

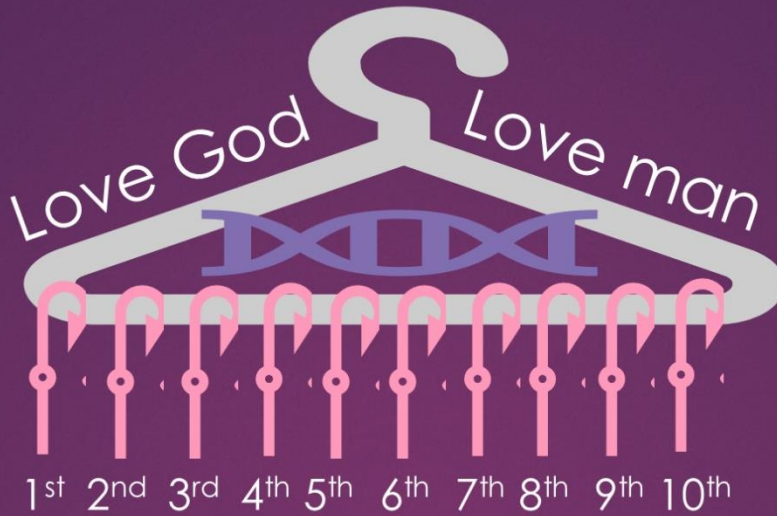
Main Goal

To emphasize and demonstrate the way in which the moral law *continues* to be a rich source of wisdom and blessing in the life of a believer.

Stage 1 Goals (WLC 91-93)

- **Identifying some common misconceptions (e.g. believers are “free” from the law).**
Rom 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. 1Co 9:20 To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. 1Co 9:21 To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law.
- **Distinguishing between different uses of the law? (Revelation, Torah, Moses, Levitical WCF 19:1-4 explains these distinctions)**
 Psalm 1 blessed man who meditates on the law day and night likely means the whole Torah, the record of who God is, what he has done and what is man’s duty. The entire WLC captures this meaning of the law, the teaching. There is a fundamental centrality to the mosaic law, the Ten Commandments given on Sinai, written on stone tablets and placed in the ark of the covenant, which WCF 19:1-2 says is the same law given to Adam in the garden in its virtue form, by God’s example and by instruction from God (ten virtues “to do”, one prohibition representing all ten “do not’s”). The ceremonial and judicial laws are applications of these Ten Commandments, cleanliness laws for approaching God and peacemaking laws for reconciling men.
- **Explaining why the moral law is such a key concept to grasp.** *When properly understood, the moral law helps explain all other biblical teachings in systematic and practical theology within the Westminster Standards. It functions as a sort of master refrain in the symphony of Scripture, helping us to better enjoy its diverse harmonies and counterpoint variations. When we understand those harmonies in Scripture, we have a duty to exemplify, proclaim, intercede and administrate those symphonic harmonies originating in the righteousness of our Triune God, throughout the creation, the church, the family and the society.*
- **USE real-life examples to help illustrate some of these points of discussion (from your own devotional life, from your profession as a teacher, from your profession as a biblical counselor, etc.).**
- I have the privilege of doing this as a husband and father, and as the designer and principle teacher in CRTS biblical counseling program. In the family, its piecemeal, a worldview that shapes my administration of everything I do a husband and parent, but proclaimed as needed (seldom given the opportunity to present the entire model to my family, other than if they read my book). At CRTS, students are required to master this moral law symphony played by the Westminster Standards and use in in their homework and internships.
- Unfortunately, this moral law symphony is largely neglected in the Reformed practical theology books and articles of our modern era. Particularly, the practical theology associated with biblical counseling at Westminster Theological Seminary’s CCEF and ACBC have largely ignored its centrality. I hope that my teaching and publishing can restore the functionality of the Westminster Standards to the practical theology departments of the reformed seminaries.

Symphonic morality perspective



- 1st pro-LORD
- 2nd pro-covenantal
- 3rd pro-blessing
- 4th pro-theosynchrony
- 5th pro-harmony
- 6th pro-life
- 7th pro-marriage
- 8th pro-stewardship
- 9th pro-truthful
- 10th pro-contentment

X X X X X X X X X X



Delivered from the sins against each command

All the law and prophets integrate under this structure
Matthew 22:40

The moral law is repeated in six biblical patterns, perspectives found in the Westminster Standards

Lex Christi-DRL (Dominion of the Righteous Lord)

Symphonic pedagogical perspective

EXODUS 20:1-17 IS WLC'S MICRO-SCALABLE TEACHING MODEL: THE ENTIRE WLC CAN BE ORGANIZED UNDER EXODUS 20:1-17 OUTLINE.

