Adapting the Structural Perspectives of the Westminster Larger Catechism for Biblical Counselor Training

Rev. Dr. Timothy P. Yates

This article is an expanded version of its published form in *Unio cum Christo,* April 2023 volume on biblical counseling www.uniocc.com which here adds illustrations throughout and at the end of the article adds the detailed 6Rs counseling method and counseling report form.

Abstract

Biblical counseling resources lack structural coherence with the doctrine and Christian life model of the Westminster Standards. This article proposes reorienting counselor-trainers and counselors with these perspectives as a contribution to David Powlison's vision to formulate a unified theory of systematic theology for soul care. The twofold structure of the Larger Catechism, called the *symphonic pedogogical* perspective—building up the saints to know our Triune God and his work—is paired with teaching disciples to do everything that Jesus commanded. We observe five substructural patterns to integrate its instructional method. This essay explains the significance of each perspective for counseling cases.

Keywords

Westminster Confession of Faith, Westminster Larger Catechism, Grand Unified Theory, perspectivalism, descriptive and prescriptive presuppositions, God's attributes, *lex Christi*, man's derivative reflections

Introduction

From the perspective of biblical counseling theory as developed over the past fifty years, Heath Lambert notes that biblical counseling journals, booklets, and books have mostly devoted themselves to matters of the Christian life and sanctification.[1] The repetition of one model and the lack of new foundational theory development is seen in *How People Change.*[2] A diagram with two trees with a cross in the center (the gospel) illustrates this model: it includes our situation with a scorching sun representing our suffering and communicates that our behavior is rooted in the heart (cf. Matt 7:17–20). This illustration shows up in the teaching of biblical counselors trained by Westminster Theological Seminary or the Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation (CCEF) who have come to Taiwan or China in the past twenty years. This is the same basic model David Powlison taught at Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia. It is a simple, memorable way to link biblical concepts to a few of the key topics that most counseling needs to address. However, we need a better model that provides *explicit* coherence with the Westminster Standards.

Powlison was one of the most articulate spokesmen for the biblical counseling movement, as a biblical counselor, historian of its founding by Jay Adams, visionary, and apologist. He envisioned that biblical counseling teachers' ongoing goal should be "articulating biblical truth and developing our systematic theology of care for

---

[1] Heath Lambert, *The Biblical Counseling Movement after Adams* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 211, note 48. David Powlison's articles and books on the Christian life and sanctification issues show his orientation to using the moral law. David Powlison, *Making All Things New: Restoring Joy to the Sexually Broken* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017); *Good and Angry: Redeeming Anger, Irritation, Complaining, and Bitterness* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2016); "Counsel Ephesians," *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 17.2 (1999): 2–11; Charles Spurgeon, David Powlison, and Jay E. Adams, "The Law Written on the Heart," *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 12.2 (1994): 25–32; David Powlison, "The Sufficiency of Scripture to Diagnose and Cure Souls," *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 23.2 (2005): 2–14. The following book, inspired by Powlison's teaching, centers sanctification on the moral law as well: Timothy S. Lane and Paul David Tripp, *How People Change* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2008), 153–60, 180–81, 190, 196–98, 203.

[2] Lane and Tripp, *How People Change*, 97, 100; also translated into Chinese in 2013.

the soul, … for understanding and transforming human nature" and ultimately developing a "Grand Unified Theory" that "appreciate[s] the … historic resources of the Christian faith" and "do[es] fresh theological work"; since it "arise[s] from Scripture, it will explicitly cohere with long-formulated Christian orthodoxy and orthopraxy" and "cohere intellectually and structurally with every other form of the church's ministry: worship, preaching, teaching, discipleship, child-rearing, friendship, evangelism, mercy works, missions and pastoral leadership."[3]

What follows are my proposals to support Powlison's vision for developing a unified theory for biblical counseling training.[4] This article provides a very brief summary of my latest book, *Westminster Foundations*, which observes and adapts six integrating motifs from the Westminster Standards that explicitly cohere with the Standards' mature systematic-practical theology and intellectually and structurally cohere with any church ministry.[5] This counseling framework has been developed using the structure of the Westminster Larger Catechism (WLC) which is organized around its integrating motif of the moral law, which I have named *lex Christi*.[6]

I am assuming that the theological content of the Westminster Standards, including its *unified structural themes*, accurately represents what the Scriptures teach,[7] even as many seminaries and Reformed denominations have required their ordained faculty, elders, and deacons to take this vow in explicit agreement: "Do you sincerely receive and adopt the *Confession of Faith* and the *Catechisms* of this Church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures?"[8]

---

[3] David Powlison, *The Biblical Counseling Movement: History and Context* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2010), 278, 281–83, 299.

[4] Thanks to Vern Poythress for offering important editorial suggestions on this journal article and in my previous research and writing.

[5] Timothy Paul Yates, *Westminster Foundations: God's Glory as an Integrating Perspective on Reformed Theology* (Lancaster, PA: Unveiled Faces Reformed Press, 2023). About half of the book is adapted from Timothy Paul Yates, "Adapting Westminster's Moral Law Motif to Integrate Systematic Theology, Apologetics and Pastoral Practice" (PhD diss., NorthWest University, South Africa, 2021). These works and the illustration files (not used in this article) and other resources are free for downloading at www.bethoumyvision.net.

[6] *Lex Christi* is my Latin adaptation of the phrase "law of Christ" (Gal 6:2; 1 Cor 9:21), a purposely less recognizable theological phrase that I can define using Westminster's nuanced meanings with less preconceived misconceptions. I substitute this phrase as an adaptation of the Westminster Standards phrase "moral law" below and identify uses latent in the structural patterns of the WLC beyond the three commonly identified uses in WCF 19:6, which are to show us our sin, lead us to Christ as mediator, and teach us our duty. Vern Poythress has also adopted my *lex Christi* virtues vocabulary; see Vern Poythress, "Introducing the Law of Christ (Lex Christi): A Fruitful Framework for Theology and Life," February 20, 2021, updated December 17, 2022, https://frame-poythress.org/introducing-the-law-of-christ-lex-christi-a-fruitful-framework-for-theology-and-life/.

[7] See Stephen Casselli, *Divine Rule Maintained: Anthony Burgess, Covenant Theology, and the Place of the Law in Reformed Scholasticism* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2016), 140–42. Casselli demonstrates how the theology of Anthony Burgess, a Westminster Divine who influenced the Confession's wording on the moral law (ch. 19), was based on careful biblical exegesis, ecclesiastical and pastoral concerns for the church in that day, and sensitivity to the progress of revelation that led to fulfillment in Christ.

[8] "The Book of Church Order of the Presbyterian Church in America, " (2019), chapter 21-5, https://www.pcaac.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/BCO-2019-with-bookmarks-for-website-1.pdf. Additional support for these six perspectival tools can be seen by the significant continuities between the structural patterns in the WLC and Romans.

I. *A Comprehensive Counseling Framework: The Symphonic Pedagogical Perspective*

This overarching WLC perspective sets forth God and man in relation to each other. The WLC organizes its discussion under two headings: what the Scriptures principally teach us to believe concerning God and what the Scriptures principally require as the duty of man (WLC 91, 5). I call this the *symphonic pedagogical* perspective.[9] The Westminster catechisms use Exodus 20:2–17 as the organizing text for this framework that defines the Christian religion. The preface to the Ten Commandments found in Exodus 20:2, "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt," is adapted by WLC 101 as a summary of what to believe concerning God. Thus, WLC 101 concisely summarizes WLC 1–90 into one terse sentence. The whole duty of man is reorganized under the headings of the moral law (WLC 91–151), followed by specific expansions of the meaning of the second and third commandments defining the means of grace (WLC 152–196, explaining the word sacraments and prayer).

Details of the WLC's Symphonic Pedagogical Perspective

God: What God is, his glory defined by his attributes and Triune persons (WLC 6–11)
Summarized in the preface to the moral law (WLC 101; Exod 20:2)
What God does, revealed in his decrees concerning angels and men (WLC 12–13)
execution of his decrees in creation and providence (WLC 14–90)
creation of the world, angels, and man in *lex Christi* righteousness (WLC 15–17)
providence about angels:
permits some angels to irrecoverably fall for his glory, limiting their sins, while establishing the elect angels to administer his *lex Christi* glory (WLC 19)
providence about man, preserving and governing by *lex Christi* and ordering them to his glory (WLC 18, 20):
covenant of life/works with thefirst Adam by *lex Christi*; all mankind falls into sin under his headship, some left in sin (WLC 20–30)
covenant of grace with the second Adam, Christ: all the elect restored to *lex Christi* righteousness under his headship (WLC 30–56)
Christ the mediator of the covenant of grace (WLC 36–56)
his person as God-man, the Lord Jesus Christ (WLC 36–41)
his execution of the offices of prophet, priest, and king (WLC 42–56)
his humiliation (imputing Adam's *lex Christi* disobedience, suffering its curses) and exaltation (rewarded for perfectly obeying *lex Christi* in the covenant of works; WLC 46–56)
Christ's mediatorial benefits
to preserve the witness of the visible church (WLC 60–63)
to redeem the invisible church by the Spirit and word (WLC 57–59, 64)
faith-union with Christ in effectual calling (WLC 65–68)
communion with Christ in full *lex Christi* righteousness (WLC 32, 65, 69–90)
in grace: justification, adoption, and sanctification (WLC 69–81)

[9] For the detailed explanation of this perspective, see Yates, *Westminster Foundations*, 101-110; "Adapting Westminster's Moral Law Motif," 57–58.

in glory: this life, intermediate state, and resurrection (82–90)
What duty God requires of men: Exercise the benefits they have received in the covenant of grace from Christ the mediator.
The meaning, use and interpretation of *lex Christi* (WLC 90–101)
Duties to God (WLC 102–121)
Duties to man (WLC 122–148)
The whole *lex Christi* reveals man's sinfulness and his deserved wrath (WLC 149–152), awakening man's conscience to flee from God's wrath by faith and repentance and diligent use of the means of grace (WLC 96, 153–196), which are defined as duties to God (second and third commandments; WLC 108, 112), including duties of ministers to their flock (fifth commandment) to properly represent God in these means, and how the flock should receive these means
word (WLC 155–160)
sacraments (WLC 161–177)
prayer (WLC 178–196)

Why is this *symphonic pedagogical* perspective important? Westminster's use of Exodus 20:1–17 provides a simple biblical text for training children (Westminster Shorter Catechism) or adults (WLC). Furthermore, Exodus 20:1–17 can serve as an outline for the entire seminary curriculum because it emphasizes what to believe about God and his work, which is the scope of systematic theology, and what duty God requires of man, which is the scope of practical theology. This perspective provides vital theoretical formation for biblical counselors. Lay counselors usually get exposed to how-to resources as the primary formation tools since the prominent biblical counseling certificates by CCEF and the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors (ACBC) mostly provide methodology and sanctification-related resources. Training institutions need to be reawakened to the value of the WLC's condensed pedagogy. Powlison's visionary appeal to show how counseling "explicitly cohere[s] with long-formulated Christian orthodoxy and orthopraxy" can be answered, in part, by a retrieval of the WLC adapted to all levels of counselor training. Working familiarity with the themes of the WLC's theological structure and the wording of the outline will help counselors explain the major themes of Christianity to counselees. Furthermore, its memorability helps locate and contextualize the good biblical themes they learn from practical theology books and articles within the larger structure of the WLC's mature systematic-practical theology. It will also serve as a guard against unbalanced counseling messages within the biblical counseling community. Popularized in the 1980s, counseling theory claimed faith in one's new identity in Christ or justification should be the only motivator for the Christian imperatives in sanctification, becoming nearly synonymous with being truly gospel- or Christ-centered.[10] The WLC's corrective answer is union and communion with our mediator Christ in grace and glory by the Spirit-and-Word-worked effectual call to saving

[10] David Powlison, *How Does Sanctification Work?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 27–30, 42, 53–60, 76. Chapter 5, "We are Sanctified by Remembering Our Justification" (pp. 53–60), critiques the tendency to consider legalistic self-righteousness as the main problem Paul is addressing in every text mentioning justification; in, e.g., Rom 8:18–39, the problem is the readers' doubting of God's love in times of suffering, so Paul reminds them of justification so they can be comforted by God's inseparable love and not lose heart, since various interdependent truths show that "God is for us!"

faith, such that all of faith's exercises—whether to justification, adoption, sanctification, or glorification—are by grace alone.[11]

Why is this perspective important in the weekly practice of counseling? It provides a framework for evaluating the relative pastoral needs of counselees. Church member Jack shares how he cannot seem to overcome his self-condemnation for leaving his wife and daughter for a two-year affair with another woman, though now his marriage and membership have been restored after repentance. Jack needs strengthening and encouragement related to his understanding of God's redemptive work, "what to believe concerning God," as do any like him who struggle with assurance of forgiveness, assurance of salvation, and God's providence over suffering. Young church planter David comes to you after his elders have pointed out his sins of dominating and manipulating others using condemning words and explosive anger. David and others like him need help to understand and practice their fifth- and sixth-commandment moral law duties while learning how to resist what these commands forbid. Generally, however, counselees need a combination of counsel strengthening both areas. Why? Counselors who understand the WLC's symphonic pedagogical structure will know that the *redeeming work of God* in effectual call to faith-union and communion in grace and glory *provides grace to the elect for their performance of every required duty toward God and man.* "What to believe concerning God" shows God's divine decree to save through the covenant of grace in effectual call to union with Christ as mediator by imputing, imparting, and preserving the duties required for communion in grace and glory. Those same duties to have communion in grace and glory through faith-union with Christ are be exercised and vivified as our *lex Christi* responsibilities. God graciously gives the elect what he requires of them and then commands the elect to exercise what they have been given through diligent use of the means of grace in the trials and tests of life. In Augustine's words, "Give me the grace to do as you command and command me to do what you will."[12]

Furthermore, one of the most significant theoretical debates in biblical counselor training is the relationship it should have with the various psychologies. The WLC *integrates* various topics of biblical truth using a moral law motif to develop a mature systematic-practical theology. However, extrabiblical knowledge cannot be *integrated* with this truth; it can merely supply illustrations and applications of this truth. First, the Westminster Standards *describe* the authority of Scripture to reveal God's Triune nature and attributes and his works of creation and providence to angels and men. The first heading of the *symphonic pedagogical* perspective (WLC 1–90) provides the supreme presuppositions for all other *descriptive* knowledge. True knowledge of God, his purposes in creation and providence, and knowledge of man must come from Scripture (2 Tim 3:16–17) and from those who proclaim its truths (Eph 4:11–16). *Descriptive* extrabiblical knowledge from science or psychology, for example, may contribute merely illustrative or applicational knowledge about God's works in creation as a whole and the behaviors of man under God's providence.[13] Second, the primary purpose of WLC 90–196 is to *prescribe* the moral

---

[11] Richard Gaffin addresses this overreliance on and misuse of justification as the primary motivator in sanctification, compared with actual biblical texts pointing to the main motivator as grace that unites us with Christ by faith. See Richard Gaffin, *In the Fullness of Time: An Introduction to the Biblical Theology of Acts and Paul* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2022), 390–98.

