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**A PRACTICAL
EXPOSITION OF THE
TEN COMMANDMENTS**

UPDATED TO MODERN ENGLISH

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A Practical Exposition of the Ten Commandments

by James Durham

With a Resolution of Several Momentous Questions and Cases of Conscience.

Thy Commandment is exceeding broad.

Psalm 119. 96.

The second Edition revised and corrected, To which are prefixed the Commendatory Epistles of two famous English Divines, Dr. Owen and Mr. Jenkin

**To the Right Honourable, Truly Noble,
and Renownedly Religious Lady, My Lady
Marquess of ARGILE.**

If it had pleased the Almighty, Holy, and Infinitely Wise God, He could have completely expelled even the smallest remnants of indwelling sin at the very moment of His people's conversion, and perfectly conformed them to His own image of holiness. However, in

His unfathomable wisdom, He has ordained otherwise for reasons known best to Himself. Regarding these reasons (which, to some extent, we can strongly speculate about and find some measure of peace), it is wise for us to refer to the day of the great and solemn assembly of the first-born, where all such matters will be addressed and satisfactorily discussed.

Since He has deemed it appropriate for some vestiges of sin (though stripped of its power and dominion) to remain, and that the spiritual constitution of sojourning saints should be a mixture of grace and corruption (each maintaining its natural and irreconcilable enmity toward the other, with both lusting against one another), it is highly congruous and suitable to His inscrutable wisdom that there should be a proportionate and corresponding mixture in His providential dealings with them while still on this side of Heaven. Some experiences may be more pleasant, while others may be more challenging. The fleshly and unregenerate part requires trials to discipline and motivate it, while the spiritual and regenerate part also benefits from them to remain alert and guarded against the harmful influence of the relentless neighbor and troublesome companion—a body of death that clings to them like a belt to a man's waist. Due to this reality, they do not have many hours, let alone days, to do good without interruption.

When their constitution becomes purely grace, completely purified and refined from the impure mixture of indwelling sin, then their portion will be pure solace and joy—an unblemished and eternal joy without the slightest trace of sorrow or trouble of any kind.

But until then (and may God be eternally blessed, for that time is not far off, even just a moment), trouble and sorrow, to a greater or lesser extent, will accompany those who must enter the Kingdom of God through much tribulation. However, upon careful consideration, there will be found no valid or well-founded reason for dissatisfaction with this wise arrangement of divine providence. God does not afflict them without reason, nor are they burdened by one

or more, or even numerous, temptations arbitrarily. Rather, it is when there is a genuine need, a need that a few serious reflections will compel the afflicted to acknowledge and say, "This specific trial, with its particular circumstances, could not have been omitted without greater harm." Indeed, considering the inseparable connection that God has established in His eternal and unchangeable decree between the end and all the means leading to it, whenever a specific trial is encountered, there is reason to believe that it is as necessary for the salvation of the individual as any other means appointed to achieve the intended outcome—the salvation of that person. Reflecting on this truth, as the apostle wrote to the Thessalonians, would greatly contribute to reconciling the deeply crossed and afflicted children of God with their respective crosses. It would enable them to bear them with greater patience, joy, and cheerfulness, and it would transform their perception of these crosses into something less formidable and more amiable than they typically appear.

Furthermore, since all their afflictions are temporary, limited to the present time and but for a brief moment, not extending even a minute beyond death, let alone throughout eternity, and since the heaviest burdens and greatest trials are considered light and moderate afflictions, and God's severest corrections are administered with judgment and discretion, restraining His fierce wind in the day of His east wind, and wisely adjusting the trials of His people to their strength and circumstances, faithfully not allowing them to be tempted beyond what they can bear, but providing a way of escape with the temptation so that they may endure it, it is not His way to pour new wine into old wineskins or sew a piece of new cloth onto an old garment.

He who teaches the farmer discretion in determining the appropriate time and season for plowing, tilling, sowing, harrowing, and reaping each type of seed and grain according to its nature, and instructs them on how to thresh out these various seeds and grains using suitable methods and tools, can, with his remarkable counsel and

excellent skills, far surpass in wisdom, expertise, judgment, discretion, and tenderness the ability to determine the most fitting seasons, types, measures, and durations of his people's afflictions based on their diverse needs, dispositions, standings, capacities, and abilities.

Moreover, our Sovereign Lord, the King of Saints, out of the absolute authority of His dominion and the abundance of His abundant grace, has imposed upon every trial encountered by His people, including those burdensome afflictions that traverse the treacherous seas of this world, a toll and customs duty of spiritual good to be extracted from them. He allows, authorizes, and commands His people, through the commission granted to them under His great seal for this purpose, to demand, require, and exact this payment from every affliction that arises. And if there should be any hesitation or delay, let alone an apparent refusal to pay this customs duty, they should wait and search for it, and with resolute determination, persist in demanding it, knowing with absolute certainty and without any doubt that it can be obtained. The commission (which should be truly believed and employed according to the intentions of the grantor) serves as the highest assurance that all things (with a particular focus on their afflictions, as affirmed by most, if not all, judicious commentators) will work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose. In this covenant, He has, with great reverence to His Majesty, condescended in some way to limit His own sovereignty and absolute dominion, committing Himself to do nothing except what is for the good of His people. Thus, in all His dealings with them, His absolute dominion and His good will are proportionate and equal, with one never exceeding the other by even the slightest degree. Even in the most obscure, complex, puzzling, and mysterious providences, where they may discern and understand the least of His intentions, and where He (appearing to exercise His dominion with the utmost authority or the sternest severity of His justice) may refuse to provide a detailed account of His plans and actions, He has graciously stooped down and condescended to offer this general, profoundly satisfying

assurance: that all things shall work for their good, specifically their spiritual good and benefit—the purification of sin and their deeper participation in His holiness.

Oh! May all the sincerely devoted lovers of God, and those who have been truly called according to His purpose, be persuaded and convinced by the living faith in this truth to establish within themselves a steadfast resolution to not let any of the many crosses and afflictions they encounter pass by without paying the customs imposed by the King. If they faithfully, diligently, closely, and consistently engage in this practice, it would immensely enrich and more than compensate for all their losses, surpassing the gathering of customs from the rarest and most valuable commodities of both the Indies, even if those were exclusively monopolized by the most honourable society of the godly. It would enable them to maintain a lofty spiritual status and conduct themselves in a manner befitting the King's position, as it is fitting for those privileged to be collectors of such customs under Him.

It has been a considerable period, Noble Madam, nearing almost 30 years (whatever preceded that), since some people came to know that, by the grace of God, you earnestly embraced the collection of customs from the crosses and afflictions that were presented to you. Through this practice, you noticeably improved, grew, and elevated your spiritual wealth and condition, to the admiration of onlookers. Since then, for the majority of that time, you have been subjected to a succession of trials in the providence of God. Each trial has been more challenging than the last, and some of them were so severe that I believe (as the esteemed author of this treatise once remarked in response to a sorrowful and unexpected blow—the loss of his beloved and faithful wife, the desire of his eyes—after a period of silence, with great solemnity and composed spirit, he said, "Who could persuade me to believe that this is good if God had not said it?") even if the whole world had insisted and sworn, it would have been extremely difficult, if not impossible, to persuade you to believe that they were good. However, since God, who cannot lie, has declared it, there is no

room left for debate or doubt, let alone denial. And if you, Madam (which I hope you have), have been diligently gathering the customs of spiritual good and gain imposed by these numerous, varied, and profound tribulations, with which the Lord, undoubtedly for a blessed purpose of singular good to you, has chosen to test you more than most individuals, especially considering your noble status and lineage—Oh! What an immense stockpile and treasure of rich and soul-enriching precious experiences of the goodness and benefit of all these afflictions and tribulations must you have accumulated! What humility and gentle walking, what contrition and tenderness of heart; what frequency and fervency, what solemnity and spirituality in prayer? What moments of solitude and silence, acknowledging that God has brought it about? What vindication of God and attribution of righteousness to Him in all His actions? What delightful soliloquies and introspective communions within your heart upon your bed, self-examinations and reflections? What joyful meditations on God and His law? What mortification of desires, what detachment and denial, and what detachment from all creature comforts and delights of the sons of men?

How diligently have you secured the grand interest amidst the shaking and loosening of all other interests? How eagerly have you desired and found satisfaction in fellowship with God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ, even when your other relationships have been left desolate? How have you regarded all the things that hold value among men as mere loss and filth compared to the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus Christ the Lord? How have you grown increasingly distinct from the world by the renewing of your mind? How have you been transformed into the image of God, from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord? How have you displayed exemplary holiness in your conduct? How have you prioritised the public interest of His glory over your personal and selfish interests? How have you eagerly awaited and longed for the coming of His Kingdom? How have you desired and purposed to faithfully serve your generation according to His will, and once that is done, how have you groaned to be unclothed and clothed with your heavenly dwelling? How have you

longed, with sweet submission to His will, to be dissolved and to be with Jesus Christ, which is best of all? In the meantime, how have you conducted yourself as a stranger and pilgrim, openly declaring to the world that this is not your home, but that you anticipate a heavenly country? How have you shown that God is not ashamed to be called your God? Lastly, what practical and experiential knowledge do you have, and what clear understanding do you possess, of the remarkable and unparalleled art of finding in God what is lacking among His creatures? Even a small portion of Him can go unimaginably far in filling up the empty and void spaces left by the removal of many cherished creature comforts. What loss or lack is there that cannot be compensated in Him? He is God all-sufficient, and in Him, everything desirable and excellent that is found among the creatures is present in a transcendent and infinitely superior way. From Him, as the boundlessly full fountain and immeasurably vast, immense, shoreless, boundless, and bottomless ocean of all delightful, desirable, imaginable, and possible perfections, the small drops and rivulets of apparent and superficial perfections scattered among the creatures flow forth. Oh, beautiful and blessed fruits of afflictions, not brought forth by afflictions alone, but by His own grace working together with and through them. It is part of His royal and incommunicable prerogative, not imparted or given from His own hand to any dispensation, whether of ordinances or providences, whether more favourable or more challenging, apart from His blessing and grace, to teach for profit. If you, Madam, have not been enriched in this manner, and if your stock and revenue have not been improved in this way, I assume it is a burden to you and more distressing than all your other afflictions.

And it is also evident that you wholeheartedly pursue this as your greatest aim in the world, diligently driving towards it. From my own personal knowledge and observation, both long ago and recently (having had the honour and happiness of being in your company on many occasions, even during the lowest points of your outward prosperity), and from the accounts of others who are more discerning and observant than I am, I could say much more about

the wealth of gain and advantage you have received, the progress you have made, the compensation for your losses, and the recovery from all your setbacks in this regard. However, my fear of being perceived as a flatterer by those who do not know you as well as I do prevents me from saying too much, and I also acknowledge your Christian modesty, sobriety, and self-denial, which may not allow you to fully receive such commendations. To attempt to express everything that could truthfully be said on this matter, without resorting to mere flattery (which is all too common in dedicatory epistles), would be considered by you as beneath your dignity to ask for or expect, and beyond my capabilities to perform adequately.

Now, Madam, being fully convinced that this profound, sound, substantial, soul-searching, and soul-settling treatise will be welcomed by you and will benefit you spiritually in ways surpassing most others, I find no need for lengthy deliberation on whom to dedicate it to. In my humble opinion, you hold a well-deserved preference over many other ladies of honour currently living. Furthermore, I have no doubt that if the esteemed and now deceased author had intended to dedicate this work to any noble lady, it would have been you. I know he held you in high regard, as he had expressed his intention to dedicate his piece on the Canticles to your noble and well-known sister-in-law, my Lady Viscountess of Kenmure, before his passing. There is no need for letters of commendation to you, who were so intimately acquainted with the author. The reading of this treatise will sufficiently commend itself, and as a posthumous work of his, it will also commend him in the public sphere.

I shall now only say, which will greatly endear it to you and to all sincere students of holiness, that it is, for the most part, very practical (and what is polemical in it, which is much needed at this time, is directed towards suitable practices based on true judgment). And your Ladyship knows that the power, indeed, the very essence and life of religion, lies in the diligent practice of it. In fact, we only truly know in God's eyes what we through grace, with singleness and

seriousness, aim and strive to practice. It is those who do His commandments and keep them who possess true understanding, and it is their wisdom and insight in the eyes of the nations who hear of these statutes and are compelled to say, "Surely this is a wise and understanding people." Merely possessing a great measure of apprehensive and speculative knowledge of the truths and will of God does not make one truly wise, for it is not wisdom unto salvation, nor does it prove those who possess it to be genuinely happy. The Lord has not declared them to be such who only know, but those who, knowing these things, actually do them. Unfortunately, many, without much consideration, seek to know only or primarily for the sake of their own knowledge or to make it known to others that they possess knowledge. This is a notable disappointment of the purpose of all sound scriptural theology, which is, in its entirety and in every part, head, and article, for practice and not mere speculation. This is a great soul-ruining practical error of many professing individuals in this knowledge-driven age on one hand. On the other hand, there is another error in practice, sadly encountered by not a few well-meaning souls. These individuals, desiring and delighting only in hearing, reading, and knowing what directly addresses their current situation and spiritual exercises or immediately emphasizes something to be practiced, grow weary of and pay little attention to what serves for a more comprehensive and clear understanding of their judgments in the literal meaning of the scriptures, in the doctrinal aspects of religion, and in what may enhance, improve, and advance their knowledge of its principles. They neglect to become firm in faith, established in present truth, and having their loins girded with it. As a result, although some of these individuals may, by grace, have chosen the better part that cannot be taken from them, they are not only filled with confusion and troubling doubts about their own spiritual state and condition due to their ignorance, but they are also particularly vulnerable to the grave danger of being ensnared and carried away as an easy prey by every error and sect leader who plausibly pretends to have even the slightest regard for the practice and power of godliness. This has been highly detrimental to the Church of God in

all ages, and it is most noticeably evident in the present time, and there is much reason to fear that it may further exacerbate if we are tested with intense and suitable temptations.

Happy, therefore, yes, three times happy are those who, guided by the skill and leadership of one appointed to be a guide and pilot to God's people, are helped to navigate the port and steer a straight and steady course between the extreme dangers on the right and left. Thousands have perished and suffered shipwreck on the treacherous rocks and reefs. It should be their utmost priority to diligently seek knowledge of religious truths, to eagerly pursue it like one would search for silver and hidden treasure, and to make use of all divinely appointed means to increase their knowledge. They should vigorously strive to put their knowledge into practice and align their actions with their beliefs and profession. My earnest desire is that your Ladyship, with God's blessings upon this instructive and emotionally stirring practical treatise, may continue to navigate the port in this manner, catching favorable winds to fill your sails, until you reach the destination of unwavering faith, with sails set high, at that peaceful port and heavenly haven of rest prepared for the people of God. This is my sincere wish,

Noble Madam,

as your devoted servant,

for the sake of Christ.