WLC 1-90 "what the Scriptures principally teach us to believe concerning God" (heading before WLC 91; WLC 5)

Exodus 20:2 Preface to Ten Commandments

"I am the Lord who brought you out of Egypt . . ." WLC 101 summarizes WLC 1-90, the symphonic *lex Christi* perspective

WLC 91-196 "what the Scriptures principally . . . require as the duty of man" (heading before WLC 91; WLC 5)

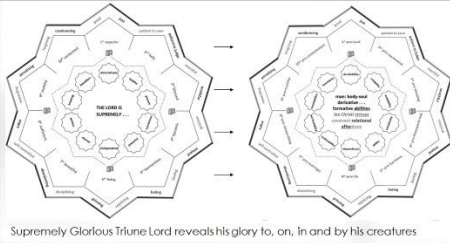
Exodus 20:3-17 Ten Commandments

WLC 91-100, 151 defines the moral law, its interpretation and its uses

WLC 102-150 uses supra-morality perspective to explain the moral law

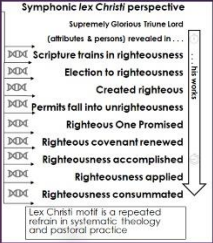
WLC 108 (2nd C), WLC 112 (3rd C) summarize WLC 152-196 about duties of the means of grace (Word, sacraments, prayer).

Symphonic attributes & persons perspectives:
God's attributes and Triune persons are revealed in God's works



Supremely Glorious Triune Lord reveals his glory to, on, in and by his creatures

Symphonic lex Christi perspective:
lex Christi integrates what we believe concerning God's works



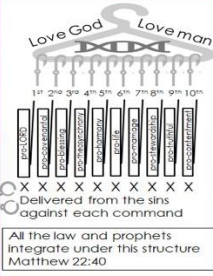
Supremely Glorious Triune Lord (attributes & persons) revealed in . . .

- DDX Scripture trains in righteousness
- DDX Election to righteousness
- DDX Created righteous
- DDX Permits fall into unrighteousness
- DDX Righteous One Promised
- DDX Righteous covenant renewed
- DDX Righteousness accomplished
- DDX Righteousness applied
- DDX Righteousness consummated

Lex Christi motif is a repeated refrain in systematic theology and pastoral practice

What we believe concerning God and his work in creation and providence to effectually call and unite the elect to Christ for communion with him in grace and glory . . . (WLC 1-90)

Symphonic morality perspective: lex Christi provides the organizing outline for what Scripture requires as the duty of man



Love God Love man

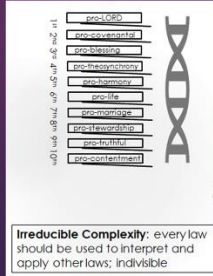
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Delivered from the sins against each command

All the law and prophets integrate under this structure Matthew 22:40

Symphonic commands perspective: lex Christi inseparably holds together what Scripture requires as the duty of man



Love God Love man

1st 2nd 3rd 4th 5th 6th 7th 8th 9th 10th

Delivered from the sins against each command

Irreducible Complexity: every law should be used to interpret and apply other laws; indivisible

Renews them to fulfill their moral duty and receive its blessings while delivering them from moral evil and its curses (WLC 91-196)

Question 91: What is the duty which God requires of man?

Answer: The duty which God requires of man, is obedience to his revealed will.

Question 92: What did God at first reveal unto man as the rule of his obedience?

Answer: The rule of obedience revealed to Adam in the estate of innocence, and to all mankind in him, besides a special command not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, was the moral law.

Question 93: What is the moral law?

Answer: The moral law is the declaration of the will of God to mankind, directing and binding everyone to personal, perfect, and perpetual conformity and obedience thereunto, in the frame and disposition of the whole man, soul and body, and in performance of all those duties of holiness and righteousness which he owes to God and man: promising life upon the fulfilling, and threatening death upon the breach of it.

Stage 2 Goals (WLC 94-97)

- Highlighting the key role of the moral law in the life of a *believer* (e.g. WLC 95 – reveals the holy nature and will of God, exposes our sinfulness & helplessness, and reminds us of our need for Christ and his righteousness; WLC 97 – reveals the greatness of the debt we owe to Jesus and spurs us on to greater thankfulness). AUGMENTING THESE INSIGHTS with its life-integrating perspective: *symphonic lex Christi* perspective expands on the ways WLC integrates doctrinal categories using the theme of righteousness/holiness: God, covenant of works, man, Christ, salvation, Last Judgment curses, New Heaven-New Earth blessings. I use this perspective to teach youth communicants class, to help them grasp the unity of the Bible story under an integrated theme and organized using the 5 PCA membership questions. (see website www.bethoumyvision.net "Youth Curriculum" tab for PPTX saved as PDF.

eous Lord)



Symphonic *lex Christi* perspective



Supremely Glorious Triune Lord

(attributes & persons) revealed in . . .



Scripture trains in righteousness

Election to righteousness

Created righteous

Permits fall into unrighteousness

Righteous One Promised

Righteous covenant renewed

Righteousness accomplished

Righteousness applied

Righteousness consummated



. . . his works



Lex Christi motif is a repeated refrain in systematic theology and pastoral practice

