

LUTHER ON GOD'S LAW



„Dies sind die heilige zehn Gebot“
 (“These are the holy Ten Commands”)
 [Famous German hymn by Martin Luther]

by

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“After God had made all other creatures, He created man...with righteousness and true holiness after His image, having the Law of God written in their hearts (Genesis 1:26; Colossians 3:10; Ephesians 4:24; Romans 2:14-15)... God gave to Adam a Law (Ecclesiastes 7:29)... This Law, after his fall, continued to be a perfect rule of righteousness and...was delivered by God upon Mount Sinai in Ten Commandments (James 1:25; 2:8-12; Romans 13:8-9)... This Law [is] commonly called Moral...[and] doth for ever bind all, as well justified persons as others, to the obedience thereof (Ephesians 6:2 & First John 2:3-8)... Neither doth Christ in the Gospel any way dissolve but much strengthen this obligation (Matthew 5:17-19 & Romans 3:31)..., the Spirit of Christ subduing and enabling the will of man to do that freely and cheerfully which the will of God revealed in the Law requireth to be done (Ezekiel 36:27 & Hebrews 8:10 & Jeremiah 31:33).” 1646-47 *Westminster Confession of Faith*, 4:2 & 19:1-7.

Luther died in 1546, a 100 years before British Calvinists at the Westminster Assembly wrote the above words. Yet Luther, had he then still been alive, would, unlike many modern “Presbyterians” (*sic*), have endorsed every one of those words. In this article, we shall prove it.

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Luther explains¹ that “God said: ‘Let Us make man as an image like Us [*cf.* Genesis 1:26].” To Luther (and indeed to all other Christians): this ‘Us’ is “the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” - with that pre-incarnate “Son” quite the Central Person in the Trine God.

Now then, continues Luther: “God created man upright [Ecclesiastes 7:29, *cf.* Romans 2:14]. This uprightness was natural, in body and soul.” Thus Adam first obeyed the Law of nature; that is, the Law of God the Son.

Luther further comments,² on Ecclesiastes 7:29: “God has placed man into things; has given him certain works and a certain task.... God made man upright, straightforward..., and to be content [*cf.* the Tenth Commandment].... But man forsakes this uprightness.”

Accordingly, Luther stated:³ “The Ten Commandments are not of Moses. Nor did God give them first to him. On the contrary, the Decalogue belongs to the whole World. It was written and engraved in the minds of all human beings from the beginning of the World.... Later on, since men had finally come to the point of caring neither for God nor for men, God was compelled to re-new these laws through Moses and, after writing them with His fingers on tablets [of stone], to place them before our eyes in order to present to us what we were before the fall of Adam and what someday we are to be in Christ.”

These above words “from the beginning of the World” mean the substance of God’s Law of the Decalogue must have been given to Adam before his fall. *Cf.* Ecclesiastes 7:29. Without such a prelapsarian Law, Adam’s fall from his primordial sinless condition could never at all have occurred. For sin is the transgression of the Law. First John 3:4.

So Luther rightly translates Hosea 6:7, regarding the Ephraimites and the Gileadites, as follows: “*sie uebertreten den Bund wie Adam*” (alias: ‘they transgress the covenant like Adam). Indeed, those who imitate Adam in this, similarly transgress God’s Law through their idolatry and murder and theft and adultery etc. This is why Luther’s rendition of Hosea 6:7-10 has God saying even of the covenant people that “they, like Adam, transgress the covenant.... Gilead is a city full of idolatry and bloodguiltiness.... Like a troop of robbers...they murder on the road.... There is whoredom.”⁴

But Hosea’s above words are preceded immediately also by the glorious **Gospel!** ‘Come, and let us return to the Lord! For He has torn, and He will heal us! He has smitten, and He will bind us up!.... He will revive us! On the third day, He will raise us up, and we shall live before Him!’ Hosea 6:1-3.

Luther comments⁵ on Hosea 6:3: ‘He is speaking about Christ’s resurrection’; the revivification of the Second Adam for His people. As regards His Israelites, on Hosea 6:7 Luther says:⁶ ‘They do as their father [Adam] did. He transgressed the Covenant he had received.’

Indeed, also the famous Lutheran Rev. Professor Dr. C.F. Keil here indicates:⁷ ‘Many Church Fathers and Old-Lutherans’ see Hosea 6:1-3f as ‘a prediction of Christ’s death and resurrection on the third day.’ Keil further observes on Hosea 6:7 that “the words *k^e-’Adam* cannot be translated as ‘like men.’ That would make sense, only if the Prophets or the Priests or the Government were **distinguished** from the common people” [which here they are **not**]. Here, ‘*k^e-’Adam*’ **must** be translated: “**like Adam** who **transgressed God’s Commandment**’ not to eat of the tree of knowledge [of good and evil]. This Commandment was fundamentally a **Covenant** which God concluded with him for the purpose of maintaining Adam in his vital fellowship with the Lord; like the Covenant God concluded with Israel. Cf. Job 31:33, and Delitzsch thereon.”

Thus, at the deepest level, Hosea 6:1-10 deals with the work of both the first Adam and the Second Adam Jesus Christ. That is to say, Adam forsakes the Covenant which God would re-erect with Noah as a type of Christ the ‘Second Adam’; re-erects it as God’s re-new-ed Covenant. Genesis 1:26-28 & 6:18 & 9:1-9 and First Corinthians 15:22-47.

Luther says:⁸ ‘The Law is written in the depth of the heart, and cannot be erased.... It is impossible to remove the Law from the heart. In Romans 2, Paul testifies that the Gentiles...are nevertheless a law unto themselves, being obliged to witness that what the Law requires is written in their hearts.... The Law must be preached wherever Christ is to be preached!’

Luther rightly re-establishes the righteousness of God in Christ as the sole ground of a sinner’s justification. Yet (perhaps from fear of lapsing into so-called ‘works-righteousness’), he is not as strong as he could have been on the subject of sanctification. Nor is he as firm as he could have been in emphasizing the place of God’s Law as a guide for leading a holy life.

However, is Luther’s previous statement⁹ correct? Is it really so, as Luther has suggested, that ‘the Ten Commandments’ alias ‘the Decalogue...was written and engraved in the minds of all human beings from the beginning of the World?’

It would seem that before the fall, the negative eight prohibitions of the Decalogue would then probably have been framed just as positively as are its two injunctions “4 Remember the sabbath day!” and “5 Honour your father and your mother!” After the fall we have eight negativized prohibitions, like: 1 “you shall not have any other gods before Me!”; 2 “you shall neither make nor worship any graven image!”; 3 “you shall not take the Name of the Lord your God in vain!”; 6 “you shall not kill!”; 7 “you shall not commit adultery!”; 8 “you shall not steal!”; 9 “you shall not bear false witness!”; and 10 “you shall not covet!”

However, before Adam’s fall, these eight prohibitions were very probably all positive injunctions. We mean Adam would then have understood them as: “1 worship the Lord alone!”; “2 worship the Lord only spiritually!”; “3 use His Name reverently!”; “6 respect life!”; “7 be pure!”; “8 guard property!”; “8 tell it like it is!”; and “10 be content!”

As also Rev. Professor Dr. Abraham Kuyper Sr. wrote:¹⁰ “A special prohibition was imposed upon Adam.... The Test Prohibition was connected to the Moral Law in two ways.

‘First. It was supported by it. If the Moral Law had not preceded the Test Prohibition, and if “you shall love the Lord your God with all your soul!” had not previously resounded within Adam’s nature, subjection to the Test Prohibition would not have made sense and there would have been no basis for its “you shall not eat of it!” [Genesis 2:17]. The Test Prohibition thus thoroughly presupposes the Moral Law. It is directly connected therewith. It is nothing other than a specialized expression thereof.

‘But second. Also the ‘tree of the knowledge of good and evil’ directly brings us into contact with the increased Moral Law. For the words ‘knowledge of good and evil’ presuppose that good and evil were distinguishable [by unfallen man]. It could not therefore be otherwise than that the moral norm must have been within him already, although without yet having come to the articulation which only the experience of one’s soul makes possible.”

So then, regarding Adam and Eve, “precisely the Test Prohibition therefore served to determine the attitude of their souls toward the Moral Law. If they had not fallen, even the knowledge of sin would never have awakened within them. But if they indeed fell, through their own self-presumptiveness, the opposition between light and shadow from the side of the evil one would then arise in their heart.... With this act [of God] toward Adam, a special obligation was imposed upon him. It stood in direct relationship to the Law of works [Hosea 6:7-10]....

‘Obviously this does not mean that the words of the Law of the Ten Commandments would already have been spoken forth by the Lord our God into the ears of Adam and Eve in Paradise [before the fall]. It would then simply say that an internal revelation of the Law took place [cf. Romans 2:15f], by God’s operation upon their moral consciousness, so that they knew of a boundary between what had been commanded and what had been prohibited, and were able to gird themselves to consummate what had been commanded....

‘Now the question arises as to the way in which and whereby the consummation of this revealed Law could commence. Adultery, for starters, could not be committed as long as there was only one man and one woman [cf. Genesis 1:26-28 & 2:17-24]. One could not steal, as long as one had nobody else to contest ownership with. To whom could Eve have borne false witness

about Adam, or Adam about Eve?

“Adam could just as little have killed Eve, as could occur to us if we were living on an uninhabited island and there was only one other person there! Before toiling in the sweat of one’s face existed, there could be no question of desecrating the sabbath by slavish labours. Not to honour father and mother was unthinkable to the first two human beings, who had no father or mother or teachers or political government” to which they were subject.

“If things had thus remained at this general revelation of Law, development of [a consciousness of] sin in the more precise and deeper sense could indeed have occurred with Adam. But there could then have been no sinful conscious deed which at the same time could have led to destruction.

“Precisely in order for the Law to **operate**, a Special Prohibition therefore just had to come. And because a natural cause of transgressing that Law was still unthinkable, the Test Prohibition **had to** bear an arbitrary character....

“Both Tables of the Law were thus sudden brought into tension. There would then be: a rejecting of God; idolatry; a worshipping of Satan. But also theft, by taking what did not belong to man; and killing himself and the entire human race....

“So not just a little but a lot; yes, **everything**, was contain in that one Test Prohibition: ‘you shall **not!**... The Test Prohibition rested upon the whole of God’s Law....

“In the strictest sense, everything depended upon that one act.... Thus, in the transgression of that Test Prohibition not just that one little commandment but indeed the entire Law of God in its deepest root was wrenched out of its socket and trampled upon by sensual covetousness!” Thus Kuyper.

Now in several places Luther, still emerging from mediaeval monkery, deviates from the Decalogue. This can be seen in his toleration of images inherited from Romanism; in his insufficiently strong views anent the nature of weekly sabbath-keeping today; and, on at least two occasions when appeasing nobles, his connivance at bigamy and advocacy of infanticide where a baby was born severely deformed.

To justify his laxity on God’s Second Commandment against the manufacture and religious use of graven images, Luther followed the practice of the Deformed Church of the Middle Ages and misnumbered most of God’s Commandments. For he ‘raptured *the Second; misnumbered the Third through the Ninth; and subdividing the Tenth into two allegedly-different Commandments - in order to maintain the sum total of exactly Ten Commandments.

On the other hand, even as regards the Bible’s Second Commandment, Luther did find it commendable that “when the Jews had worshipped the golden calf and provoked God to anger,” Moses “put many of them to death and thereby made atonement before God.”¹¹ Indeed, in the second of his 1522 *Eight Wittenberg Sermons*, Luther says¹² that “when Paul came to Athens...he found in the temple many altars...and said they were all idolatrous works, and begged the people to forsake them.... When the word took hold of their hearts, they forsook their idols.... In

consequence, idolatry fell of itself.”

Too, also in the third of his *Eight Wittenberg Sermons*, he does say¹³ regarding “the images” that “it would be much better if we did not have them.... You read in the Law, Exodus 20, ‘you shall not make for yourself any graven image or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above’.... There you take your stand; that is your ground.... It should have been preached that images were nothing and that God is not served by their erection.... That is what I did; that is what Paul did in Athens, when he...saw all their idols [Acts 17:22]. He did not strike at any of them, but stood in the market-place and said, ‘you men of Athens, you are all idolatrous!’ He preached against their idols.”

These matters concerning Luther’s understanding of the Biblical Second Commandment, needed some correction by Calvin and Calvinism. Correction is here needed also by Modern Evangelicalism, which at best is basically Sub-Lutheran rather than Truly-Calvinistic.

And here is the needed corrective! The 1647 *Westminster Confession of Faith* declares¹⁴ that “the acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by Himself, and is so limited by His Own revealed will that **He may not be worshipped** according to the imaginations and devices of men or the suggestions of Satan **under any visible representation** or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scripture. Deuteronomy 12:32; Matthew 15:9; Acts 17:25; Matthew 4:9f; Exodus 20:4-6; Colossians 2:23.”

The 1648 *Westminster Shorter Catechism* was and is “for **catechising** such as are of **weaker capacity**,”¹⁵ toward their admission to the Lord’s Table at adolescence. It declares¹⁶ that the Second Commandment “requireth the receiving, observing, and keeping pure and entire, all such religious worship and ordinances as God has appointed in His Word (Deuteronomy 32:46 & Matthew 28:20).” Further, it also “**forbiddeth** the worshipping of God by **images** (Deuteronomy 4:15-19 & Exodus 32:5-8) or any other way not appointed in His Word (Deuteronomy 12:31-32).”

The 1648 *Westminster Larger Catechism* was and for “such as have made **some proficiency** in the knowledge of the grounds of religion.”¹⁷ It states¹⁸ that the “duties required in the Second Commandment” include “**opposing all false worship** (Acts 17:16-17 & Psalm 16:4) and, according to each one’s place and calling, **removing it and all monuments of idolatry** (Deuteronomy 7:5 & Isaiah 30:22).”

Further, it also states: “The sins forbidden in the Second Commandment are all...any wise approving any religious worship not instituted by Him Himself (Deuteronomy 12:30-32).” Such include “tolerating a false religion (Zechariah 13:2-3 and Revelation 2:14-15 & 17:12-17); the **making any representation of God, of all or of any of the three Persons** either inwardly in our mind or **outwardly in any kind of image** or likeness of any creature whatsoever (Deuteronomy 4:15-19 & Acts 17:29 & Romans 1:21-25); all **worshipping** of it (Daniel 3:18) or **God in it or by** it (Exodus 32:5); the making of **any** representation of feigned deities (Exodus 32:8) and all worship of them or service belonging to them (First Kings 18:26-18 & Isaiah 65:11); all superstitious devices (Acts 17:22 & Colossians 2:21-23); corrupting the worship of God (Malachi 1:7-8,14); adding to it or taking from it (Deuteronomy 4:2); whether invented and taken up of ourselves (Psalm 16:39) or **received by tradition** from others (Matthew 15:9) though under

the title of **antiquity** (First Peter 1:18), **custom** (Jeremiah 44:17), **devotion** (Isaiah 65:3-5 & Galatians 1:13-14).”