TO THE CHRISTIAN READER

The subject matter of this treatise is undoubtedly of great excellence. It is not just a portion of divinely-inspired scripture, but specifically the Moral Law. This law serves as the straight, infallible, perfect, and perpetually binding guide for life and conduct. It encompasses a

concise summary of all required duties and prohibited sins. It is worth noting that certain groups, including the Socinians, Anabaptists, and Arminian-Remonstrants, unfortunately attempt to transform the Gospel into a new Law or Covenant of Works. They aim to establish righteousness based on faith and works through their alleged supplements, amendments, and additions to the New Testament. Likewise, the Papists boast about their works of supererogation and counsels of perfection, seeking to surpass the demands of the Law. However, the Ten Commandments, later summarized by Jesus Christ into two commandments, were directly pronounced by God Himself and inscribed twice on stone tablets. They encompass a multitude of diverse matters and purposes. Without exaggeration, it can be confidently asserted that no other spokesman in the world has conveyed such a remarkable amount of matter and substance with such admirable holiness, conciseness, and significance. It is not surprising, for it is the same God who gave humans the ability to speak and taught them to communicate. He possesses an unparalleled skill in speaking meaningfully with few words. In this, He calls us to humbly imitate Him according to our capacity. Undoubtedly, one of the numerous and glaring signs of the decline of this generation from the ancient, lovely, and praiseworthy simplicity is the tendency of many individuals to forget that words were originally intended to be the external signs of internal thoughts. Falsely assuming that others are obliged to listen to their excessive speech because they enjoy hearing themselves talk, they multiply words unnecessarily and out of proportion to the subject matter. Instead, a few well-chosen words could adequately convey their thoughts and make a suitable impression. However, in their excess, they waste time and tire themselves as they wander through the unnecessary and superfluous wilderness of words.

And this is accompanied or rather brought about by another aspect of vanity, where men, tired of familiar and long-used words that are already sufficiently meaningful, become infatuated with new, coined words that have never been heard before. They stretch their wit (if an excess of words, though new and fancy, can be considered a display

of wit; for it does not make us any wiser or more knowledgeable) and strain their creativity to find not new ideas, but new words. This often leads to the entanglement and obscuring of old, plain, and obvious matters, at least for more ordinary readers and listeners—a clear distortion of the purpose of words for which the creator of language will hold us accountable. They are not content with such curiosity in simpler and more common matters. This alien, foreign, and even whimsical style of language is introduced into theological and profoundly spiritual discussions, whether spoken or written. These discussions should, I acknowledge, be conducted in a manner befitting the oracles of God, with a grave and appropriate use of language that reflects the majesty of the subject, so as not to be exposed to contempt through any inappropriate incongruity or baseness. However, this has resulted in immeasurable harm and hindrance to edification. Many, in their fastidious rejection of simple and sound words, are ready to dismiss and exclude the most precious and beneficial truths from the stage of the Church, even though they possess abundant beauty, majesty, and power in their own spiritual simplicity. They are deemed unfit to play their part and are considered dull and blunt, if not completely unworthy of being acknowledged and accepted as truths, unless they appear, whether in the pulpit or in print, clothed in this strange and showy attire, adorned with the feathers of arrogant human eloquence, and embellished with rhetoric and artificially labored elegance of speech. Such adornments, which our truly manly and magnanimous Christian author undervalued, are like a comedian's coat, lacking true substance.

And it is not surprising, as even the pagan moral philosopher Seneca regarded it as hardly worthy of a man. In his writings to Lucilius, he advises him to focus on understanding the substance of words in his heart rather than being preoccupied with them. He considers those who have affected and laborious speech to be occupied with vain things, likening them to young men who are well-groomed and overly concerned with appearance but lack substance and generosity. Seneca further asserts that a virtuous person speaks more calmly but

with greater confidence, placing more trust in the content of their words than in their eloquence. If someone overly disguises and polishes their speech, it is a sign that they are a hypocrite and of little worth. Speaking affectedly is not a mark of true character. Unfortunately, this tendency, along with other extravagances, has reached astonishing heights among the so-called wisdom of words or word-wisdom monopolizers of this age. If the great Apostle Paul, who spoke wisdom (though not of this kind or of this world) among those who were mature, deliberately avoided the wisdom of words, enticing speech, and excellence of human eloquence so that the cross of Christ would not be made ineffective and the faith of his hearers would not rest on human wisdom but on the power of God, he would likely be seen as weak and his speech would be considered crude and contemptible by these wordsmiths and wise heads (as he was judged by the boastful doctors of the Church of Corinth). In fact, he might even be regarded as a babbling fool, as he was by the philosophers and orators in Athens. The subject matter of this Treatise, I repeat, must indeed be most excellent, as it deals with the spiritual, holy, just, and good Law—the Royal Law that binds us to the obedience of God our King—the Law that Jesus Christ came not to destroy but to fulfill. He is the fulfillment of the Law for righteousness to everyone who believes. This Law serves as a schoolmaster, leading us to Him by revealing the holy nature and will of God, and our duty to walk in conformity with it. It convicts us of the deep-seated sinfulness in our nature, hearts, and lives, our universal disobedience to it, and countless transgressions. It shows us the obligation to face the wrath and curse of God because of our sins, our utter inability to keep the Law and deliver ourselves from this sinful and wrathful state. It humbles us under this conviction and sense of our shortcomings. It leads us to renounce self-righteousness or righteousness according to this Law. Finally, it convinces us of the absolute and indispensable need for another righteousness—namely, the imputed righteousness of Christ. This Law is essential for all people, both in general and individually, whether they are regenerated or unregenerate.

From which, not even the smallest stroke or letter can pass unfulfilled, Heaven and Earth must pass away. This is the portion of Divinely-inspired Scripture that constitutes the Moral Law, which is the most direct, infallible, perfect, and perpetually binding rule of life and conduct. It is a concise summary and abridgement of all the required duties and forbidden sins. Despite the opinions of certain groups (including Anabaptists, Arminian-Remonstrants, and even some Papists) who seek to transform the Gospel into a new Law or Covenant of Works, this Moral Law remains firm. They attempt to establish a righteousness of faith and works through their alleged supplements and amendments to the New Testament. However, it is clear that these Ten Commandments, immediately pronounced by God Himself and twice written with His own finger on stone tablets, encompass a multitude of matters and purposes. Without hesitation or hyperbole, it can be asserted that never before have so much significance, holy wisdom, and profound truths been conveyed in so few words. This concise and profoundly significant communication is characteristic of the One who gave humans the gift of speech and taught them to communicate. He far surpasses the most skilled orators, for He has the ability to convey vast amounts of meaning with great brevity. He calls us to humbly imitate Him in this manner. It is undoubtedly a sign of the decline of this generation that many people, forgetting that words were originally intended to be external expressions of internal thoughts, indulge in an excessive desire to hear themselves talk. They mistakenly believe that others are obligated to do the same. They seek to multiply words unnecessarily, often without regard for their true significance. Instead of using a few well-placed words to convey their thoughts, they lead us through a wasteland of unnecessary and superfluous verbiage, wasting our time and leaving us weary. And it is not just a matter of excessive words in general, but also the introduction of new and unfamiliar terms. People become enamoured with novelty and invent new words, unnecessarily complicating and obscuring plain and obvious concepts. This is detrimental to edification, for many individuals reject simple and sound words, dismissing profound and profitable truths as dull and unworthy of acceptance. They demand that these

truths, whether preached from the pulpit or written down, be clothed in a strange and ostentatious language—a language that resembles the coat of a comedian adorned with the feathers of arrogant human eloquence and embellished with the trappings of rhetorical flourish. However, our esteemed Christian author, Mr. Durham, undervalued such affected speech and eloquence, rightly recognizing its insignificance. Even the pagan philosopher Seneca understood the importance of substance over words, advising his protégé Lucilius to focus on understanding the essence of ideas rather than being preoccupied with eloquent language. Seneca compared those who indulge in artificial and polished speech to well-groomed young men who lack true substance and depth. He affirmed that a virtuous person speaks with calmness, security, and confidence, placing more trust in the content of their words than in their eloquence. Indeed, speech is a reflection of the mind, and excessive polish and artifice indicate hypocrisy and worthlessness. This obsession with eloquence and wordiness has reached extraordinary levels in our present age, overshadowing true wisdom and monopolizing the minds of many. If the great Apostle Paul, who spoke wisdom (though not of this world or this kind) among the mature, deliberately avoided the wisdom of words and eloquent speech so that the cross of Christ would not lose its power and people's faith would rest in the power of God rather than in human wisdom, he would likely be seen as weak and his speech would be deemed crude and contemptible. He would be dismissed as mere babbling by the philosophers and orators of today. However, the subject matter of this treatise, the Moral Law, is undeniably excellent. It is a spiritual, holy, just, and good law, the royal law that binds us to obey God, our King. Jesus Christ Himself came not to abolish this law but to fulfill it, being the end of righteousness for everyone who believes. It serves as a guiding master, leading us to Him by revealing the holy nature and will of God, convicting us of our sinful nature and actions, demonstrating our need for His redemption, humbling us under the weight of our inability to keep the law, and pointing us towards the necessity of His imputed righteousness. This law is indispensable, applicable to all people and essential for both the unregenerate and the regenerate. It

is a matter of utmost importance to understand and study it rightly, not for the sake of justification but for the purpose of glorifying God in our obedience. If this treatise even remotely aligns with the weightiness of its subject and theme, it will surely possess its own excellence. And to convince you of this, I need only mention that it is the posthumous work of the esteemed Mr. Durham, a man who had a unique excellence in his spoken and written words. This is evident in his insightful commentary on the Book of Revelation, where he delved deeply into its mysteries, shedding light on truths that had remained hidden to many before him. Furthermore, his sweet and savory exposition of the Song of Solomon displays his exceptional understanding and experience of the love of Jesus Christ, both inwardly and outwardly. The profound realities affirmed by God and powerfully experienced by the godly are clearly articulated by Mr. Durham, who was more deeply affected by them than by any physical sensation. Indeed, the more spiritual something is, the greater its reality and the stronger its efficacy. Unfortunately, a recent blasphemous writer, maliciously referred to as "Fine Romances of the secret Amours between the Lord Christ and the believing Soul, told by the Non-conformist preachers," has maliciously attacked these sublime spiritual truths. However, their derisive words and criticisms cannot diminish the profound significance and power of the truths contained in this treatise on the Moral Law.

What? Are these and similar verses considered romances? Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for his love is better than wine. Your name is like a fragrant ointment poured forth; therefore, the virgins love you. We will remember your love more than wine; the upright love you. Look, you are fair, my beloved, and pleasant; our bed is green. My beloved is like a bundle of myrrh to me; he shall lie all night between my breasts. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love. Sustain me with flagons, comfort me with apples, for I am lovesick. His left hand is under my head, and his right hand embraces me. My beloved is mine, and I am his; I am my beloved's, and his desire is towards me.

I found him whom my soul loves; I held him and would not let him go. Set me as a seal upon your heart, and as a seal on your arm. Love is as strong as death—many waters cannot quench love, nor can floods drown it. I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved, tell him I am lovesick. Come, my beloved, let us go up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vines flourish. There I will give you my love. Hurry, my beloved, and be like a gazelle or a young stag on the mountains of spices. How fair and pleasant you are, O love, for delights! O my dove, let me see your countenance, let me hear your voice, for your voice is sweet and your countenance is lovely. You have ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse, with one glance of your eyes, with one chain of your neck. Turn away your eyes from me, for they have overcome me. "He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him. If anyone loves me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. The love of Christ compels us. We love him because he first loved us. The love of God is poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit given to us. Though we have not seen him, we love him; and even though we do not see him now, we believe in him and rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory. May you, together with all the saints, comprehend the breadth, length, depth, and height, and know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge. Are these, I ask, romances? Are these mere fantasies, fictions, and fabrications? Are these cunningly devised and told by the non-conformist preachers?

Did the apostle thunder the great anathema against men for not having a mere romantic and fancied love for the Lord Jesus? (The execution of such a dreadful judgment would solidly prove its reality and serve as a severe reproof for denying it.) Would the most proud, petulant, perverse, and profane pretender, merely claiming the name of a Christian, dare to say such a thing? If these genuine expressions of love and interactions between the Lord Christ and the believing

soul are considered romances, then the entire Bible (of which these are a significant and comforting part) could be considered a romance (which this romantic divine would probably not hesitate to claim, making little account of it, and audaciously alleging that the English Bible is a book with errors in some places, lacking in sense, and of dangerous consequences; he would be reluctant to treat Grand Cyrus, Cleopatra, and his other beloved romances in the same manner.) If there is no real love between Christ and the Christian, but only romantic and feigned love, then there is no real Christianity, no real Christ (whom this new doctor devalues under the thinly veiled pretext of exalting him, claiming that his unparalleled civility and gracious conduct seem to be almost as compelling evidence of the truth and divinity of his doctrine as his unparalleled miracles were; otherwise, he would be a base and deceitful impostor. What would this young divine, who disparages the old divines and even great Calvin by name, say about the divinity of the person and doctrine of blessed Jesus? If, when he was on earth, he had spoken and acted as roughly and straightforwardly more frequently (which he could have done under the same circumstances), as he did when he called Herod a fox and drove the buyers and sellers out of the temple, and if he had appeared as uncivil and unobliging as his precursor, John the Baptist, he would likely have doubted his divinity and deemed him nothing more than a base impostor, if not outright declared that he had a devil.) No real redemption, no real Redeemer; no real misery, no real mercy; no real heaven, no real hell (although the real enactment of its story will easily and quickly refute this romantic conception of it). And, in conclusion, no real God: everything is but a complete, elaborate romance, fable, and fabrication. The Lord, against whom this mouth wickedly opens wide, and whom another Rabshakeh reviles with such furious reproach, rebuke the spirit that prompts the expression of this damnable and diabolical, nay, hyper-diabolical doctrine (for even the devils believe that there is one God and tremble, and they acknowledged Jesus Christ to be the Son of God, whom they feared would torment them before the appointed time).