[12] Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin, 233, https://www.sas.upenn.edu/~cavitch/pdf-library/Augustine_ConfessionsX.pdf.

[13] David Powlison, "Cure of Souls (and the Modern Psychotherapies)," *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 25.2 (2007): 14–20.

law as the binding duty of all men.[14] The second heading of the *symphonic pedagogical* perspective *prescribes* the duties to God and man that can function as the presuppositions under which all other *prescriptive* extrabiblical knowledge can be engaged. WLC 102–21 (duties of man to God) and WLC 122–48 (duties of man to man and to creation as it impacts man) can function as epistemic filters, especially relevant for evaluating any *prescriptive* knowledge from the social sciences (economics, history, political science, sociology, psychology, and anthropology).[15] Christians can apply any *prescriptive* extrabiblical knowledge conforming to these scripturally defined man-to-God, man-to-man, and man-to-creation duties, reform any knowledge that can be taken captive to Christ (2 Cor 10:5), or reject any knowledge that cannot comply with God's moral vision for human flourishing (Acts 17:24–31)![16] This use of the moral law to engage psychological *prescriptions* for man coheres with how the Westminster Divines used the moral law to engage worldviews.[17] While Reformed counselors acknowledge that these applications will not always be certain due to limited knowledge, such as whether attachment theories between caregivers and infants are valid applications of the biblical *descriptions* of how man relates to God or *prescriptions* defining our duties to God (first commandment) or whether *prescribing* certain psychiatric medications conforms to the duty to be pro-life (sixth commandment), we can at least begin to reframe our engagement with any truth-telling psychologies as *descriptive* and *prescriptive* applications of Westminster's epistemological presuppositions. The WLC provides anchor points to an irreducibly complex, interdependent, *indicative-imperative* system of new covenant transformation, union-with-Christ-in-grace-and-glory truth, that helps guard against importing *descriptions* of man divorced from the context of God's sovereign providence or mere *prescriptive* moralism, emotional quotient theories, cognitive therapies, or positive psychology disconnected from faith-union with the risen Christ (Col 2:19–3:4).

II. *Descriptive and Prescriptive Presuppositions Explained*

Within the overarching *symphonic pedagogical* framework, five subsets of perspectives can serve as counselor tools to integrate and apply a mature systematic-practical theology, as illustrated in the diagram below. The upper section illustrates the descriptive presuppositions of (1) the *symphonic attributes* perspective, (2) the *symphonic persons* perspective, and (3) the *symphonic lex Christi* perspective. The lower section illustrates the prescriptive

---

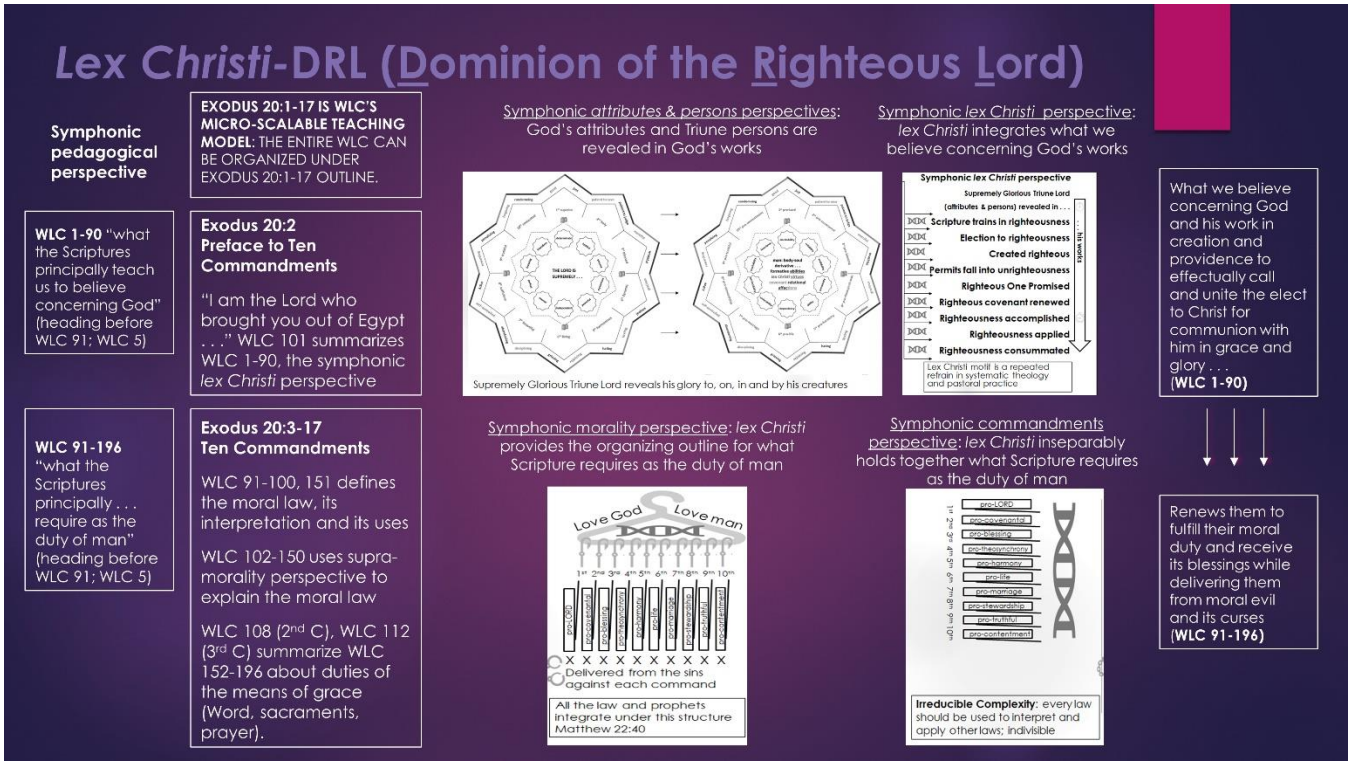
[14] WLC 91–196 also *describes* the meaning of the moral law and its purposes in redemption and judgment. The moral law informs them of God's similar righteous nature, his moral will as their duty, reveals their sinful bondage and inability to keep it, while also *prescribing* humble submission to seek righteousness by faith in Christ for mercy and credited righteousness (WLC 93, 95), which is also our first- and second-commandment duty (WLC 104, 108).

[15] See Yates, "Adapting Westminster's Moral Law Motif," 270–319 (ch. 9), for an example of engaging psychology using biblical presuppositions, both *descriptions* of the moral conscience (Rom 2:14–15) and *lex Christi prescriptions* for counseling related to those suffering dissociative identity symptoms due to trauma.

[16] For an example of reframing Esther Meek's Polanyian epistemology in *Loving to Know: Introducing Covenant Epistemology* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011) under a *lex Christi* rubric, see Yates, "Adapting Westminster's Moral Law Motif," 6–9.

[17] Paul Ackerman also uses the moral law to engage psychology. See Paul Ackerman, "The Integrated Model for Relating Psychology and Christianity: A Critique in the Light of Biblical Creation," *The Creation Social Science and Humanities Society Quarterly Journal* 10.4 (1988): 7–13, https://creationism.org/csshs/v10n4p07.htm.

presuppositions of the decalogue as an outline for (4) the *symphonic morality* perspective, and its irreducible prescriptive complexity in (5) the *symphonic commandments* perspective.



1. *Descriptive Presuppositions Explained: Symphonic Attributes Perspective*

The *symphonic attributes* perspective is defined as the glory of God revealed in his attributes and Triune persons (WCF 2:1–3) throughout the topics of Westminster's systematic and practical theology *to*, *on*, *in*, and *by* his creatures (WCF 2:2).[18] These four prepositions are key to Westminster's integrative systematic-practical theology and the reason why this *symphonic attributes* perspective must be creatively adapted for biblical counselor training. This perspective is key to knowing what it means to honor and bless the name of the LORD (the I AM), our third-commandment duty, and to properly witness to who man becomes in union with Christ, our ninth-commandment duty. It presents an integrative perspective connecting the doctrine of God with what union with Christ accomplishes in justification, adoption, sanctification, and glorification. Deductive research and extrapolation of the logic uncover the rudiments of an integrative theology between the doctrines of God and mancontributing a partial answer to Powlison's "Grand Unified Theory" vision of "*articulating biblical truth and*

[18] For the details on attributes, see Yates, *Westminster Foundations*, 39-80, and "Adapting Westminster's Moral Law Motif," 61–105. For the meaning of *symphonic*, see Vern S. Poythress, *Symphonic Theology: The Validity of Multiple Perspectives in Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2001), ch. 7, https://frame-poythress.org/ebooks/symphonic-theology-by-vern-poythress/#ch7.

developing our systematic theology of care for the soul … for understanding and transforming human nature."[19] Counselors must understand what man's embodied-soul derivative attributes look like in relation to the Lord's perfective attributes. Unfortunately, Reformed academic development of the doctrine of God has developed in its own specialized, isolated trajectory without being correlated with the doctrine of man created in God's likeness. When the meaning of God's name is fragmented from the study of man in his likeness, academics also fail to observe the specifics of the corollary teaching that man is created in God's likeness to reveal the eternal power and divine nature of God (Rom 1:20).

For the sake of counselor training, the long list of God's attributes in WCF 2:1 could benefit from a reorganization into three creatively adapted sets. The first set of attributes is the attributes of God's essential being, called *supra-actuating attributes*.[20] The Lord is living, unchanging, almighty, determinate, all-knowing, eternal, spirit (WLC 7–8; WCF 2:1). A second set of attributes can be grouped and named God's *supra-righteousness attributes* (WLC 7; WCF 2:1). However, this group lacks specificity, linked only to God's holiness. Ten new attribute names can be created to represent the virtues of each of the Ten Commandments. A third set can be grouped as *supra-familial attributes*, originating in the eternal love of the Father for the divine begotten Son in the bond of the Spirit, and expressed in creation and providence by loving all who share this affection for the Son and hating all those who reject the Son. [21] God differentiates between men based on covenant relations, attributes of wrath and justice to law nonconformists outside Christ's covenant of grace and attributes of mercy, grace, patience, goodness, and truth to his people who are in Christ's new covenant of grace (WLC 13, 93; WCF 3:5–7).

After God's attributes are reorganized into the above three sets, three derivative reflection sets can be proposed to describe man in God's image. The first set could be called derivative attributes of man's *formative abilities*, defined as those of living, changeable, enabled, reasonable, choosing, knowledgeable, immortal souls (WLC 17; WCF 4:2). A second set of ten commandment–linked virtues can be grouped and named man's reflective *lex Christi virtues*, or obedience to the moral law (WLC 7; WCF 2:1). A third set of derivative attributes can be grouped as the *covenant-relational affections*, both justice to enemies and mercy toward all, especially those of the household of faith (Gal 6:10; e.g., WLC 135, sixth-commandment duties that overlap with all other commandments). Perhaps we could use a computer-language metaphor of a) essential hardware to represent man's *formative abilities*, b) an operating system to represent man's *lex Christi virtues*, and c) software applications to represent man's *covenant-relational affections*. Union with Christ specifically focuses on renewal of the *lex Christi*

---

[19] Powlison, *The Biblical Counseling Movement*, 278, repr. of Powlison, "Cure of Souls (and the Modern Psychotherapies)," 14.

[20] Richard Muller mostly defines a similar list as God's divine essence, names, and "essential" attributes. See Richard Muller, *The Divine Essence and Attributes*, vol. 3 of *Post–Reformation Reformed Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 227–364.