This prohibits the manufacture and the honouring not only of statues but even of pictures and stained-glass (mis)representations also of the creaturely nature of “Jesus” (*sic*). In this, even Luther himself was guilty and needed correction. Nevertheless, he himself did clearly stress the importance of the Decalogue in the life of humanity. Thus he (quite rightly) opposed abortion, and also insisted on the death penalty for rape.

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It is important to realize that Luther rightly grounded the Ten Commandments as God’s Moral Law for all men not in the Mosaic laws of Israel from Exodus through Deuteronomy, but in the Law of nature’s God given to Adam as the ancestor of all men in the Book of Genesis. A few excerpts from Luther at this point, will make this clear.

“The Law of nature,” explains Luther,¹⁹ “is the Ten Commandments. It is written in the heart of every human being by creation [*cf.* Ecclesiastes 7:29 & Romans 2:14*f*]. It was clearly and comprehensively put on Mount Sinai [Exodus 19:1-7 & 20:1-17], finer indeed than any philosopher has stated it. The Law of nature, then, is created and written in the heart. It does not come from men, but is a [God-]created Law to which everyone who hears it cannot but consent.”

On Genesis 2:1-3*f*, Luther states:²⁰ “If Adam had stood in his innocency, he would still have kept the seventh day holy. That is, on that day he would have taught his children and children’ s children what was the will of God, and wherein His worship did consist. He would have praised God, given thanks, and given offerings.... Adam was to gather with his descendants on the sabbath at the tree of life, and when they had together eaten of the tree of life: to preach [God’s **Word** (*i.e.* to proclaim God and His praises and the glory of creation)...; and to exhort them to a holy and sinless life, and to a faithful tilling and keeping of the garden.... On the other days he would have worked, either tilling his fields or hunting....

“On this [sabbath] day, he instructed his family, of which the sacrifices of his sons [alias the gifts they brought to God] give proof [Genesis 4:2-4]. Therefore, from the beginning of the World the sabbath was intended for the worship of God. Unspoiled human nature would have proclaimed the glory and the kindness of God in this way: on the sabbath day, men would have conversed about the unmeasurable goodness of the Creator; they would have sacrificed; they would have prayed, *etc.* For this is the meaning of the verb ‘to sanctify’ [in Genesis 2:3].... The sabbath command remains for the Church. It denotes that spiritual life.”

Now in the middle of the garden, stood the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Genesis 2:9-17 & 3:3. “This tree,” explains Luther,²¹ “would have been the ‘church’ at which Adam, together with his descendants, would have gathered on the sabbath day. A Law is given to righteous Adam.... It shows too that Adam was created in the state of innocence, or was righteous.” Ecclesiastes 7:29.

To Luther, it was God Himself Who threatened unfallen man with the capital punishment

of death if he should ever disobey God by manducating of the fruit of the forbidden tree of the knowledge of good and evil (which discriminated between virtue and vice and thus re-inforced Adam's knowledge of the good enjoined and the evil prohibited in the Ten Commandments). For even before the fall, God warned Adam: 'Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat! But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat thereof! For in the day that you eat thereof, you shall surely die.'" Genesis 2:16-17.

As Luther here comments:²² "Adam had need of this Command concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; namely, so that there should be an outward form of worship and an outward work of obedience toward God.... Who, then, is either so ignorant or so deranged as to conclude...that no Law was given to Adam, when he hears it stated that Adam was righteous?..."

"A Law was given to righteous Adam not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.... 'On whatever day you will eat from it, you will die!' This threat which was so clearly added, also proves that a Law was given to Adam. Moreover, it shows too that Adam was created in the state of innocence or was righteous.... Therefore if Adam had obeyed this Command, he would never have died.... It is part of this original righteousness, that Adam loved God and His works with an outstanding and very pure attachment."

Doubtless Adam related this threat to Eve, after she had been created. For she in turn, again before the fall, told the serpent: "We may eat of the fruit of the tree of the garden: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said 'You people shall not eat of it neither shall you touch it lest you die!'" Genesis 3:2-3. For as Luther observes:²³ "Eve sinned against both Tables of the Law and against God Himself and His Word."

Indeed, soon after the fall, when Adam was still in the garden, God challenged him: "Did you eat of the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?... Because you have...eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, saying 'You shall not eat of it!' - cursed is the ground for your sake; in sorrow shall you eat of it all the days of your life; thorns also and thistles it shall bring forth to you...till you return to the ground! For out of it you were taken. For dust you are, and unto dust you shall return!" Genesis 3:11 & 3:17-19.

Luther also rightly demands²⁴ that "we must firmly establish civil law and the sword" – in order to punish murderers and other evil-doers. He observes: "**This penal law existed from the beginning of the World.** For when Cain slew his brother, he in turn was in...great terror of being killed [Genesis 2:17; 3:3; 4:8-14].... He would not have had this fear, if he had not seen and heard from Adam that **murderers should be slain**. Moreover, God **re-established** and **confirmed** it after the Flood in unmistakable terms when He said: 'whosoever sheds man's blood, his blood shall be shed by man' [Genesis 9:6]....

The great German Reformer thus upholds capital punishment for capital criminals. He insists that murderers deserve death penalty at the hand of man.

For in Genesis 9:5-6, God Himself says to Noah and all his descendants: 'Surely, I will requite your blood from your lives! At the hand of every beast I shall requite it, and at the hand of man. At the hand of every man's brother, I will requite the life of man. Whosoever sheds

man's blood, his blood shall be shed by man. For God made man as His image."

In Genesis 18:18f & 26:5, one reads God saying about the Pre-Mosaic Abraham (the father of all Christians!) that 'he will **command** his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment.... Because Abraham obeyed My voice; and kept my charge, **My Commandments**, My statutes and **My Laws**."

Here Luther observes:²⁵ "Those who, influenced by I know not what reasons, maintain that the Law should not be preached in the Church, are **pernicious teachers!** Would you actually not teach the Law where there is a real people of the Law: namely the greedy, the proud, adulterers, usurers, idolaters, *etc*? Would you use the promises of the New Testament, to increase the smugness of those who were smug before? Indeed, God wants the destruction of Sodom by fire...made known among all posterity - in order that at least some may be reformed and may learn to fear God....

"Today you may encounter **many** who are **offended** by the **necessary preaching** of the **Law**, and shun it.... They do not give up sinning: they are addicted to greed, to wrath, to lust, to revelling, *etc*.... **The destruction of Sodom by fire** is to be **set** before **all succeeding generations** and indeed **before the very Church of God**, in order that men may learn to fear God.

"In the doctrine of the Antinomians, there was this statement: 'If somebody were an adulterer, provided only that he believed, he would have a gracious God.' To that, Luther retorted: 'What kind of Church will it be, I ask, in which so awful a statement is heard?... This sickness demands a different medicine, namely that you say with Paul: 'God will judge the adulterous!'; (Hebrews 13:4); 'They will not see the Kingdom of God' (*cf.* First Corinthians 6:9f); and 'Without chastity, no one can please God' (Romans 8:9). Hence they are defiled, and under the wrath of God....

"To declare that the Law should not be taught in the Church, is characteristic of men who do not know Christ and are blinded by their pride and wickedness.... These events are related... In this passage [Genesis 18:19], there is added the command to preach. 'He [Abraham] will relate them,' says God, 'to his children.' That is: 'I want the destruction of Sodom by fire, preached in the Church'.... Keep this passage [Genesis 18:19 to 19:29] in mind! It is adequate by itself to refute the Antinomians."

Luther continues:²⁶ "Therefore, before and **after** we have become Christians, the Law must in this life constantly be.... As St. Paul and many of our books so frequently teach." Indeed, "those are absolutely not to be tolerated who hold that the teaching of the Law is to be thrown out of the churches. For this plane is necessary, for tough and knotted logs!"²⁷

In Genesis 26:4-5, God says He would bless Isaac "because Abraham obeyed My voice and **kept** My charge, **My Commandments**, My statutes and **My Laws**." There, Luther comments:²⁸ "*Mitzvoth*' denotes Commandments and a constant charge, as the Decalogue is....

"Thus Abraham was observant and waited for the Commandments of the Lord, even for the commands that pertained to morals.... **He observed the Decalogue**, the rite of the Sabbath.... The Decalogue...that originated with the fathers, is not Mosaic.... And we are right in saying

with St. Paul (Romans 7:22-23): ‘I **delight in the Law of God**, in my innermost self!’”

Elsewhere,²⁹ Luther also seems to prescribe capital punishment for murderous abortionists. While discussing Abraham’s many children listed in Genesis 25:1-4, Luther comments: ‘God wanted to teach and attest that the begetting of children is wonderfully pleasing to Him.... He upholds and defends His Word, when He says [Genesis 1:26-28 & 9:1-7]: ‘Be fruitful!’*

‘He is not hostile to children, as we are.... He seems to emphasize procreation to such an extent that children are born even to adulterers and fornicators, contrary to their wish. How great, therefore, the wickedness of human nature is! How many girls there are who prevent conception and kill and expel tender fetuses -- although procreation is the work of God!’”

Luther adds, regarding the death penalty for murder: “Afterward it was also [**re-**]confirmed also by the law of Moses. Exodus 21:14, ‘If a man kill presumptuously, you shall take him from My altar so that he may die!’* And again, in the same place [Exodus 21:23f]: ‘a life for a life, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a foot for a foot, a hand for a hand, a wound for a wound, a bruise for a bruise.*

It should be noted most carefully that this Luther quotation ends with the very Bible passage perhaps most germane of all to the discussion of the abortion issue. Exodus 21:22-25. This text and reasoning, the great Protestant Reformer then proceeds to apply also to the Newer Testament.

Right after this, Luther very significantly indicates that the New Testament brought absolutely no change here. Here, Luther is still discussing the previous Exodus 21:23f passage requiring ‘a life for a life; an eye for an eye; a tooth for a tooth; a foot for a foot; a hand for a hand; a wound for a wound.* In the very next sentence, he goes on to declare:

“Christ also [re-]confirms it, when He [Matthew 26:52] says to Peter in the garden, ‘he who takes up the sword shall perish by the sword*-- which is to be interpreted like Genesis 9, ‘whosoever sheds man’s blood’ *etc.* Doubtless Christ refers in these words to that passage, and **incorporates and confirms** it in them.”

‘John the baptizer [also] teaches the same. When the soldiers asked him what they should do, he answered [Luke 3:14] — ‘do injustice or violence to nobody, and be content with your wages!’* If the sword were not divinely appointed, he should have commanded them to cease being soldiers -- since he was to perfect the people, and direct them in a proper Christian way. Hence it is sufficiently clear and certain that it is God’s will that the sword and secular law be used for the punishment of the wicked and the protection of the upright [First Peter 2:14].”

Consider too the Pre-Mosaic Pagan Shechem’s rape of Dinah in Genesis 34. On that, Luther comments:³⁰ ‘I think that **rape** was forbidden and a **capital offence** not only in Jacob’s house, but also in that whole area.... The rape of a virgin is a capital crime of itself – by all law, divine and civil.... In all ages, this crime has been punished in a fearful manner.”

Genesis 38:24-26 refers to the grievous sexual sin committed by Judah with Tamar. There, the undisguised Judah did not know he was committing whoredom with his disguised

daughter-in-law Tamar; but she well knew she was committing it with her father-in-law.

In respect of that Pre-Mosaic sin and crime, Luther comments:³¹ “Who sinned more gravely, Judah or Tamar? He did not [knowingly] commit adultery or incest. He [knowingly] committed simple fornication. Tamar, however, is guilty of both [adultery and incest – and **knowingly** so]. Because she was the [espoused] bride and wife of Shelah, his [Judah’s] third son – who was her ‘husband’ by divine right.... She can be accused by him [Shelah] of adultery. But sexual intercourse with her father-in-law [knowingly and even premeditatedly by her] is most disgraceful incest. According, they can by no means be excused – although Judah’s sin was less serious” than was Tamar’s.

In Deuteronomy 6:1-8, God enjoins: “These are the Commandments.... Do them!.... **Keep all His Commandments** which I command you, you and your son and your son’s son!.... And these words, which I command you today, shall be in your heart! And you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk about them when you sit in your home, and when you walk along the road, and when you lie down, and when you get up!”

On these words, Luther comments:³² “I have often said and still say [in 1529] that I am willing to sit at the feet of the man and to allow him to be my teacher, who thoroughly understands the Ten Commandments.... The Ten Commandments are still...my ABC; nay, my Bible. I must still remain their pupil, although I have read the Bible from cover to cover many a time.”

Psalm 1:1-2 declares: "Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly.... But his **delight** is in the **Law of the Lord**; and in His Law, he keeps on meditating day and night."

In his exposition hereof, Luther enjoins:³³ "See to it that you separate very far and very widely, the ‘Law of the Lord’ from the laws of any human beings whatsoever; and be extremely careful that you do not mix these two classes of laws!... This is what pestilential teachers are now doing when they either turn the Law of God into mere human traditions, or human traditions into the Law of God."

As Luther once wrote in somebody else’s book as a further comment on this Psalm’s words that the blessed man does indeed ‘delight...in the Law of the Lord...day and night:³⁴ ‘The old Adam hates the Law.... The slogan of the world is not ‘his delight is in the Law of the Lord’ but: his hatred and hypocrisy.... Be guided by this fact!”

Psalm 110:3 declares of the Lord Jesus Christ: ‘Your people shall be willing in the day of Your power, in the beauties of holiness.’ There, Luther comments:³⁵ “Since human nature utterly lacks the ability to obey God, and yet **God would have the Ten Commandments kept** and obedience rendered to Him, He must undertake to change the old disobedient corrupt nature of man; must renew it; and create the sort of hearts, minds and wills that gladly and with pleasure render God a real and perfect obedience.”

Isaiah 1:21-23 condemns **harlotry**, **murder**, **theft**, and **neglect of the fatherless**. There, Luther comments:³⁶ “The Law of nature is the Law of God, and the Prophets teach the one person

owes love to the other. Therefore no one will be excused!"

In Matthew 5:17-27, Jesus says: "Don't think I have come to break down the Law or the Prophets! I have not come to break them down, but to finish constructing them.... Not one jot or tittle shall in any way pass away from the Law.... Therefore, whosoever shall break one of these least Commandments and shall teach man so, he shall be called the least.... For I tell you, that unless your righteousness shall exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall no way enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.... You shall not kill!.... You shall not commit adultery!"

Here, Luther comments:³⁷ "The Lord Christ...begins from the bottom, by clarifying and commanding the Law.... He explains from the outset that He has no intention of abolishing the Law, but had come for the very purpose of correcting the teaching of the Law in opposition to those [the Scribes and the Pharisees] who were weakening it by their teaching....

"Christ answers: 'No, certainly I have no intention of destroying the Law or the Prophets!... If anyone despises or departs from the smallest Commandment in His teaching, he will be thrown out of the Kingdom of heaven.... I do not intend to bring another law or a new law'....

"What the Gospel or the preaching of Christ brings, is not a new doctrine to undo or change the Law.... The Law is so rich and perfect, that no one needs to add anything to it.... Therefore no one, not even Christ Himself, can improve upon the Law.... He does not go beyond the Law.... What is said here, therefore, is not different from what St. Paul says (Romans 3:31): 'Do we then overthrow the Law, by faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the Law!'"