But this desperado would drive us to disbelieve both and yet mock us, removing all fear of being tormented for any reason, either before or at the appointed time. This teacher, who would benefit from recent instruction by renowned Doctor Owen, sharp-minded Master Marvel, and the wise author of "The Fulfilling of the Scriptures" in his Second Part (if he would humble himself to receive instruction), deserves not only to be expelled from Protestant churches but also to be hissed and chased out of the Christian world. Furthermore, it is evident from the divinely politic and profoundly wise treatise on scandal, both in general and in particular on scandalous divisions, that both preachers and followers of the Gospel should read and reread in these sorrowful times, where so much offense is given and there is a great readiness to take offense. This piece, I humbly believe, does not fall far behind, if at all, in comparison to any of these treatises or any other brief treatise on the commands. In it, the light of the glory of the Lord, shining in the face of Jesus Christ, has beamed so brightly and radiantly into the heart of the author's servant, revealing the seven abominations of our hearts. By digging, he has uncovered great abominations, even greater, and still greater. He who searches Jerusalem with candles has handed him the candle of the true meaning of the law of the Lord, allowing him to descend and explore the inner parts of the corrupt nature within our being, searching the most hidden corners of the deceitful and wicked depths locked within our hearts. It is as if he has been given the end of the thread of searching, enabling him to follow and discover us in the many twists, turns, windings, and wanderings of the labyrinth of this great mystery of iniquity that operates within us.

He has skillfully aided him in anatomically dissecting even the smallest capillary veins of the vast body of duties encompassed within these Ten Commandments, as if providing a transcribed and engraved copy upon the fleshly tablets of the author's heart and in his entire visible conduct, as has similarly been done in the lives of many sinful individuals. Without prolonging the discussion, let me simply say, to provoke and persuade you to consider what the

blessed author, though deceased, still speaks in this chosen treatise (particularly directed to the inhabitants of Glasgow, now for the second time). Amongst many other ailments of this declining and degenerated generation, there exists a strong craving for new and more speculative notions, while showing disdain for old and more solid and substantial aspects of religion. This is evidenced by the fact that although few subjects are more necessary and useful than what is addressed here, it is commonly disregarded as a very ordinary and commonplace topic. The Ten Commandments are considered more suitable for children to recite and memorise, or at best for rudimentary and uninformed beginners, apprentices, and Christians in the early stages of their faith journey. Meanwhile, those who profess to possess greater knowledge and experience, considering themselves to have completed their apprenticeship and become masters of religious practice, somewhat scornfully overlook and deem it beneath them to spend time conversing with Moses at the foot of Mount Sinai. They seem to believe they can instantaneously ascend to the summit of Mount Zion and engage in communion with Jesus Christ. As a result, many are woefully ignorant of the very letter of the Law, and even more lack deep understanding of its spiritual significance. This ignorance carries immense and indescribable consequences, which must be considered in relation to the diverse states of individuals, whether they are regenerate or unregenerate, and the varying degrees of their ignorance.

1. It greatly hinders self-examination, which is a significant aspect and even a foundation of practicing godliness. How can a person effectively search and evaluate their heart and actions if they are entirely or to a great extent unaware of the standard by which the search should be conducted?
2. It keeps individuals largely unacquainted with themselves, their spiritual condition, disposition, and conduct. As a result, they are rarely, if ever, able to accurately and genuinely represent the state of their spiritual affairs before God.

3. It is not the source of true devotion, as the ignorant or impious claim of Papists suggests, but rather fosters a false sense of security and carnal peace. The uninformed or poorly informed conscience of a sinner is misled and falsely assured against rightful and well-founded accusations. They often remain ignorant of when they commit sins or fail to fulfill their duties, and yet every sin is a transgression of this Law, and every duty is an act of conformity to it. How can a person be rightly challenged and accused by their own conscience for the commission or omission of certain actions if they are largely unaware of the full extent and spiritual meaning of this Law?
4. It significantly hinders the exercise of humility, repentance, and self-loathing. How can breaches of this Law, whether through omissions or commissions, be sincerely repented of and mourned over when they are not even recognized as breaches of the Law in general, let alone specific commandments? Even if there is some vague awareness of them as breaches of the Law in general, without a distinct knowledge of the commandment that is being violated, conviction will not be as immediate and sorrow will not be as deeply felt. For true humility, we need the undeniable evidence of our guilt in breaking a specific commandment so that we cannot easily evade or dismiss it.
5. It clearly impedes earnest and effective efforts, empowered by God's grace, to rectify what is wrong and promptly turn our lives towards obedience to His commandments. There is little reason to expect people to genuinely seek to correct their wrongdoings when they are ignorant of them or not fully convinced of their existence.
6. It strongly contributes to nurturing spiritual pride and a self-righteous attitude, which is inherent in us, just as sparks naturally fly upwards. When individuals are unaware of their sins and the extent of their sins, they are more easily inclined to believe that they are not great sinners and do not have as much

reason as claimed to be so utterly displeased with themselves. What may be the downfall of a natural, unrenewed person can be a dangerous ailment for a child of God.

7. This prejudice, which naturally and inevitably arises from the six preceding prejudices, significantly hinders true conviction and a genuine sense of the absolute and indispensable necessity, immense usefulness, steadfastness, and unparalleled worth of our precious Jesus Christ the Savior and His imputed righteousness. It prevents people from seeking Him daily and relying on Him as the source of both righteousness and sanctification appointed by God for His people. It hinders them from continually abiding at the open fountain for sin and uncleanness, and from experiencing edifying, refreshing, and somewhat transporting admiration for the perfect righteousness of Christ, which can cover and make it seem as if so many and various violations of God's holy Law had never occurred. It obstructs fresh convictions of the immeasurable obligation that the people of God owe to Him, who perfectly fulfilled this Law and took upon Himself our cursed state. It hampers the provocation and gratitude that should inspire greater care and eagerness to conform to His Law as the rule of obedience. Lastly, it hinders the appropriate longing and yearning of the soul to be, according to His gracious covenant, enabled to perfectly do His will in our own lives, never transgressing His Law again, and to experience the full fulfillment of the exceedingly great and precious promises that He will redeem Israel from all their iniquities, and His servants will serve Him.

Oh, if only we could persuade everyone, by what has been said, to study the Law of God more diligently and accurately, and to read and contemplate this profound and soul-searching treatise. If only we could convince individuals (which, in reason and conscience, could be assumed to not be a difficult task with men and women professing to be Christians, claiming to possess immortal souls that will be eternally and unalterably happy or miserable) to devote as much

time to reading, examining, and pondering such pieces as they do to reading romantic books and novels; To idle visits and to empty and meaningless compliments; to excessively costly, vain, and excessive grooming and dressing of the body, and constantly changing hairstyles (wherein, like other vanities, many men somewhat effeminate themselves, now competing with women through their unnaturally nourished long hair and extravagant displays of vanity (as Master Bolton calls them), and partly through their various and strangely transforming styles and colors of wigs) which prompted Tertullian in the 7th chapter of his book "De cultu mul." to question the women of his time in this manner: What does this burdensome styling of the head contribute to your well-being? Why won't you let your hair rest and remain still? Sometimes it is tied up, sometimes let loose to hang down, sometimes curled and frizzed, sometimes tightly bound and pressed down, sometimes kept under strict control (with braids, knots, and other methods), and sometimes allowed to escape and flow freely at random. And in addition, you attach to your heads I know not what monstrosities of hair sewn and woven this way and that way. If you are not ashamed of these monstrosities, at least be ashamed of the defilement, lest it be discovered that you adorn and cover a holy and Christian head with the spoils and plunder of the hair of another head, which may belong to a filthy person or even a notorious offender condemned to Hell. What would he have said about some women among us who, not content with their own hair or any of the colors that God has made to grow on the heads of rational creatures, abominably choose to attach animal hair to their foreheads? (These are extreme excesses of this age, present in almost all ranks of society, and never more prevalent than since God began to contend with us and call us to set aside our adornments, so that He may determine what to do with us. Sadly, many individuals spend more time in these days grooming and dressing themselves and looking in a mirror for that purpose in one week than they do in a year or even many years to examine themselves in the mirror of God's Law, to discover the many stains and blemishes that mar their souls, or in such treatises as this, which wipe away the dust of misconceptions regarding the meaning of the

Law and provide a clear and accurate representation of what kind of people we are.) To excessive drinking and toasting, or drinking and pledging healths, which were prohibited and strongly condemned in the ancient Church, particularly by Basil and Augustine, on the very grounds that they were inventions of the Devil and practices associated with unbelievers and pagans.

To excessive drinking and partying, a practice that damages one's conscience and weakens the soul, although many people (including some who should know better) pay little attention to it; to gambling and dice-playing, which has been condemned by many Church Fathers, various councils, imperial statutes, Protestant and Catholic theologians alike—some councils even excommunicated dice-players; to singing and playing of frivolous and suggestive songs, as well as lascivious dancing, which have also been strongly denounced and condemned by councils, Church Fathers, and numerous theologians, particularly the Waldenses and Albigenses, who consider a woman's skill in dancing as no indication of her virtue. The author of "*Magica de spectris lib. 1. hist 287. pag. 285.*" makes an interesting observation about the profane and promiscuous dancing that is so popular in this age, noting that hardly any meeting between the Devil and witches took place without dancing; such is the pleasure that unclean spirit takes in this activity. Moreover, bringing spectators to watch profane interludes and stage plays, which, as the highly learned and pious Doctor Ussher, the late Archbishop of Armagh, affirms, violate multiple aspects of the seventh commandment through the misuse of clothing, language, eyes, facial expressions, gestures, and nearly every part of the body. Therefore, those who attend such performances and listen to such words (what would he have said about the authors or composers of such plays and the actors in them? The ancient Church prescribed excommunication for both, and notable judgments have befallen some of them. For instance, according to credible accounts, a man who played the Devil's part in a stage play in one of the cities of Brabant and then went home dressed as such, engaged in sexual relations with his wife, and declared that he would conceive a devil with her, ended up

having a child that danced as soon as it was born, resembling the devil as depicted in paintings. Furthermore, the builders and patrons of houses for these plays, referred to by Church Fathers and Doctors as the Devil's temples, chapels, shops, and schools, demonstrate their neglect of Christian duty and carelessness in sinning. The plays themselves are regarded as the Devil's spectacles, lectures, sacrifices, recreations, etc., and the actors as his chief agents. Those who have these plays performed in their own homes (as some do nowadays), essentially turning their houses into synagogues for the Devil's conveniences, and those who financially support the actors either to encourage their lewd way of life or to gain permission to watch are committing a grievous sin. Augustine, Vincentius, and others consider it an offering or sacrifice to the Devil, the one who invented such practices. This reflects their neglect of Christian duty and their willing entrapment by the Devil—a truth that has been tragically exemplified, as recounted by Tertullian in his book "De spectaculis" chapter 26, and he declares that God is a witness to its veracity.

One of these instances involved a woman who, upon returning home from a stage play, was immediately possessed by a devil. When confronted through exorcism and asked how he dared to attack and enter a believing woman, the devil boldly answered that he had done so justly. He claimed to have found her within his own temple, domain, or jurisdiction, as if he had said, within his own realm and sphere of influence. The other incident involved a woman who, after hearing a tragedian, had a linen sheet presented to her in her sleep. The actor from the play was also mentioned, rebuking her for her actions. Sadly, she died within five days. There is also the story of Alipius, a dear friend and convert of Augustine. As Augustine recounts in the sixth book of his Confessions, Alipius was urged by some friends and fellow students to accompany them to watch a swordplay. At first, Alipius vehemently resisted, but eventually, he allowed himself to be persuaded. He resolved to be absent while being present, closing his eyes throughout the performance. However, when a loud shout erupted due to an incident during the play, he opened his eyes. Though he intended to disregard whatever

he saw, he was immediately struck with a deep wound in his soul. From that moment, he was no longer the same person. He became a true companion to those who brought him, joining in the excitement and growing increasingly unruly. His experience drove him to return to such events and even surpass the very people who initially drew him away.

However, after a considerable period of indulging in such profanity, he was mercifully restored, though not until a long time had passed. (Individuals who have been led astray by stage plays, whether of a civil or religious nature, are rarely swiftly reclaimed from them.) This was exemplified by the case of a recent English gentlewoman of good standing. She spent much of her precious time attending stage plays and, in the end, fell ill with a dangerous sickness from which she passed away in 1631. When friends summoned a minister to prepare her for death, he began instructing and exhorting her to repent and call upon God for mercy. However, she did not respond at all but instead cried out, "Hieronimo, Hieronimo! Oh, let me see Hieronimo acted!" Thus, she requested a play instead of seeking God's mercy, closing her dying eyes and meeting a fearful end that matched her miserable life. Similarly, there were several individuals who experienced mental disturbance upon witnessing the visible apparition of the devil on stage at the Bell-Savage Playhouse during the reign of Queen Elizabeth. This occurred while they were watching the profane enactment of the history of Faustus. Many other lamentable examples and warnings could be added, illustrating how individuals gradually deviate from the faith enticed by the dangerous habit of attending such plays, with which Tertullian states they are communing with the devil. Would anyone dare to appear before the dreadful tribunal of God to defend and justify the allowance of more time for these and similar practices (several of which are expertly discussed by the author in the following treatise, and most of them with their respective authorities by Master Prin in his "Histrio-Mastix") than for reading this and other such treatises? If anyone dares, they must answer for it. By the grace of God, I have no

intention of aligning myself with them in such a bold and desperate venture.

Now, dear Christian reader, without any further preamble, let us delve into the treasure of the treatise itself. If you approach it with seriousness and contemplation, I believe I can humbly, in the name of the Lord, challenge you to walk away from it without a heart full of convictions, burdened with a sense of guilt, and crying out like the leper under the Law, "Unclean, unclean!" With Job, you will declare, "Behold, I am vile." With David, as you gaze intently into the mirror of this Law, illuminated by God's light, you will see a clear reflection of countless transgressions, like tiny particles in the bright sunshine. Who can understand their own errors? Cleanse me from hidden faults, you will pray. With the prophet Isaiah, you will acknowledge, "We are all as an unclean thing," as if uncleanness itself were personified, and all our righteousness is like filthy rags. With the apostle James, you will admit that in many things we all stumble. And finally, with the apostle Paul, you will grasp the spiritual nature of the Law while confessing your own carnality and bondage to sin. You will cry out, "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" So that you may also, with that same apostle, be able to say and sing to the praise of His grace, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord," is the heartfelt desire of your servant in the Gospel, for the sake of Christ.