- Discussing the role of the moral law in the life of an *unbeliever* (WLC 96). Alert them to the punishments and aggravations of sin in this world (WLC 28, 151) and awaken their consciences to flee from God's wrath on unrighteousness and repent since Christ will judge the world in righteousness by the man he has appointed (Rom. 1:18-3:20; Acts 17:30-31).
- **WLC 28: What are the punishments of sin in this world? FALLEN WORLD (sickness, death) SINNED AGAINST (others break commandments that harm us or those we love), but obedience can avoid the punishments that are caused by my own sin.**
Answer: The punishments of sin in this world are either inward, as blindness of mind, a reprobate sense, strong delusions, hardness of heart, horror of conscience, and vile affections [*in separation from God, given up to lusts* 1st-4th, 10th Cs]; or outward, as the curse of God upon the creatures for our sakes, and all other evils that befall us in our bodies [6th C], names [9th C], estates [8th C], relations [5th & 7th Cs], and employments [4th C]; together with death itself [6th C]. (proof text Deut. 28:15-68)
- **WLC 151: What are those aggravations that make some sins more heinous than others?** Answer: Sins receive their aggravations, From the persons offending: if they be of riper age, greater experience or grace, eminent for profession, gifts, place, office, guides to others, and whose example is likely to be followed by others [5th C]. From the parties offended: if immediately against God, his attributes, and worship [1st C]; against Christ, and his grace [2nd C]; the Holy Spirit, his witness, and workings [3rd C]; against superiors, men of eminency, and such as we stand especially related and engaged unto; against any of the saints, particularly weak brethren, the souls of them, or any other, and the common good of all or many [5th C]. From the nature and quality of the offense: if it be against the express letter of the law, break many commandments, contain in it many sins: if not only conceived in the heart [10th C], but breaks forth in words and actions, scandalize others [9th C], and admit of no reparation: if against means, mercies, judgments, light of nature, conviction of conscience, public or private admonition, censures of the church, civil punishments [5th C]; and our prayers, purposes, promises, vows, covenants, and engagements to God [1st-4th Cs] or men [4th-9th Cs]: if done deliberately, wilfully, presumptuously, impudently, boastingly, maliciously, frequently, obstinately, with delight, continuance, or relapsing after repentance. From circumstances of time and place: if on the Lord's day, or other times of divine worship; or immediately before or after these [4th C], or other helps to prevent or remedy such miscarriages: if in public, or in the presence of others, who are thereby likely to be provoked or defiled [5th 7th Cs].
- USE real-life examples to help illustrate some of these points of discussion (from your own devotional life, from your profession as a teacher, from your profession as a biblical counselor, etc.). Recently involved in a counseling case, mediating a divorce. The man who lost most everything in 12 hours (family, marriage, good school job, honor among peers, financial stability of two income family and good housing) due to his carelessness about sin (inward punishments of sin: vile affections, hardness of heart) that led to multiple life-destroying sins: caught being sexually unfaithful, long term verbal-emotional-sexual abuser of spouse and angry and irritable to children, financial mismanagement, drunkenness, drunk driving, Every one of the outward punishments of sin came upon him.

From the specifics of the punishments of sin *in this life*, we can trace the justice of hell in the second eternal death (Rev. 20:14). Hell will be the place of *lex Christi* antithesis, the multiplication of the sorrows and punishments of *spiritual-relational-material* unrighteousness forever on wicked souls rejoined to physical bodies. Scripture's vision of hell's torments reveal it as the ultimate form of giving men up to their lusts (Rom. 1:24, 26, 28). Hell does not transform the wicked, but leaves them to dwell in pure unrighteousness, unmitigated by what was experienced on earth with common grace and the presence of the elect. Hell is giving men what they have desired (Rev. 21:8), combined with the immediate torment of the justice due that unrighteousness, including its "natural" consequences: hatred for God, his worship, name and Sabbath rest, hatred for men, complete anti-harmony, anti-life, anti-marriage, anti-stewardship, anti-truthfulness, anti-contentment. In terms of Proverbs 1:31, the wicked will "eat the fruit of their way, and have their fill of their own devices." Using a *lex Christi* hermeneutic on Luke 16:24-31, readers can observe that hell is a place of intense, but completely unsatisfied desires (antithesis of 10th C) of thirst and fire and being eaten

by worms (antithesis of 6th C; Isa. 66:24) and for protection of earthly family (antithesis of 5th & 7th Cs) while God ignores begging pleas for help or salvation (antithesis 1st C; Prov. 1:24-32). The story also includes the application of reversed justice, that the rich man's ignoring and rejecting the poor man's need of mercy in this world is punished by rejecting his pleas for mercy in hell (antithesis 1st C). Another form of torment comes from seeing the satisfied desires of the godly from "far off" (antithesis of 10th C, Luke 16:23). Thus, it is likely that hell will be a place of intense, but unsatisfied, desires related to all the commandments. It will be a place for the complete removal of *all* common grace benefits that grant men so many earthly satisfactions, inward-spiritual, and outward-relational-material (Acts 14:17). The eternal curse gives men what they wanted, a *spiritual-relational-material* place where all the sorrows of *lex Christi* antithesis abound forever.