In Matthew 22:37-40, Jesus states: "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind!' This is the first and great Commandment. And the second is like unto it, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself!' On these two Commandments, hang all the Law and the Prophets."

On this, Luther preached:³⁸ "The Law indicates what is wrong with a man. Then, when Christ comes, He says: 'Now we want to establish the Law!' For He comes Who helps to fulfil. As He says [in Matthew 5:17]: 'I did not come to destroy the Law so that there should be no Law, but in order to fulfil it Myself and to bring help and strength and the Holy Spirit through Whom you too may fulfil it.' I do not want idle Christians!"

Romans 2:14-15 states that even the Heathen, who too descend from their ancestor and federal head the Pre-Mosaic Adam, "show the work of the Law written in their hearts." As Luther concludes:³⁹ "This Law is impressed upon all people, Jews and Gentiles, and to this Law all people are bound.... The whole transmitted law is nothing but the Law of nature, which cannot be unknown to anyone, on account of which no one can be excused."

Indeed, "through faith...we establish the Law." Romans 3:31. "I would not have known sin, but by the Law; for I would not have known covetousness if the Law had not said: 'you shall not covet!' Romans 7:7 *cf.* Genesis 3:6 (before the fall!). 'For this: 'you shall not commit adultery!'; 'you shall not kill!'; 'you shall not steal!'; 'you shall not bear false witness!'; 'your

shall not covet!’ - is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, ‘you shall love your neighbour as yourself!’” Romans 13:9. Cf. Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 5:17-32 & 7:12 & 19:17-19 & 22:37-40; Galatians 5:14 & 6:2; and James 1:25 & 2:8-12.

In Romans 8:3-4, Paul states that God sent His Own Son, "so that the righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. Here Luther observes⁴⁰ that "the content of the Law...is God’s good will for men [and] remains unchanged, so that justification liberates fallen man from moral inability in order that he may fulfil it. Because Christ and His Spirit live in men by grace and through faith in the Triune God, they thus do what the Law requires of Them. Christ does this in them. The Spirit urges inside of them to love God and His Law, so that now they have joy therein (Romans 7:22)." ‘For I delight in the Law of God, according to the inward man!’

Declares Luther:⁴¹ "The grace of God, which Christ has bestowed on me because I believe in Him, makes the First Commandment a pleasure for me.... I sense that I can do it. I have started with the lesson, and have already mastered the ABCs.... Formerly, I found that I had no delight in the Law. But now I discover that the Law is precious and good; that it was given to me for my life. And now it is pleasing to me. Formerly it told me what to do. Now I am beginning to conform to its requests. So that now I praise, laud, and serve God!"

On Second Corinthians 3:3-18, the Apostle Paul insists that the Lord by His Spirit keeps on engraving the Law of God into the tablets of the heart of the Christian and changing them from glory into yet greater glory. And in a sermon thereon, Luther insists⁴² that "no one doubts that the Ten Commandments must be taught and, what is much more, must be kept."

Indeed, Luther once autographed someone’s Bible. Therein, he then wrote:⁴³ ‘The Commandments must be kept; otherwise there is no life, but only death.’

* * * * *

So much for Luther on the Pre-Mosaic Commandments, and on sins and crimes thereagainst. Now let us take a look at the Decalogical Law of God in Luther’s early treatises.

Luther started off the Protestant Reformation of Christianity in 1517. In his 1520 *Discussion of Confession*, in which he rejects the Romish concept of penance through priests, he writes:⁴⁴ ‘We ought therefore to look briefly at the Commandments of God – in which, if they are rightly understood, all sins are, without doubt, contained.’

Luther steadily maintains that the Ten Commandments were a complete guide to holy living, and that every possible sin is prohibited somewhere in the Decalogue. See his 1518 *Short Directions as to how one should Confess*; and his 1950 *Short Form of the Ten Commandments*.

‘For example,’ writes Luther, ⁴⁵ ‘as regards the Commandment ‘you shall not commit adultery!’ – let the penitent quickly say in what manner he has given place to lust, either in act or word, or by consent, just as though he were describing himself entirely, with all his limbs and senses in that Commandment.... So [too] in the case of the Commandment ‘you shall not kill!’ Let him quickly say by what kind of wrath he has sinned – whether by hatred, slander or cursing,

or by the act of murder itself. And so with the rest – as I have tried to show in my *Praeceptorium*, and my writings on the Decalogue.”

In his 1520 *Treatise on Good Works*, Luther gives an exposition of the Ten Commandments - running to almost a hundred pages. It begins:⁴⁶ “We ought first to know that there are no good works except those which God has commanded.... Therefore, whoever wishes to know and to do good works - needs nothing else than to know God*s Commandments.

“Thus Christ says, Matthew 19, ‘if you wish to enter into life - keep the Commandments!*

And when the young man asks Him, Matthew 19, what he should do that he may inherit eternal life - Christ set before him naught else but the Ten Commandments....

“This is the work of the First Commandment, which commands: ‘you shall have no other gods!’ This means: ‘Since I alone am God, you shall place all your confidence, trust and faith in Me alone, and in no one else’.... This faith, faithfulness, confidence deep in the heart, is the true fulfilling of the First Commandment. Without this, there is no other work that is able to satisfy this Commandment. And as this Commandment is the very first, highest and best from which all the others proceed - in which they exist and by which they are directed and measured.... The First Commandment forbids us to have other gods: and thereby commands that we have...the true God by a firm faith, trust, confidence, hope and love.”

As previously noted, therein following the bad habit of the idolatrous Mediaeval Church, even Luther unwittingly combines the First and the Second Commandments into what he calls the First Commandment. He misnumbers the Biblical Third Commandment through the Ninth Commandment, as the mediaeval ‘Second Commandment’ through the mediaeval ‘Eighth Commandment.’ And, in order still to end up with precisely Ten Commandments, he then splits the Biblical Tenth Commandment into the mediaeval Ninth Commandment ‘you shall not covet your neighbour’s house!’ and the mediaeval Tenth Commandment ‘you shall not covet your neighbour’s wife [*etc.*]!’

Luther does this and follows the uninspired and uninspiring mediaeval division and subdivisions of the Decalogue, instead of rather following the inspired Old Testament Hebrew and the inspired Pauline New Testament and even the later uninspired Jewish understanding that the Biblical Tenth Commandment covers all forms of covetousness. See Romans 7:7’s ‘you shall not covet!’; and *cf.* too Ephesians 5:5 and Colossians 3:5. Yet interestingly, as we shall see below in his treatment of what he calls ‘the last two Commandments,’ also Luther confesses that ‘the two Commandments are drawn together by St. Paul into one, Romans 7!’⁴⁷

Referring to the Biblical Third Commandment, Luther describes it as ‘the work of the...Commandment that we shall ‘honour God*s Name and not take it in vain!’.... Yet this is not to be enough. But we are thereby also commanded to honour, call upon, glorify, preach and praise His Name.... If you had nothing else at all to do, would you not have enough to do with this Commandment alone: that you without ceasing bless, sing, praise and honour God’s Name?... What work is there in heaven, except that of this...Commandment?

“The first work of this Commandment, then, is: to praise God in all His benefits, which are innumerable.... The second work of this Commandment is to be on one’s guard: to flee

from and to avoid all temporal honour and praise and never to seek a name for oneself or fame and a great reputation.... So deeply is nature sunk in the evil of its own conceit, and in its self-confidence contrary to these two first Commandments!.... Few and most spiritual men must they be - who, when honoured and praised, remain indifferent and unchanged so that they do not care for it nor feel pride and pleasure in it but remain entirely free [and] ascribe all their honour and fame to God, offering it to Him alone....

“The prophets...rejected such self-devised works, and preached only God’s Commandments. As one of them says, Jeremiah 7: ‘Thus saith the God of Israel unto you, ‘Take your burnt-offerings unto all your sacrifices!... For concerning these things..., this thing I commanded you: ‘Obey My voice...and walk in the way that I have commanded you!’” And Deuteronomy 12: ‘thou shall not do whatsoever is right in thine own eyes, but what your God has commanded you!’... And Psalm 1, ‘A godly man meditates in God’s Law day and night’.... And Joshua 23, ‘ye shall not go aside from My Commandments to the right hand or to the left!’...

“They must exercise themselves in the keeping of God’s Commandments. As it is written, Judges 3. So He deals with us also, when He sends us all kinds of misfortune. So exceedingly careful is He of us, that He may teach us and drive us to honour and call upon His Name, to gain confidence and faith toward Him, and so to fulfil the first two Commandments....

“Here, foolish men run into danger, and especially the work-righteous saints and those who want to be more than others. They teach men to make the sign of the cross. One...runs to the fortune-tellers; one seeks this, another that, if only they may hereby escape misfortune and be secure.

“It is beyond telling what a devilish allurements attaches to this trifling with sorcery, conjuring and superstition - all of which is done only so that men may not need God’s Name and put no trust in it. Here, great dishonour is done the Name of God and the first two Commandments - in that men look to the devil, men or creature for that which should be sought and found in God alone through naught but a pure faith and confidence and a cheerful meditation of and calling upon His Holy Name. Now examine this closely for yourself and see whether this is not a gross, mad perversion: the devil, men and creatures they must believe - and trust to them for the best!...

“Further works of this Commandment are: that we shall not swear, curse, lie, deceive and conjure with the Holy Name of God and otherwise misuse it.... We should prevent others from making sinful use of God’s Name by lying swearing, deceiving, cursing, conjuring, and otherwise. Here again, much occasion is given for doing good and warding off evil. But the greatest and most difficult work of this Commandment is to protect the Holy Name of God against all who misuse it in a spiritual manner.... I must step forth - and for the sake of God’s honour and Name, bring upon myself the enmity of all men. As Christ said to His disciples: ‘you shall be hated by all men for the sake of My Name.’”

Now follows the...Commandment: ‘you shall hallow the day of rest!’.... The first works of this Commandment are plain and outward, which we commonly call worship - such as...praying and hearing a sermon on holy days.... We should err from His Commandment neither to the left nor to the right; that is, neither with unbelief nor with tempting; but with simple

faith remain on the straight road, trusting Him, and yet setting Him no bounds.... We must also practise the outward prayer in its proper time..., as this Commandment requires....

“There is no better mirror in which to see your need, than simply the Ten Commandments: in which you will find what you lack and what you should seek.... All this has been said of prayer for personal needs, and of prayer in general. But the prayer which really belongs to this Commandment and is called a work of the Holy Day, is far better and greater and is to be made for all Christendom, for all the needs of all men, of foe and friend.... If you ask what you shall speak of and lament in your prayer, you can easily learn from the Ten Commandments and the Lord’s Prayer. Open your eyes and look into your life and the life of all Christians, especially of the spiritual estate.... You will find how faith, hope, love, obedience, chastity and every virtue languish, and all manner of heinous vices reign.... What a lack there is of good preachers!... Knaves, children, fools and women rule!...

“Spiritually understood, this Commandment has a yet far higher work which embraces the whole nature of man. Here it must be known that in Hebrew, ‘Sabbath’ means ‘rest.’ Because on the seventh day, God rested and ceased from all His works which He had made. Genesis 2. Therefore He commanded also that the seventh day should be kept holy, and that we cease from our works which we do the other six days.

“This Sabbath has now for us been changed into the Sunday.... The other days are called work-days. The Sunday is called rest-day or holiday or holy day. And would to God that in Christendom there were no holiday, except the Sunday!....

“The bodily rest is that of which we have spoken above. Namely, that we omit our business and work: in order that we may gather in the church..., hear God’s Word, and make common prayer.... The spiritual rest which God particularly intends in this Commandment, is this: that we not only cease from our labour and trade, but much more; that we let God alone work in us....

“Then go forward into the Second Table of the Commandments and see how disobedient you have been and still are toward father and mother and all in authority; how you sin against your neighbour with anger, hatred and evil words; how you are tempted to unchastity, covetousness and injustice in word and deed against your neighbour....

“The Second Table follows. ‘You shall honour your father and your mother!’.... From this Commandment, we learn that after the excellent works of the first...Commandments, there are no better works than to obey and serve all those who are set over us as superiors. For this reasons also - disobedience is a greater sin than murder, unchastity, theft and dishonesty and all that these may include. For we can in no better way learn how to distinguish between greater and lesser sins than by noting the order of the Commandments of God, although there are distinctions also within the works of each Commandment. For who does not know that to curse is a greater sin than to be angry; to strike than to curse; to strike father and mother more than to strike any one else? Thus these...Commandments teach us how we are to exercise ourselves in good works toward men, and first of all toward our superiors.

“The first work, is that we honour our own father and mother. And this honour consists

not only in respectful demeanour.... There are some [children] so wicked that they are ashamed of their parents because of poverty, lowly birth, deformity or dishonour, and allow these things to influence them more than the high Commandment of God Who is above all things and has with benevolent intent given them such parents to exercise and try them in His Commandment. But the matter becomes still worse when the child has children of its own; then love descends to them and detracts very much from the love and honour toward the parents....

‘Thus God’s Commandment secretly comes to naught while all seems good.... That is fulfilled, which is written in the Prophets Isaiah [57:5] and Jeremiah [7:31 & 32:35], that the children are destroyed by their own parents.... They do like the king Manasseh, who sacrificed his own son to the idol Moloch and burned him, Second Kings 21[:6, *cf.* abortion]. What else is it but to sacrifice one’s own child to the idol and to burn it, when parents train their children more in the way of the world than in the way of God?....

‘O, how perilous it is to be a father or a mother, where flesh and blood are supreme! For truly, the knowledge and fulfilment of the...Commandments depends altogether upon this Commandment. Since parents are commanded to teach them to their children. As Psalm 78[:5] says, ‘How strictly has He commanded our fathers that they should make known God’s Commandments to their children, so that the generation to come might know them and declare them to their children’s children!’....

‘What else here [in Matthew 25:35] are the hungry, thirsty, naked, imprisoned, sick, strangers - than the souls of our own children?.... See what great lessons are these, how many good works you have before you in your home with your child - that needs all these things like a hungry, thirsty, naked, poor, imprisoned, sick soul! O what a blessed marriage and home were that, where such parents were to be found! Truly, it would be a real church; a chosen cloister; yea, a paradise! Of such says Psalm 128: ‘Blessed are they that fear God and walk in His Commandments! You shall eat of the labour of your hands. Therefore you shall be happy, and it shall go well with you. Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine in your home, and your children around your table shall be like the young branches of laden olive trees’....

‘On the other hand, parents cannot earn eternal punishment in any way more easily - than by neglecting their own children in their own home and not teaching them the things which have been spoken of above.... This is shown by that word of Christ, Luke 23[:28f], ‘You daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me but for yourselves and for your children! The days are coming in which they shall say: ‘Blessed are the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never gave suck!’... The Commandment places the parents in honour, for the very purpose that the self-will of the children may be broken and that the children may become humble and meek....

‘This Commandment [also requires]...obedience of servants and workmen toward their lords and ladies, masters and mistresses. Of this, St. Paul says, Titus 2[:9f & First Timothy 6:1]: ‘You shall exhort servants, that they highly honour their masters; be obedient; do what pleases them; not cheating them nor opposing them!’.... On the other hand, the masters and mistresses should not rule their servant...roughly.... Of this, St. Paul says, Colossians 4[:1], ‘Masters, do to your servant that which is just and equal: knowing that you too have a Master in heaven!’....

