are all ceremonial laws. Since, however, the ceremonial laws are not binding, as they themselves⁵ confess, why do they cite these laws as an argument and thus contradict their own confession? Furthermore, even when Moses' laws were still binding on the Jewish people, it was stipulated that no vow is binding which is impossible or beyond our power and ability.⁶ That is why Moses also says, "When a man vows a vow to the Lord, or swears an oath to bind his soul, etc."⁷ Now when the Scriptures use the word "soul,"⁸ they refer not to the conscience or the inner life, but to a man's living body.⁹ Thus Christ says, "The good shepherd lay down his soul for his sheep" [John 10:11].

The vows that people¹⁰ made, therefore, set aside and pledged a man's house, farm, cattle, or his life to service in the temple or

³ I.e., of the Old Testament.

⁴ LW 40, 93.

⁵ Cf. LW 40, 94.

⁶ Cf. Luther's conclusion on chastity, poverty, and obedience in LW 44, 337, 341-344.

⁷ Num. 30:2; Luther is referring to the entire chapter, which stipulates that certain vows are not binding because those making the vows have no right to make them; for example, a married woman's vow is invalid if her husband disapproves.

⁸ Seele.

⁹ Lebendige leib.

¹⁰ I.e., the people of the Old Testament.