To the Reader

The decline of religion in the world today has reached such a level that it is noticed by all who claim any interest in it, and it is complained about by many. By religion, we mean its power in the hearts and lives of people, not merely an outward profession of it, let alone the general pretense made by those who openly deny its power. Its manifestation is not only seen in the fruits of sinful complacency and the wicked lives of people from all walks of life, but it is also becoming evident in its effects in the current state of the world, which is filled with misery and confusion. The wrath of God is revealed in various ways from heaven against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of people who suppress the truth by their unrighteousness, and in many nations, there are visible signs and manifestations of it. There is no peace among them, whether they are coming or going; instead, great distress is upon all their inhabitants. Nation rises against nation, and city against city, for God afflicts them with all sorts of adversities. Regardless of what people may think or plan in these matters, the judgments of God are not simply serving their desires and passions. He contends with the world because of its neglect of the gospel and its opposition to it. Our present respite in enjoying outward blessings does not prove that we are not the objects of His displeasure. All people are in the same condition when they fall into the same sins and the same lapses from the power of religion, for God shows no partiality. It is indeed an expression of divine patience, which if abused through complacency, will lead to a more severe retribution. Meanwhile, the voice of God to us in all the miseries and desolations we hear about in the world is that unless we repent, we will likewise perish. We are not completely without clear warnings among ourselves through various severe dispensations of divine providence. Those who are not completely hardened by the deceitfulness of sin can easily discern God's hand raised in various indications of His displeasure. However, it must be acknowledged and lamented that the security of the world appears to

be unshaken, and the flood of sin shows no sign of being restrained in the least.

The reasons and causes of the present widespread departure from the truth, power, holiness, and glory of the Gospel or Christian religion have been investigated and explained in a separate treatise intended for that purpose. However, a few things relevant to the current situation can be observed here. All declines in religion originate in individual persons, although they eventually extend to families, and thus the infection spreads to larger communities, both ecclesiastical and national. This is also the natural progression in the development of the power of religion to which it is opposed. God's testimony to Abraham was that, by walking in the ways of the Lord himself, he taught and commanded his children and household to do the same. If the living power of godliness, as manifested in the life of Christ and the gospel, is not preserved in individual persons, then the profession of the purest religion in churches or the highest pretense of it in public, national acts is of no benefit to the souls of people and does not contribute to the glory of God. The only purpose of outward religious order and profession is lost when they are not applied to generating and promoting holiness or evangelical obedience in individuals. Therefore, if there is still hope for a revival of the power of religion in the world, if we seek to halt the fatal decline it is currently experiencing, we must focus on forming and restoring its principles in the hearts and consciences of individuals. It is through them that it will spread to families and larger societies. All reformation must begin here or through the use of appropriate means. In the following discussion, we have one example among many presented to us as a possible way to achieve this.

The general and unquestionable reason for all sins and failures among people is the neglect of the holy and perfect rule of obedience, or the law of God, without a sincere and conscientious commitment to adhere to it. Without a proper recognition of the authority of God in His law and an understanding that we will be held accountable for our adherence to it, there can be no legitimate expectation of the

restoration of the power and glory of religion. There are many ways in which people are led astray from giving due consideration to and faithfully complying with this rule.

First, false and corrupt interpretations of the law enable many to indulge in various lusts and neglect many old duties. The Pharisees of old, by representing the purpose and meaning of the law as pertaining only to external acts and practices, undermined true holiness and religion within the apostatizing Jewish church. Under the pretense of establishing a false legal righteousness, they destroyed the true righteousness of the law. These things always go hand in hand. Those who argue for their own righteousness through works of the law consistently, through false glosses and interpretations, undermine the spirituality and all animating principles of the law itself. To correctly understand the meaning of the law and to seek righteousness by it, or by its works, are entirely inconsistent. Therefore, many people, due to their natural blindness and their dislike of and enmity towards it, have sought to accommodate the law itself to their own lusts and inclinations through false interpretations. This was evident with the Pharisees of old, and the present understanding of many about these things is not much different from theirs. Such interpretations of the law are embraced where there is little regard for the spiritual state of the heart or the internal struggle between the principles of sin and obedience. The scope of the commandment is also greatly stretched by many, and they will scarcely allow anything to be commanded or forbidden in it unless it is plainly expressed in the letter. It is clear how such understanding will gradually weaken the sense of the necessity of universal mortification and diminish the diligence of the mind in striving for a renewed spiritual state of the heart. By such means, a decline from true holiness and piety will be effectively promoted. When people begin to satisfy themselves with the external duties of divine worship and righteousness, which, if left alone, are but lifeless religion, they will not remain conscientiously devoted to even those duties for long.

Secondly, the separation of the duties of the law from the grace of the gospel will have a similar effect. It will quickly lead to a pretense of morality that opposes true evangelical obedience. There is no way that the entire rule of duty can be rendered more ineffective and useless to the souls of men. If the reconciliation made in Christ between the law and the gospel is taken away, it will only become a lifeless letter. And as soon as this notion takes hold, it becomes evident in its consequences. Every attempt by people against the grace of God will result in the destruction of morality among themselves.

Such understandings, when combined with abundant temptations that cater to the desires of all kinds of people, can only promote the interests and prevalence of sin and Antichrist in the world. It is evident that there is a great neglect and contempt of the holy rule of obedience in most people, accompanied by a profound ignorance and misunderstanding of its purpose and meaning in many. Therefore, a sincere effort to explain and uphold its authority and significance, as well as to apply it to the consciences of professed Christians, guiding and urging them towards consistent obedience, can be considered timely and, by the blessing of God, exceptionally beneficial. Just as our Lord Jesus Christ, upon observing the harm that had befallen the Church due to the false interpretation of the Law imposed by the Pharisees, commenced his prophetic ministry by vindicating it from their corrupt interpretations and restoring its original crown of purity and spirituality, so it is acknowledged that the endeavours of this worthy servant of Christ in the work of the Gospel, the author of the following exposition of the Decalogue, are both timely and worthy of acceptance. Just as other efforts are necessary for all those upon whom it is incumbent to care for the advancement of holiness in the Church and to impede the progress of sin insofar as lies within their power, it is clear that, for the aforementioned reasons, this particular approach is specifically timely and beneficial. I am convinced that every devout, humble, and open-minded reader will acknowledge the significant benefits that can be derived from this work. Some may readily perceive how far short their self-prescribed

measure of duties falls from what is indispensably required of them, while others may gain a clear understanding of the comprehensive framework of obedience in its principles, content, manner, and purpose that they sincerely strive to attain. Moreover, there are several aspects of this discourse that, in my view, exhibit a notable degree of excellence.

1. The author's intention of teaching with clarity and simplicity is evident throughout the entire book. This makes it accessible to even the least knowledgeable individuals, which is the greatest strength of such discourses in terms of their structure and organization. Since the sole purpose is to guide the practice of all types of Christians, any ornamental language or anything that deviates from simplicity, sobriety, and seriousness is irrelevant. Therefore, while the topics discussed require continuous engagement from the wisest, most knowledgeable believers, the style and delivery are tailored to the understanding and capacity of even the least knowledgeable among them, ensuring that everyone can benefit from it.
2. Specific instances and cases pertaining to daily practice are presented, explained, and resolved in a clear and comprehensive manner, making the entire book a complete Christian guide for living in obedience to God. The pious reader can select any particular duty or category of duties to test the validity of the instructions, and if I am not mistaken, they will recognize the wisdom and profound experience from which these plain directions arise. For example, if one considers what is revealed about public prayer and the potential mistakes people may make in that regard on pages 52 and 53, or focuses on matters that personally concern them, they will find unaffected clarity, concise explanations, and sound judgment evident throughout the text.
3. Additionally, the entire discourse consistently emphasizes the importance of the heart and inner principles of obedience, while

addressing the opposing actions of the flesh and various temptations. As a result, these discourses, though delivered with plain language, will be truly understood only by those who have developed their faculties to discern between good and evil to some extent.

This book provides a comprehensive testimony, not only against the immoral lives of many individuals who are called Christians, but also against the shallow and careless profession of faith that too many content themselves with. These individuals claim to possess a greater understanding of and adherence to the truth and power of religion. By following the guidelines set forth in this book, those who are genuinely committed to obedience can examine themselves and identify any areas of decline they may have experienced in this challenging time of temptation that has befallen the world. Furthermore, they can receive guidance in their Christian journey, aiming to bring glory to God and find comfort for their own souls. It is my sincere hope that all of this may be achieved.

To you, Christian reader,

I am your servant in the work of the Lord,

John Owen

TO THE CHRISTIAN READER,

The esteemed and valuable labours of this esteemed author have long been recognized and commended, even to the extent that the great Apostle Paul himself considered them to be a complete testimony, rendering any additional letters of commendation unnecessary. He mentioned this in 2 Corinthians 3, where he

explained to the Corinthians that they were his letter of recommendation, indicating that their conversion and the virtues cultivated in them through his ministry served as a sufficient witness to its worth and dignity. God has graciously bestowed this letter of commendation upon the ministerial efforts of the esteemed Mr. Durham, both in his writings and his preaching, to such a remarkable extent that it seemed to me that adding my own letter of commendation to this excellent exposition of the Decalogue would be like trying to make the sun appear brighter by the feeble light of a candle. However, as some have placed an undeserved value on my endorsement of this worthy endeavor, I felt compelled to express that, in my opinion, the design and purpose of this Treatise elevate the importance of holiness in heart and life. It has been compiled with strength and clarity of judgment, as well as a genuine and fervent affection for holiness. By the blessing of God, it may serve to preserve and restore many in this sinful age, which is so overrun with impieties. It can be seen as an excellent antidote against these prevailing sins, particularly considering that it has been providentially brought forth in a time when it is most needed. With hopeful expectation, I entrust you and this esteemed work to the blessing of God, in whom I remain your faithful friend, committed to serving your soul.

WIL: JENKYN

London, November 1675

Preface to the Ten Commandments

"And God speake all these words, saying, I am the Lord thy God.
Which have brought thee out of the Land of Egypt, out of the

House of Bondage." -Exodus 20. 1:2.

With the strength that God provides, we have resolved to embark on the task of explaining the Ten Commandments. Before we proceed, allow us to provide you with the reasons that have motivated us to undertake this work.

The first reason is the excellence of this Scripture. It is intended by the Lord himself to serve as a comprehensive summary of his people's duty. It is distinct in its nature, as it was spoken directly by God himself. He uttered these words to his people and later wrote them twice with his own finger (without the use of a scribe, as in other Scriptures) on two stone tablets, which were then commanded to be kept in a special manner in the Ark. It is also emphasized that these commandments should be learned and written on the doorposts and diligently taught to their children. In the exposition of these commandments, not only the Prophets and Apostles, but even our blessed Lord in his Sermon on the Mount, extensively expounded upon them.

The second reason is the usefulness of this Scripture and the knowledge of it for those who desire to know what is pleasing to God. It provides guidance for fulfilling one's duties to God and understanding what displeases him. It helps people recognize sin and avoid it, as well as prompts repentance when they have fallen into sin. It is through the law that the knowledge of sin is obtained, as mentioned in Romans 7:7, and it also imparts knowledge of one's duties. Therefore, it is condensed into a few words so that it can be easily memorized and retained in the hearts and minds of God's people. Throughout history, it has been recommended in both the Word and various catechisms as a guide for righteous living. Yet, it is so comprehensive that without effort and diligence to understand it, one cannot fully grasp its profound purpose.

The third reason is the prevalent ignorance among many regarding the meaning of this useful and excellent Scripture. Especially in this

complacent era, numerous individuals are unaware that they are breaking the commandments when they transgress them, at least in many significant matters. This ignorance leads to unfortunate consequences: 1. There are few convictions of sin. 2. There is little repentance for sin. 3. There is a great deal of security, presumption, self-righteousness, and similar attitudes. This ignorance of the Scripture has a profound influence, just as among the Jews, the lack of understanding of its spirituality caused many to neglect the essence of holiness and proudly rely on self-righteousness, thereby disregarding Christ the Mediator. We can observe this in Paul's example in Romans 7:9. One reason our Lord expounded upon the Law was to highlight the necessity of a Mediator, who is the fulfillment of the Law for righteousness to all who believe, as stated in Romans 10:4. As these effects are evident in the present time, we believe it is beneficial to employ the same remedy. This problem is not confined to the irreligious; it also affects the most formal and civil individuals, who stumble over this stumbling stone. Furthermore, many believers are often so captivated by intricate doctrinal truths that they do not give sufficient attention to the meaning of the Law. This impedes their convictions of sin, practice of tenderness, constant exercise of repentance, and daily reliance on the cleansing power of the Blood.

Although it may appear incongruous with the nature of this exercise (as it should be noted that the author delivered this teaching on the Law in several lectures on Sunday mornings before the sermon, a time when he previously used to read and expound a chapter of the Holy Scriptures or a substantial portion thereof), considering the aforementioned reasons and the nature of this excellent Scripture, which cannot be hastily passed over (as it contains much in few words and therefore requires adequate time for explanation), and considering its significance and usefulness for all types of listeners, we are confident that it aligns well with the purpose of this exercise (which is the purpose of expounding all Scripture) to spend some time focusing on it for the instruction and edification of the people.

Our purpose is not to strive for great precision or to delve into numerous questions and digressions, nor to extensively emphasize application and use. Instead, we aim to plainly and briefly (to the best of our ability) convey the meaning of God's Law. We will accomplish this by: 1. Presenting the inherent duties required by each Commandment. 2. Highlighting the sins that directly oppose and contradict each Commandment, providing guidance and assistance in fulfilling our duties, as well as prompting repentance and aiding in the work of conviction. Through this, we hope to be led to Christ Jesus, who is the ultimate purpose of the Law, as it was given to Israel, and who is the end of the Law for righteousness for all who believe (Romans 10:4).

To prepare for the exposition of the Law, we will: 1. Establish certain conclusions that arise from the preface. 2. Provide some common distinctions. 3. Clarify and affirm certain rules or observations that are helpful for understanding the Law in its entirety.

