

### **The Universal Forms of Love, III**

I would like to begin class by reading one verse of Psalm 119. It is verse 75. This is the New Revised Standard Version. One of the things that is helpful with familiar Scripture is to read it in different versions. This is because there are various ways in which the Hebrew can be translated, as you know, and sometimes you get a nuance in one version that you do not get in the other. I think that the New Revised Standard Version of verse 75 is helpful in the way it renders it. It says, “I know, O Lord, that your judgments are right and that in faithfulness you have humbled me.” Let us pray together.

*Lord, we confess that we are not worthy of Your kindness and Your faithfulness, all Your mercy and Your grace that you have poured out upon us in our Lord Jesus, revealing Your grace for our lives, giving us the Holy Spirit to enable us to see it, humbling us in Your faithfulness that we might seek out of gratitude to conform ourselves more carefully to the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ, that our lives may shine forth Your glory in response to all that You have done for us. Be with us to that end in this session, we ask for Jesus' sake. Amen.*

Our topic for this session is the use of the moral law, and I have a couple of sub points under this. The first one is to talk about classification. When we say, “the use of the moral law,” we are talking about how the moral law is intended to function in a fallen world. It is conditioned by the Fall. This is the use of the Law in a fallen world, and I think it is actually better to think of it not in terms of our use of the Law (although we are involved in this) but in terms of how God uses the moral law in a fallen world. It is for us to read and implement and so forth. But when we talk about the use of the Law we are talking about the use of the moral law in a fallen world. There is a standard classification of a threefold use of the moral Law that derives from the 16th Century: civil, pedagogical, and the third, which people name differently. Believe it or not, the civil or political use of the Law is the most common designation in the classification.

Briefly, the civil use of the Law is to restrain. This is how the Law operates in a fallen world. Usually the classification is that the civil law is used to restrain sinners from social injustice. The figure that is most commonly used as a handle for looking at that is the bridle. The Law is a bridle to restrain sin in society. Actually, I think it is a bit broader than that. That is part of it, but when we come to the role of the state in God's design, we are going to look at it in terms not only of Law and order but also social justice. There is a positive use of the moral law in promoting social justice. So, it is not entirely negative to restrain. It also gives the impetus in a fallen world for pursuing the good in society. So just bear in mind that this is a part of the whole. The civil use of the Law is to restrain sinners in society by threatening punishment and carrying it out in appropriate occasions, and that is a bridle to keep the earth from being filled with violence before the flood. The function of civil government, at least the main function of civil government, is to use the Law in that way.

It was Luther who really insisted that that is not the main use of the Law. He acknowledged that there is a civil or political use of the Law, but he said that civil righteousness is not the righteousness of God. You can be righteous before the civil law, living an upright, decent life, and fall short of the glory of God and be threatened to eternal damnation with the civic righteousness. And so he focused on the theological—or as it has come to be called, the pedagogical—use of the Law, which is basically to convict sinners of our sin and thereby to drive us to Christ. Again, “to convict” is a part of the whole. The goal is that the conviction would drive us to Christ. Really, it is to show us our sin and our need of a Savior, having seen how imperfect we are when held up against God's standard. When we see God's standard, His perfect holiness, which threatens judgment for the least infraction, we are driven to Christ.

Only in Him can we have hope of our salvation. The pedagogical use of the Law (using that term that we saw in Galatians in this particular sense) is to convict us of our sin, show us our need of our Savior, and to drive us to Him. The figure that is most commonly used is the figure of a mirror. As long as we just look at the civil law, we can think we are pretty good. We are not as bad as our neighbors who are in jail. But when we look at the Law of God as it is intended to be used (as a spiritual searchlight), then we see ourselves as God sees us. That is the function of the mirror. God holds up the mirror so that we see ourselves as God see us. From the point of view of His perfect holiness, we do not look that good. We need a Savior.