- **Should we use the moral law in evangelism?**
- PERSONAL EXAMPLE OF MORAL INTEGRITY and the visible blessedness of the moral life as a light shining before neighbors, as they see blessings in our employments (4th C), health (6th C), relationships (5th & 7th Cs), estates (8th C), and names (9th C).
- PROPHETIC WITNESS: Paul's example of evangelizing the Gentiles shows a dependence on the moral law as *symphonic lex Christi* to present the Gospel to them Acts 14:17; 17:24-31 can be analyzed using a moral law rubric. There are repeated themes of moral law righteousness woven throughout the themes he presents in evangelism: God is righteous and filled with wrath to unrepentant sinners who break his moral law (idolatry, 2nd C sins Acts 17:27-29, since man in God's image (5th C representative mediators) lives, moves, breathes under God's appointed sovereign determination, men should know that (1st C) they should seek the true God, a God is omnipresent, living, speaking, determining Creator-Judge, while idols cannot properly represent a living, speaking, determining God). Men must repent of idolatry and study the righteousness found in Christ, the moral righteousness of his active obedience that guaranteed his resurrection. (2nd C virtue of being pro-covenantal, to worship God through Christ as mediator), and know that by this righteous moral law standard he will judge the world.
- The creation is an expression of God's generous 6th C mercy to provide life and material sustenance to all the living (Acts 14:17; 17:24-26).
- PRIESTLY COMFORT, PRAYERS AGAINST CURSES for SIN and brokenness IN FAMILIES, SOCIETY; KINGLY ADMINISTRATION FOR MORAL FLOURISHING: The standard approaches of missionaries to do works of mercy in cross-cultural bridging (*educational missions* 5th C, pro-harmony related mercy for teaching all kinds of knowledge in submission to biblical wisdom foundations; teaching healthy parenting; reestablish respected government and police whose duties are to serve the moral good of the people; *medical missions* 6th C pro-life related mercy for physical healing; *family missions* 7th C, pro-marriage related mercy to strengthen healthy families in marital faithfulness; *banking missions* 8th C pro-stewardship related mercy, see micro-finance loans proposed by the Chalmers Center, Brian Fikkert in Africa's poorer countries; *truth-telling missions* 9th C related mercy to establish "freedom" of truthful speech and "freedom" of the truthful press to expose evil in all areas of society, removing the suppressors of truth and all liars).

Question 94: Is there any use of the moral law to man since the fall?

Answer: Although no man, since the fall, can attain to righteousness and life by the moral law; yet there is great use thereof, as well common to all men, as peculiar either to the unregenerate, or the regenerate.

Question 95: Of what use is the moral law to all men?

Answer: The moral law is of use to all men, to inform them of the **holy nature** and will of God, and of **their [holy] duty**, binding them to walk accordingly; to convince them of their disability to keep it, and of the **[unholy]** sinful pollution of their nature, hearts, and lives; to humble them in the sense of their sin and misery, and thereby help them to a clearer sight of the need they have of Christ, and of **the perfection of his obedience [holiness of Christ]**.

Question 96: What particular use is there of the moral law to unregenerate men?

Answer: The moral law is of use to unregenerate men, to awaken their consciences to flee from wrath to come, [*judgment by the moral law, punished with a place of anti-moral law blessing, only filled with its curses*] and to drive them to Christ; or, upon their continuance in the estate and way of sin, to leave them inexcusable, and under the curse thereof.

Question 97: What special use is there of the moral law to the regenerate?

Answer: Although they that are regenerate, and believe in Christ, be delivered from the moral law as a covenant of works, [*yet Christ, as second ADAM, fulfilled this moral law for us as a covenant of works, so we might receive the covenant of grace in union with him*] so as thereby they are neither justified nor condemned; yet, besides the general uses thereof common to them with all men, it is of special use, to show them: How much they are bound to Christ for his fulfilling it [*active obedience*], and enduring the curse thereof in their stead, [*cursed as unrighteous representative, passive obedience*] and for their good; and thereby to provoke them to more thankfulness, and to express the same in their greater care to conform themselves thereunto as the rule of their obedience.

Stage 3 Goals (WLC 98-99)

- Discuss the language of *duties required* and *sins forbidden*. This is derived from biblical language. For example, used in Ephesians 4:22-24, to put off the sins of the old self and put on the new man.
- Do the Ten Commandments really summarize the *whole* moral law (WCF 98)?! Provide several practical examples to clarify the meaning of WLC 99-3. Is an understanding of WLC 99-3 the best way to highlight the expansiveness of the Ten Commandments? The prohibitions of the Ten Commandments forbid any denial of God's authority to rule over us and any form of sinful desires and produce sinful words and actions. Mortify, put to death anything unrighteous and vivify anything righteous. All commands aim at these same two things.
- Spend a considerable amount of time expounding on *the promise of blessing* for obeying the moral law (WCF 99-4). WCF 19:6: "*The promises of it, in like manner, shew them God's approbation of obedience, and what blessings they may expect upon the performance thereof:*" For example: What kind of blessings should we expect? Are the blessings temporal or eternal? Spiritual or material? Delayed or immediate? Provide several concrete examples of blessings for obedience. SPIRITUAL-RELATIONAL-MATERIAL blessings corresponds to the WLC 28 the punishments of sin in this life.
- In connection with WCF 99-4: What is the proper way to associate the Beatitudes with the Ten Commandments? Some commentators say that the Ten Commandments are negatively-oriented (i.e. "do not"), whereas the Beatitudes are positively-oriented (i.e. "blessed are"). Is there any value in drawing that distinction?

A literalistic reading of the Ten Commandments by themselves, without the aid of a biblical theology of the Bible, might characterize the Ten Commandments as majority negative, since there are 8 "do-nots" and only 2 "dos". WLC 99:4 clearly teaches Reformed believers to reject such a simplistic reading: "where a duty is commanded, the contrary sin is forbidden"

WLC uses the outline of the Ten Commandments under two categories of positive duties and prohibitions.