The first conclusion we assume is that this Law, being moral in nature, applies to Christians and believers today, just as it did in ancient times. This is evident from the fact that the Law-giver mentioned here in Acts 7:38 is the Angel Christ, and it is His Word, as made clear in verses 30 and 31. Additionally, considering that the content of the Law aligns with the natural inclinations of Adam, it held binding authority even before it was formally given. This inherent obligating force cannot be separated from its nature, despite the diminishing presence of right reason in fallen human nature. Therefore, Christ did not abolish the authority of this Law, and Paul did not render it void through the doctrine of faith. On the contrary, our Lord stated that He came to fulfill the Law (Matthew 5:17), and Paul affirmed that his preaching of faith aimed to establish it (Romans 3:31). The consistent practice and teachings of both Christ and Paul confirm this truth, demonstrating that the violation of God's holy Law is equally sinful for us today as it was for those who came before us.

The second conclusion is that although this Law and obedience to it apply to Christians and are required of them, it is not imposed upon them as a Covenant of Works or as a means for seeking or expecting justification. On the contrary, its purpose is to dismantle self-righteousness by manifesting sin and working wrath. This is evident in the fact that God is referred to as "Our God" here, which can only be attributed to sinners through grace. Furthermore, it is evident from the Lord's acceptance of this sinful people as His own and the inclusion of numerous ceremonies and sacrifices in conjunction with this Law, which point to and lead to Christ. Additionally, the Law was added on Mount Sinai as an aid to the Covenant made with Abraham (Genesis 17), which was a Covenant of Grace and was never altered in its essence. The people of Israel, as the descendants of Abraham, were encompassed within this covenant. Therefore, it is clear that the Lord's intention in making this covenant with His people was not for them to expect righteousness and life through the Law, but rather for it to be instrumental in making the prior Covenant with Abraham effective. Thus, while we are obligated to obey the Law, we should not seek righteousness or life through the duties prescribed therein.

The third conclusion is that both ministers in preaching and the people in practicing this Law should approach it with subordination to Christ. The duties required here are to be performed as part of the Covenant of Grace and in accordance with the obligation placed upon us by that covenant. Therefore, all our obedience to God should continually flow in that direction.

If we inquire about the difference between performing the duties of the Law within the framework of the Covenant of Grace and performing them within the framework of the Covenant of Works, or how we are to approach the duties of the Law with subordination to Christ and His grace, I would respond that they differ in the following four aspects, which indicate that these duties should not only be done but should be done in a manner consistent with and flowing from grace. This is also supported by the fact that in the

preface to the Commandments, God presents Himself as the Redeemer, who is the object of our duty and the motive behind it.

1. They differ, I say first, in the purpose or reason for which they are performed. We are not to carry out duties in order to merit life, pardon, or the enjoyment of God. Rather, we perform them to testify our respect for Him who has freely provided these blessings for us. We should not rest in duties that are engraved on these Covenant-Blessings.
2. They differ in the principle by which we carry them out. It is not in our own strength, as the works of the first Covenant were to be performed, but in the strength of grace and by virtue of the promises of sanctification included in the second Covenant (2 Cor. 7:1).
3. They differ in terms of how they are accepted. Duties under the first Covenant are to undergo scrutiny based on their own worth and inherent perfection. They will be accepted or rejected based on their conformity or non-conformity to the perfect rule of God's Law. However, under the second Covenant, the acceptance of our performances, prayers, and praises is founded on Christ's righteousness and God's mercy in Him. Only in Him are they sweet-smelling sacrifices, and our persons are accepted for His sake (Ephesians 1:4).
4. They differ in terms of the motive from which they originate. The primary motive for our obedience in the Covenant of Grace is not fear of threats and wrath in case of disobedience, as it is in the Covenant of Works. Nor is it the pursuit of personal salvation through our holiness, which also serves as a dominant motive for obedience under that Covenant. Instead, it is love and gratitude, not only towards God as Creator but also as Redeemer, as the text here demonstrates. "I brought you out of the House of Bondage." Our purpose is to proclaim His praises and glorify Him who called us and bought us. When duties

possess these qualities, they are consistent with grace and serve as its support. However, when these qualities are lacking or excluded, Christ is dishonoured, and individuals become legalistic, thereby deviating from and undermining grace.

With these necessary caveats in place, we shall present the following distinctions to clarify them:

1. We would distinguish between a Law and a Covenant, or between this Law considered solely as a Law and as a Covenant. A Law necessarily implies two things: to direct and to command, enforcing obedience through authority. A Covenant further implies promises made upon a condition or threats added if the condition is not fulfilled. Now, this Law can be considered without the aspect of a Covenant, for it was within God's freedom to add or not to add promises, and the threats (assuming the Law had been kept) might never have come into effect. However, the first two aspects are essential to the Law, while the last two, for believers, are rendered null through Christ. In this sense, it is said that through Him, we are freed from the Law as a Covenant, so that the life of believers does not depend on the promises attached to the Law, nor are they in danger due to the threats associated with it. Therefore, we must take note that when the Covenant of Works is mentioned, it does not simply refer to this Law, but rather the Law presented as the condition for obtaining life through obedience to it. In this regard, it was formally given only to Adam. Thus, this is the first distinction between the Law and the Covenant of Works.
2. We must distinguish between these Ten Commandments in their simple and strict sense, considering their content, and in their full administration, including the Preface, Promises, Sacrifices, etc. In the first sense, they are a Law containing the substance but not the form of the Covenant of Works. Moses, by it, is said to describe the righteousness required by the Covenant of Works, yet he does not propose it as the righteousness they

were to rely on. His aim is to lead them to a Mediator by revealing sin through the Law (Romans 10:3). In the second sense, it is a Covenant of Grace, essentially the same as the Covenant made with Abraham and the Covenant made with believers today, although differing in its administration.

3. We must distinguish between God's intention in giving the Law and the way in which believers in Israel made use of it, as well as the corrupt misuse of it by the carnal multitude among the people, contrary to the Lord's intent. In the first sense, it was a Covenant of Grace, while in the second sense, it became a Covenant of Works for them. Therefore, the Lord rejects their sacrifices and services, as we can see in Isaiah 1:13, 66:2-3, and Jeremiah 7:22, because they relied on them to the detriment of Grace and contrary to the spirit and purpose of the Law when considered in its entirety.
4. Let us distinguish between the Moral, Ceremonial, and Judicial Law. The Moral Law pertains to conduct and the proper ordering of a godly lifestyle. Because these principles are perpetually just and right, the obligation of this Law in that aspect is perpetual. Therefore, in its exposition, the terms "Moral" and "of Perpetual Authority" are synonymous and should be understood as such. 2. The Judicial Law is concerned with governing outward society and generally aligns with the Moral Law, except for certain aspects specific to the people of Israel. This Law, as given to them, is not perpetual since their specific governance has come to an end. 3. The Ceremonial Law consists of ceremonies, types, and shadows that pointed to a coming Saviour. This Law has also been abolished since the substance it foreshadowed has been fulfilled. However, there is a distinction: the Judicial Law is merely "dead" (Mortua) and may, with appropriate caution, be applied under the New Testament where deemed suitable. On the other hand, the Ceremonial Law is "deadly" (Mortifera) and cannot be revived without falling from grace (Galatians 5:2).

5. When discussing moral matters, we must differentiate between those that are naturally moral and those that are positively moral. Naturally moral principles, such as love for God and our neighbours, possess inherent rectitude and holiness that cannot be separated from them. They derive their moral standing from the nature of the things themselves. On the other hand, positively moral principles obtain their obligation through a specific positive sanction. For example, in the fourth Commandment, it is naturally moral to worship God as nature teaches us. However, the specific day on which worship should take place is determined by God's positive command. The former cannot be altered, while the latter is subject to God's discretion. Nevertheless, until God changes it, the authority of the command remains in force for all. It is equally sinful to transgress any of these commands, although without the positive sanction, some of them do not carry a natural obligation requiring obedience.
6. The sixth distinction is of the Moral Law into two Tables: the first and second. The first Table encompasses our immediate worship, service, and obedience to God Himself, and is contained in the first four Commandments. The second Table encompasses our mediate obedience to God in all the duties we owe to others, and is contained in the last six Commandments. These divisions were established by the Lord Himself, as there are ten Commandments in total (Deuteronomy 4:13). From this distinction, note the following: 1. All the Commandments of the second Table hold the same authority as those of the first Table. God spoke all these words, and as Acts 7:38 reveals, it was our Lord Jesus. 2. Sins directly against the first Table are considered greater than those against the second Table. That is why the first Table is referred to as the First and Great Commandment (Matthew 22:38). Therefore, 3. In matters of morals (if they pertain to the same nature), the duties of the second Table yield and give way to the duties of the first Table when they cannot coexist. For example, when there is a conflict between loving

God and showing love to our father and neighbour (Luke 14:26, Matthew 10:37), or when obedience to God and obedience to our superiors cannot be reconciled, we are to obey God rather than man (Acts 4:19), and we are to love the Lord and hate father and mother (Luke 14:26). However, note that Ceremonial or positive aspects of the first Table may temporarily yield and give way to Morals in the second Table. For instance, in situations where a neighbour's life is in danger, we may engage in travel on the Sabbath day, as stated in the Scriptures: "I desire mercy, not sacrifice," and "the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath," etc.

7. The seventh distinction, which is common, is between affirmative and negative Commandments. As you can see, all the Commandments in the first Table are stated negatively, directly forbidding sin: "You shall not have other gods," etc. Only the fourth Commandment is both negative and affirmative, prohibiting sin and directly commanding duty. Likewise, the fifth Commandment, which is the first of the second Table, is affirmative, while all the remaining Commandments in the second Table are negative.

This distinction should not be understood as if nothing is commanded or enjoined in negative precepts, or as if nothing is forbidden in affirmative precepts. (For whatever is expressly forbidden, the opposite is always implied as commanded, and whatever is expressly commanded, the opposite is always implied as forbidden.) The distinction is made based on how they are phrased. To better understand this, consider the following rules or general observations, many of which are explained in the larger Catechism.

1. Regardless of whether the Commandments are expressed affirmatively or negatively, each of them has two parts. One part is affirmative, implied in the negative precepts, requiring the duties that are contrary to the forbidden sins. The other part is negative, implied in the affirmative precepts, forbidding the sins

that are contrary to the commanded duties. For example, the third Commandment, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain," implies a command to reverently use His name. Similarly, the command to remember to keep the Sabbath day holy implies a prohibition against profaning it. In this sense, all the Commandments can be considered negative (and thus, a part of the fourth Commandment is expressed negatively: "Thou shalt not do any work") or affirmative. Christ encompasses all the negatives under the two great affirmative commandments of love to God and our neighbour, for every Commandment both enjoins and forbids. The same can be said for promises and threats, as every promise contains a threat conditionally implied, and every threat contains a promise conditionally implied. This may be the reason why some Commandments are expressed negatively and others positively, to show us that both are included.

2. While the positive commandment or the positive part of the commandment carries the same force and authority as the negative part in terms of the obligation it imposes on us for duty, it does not bind us to all occasions and times like the negatives do. Hence, the common maxim that affirmative commands always bind and oblige (*semper*), meaning their authority is constant, and we are never exempted from obedience to them. However, they do not bind and oblige "*ad semper*," meaning in all circumstances of time, we are not obligated to engage in the specific duties commanded. On the other hand, negatives bind us both *semper* and *ad semper*, meaning always and in all circumstances of time. For example, in the third Commandment, the affirmative part is to use the Lord's name and ordinances in prayer, reading, and hearing reverently and holily. Similarly, in the fourth Commandment, we are required to sanctify the Sabbath by participating in ordinances, etc. These duties are ongoing, such as the duty to pray, hear, etc., but we are not always expected to be engaged in these duties. We must also abound in other necessary and

merciful duties such as eating and sleeping, where we cannot actively demonstrate love or fear. On the other hand, the negative part is not to profane the Lord's name in His ordinances, which must never be done. The reason for this difference is that in affirmatives, we are not constantly bound to the acts of duties and graces, but to the disposition and habit. Habits are a spiritual quality, a force or power that enables us to bring forth these acts and do so at the appropriate time and season when they are required. In sinful matters, we are not only prohibited from the habits but also from the acts themselves. The acts are always and forever sinful, whereas they are not always required as duties. If anyone desires rules to determine when a duty is called for, such as when to pray or hear, it is difficult to provide specific guidelines. However, we can try to discern it based on these general principles.

Any affirmative precept binds us to immediate practice when the required duty tends to the glory of God, to which everything should be done (as stated in 1 Corinthians 10:31), and when neglecting the duty may dishonour Him.

When it contributes to the edification of others and omitting it would in some way stumble and offend.

When certain special providences coincide and create an opportunity for such a duty. For example, when we have the means to give alms and an indigent person presents themselves, whose necessity calls for it (Galatians 6:10). Likewise, when privacy for prayer is available (and no other more necessary duty at that time is called for), which we should be vigilant in (Colossians 4:2). Or when we encounter a particular occasion or circumstance that points out a specific duty as being required, such a providence invites us to engage in the practice of that duty. While providences do not make things duties that are not already duties, they do serve to time and contextualize duties that are incumbent upon us by virtue of affirmative precepts.

The Word sets forth certain special occasions and times, such as praying in the morning and evening, and hearing the Word on Sabbath days. In these and similar duties, we should take note of the examples of the saints recorded in Scripture, as they serve as a model for imitation.

When they do not come with inconveniences that contradict or hinder other moral duties of edification, love, etc. If they do, they must yield and give way to these other duties. However, if no other duty is required at that time, then they ought to be performed, for we should always be engaged in some duty. Although such duties themselves are moral, such as praying, hearing, and others that could be mentioned, the timing of them or the manner in which they are carried out is not inherently moral. It is determined by the circumstances that call for them.

When such a duty cannot be omitted without sin. Even if there is no inward exercise of mind or suitable disposition of spirit, the conscience calls for it, or there may be a special occasion or circumstance that compels us to undertake it.

Note that this rule of negatives binding *ad semper*, or obliging in all circumstances of time, is not applicable when the matter is not moral. Therefore, we should distinguish again between negative morals and negative positives. Positive commands, whether negative or affirmative, always yield to moral commands. For example, a part of the fourth Commandment is negative, stating, "You shall do no manner of work" on the seventh day. However, sometimes, when necessity calls for it, performing some manner of work is lawful on that day because it is only a negative positive, not a negative moral. Similarly, David's eating of the showbread was against a negative command but not against a negative moral; it was against a negative positive.