The third use of the Law is to guide believers in their new obedience. Having been driven to Christ out of conviction for sin, the Law now functions in a third way to guide believers in their new obedience. And the figure that is most commonly used for the guiding function of the Law is a lamp. So these are the threefold uses. Actually, they are taught very well in this hymn by Matthias Loy: “The Law of God is good and wise / And sets His will before our eyes, / Shows us the way of righteousness, / and dooms to death when we transgress. / Its light of holiness imparts / The knowledge of our sinful hearts / That we may see our lost estate / And seek deliverance ere too late.” The pedagogical function of the Law is “To those who help in Christ have found / And would in works of love abound / It shows what deeds are His delight / And should be done as good and right.” What formerly convicted us now guides us in our new obedience.

This is standard and it is helpful. It is a little ambiguous because the Law continues to convict us of our sin. The Law still is a mirror; even after we come to Christ the Law still is a mirror. Lutherans, when they speak of the third use of the Law, tend to think of the Law as for believers in convicting us of our sin after we come to Christ. They tend to think that the Law reminds us of our need of a Savior, and they even incorporate the threat of the Law in this dialectic of Law and grace. I think that the threat of the Law is done away with in Christ. When we come to Christ and embrace Him as our Savior, the threat of the Law is gone. We are not obeying out of the threat of the Law. We are obeying now out of the motivation of grace. I think that there is a better way, a more accurate way, of dealing with the various functions of the Law. We are thinking primarily about the specially revealed Law of God in Scripture and then our proclamation of that in evangelism.

Looking at the Law as a threefold rubric is the 16th Century way of looking at it. It is still useful and still has its place. However, it does have limitations, especially since we cannot agree on a title for the third use of the Law because it is complex in the life of a believer. I would say you ought to consider the way the Westminster divines considered it in the Larger Catechism. It asks, “What is the general use of the Law to all men? What is its use to the unregenerate first? And what is its use for the regenerate?” Here, I think we get a more accurate presentation when it says, “The use of the Law with respect to all men is to inform and to humble.” That is its use to all. That is what it always does whether you are regenerate or unregenerate. It always informs of the nature and will of God and it always humbles us. To me, that really seems to be a better way of thinking about it. They are leaving aside whatever its political use may be to talk about its use as the scriptural revelation of the Law of God and its use to inform and humble.

It is of particular use to the unregenerate to awaken and to drive to Christ. That is parallel to the pedagogical use. They are thinking that, strictly speaking, the pedagogical use of the Law is for the unregenerate. They do not assume baptismal regeneration and so the Gospel is preached both to all who are professing Christians as well as those who are in evangelism. The purpose of the usefulness, I should say, of Law to all, is to awaken and to drive to Christ. When it comes to the special use for the regenerate, they say it is to show how much we are bound to Christ and to provoke us to thankfulness,

greater thankfulness for our sin. I think that there is a great advantage of looking at it this way. The Law always informs and humbles. Remember, this is the function of the Law in a fallen world. And in a fallen world, it always informs us of the holy nature and will of God, and doing that, sinners are always humbled. Particularly, with respect to the unregenerate, the purpose is to awaken the realization that we fall short of the glory of God and to drive us to Christ. Actually, the Larger Catechism goes on to say “or else to render the more inexcusable.” If they do not receive the teaching, then they are in a worse condition having heard the offer, the full and free offer, of Christ as their Savior to meet their need. They resist the awakening aspect because they think they are not that bad or that God will forgive. They think that it is surely God’s will to forgive, and so they resist the idea of being driven to Christ and think they are more excusable for rejection of Christ. But the special use of the Law to the regenerate is to show us how much we are bound to Christ for His fulfilling it in our stead. You see how it has removed the threat of the Law. You can look at the Law. You can be informed and humbled by the Law to its fullest extent. If you come to Christ, that only shows you how much you are bound to Him for His fulfilling it in your stead, bearing the penalty and completing its righteousness.