The "blessed" representative language of the beatitudes corresponds to the whole scope of these ten virtues: the poor in spirit inherit the kingdom; those who hunger and thirst for righteousness shall be satisfied with all these virtues; the pure in heart shall see God; those persecuted for righteousness shall be rewarded (Matt. 5:3, 5-6, 8, 10-12; see Ps. 1). This "blessed language also corresponds to specific virtues: meek, peacemakers 5th & 6th Cs; merciful, as in forgiving offenses and helping the needy 4th, 6th, 8th Cs (Matt. 5:7, 9).

Also the fruits of the Spirit are woven throughout the exposition of the moral law (WLC 103-148).

- If there is extra time remaining, then we can conclude with a discussion about WLC 99-7 & 99-8. WCF 99-7 & 99-8 are very similar. What does one emphasize that the other does not? What are helpful guidelines for dealing

with resistance to the moral law? When do we push for obedience? How hard should we push? And when should we stop pushing?

Question 98: Where is the moral law summarily comprehended?

Answer: The moral law is summarily comprehended in the ten commandments, which were delivered by the voice of God upon Mount Sinai, and written by him in two tables of stone; and are recorded in the twentieth chapter of Exodus. The four first commandments containing our duty to God, and the other six our duty to man.

Question 99: What rules are to be observed for the right understanding of the ten commandments?

Answer: For the right understanding of the ten commandments, these rules are to be observed:

1. That the law is perfect, and binds everyone to full conformity in the whole man unto the righteousness thereof, and unto entire obedience forever; so as to require the utmost perfection of every duty, and to forbid the least degree of every sin.
2. That it is spiritual, and so reaches the understanding, will, affections, and all other powers of the soul; as well as words, works, and gestures. [1st C, 10th C]
3. That one and the same thing, in divers respects, is required or forbidden in several commandments.
4. That as, where a duty is commanded, the contrary sin is forbidden (best example, Eph 4:28, but Eph. 4:25-6:9 shows these patterns); and, where a sin is forbidden, the contrary duty is commanded: so, where a **promise is annexed**, (1st First commandment with a promise: 5th C honor father and mother “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.” Eph. 6:2-3; Proverbs exemplifies these promised blessings; ; Proverbs exemplifies these promised blessings; exemplified by the blessings received and given by the virtuous woman Prov. 31:10-31. **But these promised blessings for obedience are associated with obedience to ALL commandments inseparably** “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.” Deut. 28:1-15) the contrary threatening is included; and, where a threatening is annexed, the contrary promise is included. Psalm 1 is not outdated, “blessed is the man who delights in the law of the Lord and meditates on his law day and night.” **Cultural contexts of greater moral law conformity** will support and enhance the blessings of obedience (mutual synergies of law, governance, civility, contractual integrity, neighborly kindness and concern for others). **Cultural contexts of moral law disconformity** will generally threaten, discourage, persecute, abuse those who keep the moral law in the public, civil spheres, through the family may form its own blessed sub-culture.
5. That: What God forbids, is at no time to be done;: What he commands, is always our duty; and yet every particular duty is not to be done at all times.
6. That under one sin or duty, all of the same kind are forbidden or commanded; together with all the causes, means, occasions, and appearances thereof, and provocations thereunto.
7. That: What is **forbidden or commanded to ourselves**, we are bound, according to our places, to endeavor that it may be avoided or performed by others, *according to the duty of their places.* (*authorities, such as church leaders, parents who are to teach or require obedience of their members or children to the virtues of the moral law in the visible church or in families.* How to deal with resistance? The primary model is familial, where parents have the power of the rod, various forms of gentle discipline and instruction of the Lord; 5th C duties of superiors to inferiors **WLC 129: What is required of superiors towards their inferiors?**
Answer: It is required of superiors, according to that power they receive from God, and that relation wherein they stand, to love, pray for, and bless their inferiors; to instruct, counsel, and admonish them; countenancing, commending, and rewarding such as do well; and discountenancing, reproving, and chastising such as do ill; protecting, and providing for them all things necessary for soul and body: and by grave, wise, holy, and exemplary carriage, to procure glory to God, honor to themselves, and so to preserve that authority which God has put upon them.)
8. That in: **What is commanded to others**, we are bound, *according to our places and callings*, to be helpful to them; and to take heed of partaking with others in: What is forbidden them. (*encourage others to obey the moral law in their places and callings, and do no support them in doing evil, such as untested ordination to office of elder*)

- USE real-life examples to help illustrate some of these points of discussion (from your own devotional life, from your profession as a teacher, from your profession as a biblical counselor, etc.).

Yates Catechism 2 (CHAPTER 15: SPIRITUAL-RELATIONAL-MATERIAL EXPERIENCE OF CURSE & BLESSING, pp. 211-212 in *Westminster Foundations* www.bethoumyvision.net by Tim Yates) WLC lacks a parallel statement of the blessings of the moral law.

Q2: What are the blessings of *lex Christi* obedience in this life?