‘Here I ought naturally also to say how a wife ought to be obedient, subject to her husband

as to her superior, give way to him, keep silent and give up to him, where it is a matter not contrary to God's commands. On the other hand, the husband should love his wife...and not deal strictly with her, of which matter St. Peter [First 3:6f] and St. Paul [Ephesians 5:20f & Colossians 3:18f] have said much. But this has its place in the further explanation of the Ten Commandments, and is easily inferred from these passages....

“Again, obedience is the duty of subjects, that they direct all their diligence and effort to do and to leave undone what their overlords desire of them.... But if it should happen, as it often does, that the temporal power and authorities, as they are called, should urge a subject to do contrary to the Commandments of God or hinder him from doing them – there, obedience ends; and that duty is annulled. Here a man must say as St. Peter says to the rulers of the Jews: ‘We ought to obey God rather than men!’ [Acts 5:29]....

‘The passions of anger and revenge of which the...Commandment says ‘you shall not kill!’... includes many, and dispels many vices, and is called meekness.... No one considers or examines himself how near or how far he be from meekness and the fulfilment of this Commandment. Although God has said that not he who does such works but he who keeps His Commandments shall enter into eternal life [John 14:15,21 & 15:10].... God says, Matthew 5[:22], ‘I say to you that whosoever is angry with his neighbour is in danger of the judgment’.... What remains then for the outward act – striking, wounding, killing, injuring, *etc.* - if the thought and words of anger are so severely condemned?!

‘But where there is true meekness, there the heart is pained at every evil which happens to one's enemy. And these are the true children and heirs of God and Brethren of Christ, Whose heart was so pained for us all when He died on the holy cross. Even so, we see a pious judge passing sentence upon the criminal with sorrow and regretting the death which the Law imposes....

‘Here we must watch that we be not meek contrary to God's honour and Commandment! For it is written of Moses, that he was the very meekest man on Earth. But yet, when the Jews had worshipped the golden calf and provoked God to anger, he put many of them to death and thereby made atonement before God.

‘Likewise it is not filling that the magistrates should be idle and allow sin to have sway, and that we say nothing. ... God's honour and Commandment we must protect, and injury or injustice to our neighbour we must prevent. The magistrates with the sword; the rest of us with reproof and rebuke; yet always with pity for those who have merited the punishment.

“You shall not commit adultery!’ In this Commandment too, a good work is commanded, which includes much and drives away much vice. It is called purity or chastity, of which much is written and preached. And it is well known to every one, only that it is not as carefully observed and practised as other works which are not commanded.

‘So ready are we to do what is not commanded, and to leave undone what is commanded! We see that the world is full of shameful works of unchastity, indecent words, tales and ditties; temptation to which is daily increased through gluttony and drunkenness, idleness, and frippery. Yet we go our way as if we were Christians! When we have been to church, have said our little

prayer: then we think our whole duty is done....

‘For this work of chastity is to be permanent - it will drive to many other good works: to fasting and temperance over against gluttony and drunkenness; to watching and early rising, over against laziness and excessive sleep; to work and labour, over against idleness. For gluttony, drunkenness, lying late abed, loafing and being without work - are weapons of unchastity, with which chastity is quickly overcome....

‘Some have also indicated more things which should be avoided, such as soft beds and clothes, so that we should avoid excessive adornment and neither associate nor talk with members of the opposite sex, nor even look upon them.... Each one must watch himself, and see what things are needful to him for chastity.... St. Peter says [Second Epistle 2:11]: ‘I beseech you, abstain from fleshly desires and lusts which war always against the soul!’ And St. Paul, Romans 6[:22]: ‘You shall not obey the body in its lusts!’ In these and like passages, it is shown that no one is without evil lust; but that everyone...must daily fight against it....

“You shall not steal!* This Commandment also has a work which embraces very many good works and is opposed to many vices.... It fights not only against theft and robbery, but against all stinting in temporal goods which men may practise toward one another: such as greed, usury, overcharging, and plating wares that sell as solid, counterfeit wares, short measures and weights.... Who could tell all the ready, novel, clever tricks which multiply daily in every trade by which everyone seeks his own gain through the other’s loss and forgets the rule [Matthew 7:12] which says: ‘Whatever you wish others to do to you, that you too must do to them.’ If everyone kept this rule before his eyes in his trade, business, and dealings with his neighbour - he would readily find how he ought to buy and sell, take and give, lend and give for nothing, promise and keep his promise, and the like....

‘Christ also teaches, Matthew 6[31f], that we should take no thought what we shall eat and drink.... The birds fly without worry and greed, and so we also should labour without worry and greed.. But if you do worry and are greedy, wishing that the roasted chicken fly into your mouth - worry and be greedy, and see whether you will thereby fulfil God’s Commandment and be saved!...

‘If the heart looks for divine favour and relies upon it, how is it possible that a man should be greedy and worry? He must be sure beyond a doubt that God cares for him. Therefore he does not cling to money. He uses it also with cheerful liberality for the benefit of his neighbour; and knows well that he will have enough, however much he may give away. For his God, Whom he trusts, will not lie to him nor forsake him....

‘In this Commandment, it can clearly be seen how all good works must be done in faith. For here every one most surely feels that the cause of covetousness is distrust, and the cause of liberality is faith. For because a man trusts God, he is generous and does not doubt that he will always have enough. On the other hand, a man is covetous and worries, because he does not trust God.... There take your enemies, the ungrateful; and do good to them! Then you will find how near you are to this Commandment, or how far from it.... Feed the hungry! If you do not feed him, you have, as far as you are concerned, slain him [cf. Matthew 25:35f]....

“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour!” This Commandment seems small, and yet is so great.... It includes no more than the work of that small member, the tongue, and is called... ‘telling the truth’.... It forbids many evil works of the tongue.... Those which are committed by speaking, and those which are committed by keeping silent. By speaking, when a man has an unjust law-suit and wants to prove and maintain his case by a false argument, catches his neighbour with subtilty, produces everything that strengthens and furthers his own cause and withholds and discounts everything that furthers his neighbour’s good cause.... Thus, he does not do to his neighbour as he would have his neighbour do to him [Matthew 7:12]....

“Thus some men do for the sake of gain.... Thus they intentionally allow their neighbour’s cause to be lost, although they know it is just. This evil is at present so common - that I fear no court is held and no suit tried, but that one side sins against this Commandment.... He who would keep this Commandment would have both hands full, doing only those good works which concern the tongue....

“In this Commandment, again you see briefly that faith must be the master-workman in this work too.... Without it, no one has courage to do this work.... Every one may easily by this Commandment test and weigh himself whether he be a Christian and truly believe in Christ; and thus whether he is doing good works, or no[t]....

“A man, although he neglect all else, has enough to do with all his powers to keep the Commandments of God.... The last two Commandments [*viz.* the Tenth against covetousness]...forbid(s) evil desires of the body for pleasure and for temporal goods.... These evil desires do no harm to our neighbour. And yet they continue unto the grave; and the strife in us against them, endures unto death. Therefore these...are drawn together by St. Paul into one, Romans 7:7, and are set as a goal.” ‘You shall not covet!’

In his 1520 article *The Papacy at Rome*, sub-titled *An Answer to the Celebrated Romanist at Leipzig*, Luther again underscores God’s Commandments. There, he rightly declares:⁴⁸ “Christ Himself said [Matthew 5:18]: ‘Not one jot or tittle of the Law shall pass away!’”

In his *Open Letter to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation* of the same year, Luther further condemns⁴⁹ that “misunderstanding of the Divine Commandments” exhibited by a “foolish fellow” who thinks to gloss over...disobedience and contempt of the Divine Commandments.” He adds that “the popes have helped this along.... The people are excited, stirred up, torn away from God’s Commandments and drawn toward their own deluded undertakings....

“All pilgrimages should be given up. For there is in them nothing good, no Commandment, no obedience; but, on the contrary, numberless occasions for sin and for the despising of God’s Commandments.... Show him how to apply the money and labour necessary for the pilgrimage, to the keeping of God’s Commandments!...

“Such vows [of pilgrimage] ought to be forbidden and cancelled, and the Commandment of God exalted! And he ought to be shown that he should henceforth be satisfied with the vow he made in Baptism, to keep the Commandments of God!....

‘No one wants to walk in the straight and common path of God’s Commandments. Everyone makes himself new roads and new vows, as though he had fulfilled all the Commandments of God!.... For what is not commanded, and is concerned for self rather than for the Commandments of God, that is surely the devil himself!

In Luther’s 1520 *Treatise on Christian Liberty*, he insists:⁵⁰ ‘The Commandments indeed teach things that are good. But the things taught are not done as soon as taught.... ‘You shall not covet!’ is a command which convicts us all of being sinners.... When a man through the Commandments has learned to know his weakness and has become troubled as to how he may satisfy the Law, since the Law must be fulfilled so that not a jot or tittle shall perish [Matthew 5:18]...; then, being truly humbled and reduced to nothing in his own eyes, he finds in himself no means of justification and salvation....

‘If you wish to fulfil the Law and not to covet, as the Law demands, come believe in Christ in Whom...righteousness...and all things are promised you! If you believe, you shall have all; if you believe not, you shall lack all. For what is impossible for you in all the works of the Law, many as they are but all useless, you will accomplish in a short and easy way through faith.... Thus the promises of God give what the Commandments of God ask, and fulfil what the Law prescribes: so that all things may be of God alone, both the Commandments and the fulfilling of the Commandments....

‘We should think of the works of a Christian man who is justified and saved by faith...just as we would think of the works which Adam and Eve did in Paradise and all their children would have done if they had not sinned.... Adam was created by God righteous and upright and without sin, so that he had no need of being justified and made upright through his dressing and keeping the garden. But, so that he might not be idle, the Lord gave him a work to do – to cultivate and to protect the garden.

‘These would truly have been the freest of works done only to please God and not to obtain righteousness, which Adam already had in full measure and which would have been the birthright of us all. Such also are the works of a believer. Through his faith, he has been restored to Paradise and created anew; has no need of works so that he may become or be righteous; but, so that he may not be idle and may provide for and keep his body, he must do such works freely, only to please God.’

Says Luther’s 1520 *Brief Explanation of the Ten Commandments, The Creeds, and the Lord’s Prayer*:⁵¹ ‘The **ordinary** Christian...is **required** to learn and **know** the Ten Commandments; the [Apostles’ Creed; the Lord’s Prayer. This has not come to pass without **God’s special ordering**....

‘A man needs to know...what he ought to do and what he ought not to do.... The **Commandments** teach a man to know his illness.... The **Creed** shows him and teaches him where he may find the remedy, the grace which helps him to become a good man, and to keep the Commandments.... The **Lord’s Prayer** teaches him how to ask for this grace, get it, and take it to himself.... The grace is given, and by the fulfilment of **God’s Commandments**, he is saved. These are the three chief things in all the Scriptures. Therefore we begin at the beginning, with **the Commandments** which are the first thing....

“The First Table of Moses...contains the first three [read: four!] Commandments. In these, man is taught his duty toward God, what things he is in duty bound to do and what to leave undone.

“The First Commandment teaches how man should treat God inwardly, in the heart.... How he ought always to remember Him and think about Him and esteem Him.... This Commandment is, ‘You shall have no other gods!’

“The Second [read: Third!] Commandment teaches how man should treat God outwardly, in words before other men.... That is, he shall honour God’s Name.... This Commandment is, ‘You shall not take the Name of the Lord your God in vain!’

“The Third [read: Fourth!] Commandment teaches how man should act toward God outwardly in deeds; that is, in the worship of God. It is, ‘You shall hallow the holy day!’..

“The Second Table of Moses...contains the other...Commandments. In these, man is taught what he is in duty bound to do and not to do to other men....

“The Fourth [read: Fifth!] Commandment teaches how one is to conduct oneself toward all the authorities who are God’s representatives.... Such authorities are father and mother, spiritual and temporal lords, *etc.* It is, ‘Honour your father and your mother!’

“The Second [Commandment of the Second Table alias the Sixth Commandment] teaches how one is to conduct oneself toward one’s neighbour in matters that concern his person, not to do him injury but to benefit and help him when he is in need. It is, ‘You shall not kill!’

“The Third [Commandment of the Second Table alias the Seventh Commandment] teaches how one is to conduct oneself toward the best possession one’s neighbour has next to his person: that is, toward his wife, his child, his friend. He is to put no shame upon them, but to preserve their honour.... It is, ‘You shall not commit adultery!’

“The Fourth [Commandment of the Second Table alias the Eighth Commandment] teaches how one is to conduct oneself toward one’s neighbour’s temporal possessions, not to take them from him or hinder him in their use but to aid him in increasing them. It is, ‘You shall not steal!’

“The Fifth [Commandment of the Second Table alias the Ninth Commandment] teaches how one is to conduct oneself toward one’s neighbour’s worldly honour and good name, not to impair them but to increase and guard and protect them. It is, ‘You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour!’

So then, it is forbidden to harm one’s neighbour in any of his possessions, and it is commanded to advance his interests. If we consider the Law of nature, we find how just and right all these Commandments are. For there is no act here commanded toward God or one’s neighbour that each of us would not wish to have done toward himself if he were God or in God’s place or his neighbour’s.

“The last two Commandments [Luther’s Ninth and Tenth alias the Bible’s Tenth Commandment] teach[es] how wicked human nature is, and how pure we should be from all the desires of the flesh and desires for this world’s good.... They are [meaning: It is], ‘You shall not covet your neighbour’s house; you shall not covet your neighbour’s wife nor his manservant nor his maidservant nor his cattle nor anything that is your neighbour’s!’...

“Christ Himself says [Matthew 7:12]: ‘Whatsoever you would that men should do to do, do even so to them; this is the whole Law!’... No one wishes to endure disobedience, a wife’s impurity, robbery, lying, deceit, slander; but everyone wishes to find in his neighbour kindness, thankfulness, helpfulness, truth and fidelity. All this the Ten Commandments require.”

Luther then deals with “the transgression of the Commandments. Against the First,” he condemns the following: “He who in his tribulation seeks the help of sorcery, black art, or witchcraft. He who uses...charms and the like. He who uses divining-rods and incantations and practises crystal-gazing.... He who orders his life and work by lucky days, the signs of the zodiac, and the advice of the fortune-tellers. He who seeks by charms and incantations to protect himself, his cattle, his house, his children and all his property against wolves, iron, fire and water.

“He who blames his misfortunes and tribulations on the devil or on wicked men and does not accept them with praise and love, as good and evil which come from God alone, and who does not ascribe them to God with thanksgiving and willing patience. He who tempts God, and needlessly puts himself in danger of body or soul. He who glories in his piety, his wisdom, or other spiritual gifts. He who honours God...only for the sake of temporal gain, and is forgetful of his soul’s need.

“He who does not trust in God at all times, and is not confident of God’s mercy in all he does. He who doubts concerning the faith or the grace of God. He who does not keep back others from unbelief and doubt, and does not help them so far as in him lies to believe and trust in God’s grace. Here too belong all forms of unbelief, despair, and misbelief.