[21] WCF 2:3; The Father and the only begotten Son share mutual love before creation, (John 1:14, 18; 3:35; 5:20; 17:24; Heb 1:2-3, 5), with the Spirit proceeding from both as the bond of the Father's delight in the Son (John 15:26; 2 Cor 13:14; Isa 42:1; Matt 3:16-17; 12:18; John 1:32-34; Rom 1:4, see Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: Abridged in One Volume* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011) 238-239, 242). The term "familial" is derived from the metaphor God uses to describe himself as Father (1st person of the Trinity) to the Son (2nd person of the Trinity), used in our baptismal formulation (Matt 28:19) and in the Trinitarian theology of WCF 2:3. It also provides one biblical motif for explaining the benefits of union with Christ as adopted sons by the Spirit (WLC 74; WCF 12; Rom 8:14-16; Gal 4:4-7; 1 John 3:1), and the restoration of human family love in Christ (Luke 1:17; Eph 5:1-2, 25; 6:1-4). For similar ideas noted in the Trinitarian origin of the *supra-familial attributes*, see Vern S. Poythress, *The Mystery of the Trinity: A Trinitarian Approach to the Attributes of God* (Phillipsburg: P & R, 2020), 496-498, 514-515, 528-529, 563-566.

virtues (Eph 4:24), which then changes the *formative abilities* of man's being and his *covenant-relational affections*, "the frame and disposition of the whole man, soul and body" (WLC 17, 93).

We can adapt and augment the WCF 2:1 list of God's attributes, unify the vocabulary with modern English, and arrange them into three attribute sets (totaling forty interdependent attributes), as below, where they are termed the ten *supra-actuating* attributes of essential being, the ten *supra-righteousness* attributes defined by moral law, and the twenty *supra-familial* attributes (one subset of ten pertaining to those in the covenant and another, contrasting, subset of ten pertaining to those outside the covenant) attributes.[22] These three sets are revealed in symphonically repeating motifs throughout Scripture and have integrated connections with all subsections of systematic and practical theology. All three sets of attributes are noted to situate the creatively developed set of ten *lex Christi* attributes within the WCF 2 attribute list and highlight that the origin of the *lex Christi* motif is from God's own attributes. In addition, I suggest that *all* Westminster's divine attributes have derivative reflections in man.

The first set, called *supra-actuating* attributes, are as follows. "I am the Lord your God": the I AM is supremely perfect, boundless, present, consistent, eternal, exalted, powerful, knowing, independent, determinate. These ten are respectively reflected in man's body and soul as *formative abilities*: the "I am" (self-consciousness) with qualities of perfectability, luxuriance, availability, reliability, endurability, complexity, ability, teachability, dependency, and decidability.

The second set, called *supra-righteousness* attributes, is developed by the creation of ten names to represent God's likeness in each of the commandments, below in the order of the decalogue, respectively: the Lord is superior, holy, blessed, dynamic, harmonious, living, beautiful, sufficient, truthful, and contented. These ten are respectively reflected in man's *lex Christi virtues* to represent each commandment's renewal in man: pro-Lord, pro-covenantal (meaning the elect can only approach his holiness through his covenants), pro-blessing, pro-theosynchrony, pro-harmony, pro-life, pro-marriage, pro-stewardship, pro-truth, and pro-contentment.

The members of the third set, called *supra-familial attributes*, originate in the love of the Father for the Son in the bond of the Spirit, but are expressed in creation and providence in the ways God relates to man outside or within his covenants.[23] These are divided into two subsets of ten. The first subset is called God's *covenant-reconciliation* attributes. God is loving, gracious, merciful, patient to save, good, forgiving, rewarding, slow to anger, disciplining, and rejoicing to those in covenant. The second, contrasting, subset is called God's *covenant-enmity* attributes. God is hating, jealous, wrathful, patient to judge, just, condemning, penalizing, furious, abandoning, and grieving to those outside the covenant. The derivative set reflected in man's body and soul are called *covenant-relational (reconciliation or enmity) affections* and use identical words.

Why is this *symphonic attributes* perspective important? As noted above, enriching our vision for soul care includes knowing what it means to call on the *name* of the Lord, what "put on in Christ" should look like, and what "put off in Adam" looks like.[24] In an infinitely complex way, the integrity of our third-commandment

---

[22] Three sets of ten are suggested to create a motific illustration using nested ten point stars; see "2023 lex Christi–DRL Illustrations PDF," http://bethoumyvision.net

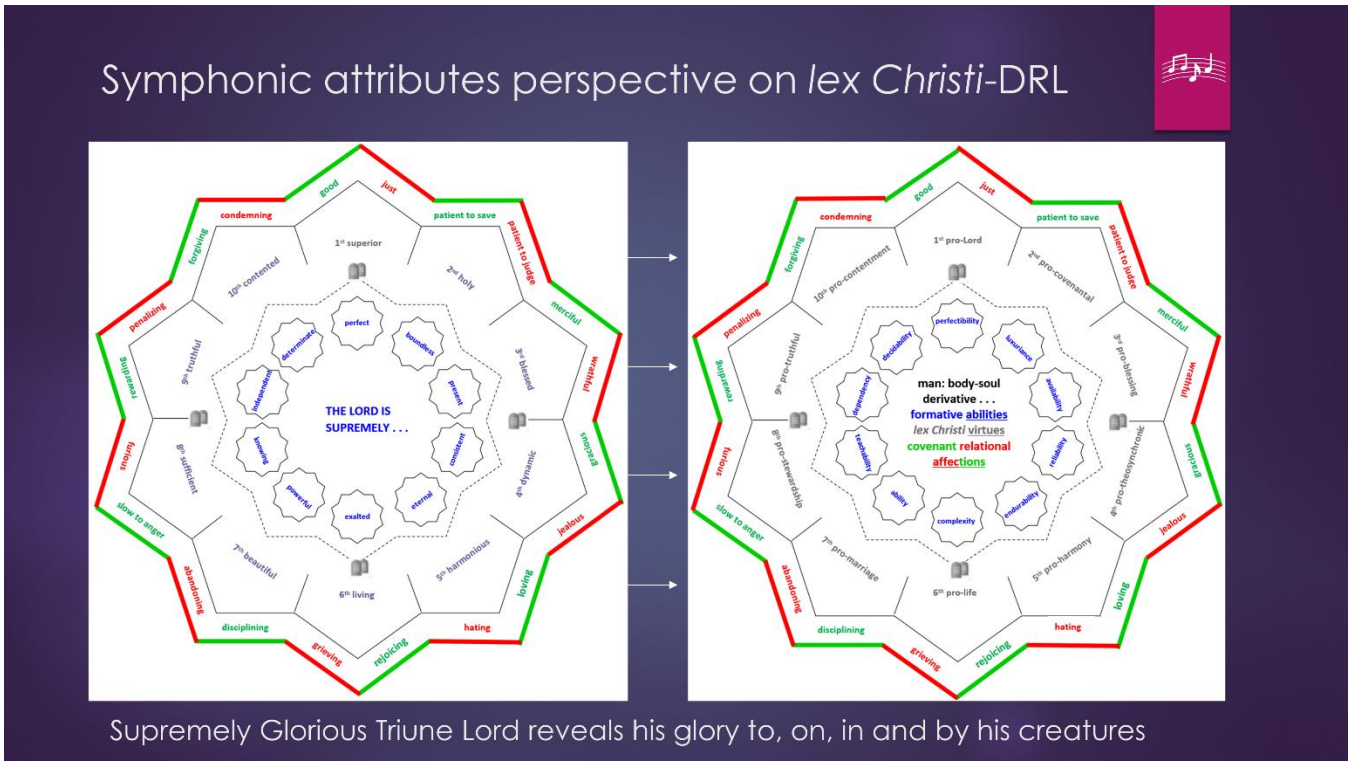
[23] The list is not exhaustive but suggestive of many other relational words in Scripture.

[24] Richard Chewning offers another thoughtful perspective linking divine attributes to human reflections, but without the three sets categorization. See Richard C. Chewning, *Becoming Partakers of the Divine Nature* (Quarryville, PA: Great Rock Publishing, 2013).

witness to the LORD, I AM, depends on knowing the proper use of his name, as his glory is revealed *to us* in all his works, that his glory may be revealed *on us* in creation and justification, as well as *in us* and *by us* in sanctification and glorification. The typical doctrine of man experienced in weekly corporate worship tends to focus on the "do nots" of the moral law and use the Ten Commandments in weekly worship to expose sin and call for prayers of repentance. Believers seldom hear the positive demands of the law linked to the attributes of God himself. This adapted perspective proposes a specific, simplified *lex Christi virtue* related to each commandment situated within other attributes defined in the doctrine of God. Better grasp of the meaning of God's name produces better witness to who man is re-created to be in his likeness. Union and communion with Christ in grace and glory means that, in faith-union with the second Adam, his *lex Christi* virtues are actually linked to the specific moral attributes of God defined under the term *righteousness*, purposed in election, imputed in justification, imparted in sanctification, and awaiting perfection in glorification. The visible church, in honor of and proper witness to God's name, should utilize its important corollary ministry of biblical counseling by choosing counselors that exemplify, proclaim, intercede, and administrate *lex Christi* virtues and discipline *lex Christi* failure.

When we notice that the focus of redemption is the renewal of the *lex Christi virtues*,[25] how shall we relate these *virtues* to the other two sets of *formative abilities* and *covenant-relational affections* describing man's soul by the instrument of man's body? These *abilities* and *affections* are meant to be used to please God and promote human flourishing, but they are only properly redirected when the core *lex Christi virtues* are renewed. For example, *lex Christi virtues* command duties of love for all men within the details of the second table of the moral law. When nuanced with *covenant-relational affections*, counselors can distinguish between the duties of love to those in the covenant and those outside the covenant. While imitating God's display of patient common grace love to all, there should be a special display of *covenant-relational reconciliation affections* to "one another" in the visible church (Matt 5:44–45; Rom 9:22–23; Gal 6:9–10; Eph 4:1–6:4). Since God loves the saints as new creatures in Christ and shows them his *covenant-relational reconciliation* attributes, all the assemblies of believers need to show these same affections to one another, whether in the context of marriage, family, schools, businesses, or churches. Likewise, current models of biblical counseling lack a clarified category for how the visible church imitates God's *covenant-relational enmity* attributes in biblically defined ways, hating sin, grieving over and separating from unrepentant sinners, giving men up to their lusts, disciplining neighbor-harming sins under her laws, and waiting for God's final justice (Rev 2:5; Heb 1:9; Eph 4:30; Rom 9:2; Matt 10:14; 15:14; Acts 13:46; Rom 13:3–4; Rev 6:10). These nuances contribute to a systematic-practical theology for soul care.

[25] Ephesians 4:24 motivates us to research how Ephesians covers every commandment's renewal in union with the resurrected Christ.



2. *Descriptive Presuppositions Explained: The Symphonic Persons Perspective*

WCF 2:3 explains a Trinitarian presupposition that is integrated throughout its systematic-practical theology using an *inseparable operations* perspective that describes each person of the Trinity as participating in all God's works, such as decrees, creation, providence, redemption, and judgment.[26] Many systematic theology books have developed this integrative approach.[27]

Throughout the Westminster Standards, the word "Godhead" generally represents the Triune Lord: Father, Son, and Spirit (WCF 2:3; 26:3; WLC 6, 9-10).[28] While this inseparable operations motif is only explicit in the doctrine of creation (WCF 4:1), the doctrine of perseverance (WCF 17:2), and the eternal communion of the saints with the Triune God in glory (WLC 90), the *symphonic persons* perspective means that whenever the divine

[26] Adonis Vidu, "How the Doctrine of Inseparable Operations Unlocks the Gospel," *The Gospel Coalition*, May 3, 2021, https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/doctrine-inseparable-operations/.

[27] Robert Letham, *Systematic Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 108–24; Vern Poythress, *The Mystery of the Trinity* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2020), 563–87. There is a reawakening to Trinitarian themes in modern theology and biblical counseling: Michael Reeves, *Delighting in the Trinity: An Introduction to the Christian Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012); Fred Sanders, *The Deep Things of God: How the Trinity Changes Everything* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010); Robert Letham, *The Holy Trinity* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2004); Bruce A. Ware, *Father, Son and Holy Spirit: Relationships, Roles and Relevance* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005); Stephen Seamands, *Ministry in the Image of God: The Trinitarian Shape of Christian Service* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006).