Keep in mind this rule: In all commands, both collectively and individually, we should pay special attention to the overall purpose

that God intends, either through all the commands in general or through a specific command. The general purpose is perfect and absolute holiness, as He is holy (2 Corinthians 7:1; 1 Peter 1:15-16). Therefore, whatever God requires, He requires it to be absolutely perfect in its kind. For example, our love for Him should be with our whole heart, and our love for others should be as we love ourselves. Our chastity and purity should be complete (see 1 Timothy 1:5). This rule will guide us in aiming and striving for what is required. Any interpretation of the commandments that falls short of this purpose is undoubtedly deficient. By this rule alone can we arrive at the correct meaning of each commandment because each of them has its unique purpose, both in terms of the duties it requires and the sins it condemns. It is through this rule that our Lord Jesus Christ, whose interpretation, along with that of the prophets, is the most reliable, extends the reach of the seventh Commandment to include even the smallest forms of impurity, as it prohibits everything contrary to perfect and complete purity.

The fifth rule is that the Law is spiritual, as mentioned in Romans 7:14. It demands not only outward obedience to certain duties or abstaining from sinful acts but also spiritual service. In this regard, three aspects are involved: 1. It requires spiritual duties such as faith, fear, love for God, and others. It emphasizes not only right actions but also right attitudes and inward dispositions. Paul, in order to demonstrate the spiritual nature of the Law, highlights the struggle with lust as an example. 2. The Law is spiritual in the sense that its obligation extends to the spirit, reaching the depths of the heart, affections, and thoughts, in addition to the outward actions. The love it requires is love with all one's soul, heart, and mind. Thus, it condemns heart-idolatry, murder, and adultery alongside their outward manifestations. 3. It is spiritual in terms of manner. It requires that all outward duties be performed with a spiritual end in view, from a spiritual motive, and in a spiritual manner, which is in contrast to the carnal way to which the unregenerate heart inclines. This is why we are commanded to walk in the spirit (Galatians 5:16).

Consequently, praying and praising, which the Law calls for, involve praying and praising in the spirit (1 Corinthians 14:14-16).

The sixth rule is that besides the duty explicitly expressed in the affirmative commands, there is also an implication of further duties. Similarly, besides the specific sin mentioned in the negative precepts, there is a prohibition of other sins of that nature, regardless of their degree. For example, in the affirmative commands: 1. When a duty is commanded, all the means that may aid in fulfilling that duty are also commanded. Therefore, under the responsibility of preserving our brother, as stated in Leviticus 19:17-18, we are commanded to reprove him, and so on. 2. When a particular duty is commanded, all duties of that kind are commanded as well. For instance, keeping the Lord's Day holy, as commanded in the fourth Commandment, entails hearing, praying, being watchful throughout the week, and engaging in all aspects of worshipping God on that day, such as tithing (providing for the ministry), appointing suitable ministers, and building churches, even though they are not all specific duties of that day. 3. When a duty is required, the acknowledgment and appropriate confession of that duty are also required. Hence, in the same commandment, Romans 10:10 highlights the necessity of both believing in God and professing one's faith. 4. When the duty of one relationship is demanded (such as children's submission), the duties of the other relationship (such as parents' responsibilities) and even those encompassed within that category are also required.

Again, in the case of negative commands, take note of the following: 1. When major sins are forbidden, all lesser sins of the same kind are also forbidden. Under the prohibitions of adultery, murder, and idolatry, for example, all forms of inappropriate and obscene speech, lustful gazes, impure thoughts, revenge, hasty anger, worldly attachments, and so on, are prohibited. They are included and condemned using strong language to make them even more detestable, abhorrent, and dreadful. 2. All means that can prevent these sins are commanded, while all traps, occasions, or incentives to

commit them are prohibited. 3. Where a specific sin is forbidden, any hint of scandal or even the appearance of guilt associated with it is also forbidden. God desires His people to be holy, shining in holiness, without blemish or scandal, and to abstain not only from all evil but also from anything that resembles it (1 Thessalonians 5:22). 4. We are not only forbidden from committing such sins ourselves, delighting in them, or being inclined towards them, but we are also prohibited from treating them lightly or considering them insignificant when committed by others. Instead, we are commanded and ought to mourn over them when they are committed by others.

The seventh rule is that whatever duty is incumbent upon others, we are commanded to support and promote it in our respective positions. Masters should assist their servants, husbands their wives, neighbours one another, through advice, guidance, encouragement, prayer, and other forms of help. This is evident in the fourth Commandment, where the duties of servants and strangers are imposed on the master. Furthermore, whatever sin we refrain from committing ourselves, we are likewise prohibited from participating in it with others in any manner, whether through advice, example, connivance, providing occasions, or by mocking and laughing at it in their presence. The rule is clear: "Keep thyself pure, partake not of other men's sins" (1 Timothy 5:22). People may consider themselves exempt from personal transgressions while actively participating in the transgressions of others, thus violating the Law.

The breach of one commandment essentially breaks all of them. The commandments are interconnected and linked in such a way that if the authority of God is disregarded in one, it is disregarded in all (James 2:10, 1 John 4:20).

Certain actions or attitudes may be commanded or forbidden in multiple commandments, either as an end or a means. Ignorance and drunkenness, for instance, disable individuals from fulfilling all their duties and predispose them to all sorts of sins. Idleness falls into the same category. On the other hand, knowledge, sobriety,

watchfulness, and similar qualities are commanded in all the commandments because without them, people are ill-equipped and incapacitated to perform any commanded duty.

The tenth and final rule is that the Law is holy, just, and good. Therefore, even the slightest opposition to it or discontentment with it is considered a sin (Romans 7:12). In summary, keep these few key points in mind regarding the obligations of the Law.

1. It obliges us to all duties, encompassing both public and private duties towards God, others, and ourselves. It extends its reach to encompass words, actions, gestures, thoughts, and even the slightest movements of the heart. Its commandment is extensive, and thus nothing, no matter how small, should escape its governance. It applies to all individuals of all ranks, both in terms of their actions and their endurance.
2. It obliges us not only to perform the required duties but also to carry them out in the right manner, encompassing every aspect related to those duties. In its true scope, it prohibits all sins that are contrary to the commanded duties.
3. It obliges the entirety of a person, both outwardly and inwardly. Outwardly, it covers deeds, words, gestures, and appearances. Inwardly, it includes the understanding, will, affections, memory, and conscience. Thus, it demands that the mind, will, and entire nature be sanctified and conformed to all these commandments.
4. It demands obedience in all aspects and at all times, with the highest degree of commitment. Even the slightest deviation in conduct or habit constitutes a transgression. The required obedience is perfect in every respect. Not only must there be no direct violation of any of these commandments, let alone a continuous breach, but also: 1. There must be no appearance of breaking them (1 Thessalonians 3:2). 2. There must be no

consent to break them, even if it does not manifest in action (Matthew 5:28). 3. We must not place ourselves in the path of temptation or snare that might entice or lead us (so to speak) to break them, as David was enticed by looking at a woman (2 Samuel 11:2), a situation Job guarded against (Job 31:1). 4. There must be no corrupt inclination or desire for evil, even if it does not gain assent. There must be no delight in such things, even if the heart does not consent to act on them, nor any discontentment with the restrictions that prevent engaging in such acts, nor any secret desire for such things to be permissible. On the contrary, we should consider everything commanded as right (Psalm 119:128).

5. Even the involuntary movements of the mind that never give assent to any of these evils, nor find delight in them, are still prohibited by this Law because they stem from a corrupt source and serve as evidence of our nonconformity to God's image in our nature. They should not exist within us. Hence, the Apostle laments the presence of lust in his own experience, even though he resisted it (Romans 7).
6. It not only directs us regarding the outward manifestations of corruption but also addresses the root of original sin within us, which harbours the seeds and incentives for actual evils that contradict this holy Law. Through all of this, we can grasp the level of holiness it demands and how frequently, if we were examined in accordance with these rules for each commandment, we would be found lacking and flawed. This realization should lead us to humility and repentance for what has passed, and it should prompt us to anticipate future challenges from this Law. It underscores the ongoing need for continual application of the cleansing power of the Blood of Sprinkling and the necessity of being washed in that abundant fountain, as it applies to the House of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for the cleansing of sin and impurity. It also

highlights the importance of striving to align our steps more precisely with this Law.

Before concluding the preface, I will add two more distinctions, followed by two additional rules: 3. I will provide you with some Scripture references to aid your memory. 4. I will offer some guidance and assistance to those who conscientiously study this Law. 5. I will address and clarify a specific case.

1. Then you should distinguish between the Law as given to Adam and as given to Israel: when given to Adam, it functioned as a Covenant of Works, but when given to Israel, it became a Covenant of Grace. Therefore, from our perspective today, it calls for Gospel-oriented duties such as faith in Christ, repentance, hope in God, and so on (1 Timothy 1:5). Although it does require legal duties, they should be performed in a Gospel manner. In the first Commandment, for example, we are commanded to have God as our God, which sinners cannot obey except through Christ Jesus. The Covenant of Works has been broken, and the bond of friendship between God and humanity has been nullified. Consequently, without that Covenant, people are without God in the world and without Christ and the promises (Ephesians 2:12-13). Therefore, our acknowledgment of God as our God (as emphasized in the preface to the Commandments), our acceptance of Christ as our Saviour, and our adherence to His righteousness and the promises of the Covenant (which are all fulfilled in Him) must go hand in hand.
2. Distinguish between the various administrations of the Covenant of Grace and the Law, specifically in terms of positives mentioned in the second Commandment. This Commandment previously bound the Israelites, before Christ's coming, to practices such as circumcision, sacrifices, observing the seventh day of the week, and other ceremonies that were in line with the administration of the Law and the Covenant of Grace at that time. However, now it prohibits those practices for us and

requires other duties. With the change in the priesthood, there is a necessary change in the laws associated with it. Nonetheless, as a part of the Moral Law, that Commandment still obligates us to worship God alone, according to the manner He prescribes.

In addition to the rules already provided to enhance the understanding of the Commandments, we present two more.

The first rule is that the Commandments should be interpreted in such a way that none of them contradict one another. This means that there is nothing commanded in one Commandment that is forbidden or contrary in another. One duty does not override or exclude another, but they simply differ. However, when two duties come into conflict, one of them ceases to be a duty for that particular time, as explained in the distinction between affirmative and negative Commands.

The second rule is that all these Commandments bind and require obedience from individuals according to their respective roles, qualifications, and circumstances. The fifth Commandment demands different things from a magistrate, a subject, a minister, and a private Christian. A servant reproves his fellow servant in one way, while a master does it differently. The Law expects more from someone with talents, power, and wealth, in terms of using and developing these gifts. The Law, being just, has a proportionality to various positions and abilities, setting boundaries without altering or confusing them.

To aid your memory and make these rules more accessible, you can associate them with the following five Scriptures:

The first Scripture is Psalm 119:96, "I have seen a limit to all perfection, but your commandment is exceedingly broad." Although this verse has a broader meaning, it certainly includes this Law, which is the Commandment in a particular sense. It emphasizes that

the Law is extensive and encompasses the entirety of its obligation, covering all things, individuals, and various types of duties.

The second Scripture is Romans 7:14, which speaks of the spirituality of the Law and the obedience it requires. It states that the Law is spiritual, highlighting the nature of the obedience it calls for.

The third Scripture is Romans 7:12, which signifies the Law's perfection in its nature. It states that the Law is just, holy, and good. Therefore, being discontent or desiring it to be otherwise is a violation of the Law. It should be loved and delighted in because it is good.

The fourth Scripture is 1 Timothy 1:5, which reveals the ultimate purpose of the Law. It states, "The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith." This threefold purpose highlights the absolute purity and holiness required in our love for God and others, leading to a clear conscience before God. All of this must flow from genuine faith without presumption, relying on Jesus Christ, who is the ultimate fulfillment of the Law.

The fifth Scripture is 1 Timothy 1:8, which declares, "Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully." This verse cautions against misusing the Law and encourages its lawful application. There are various ways in which the Law can be abused: 1. Using it to seek righteousness on its own merits. 2. Claiming authority for practices not supported by the Law, such as human traditions or seeking salvation through circumcision. 3. Denying its authority in practice. 4. Turning it into mere speculation and pointless debates. 5. Using it in a way that deters and frightens people from coming to Christ. 6. Oppressing and discouraging believers by using its threats and condemning power inappropriately. In summary, the Law should be used according to its intended purposes and in line with the teachings of the aforementioned Scriptures.

Furthermore, since the study of this Law is immensely beneficial, we not only encourage and commend it, but also provide a few additional guidelines to help us use it correctly and guard against its misuse when reading or hearing it.

1. Firstly, consider it as God's Word and receive it as if you were hearing God Himself pronounce it from Mount Sinai, causing you to tremble and be deeply affected with reverent fear whenever you read, hear, or meditate upon it. This is how the people were moved when it was first given.
2. Pray earnestly for grace to grasp its meaning. Just as David fervently prayed in Psalm 119:18 and sought understanding of the Law, we should also recognize that it is fitting for both kings and believers, even prophets, to study this Law and pray for enlightened understanding.
3. In your reading, seek to understand the Law in order to put it into practice, for that is the ultimate goal of knowledge, and it is what the Law itself aims for. We are considered knowledgeable in God's eyes only when we sincerely strive to live out what we have learned. Failing to pursue practical application hinders both understanding and practice, and leads to great carelessness.
4. When you hear and learn about a duty or sin, reflect upon yourself and examine whether that sin exists within you, and to what extent you fall short in fulfilling that duty. This is the proper use of the Law—to expose sin and transgression. Therefore, it is likened to a mirror, and you should look into it to understand your own character and discern what shortcomings need to be addressed.
5. When the Law reveals sin, be open to the conviction it brings. The purpose of the Law is not to increase sin in practice, but rather to bring a sense of guilt, awareness, and conviction to the

conscience (Romans 5:20). Follow these convictions with repentance until they lead you to turn to Christ and find refuge in Him.

6. Seek help from Christ's teachings and the words of the prophets to understand the Scriptures, for they are the authoritative sources. They serve as the best commentary on the Commandments. However, do not dismiss the insights provided by human writings, such as the larger Catechism, which offers comprehensive guidance on this matter. When properly utilized, it can prove exceedingly beneficial for your instruction.

Lastly, we address the weighty question before delving into the Commandments: Can any of these Commandments be violated during sleep, through dreams, thoughts, actions, etc., which would otherwise be deemed unlawful? Or, when a person is sleeping and dreaming, are they still bound by the Law's rules? This question presents its own challenges, and although we should not dwell on it excessively, it is not without its value in terms of bringing peace and tranquility to God's people or humbling and prompting them to repentance when resolved correctly. I am aware that most tend to lean towards the negative stance, suggesting that individuals are not guilty of sin through such dreams. This is primarily because during sleep, they are unable to employ their reasoning faculties, resembling individuals who are mentally unstable or delusional. I aim to approach this subject with caution, yet I will dare to share my perspective and the reasons behind it.