So it is the doctrine of justification by faith alone that gives us the freedom to look into the Law as a mirror and to see what it teaches us with respect to God’s holiness. We do not need to be afraid of that. It shows us how much we are bound to Christ for His fulfilling it in our stead and provokes us to thankfulness. It provokes us to gratitude when we see what Christ has done for us. It provokes gratitude and the desire to conform ourselves more perfectly to the obedience that it requires. I think that we should make more of this steam than we do of the other. Lutherans have a slogan, “The Law always accuses,” and I think that they are right in that slogan. But I think that there is a difference in the way in which it functions in the dialectic of Law and Gospel in Lutheran theology so that the Law never has quite the positive thrust that it has in the Reformed tradition. We should agree that the Law always does accuse. It does always accuse. But for those who are in Christ, it does not threaten. That accusation does not threaten. It motivates us to gratitude. It motivates us to thankfulness. It is a different way in which the Law functions depending on our relationship to Christ. That is the key difference in how the Law functions. When we are in Christ and we want to please our Savior, then what do we do? Well, Jesus said in part of the Great Commission, “Teach them to observe all things, whatever I commanded you.” We follow His teachings, and His teachings bring to full expression the gracious instruction that God has given us in His Law.

Does the Law refer to society as a whole? The Law serves to inform all men of the holy nature and will of God and therefore refers to society in that the will of God for society is a part of what that does. But actually, the Larger Catechism sets that aside for a moment to look at how the Law functions in its scriptural context. In its scriptural context, it informs all men of the holy nature and will of God. And God does use the moral law to inform society of what His will is, but that also functions in a natural knowledge of the moral law. I am going to expand on that later. I think it is an important point, but the Westminster divines leave that aside now because we are primarily talking about the scriptural context—the specially revealed context—for the Law, and it is given to humble us. In this context, that is its function. It does not deny that it informs a society, but I am going to ask the question, “What is the secular use of the Decalogue?” That is a different question from “What is the civil use of the moral law that is known also by virtue of our constitution as human beings in the image of God?” The question is whether the Westminster divines, in moving away from that typical schema and developing this one, were implicitly criticizing that because of its deficiencies. I do not know the answer to that question in detail. They tended to go their own way and not be so dependent on formulations that have been in the past. It is true in the question of the threefold analysis of the Law of Moses they use the standard threefold designation. So a good question would be, “Why did they move away from this?” I think part of it is because of the debate over the third use of the Law, but I do not know for sure. It would be a

good research question. What is behind this rethinking of how to present the same material but in this context? I think that it is extremely helpful for us to have it done this way so that the Law still has this convicting function for believers but not with a threat. So it always informs and humbles, and that is its purpose in a fallen world. And we are still sinners who are progressively being sanctified, so we need to hear that.

I will tell you what got me started on Psalm 119:70–75. One of the professors here preached a sermon recently on the Sermon on the Mount and how our private worship should be the same as our public worship. Too often what we do by way of prayer and alms and fasting is all public. But does it really match in our heart? Well, it was humbling. You had to say at the end of that sermon, “The Lord’s judgments are right. They are right. But in faithfulness, You have humbled me. We needed to hear that message.” I think that is an example of what it is doing. It was not that we felt threatened or guilty. It was a searching message, but it gave us hope. It gave us comfort—believe it or not, there is a better way to live and it is possible by God’s grace. We are provoked to greater thankfulness and greater zeal, to conform ourselves to the Law of God. I think this works better.

What about the unregenerate? How does the Law function for them? It awakens them to their need and drives them to Christ. But if they do not come, it leaves them in a worse condition. That is also its function: to render them inexcusable so that in the last day that can be held against them as part of judgment. The Westminster divines characteristically think through all the implications. The threat is still there to the unregenerate. There is no question about that. That is right. Notice that they even varied the language. What is the particular use to the unregenerate? The particular use to the unregenerate is to drive them to Christ. What is the special use to the regenerate? It is special. There is something heartwarming about this use. All the threat is gone and the same bell that awakens the unregenerate rings in our hearts too, not with fear but rather to show us how much we are bound to Christ for His fulfillment in our stead. The more I look at it, the more I consider this to be useful, and I do want you to know about this. The Larger Catechism is not well known even in the Reformed tradition. Those of you who are not Presbyterians need not think that you are way behind those of us who are because we do not know this either. The Larger Catechism is the orphan of the Westminster standards but here and there it has extremely helpful stuff that is not in the other catechism. I think this is one. You be the judge. But it shows God’s purpose in giving the Law.