[28] WCF 8:2 is an exception, where "Godhead" refers to the divinity of Christ in union with his "manhood."

name of "God"[29] is used in the Westminster Standards, it represents the Trinity. There is hardly any section of the Standards that omits the mention of God or one of the divine persons, which is evidence for the *symphonic persons* perspective. We affirm that the supremacy attributes of the Lord God the Father are the same supremacy attributes of the Lord God the Son, the second person of the Trinity, and they are the supremacy attributes of the Lord God the Holy Spirit—shared equally as *autotheos*, God-of-himself, the self-existent Triune God.[30]

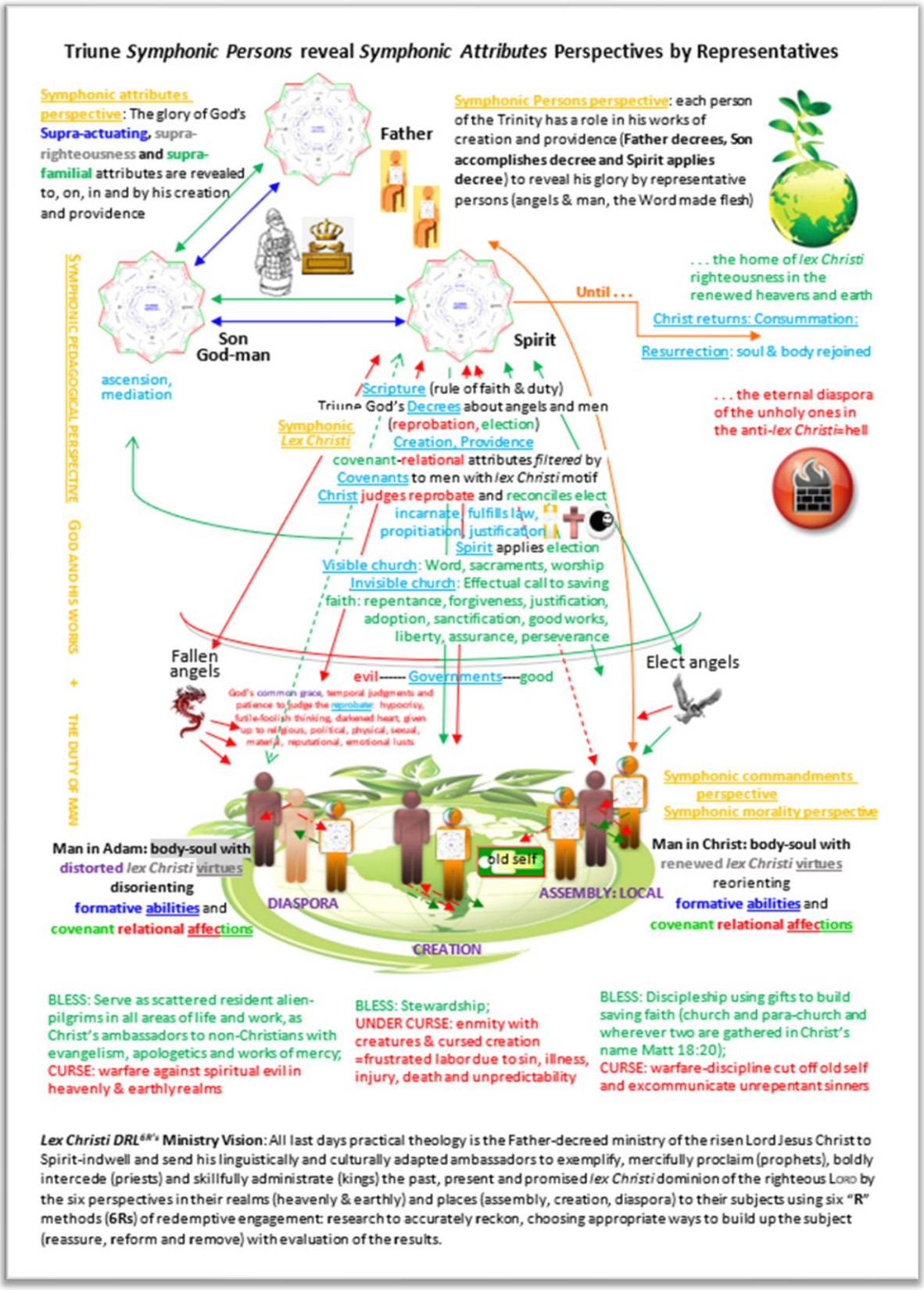
In the application of "God's decree" of redemption and "all the means thereof" (WCF 3:1, 3, 6–7; WLC 13), the *symphonic persons* perspective reveals the archetypical *mediate representative* of the resurrected, ascended, right-hand-seated Christ receiving authority to send the Spirit to apply the virtues of his mediation to his elect within the context of the visible church (Acts 2:33). This archetypical *mediate representative* pattern is then administered over all the universe, most visibly revealed as *symphonic abilities*, *virtues*, and *affections* by created *persons* (angels and men) *in relationship* to God, to one another, and to all creation. From the perspective of the Lord's *covenant-relational* attributes, even the wicked reveal his wrath when he gives men up to their lusts, and his justice, while he also reveals to them his common grace kindness and patience, so that they might benefit the righteous in the common operations of society.[31] Biblical counseling is one way to alert counselees to the reality of relational mediate representation. The counselor is a mediate representative to the counselee. They equip counselees to actively participate in mediately representing God's supremacy attributes in derivative ways in all their relationships.

---

[29] This occurs 171 times in the WCF, 241 times in the WLC. Also, there are about ten uses of the name "Lord" to represent the Trinity in WCF 1:1; 7:3; 13:1; 20:2–3; 21:7–8; 23:1; 24:3; 33:2. Its primary uses in the WLC are found in the many mentions of the phrases of the Decalogue and its preface: WLC 101, 102, 107, 110, 111, 114, 115, 120, 123, 133, the only exception being WLC 165, which states that baptism into the triune name brings one into an "open and professed engagement to be wholly and only the Lord's." The other fourteen or so uses of "Lord" in the WCF refer to the Lord Jesus Christ, plus additional uses naming the Lord's Day and the Lord's Supper.

[30] Calvin used this Greek term *autotheos* to affirm and protect the biblical teaching about the divinity of Christ as self-existent God, God-of-himself, *ex se ipso*, but also to indicate that the Son derives his *hypostatic identity* as the second person of the Trinity from the generated relationship he has with the Father from before the ages. See Robert Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, 2nd ed. (Nashville: Nelson, 1998), 327–31.

[31] Prov 16:4; Isa 45:1–13; Rom 1:18–32; 9:22; Acts 14:17; 17:30; Matt 5:45; 13:28–30.


Triune Symphonic Persons reveal Symphonic Attributes Perspectives by Representatives
Symphonic attributes perspective: The glory of God's Supra-actuating, supra-righteousness and supra-familial attributes are revealed to, on, in and by his creation and providence
Father
Symphonic Persons perspective: each person of the Trinity has a role in his works of creation and providence (Father decrees, Son accomplishes decree and Spirit applies decree) to reveal his glory by representative persons (angels & man, the Word made flesh)
. . . the home of lex Christi righteousness in the renewed heavens and earth
Until . . .
Christ returns: Consummation:
Resurrection: soul & body rejoined
Son God-man
Spirit
ascension, mediation
SYMPHONIC PEDAGOGICAL PERSPECTIVE GOD AND HIS WORKS + THE DUTY OF MAN
Scripture (rule of faith & duty)
Triune God's Decrees about angels and men (reprobation, election)
Symphonic Lex Christi
Creation, Providence
covenant-relational attributes filtered by
Covenants to men with lex Christi motif
Christ judges reprobate and reconciles elect
incarnate, fulfills law, propitiation, justification
Spirit applies election
Visible church: Word, sacraments, worship
Invisible church: Effectual call to saving faith: repentance, forgiveness, justification, adoption, sanctification, good works, liberty, assurance, perseverance
. . . the eternal diaspora of the unholy ones in the anti-lex Christi=hell
Fallen angels
evil------ Governments----good
Elect angels
God's common grace, temporal judgments and patience to judge the reprobate: hypocrisy, futile-foolish thinking, darkened heart, given up to religious, political, physical, sexual, material, reputational, emotional lusts
Symphonic commandments perspective
Symphonic morality perspective
Man in Adam: body-soul with distorted lex Christi virtues disorienting formative abilities and covenant relational affections
old self
DIASPORA
ASSEMBLY: LOCAL
CREATION
Man in Christ: body-soul with renewed lex Christi virtues reorienting formative abilities and covenant relational affections
BLESS: Serve as scattered resident alien-pilgrims in all areas of life and work, as Christ's ambassadors to non-Christians with evangelism, apologetics and works of mercy; CURSE: warfare against spiritual evil in heavenly & earthly realms
BLESS: Stewardship; UNDER CURSE: enmity with creatures & cursed creation =frustrated labor due to sin, illness, injury, death and unpredictability
BLESS: Discipleship using gifts to build saving faith (church and para-church and wherever two are gathered in Christ's name Matt 18:20); CURSE: warfare-discipline cut off old self and excommunicate unrepentant sinners
Lex Christi DRL6R's Ministry Vision: All last days practical theology is the Father-decreed ministry of the risen Lord Jesus Christ to Spirit-indwell and send his linguistically and culturally adapted ambassadors to exemplify, mercifully proclaim (prophets), boldly intercede (priests) and skillfully administrate (kings) the past, present and promised lex Christi dominion of the righteous LORD by the six perspectives in their realms (heavenly & earthly) and places (assembly, creation, diaspora) to their subjects using six "R" methods (6Rs) of redemptive engagement: research to accurately reckon, choosing appropriate ways to build up the subject (reassure, reform and remove) with evaluation of the results.

3. *Descriptive Presuppositions Explained: The Symphonic Lex Christi Perspective*

The WLC also uses a *lex Christi*-integrating motif that helps explain the various stages of the biblical narrative and various aspects of systematic and practical theology. I call this the *symphonic lex Christi* perspective because it resembles a symphony in which melodies are repeated. The *symphonic lex Christi* perspective refers to the recurrence of the *lex Christi* motif, most commonly summarized by the terms *righteousness* or *unrighteousness* (but also including holiness, godliness, good works, and sinfulness) throughout the symphony of topics in Westminster's systematic and practical theology. Melodic repetitions are sounded in creation, fall, Sinai, Christ, and salvation, as described in WCF 19, "Of the Law of God." The following provides a summary.

Scripture trains in righteousness. The Lord is righteous. The Lord elects some men to righteousness. The Lord creates Adam righteous and gives him his entire righteous law in Eden. The Lord permits man's fall into unrighteousness and passes by some, leaving them in their unrighteousness unto final judgment. The Lord promises Christ, the righteous offspring of the woman, who became incarnate to fulfill righteousness as the second Adam. Through effectual call we believers are united to Christ to commune with him in grace and glory. We are credited with *lex Christi* righteousness in justification and recreated with *lex Christi* wisdom in sanctification. We appropriate the means of grace in communion with the saints and by electing leaders who exemplify, proclaim, intercede, and administer these *lex Christi* virtues in all assemblies of two or more. The Lord leads his church to discipline according to the prohibitions of *lex Christi* to restore its virtues. The saints hope for a perfected *lex Christi* world and relationships in glorification. The Lord consummates judgment on unrighteousness and eternally prepares a home of righteousness in the new heavens and the new earth, while hell is the application of justice, a place filled with the total chaos of an anti-*lex Christi* environment.[32]

Why is this perspective important in biblical counseling? This perspective prevents the legalistic application of the other perspectives. Everything we are commanded to do in the moral law is an exercise of the grace received in the symphonic *lex Christi* perspective. The work of Christ and the Spirit intimately integrate the *lex Christi* such that faith-union with Christ applies the *lex Christi* righteousness required to see God (Heb 12:14).

[32] For the specific symphonic WCF patterns cited and adapted with biblical texts and for the use of *lex Christi* to interpret creation, fall, final renewal, and final judgment, see Yates, *Westminster Foundations*, 91-100, and "Adapting Westminster's Moral Law Motif," 127–32. Richard Muller highlights two theologians who used this perspective after the Westminster Standards were published; see Richard Muller, "The Covenant of Works and the Stability of the Divine Law in Seventeenth-Century Reformed Orthodoxy: A Study in the Theology of Herman Witsius and Wilhelmus A Brakel," *Calvin Theological Journal* 29 (1994): 75–101.

4. ***Prescriptive Presuppositions Explained: Symphonic Morality Perspective***

The third WLC perspective is that *all* biblical morality falls under the scope of the Ten Commandments. This perspective is summarized in love for God and love for neighbor (WCL 102, 122), and on these two great commandments the WLC builds its understanding of the moral law. The WLC uses the Decalogue's imperatives (eight "you shall not" and two "you shall" ["Remember," "Honor"], Exod 20:3–17) to create ten sets of duties and prohibitions drawn from logical connections to any related biblical morality from anywhere in Scripture (WLC

102–49). I call this the *symphonic morality* perspective.[33] For example, in WLC 108, the second-commandment prohibition, "You shall not make or worship idols," creates a contrasting set of duties to "receive, observe, and keep pure the use of prayer, the word, sacraments, church government and discipline, fasting and vows" that are all developed logically from the entire Bible related to proper worship under the terms of the covenant. Showing that this biblical *symphonic morality* perspective can be further expanded, WLC 152–196 further explains that brief summary of second-commandment duties with even greater detail related to the effectual use of the outward means (word, sacraments, prayer) to receive the benefits of Christ's mediation in the new covenant. The biblical teaching about prayer (WLC 178–85) is an expanded explanation of the duties of the second commandment, and to that is added the specifics of the Lord's Prayer (WLC 186–96) as a structure for worship and intercession to receive new covenant *benefits* (expansion of Christ's kingdom, forgiveness, deliverance from temptation and evil and removal of its sources, provision of daily bread) and enable the performance of new covenant *duties* (hallowing God's name, doing his moral will, forgiving debtors). As an example of the biblical legitimacy of creating this logical *symphonic morality* perspective, notice how Paul reframes the eighth commandment as a prohibition and duty in one verse: "Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need" (Eph 4:28). Further, by examining the Scripture index to the WLC,[34] readers note that its primary use of the entire book of Proverbs as proof texts is organized under the rubric of its moral law exposition, illustrating that many of its themes can be restructured under individual commandments.