“Against the Second” [meaning the Third Commandment], Luther condemns the following: “He who swears needlessly or habitually. He who perjures himself, or breaks a vow. He who vows or swears to do evil. He who curses by God’s Name. He who tells foolish tales about God, and frivolously perverts the words of Scripture [as is today frequently done by ‘Evanjellyfish’ on their pulpits!].... He who calls upon God’s Name falsely, as do the heretics and all vainglorious saints. He who does not praise God’s Name in all that befalls him. He who does not resist those that dishonour the Name of God, use it falsely, and work evil by it. Here belong all the sins of vainglory and spiritual pride.”

“Against the Third” [meaning the Fourth Commandment], Luther condemns the following: “He who is given to gluttony, drunkenness, gambling, dancing, idleness and unchastity. He who is lazy, who...indulges in idle talk. He who without special need works and transacts business on the Lord’s day....

“Against the Fourth” [meaning the Fifth Commandment], Luther condemns the following: “He who is ashamed of his parents because of their poverty, their failings, or their lowly position.

He who does not provide them with food and clothing in their need. Much more, he who curses them, speaks evil about them, hates them, and disobeys them. He who does not from the heart esteem them highly because of God's Commandment. He who does not honour them, even though they do wrong and violence. He who does not keep the Commandments of the Christian Church.... He who dishonours, slanders and insults the priestly [meaning the presbyterial] office. He who does not pay honour, allegiance and obedience to his lords and those in authority, be they good or bad. Among the transgressors of this Commandment are all heretics, schismatics, apostates, excommunicates, hardened sinners and the like. He who does not help men to keep this Commandment and to resist those who break it. Here belong all forms of pride and disobedience.

“Against the Fifth” [meaning the Sixth Commandment], Luther condemns the following: “He who is angry with his neighbour. He who says to his neighbour *Raca*, which stands for all terms of anger and hatred [Matthew 5:22].... He who scolds about his neighbour's sins or failings, and does not rather cover and excuse them. He who forgives not his enemies nor prays for them, is not kindly disposed toward them, and does them no good. This Commandment includes also all the sins of anger and hatred such as murder, war, robbery, arson, quarrelling, contention, envy of a neighbour's good fortune and joy over his misfortune....

“Against the Sixth” [meaning the Seventh Commandment], Luther condemns the following: “He who seduces virgins, commits adultery, and is guilty of incest and like unchastity. He who uses unnatural means to satisfy his desires.... He who arouses or displays evil desires with obscene words, songs, tales or pictures. He who by looks, touch, or thoughts arouses his own desires and defiles himself. He who does not avoid the causes of unchastity, such as gluttony, drunkenness, idleness, laziness, oversleeping and intimate association with men or women. He who by extravagant dress or demeanour incites others to unchastity. He who gives house, place, time, or help to the commission of this sin. He who does not by word and deed help others to preserve their chastity.

“Against the Seventh” [meaning the Eighth Commandment], Luther condemns the following: “He who practises thievery, robbery, and usury. He who uses false weights and measures, or sells bad wares for good. He who receives bequests and incomes dishonestly. He who withholds wages that have been earned, and repudiates a debt. He who will not lend to a needy neighbour.... All who are avaricious and make haste to be rich, and do any of those other things by which a neighbour's property is withheld or taken away. He who does not protect another against loss. He who does not warn another against loss. He who places an obstacle in the way of his neighbour's profit and begrudges his neighbour's gains.

“Against the Eighth” [meaning the Ninth Commandment], Luther condemns the following: “He who conceals or suppresses the truth in a court of law. He who lies and deceives to another's hurt. All hurtful flatterers, whisperers, and double-dealers. He who speaks evil of his neighbour's possessions, life, words and works, and demeans them. He who gives place to slanderers, helps them on and does not resist them. He who does not use his tongue to defend his neighbour's good name. He who does not rebuke the slanderer. He who does not say all good of every man and keep silent about all evil. He who conceals or does not defend the truth.

“The last two Commandments” [meaning the Tenth Commandment], explains Luther,

“are set as a goal to which we are to attain, toward which through repentance and by the help and grace of God we are daily to strive. For wicked inclinations do not wholly die until the flesh turns to dust and is new created....

“It is possible to sin against all the Commandments by bidding, advising and helping others to sin against them.... From all this, it follows that the Commandments command nothing but love.... Nothing but love fulfils the Commandments.... Therefore St. Paul says [Romans 13:10] that love is the fulfilling of all Commandments; just as evil ‘love’ [sic] is the transgression of all Commandments.”

Luther then deals with “the fulfilment of the Commandments. Of the First,” he states it means: “To fear and love God in true faith.... Of the Second” [meaning the Third Commandment], Luther states it means: “To praise, honour, bless and call upon God’s Name.... Of the Third” [meaning the Fourth Commandment], Luther states it means “all that is commanded about worship, the hearing of sermons, and good works....

“Of the Fourth” [meaning the Fifth Commandment], Luther states it means: “Willing obedience, humility, submission to all authority because it is God’s good-pleasure. As the Apostle St. Peter says [First Epistle 2:18], without retort, complaint or murmuring. Here belongs all that is written about obedience, humility, submissiveness, and reverence.

“Of the Fifth” [meaning the Sixth Commandment], Luther states it means: “Patience, meekness, kindness, peacefulness, mercy, and a heart in all things sweet and kindly, without hatred...or bitterness toward any man.... Of the Sixth” [meaning the Seventh Commandment], Luther states it means: “Chastity, purity and modesty.... Of the Seventh” [meaning the Eighth Commandment], Luther states it means: “Poverty of spirit, charity, willingness to lend..., and a life free from greed and avarice.... “Of the Eighth” [meaning the Ninth Commandment], Luther states it means: “A peaceful wholesome tongue that injures no one and profits every one; that reconciles those that are at enmity, apologizes to those that are slandered, and takes their part....

“Of the Last Two [Commandments, meaning the Tenth Commandment], Luther explains “that entire chastity and utter despising of temporal desire and possessions...are perfectly attained only in the life to come. In all these works we see nothing else than the love of others: that is, of God and of one’s neighbour....

“The **Ten Commandments** contain, in a very brief and orderly manner, all the teaching that is needful for man’s life. And if a man desires to keep them, he has good works for every hour of his life and has no need to choose him other works...and do what is not commanded. All this is evident from the fact that these Commandments teach...only what he should do and not do for others, God and man.... So the Ten Commandments teach.... Knowing this, we must learn next whence we shall get the power to lead good lives and to keep the Commandments” – from the Gospel, in the *Creed*!

According to Luther, the Ten Commandments are reflected also in *the Lord’s Prayer*. Thus he claims that “*Hallowed be Your Name!*” also means: “Grant that by our good works and life, all other men may be stirred up to praise not us but You in us and to honour Your Name!”

Luther further claims that ‘*May Your Kingdom come!*’ also means: ‘Help us...so that all our heart, mind and spirit...may obediently serve You, keep Your Commandments and do Your will! He also claims that ‘*May Your will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven!*’ means: ‘Help us that all our members - eyes, tongue, heart, hands, feet - be not submissive to their own desires or will but be taken captive...in Your will!.... Preserve us from the cruel vice of aspersion, slander, back-biting, malicious judging, condemning and accusing of other men!’ And so on.

In Luther’s 1521 famous polemical satire *Answer to the Superchristian, Superspiritual and Superlearned Book of Goat Emser of Leipzig*, he cites⁵² Second Corinthians 3:3f. That reads: ‘You are an epistle of Christ through our ministry, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.’

Antinomians often try to twist this passage to try to vitiate the Ten Commandments as the rule for Christian conduct. But Luther here argues to the contrary. Here, ‘the Spirit...gives strength and power to the heart’ and ‘creates a new man who grows to love God’s Commandments and does with joy all that he ought to do.... By this Spirit or grace a man does what the Law commands, and satisfies it.’

Also in his anti-celibacy tract *To the Knights of the Teutonic Order*, sub-titled *An Exhortation that they lay aside False-Chastity and take upon them the True Chastity of Wedlock*, Luther again appeals to (especially the Fifth and Seventh of) the Ten Commandments. There he argues⁵³ that the ‘vow of celibacy...contradicts this word of God, ‘It is My will that you be not alone but have a helpmate!’ [Genesis 2:18]....

‘Celibates live under the terrible sentence in which Daniel [11:37] says, ‘he will not respect married women.’ Which is as much as to say:...he will avoid married women not because he loves chastity or serves God...but so that he may have an easy life...and yet neither live chastely nor serve God but be so much the freer to practise harlotry and knavery....

‘For this reason also, God has done marriage the honour of putting it into the...Commandment immediately after the honour due to Him, and commands ‘you shall honour father and mother!’ Show me an honour in Heaven or on Earth, apart from the honour of God, that can equal this honour! Neither the secular nor the spiritual estate has been so highly honoured. And if God had given utterance to nothing more than this...Commandment with reference to married life, men ought to have learned quite well from this Commandment that in God’s sight there is no higher office, estate, condition and work (next to the Gospel which concerns God Himself) than the estate of marriage.’

In Luther’s 1523 treatise *Secular Authority: To What Extent it Should Be Obeyed*, he explains:⁵⁴ ‘We must firmly establish secular law.... The passages which establish this, are the following: Romans 13, ‘let every soul be subject to power and authority’; First Peter 2, ‘be subject to every kind of human ordinance, whether to the King as supreme or to the Governors as to those sent by him for the punishing of the evil and for the reward of the good.’

Among Luther’s liturgical writings, are his many hymns for congregational worship. Two such are his 1524 catechetical hymns: *Mensch, wilt du leben seliglich?* (alias *Man, would you live right blissfully?*); and his *Die sind die heiligen zehn Gebot* (alias *These are the holy Ten*

Commands, set to a 14th-century folksong. In Luther's original German he made both of these hymns about the Decalogue, to rhyme.⁵⁵ Below are versions of the official English translations. In them, I myself (where necessary) have substituted more modern words and also striven to improve their rhymes.

The first, as in the case of the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, is suitable "for **catechising** such as are of **weaker capacity**"⁵⁶ toward their admission to the Lord's Table at adolescence. Here, then, is Luther's *Man, would you live right blissfully?* By *Man* (or *Mensch*), Luther meant human being. As is apparent from many of its words, he had especially children in view. Accordingly, we have taken the liberty to change its first word from "Man" to "Child." The tune is *Walter*, but it is singable also to the well-known tune of *Old Hundredth* (L.M.). ***

'Child, would you live right blissfully
and dwell with God eternally?
Then, do observe the Ten Commands
Which God gave us from His Own hands!

Your God and Lord I am always;
no other god shall make you stray;
your heart must ever trust in Me;
For in My Kingdom, you must be!

My Name to honour, you shall heed
and call on Me in time of need!
Hallow shall you My sabbath day
so that I work in you always!

Father and mother you shall hold
in honour next to Me, your Lord!
None kill, nor yield to anger wild!
And too, keep wedlock undefiled!

From anyone to steal, beware!
'Gainst none shall you false witness bear!
Your neighbour's wife you shall not eye;
let his, be his - until he die!"⁵⁷

The second is, as in the case of the *Westminster Larger Catechism*, suitable for "such as have made **some proficiency** in the knowledge of the grounds of religion."⁵⁸ It clearly reflects a greater degree of maturity with the singers, than does the previous hymn above.

Here, then, is Luther's *These are the holy Ten Commands*.⁵⁹ The tune is *Erfurt*, but it is singable also to the well-known tune of *Duke Street* (L.M.)

'These are the holy Ten Commands
which came to us from God's own hands,
by Moses who obeyed His will

right at the top of Sinai's hill

You shall not speak, like idle word,
the name of God Who is the Lord!
As right or good, you shall not praise
except for what God does and says!

Keep holy too the sabbath day,
that rest you and your household may;
from all your work you must be free,
so that God's work in you shall be!

Honour you shall, and shall obey
your parents every single day;
to serve them, ready be at hand,
so that you live long in the land!

In wrathfulness you shall not kill
nor hate nor take revenge for ill;
but patience keep, and gentle mood,
and even to your foe do good!

Your marriage-bond you shall keep clean,
so that your heart no other mean;
your life you must keep pure and free,
with temperance and chastity!

Steal not your neighbour's goods or gold
nor profit by his sweat untold;
but open wide your kindly hand
to the impover'ished in your land!

You shall not lying stories hear
nor 'gainst your neighbour falsely swear;
his innocence you must rescue
and hide his shame from others' view!

Your neighbour's wife or house to win
you shall not seek, nor aught within;
but wish that all his goods may be,
like yours, enjoyed till jubilee!

To us come these Commands, that so
you, son of man, your sins may know.
Thus may you full attention give
to how before God you should live!

May Christ our Lord help us in this,
for He our Mediator is!
Our own work is a hopeless thing;
it, only God's wrath down can bring!"

At Hymn No. 287 in *The Lutheran Hymnal*, and at Hymn No. 180 in the *Kirchengesangbuch* of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, the latter hymn above is rendered in the 1854 translation by Massie. That runs⁶⁰ as follows:

“That man a godly life might live
God did these Ten Commandments give
by His true servant Moses, high
upon the Mount Sinai.
Have mercy, Lord!

By idle word and speech profane
take not My holy name in vain;
and praise but that as good and true
which I Myself say and do!
Have mercy, Lord!

I am thy Lord and God alone,
No other god beside Me own;
put thy whole confidence in Me
and love Me e'er cordially!
Have mercy, Lord!

Give to thy parents honor due;
be dutiful and loving, too;
and help them when their strength decays!
So shalt thou have length of days.
Have mercy, Lord!

In sinful wrath, thou shalt not kill
nor hate nor render ill for ill;
be patient and of gentle mood,
and to thy foe do thou good!
Have mercy, Lord!

Be faithful to thy marriage vows;
thy heart give only to thy spouse;
thy life keep pure, and lest thou sin,
use temperance and discipline!
Have mercy, Lord!

Steal not; all usury abhor,
nor wring their lifeblood from the poor,

but open wide thy loving hand
to all the poor in the land!
Have mercy, Lord!

Bear not false witness nor belie
thy neighbor by foul calumny;
defend his innocence from blame
with charity hide his shame!
Have mercy, Lord!

Thy neighbor's house desire thou not,
his wife, nor aught that he hath got;
but wish that his such good may be,
as thy heart doth wish for thee!
Have mercy, Lord!

God these Commandments gave therein
to show thee, child of man, thy sin
and make thee also well perceive
how man unto God should live!
Have mercy, Lord!

Help us, when we to Jesus flee,
a Mediator have in Thee!
Our works cannot salvation gain;
they merit but endless pain.
Have mercy, Lord!

The singing today of both of Luther's above two hymns, the first in Sunday Schools and in Catechism Classes to and by young people and the second by the entire people of God at weekly Congregational Worship, would greatly correct the modern antinomianized Sunday Circus miscalled "Church." Indeed, it would help change it back into the True Church of the Apostles and of the Reformation!

In 1525, Luther writes in his *Against the 'Heavenly Prophets'*:⁶¹ "The Jews also erred and worshipped idols instead of God.... 'Thou shalt not kill, commit adultery, steal, *etc.*' are...the Law of nature written in each man's heart, as St. Paul teaches (Romans 2[:15]).