What use does the Law have in sanctification, especially when we make the strong distinction between its pedagogical use to convict us and to drive us to Christ? And what is the third use of the Law in sanctification? I think that we need to remind ourselves that salvation is by grace through faith. That means justification is by grace through faith, and it means that sanctification is by grace through faith. In sanctification, the Spirit works by and with the Word. And part of the Word is the Law of God, the commands of God. So the Spirit uses those, not the threats of the Law because we have been driven to Christ, and they are not threatening. We are not sanctified by Law. Sometimes Reformed theologians make the mistake of saying we are justified by grace or we are sanctified by Law. That is a poor way of putting it. Law has no power to make alive. There were two problems in First Century Judaism that Paul addresses in Galatians. One was justification by works and he said, “If justification is by works, then Christ died for nothing.” The other error was sanctification by Law. The idea was that the Law itself has an inherent power to subdue the evil impulse in fallen humanity and to bring the good impulse to fruition. Paul says if there had been a law that could make alive (if there could have been a law that could subdue the evil impulse and bring the good impulse alive), then salvation would be by the Law, but it is by the Spirit. That is in the context where he is talking about the Spirit and the necessity of the Spirit to enable us to live a life that is pleasing to God. But the standard for a life that is pleasing to God is the same standard that brought us to God in the first place. It is the standard of God’s perfection. And

so the Holy Spirit uses that standard to enable us more and more to yield obedience out of a childlike love and a ready mind. So, sanctification is by grace and the Spirit works by and with the Word. And all Scripture is inspired by God and useful for instruction, for correction, for rebuke, and for training in righteousness, so we accept it and there is a gracious use of the Law of God that is non-threatening because we are justified. It is a lamp to our feet.

I think there is a mistake in Calvin on this point. Lutherans make much of this. I am quite satisfied with the idea that we use the figure of a lamp for this third use of the Law. Calvin used the figure of a whip and I just boggle at that. Calvin is aware that the motivation comes by the Spirit, but why then does he say, “The Law is a whip as to a bulky ass”—to get us moving? If the Spirit does not get us moving, why should we think that the Law will get us moving? I think Calvin misspoke. I do not think that I find that metaphor of a whip in the life of a believer. His idea is that we should be serious about this, and I agree. But I think it is the Spirit working by and with the Word. The Spirit does not work by a whip. I think that it may be a mistake to look at the Law as some kind of whip that beats up on us until we do it. That is not God’s way, it seems to me. What we need is more grace, not more Law. I think that to provoke us to greater thankfulness is really the special use of the Law to believers.

Let us look at the Ten Commandments in church history. I will begin actually with Hellenistic Judaism because Philo of Alexandria lived from 20 BC to AD 50, which was at the time the New Testament was being formulated, right at the time of Christ. He apparently was the first to use the Ten Commandments as the comprehensive summary for the whole Law of Moses. He put the other laws of Moses under the Ten Commandments. He also divided them into two tables. He divided them equally in terms of five and five. The first contains our duties toward God, which would include the fifth commandment as duty toward God to honor your father and your mother. That is, in some respects, a transitional commandment because parents do represent God in a unique way in the family. So there is some rationale for him doing it that way just to have them evenly divided. You might ask, “Why are there ten, anyway?” They are comprehensive, but my guess is that we work that way. We work in tens. Remembering ten things on your ten fingers could be one way it was done, but then Philo did five and five. It is not a bad idea. But he also recognizes that only those who practice both tables are whole in virtue. That is, you cannot consider yourself virtuous without a love of God as well as a love of humankind. That is a good analysis of the Decalogue, and it was picked up in the early church. The first teaching that we have is the *Didache*. It was not until 1875 that we recovered this, and it is unsure how to date it. The opening paragraph expounds the summary of the Law to love the Lord your God with all your heart and your neighbor as yourself. In light of the Sermon on the Mount, and I will not go through that, you can see how it expands the Decalogue in the second paragraph. It begins with the twofold commandment of love, and then it uses the Decalogue as a way of organizing that material. Then the third paragraph gets to the root sins: anger, envy, lust, and so forth. It is really a remarkable document. It begins with love and uses the Decalogue as a way of showing us the norms of love and then searching the root of our sins in these things.