However, we can note that the WLC's details of each commandment's biblical virtues are not comprehensive of every possible nuance of biblical morality. Some of its detailed emphases reflect the sharp turns away from errors in the Church of England and Roman Catholicism.[35] Today, some of the commandments need larger biblical headings to define their overall virtue. Some adaptation and additions will be required to show how all morality in the modern age can be organized under the rubric of the moral law.[36] For example, I have adapted the second commandment as the virtue requiring us to be pro-covenantal—all proper worship must be according to the demands of the covenant under which God's people lived, in addition to the WLC 107–10, focusing on what defines proper corporate worship—and the fourth commandment as the virtue requiring us to become pro-theosynchronic—we align our lives with God's sovereign providential timings in weekly cycles, annual patterns, and lifetime perspectives, as well as with God's interpretation of history, past, present, future, in addition to WLC 115–21, which focuses on the observance of the Lord's Day.

Why is this *symphonic morality* perspective important? Pastor Bob has met with married church member Lisa, mother of a three-year-old daughter, and learned of her tragic seven-year history of bondage to many food-related health and diet rules with related pills by day, combined with her indulgence in junk food frenzies and vomiting

---

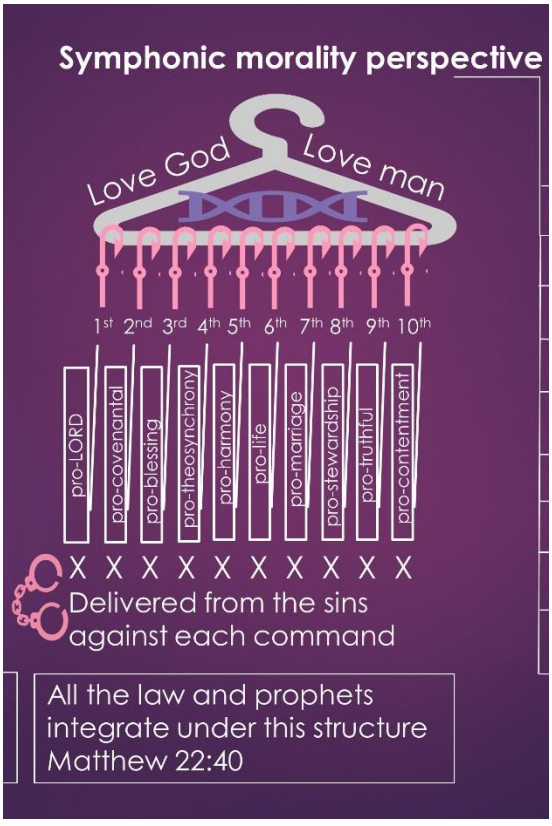
[33] For a summary of WLC 103–149 on the moral law, see Yates, *Westminster Foundations*, 29–34, and "Adapting Westminster's Moral Law Motif," 41–47.

[34] Presbyterian Church in America, *Scripture Index*, https://www.pcaac.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Scripture2022.pdf.

[35] See WLC 108–9 and WLC 21 on proper forms of worship, excluding many forms used in the Church of England and the Romans Catholic Church; WCF 20:1 on freedom of the conscience under the word of God; WCF 23:3 rejecting the interference in presbyterian church matters by the pope or kings or bishops with civil authority. WCF 25:6 originally condemned the pope of Rome as the antichrist and refutes his claim to be head of the church.

[36] See Yates, "Adapting Westminster's Moral Law Motif," 121–26.

by night. For homework Pastor Bob emails her his own notes providing a *supramorality* perspective on food and drink to discuss at their next counseling session, namely, that any obedience to God about food from anywhere in the Bible can be organized under the *lex Christi* outline. All Lisa's eating should fulfill the Lord's command to seek first his kingdom and righteousness. Her eating should be an act of joy in and communion with God, seeing his eternal power and divine nature in food even as she prays that God would provide her daily bread (first commandment; Rom 1:20–21; Matt 6:11). The Lord uses food metaphors to lead Lisa into new covenant worship and calls her to taste and see that he is good in the Lord's Supper (second commandment). Lisa must praise and bless God for the food she receives (third commandment; 1 Tim 4:3–5). Lisa learns a historical perspective on food in noticing seasons of God's abundant provision, such as Thanksgiving holidays (fourth commandment; Acts 14:17). Most evidently, Lisa needs to yield herself to God's design to eat with family relationship–building purposes (fifth and seventh commandments), to rule over the earth's produce to serve her health and life and share with those in need (sixth commandment), spend her food budget on *lex Christi* purposes (eighth commandment), aim for a *lex Christi*-honoring reputation rather than a secular world–imposed body-image reputation (Jas 2:1–5, 12; ninth commandment) and find freedom from her particular forms of food and body-image coveting (tenth commandment). Pastor Bob knows all these *lex Christi* neighbor-love designs come from the Triune God by the new covenant writing of the law on Lisa's heart (Heb 10:16), though her actual transformation will likely be a daily battle of dying to sin and living to righteousness. Proper self-care under *lex Christi* is reinforced by knowing who God is and what he has done for her rescue from bondage through Christ, the mediator of the covenant of grace, by his Spirit, with the support of the visible church. Lisa will likely need more than just verbal counsel, as various compulsions and addictions usually require larger interventions with the support of the visible church that remove her opportunities to sin until she develops self-discipline, truly hating wickedness for its damaging curses and loving righteousness while experiencing its consequent blessings (Ps 1; WLC 95, 97).



5. *Prescriptive Presuppositions Explained: Symphonic Commandments Perspective*

The sixth WLC perspective provides another tool for biblical counselors. I call this the *symphonic commandments* perspective.[37] This perspective is defined as the *interdependence* of each commandment on the others. Man's obedience to God must be obedience to all commandments together as an inseparable unity, to speak and act according to the whole law of liberty (Jas 2:10–12). WLC 99 shows the pattern of using each commandment as a way of interpreting other commandments. For example, the heart sin of coveting (tenth commandment) is a root of many other sins, so it defines each commandment as having spiritual or heart dimensions (WLC 99:2). According to each one's role of authority, submission, or equality (fifth commandment), each is to model, explain, and use their role to represent and encourage obedience to all the commands and prevent or resist what disobeys the commands (WLC 99:7–8). There are many interconnections and parallels in meaning between the first four commands and the last six commands. The third commandment honoring the Lord's name has parallels with the ninth commandment honoring the name of our neighbor truthfully and mercifully. The aggravations of sin in WLC 151 also show the interdependence of each commandment on the others: the tenth commandment provides guidance about whether sin was committed only in the heart (with delight in sin, willful foolish presumption, pride, anger, or malice) or also included first- to ninth-commandment multiple combined sins against various commandments, and against our promises, contracts, or vows related to those commands (with repeated relapsing, in public view). These may be against God (first commandment), his proper worship (second commandment), the means whereby he makes himself known and our use of them (prayers, covenants, vows to God; third commandment), or the purpose of the Lord's Day and during or around that time (fourth commandment). They may be committed against witnesses, whether superiors or equals or inferiors, and their lawful restraints, admonitions, and discipline (all fifth commandment related). They may be against the reputations of others and do irreparable damage (ninth commandment). This perspective identifies an irreducible complexity to the entire set of moral law commandments such that they cannot be separated and must be received as a whole coherent system. As a unity, *lex Christi* should functionally control the way Christians develop epistemology for any other *prescriptive* knowledge, and it is vital for apologetics, enabling it to engage worldview *prescriptions* and *prescriptive* ethics.

Why is this important in counseling? Consider how the *symphonic commandments* perspective is useful in analyzing a marriage counseling case. Nancy comes to your pastoral office complaining with many tears about her husband John. Both are long-term church members who affirm the five *solas* of faith, Christ, grace, Scripture, and all to God's glory. Though counselors should always be cautious when hearing only one side of the marital story, you know Nancy is well respected among the church sisters, and you get enough detailed data to verify her story. She shares how John recently threatened her in anger for her refusal to tell him about her personal finances. This type of threatening behavior had occurred only once before in their twenty-five-year marriage.

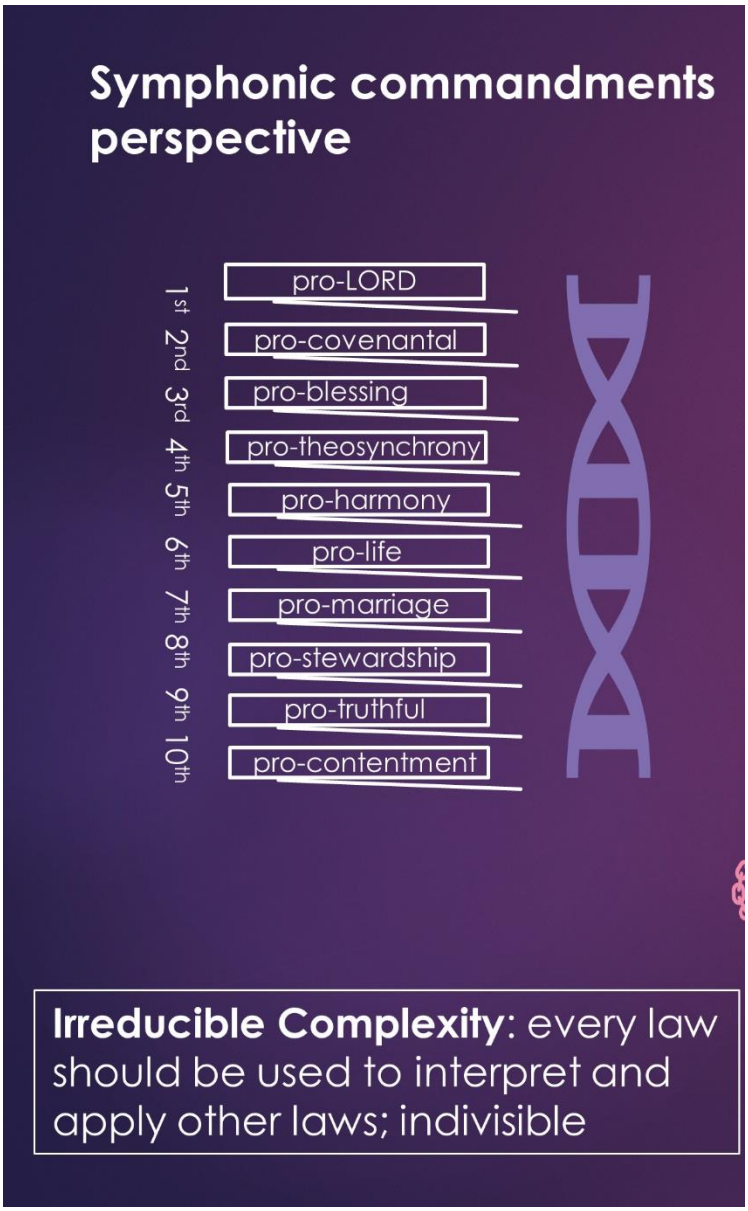
You ask detailed questions about their marital history and discern that John, a former bank employee, has a pattern of pride about his acumen in family finances (disobedience to the fifth commandment) coupled with repeated condemnation of Nancy's forgetfulness in paying her half of the mortgage payments (disobedience to the ninth commandment). However, Nancy has a deeply held belief that if any man ever threatened her, she should divorce him. She has been crying in hopelessness for the past three months about their impending

[37] For an explanation of this perspective in WLC 99 and 151, see Yates, *Westminster Foundations*, 34–37 and "Adapting Westminster's Moral Law Motif," 38–41.

retirement future, not wanting to share her life with a man who has threatened her. She has been unwilling to share her variable monthly income for fear that John, who recently lost his high-income job, will demand that she pay more of the monthly mortgage, leaving her less to care for their daughter's college costs, of which their established pattern has been to share half the monthly payments.

The *symphonic commandments* perspective provides a tool for you as counselor to look at *lex Christi* interdependence, how each commandment operates or is neglected in family dynamics. When Nancy brings a reluctant John in for the next counseling appointment, you use this tool to reorient them both to a balanced representation of each other's reputation and honor of each other's reputation wherever each has been faithful to any commandments (obedience to the ninth commandment). Nancy has overemphasized John's fifth-commandment misuse of authority and sixth-commandment anger and threats, while John has overemphasized Nancy's eighth-commandment financial forgetfulness. They both lack contentment (tenth commandment) and confidence in God's daily provision (first commandment).

The *symphonic commandments* perspective provides a total marital health check-up, pointing the couple to the biblical requirement of interdependent love, delight, thankfulness, and contentment in each commandment's righteousness and of hatred and grief to repent of each commandment's unrighteousness. It reminds them to diligently use the means of grace to restore trust that God will not suddenly forsake them in retirement (first commandment). It reminds them that God dynamically orders their times and places and calls them to *theosynchrony*, to participate in God's *chrono*-order, from a macrohistorical perspective of God "joining them together" (Matt 19:6) to a weekly microscheduling of time together rebuilding trust after this emotional fallout (fourth commandment). It encourages John to use his authority to build up Nancy, while she should not throw away her respect for him over one emotional incident (fifth commandment). It teaches John to repent of his emotional outburst and Nancy to repent of her bitterness and unwillingness to forgive, and it teaches John to frequently praise Nancy's God-given strengths used to protect family health, physical life, and peace (sixth commandment). It points John to greater appreciation for their differences in sex and sexuality, living with Nancy in an understanding way (1 Pet 3:7; seventh commandment). It teaches both to be patient with their shared property stewardship and Nancy in particular to repent of her unfounded fear of disclosing her monthly income to John and to frequently praise John's God-given financial acumen (eighth commandment). It reorients each to God's way of speaking about those united to Christ (Rom 8:1; Phil 1:3–6; ninth commandment). It warns them both against coveting an unrealistic retirement dream home with a mortgage they cannot afford (tenth commandment), repentance from proud, take-control planning for the future (Jas 4:13–16), coupled with submission to God's providence in John's recent job loss and their new income realities (first commandment). You send a follow-up email reminding them of this counsel, reminding them also that God's covenant of grace promises to accomplish this moral law renewal in them both, and give them the WLC 91–151 moral law section to ponder for homework. Nancy reports to you a few months later that this *symphonic commandments* perspective has proven vital to restoring their marital trust and joy and led them to sell their unaffordable retirement home and buy something within their adjusted income range.