And 1. We assert that there is a significant distinction between sleeping, dreaming individuals and those who are mentally unstable.

1. Madness is inherently punitive, a disease afflicting sinful humanity, just like other illnesses. However, the same cannot be said of dreaming individuals. Sleep itself is a natural state, as evidenced by the existence of day and night before Adam's Fall, and there are instances of Adam himself sleeping. Similarly, dreaming is a natural consequence, arising from the restless nature of the imagination and

the wandering of thoughts, which is somewhat inherent. However, the specific subjects of one's dreams or the nature of those dreams (such as being filthy or profane) seem to be influenced by sin, which is not inherent in the act of dreaming itself. Therefore, individuals are not as passive in dreaming as they are in madness. 2. In dreams, individuals have more use of reason compared to when they are mad, even though that use may be imperfect, as acknowledged by the Schoolmen. Experience confirms this, and even Augustine, in Book 10 of his Confessions, admits that one can reason and deliberate during sleep, sometimes rejecting certain thoughts or desires without giving consent to them. They may even provide reasons for rejecting those thoughts that they would possibly embrace at other times. This indicates a certain level of rationality in dreams, which is lacking in madness. It is worth noting that there is a resemblance and similarity between individuals' dreaming and their rational actions while awake. Children and individuals in a disordered state or madness exhibit more foolishness and less reason in their dreams compared to those who have more use of reason. However, wise individuals in a state of distraction or natural fools do not show such a difference. Additionally, we believe that dreaming is more characteristic of reasonable human beings than animals, and more prevalent in individuals who have the capacity for reasoning compared to children. On the other hand, madness can occur in anyone. 3. The way a person conducts themselves in moral matters has a much greater influence on their dreams when they have clear use of reason compared to its influence on them during madness, especially in relation to the actions committed in those states. 4. Furthermore, it carries some weight that under the Law, in Leviticus 15 and Deuteronomy 23, sacrifices and washings were prescribed for certain sins committed during sleep and dreaming (whatever those sins may be in themselves), whereas they were not prescribed for the sins of individuals who were mentally deranged. Taking all these factors into account and duly considering them, we cannot view sins, specifically those that are otherwise unlawful, committed in dreams, and sins committed in a state of distraction as equal.

Yet secondly, there are certain things that we willingly acknowledge in this matter: Firstly, we do not consider every passing transient thought or motion in sleep as sinful dreams, which may simply be characterized by idleness and unprofitability. Although these thoughts or motions may potentially be sinful when one is awake (when even the slightest thought should be aimed at something edifying), we believe that dreams that are purely negative, so to speak, not involving sinful content, should not be regarded as sins. They cannot be counted as sins even historically, as if they were objects presented to the imagination or merely proposed objectively. We say they are not sinful because at such times, one's imagination is receptive to such representations and cannot resist them, especially considering the possibility of them being influenced by the Devil, who surely takes advantage of these moments. However, there are other sinful dreams, such as those mentioned in Leviticus 15, which may involve the release of semen, rising passions, or even delighting in revenge. It is possible (as we have heard) for these dreams to lead to the commission of certain acts. In such cases, there appears to be a more deliberate consent and sometimes even delight, with external bodily movements striving to fulfill one's desires. In all these instances, it seems difficult to argue that one is merely passive. When the subject matter of the dreams is something that a natural conscience would be frightened and disturbed by, it is these dreams that we are addressing.

Secondly, we believe there is a significant difference in the degree of sinfulness between such sinful motions, desires, and pleasures in a waking state compared to the same experiences during sleep. The guilt is much less by many degrees in the former than in the latter.

Thirdly, a distinction must be made between gross sins that are objectively presented to the imagination in sleep and the same sins that not only have such representation but also involve more settled actions following them.

Furthermore, there is a distinction between disordered individuals experiencing these kinds of dreams and those who are sober and composed. However, we still lean towards the belief that there may be some guilt that should be repented of in such dreams, and therefore individuals may indeed sin against these holy Commandments even while asleep, considering that in many dreams, as in many words, there are various (even sinful) vanities, as mentioned in Ecclesiastes 5:7.

This truth is clearly evident from the foundations we have already established. However, for further clarification and confirmation, we present the following arguments. The first argument is as follows:

1. The pleasurable delight experienced in sinful dreams is a result of original sin, which has tainted all our imaginations and made them evil (Genesis 6:5). These dreams are an outflow of habitual lust, which has become natural to us. If they are a fruit of that sinful nature, then they must share the same sinful character. That they arise from original sin can be demonstrated in the following way: We cannot imagine such dreams occurring to Adam in his state of innocence when everything was pure, even though sleep and dreams were natural to him. This is further supported by the maxim of the Schoolmen, which states that Adam's innocence was incapable of deception or anything that would cause him sadness, whether sleeping or awake. However, such dreams clearly imply both deception and sorrow. If it is argued that such dreams may be caused by external factors, such as the Devil presenting certain things to people in their sleep, I answer that I partly agree. Although he may present these things to us in sleep as well as when we are awake, it is we who entertain these presented representations, delight in them, and act upon them, albeit tempted by him. We can say that he is the father and, as it is said in Acts 5:3, he fills the heart and provides fuel. However, we are the mother (that is, our corruption) that gives birth to them. Can anyone claim that if there were no corruption within us, these dreams would be entertained in such

a manner? Even though they may come from the Devil as an external cause, considering our inclination towards such things, our corrupt nature readily responds to these temptations, just as powder or flax immediately catches fire when ignited. Is it not conceivable that a dart of temptation would be thrown in and at least awaken and stir up the scent of corruption? Indeed, pure human nature in our blessed Lord (who was without original sin) was like water, instantly extinguishing all such fiery darts. If these dreams come from the Devil, what purpose could he have in presenting them to people? It must be either because they are sinful, with the aim of defiling individuals and leading them into sin, or because they are burdensome and distressing to people, and the Devil takes delight in human misery. However, such dreams are not particularly burdensome and distressing to most people, so that cannot be his aim. They would not be so burdensome to others if it were not for their perception of guilt associated with them. Therefore, the Devil's aim must be to defile people with sin through these dreams.

2. Another argument that supports the previous point (and let us consider it with reverence) is that our blessed Lord Jesus was made in all things like us, except for sin. None of the sinful fruits of original sin are found in Him. Yet, I believe it would be horrifying to imagine such dreams occurring to Him or that His absolute holiness was capable of them. He is the only example of someone free from original sin, and it is unlikely that He would be subject to any other penal aspect except for what implies sin or what implies bodily disorders and infirmities resulting from internal causes. Since He was free from sin, like Adam before the Fall, He would not be naturally (from inward principles or necessity, as we are) susceptible to sickness or death.
3. The third argument is that men often contribute to these sinful dreams themselves. They do so either by excessive indulgence, predisposing themselves to such inclinations, or by having a loose mind that delights in entertaining such thoughts

throughout the day in their more rational reflections and determined intentions. It is common for dreams to reflect the state of the body or the habitual patterns of our actions. Therefore, one's occupation or specific activities may appear in the mind during sleep, including sinful behaviors. Additionally, individuals may be responsible for these dreams by not praying to God for protection against them and by neglecting to pursue greater mortification to avoid them. Moreover, not being appropriately affected by these dreams once they have passed also contributes to the problem. In such cases, even the Schoolmen (who are not known for being the strictest and most delicate casuists) would admit, all things considered, that there is a consequential sin in dreams. We believe that few people experience such dreams without some circumstance indicating their participation in sin. Although our natural disposition may be considered innocent in itself, any inclination towards sinful actions while sleeping or awake stems from our corrupt nature. It clearly demonstrates the disorderliness of our natural inclinations.

4. The fourth argument comes from the Law of Washings and Sacrifices for the uncleanness caused by emissions in men's dreams. This implies that both sleeping and waking men should be holy. Although there are sacrifices and purifications appointed for things that are not morally sinful, such as touching a dead body or having leprosy, it would be difficult to apply the same reasoning to the present case. Firstly, if it is claimed that there was no moral sinfulness in those pollutions, then what purpose did the sacrifices and washings serve? If someone suggests, as they must, that they were symbolic of the hidden actions of original sin, it confirms what we have said. Secondly, are there any other actions that are not inherently sinful that have such a connection or resemblance to any specific commandment, as the one mentioned in Leviticus 15 does to the seventh commandment? It seems to have a direct reference to it.

5. The fifth argument can be drawn from the comprehensive nature of the Law, which encompasses the whole person—outward and inward, soul, heart, mind. If it applies to the entire person, then why not to the imagination, memory, and so on? We can be certain that when spirits are perfectly conformed to the Law of God, there will be no such thoughts consistent with it. Moreover, doesn't this Law obligate and bind at all times? Even sleeping individuals (as we believe) are subject to its negative commands. That is, although they are not required to pray or listen in their sleep, they are still obligated not to commit murder, adultery, etc. while asleep. The more renewed and holy Christians are in their daily walk, the same applies to their dreams. This is how sanctified individuals differ from those who are unconverted.
6. The sixth argument is as follows: We suppose that the principles which prove involuntary lust, in its initial motions before consent, to be sinful will also imply that these motions in sleeping individuals (of which we speak) are sinful. Firstly, although these motions of lust are involuntary and do not impair the deliberate use of reason more than other thoughts, and secondly, although they are resisted by the regenerated and not approved of any more than the other thoughts, they are not in accordance with reason (though not produced by it) and do not align with the simplicity and angelic holiness that should be found in humans. It is difficult to imagine that even the fleeting motions of lust, however swiftly they pass through us, do not leave behind some residue of defilement due to our corruption, which still accompanies temptation to a greater or lesser extent (something that cannot be said of the sins presented to our Lord by the Tempter). According to the Orthodox tradition, such lusts or motions of lust have always been considered sinful based on the aforementioned reasons provided by Paul's teaching in Romans 7. We see no reason why these same reasons would not apply here.

Lastly, we would like to add that, in general, the consciences of the righteous view these practices, even if committed in sleep, with horror. No amount of reasoning or debate can truly calm them until they humble themselves before God and acknowledge their wrongdoing. Yet, they do not experience the same trouble in other purely ceremonial matters. Augustine, in his Confessions, expresses his lamentation and confesses his sorrow over these actions, although elsewhere he does not consider them as sins. He mourns that, in some way, these acts were done within him, and he even emphasizes that he had not always rejected them as he sometimes had. Do not the righteous, at times, oppose these desires in their sleep? How often do they wrestle against this evil in prayer, perhaps due to a different understanding of it than simply as punishment or affliction? Even though there are many more afflictions that do not affect them in the same way, they are aware of the arguments against the sinfulness of these actions or desires. This leads me to believe that there is something directly opposed to conscience and purity in these sinful actions or motions.

In conclusion, we are confident that this viewpoint is in line with the purpose of the Law and the absolute purity and angelic holiness that God demands. It is not only when we are awake that we should remain in communion with Him, but even in our sleep, our communion with Him should not be broken. It is certainly safest for humans to humble themselves under the awareness of their sinful nature and the sad inevitability of sinning, both awake and asleep, which they have brought upon themselves. In doing so, they may better recognize the necessity of a Mediator for righteousness, which are the primary ends and uses of the Law.

We now turn our attention to the words spoken by the Lord Himself concerning the number of these Commandments and their general purpose, as previously mentioned. However, there are four aspects we would like to address briefly to further clarify the text before delving into the first Commandment.

The first question is whether the words "I am the Lord thy God" are a part of the first Commandment or a preface to all the Ten Commandments. We believe it serves as a foundation for pressing and eliciting obedience to all the Commandments, but it is specifically related to the first Commandment. This is evident from the negative expression in the commandment, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me," which implies having no other gods except for the Lord. And who is this "me"? It is the Lord thy God who brought thee out of the land of Egypt. Therefore, there is a special connection between this Commandment and the Preface, as it encompasses the positive aspect of this negative Commandment. It clarifies three important points.

1. It establishes the right object of worship, which is Jehovah, Elohim, the Lord. Jehovah signifies the unity of the divine essence, as it is a singular word, while Elohim, being a plural word, signifies the plurality of persons in the Godhead. Thus, the Lord, who commands and demands obedience, is one God in three persons.
2. It clarifies the proper channel through which our service should flow, which is the Covenant. Our obedience is not directed towards God in an abstract sense, but towards God as our God. He says, "I am the Lord thy God," emphasizing the covenantal relationship. As stated in Deuteronomy 28:58, "That thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, THE LORD THY GOD." This makes our service and worship genuine and pleasing. Without this relationship, no sinful man can offer acceptable service to God. Furthermore, it highlights the need to restore the broken relationship that once existed between God and man under the Covenant of Works, which can only be accomplished through Christ. It also emphasizes that this relationship with God in Christ and obedience to the Law are compatible.

3. It reveals the right and powerful motivation for obedience, namely, the benefits of redemption, love, and thankfulness. These motives compel us to perform the commanded duties willingly and cheerfully. Obedience is driven by the gratitude and love we have for God due to the redemption He has provided.

Secondly, one may question why the second Commandment and the fourth Commandment have reasons attached to them that explicitly urge obedience, while the others do not. The answer is that all the other Commandments are determined in the consciences of men by the Law of Nature, and the sins against them are recognized as evil through the light of nature. However, the specifics of how God should be worshipped in external matters and the designation of a particular day as a solemn time of worship are determined by God's positive Law. These aspects are not as strongly impressed upon the consciences of men as the duties required by the other Commandments. Therefore, the Lord provides reasons to persuade obedience to these two Commandments. For the second Commandment, He declares, "I am a jealous God," indicating that even the slightest deviation from Him in external matters is not acceptable. And for the fourth Commandment, He commands to keep the Sabbath day because He has set it apart from other days, although it was not previously distinguished. This reason is further elaborated in the text. According to this reasoning, which is also presented by the School-men, it becomes evident that the second Commandment concerning external worship, as distinguished in our understanding, is distinct from the first, which requires the inward worship due to God. The first Commandment is Moral-Natural and remains unalterable, leaving a strong impression on a natural conscience. Therefore, based on this foundation, it does not require a reason.

