Letter of the Law vs. Spirit of the Law?


“One of the ironies which is fostered, at times innocently, in the Church, is the feeling we have that the spirit of the law is superior to the letter of the law because for some reason it seems more permissive or less apt to offend others. The reverse is true. The spirit of the law is superior because it demands more of us than the letter of the law. The spirit of the law insists that we do more than merely comply superficially. It means, too, that we must give attention to the things that matter most and still not leave the others undone.”

There is really no dichotomy between living the letter of the law and living the spirit of the law. One has to live the letter of the law in order to live the spirit of the law; one must live the spirit of the law in order to be able to live the letter of the law.