This work is still in progress. I was asked to do some lectures last summer on the Ten Commandments. I gave lectures called, “The Ten Commandments in the Bible,” “the Ten Commandments in the church,” and “the Ten Commandments in contemporary society.” We will get to that, too, but I began to ask the question, “Where is the first exposition of the Ten Commandments in church history?” I was looking for sermons on the Ten Commandments or treatises on the Ten Commandments or catechisms on The Ten Commandments, but you do not find them in the early church. The early church expounds the twofold commandment of love. It recognizes the Ten Commandments as basic instruction. “We should do that,” in effect, is what they are saying. They do not use that to organize the material of the Christian life. They use, rather, the Sermon on the Mount. The content of the moral law is in the Sermon on the Mount. The

Sermon on the Mount, they say, is at a higher level, which it is. But that was the way the early church did it. To my knowledge, there are no expositions of the Ten Commandments in sermons, catechisms or separate treatises in that whole period of the first millennium, which is sort of provocative. Why is that? Well, it is probably because of their understanding of the distinctiveness of the Christian way of life that goes beyond what you can pour into the Ten Commandments. That is likely the reason they thought that way. In any case, it is interesting to go through that material, but, as far as I know, you do not get exposition of the Ten Commandments until you come to the Middle Ages. In commentaries on Exodus or commentaries on Deuteronomy, you would expect that there would be some there, but I am thinking in terms of special instruction to the church, not commentaries in which there would be an analysis of the Ten Commandments. That waits until the Middle Ages.

Following the division of the church east and west in 1054, there was a revival of interest in the Decalogue among Western theologians. Gregory the Great had actually put down the Ten Commandments as instructions in terms of the seven deadly sins and the corresponding virtues. But it was Hugh of Saint Victor that gave a brief exposition of each commandment and love as the fulfillment of Law. His institutions, Hugo's Institutes, appear to be the first of these. He was an early 12th Century philosopher and theologian. Hugh directly influenced Peter Lombard. Peter Lombard apparently heard those lectures as they were first given and then published them as his institutes, and he included a section on the Decalogue in his *Sentences*. That was the prime textbook of systematic theology in the Middle Ages. The inclusion of the Decalogue in the systematic exposition of the faith was a first in Peter Lombard.

Alexander of Hales, who was a professor at the University of Paris in the 13th Century, introduced commentary on Lombard's *Sentences* replacing traditional commentary on the Scriptures. Lombard's systematic theology goes by the title of *Sentences*. In *Sentences*, he used quotations from the early church to organize his material, and he expanded on it. But Lombard's *Sentences* then became the basis for instruction in the university rather than the traditional commentary on the Scriptures and that was a key step. Then it was picked up by Thomas Aquinas who provided a complete account of Christian ethics, including a detailed exposition of the Decalogue. Ever since then it has been standard as the way in which we do things. But it developed late and the catechetical developed after the fourth Lateran council.

Somebody has called the canon of the Fourth Lateran Council the most important legislative act in the history of the church. It says, "All the faithful of both sexes after they have reached the age of discretion must confess all their sins at least once a year to their own parish priest and perform to the best of their abilities the penance and pose, reverently receiving the sacrament of the Eucharist at least on Easter Sunday; otherwise, they shall be cut off from the church during their lifetime and shall be without a Christian burial in death." That then became church law, and that is the sacrament of penance. It is now called the sacrament of reconciliation but the content is the same. It is in response to that requirement that you have to come to your parish priest every year and confess all your sins. (How do you know what to confess?) Then the catechisms began to develop, including John Wycliffe's. Wycliffe's were at first basically oriented toward the sacrament of penance and confession. And Wycliffe is all in rhyme, "Thou shalt have one God and no mo', or all thing love him also, and thy neighbor both friend and foe," and so it goes. "Steal thou not thy neighbor's thing, with buying selling or wrong getting." At the end Wycliffe says, "These are the Ten Commandments. These are the Commandments Ten that God gave to all men. Nickel joy [much joy] shall be to them that keep well and truly then."