"Also Christ Himself (Matthew 7[:12]) includes all of the Law and the Prophets in this Law of nature [*cf.* too Matthew 5:17-32*f.*]. Paul does the same thing in Romans 13[:9].... There the Law remains, and is not abrogated."

Also in 1525, Luther writes in his *How Christians Should Regard Moses*:⁶² "The Gentiles have certain laws in common with the Jews, such as these: there is one God; no one is to wrong another; no one is to commit adultery, or murder, or steal.... This is written by nature into their hearts [Romans 2:15].... It is natural to honour God, not to steal, not to commit adultery, not to bear false witness, not to murder.... What Moses commands, is nothing new. For what God had

given the Jews from Heaven, He has also implanted in men by nature.... The Ten Commandments are a mirror of our life, in which we can see wherein we are lacking.”

In Luther’s Preface to his 1526 *The German Order of Service*, he writes⁶³ that “the German Service needs an easily understood, plain, simple **catechism**. Catechism means instruction...in the Christian religion.... This instruction or direction I know not how to put in a clearer or better way than has been done since the beginning of Christendom and retained to our own day -- namely in these three: the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Our Father.

“These three contain, simply and briefly, about everything a Christian **needs** to **know**. This instruction **must** be **given**...and **repeated** or read aloud evenings and mornings **in the homes** for the children and the servants, if we want to **train them as Christians**. They should not merely learn to say the words by heart, as heretofore, but with each part they should be asked **questions** and give **answer** [cf. Luke 2:41-47 & Hebrews 5:12 to 6:6] what each part means and how they understand it....

“In the Ten Commandments, one must ask: What does the first Commandment mean, the second, the third, and the other Commandments?.... If we wish to **train** children, we must become children with them.

“Would to God such ‘child’s play’ were widely practised! In a short time we would have a wealth of Christian people, souls becoming rich in Scripture and the knowledge of God - until they would, of their own accord...comprehend all Scripture.”

1529 saw the appearance of Luther’s voluminous *Large Catechism*. There, among other things, he states:⁶⁴ “In the Ten Commandments, we have a summary of divine teaching. They tell us what we must do to make our whole life pleasing to God; and they show us the true fountain from which, and the channel in which, all good works must flow. No deed or conduct can be good or pleasing to God unless it is in accord with the Ten Commandments, however great and precious it may be in the eyes of the world....

“The Ten Commandments are written in the hearts of all men; but the Creed, no human wisdom can comprehend.... Through this knowledge, we come to love and to like all Commandments of God. Since we see that God gives Himself to us entirely, with all that He has and is able to do, in order to aid and guide us in keeping the Ten Commandments.”

The same year saw the appearance also of Luther’s *Small Catechism*, designed to prepare Christian youth for their admission to the Lord’s Table at adolescence. Right at its very outset, he begins⁶⁵ with “The Ten Commandments” and says that “they should be clearly and simply explained to every household by the head of the family.” He then, with omission of the Second, and then renumbering the rest and splitting the Tenth into two Commandments so as to keep exactly ten, enunciates them one by one, after which follow his own catechetical questions and answers. Thus:

“You shall have no other gods!” What does this mean? Answer: We should fear and love God, and trust in Him above all things....

“You shall not take the Name of your God in vain!” What does this mean? Answer: We should so fear and love God as not to curse, swear, conjure, lie, or deceive, by His Name; but call upon it in every time of need, pray, praise, and give thanks....

“You shall keep holy the sabbath day!” What does this mean? Answer: “We should so fear and love God as not to despise preaching and His Word, but deem it holy, and willingly hear and learn it....

“You shall honour your father and your mother!” What does this mean? Answer: We should so fear and love God as not to despise nor provoke our parents and rulers, but honour, serve, obey, love, and esteem them....

“You shall not kill!” What does this mean? Answer: We should so fear and love God as not to do our neighbour any injury or harm in his body, but help and befriend him in all bodily troubles....

“You shall not commit adultery!” What does this mean? Answer: We should so fear and love God as to be chaste and pure in our words and deeds, and that husband and wife should love and honour each other....

“You shall not steal!” What does this mean? Answer: We should so fear and love God as not to take our neighbour’s money or property, nor get it by false wares or dealing, but help him to improve and protect his property and livelihood....

“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour!” What does this mean? Answer: We should so fear and love God as to be not to belie, betray, or slander our neighbour, nor injure his character, but defend him, speak well of him, and make the best of all he does....

“You shall not covet your neighbour’s house!” What does this mean? Answer: We should so fear and love God as to be not to try to defraud our neighbour of his inheritance or home, nor obtain it under pretext of a legal right, but aid and assist him to keep it....

“You shall not covet your neighbour’s wife, nor his manservant nor his maidservant nor his cattle nor anything that is his own!” What does this mean? Answer: We should so fear and love God as not to detach, extort, or alienate from our neighbour his wife, servants, or cattle, but induce them to stay and do their duty.

“What does God say about all these Commandments? He says this: ‘I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me and keep My Commandments.’

“What does this mean? Answer: God threatens to punish all who transgress these Commandments. We should, therefore, fear His anger, and do nothing against such Commandments. But He promises grace and every blessing to all who keep them. We should therefore love and trust in Him, and gladly obey His Commandments.”

In Luther's 1531 *Table Talk*, he remarked half-jokingly yet also quite seriously:⁶⁶ "Though I am a great doctor[!], I haven't yet progressed beyond the instruction of children in the **Ten Commandments**, the *Creed*, and the Lord's Prayer.... The First to the Seventh Commandments follow one another in good order. Murder is a graver sin than adultery, adultery is a graver sin than stealing [in the Eighth Commandment. Indeed, in the Ninth and the Tenth Commandments], it is with the mouth and with coveting...that one sins against all the other Commandments."

In the same year, Luther further states in his *How one should teach common folk to thrive [or to impose repentance upon] themselves*:⁶⁷ "In the presence of God, we should acknowledge ourselves guilty of all manner of sins.... Consider your calling, according to the Ten Commandments! Namely, whether you are a father or mother; a son or daughter; a master, mistress, or servant; if you have been disobedient, unfaithful, slothful, angry, unchaste or quarrelsome; if you have injured anyone by words or deeds; if you have stolen, neglected or wasted aught; or done any other evil!....

"Then say: 'I, a poor sinner, confess before God that I am guilty.... Especially do I confess that as a manservant, maidservant, *etc.*, I am not faithfully serving my master. For here and there, I have not done what I was told. I have angered and provoked them to curse. I have neglected my work, and caused loss. I have been unchaste in word and deed; quarrelled with my fellows; grumbled and cursed against my wife; *etc.* For all this, I am sorry and ask for mercy. From now on, I will do better'....

"Thus a master or mistress may speak: 'Especially do I confess...that I did not faithfully rule my children, servants and wife to the glory of God. I have cursed; given a bad example with vulgar words and deeds; hurt and slandered my neighbour; sold at too much profit; given poor or underweight merchandise'...and whatever else he did against the Commandments of God and his own calling."

In his 1538 *Against the Sabbatarians*, Luther states:⁶⁸ "Perhaps the Jews will also call the Ten Commandments the 'Law of Moses'.... You must reply...: 'The Ten Commandments spread over the whole World not only before Moses, but even before Abraham and all the Patriarchs. For even if a Moses had never appeared and Abraham had never been born, the Ten Commandments would have had to rule in all men from the very beginning, as they indeed did and still do.

"For all creatures rightly regard God as God, and honour His Name.... We and all human beings are obligated to hear His Word, to honour father and mother, to refrain from killing, from adultery, from stealing, from bearing false witness, from coveting.... All the Heathen bear witness to this in their writings....

"God Himself...is the universal God of all the nations, Who gives the universal Ten Commandments which prior to this [origin of the nations as per Genesis eleven] had been implanted at creation in the hearts of all men.... We and all Gentiles are just as duty-bound as the Jews to keep the First Commandment, so that we have no other gods than the only God.... Thus the First Commandment remains common to both Jews and Gentiles....

“His Ten Commandments...pertain to all of mankind.... Each country and each household is duty-bound to observe the ordinances.... These also are the Commandments of God, Who ordained all the Governments of the World.”

So Luther considers it, above, inappropriate to “call the Ten Commandments the ‘Law of Moses.’” Why? Because, he explains, they were “spread over the whole World not only before Moses, but even before Abraham and all the Patriarchs” and “had to rule in all men from the very beginning” and “and still do.”

Note in Luther’s above expressions how he insists “the Ten Commandments” have “had to rule in all men from the very beginning”: viz. “before Moses” and “even before Abraham and all the Patriarchs”; because they “had to rule in all men from the very beginning, as they indeed did and still do. Be it further noted that God “from the very beginning” published the Decalogue to Adam, which he and later also all of his descendants transgressed (Hosea 6:7-10 cf. Romans 1:19-21 & 2:14-16 & 3:31 & 7:7 & 7:22 & 8:2-4 & 13:9)!

Be it noted yet further that God **re**published the Decalogue “even before Abraham and all the Patriarchs”(Genesis 18:19 cf. 26:5), and that Abraham is the father of all believers who should walk in his footsteps (John 8:39 & Romans 4:12f & Galatians 3:16-29 & James 2:21-23)! Be it even further noted that Jesus **re-re**published “the Ten Commandments,” so that they “rule in all men”(Matthew 5:17-32 & 15:4-6 & 19:17-19 & 22:36-4)! And be it moreover noted that because they “still do,” they do for Luther too!

Finally, be it also noted that for Luther, because “His Ten Commandments...pertain to all of mankind,” also “each country and each household is duty-bound to observe the ordinances” also governmentally. For: “These also are the Commandments of God, Who ordained **all** the **Governments** of the **World**.” That is universal Christonomy indeed!

In his 1539 work *On the Councils and the Churches*, Luther rightly observed against ultradecalogical works of ecclesiastical supererogation:⁶⁹ “We poor Christians have enough to do to keep God’s Commandments. So much, indeed, that we cannot give attention to the other ‘high[er] works’ which they boast of.... For we drive and practise, both ourselves and our followers, with the greater diligence to love God above all things and our neighbour as ourselves; to be humble and patient, merciful and gentle, chaste and sober, not covetous or envious, and to keep the rest of God’s Commandments. We should be glad if there were among our people no pride, avarice, usury, envy, over-drinking, over-eating, adultery, or wantonness....

‘If one is not to keep a Law, or it is to become no Law because it is not kept or has fallen - then let us be at ease in our minds and keep no more laws! A whore can say that she is doing right, because the...Commandment has ‘fallen’ and is not in use among adulterers and adulteresses!

‘Nay, we children of Adam together with the devils will hold a council against God and pass this resolution: ‘Listen, God, all Your Commandments have ‘fallen’ and are no longer in use among us men and devils! Therefore we ought no longer to keep them, but act against them. You ought to approve of that and not condemn us, since there is no sin when the Law has fallen!’

‘So robbers and murderers might also beatify themselves and say: ‘We are no longer bound to be obedient to you princes and lords, but are right in fighting you and robbing you! For among us, your Law has ‘fallen’ *etc.*”

Luther goes on to give a most important analysis of the Council of Jerusalem alias the First General Assembly of the Christian Church at Acts 15:28 anent its decisions that no extra burden be laid upon the Gentile Christians other than the prohibitions against **idolatry** and **bloodshed** and **stranglings** and **fornication**. Here, he says: “**The Ten Commandments must remain...** If a burden is no more a burden, it is good to bear.... **It is good to keep, like the Ten Commandments...grown out of God*s Law.**”

Luther then turns against the heretic John Agricola of Eisleben who, having demeaned the Law, taught that repentance was possible only through the knowledge of the goodness of God revealed in the Gospel. Explains Luther:

‘That is what the Antinomians too are doing today! They are preaching finely and...with real seriousness about Christ*s grace, the forgiveness of sins, and the other things that can be said concerning redemption.... They will not speak to the people about...sanctification, *i.e.*, the new life in Christ. For they think that they ought not to terrify people or disturb them, but always to preach in a comforting way about grace and the forgiveness of sins in Christ.

‘They utterly avoid such words as these: ‘Listen! You want to be a Christian - and yet remain an adulterer, fornicator, drunken swine, proud, covetous, a usurer, envious, revengeful, malicious!*

‘On the contrary, they say: ‘Listen! Though you are an adulterer, a fornicator, a miser, or any other kind of sinner -- only believe, and you will be saved and need not fear the Law. Christ has fulfilled it all!*

‘Tell me, is that not...taking away Christ and bringing Him to nought at the same time that He is most highly preached? It is saying Yes and No....

‘They are fine Easter preachers, but shamefully poor Pentecost preachers! For they preach nothing concerning sanctification...but preach only about redemption by Christ....

‘Whosoever, then, does not cease from sinning, but continues in his former wicked life - must have another Christ from the Antinomians. For the real Christ is not there!”

Luther than turns against the Romanists with all their unbiblical additions to God’s Commandments. Says he: ‘I can easily show that the poor, insignificant pastor at Hippo, St. Augustine, taught more than all the councils (to say nothing of the ‘most holy’ popes at Rome whom I fear to mention)!

‘I will go even farther and say that more is given us in the Childrens’ Creed [alias the *Apostles’ Creed*], than in all the councils; and the Lord’s Prayer and the Ten Commandments teach more, than all the councils teach. And not only do they teach, but they guard against the preaching of anything new that is contrary to the[ir] old doctrine....

“We do not remain in sin, but can and **should lead a new life in good works of all kinds - such as the Ten Commandments, or Two Tables of Moses, require....** The Holy Spirit gives people faith in Christ, **according to Acts fifteen....** He makes heart, soul, body, works and manner of life new -- and **writes God*s Commandments not on tablets of stone but on hearts of flesh according to Second Corinthians three....**

“According to the First Table, He gives knowledge of God so that those whom he enlightens can resist all heresies.... In the Second Table...He also sanctifies Christians.... They willingly obey parents and overlords; conduct themselves peacefully and humbly; are not wrathful or revengeful or malicious; nor lewd adulterers.... They do not lie, deceive, backbite -- but are kind, truthful, faithful and reliable and whatever else God*s Commandments require.... Those who are not of this sort, ought not to count themselves Christians – and they ought not to be comforted as one comforts Christians with much talk about the forgiveness of sins and the grace of Christ, as the Antinomians do!

“For they, rejecting and not understanding the Ten Commandments, preach much about the grace of Christ instead. They strengthen and comfort those who remain in sins –telling them that they should not fear sins, or be terrified at them, since through Christ these are all done away.... They really do not understand the Faith and Christ aright, and abolish Him even as they preach Him. For how can a man preach rightly about the works of the Holy Ghost in the First Table and speak about comfort, grace, forgiveness of sins - if he neither heeds nor practises the works of the Holy Ghost in the Second Table which he can understand and experience while he has never attempted or experienced those of the First Table?

“Therefore it is certain that they neither have nor understand either Christ or the Holy Ghost, and their talk is mere foam on their tongues, and they...teach Christ - and destroy Him by teaching Him.... So too in regard to the Second Table.... They teach disobedience to parents and superiors.... They murder, fight, set people at odds, envy, hate, take revenge, are unchaste, lewd, steal, take usury, deceive, and practice all kinds of knavery to the limit....