Assembling all the perspectives for practical theology: *lex Christi*-DRL[6R's]

Another key contribution of my thesis is to propose a method to use the six *lex Christi* perspectives in a wholistic biblical counseling practice.[38]

Q. Elect believer, what do you believe about pastoral practice, namely, evangelism, apologetics, missions, biblical counselling, teaching, preaching, Christian education, marketplace ministry?

[38] See the author's website link in footnote #4, PhD thesis 4.8 for an explanation of every phrase in this definition together with questions to consider asking counselees during 6R's counseling process. The 6R's can be used as a counseling report form.

A. That all last days[39] practical theology is the Father-decreed[40] ministry of the risen Lord Jesus Christ[41] to Spirit-indwell and send[42] his linguistically and culturally adapted ambassadors[43] to exemplify,[44] mercifully proclaim,[45] boldly intercede[46] and skilfully administrate[47] the past,[48] present[49] and promised[50] dominion of the Righteous Lord by the *symphonic pedagogical* perspective and its five sub-perspectives (*symphonic attributes*, *symphonic persons*, *symphonic lex Christi*, *symphonic commandments*, *symphonic morality*)[51] in their realms (heavenly[52] & earthly) and places (assembly, creation, diaspora)[53] to their subjects[54] using six "**R**" methods (**6Rs**) of redemptive engagement:

---

[39] Ministry post-ascension of Christ and sending of the Spirit (Acts 2:17; Heb. 1:2).

[40] Fulfils the purposes decreed by the Father for the good works prepared in advance for his elect united to Christ (Eph. 1:9-11; 2:10).

[41] What the Lord Jesus Christ (as fully God-fully man) continues to do and teach through us (Acts 1:1; 2 Cor. 13:3).

[42] The Spirit teaches us the things of God that natural man cannot understand (1 Cor. 2:12) so his Spirit-taught ambassadors can be sent as his representatives (2 Cor. 5:20).

[43] Language and culture adaptation is a fundamental responsibility of the followers of Christ as they obey the Great Commission to make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 2:1-11; 1 Cor. 9:17-21), and is part of the meaning of the sign of Jonah that the Gospel will go to the Gentiles in their languages and they will repent (Matt. 12:39-41).

[44] Our model of life among those we serve must conform to the *lex Christi* patterns (Acts 20:32-35; 1 Tim. 4:12).

[45] This is primarily a *prophetic* role. Though the Athenians' excessive idolatry grieved Paul, he still was able to complement their general desire to worship a god, while pointing them to the true Lord God (Acts 17:22-30), proclaiming God's mercy in Christ to those who believe and repent. Proclaiming includes the written text and all forms of media. Overlapping with a prophetic role, a priestly role includes showing mercy to sinners (Heb. 2:17-18; 4:14-5:7).

[46] These duties are patterned after the role of *priests* (Heb. 2:17-18; 4:14-5:7; 7:25; 1 Tim. 2:1-8). Paul's prayers in Ephesians 1:15-23 and 3:14-21 , as well as his request for the intercession of the saints (Eph. 6:18-20) is evidence of the significance of priestly intercession and the freedom of access that all believers now have in Christ (Eph. 2:18).

[47] This is primarily a *kingly* role. Administration of all the following biblical themes and principles in our various realms and places requires mentoring by mature leaders who already do these things, as well as coherent theological and biblical knowledge combined with wisdom to apply that knowledge to people, delegating and reforming cultural influences against the *lex Christi*. Biblical examples would be like the administrative gifts of Joseph in Egypt (Gen. 37-50), Moses in Sinai (Exod. 18:1-27), Solomon in Israel (1 Kings 3-10), Daniel in Babylon (Dan. 1-6), Ezra in the post captivity rebuilding of Jerusalem (Ezra 7:6-10:44), Nehemiah's stewardship over post-captivity Jerusalem (Neh. 4:1-7:4; 12:44-13:31), the apostles' appointment of deacons to care for the Hellenistic widows in Jerusalem (Acts 6:1-7) and Paul and Barnabas appointing elders and deacons in every city of their church planting ministry and training their disciples to do the same (Acts 14:23; Tit. 1:5).

[48] All the past redemptive history fulfilled in Christ and providentially applied by the Spirit in our own salvation history.

[49] We apply the righteous kingdom rule of Christ to our present realms, places and roles as professionals in the workplace, parents, church members, teachers, pastors, students, neighbours in the local community, and citizens of the nation.

[50] Like Paul did by rebuking the darkened worldview of the Athenian idolaters as commandment breakers, revealing the one true Lord and commanding their repentance (Acts 17:24-30), we reflect the *promised* dominion of the Lord in the present, when on the last day the Lord "will judge the world in righteousness," (Acts 17:31).

[51] See 2.2.1-2.2.3 for the three *lex Christi* perspectives (unified, supra-morality and symphonic), and chapter 3 for the *symphonic lex Christi attributes* perspective. *The* lists of the Lord's attributes (*supra-actuating*, *supra-lex Christi* and *supra-familial*) derived from WCF 2 in 3.3.1-3 can all be organized as reflective capacities of man using *lex Christi* coherence. All of the reflective attributes required of man are either explicit or implied in WLC 99-151, see 3.3.3 for the most obvious examples.

[52] Some ambassadors, part of the great cloud of witnesses who still speak to us, represent his righteousness and rule with Christ, are already raised up to heavenly realms with Christ who is still the greatest ambassador by the Spirit (Eph. 2:7; Col. 3:1-4; Heb. 11:1-12:4, 22-24; Rev. 20:3-6)

[53] See Yates (2017, pp. 165-174) where assembly means two or more gathered in Christ's name (Christian marriage, family, businesses, institutions, schools, the organized church, etc.), creation means the physical world and human bodies where we have stewardship and creation-flourishing opportunities, and diaspora (Romanised Greek for scattered, dispersed, as in 1 Pet. 1:1) meaning Christians living and working among non-Christians.

Research (what is revealed) to accurately **R**eckon, choosing appropriate ways to build up the subject (**R**eassure, **R**eform and **R**emove) with evaluation of the **R**esults (the ambassador strives for an engagement that is received by the subjects with the intended results of training in righteousness).

Notice that the definition of pastoral practice relates the R's to the full *lex Christi* framework, "by the *lex Christi*", that is, based on the presuppositions of the *symphonic commandments* perspective (every commandment is inseparable from others), *symphonic morality* perspective (the 10C's are the master outline under which all biblical righteousness and unrighteousness can be defined) and *symphonic lex Christi* motif (that *lex Christi* situated attributes are revealed through the Triune works of God, the topics of systematic theology and pastoral practice).

The **6R** methods of the ambassador's engagement are derived from the ways the Lord's *supra-actuating* attributes[55] decree his sovereign dominion by his *supra-lex Christi* attributes[56] engaging by his *supra-familial* attributes[57] depending on the relationship to the *lex Christi* mediator. In other words, the Lord's dominion is sovereignly determined by his *supra-actuating* attributes (decree of election or reprobation, WCF 3) for the purpose of magnifying his *supra-lex Christi* righteousness among all nations (Eph. 1:4; Deut. 4:5-7; Isa. 42:3-4, 21; Rev. 21:8), so that his people might praise his *supra-familial* attributes (whether mercy or wrath)[58] on the basis of their relationship to a mediator who exemplifies, proclaims, intercedes regarding, and administrates *lex Christi*.

The term **R**esearch can describe how the Lord correctly 'searches' because he is supremely knowing, boundless, present (*supra-actuating* attributes). The Lord always correctly **R**eckons because he is supremely determinate, faithful, perfect and independent (*supra-actuating* attributes). The Lord has the power to produce intended **R**esults of training in righteousness (2 Tim. 3:16) because he is supremely eternal and powerful (*supra-actuating* attributes). Because of his *supra-familial* attributes, the terms **R**eassure, **R**eform could summarize the ways the Lord is loving, gracious, merciful, patient to save, good, forgiving, rewarding, self-controlled, disciplining and rejoicing, and **R**emove could summarize the ways the Lord is hating, jealous, wrathful, patient to

---

[54] I use the term "subject" here in the widest sense, meaning a wide variety of people, including readers/viewers in literature and media, anyone who is willing to observe, listen to teaching/instruction or read, but also including eager students of a teacher, or sharing among those with equal authority, or one under authority to his leaders.

[55] See Yates' PhD thesis 3.3.1, named as supremely determinate, faithful, present, mysterious, powerful, independent, eternal, perfect, knowing and boundless. For his decree, see parallels with all the attributes listed in WCF 3:5 "according to his eternal [eternal] and immutable [faithful] purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will [mysterious, perfect, determinate], hath chosen in Christ [determinate, powerful], unto everlasting glory, out of his mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith, or good works, or perseverance in either of them of any other thing in the creature, as conditions, or causes moving him thereunto [independent]; and all to the praise of his glorious grace."

[56] See Yates' PhD thesis 3.3.2, named in 10 C's order as superior, holy, blessed, dynamic, harmonious, living, beautiful, sufficient, truthful and contented. For his sovereign dominion by *symphonic lex Christi* attributes, see WCF 3:6-7, where the elect are "effectually called unto faith in Christ by his Spirit working in due season, are justified, adopted, sanctified and kept by his power, through faith, unto salvation." This means that all aspects of his salvation relate to the full 10 C's *lex Christi:* forgiveness for *sins*, crediting *righteousness*, imparting righteousness, keeping in righteousness unto the new kingdom reward.

[57] See Yates' PhD thesis 3.3.3, named as 10 pairs of attributes, the first in the pairs are reconciliation-related and the second are enmity-related: loving-hating, gracious-jealous, merciful-wrathful, patient to save-patient to judge, good-just, forgiving-condemning, rewarding-penalizing, self-controlled-angry, discipling-abandoning and rejoicing-grieving.

[58] Those predestined unto life experience his sovereign dominion "all to the praise of his glorious grace" (WCF 3:5) and see his sovereign reprobation "to the praise of his glorious justice" (WCF 3:7).

judge, just, condemning, penalizing, angry, abandoning and grieving. But all 6R's function to establish the kingdom of *lex Christi* righteousness on, in and by the renewed saints (Matt. 6:33).

As ambassadors in faith-union with the *lex Christi* mediator, Christians practice their *formative-abilities*[59] to **R**esearch, **R**eckon and evaluate **R**esults using the *lex Christi virtues*[60] as the standard for what *covenant-relational affections*[61] choose, whether to **R**eassure, **R**eform or **R**emove. Of course, by simplifying the *covenant-relational affections* to 3R's some of the nuances of are lost, so reconciliation-enmity sub-themes need to be regularly reviewed and applied. These engagement verbs show how pastoral practice reflects the symphonic *lex Christi attributes* situated among the *supra-actuating* and *supra-familial* attributes of God.[62]

The **6Rs** methods of engagement correspond roughly to the Scriptures' self-described purposes to research and reveal our hearts to discover and discern our purposes, thoughts and behavior patterns by a standard of righteousness, to "see if there be any grievous way in [us]" and to teach, reprove, correct and train in righteousness,[63] even as the Lord "will judge the world in righteousness" (Heb. 4:12-13; Ps. 139:23-24; 2 Tim. 3:16; Acts 17:31). The name also uses superscript ^{6Rs} to indicate that each R applies the entire *lex Christi.* For example, **R**eckoning is done by authorities, equals and those in submission (5C), according to what is supremely revealed and modelled by the Lord (1C) in his covenant (2C) for the glory of his name (3C) in the patterns of determined times (4C), for the blessing of human life (6C) and marriage (7C) and stewardship of property (8C) and reputations (9C) with thankful contentment for God's providences (10C). So it goes with each choice of an appropriate R that builds up the hearer, whose counsellor may need to teach him/her to **r**emove some unethical 10C areas, while **r**eassuring other ethical 10C areas. For a simple biblical connection, Vern Poythress connects four of the **R's** with 2 Timothy 3:16: **R**eassure can be derived from "teach", **R**eform can be derived from "correct", **R**emove can be derived from "reprove", and **R**esults can be derived from the goal of "training in righteousness" (email communication Nov. 12, 2020). These verbs are suggestive, not exhaustive; more R's (or other verbs) could help explain the latter three: **r**eassure (remind, redirect), **r**eform (restrain, restore) and **r**emove (reject). Also, one R was chosen to account for the consequences of ministry, doing regular evaluation of the **r**esults of the work, with the goal to train in righteousness (2 Tim. 3:16). But due to misunderstanding, or incomplete knowledge, any

---

[59] Man's *formative-abilities* in the Lord's likeness: decidability, reliability, availability, complexity, ability, dependency, endurability, perfectibility, teachability and luxuriance (see Yates' PhD thesis 3.3.1).

[60] The duties of the *lex Christi* require all men to be pro-Lord, pro-covenant, pro-blessing, pro-theosynchronic, pro-harmonious, pro-life, pro-marriage, pro-stewardship, pro-truth or pro-contentment.