We are coming right up to the eve of the Reformation. Dietrich Kolde's *A Fruitful Mirror or Small Handbook for Christians* will give you the tone of where things were at the time of the Reformation. It

was the first printed catechism in German, printed 19 times before 1500 and at least 28 times afterward. It was to be carried by Christians at all times since it contains everything that is necessary for the well-being and salvation of the soul, so Kolde claimed. This then became the Bible, in effect, that you carried with you—creed, Decalogue, five commandments of the church, seven deadly sins, nine alien sins, the openly discussed sins, the mute sins against nature, six sins against the Holy Spirit, great sins of the tongue, six conditions of forgiveness, seven signs of the state of grace, repentance, confessions, satisfaction, and various devotional instructions in prayers (including the Paternoster in Ave Maria), and how to die. The sacrament of penance is of central importance. One paragraph said, “You should know that according to canon law, penance be received from the priest is not sufficient even for the least mortal sin that we have committed. Therefore, it is necessary for us to do even more penance. For example, by groaning, crying out, begging help, giving alms,” and he goes on and on. That is the legalism that Luther faced at the beginning of the 16th Century. That is why the first of the 95 Theses is when Christ said, “Repent,” he did not mean “do penance.” He meant that we are to have this change of heart toward God in His love that leads us to trust in Christ. The way Luther’s catechisms came about is interesting. Quoting the logic of Luther’s order, the Creed and the Lord’s Prayer had become standard. Luther adds to that the Ten Commandments so that his catechism is a short form of the Ten Commandments, the creed, and the Lord’s Prayer. The logic of Luther’s order—Decalogue, Creed, Lord’s Prayer—is our conviction of need through the Ten Commandments where to find aid, exposition of the Gospel through the Creed, and how to ask for it in the petitions of the Lord’s Prayer.

The interesting thing that I found about Luther’s publication of his catechism is it was first published in poster form to be posted in homes and schools as well as churches, and it was an immediate success. It sold out immediately. Then he published it in typical book form but it was a very great success. People were so hungry for something besides these penitential books like Kolde’s. I will give you an example. In the sample treatments of the Commandments, first it says, “You shall have no other God.” What does this mean? The answer is that we should fear, love, and trust in God above all things.” It is very simple. The fifth commandment in our enumeration says, “You shall not kill.” What does this mean? “We should fear and love God so we should not endanger our neighbor’s life nor cause him any harm but help and befriend him in every necessity of life.” Man cannot improve on it. It really set a new standard for catechetical material. It was picked up by Calvin, adopted in the Anglican Catechism, and it came to wonderful expression in the Heidelberg Catechism.

The Heidelberg Catechism begins with the famous question, “What is your only comfort in life and death? That I am not my own but belong body and soul, in life and death, to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ.” And then it goes on to expand on the Gospel, “He has full paid for all my sins with His precious blood, set me free from the tyranny of the devil. He also watches over me. In fact, all things must work together for my salvation.” It begins with that great hopeful note. “And what must you know to live and die in the joy of this comfort? First, how great my sin and misery are. Second, how I am set free from all my sins and misery. And third, how I am to thank God for such deliverance.” The thing about the Heidelberg Catechism is that it has a brief number of questions focusing on our need and misery but then the exposition is actually through the exposition of the Creed and then our gratitude is expressed in good works. And questions 32-115 are where the exposition of The Ten Commandments comes in. In other words, there is a brief section on our sin and misery by the perfect standards of God’s Word to love my Lord with all my heart and my neighbor as myself, which we obviously have not done. Then there is the exposition of the Gospel through the Creed and then you get to the Decalogue as the way of life. That is the emphasis that it gives to what is called the third use of the Law—which obviously differs from Luther’s conception—and then it takes the Lord’s Prayer. For comparison’s sake, notice the Heidelberg’s treatment of the sixth commandment and how it gets to the full attitude that lies behind the commandment: “I am not to belittle, insult, hate, or kill my neighbor—not by my thoughts, my words,