A2: In this world still under the creational-providential post-fall curses, all blessings related to restoration of Christ's *lex Christi* rule in us and in the entire creation are sourced from the Father and come to us through mediate representatives. Exact representatives are Christ, the Spirit and God's Word, approximate representatives are creation order, angels, man, creatures. These blessings are inward, in the soul, such as mutually synergistic peace of conscience toward God and his law in union with Christ, adoption to sonship, spiritual discernment, renewed holy affections and hope of glory (1st-3rd Cs).¹ These blessings are outward, in the multi-sensory body, experiencing material-relational blessings in time-space synchronies (4th C), physical bodies (6th C), material resources on a portion of this earth (8th C), relationships (5th authority-submission; 7th C marriage, family) and reputations (9th C). We respond to these inward and outward glory-blessings revealed to us, on us, and in us with a legitimate derivative happiness that must be disciplined with thankful contentment (10th C). These all combine to nurture our chief and highest purposes to glorify and enjoy God (1st-3rd Cs; WLC 1). Further, these blessings must be reflected by us to others, while awaiting their eternal perfection in the new heavens and new earth and the removal of the punishments of sin in this world.

We should be attracted by the synergistic duties that bring blessings. These are the best for human flourishing. These are also the attractions of the new heaven and new earth, enhancing our desires for eternal dwelling in the hope of righteousness (Gal. 5:5)

It also warns us against unbalanced emphasis on spiritual blessings, to the neglect of relational-material blessings. NT does not simply teach "every spiritual blessings in the heavenly places" (Eph 1:3)

Consider how to rewire the savor of a warm, crunchy, buttered slice of black raspberry wheat toast leading to delight in God. We eat as a act of worship of the Father through Christ by the Spirit (2nd C pro-covenantal). We eat with integrity bearing Christ's name to bless God's name (3rd C, pro-blessing). We eat as a *provision* from God's hand on the produce of the earth (1st C pro-Lord). Toast is physically *present* to put in the toaster and hold in the hand acquired by *holy* means of faithful labor and exchange of goods (4th C pro-theosynchrony, 6th C pro-life, 8th C pro-stewardship). This requires God's gifts of *knowledge* and *wisdom* (5th C pro-harmony, with executives and workers to harvest and produce) giving *power to produce* creation's goods and distribute them by *trustworthy* market services (9th C pro-truthful) and family *cooperation* (5th C & 7th C relational harmonies in marriage, family, neighborhood, local, regional, national and international markets) that are available to be purchased or made by God's people on six *theo-synchronic* days of the week (4th C). The believer can enjoy a piece of breakfast toast while it brings him to delight in God! Of course, you can fill in the blank with your own favorite foods if you are on South Beach diet phase one or on a gluten-free, vegan diet, but hopefully without calling another's freedom's evil (Rom. 14:1-15:7).

These ways of viewing the blessing of the created world integrate with nearly anything you enjoy experiencing, tasting, smelling, seeing, hearing, touching (within the bounds of the Ten Commandments and Christian freedom). These themes can be connected to delight in God (who gives and sustains it). Therefore, fundamentalist legalism that originates from church or institutional leadership codifying them in statements of faith or covenants of behavior are misguided because they prohibit many kinds of Christian freedoms and forbid experience of relational-material blessings

¹ WLC 83 explanation of 'communion with Christ in glory in this life' has some parallels with the inward blessings noted above: "The members of the invisible church . . . enjoy the sense of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy [Spirit], and hope of glory . . ."

(prohibiting participation in popular culture such as alcohol, card or mahjong playing, movies, computer games and apps, TV, social media, dancing, certain books, defining acceptable clothing, jewelry or hair styles; 1 Tim. 4:1-5). In addition to submitting to the Ten Commandments as the control standards for our duties and prohibitions (Westminster Larger Catechism 99-150 gives an excellent summary of the biblical theology of each command), the morality of something we enjoy is more conditioned by whether we can see God's eternal power and divine nature reflected in it or through it, giving him glory and thanks, than by prohibitions that seem to protect the holiness of God's people. Don't handle, taste or touch, as traditional rules developed to restrain the appearance of evil, are of no value in stopping the heart indulgence of the sinful flesh (Col. 2:20-23).

The believer needs to enlarge his capacity for joy in the joys of his spouse, family and congregants and connect these themes of blessed joy to joy in God himself. In all of life, he will be able to others see and experience connections between the attributes of God and their reflections in Christ, the people of God and in earthly things or everyday experience. We do not have abstract delight in God, but synergistic relational-material blessings that enliven the spiritual blessings in our relationship to God, and spiritual blessings that enliven our experience of relational-material blessings with men, angels and the created world.

Delight in God is *always* discerned through some created thing. Yes, that's right! There is no direct pathway to delighting in God. We always get redirected through means of created things to discern God in the created thing. God spoke to the fathers through angels, dreams, visions and pre-incarnate appearances, which were then recorded in the Old Testament by the prophets. God's grace and truth was revealed through the incarnate Christ. Without going through his created humanity, no one can come to God (John 14:6; 1:14; Heb. 1:1-3; 7:25; Rom 5:17-20; 1 Cor. 15:42-49). Since we are pilgrims living after the New Testament era, we must go through the foundation of the prophetic and apostolic God-breathed, inerrant, created pages of Scripture to discern God, and Christ the cornerstone (Eph. 2:20; 2 Pet. 1:3-4, 21; 3:16-18; Rom. 15:4). By reading Scripture, we learn who God is and his providential works in the world in ruling over the created universe, the works he continues to do through his people, and the evil he permits in giving up his enemies to their lusts and conquering them. When looking at the text of Scripture or at people, or observing the interactions of time and space with created beings and objects, we can discern God's person and work, leading to delight in God who is discerned.² Then through Scripture in our hearts as the glasses with which to see the world, we can look at created things and discern God's eternal power and divine nature (Rom. 1:20; Ps. 19:1-2). When looking at his work, but failing to see God or his work, we go back to Scripture to try to understand more about what we have been missing in our spiritual perceptions of the world. Creation study by itself, without the glasses of Scripture, will reveal some "rebel facts" (it never *directly* reveals *truth*) and when interpreted by unregenerate man, will lead to distorted and erroneous ideas.³ Those facts must submit to the authority and interpretive lens of Scripture to become a source of delight in God himself (2 Cor. 10:4-5).