[61] *Reconciliation* engagement is expressed by being loving, gracious, merciful, patient to save, good, forgiving, rewarding, self-controlled, disciplining and rejoicing, but *enmity* engagement is expressed by being hating, jealous, wrathful, patient to judge, just, condemning, penalizing, angry, abandoning and grieving. Again, for Christians, these enmity methods should only be used with Scriptural definition and warrant within the *lex Christi* standards. Consider the following Scriptures for examples of making righteous earthly judgments about men's sins on earth (Matt 18:17-18), hating (Rev. 2:4) and abandoning (Matt 10:14; Matt 15:14; Gal. 4:30). These *covenant-relational affections* should never be used to violate any of the commandments to be pro-Lord, pro-covenant, pro-blessing, pro-theosynchronic, pro-harmonious, pro-life, pro-marriage, pro-stewardship, pro-truth or pro-contentment.

[62] Readers are reminded that Meek's epistemological etiquette reorganized under a *lex Christi* outline in Yates' PhD thesis 1.3.2 is similarly useful way to engage people, worldview, ideas and the creation.

[63] Adams (2010) used the four verbs of 2 Tim. 3:16 to develop a biblical counselling method defining how to help people change as a four-step process. ◦ These purposes are shared with some overlap in the purposes of the sacraments, prayer, communion of the saints and church censures. These R's roughly conform to the ways BC has already defined its method of engagement with the psychologies (see Yates PhD thesis 1.3.5) to exposit biblical truth, reform psychological ideas to conform with Scripture and expose psychological errors)

"R" used by the ambassador has potential for error or failure, leading to failure in being received with the intended results. Factors in the subject may hinder receiving with results, while the ambassador may have been faithful. God may have other purposes, the subject may show false positive responses, but then go back to the old patterns due to lack of community support.

The practical theology definition is accomplished by Christ working through his Spirit-led faith-united ambassadors, thus the 6R's proclaim God-dependence, not trust in another method. Further, the wording emphasizes the linguistically capable, culturally adapted, skilled and mature modelling for and training the young and immature who are learning to speak, read and write, as well as understand culture, God and his kingdom laws. The mature will know better how to research revealed reality and reckon. It is a community of ambassadors doing practical theology in various realms and places and their relational places of influence (see Yates PhD thesis 1.3.2).

The WCF 2:2 also uses similar principles to show God's engagement with his people. What the Triune God does to reveal himself and his will **to, on** and **in** us by the Word becomes the pattern the Lord uses to reveal himself **by** us to others. WCF 19:6 could be categorized as using many of these "R" methods to apply the moral law.[64] By the inward witness of the Spirit to deepen saving faith (WCF 14:2), receiving Christ and conforming to his righteousness, Scripture also comforts and reassures us that we belong to him (WCF 18:1-4).

1. **Research:** seek to discover the revealed reality of the *subject* (yourself, a counselee, a marriage, a family, a business, a culture, an author of articles or books, the patterns of a theory or principle). Put yourself in a learning posture to know what reality exists, limited by available revealing resources, the subject's willingness to reveal, accuracy of perceptions & memory, stability of emotions and ability to communicate clearly and truthfully. The researcher must know as accurately as possible before speaking (Prov. 18:13). We seek to understand reality, meaning, what is truthful, the actual situation of things, relationships or individuals, and this requires discernment in cases of conflict, when there is often negative portrayal of facts, exaggeration, lying or deliberately hiding relevant parts of the truth. Ask appropriate questions.

    a. Are there any *lex Christi*-DRL strengths, maturities and healthy habits already existing? Does the subject have conceptual awareness and functional application of the *lex Christi*-DRL vision? What are the methods, resources and life contexts that have made this growth possible?

    b. What are the identified problems or unrighteous patterns of human behaviour and who are the people involved? WHAT? HOW? WHEN? WHERE? WHO? Research both broad life patterns, "the manner of life" (Eph. 4:22) and detailed examination of problem areas, seeking clarification.

---

[64] . . . **[research, reckon, reassure]** As a rule of life informing them of the will of God, and their duty, it directs, and binds them to walk accordingly; **[reform, remove, results]** discovering also the sinful pollutions of their nature, hearts, and lives; so as, examining themselves thereby, they may come to further conviction of, humiliation for, and hatred against sin; **[reckon, reassure, results]** together with a clearer sight of the need they have of Christ, and the perfection of His obedience. **[reckon, reform, remove, results]** It is likewise of use to the regenerate, to restrain their corruptions, in that it forbids sin; and the threatenings of it serve to show what even their sins deserve; and what afflictions, in this life, they may expect for them, although freed from the curse thereof threatened in the law. **[reassure, results]** The promises of it, in like manner, show them God's approbation of obedience, and what blessings they may expect upon the performance thereof . . . .

c. What is the subject's conceptual worldview, story or narrative into which life makes sense, purposes for living and habitual-functional practice? Look at recurring phrases, principles for verifying data, human responsibility, and level of God-awareness.

d. What defines the subject's moral self-righteousness, those principles or practices that get praised when performed, and judged when neglected? How is the subject's conscience, thinking, words and behaviour handling performance and neglect in self and in others? Where is the subject engaged in excusing and accusing related to selective *lex Christi* principles (Rom. 2:15)?

e. What is the history of the subject's conscience patterns? Is it socially/culturally assumed "righteousness" or "unrighteousness"? When did it begin and why? Are there historical, cultural, familial, or relational false excusers, accusers or abusers, or significant environmental trauma causing distortions in the subject's *lex Christi* orientation?

f. Does the researcher have any language or cultural barriers, biases/prejudices, self-interest, financial or relational conflicts of interest, that limit or prevent fair research to understand of revealed reality?

2. **Reckon:** discern the subject's righteousness-unrighteousness in comparison with the *lex-Christi* (1 Kings 3:9; Ps. 19:2; Prov. 14:8; Rom. 12:2; Eph. 5:10).
   a. Are there any language or cultural barriers, biases/prejudices, or conflicts of interest that prevent the researcher from proper reckoning?

   b. How likely is it that the collected information is greatly hindered by the subject unwillingness to reveal, inaccuracy of perceptions & memory, instability of emotions and inability to communicate clearly and truthfully? Greater hindrance generally means a researcher has lowered ability to reckon fairly and accurately.

   c. WHY? Analyse the subject's blindness due to sin, any patterns learned with darkened understanding (Eph. 4:18)—develop an inductive theory of the subject's heart based on phrases and implied worldviews. What wrong patterns have been learned in his fallen environment? What are the sinful responses to suffering?

   d. Attempt a big-picture analysis of the subject in life context. What metaphors define the subject's life? What is the meta-narrative?

   e. Develop BC approach using key biblical phrases that define the subject's suffering, sin, current weaknesses or needed areas of growth.

   f. What aspect(s) of the DRL vision and *lex Christi* need to change the subject? Which of the subject's loves and hates need to be more like Christ? What aspects of the Lord's righteousness need to be better known and applied by the subject with the Gospel of grace? How does Christ work those changes in union with him by the power of the Spirit? What righteous wisdom needs to be developed?

g. Are there additional people and resources that need to be accessed to help? Who can access them? Is the subject willing to access these resources or utilize them if the researcher arranges them?

h. Respectfully proclaim and skilfully administrate the response priorities below (joined with biblical teachings/texts) to build up in *lex Christi*-DRL for the "hearing" subject (Eph. 4:29).

3. **Reassure:** give appropriate salvation assurance where there are strengths in faith, love, repentance and hope. Comfort in suffering with biblical promises. Encourage to persevere in suffering (Rom. 5:1-5; 15:4). Includes other R's like reminding what the subject already knows and seek better application to any significant situations (2 Tim. 2:14; Tit. 3:1; 2 Pet. 1:12) and redirecting to help the hearer make wise and good choices from among the available options, restraining their wrong choices.

4. **Reform**: Reform means to adapt the vocabulary of the hearer to a God-oriented purpose and meaning, transforming partially wrong data using more accurate concepts, providing filtered integration, transforming knowledge about body, soul or world so that it can cross over into our functional DRL vision in submission to *lex Christi* (Col. 2-3; Rom. 2:29; Phil. 3:3; Acts 17:22-31). This is especially important for cultural adaptation and DRL witness to the psychologized community (1 Cor. 9:17-22), and for better stewardship of the physical body, such as medical research and discoveries (1 Cor. 6:19-20; 9:27), or for provoking us to better study of Scripture to see things we formerly ignored. Includes other R's like restraining by giving prohibitions and warnings about earthly and eternal consequences, to prevent sin (WCF 19:6 "[The moral law] is likewise of use to the regenerate, to *restrain* their corruptions, in that it forbids sin; and the threatenings of it serve to show what even their sins deserve; and what afflictions, in this life, they may expect for them, although freed from the curse thereof threatened in the law") and restoring to soul-body righteousness in areas of weakness in relation to knowing the Lord, union with Christ, living constructively in the fallen creation and with other people (Gal 6:1). In new believers this usually starts with the two Great Commandments to love God and love neighbor, then builds on the details of the *lex Christi* using the WLC. This includes peace-making to restore relationships in conflict as well as comfort and encouragement to restore hope to the discouraged in trials.

5. **Remove**: Remove means identifying and eliminating useless teachings or irrelevant things (1 Tim. 1:4; 6:20), for such practices have no value for righteousness or for daily functioning (Col. 2:20-23; Tit. 3:9). It also includes other R's like rejecting by identifying or diagnosing weakness, brokenness or disintegration, leading to repentance from all unrighteousness or acceptance of false teaching, both behaviour and witness, in both assembly and diaspora (Phil. 3:2, 18-19; 1 Tim. 4:1-16; 6:3-5; 1 Cor. 5). Such things will be given up to future judgment and are under the Lord's curse and will not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal. 1:6-9; 5:19-21; 1 Cor. 4:5; Jude 1:14-16; Rev. 21:8).[65] For example, some claim that certain behaviours Christians call sin have a physical or genetic "*cause*." Christians can agree the physical and genetic factors

[65] This category would include Powlison's *illustrative* uses of psychology, mostly in illustrating sinfulness in man, and that all he does apart from faith in Christ is still sin. *Co-belligerent* uses could also be seen within this category, meaning we adopt the criticisms of non-Christians and together criticize poorly done psychology.

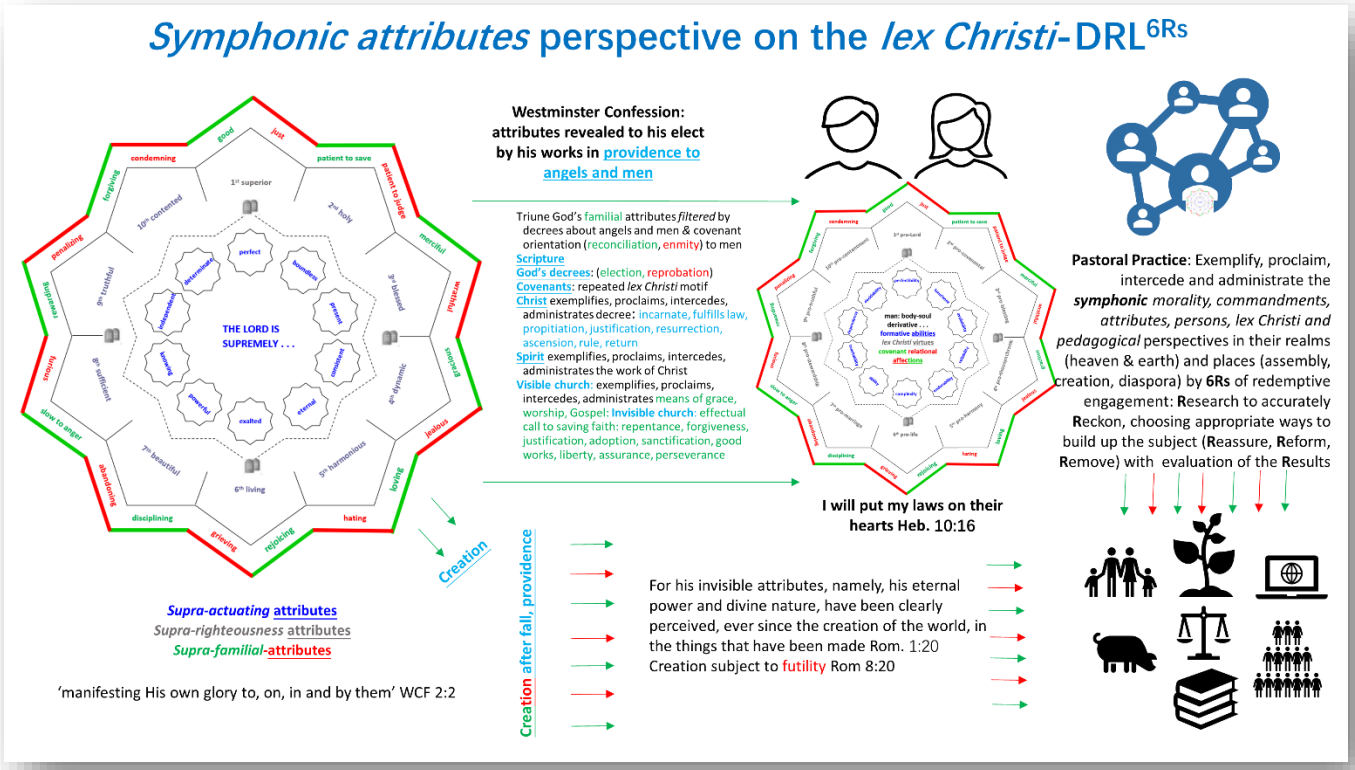
have some influence, but reject theories determining that these factors are the primary *cause* (Rom. 1:26-32; 1 Cor. 5; 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1; 2 John 1:10-11; 2 Thess. 3:6-18).