When the Creed, the Ten Commandments, and the Catechism are openly used - there, be sure, a holy Christian people is.... The Creed and Ten Commandments and God*s Word...are all holy possessions whereby the Holy Ghost makes holy the holy people of Christ....

“**The Holy Ghost works in us a daily sanctification and vivification in Christ, according to the First Table of Moses....** We fulfil it, though not so fully as Christ has done; but we constantly seek to do so under redemption or forgiveness of sin, until at last we become quite holy and need no more forgiveness....

“**The Holy Ghost makes us holy according to the Second Table of Moses;** as when He helps us to honour father and mother from the heart and helps them to raise their children in a Christian way and to lead honourable lives; when we serve our princes and lords faithfully and obediently and are subject to them and they in turn love their subjects and protect and guard them; when we are angry with no one, bear no wrath, hatred, envy or vengefulness toward our neighbour but gladly forgive him, gladly lend to him, help and counsel him; when we are not unchaste, immoderate in drinking, proud, haughty, boastful, but pure, self-controlled, sober, kindly, gentle, and humble; do not steal, rob, take usury, indulge in greed, cheat, but are mild, kind, satisfied,

generous; are not false, lying and perjuring, but truthful, reliable, and whatever else is taught in these Commandments. All of which St. Paul teaches abundantly, in more than one place.

‘For we need the Decalogue not only because it tells us in legal fashion what we are bound to do, but also in order that we may see in it how far the Holy Ghost has brought us in His sanctifying work and how much we still fall short, so that we may not become careless and think that we have now done all that is required. Thus are we constantly to grow in sanctification, and ever to become more and more ‘a new creature’ in Christ.’

Also in 1539, Luther wrote his *Refutation of the Antinomians or the Doctrine of those who storm against the Law*. It is sub-titled: *The Doctrine of the Law, and how it is to be preached and explained gloriously and usefully*. There, he pointed out that the Antinomians wrongly taught:⁷⁰ ‘The Law is not only unnecessary...but wholly unuseful and in all ways impossible.’

To that error, Luther himself then replied:⁷¹ ‘The Law was not given so that we should be justified by it; for it is not able to give righteousness or life.... Only the Word of grace, points us to Christ. However, from that it does not follow that the Law should be abolished and removed from the pulpit in the churches.... One should diligently teach it, and drive it home....

‘To take away the Law...is just as if you were to deny that Peter was a man.... It is equally the same ‘wisdom’ to remove the Law, yet still to teach that sin is forgiven.... It is equally impossible...that sin be understood without Law - whether Written Law, or whether the Law of nature.

‘Further it follows from this there would be no sin, if the Law were to be suspended - and so too no Christ Who redeems from sin. For thus does Christ Himself speak: ‘those who are healthy, need no physician!’ And inasmuch as the Law of God demands our obedience to God, those who storm against the Law also suspend obedience to God.....

‘Therefore, if the Law were to be done away with or abolished, we would thus be redeemed from sin and saved without needing Christ as Mediator. It is also false...that the Law punishes sin without the Holy Spirit.... The Law was written with the finger of God [the Holy Spirit]. And all truth, wherever it is, is from the Holy Spirit. So to forbid the Law, is to forbid the truth of God. To abolish the Law...is to punish sin unto damnation. It is, clearly, raging nonsense....

‘Therefore the Law will never in eternity be abolished. But it remains either to fill up [the measure] in the damned, or to be fulfilled in the blessed. Yet Satan’s students have it seems thought that the Law was given only for a time, and was like circumcision abolished after the coming of Christ....

‘The Law rules over man as long as he lives. Romans 7. However, he is freed from the Law when he dies. Therefore, if man were to be liberated from the Law, he would die... Outside of Christ, we experience that the letter of the Law is still unfulfilled, but yet needs to be fulfilled by us. In Christ, indeed, the Law has been fulfilled; sin has been destroyed; death has been disturbed....

‘Those are chiefly course and inexperienced people and harmful deceivers of conscience,

who would thus remove the Law from the Church.... Such undertakings are not only foolish and against God, but also in all respects impossible....

‘There are many who unashamedly and truly nonsensically maintain that one should remove even the godless from the Law, and not preach it to them.... Far rather should the Law be laid out before the godless and the evil, as those for whom it was actually and chiefly given!.... So now, the Law has without doubt been given not to be rejected but to be taught, so that thereby people acknowledge both sin and death or the wrath of God....

‘Yet insofar as it has not yet been aroused in us, to that extent we are and remain under the Law [and] sin and death. Therefore the Law (as so too the Gospel) must be preached indiscriminately, to both the pious [alias the believers] and to the impious. To the impious, so that in terror they may recognize their sin, death, and the inevitable wrath of God which is to humble them. To the pious, so that they may be admonished to crucify their flesh with its lusts and evil desires, lest they become secure (Galatians 5:24)... For sin has...not been abolished according to its substance and essence, just as the Law to the same extent has not been abolished....

‘Neither Augustine...nor we his disciples have drawn the conclusion, nor does it follow, that the Law is therefore to be rejected.... It does not abolish the Law, but it erects and confirms the Law....

‘For if the Law is removed, no one knows what Christ is or what He did when He fulfilled the Law for us. For if I wish to understand the Fulfilment of the Law that is Christ, I must indeed know what the Law and its fulfilling are!....

‘We teach that we are all debtors to the Law and children of wrath.... Therefore the doctrine of the Law is highly needed in the Church and by all means to be retained, without which Christ cannot be retained. And what will you retain of Christ, if the Law which He fulfilled has been removed and you do not know what He has fulfilled?.... Summarizing, to abolish the Law and to leave sin and death alone - is nothing other than to conceal and cover up the poisonous plague of sin and of death unto eternal destruction!’

Continues Luther:⁷² ‘Whence shall we learn what Christ is [and] what He has done for us, if we are not to know what that Law is which He has fulfilled for us; or what sin is, for which He has atoned?.... By this ‘spirit[ual]ism’ the devil does not mean to take away the Law, but [means to take away] Christ Who fulfilled the Law!’

Luther then concludes his tract:⁷³ ‘Follow St. Paul! Where there is no Law, there is also no transgression [Romans 4:15 *cf.* First John 3:4]. But there is...also secular and natural good.... Where there is no sin, there is also neither punishment nor forgiveness of sin.... Where there is neither wrath nor grace, there is also neither divine nor human rule.... Where there is neither divine nor human rule, there is neither God nor man.... Where there is neither God nor man, there is nothing than perhaps the harmful devil. From which it would follow that these [antinomian] spirits are enemies of and stormers against the Law, and are certainly either the devil himself or brethren of the devil....

‘Indeed, he [the Antinomian] denies not only the Law itself.... Also secular law and the Law of nature are not valid at all, wherever the transgressor thereby does not fear and gets damned. Romans 3.... It is rightly said: ‘Good Law comes forth from bad morals’ [cf. First Corinthians 15:33]....

‘What those [Antinomians] who storm against the Law say about God, Christ, Faith, Law, Grace, *etc.*, they say without understanding. Thus it is impossible that a man, whether he wishes to live spiritually or secularly, could learn from them.

‘Therefore one should flee from them as harmful teachers who (through their doctrine) thus without any fear of God give permission to live independently and...to do all kinds of sins and shameful things. For they do not serve Christ, but their own bellies. Indeed they seek, like nonsensical people, to placate men’; and to appease the old man, rather than to please God.

However, according to the new man -- the Law is written in the heart of the Christian. Jeremiah 31:33. So too the first man before the fall was created with God’s Law in his heart.⁷⁴

As Luther is reputed to have written⁷⁵ in 1542: ‘The Ten Commandments...God has planted into our nature. They concern the right worship of God, and good behaviour.’

Says Luther:⁷⁶ ‘If we wish to follow Moses, we can say that the original righteousness consisted in this.... Man was righteous, true and upright not only in his body and externally but above all inwardly in his soul.... He knew God, was obedient to Him with the utmost pleasure, understood the works of God without any instruction concerning them... The original righteousness also consisted in Adam’s loving God and Gods work with all his heart in a pure spirit.’

And further:⁷⁷ ‘If the Law of nature had not been inscribed and placed by God into the heart, one would have to preach a long time before the consciences are touched. To a donkey, horse, ox, cow, one would have to preach 100 000 years before they would accept the Law in spite of the fact that they have ears, eyes and heart as men has.... They can also hear it, but it does not touch their heart. Why? What is at fault? Their soul is not so constituted and formed that this preaching would take hold!

‘But when the Law is propounded to man, he soon says: ‘Yes, it is so; I cannot deny it.’ Of this validity he could not be convinced so quickly, were it not for the fact that the Law is written in his heart. Since, however, it is already in his heart, although completely blurred, it is aroused by the preaching of the Word, so that the heart cannot help confessing that we must, as the Commandments read, honour, love, and serve God.... We ascertain the norm of good works only from Scripture. It is the Moral Law. Only Scripture tells us which Commandments in Scripture...are obligatory for all men in all ages and in all places.’

Consequently, even though ‘we are not all in the public office and calling, still every Christian should and may teach, instruct, admonish, comfort, reprove his neighbour with God’s Word whenever and wherever he finds someone in need of it. For instance, a father and mother, their children and servants, a brother, neighbour, citizen, or peasant [should instruct] the other. For a Christian certainly can teach the other one who is still ignorant or weak, and admonish him

with the Ten Commandments.’’⁷⁸

Luther’s 1545 *Introduction to the Old Testament* was written in the year before his death. There, he insists⁷⁹ that ‘Moses conducts and performs his office.... In order to put nature to the very utmost shame, he gives laws that speak of natural and true sins.... **The Ten Commandments cannot be done away.** For sins against the Ten Commandments would be sin, even though...they were not known - just as the unbelief of the Heathen is sin, even though they do not know or think that it is sin.... When Christ comes, the law ceases - especially the Levitical law.... The Ten Commandments do not cease in the sense that they are no longer to be kept or fulfilled!’”

* * * * *

Luther’s many writings were collected and published in the definite twelve-volume Jena edition of 1555-58. By 1568, Pastor Timotheus Kirchner of Jena had finished his own anthology from and systematic arrangement from the Jena edition of Luther’s writings. Such he then published in Frankfort during the year 1570 under the short title *Thesaurus* (alias *Treasure*).

There, Luther explains⁸⁰ that ‘God said: ‘Let Us make man as an image like Us [*cf.* Genesis 1:26].... Three kinds of powers are in the soul - namely thought, understanding and will. Therein, they are similar to the Holy Trinity: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.... God created man upright [Ecclesiastes 7:29 *cf.* Romans 2:14]. This uprightness was natural, in body and soul. If Adam had remained the image of God, he would have raised children in whom there would have been no evil desires. Every man would have been as friendly and helpful as is God. Thus, all of us would have been similar to God....

‘See why God gives Adam the Commandment before He creates Eve!... Even before the fall, there was rule and government among men. That is now the very first Commandment.... Adam was still without any sin.... Therefore he could not thereby have become pious.... He could, however, indeed become a sinner: which is already a large proof that no Law can make one pious. Yet it was much rather given to him so that he might exercise himself therein. This proves that he was pious, and obediently walked with God. Thus the Law does not convey piety; but he who is pious, keeps the Law. That is the reason for the Law, for the sake of man....

‘In chapter two of the first book of Moses [Genesis 2:1-3], God has ordained that we should also work for six days, and celebrate the seventh [*cf.* the Fourth Commandment]... For it is indeed a fine, loving, sweet and friendly rule which does not weaken people but keeps them fine and healthy but yet not idle. Therefore they should, after working for the six days of the week, cease on the seventh from all work both for themselves and the cattle, and also especially so that one has time to heed God’s Word....

‘This was written about [the time] before man fell into sin.... Scripture mentions the Sabbath much earlier than Adam fell into sin. For it was at the same time already ordained that he should work for six days and celebrate the seventh. There is no doubt, as we have heard, that he had to work in Paradise.... Thus work and rule would have remained, yet without unrest and unhappiness. So too, wives would also have borne children: but not with anxiety, sorrow and need. But on the seventh day, all would also have stood still and rested....

‘You may not say that the first Commandment has been abrogated! After all, does one not need a God? So too, regarding: you shall not commit adultery, murder, theft, *etc.*.... To have a God, is not just the Law of Moses but also the Law of nature, as St. Paul says in Romans 1 [verses 17-20]. God has revealed this within them. Romans 1 [verse 19, *cf.* 2:14f]....

‘The Heathen know about the Godhead, that there is a God.... They have erected gods, and indulged in idolatry. That would have been impossible, if they knew or thought nothing about God. Romans 1 [verse 21].... The Heathen have failed the true God, and have worshipped gods in the place of God.... Also the Jews have failed, and have prayed to idols instead of to God - even though they have had the Law of Moses. And they still fail the Lord Jesus Christ....

‘This is not just the Mosaic Law, but also the Law of nature. Romans 1.... ‘You shall not murder/commit adultery/steal *etc.*’ is not just Mosaic Law but also the Law of Nature written in the heart of every man. This is taught by St. Paul, Romans 2[:14f]; Christ, Matthew 7[:12]; even almost all Prophets and laws, in these Laws of nature....

‘Whatever you would have people do to you, you too should do to them. For that is the Law and the Prophets. Thus too St. Paul, Romans 13[:8f], who comprehends all the Commandments of Moses in love. Also the Law of nature teaches: you must love your neighbour as yourself....

‘Wherever the Law of Moses and the Law of nature are one and the same thing, the Law remains and is not externally abolished. Being by faith spiritual, is nothing other than filling the Law. Romans 3 [verses 27-31].... The common Law of nature goes through and remains in all lands.... The Law of nature is never comprehended so finely and orderly, as precisely in the Ten Commandments of Moses....

‘That one also celebrates the Sabbath or Sunday..., is not for the sake of the Law of Moses. Also nature gives and teaches us man must indeed rest on one day for a while, so that men and cattle can refresh themselves. [1] This cause of nature, also Moses [2] places in his Sabbath; as too [3] Christ does for mankind in Matthew 12[:8] and in Mark [2:27]....

‘Regarding the chief sum of God’s Commandments, I have said above that the Law of God has not been abolished. That can never be. That is not possible. But that one understands it spiritually according to conscience, is as much as to say that the Law indeed remains.... He who has the Holy Spirit and a pure heart, does all that the Law would have done.... Thus it is here too, with the Law of God and the Ten Commandments.

The Law says ‘you shall have not other gods’; ‘you shall not take the name of God in vain’; ‘you must hallow the holy day’; ‘you must honour your parents’; ‘you may not murder’; ‘you shall not steal’; ‘you shall not commit adultery’; ‘you shall not bear false testimony’ *etc.* This is exactly as much as saying, and as if it said: you are already idolatrous, blasphemers, unholy, disobedient, a murderer, an adulterer, a thief and a liar.... A Christian...does everything which the Law would have. He has a pure heart toward God; he grants and does good to every man; he does nobody evil; he has already been made what he shall become; and he wants and can do nothing else, because he has the Holy Spirit by Whom the heart is cleansed from sin and given

a desire for all that is good....