This is something like Neo, in the movie the *Matrix*, when he is enlightened, and starts to discern the matrix into which all things connect, depicted in the movie by his ability to see the zeros and ones (lines of matrix code) as the structure behind all things visible. In the movie, the matrix is an imaginary or surreal world that can only be superseded by those who know the matrix is a digital image, a kind of imaginary lie created to keep people in submission. I'd like to use the matrix of digital-zeros-and-ones-overlaid-on-everything-we-see metaphor for another purpose, not as an imaginary digital lie that needs to be discovered and resisted, but as a way of seeing everything in this world as reflections of God's attributes, as our minds are renewed by Scripture to know who God is. Suppose we label each of the eight derivative attributes in the buttered toast paragraph above as 1a-8a in a digital matrix. After we are regenerated, we see lines of 1a-8a code reflected in all created things. It could be a piece of buttered wheat toast with jam, sharing intimacy

² See John Piper *When I Don't Desire God: How to Fight for Joy* for a wonderful study about how Scripture, prayer and created things are all means to stir up and guard our delight in God.

³ See *Redeeming Sociology: A God-Centered Approach* (Crossway 2011) for examples of how unregenerate sociologists leave God out of their sociological analysis, and falsify the data that they "see". Also available free in PDF form at <https://frame-poythress.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/PoythressVernRedeemingSociology.pdf>

with one's spouse, enjoying a scenic view, enjoying the social harmony of a system that works from production of goods to roadway distribution to market to functional credit cards and Google or Apple Pay apps that work for purchasing at a local convenience store, driving a well-made car, riding a well-performing bicycle, or seeing the city's well-built and designed buildings, stores, roads, transportation systems, parks, bike paths and sidewalks. Every created thing has discernable aspects of the derivative glory of God to those regenerated to see those attributes. This is the usual way to delight in God by created things. Another movie metaphor might also combine with the matrix metaphor, the *Avatar* movie. Selected humans enter a dreamlike trance while they are mentally united with avatar bodies. This enabled the avatar to experience Pandora as a living planet connected to Eywa, the tree of life. Though Christianity would teach us to reject all of the movie themes involving worship of the tree representing Eywa, the idea of biological interconnectivity, a neural network linking all life on the planet, is a useful metaphor. In an analogous way, regenerated believers have new eyes to see how "in [Christ] all things [in the universe] hold together," (Col. 1:17), how he reflects his eternal power and divine nature to, on, in and by all created things (Rom. 1:20; 11:36; Eph. 1:10), including his Triune, all-wise, sovereign control over all the sequencing of all events in time and space also sustaining the biodiversity of our planet earth by the word of his promise to a holy purpose, that he alone would be glorified, praised and worshiped (Rom. 1:21; 11:36; Rev. 15:4; Neh. 9:6; Ps. 4:8; 83:18; 86:10; Isa. 37:16; 44:24). The created world is infused with reflections of his glory!

Delight derived from the blessings experienced in created things is one source of delight in God, this is the proper use of the temporal delight turned to the eternal source of delight! The sinful side, ignorance and blindness to the derivative attribute "matrix" instead will see in the things themselves some amazing substitutes that seem qualified for worship (Rom. 1:20-25). Much of our superhero movie attraction in the early 21st century (Batman, Superman, Fantastic Four, Captain America, X-Men, Flash, Arrow) seems to be a quest for divine substitutes that seem worthy of worship. Similarly, this blindness is expressed in pantheism, a worldview that supposes everything created is some sort of god. The devil will ever seek to lead men to rejoice in God's gifts, the created things themselves, or the actions we do, rather than using those things to lead us to delight in God himself.⁴ Job worshiped God because God is glorious and worthy of worship, regardless of perceived benefits, unlike Job's wife, who seemed to expect more benefits from God for all the toil of religion (Job 1:1-2:10). Without delight in God himself, the temporal "believer" will fall away both in times of trouble and times of pleasure (seed on rocky soil and among thorns Matt 13:20-22).

Seeing greater likenesses to God's supremacy attributes and the derivative reflections of those attributes in the created world ought to stir God's regenerated-delighters to greater delight and attraction, while lesser reflections stir less delight or attraction. Thus, the greatest delight regenerate believers can experience is in knowing, believing in, and communing with Christ himself, the perfect reflection of the derivative attributes of God, and the fulfilment of the moral law as the definition of the righteousness of God (2 Cor. 3:18; Heb. 1:1-3; Matt 5:17; 1 Pet. 3:18; Rom. 8:3-4). All other delights in created things must be derivative subsets of our ultimate delight in Christ himself!