my look, my gesture, certainly not by actual deeds.” Question 106 asks, “Does this commandment refer only to killing? By forbidding murder, God teaches that He hates the root of murder: envy, hatred, anger, and vindictiveness. Is it enough that we not kill our neighbor in any such way? No, we are to love our neighbors and be patient, peace-loving, gentle, merciful, and friendly to him and to protect him from harm as much as we can and do good even to our enemies.” That is the full exposition in light of the whole teaching of Scripture and particularly read in light of love for our neighbor. It describes what this love requires.

As you would expect, these Lutheran and Reformed catechisms left the Roman church at a disadvantage. So, Peter Canisius wrote a much better catechism than appeared before the 16th Century for Roman Catholic instruction. Then the Roman church itself in 1566 published the catechism of the Council of Trent for parish priests. This was not a catechism to be learned on the part of the people, as the Reformed catechisms were. This was a catechism for the priests to learn what is required of them in their teaching: creed, sacraments, Ten Commandments, and the Lord’s Prayer.

By the end of the 16th Century, the pattern was pretty well set and the Westminster Confession, I think, was the culmination of those catechetical works. I think that one reason I do this history is to show how much Western culture has been affected by the Ten Commandments. For 700 years (because even in the churches we have not been teaching the Ten Commandments as we should) the organization of the moral Law of God around the Ten Commandments became the main ethical instructions and that had its impact on Western culture. That is undeniable, and that needs to be taught.

One author writes, “The new weight placed on the Ten Commandments raised the stakes for magistrates by making it possible to apply the lessons of Israel’s salvation in history to the local territory. Neglect of God’s Law held dire political consequences. Sin endangers the common goods, and magistrates must therefore prevent it.” As John Huss exhorted, “Kings and princes, counts, knights, and lords should always see that the commandments of God are not broken.” It is, in a way, understandable. But now with the emphasis on the fifth commandment, “Honor your father and mother,” applied in its wider sense to civil magistrates, the discipline of the parents becomes, it seems, the obligation of the state to discipline the community rather than the church where discipline rightly belongs. It became the order of the state. So, a few weeks after hearing a sermon on the Ten Commandments in 1452, Duke William of Saxony issued an ordinance for the reform of public morality mandating officials to enforce all of these provisions. Some of them we may think are appropriate for civil magistrates but others are questionable.

The application of honoring your father and mother to civil authorities in the Reformation was overly paternalistic. That is a judgment on my part. Plato had referred to magistrates as guardians of the law. There was a twofold guardianship, and it did not work very well. Calvin, at first, did not expound the guardian of the two tables doctrine. Rather, he concentrated on the office of the civil magistrate to do justice so that the laws of the common work must be in conformity to that perpetual rule of love. The key principle was equity, the goal and rule and limits of all laws. Calvin said, “It should be clear that the Law of God which we call the moral law is nothing else than a testimony of natural law and of that conscience which God has engraved upon men’s hearts.” It was only later that he developed the two tables doctrine. I think we need to sort that out and talk a little bit about that.

I wanted to include, as a third point, the secular use of the Decalogue. I am going to start that in the next session, but just to alert you in advance, what I understand by the secular use of the Decalogue is different from the civil use of the moral law. There is a difference between using the Decalogue in its redemptive historical context in a secular way and using the moral law. That is going to be my thesis. We should distinguish between the civil use of the moral law and the secular use of the Decalogue (the

secular use of the Ten Commandments). At first, it seems that since the Ten Commandments embody in definitive form God's moral law, that we ought not to make this distinction. I think we run into difficulty unless we do and I really think we need to go back to Calvin's original view of civil magistrates and the principle of equity in which the moral law is appropriate for governments today. We will have to start that in the next session.