‘The preface of the Epistle to the Romans [chapters 1 & 2]...is, however, the right freedom from sin and from the Law about which he [Paul] writes up to the end of chapter 6. It is a freedom to desire to do good alone, and to live well without compulsion of the Law. Therefore the freedom is a spiritual freedom which does not abolish the Law, but which achieves that which the Law demands.... The Law was given by God on Mount Sinai through the Angel.... Yet the Angel Who has here saved and Who brings the Word, equally speaks and saves as God Himself: ‘I am the Lord your God Who has led you forth out of Egypt, out of the house of slavery’ [*cf* Exodus 20:1f *cf*. Acts 7:37-39 & Galatians 3:19].....

‘In the exposition of the Ten Commandments, in the first place it is commanded how we should gratefully keep our heart before God, [and secondly]...how we should speak with words. Thirdly, it is commanded how we should act toward God in works. That is the first and correct Table of Moses - in which three [or four] Commandments are described, as to how man should act rightly in the things God requires with man and what man must do with God without the means of any creature. The Commandments in the other Table move toward one’s neighbour, and indicate how a man should act toward others.

‘I keep the Commandments which Moses has given not because Moses commanded them, but because they were implanted into me naturally, and because Moses here exactly agrees with nature.... That is now the first thing which I see in Moses, namely the Ten Commandments.... They are, by nature, impressed into each person, and written in his heart....

‘The Ten Commandments were given us, so that we should get to know for ourselves what we should require from pious children...and what God requires from us.... In the Ten Commandments, as in a mirror, we see that we are all idolatrous people, blasphemers of the Name of God, disobedient to our parents, and are murderers and bloodhounds *etc*.... He has also given us His Word, the Ten Commandments, so that we should all direct our work according to them, and act for the sake of His honour and not against the needs of our neighbour.... We should do good works, and do the same with the highest diligence. For thus God has said and enjoined in the Ten Commandments....

‘Thus a manservant or a maidservant in a home know how to create joy in his [or her] position and in his [or her] work, and how to act to as to please God and say: I thank You, Lord, that You have ordained me in this position and service. For I know that I am pleasing to You and am serving You more.... I honour father and mother, masters and mistresses with all zeal and serve them truly, and would help the household, and therefore wish to do the same with zeal and love.....

‘He who wishes to maintain himself in this life, obeys the Ten Commandments. There we hear that one should love God and have no other gods... We now have the Ten Commandments, an excellent divine teaching as to what we should do so that our entire life pleases God.... Besides the Ten Commandments, no work or being is good and can please God.... Christians can and should lead a new life in all kinds of good works, and not in all evil works: as the Ten Commandments or the two Tables of Moses require[s]. That is the doctrine of St. Paul....

“The Law is the Word. God teaches us therein, and demands what we should do and what we should avoid. These are the Ten Commandments.... Arrogance follows, [only] when man takes it upon himself to keep the Law with works.” A godly man “serves God, does not swear, honours father and mother, does not murder, does not commit adultery, and so on.

“The Ten Commandments obligate the Heathen...to the extent to which they are written in their hearts by nature.... However, God gave the Jews also a written Law - that is, the abundant **Ten Commandments, which are nothing other than the Law written in the heart.**”

* * * * *

Thus Luther himself. By 1576f, also the authoritative Lutheran *Formula Consensus* declared⁸¹ that: “they who truly believe in Christ and are sincerely converted to God...are not, nevertheless, on that account without Law....

“The Son of God redeemed them for that very reason that they might meditate on the Law of God day and night and continually exercise themselves in the keeping thereof (Psalm 1:2 & 119:1f). For not even our first parents, even before the fall, lived wholly without Law, which was certainly at that time graven on their hearts [cf. Romans 1:17-21 & 2:14-16 cf. Ecclesiastes 7:29 & Ephesians 4:24], because the Lord had created them after His Own image (Genesis 1:26f; 2:16f; 3:3).

“We believe, teach and confess that the preaching of the Law should be **urged** not only upon those who have no faith in Christ and do not yet repent, but also upon those who truly believe in Christ, are truly converted to God, and regenerated, and are justified by faith.... There is need that the Law of God should always shine before man, so that he may not frame anything in matters of religion under an impulse of self-devised devotion and may not choose out ways of honouring God not instituted by the Word of God.

“Also, lest the old Adam should act according to his own bent, but that he may the rather be constrained against his own will not only by the admonitions and threats of the Law but also by punishments and plagues, in order that he may give obedience to the Spirit and render himself up captive to the same. First Corinthians 9:27; Romans 6:12; Galatians 6:14; Psalm 119:1f; Hebrews 12:1; 13:21)....

“In this way do the children of God live in the Law, and fashion their life according to the rule of the divine Law, which way of living St. Paul is wont to call in his epistles the Law of Christ and the Law of the mind. Romans 7:25; 8:2,7; Galatians 6:2. After this manner, the Law is and remains one and the same - to wit: the unchangeable will of God.... We repudiate, therefore, as a false and pernicious dogma, contrary to Christian discipline and true piety, the teaching that the Law of God...is not to be set forth before the godly and true believers.”

* * * * *

Thus Semi-Reformed Lutheranism. What then, is to be said about those in allegedly Fully-Reformed alias Calvinistic denominations - but who denounce the preaching of the Law as ‘legalism’? This: Such Evanjellyfish ‘Presbyterians’ are in the grip of an Antinomianism demon

sent forth from the very pit of hell itself!

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Endnotes

- 1) M. Luther: *Thesaurus* [pub. 1570], Luedenscheid: Johann Berg, 1983 rep., pp. 73A.
- 2) M. Luther: *Works*, Concordia, St. Louis, 1972, 15:133.
- 3) M. Luther: *Second Dispute Against the Antinomians*, 12th Jan. 1538, in *Werke*, Weimar ed., 39:I:478,454. Also cited in E.M. Plass: *What Luther Says: An Anthology*, Concordia, St. Louis, 1959, II:748. We ourselves have not been able to find this passage in the rather doctrinaire and (Gnesio?-)Lutheranistic St. Louis edition, which intimates that parts of Luther's *Against the Antinomians* were post-mortally interpolated with Melanchthonian and Neo-Melanchthonian material [perhaps in an attempt by Neo-Lutherans to form a *rapprochement* with Calvinism]. See, however, also our next note!
- 4) Luther's translation of Hos. 6:7f: "*Aber sie uebertreten den bund, wie Adam... Denn Gilead is eine Stadt voll Abgoetterei und Blutschulden...wie die Stroeter, so da lauern auf die Leute und wuergen af dem Wege.... Den da huret Ephraim.*"
- 5) M. Luther: *Works*, Concordia, St. Louis, 1973, 18:31.
- 6) *Ib.*, 18:33.
- 7) C.F. Keil: *Biblischer Commentar ueber die Zwoelf Kleinen Propheten*, Doerffling und Franke, Leipzig, 1888, III:4:67-71.
- 8) M. Luther: *Works*, Fortress, Philadelphia, 1971, 47:10.
- 9) See at n. 3 above.
- 10) A. Kuyper Sr.: *De Leer der Verbonden*, Kok, Kampen, 1909, pp. 83 & 89-91.
- 11) See Luther's *Treatise on Good Works*, in *Works of Martin Luther*, Holman, Philadelphia, 1915, I:274.
- 12) See Luther's *Eight Wittenberg Sermons*, in *Works of Luther*, Holman ed., II:399.
- 13) See Luther's *The Eight Wittenberg Sermons*, in *Works of Luther*, Holman ed., II:404f.
- 14) *Westminster Confession of Faith* 21:1.
- 15) See *The Subordinate Standards and Other Authoritative Documents of the Free Church of Scotland*, Offices of the Free Church of Scotland, Edinburgh, 1933, p. 223.

- 16) *Westminster Shorter Catechism* QQ. & AA. 50-51.
- 17) See *The Subordinate Standards...of the Free Church of Scotland*, p. 101.
- 18) *Westminster Shorter Catechism* QQ. & AA. 108-109.
- 19) M. Luther , in *Werke*, Weimar ed., 49:1f.
- 20) M. Luther: *Commentary on Genesis*, in *Works*, Concordia ed., St. Louis, 1961, 1:79f.
- 21) M. Luther: *Comm. on Gen. (2:16-17)*, in *Works*, Concordia ed., 1961, 1:105f.
- 22) M. Luther: *Comm. on Gen. (2:16-17)*, in *Works*, Concordia ed., 1958, 1:109-13.
- 23) M. Luther: *Comm. on Gen. (3:6)*, in *Works*, Concordia ed., 1961, 1:162.
- 24) M..Luther: *Secular Authority — To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed* (in *Works*, Holman ed., Philadelphia, 1930, III pp. 231f).
- 25) M. Luther: *Comm. on Gen. (18:19)*, in *Works*, Concordia ed., 1961, 3:222 & 225.
- 26) M. Luther , in *Werke*, Weimar ed., 51:440.
- 27) M. Luther , in *Werke*, Erlanger ed., *op. ex* 24:339. Cited in Plass: *op. cit.* II:776.
- 28) M. Luther: *Comm. on Gen. (26:2-5)*, in *Works*, Concordia ed., 1968, 4:20-22.
- 29) *Works*, St. Louis: Concordia, 1964 ed., IV p. 304.
- 30) M. Luther: *Comm. on Gen. 34:7 & 34:17*.
- 31) M. Luther: *Comm. on Gen. 38:24-26*.
- 32) M. Luther , in *Werke*, Weimar ed., 28:626.
- 33) M. Luther , in *Werke*, Weimar ed., 5:32.
- 34) M. Luther , in *Werke*, Weimar ed., 48:14.
- 35) M. Luther , in *Werke*, Weimar ed., 41:148f.
- 36) M. Luther: *Works*, Concordia, St. Louis, 16:22.
- 37) M. Luther: *Works*, Concordia, St. Louis, 21:67f.
- 38) M. Luther , *Sermon on Matthew 22:34-46*, in *Werke*, Weimar ed., 45:160f.
- 39) M. Luther's *Lectures on Romans*, in his *Works*, Concordia, St. Louis, 1972 ed., 25:180.
- 40) M. Luther , in *Werke*, Weimar ed., 39:367,46,395. See too P. Althaus & R.C. Schultz: *The Theology of Martin Luther*, Fortress, Philadelphia, 1966, pp. 266f.
- 41) M. Luther, in *Werke*, Weimar ed., 46:662.

- 42) M. Luther: *Werke*, Weimar ed., 22:229f.
- 43) M. Luther, in *Werke*, Weimar ed., 48:117.
- 44) M. Luther: *Discussion of Confession*, in *Works*, Holman, Philadelphia, 1915, I:91f.
- 45) See Weimar ed., I:247f,250f,258f,398f; and Erlangen ed., *op. ex lat.*, I:218.
- 46) M. Luther: *Works*, Philadelphia: Holman, I pp. 187,194f,205,204f,208f,221f,228f,231f,237,240f,232,250 and 268f,272f,275f,278f,281f,285.
- 47) See in our main text below, just before its reference to endnote 48.
- 48) M. Luther: *Works*, Philadelphia: Holman, I:368.
- 49) *Ib.* II:114f & 131.
- 50) *Ib.* II:317f & 330.
- 51) *Ib.*, II pp. 354-67 & 375-79.
- 52) M. Luther: *Answer to the Superchristian, Superspiritual and Superlearned Book of Goat Emser of Leipzig*, in *Works of Martin Luther*, Holman ed., Philadelphia, 1930, III:354f.
- 53) M. Luther: *To the Knights of the Teutonic Order*, sub-titled *An Exhortation that they lay aside False-Chastity and take upon them the True Chastity of Wedlock*, in *Works of Martin Luther*, Holman ed., Philadelphia, 1930, III:403 & 423f.
- 54) *Ib.*, III, pp. 231f.
- 55) See M. Luther: *Liturgical Writings*, in his *Works*, Philadelphia ed., Muhlenberg Press, 1932, VI:303f.
- 56) Regarding the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, see at our endnote 15 above.
- 57) M. Luther: *Man, wouldst thou live blissfully?*; in *Works*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1965 ed., 53:281.
- 58) Regarding the *Westminster Larger Catechism*, see at our endnote 17 above.
- 59) M. Luther: *These are the holy Ten Commands*; in *Works*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1965 ed., 53:278f.
- 60) M. Luther, in *Werke*, Weimar ed., 5:32. Cited in E.M. Plass' *op. cit.*, II:747.
- 61) M. Luther: *Against the 'Heavenly Prophets'*, in *Works*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1958 ed., 40:97f.
- 62) M. Luther: *How Christians Should Regard Moses*, in *Works*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1970 ed., 35:164f.
- 63) M. Luther: *Preface to his German Order of Service*, in his *Works*, Philadelphia ed., Muhlenberg Press, 1932, VI:174f.
- 64) M. Luther: *Large Catechism*, 1529, in *Werke*, Weimar ed., 30:I:178,192.
- 65) M. Luther's *Small Catechism*, in ed. P. Schaff's *The Creeds of Christendom*, Baker, Grand Rapids, 1983 rep., III:74f.

- 66) M. Luther: *Table Talk*, in *Works*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1967 ed., 54:9-11.
- 67) M. Luther: *Man, wouldst thou live blissfully?*; in *Works*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1965 ed., 53:9f.
- 68) M. Luther's *Against the Sabbatarians*, in *Works*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1971 ed., 47:89f. This translates his: *Wider die Sabbather*, March 1538, as cited in the *Weimarer Ausgabe* of his *Works* (III:2301-2304).
- 69) M. Luther: *On the Councils and the Churches*, in his *Works*, Philadelphia ed., Muhlenberg Press, 1931, *lb.*, V pp.140,153, 195 & 233f 252 & 266f & 285f.
- 70) M. Luther: *op. cit.* I:1, in his *Thesaurus*, p. 108A.
- 71) *Ib.* I:7-11,21-27,36-39,47-48; II:1-3,9-10,15-16,26,28,34,41-42,48,53,57,61-69; in his posthumously-published *Thesaurus*, pp. 108A-111A; *cf.* too in his *Werke*, Weimar ed., 39:I:356.
- 72) M. Luther: *Second Disputation Against the Antinomians*, Theses 25-26, as cited in F. Pieper's *Christian Dogmatics*, Concordia, St. Louis, 1953, III:236; and his *Against the Antinomians* (1614 ed.), as cited in Pieper's *op. cit.*, III:237.
- 73) M. Luther: *op. cit.* III:1-7,12,15-20 -- in his *Thesaurus*, pp. 111A-B.
- 74) See the Lutheran *F. C. Solid Declaration* VI:5.
- 75) M. Luther, in *Werke*, as recorded in Aurifaber's collection, and cited in Plass' *op. cit.* II:749f.
- 76) M. Luther: *Works*, St. Louis ed., I:138.
- 77) *Ib.*, III:1053 & 1083f.
- 78) *Ib.*, V:1038.
- 79) *Ib.*, VI pp. 375f.
- 80) M. Luther: *Thesaurus* [pub. 1570], Luedenscheid: Johann Berg, 1983 rep., pp. 73A-74A, 100B, 101A-105A, & 106A-B.
- 81) Lutheran *Formula Consensus* itself at VI:1-3,5-6.