Here is one theme that can put an end to the attraction of sin, particularly "pleasurable" sins and addictions that appear initially pleasurable. Consider one example of how the blessing of marital sex joins numerous commandments in a harmonious enjoyment of each other, and ultimately enjoyment of God himself. Regenerate marital sexual intimacy (one man, one woman for life as defined in the 7th commandment) reflects greater likenesses to Christ than all lesser sexual substitutes: total life intimacy combined with naked *presence* to bless, *holiness* of mind and bodily rights given only to each another, created *complementary provision* for mutual, simultaneous sexual climax, using *knowledge* of sexual preferences to serve and give greater pleasure to spouse (all 7th C related), *unity* in established roles of a husband's authority that sacrifices and a wife's submission that honors (5th C), created complementary creation *rule* by procreation, being fruitful

⁴ Jonathan Edwards, *Religious Affections*, section two lists false signs of conversion and spiritual life as rejoicing in the gifts of God and that they are loved by God and have received justification, rather than rejoicing in God himself. [cite source](#)). *David Brainerd's Journals* show a resistance to this temptation in evaluating signs of true assurance of salvation, not satisfied to rejoice in his justification, but through that justification to rejoice in the God who justifies ([cite source](#)). C.S. Lewis *Screwtape Letters* develops a similar theme in the instructions to the junior devil to cause the man to rejoice with pride in his spiritual devotion and the fact that he did his Bible reading and praying, rather than whether these devotions actually caused him to have communion with God. [cite source](#)).

and multiplying (6th C), and use of all resources, powers and gifts to bless and prosper one another in the family and the world (8th C), *faithfulness* to each other's marital vows (9th C), thankfulness and contentment with one's spouse (10th C), and *theosynchrony* of a lifetime shared and invested in each other in synchrony with God's view and use of time for work, rest and leisure-fun together, together with setting apart the time needed for mutually enjoyable sexual intimacy (4th C).⁵ All regenerate delights are renewed to enjoy God in Christ, and everything that flows from his blessed face (1st-3rd Cs), while sharing in his grief, disgust and hatred of all that doesn't share his likeness.

The world exalts sex as delightful, but without experiencing the blessings of marital sex connected to enjoyment of God's himself as the giver of these marital intimacy delights. All lesser substitutes offered by the world, the devil or the left-over sinful delights of the unregenerate heart fail to reach the full delights of God-reflective intimacy. These imitative substitutes experience the curses and punishments of sin in this world. C.S. Lewis' *The Great Divorce* has a wonderfully creative illustration of this principle. The last scenario is about an angel spirit persuading a gray wisp of a human spirit to let it kill the lust lizard on its shoulder. The wisp human spirit cringes before the angelic spirit in anticipation of pain, while the lust lizard promises more satisfaction and more ability to be contained and quiet, so as not to cause future disturbances. Then with final permission, the angelic spirit crushes the lust lizard and throws it to the ground. Quite unexpectedly, the lizard turns into a beautiful horse upon whom the wisp human spirit rides into heavenly glory. Lewis has captured in imaginary story form what is true in life: any lust or coveting directed in disobedience to any one of the moral laws is a puny and slimy imaginary pleasure compared to the power and beauty of any *lex Christi* virtue, the latter of which is an aid to reaching heavenly glory. For example, in healthy marriages, pro-marriage sexual expression reveals so much of God's reflective glory.

Consider how a lust pleasures outside of God's design fail to reach full delight. Intimate naked presence with a *prostitute* exchanges the life-enriching theosynchronic holiness and faithfulness to lifelong promises for life-destroying commodity transactions, offering a pimp money for physical sex with an enslaved woman's body, with high probability of sexually transmitted diseases, exchanges mutually shared unity of sacrifice and honor that properly uses sexual knowledge to give mutual pleasure for dominance of the client over the pretending prostitute, exchanges the creation order of one man-one woman sexual ethic and of possible offspring from the union for enslaved, manipulated, abused and wasted resources used in destruction of relational unity and any resulting offspring (abortion). Ironically, *committed homosexual relationships* (in some countries, now called marriage) must exchange created complementary sexual climax and procreation for substitutes of God's design for genitalia and artificial conception. These relationships also exchange God's design for different gender, male-female unity for mimicry of authority-submission roles in same gender relationships. *Pornography* used for masturbation may avoid dangers of sexually transmitted diseases by intimate naked presence, but exchanges mutually enjoyable rights to a spouse's real body for digital imagery mimicking physical presence, exchanges knowledgeable intimacy between sacrificing and honoring partners with the purpose of procreation to extend the creation mandate for self-stimulation with imaginary possession of a sex object or slave, and exchanges times shared and invested in real relationships for interruptive, lonely diversion.

⁵ For other related themes about how sex is a way to know God better, see John Piper and Justin Taylor, *Sex and the Supremacy of Christ*, chapters 1-2 written by Piper. There is even a kind of intimacy preserved when the married couple must separate or cease mutual sexual intimacy by mutual agreement for a time (injury, medical problems, sexual performance problems, sickness, work, travel, and similar types of hindrances to intimacy) to give themselves to prayer, with delight in their remembered sexual intimacies shared, longing after and preparing for future sexual intimacies (1 Cor. 7:3-5).