6. **Results:** are regularly evaluated, ideally seen in a way that advances the dominion of the *lex Christi*-DRL through saving faith in the hearer or reader (WCF14:2), resulting in training in righteousness, being better equipped as God's *lex Christi* ambassador (2 Tim. 3:18-17). There are many hindrances to the hearer receiving the ambassador's ministry with the intended effect, as understood in Christ's parable of the seed and soils (Matt. 13:3-23).

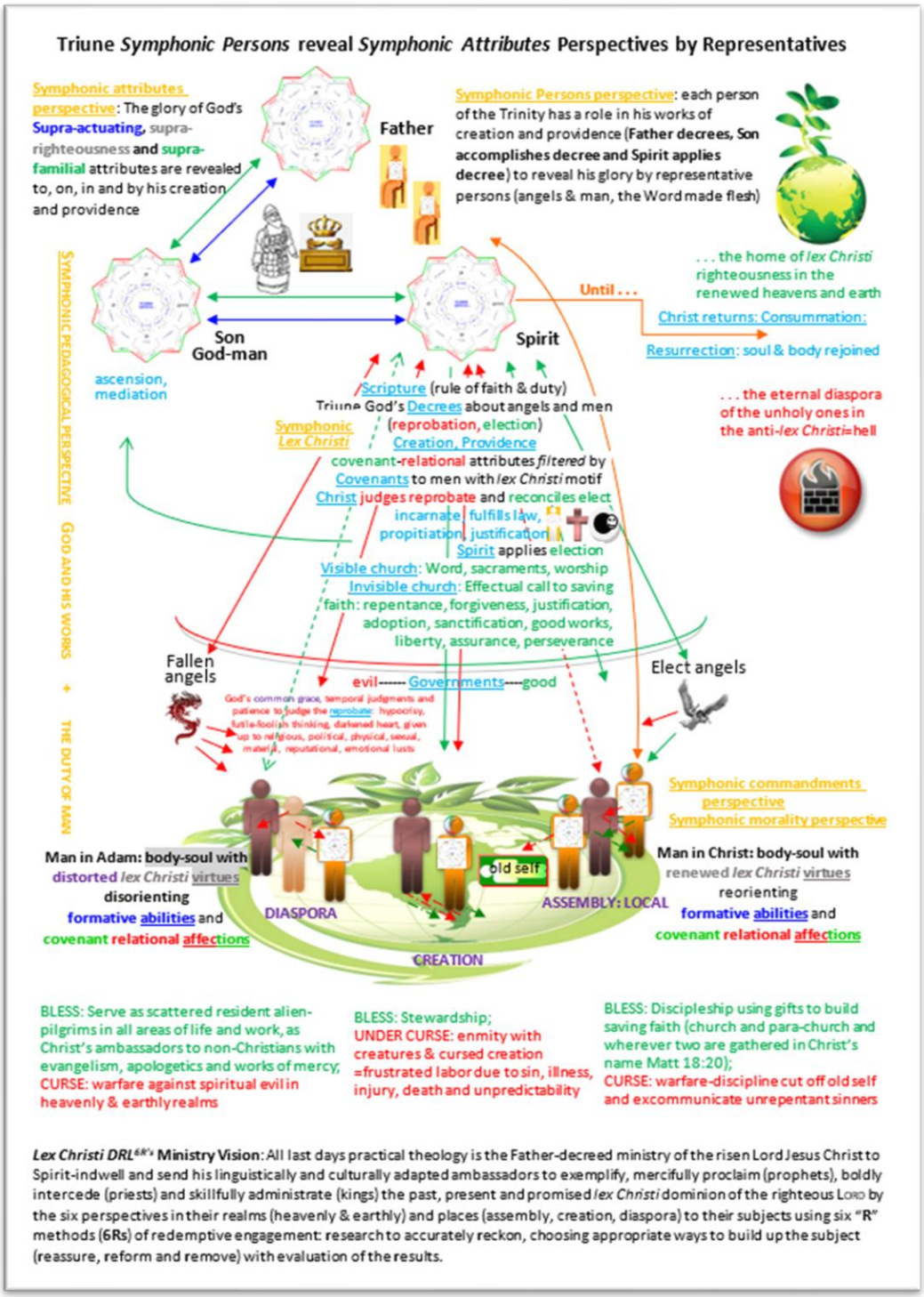
Also note that these six new words don't mean biblical counselors are sin-inspectors, or that we lack compassion for those in suffering or merely condemn those feeling helpless to change, or that we think change is simple. If that were the case, and Christians merely wanted to translate the secular DSM-5 manual of psychological disorders into a Christianized form, our Christian manual might be called *Diagnostic Standard of Moral Chaos* (DSMC), only focused on mankind's sinful failure to flourish.[66] Gembola (2020) has also identified this potential imbalance in biblical counselling that some counsellors may only seek to point out heart idols and sins while neglecting to disciple in Christian virtues. As most comprehensively developed in Romans or the virtuous wife (Prov. 31:10-31) in the context of Proverbs, we do not research to reckon without a manual also defining mankind's righteous flourishing. We are *ambassadors of righteousness*, testifying to God's righteousness in Christ, the blessed ways the Spirit transforms his people in righteousness. So, we should properly call our "manual" the *Diagnostic Standard of Moral Flourishing and Chaos* (DSMFC).

In the illustration below, the doctrinal themes of the Westminster Standards are shown in relation to the *symphonic attributes* perspective, namely that God reveals his glory to, on, in and by creation, angels and men through his providential works to the elect. The practical theology themes of exemplifying, proclaiming (prophet), interceding (priest) and administrating (king) are applied to Scripture, Christ, the Spirit and the visible church according to the Lord's decrees regarding angels and men, his providence and his covenants to renew the *lex Christi* in his elect. As individual believers in the visible church, we engage redemptively in our realms and places using the 6R's.

[66] There are also appropriate times and situations to represent his the *covenant-relational enmity* attributes, leaving straying people to go their own straying ways, imitating his giving up the non-elect unrighteous to temporal judgments and patiently enduring them until final judgment. In practice we should err on the side of gentle humility in determining who now belongs to, or who may in the future come into, or who may be removed from the visible church.


Symphonic attributes perspective on the lex Christi-DRL6Rs
THE LORD IS SUPREMELY . . .
1st superior
2nd holy
3rd blessed
4th dynamic
5th harmonious
6th living
7th beautiful
8th sufficient
9th truthful
10th contented
perfect
boundless
present
communicating
eternal
exalted
immortal
knowing
omniscient
omnipresent
sovereign
just
proud
patient to save
patient to abase
merciful
tenacious
jealous
loving
hating
rejoicing
grieving
disciplining
abandoning
slow to anger
envious
revealing
rebuking
penalizing
forgiving
condemning
Creation
Supra-actuating attributes
Supra-righteousness attributes
Supra-familial-attributes
'manifesting His own glory to, on, in and by them' WCF 2:2
Westminster Confession: attributes revealed to his elect by his works in providence to angels and men
Triune God's familial attributes filtered by decrees about angels and men & covenant orientation (reconciliation, enmity) to men
Scripture
God's decrees: (election, reprobation)
Covenants: repeated lex Christi motif
Christ exemplifies, proclaims, intercedes, administrates decree: incarnate, fulfills law, propitiation, justification, resurrection, ascension, rule, return
Spirit exemplifies, proclaims, intercedes, administrates the work of Christ
Visible church: exemplifies, proclaims, intercedes, administrates means of grace, worship, Gospel: Invisible church: effectual call to saving faith: repentance, forgiveness, justification, adoption, sanctification, good works, liberty, assurance, perseverance
I will put my laws on their hearts Heb. 10:16
Creation after fall, providence
For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made Rom. 1:20
Creation subject to futility Rom 8:20
Pastoral Practice: Exemplify, proclaim, intercede and administrate the symphonic morality, commandments, attributes, persons, lex Christi and pedagogical perspectives in their realms (heaven & earth) and places (assembly, creation, diaspora) by 6Rs of redemptive engagement: Research to accurately Reckon, choosing appropriate ways to build up the subject (Reassure, Reform, Remove) with evaluation of the Results

In the illustration below, more layers of doctrinal complexity are added from the doctrinal themes of the Westminster Standards: the Triune persons and attributes perspectives (WCF 2), the work of angels, relational location to our realms (heavenly & earthly) and places (assembly, creation, diaspora), with a future orientation to the final accomplishment of God's decrees.



Conclusion

The fragmented systematic-practical theology books and articles of the biblical counseling movement are not the most important translated resources needed to expand biblical counseling in non-English-speaking cultures. The WLC symphonic pedagogical framework and its five subperspectives are vital to Reformed, cross-cultural missions. The translated WLC can be used as our core counseling resource, both for counselor training and counselee homework, together with our own biblical theology–oriented Bible book studies using these interpretive perspectives, with applications to all of life!

Further, these six perspectives can be used as analytical tools for a counseling method using six "R" words: *research* a counselee's life in order to *reckon* strengths and weaknesses compared to any or all six perspectives, and choose counseling responses of *reassure*, *reform*, or *remove*, together with regular evaluation of counseling *results*.[67]

This *lex Christi* model "cohere[s] intellectually and structurally with every other form of the church's ministry: worship, preaching, teaching, discipleship, child-rearing, friendship, evangelism, mercy works, missions and pastoral leadership."[68] Through his representative counselors, may the Lord bring *lex Christi* "Joy to the World!"

> No more let sins and sorrows grow,
> Nor thorns infest the ground;
> He comes to make His blessings flow
> Far as the curse is found,
> Far as the curse is found,
> Far as, far as, the curse is found.
>
> He rules the world with truth and grace,
> And makes the nations prove
> The glories of His righteousness,
> And wonders of His love,
> And wonders of His love,
> And wonders, wonders, of His love.[69]

[67] See Yates, *Westminster Foundations*, 217-39, and "Adapting Westminster's Moral Law Motif," 132–42, for more details.

[68] Powlison, *The Biblical Counseling Movement*, 299; "Cure of Souls (and the Modern Psychotherapies)," 35.

[69] Isaac Watts, "Joy to the World" (1719), based on similar themes in Psalm 98.

Counseling Report Form

Age		children?		employment		Marital status	

counseling date		hours this meeting	

- 6Rs method explanation：

Research (what is revealed reality?) …
Using the questions developed in the Research category, seek to **understand** the counselee in his/her life situation. Use this section to write a summary of the content of the counselee's answers to your research questions. Research skills are God-derivative body-soul formative abilities to be *available* in *time and space* to gain *knowledge* and make *decisions* in *dependency* on God. But because we are researching other people who share human *complexity* and *luxuriance*, this research will have limitations.

to accurately Reckon …
Using the questions developed in the Reckon category, seek to **analyze** the counselee in his/her life situation. Use this section to write a summary of how you analyze the counselee's issues, ranking in order of importance. Reckon skills are based on the counselors comparison of the counselee's health and sickness related to the *symphonic pedagogical* perspective and its five sub-perspectives (*symphonic attributes, symphonic persons, symphonic lex Christi, symphonic commandments, symphonic morality*), particularly in comparison with the *lex Christi* virtues to be *pro-Lord, pro-covenantal, pro-blessing, pro-theosynchronic, pro-harmony, pro-life, pro-life, pro-marriage, pro-stewardship, pro-truthful, pro-contentment.*

choosing appropriate ways to build up the counselee (arrange your counseling topics in these three categories: **Reassure, Reform, Remove**)**.** The three R's are a shorthand summary of the covenant-relational affections. For the counselee, reassure means to love, rejoice in and reward any morally good evidence you identify, reform means to forgive, discipline or learn self-control for greater conformity to the law of Christ, and remove is defined as to grieve over, hate, condemn and abandon any remaining habits of the old sin nature. Include your counseling topics, Bible texts and homework assignments.

… in such a way that the engagement is received by your counselee with the intended Results. …。 Evaluate the counselee's honesty, trusting receptivity, respect for your ability, teachability, investment in assignments, and verifiable evidence of change. Evaluate your own positive or negative influence in the results, related to being dignified, loving, patient, giving hope, skillful listening, questioning, analyzing, and communicating, choosing appropriate homework. Results are God-derivative body-soul formative abilities (in both counselor and counselee) to be *perfectible* according to the *lex Christi virtues* and the *covenant-relational affections*.

- Upload to reporting site within 24 hours after each counseling session. *Keep adding this form below to the bottom of this same digital document for each meeting. The whole case should be only one accumulated file. Save file as student name, counselee initials, number of meetings.*

Use the same document for continuing counseling with the same case. Add a 300-400 word summary of each new counseling session below, including date and time of meeting.

Also keep making revisions to the full 6R's summary above as appropriate, but just note date (08/21) after any new added or revised material.

Students present their case studies in group supervision on a rotating schedule with the supervisor (groups of 3 or 4, so usually 1x/mo) and meet for individual discussions on current cases with their assigned assistant supervisor (2x/mo)

Assistant supervisor comments (date)

Supervisor comments (date)