Thirdly, it is worth noting that certain Commandments have Promises attached to them, while others do not. This does not mean that any Commandment lacks implicit encouragement, but in some

cases, they are explicitly stated. For example, in the second Commandment, God promises to show mercy to thousands, and in the fifth Commandment, He promises long life. The reason for explicitly expressing promises in these two Commandments is that obedience to them appears to bring the most harm to individuals and is most contrary to their corrupt wills and desires. It is not as detrimental, nor does it provoke as much hatred from the world, for individuals to love God and fear Him in their hearts. However, outwardly confessing Him before others and adhering closely to the true manner of worshiping Him expose individuals to persecution, adversity, and losses. Being devoted to the externals of godliness can bring significant prejudice and troubles, and being obedient to superiors and considerate of inferiors is not easily embraced. Therefore, to counterbalance the difficulties that come with obeying these two Commandments, God has added promises to encourage and motivate obedience to them.

The fourth point we should consider is that some Commandments contain explicit threats, while others do not. For example, the second Commandment and the third Commandment include threats. However, this does not mean that any Commandment lacks implicit threats. The reason for expressing threats in these two Commandments is that people often consider the violation of these Commandments to be trivial if they believe themselves to be sincere in their hearts, even if they are negligent and careless in many outward matters. They may also treat the manner of worship lightly and perfunctorily, thinking it of little importance as long as it is directed towards the true God. Similarly, people tend to underestimate the significance of using God's Holy Name reverently. Therefore, God has added threats to these Commandments to make people aware that He will not overlook them as easily as they often assume. The presence of reasons, promises, and threats in relation to the second Commandment clearly demonstrates its importance and how prone people are to breaking it. It emphasizes the need for special consideration and regard for this Commandment, refuting

any notion of attempting to remove it from the number of Commandments.

The First Commandment

"You shall have no other gods before me." - Exodus 20:3

In this first Commandment, we may consider two aspects: 1. The instruction given. 2. The conditions of the instruction.

The instruction given is negatively phrased, "You shall have no other Gods," directing to the right object of worship, and distinguishing the true God from all supposed gods. Although there is but one God, there are many who are labelled as gods (1 Corinthians 8:4, 5, 6). The conditions added are in these words, "before me," which suggest not only the severity of the sin being prohibited, as it's committed in His presence, and carried out, as it were, in disregard and scorn of God who always sees; but notably to highlight the breadth of the prohibition. It discourages not only outward idolatry, but also that which is inward and hidden, unseen by men and known only to God. Thus, this Commandment mandates not only external worship, but also that which is inward and spiritual before God. Hence, the aim of this first Commandment clearly lies in these two aspects (where it differs from the second), namely, 1. It identifies who is the right object of worship, and guides men towards it. 2. It governs men's internal worship of God, and calls for it, while the second Commandment assumes both these, and provides guidance on the manner of worshipping the true God externally, and regulates these.

This Commandment, like all others, has a positive part that requires something, and a negative part that prohibits something. We'll first address what is required here, and we identify it in these three points.

1. Firstly, it necessitates the correct understanding of God; for without it, no true worship can be given to him, no accurate thought or conception of him, or faith in him, can be achieved

until he is known. He must be understood to be one God in Essence (Deuteronomy 6:4) and three Persons (1 John 5:7). He must be understood in his Attributes and Essential Properties, such as Infiniteness, Immenseness, Unchangeability, Eternity, Omnipotence, Omniscience, Wisdom, Goodness, Justice, and Faithfulness. He must also be understood in his specific works, which demonstrate his Sovereignty and Majesty, like his works of Creation, Providence, Redemption, and everything related to it, like the Covenant of Grace and its terms; the Mediator and his roles. No service or worship can be offered to God, nor can we have any foundation for Faith in him, without some level of distinct knowledge of these.

2. It demands from us a suitable recognition of God in all these properties: Such as 1. Esteeming him highly above all. 2. Loving him. 3. Fearing him. 4. Believing and trusting in him. 5. Hoping in him. 6. Adoring him. 7. Honouring him. 8. Serving and obeying him. And thus 9. He must be the Supreme end in all our actions, that should mainly be aimed at by us.
3. It requires such duties as are a consequence of his Excellency, and our recognition of him as such: Such as 1. Dependence on him. 2. Submission to him, and patience under difficult circumstances from him. 3. Faith resting on him. 4. Prayers offered to him. 5. Repentance for wronging him. 6. Communion, and a constant walk with him. 7. Delighting in him. 8. Meditating on him; and such other duties as may be necessarily inferred as incumbent to beings in such a relationship with such a God, whose Excellency and worth calls and invites men to all suitable duties.

Next, it is important that we add some points of consideration to these general principles.

1. That the Commandment requires all these, and to the highest and most perfect degree.

2. That it not only requires them in ourselves, but obliges us to further them in all others, according to our roles and responsibilities.
3. That it requires the diligent use of all means that may assist and further us in these; such as Reading, Meditation, Study, etc.
4. That these things which in some respect may be given to beings, like love, fear, etc., yet when they are required as duties to God, they are required in a far superior manner, setting God apart and above all others. Therefore, even when the same terms are used, they represent significantly different degrees and kinds of affection or reverence when directed towards God.

In a more distinguished way; so that beings must yield and make room when God competes with them in these respects; and those things which are specific to God, such as relying on him, adoring him, are to be given to no other.

5. All these duties are required in such a manner that none of them push out another; instead, they all coexist, each duty maintaining its own place, without causing harm to any other.

Next, we should consider the prohibitive part of this Commandment, for its extent will be best understood by contemplating what is forbidden therein, and how it may be violated. Indeed, in relation to this Commandment, more than any of the others, almost all people consider themselves most innocent; yet upon examination, it will be found that people are most guilty of breaking it. We may view the violation of this Commandment more broadly, as God is wronged in any way concerning what is rightfully his; or more narrowly, as it pertains to what is more accurately termed Idolatry.

When considered more broadly, it is violated in two ways.

1. It's violated when what is fundamental and essential to God is effectively or practically denied to him; as when he is not

acknowledged as Eternal, Omnipotent, one blessed God in three Persons. In this way, people are guilty, either in belief or in practice, when they conduct themselves before God as if they did not believe him to be Omnipotent, Omniscient, etc. In this respect, Titus 1:16 speaks of some who claim to know God, but in their actions, they deny him.

2. The Commandment is broken when anything unbecoming the Holy Majesty of God is attributed to him; as when it is suggested that he changes, favours irreverence, etc. Thus, in Psalm 50:21, it is said of some irreverent individuals that they thought him to be like themselves. These two forms could be categorised as more general Idolatry; we will speak more about them later.
3. The third way it's violated (considering the breach of this Commandment strictly) is by attributing that which is due to God, and properly belongs to him, to beings; such as trusting in them, calling on them through prayer, considering them Omnipotent, Omniscient, or believing that they have the influence or power to guide the world. Some attribute these abilities to Stars, to the Heavens, to Fortune, to Saints, to Angels, even to Devils. This is properly Idolatry. And because it is the chief objective of this Commandment, and we are expressly commanded to keep ourselves from Idols (1 John 5), we shall dwell a bit on this.

We will 1. outline some distinctions of Idolatry, 2. demonstrate how people fall into it, 3. identify the specific Idols with which people commit Idolatry, 4. highlight the most subtle and dangerous Idols, 5. provide some guidelines by which you may test this sin of Idolatry, even when it is most subtle.

Firstly, Idolatry may be distinguished into Idolatry against the first Commandment, when worship is not directed to the right, but to the wrong object, and Idolatry against the second Commandment, which

violates the prescribed manner of worshipping God. We are now discussing the first.

Secondly, this Idolatry is either doctrinal, or Idolatry in judgement, when one professedly believes such a thing besides God to have some Divinity in it; as pagans do of their Mars and Jupiter, and Catholics do of their Saints. Or, it is practical, when people don't believe in such things, and will not acknowledge any such opinion, yet effectively they are guilty of the same thing, as greedy individuals, etc. The first takes place when in all pagans, Turks, heretics, who by their doctrines and opinions undermine the true God or His worship. The latter includes all self-seeking, ambitious, greedy, and pleasure-seeking individuals who align with the former in their practice, though not in opinion.

Thirdly, it can be distinguished into Idolatry that has a tangible object, like how the Egyptians worshipped beasts, and the Persians worshipped the sun or fire, and that which has nothing but people's imaginations as its object, like those who worship fictitious gods. In this respect, the Apostle says in 1 Corinthians 8:4 that an idol is nothing.

Fourthly, we should distinguish between the objects of Idolatry. They are either inherently sinful, like devils, irreverent people, or they are good in themselves, but become corrupted and misused when they are made objects of Idolatry, like Angels, Saints, Sun, Moon, etc.

Fifthly, distinguish between Idolatry that is more gross and openly professed, and that which is more hidden, subtle, and denied. This distinction is similar to the previously mentioned one between belief and practice, and largely aligns with it.

Sixthly, distinguish between heart-idolatry (Ezekiel 14, Exodus 14:11-12, and 16:2-3) and external Idolatry. The former consists of an inward heart-respect to some idol, as these tumultuous people were enslaved to their comfort and appetites in the last two

aforementioned places; the latter consists of some external idolatrous gesture or action.

In practical Idolatry, we should distinguish between expressing our affections towards inherently sinful objects, and expressing them excessively towards lawful objects. People are guilty of Idolatry with sinful objects when they love and covet another person's house, spouse, or goods, when things unlawful and forbidden have their heart's attention. On the other hand, people are guilty of Idolatry by making lawful objects idols, such as when they excessively or inordinately love their own means, spouse, house, etc., placing them in God's position, as Nebuchadnezzar did with Babylon (Daniel 4:30). Hence, in the former sense, people make their lusts or sins, whatever they may be, their idols. Gluttons who serve their appetite, drunkards their drunkenness, make their bellies and appetite their idol. For whatever people yield themselves to obey, they become servants to that which they obey (Romans 6:16). An idol is something excessively esteemed, and Idolatry is the transferring of God's due, outwardly or inwardly, to what is not God, whether we consider it as God or not.

Firstly, people commit Idolatry when anything, even any lawful thing, receives too much reverence from them. Their happiness is placed in it and, in effect, they can less bear to be without it, regardless of what they might say verbally, than they can bear to be without communion with God Himself. When people have such an excessive esteem of their spouse, children, houses, lands, high positions, etc., and when these are taken from them, they cry out as Micah did in Judges 18:24, "You have taken away my gods from me, what do I have left?" When all other comforts a person has, including all the Promises and God Himself, seem of little value to them compared to some particular thing they have lost due to some adverse circumstances, it indicates that it had too much of their heart. Test this by two things.

1. when any beloved thing is threatened to be removed, it then becomes apparent how much it is cherished and clung to. 2. look at what is used to compensate for the loss; notice a significant difference between David and his men, or most of them, in 1 Samuel 30:6. When he was in as much loss as they were, they could find no way to compensate for it, therefore they contemplate stoning him, but David found strength in the Lord his God. They had nothing left at all, while he still had his God, in whom he could still find comfort.

Thirdly, idolatry occurs when confidence and trust are placed in anything other than God (excessively, as previously noted in the context of love). Thus, when a person's protection is placed in people, even if they're princes (as in Psalm 146:3), or in crowds, horses and armies, it's a form of idolising them. Similarly, wealthy individuals can make gold their confidence and fine gold their hope, as mentioned in Job 31:24. That is, when people feel secure, not because they trust in God's providence, but because they possess such resources.

For instance, Asa trusted in physicians, not God, specifically regarding the cure of his disease. Or, like the rich man in Luke 12:19 who based his peace of mind on his abundant barns. Some trust in their connection to a prominent person who is their ally. This reliance can be identified through a few indicators:

1. The means to which people resort in a crisis, such as when they don't hesitate to utilise unethical means.
2. The distress they express when they are let down.
3. It's noticeable when their reliance on such a creature impairs their trust in God and His providence. Therefore, it's challenging for people to be wealthy without placing their confidence in their wealth. Thus, Christ spoke of the difficulty of the wealthy being saved.

4. People trust in their riches when possessing them makes them feel more secure, leading them to become proud and buoyant, as if their possessions added some value to them. This could only occur if these possessions were overly appreciated.

Fourthly, idolatry also manifests itself through fear when individuals or events are feared more than God. This fear may lead people to sin or, at the very least, deter them from their duty, similar to those followers who, out of fear of the Jews (John 12:42), didn't confess Christ. Thus, individuals may idolise their very enemies whom they despise, when they fear the one who can kill the body more than the one who can destroy both soul and body. In this way, powerful figures in the world are often idolised.

Even good and well-qualified individuals can also be turned into idols when people become so dedicated and devoted to them as to refer to them as their teacher and to be, metaphorically, sworn to their words and opinions (as the sectarians in Corinth were, and such are generally to their leaders), when it's not the matter or reason that influences them but the person who teaches such doctrine or holds such an opinion.

Fifthly, this idolatry can be committed through service, when an individual falls under the influence of anything. Thus, anything a person serves in this manner becomes an idol. Every dominant person or mood that an individual seeks to please becomes an idol. In this respect, it is said that one cannot serve two masters, God and Mammon, and if we still serve people, we are not the servants of Christ (Galatians 1:10). This can be identified by:

1. Observing what individuals are most excessively engaged with, and most eager to fulfil and accomplish.
2. Noting what they are willing to expend the most effort to achieve.
3. Seeing what occupies most of their time and labour.

Identifying what overwhelms, overcomes, or intimidates them the most, so much so that they cannot resist it, even if it pushes aside duties to God. When they are so occupied with God's service that it makes them ill-prepared whenever they approach immediate worship, it's a clear sign that such a thing has become the person's idol. There are numerous ways in which individuals fall into the sin of idolatry, and it would be difficult to speak of all the various idols that might be excessively loved, feared, or relied upon, thereby replacing God. I will mention a few.

Firstly, the world is a significant idol. This is the grand materialistic idol that both the covetous and the pleasure-seeking individuals chase after, crying out, "Who will show us any good?" (Psalm 4:6). This idol keeps thousands in bondage and propels them headlong into excess. An intense desire for worldly goods and a reputation on earth is the idol of many.

Secondly, the belly is another idol (Philippians 3:19) - a shameful deity, yet worshipped by the majority of people who strive for nothing more than a share in this life to fill the belly (Psalm 17:14), to earn a living and provide for their families. This group includes gluttons, drunkards, and those who seek to please their palates, who are considered the most indulgent individuals in the world, regrettably plentiful in our days. They live according to the devil's maxim, ready to give everything they have for their life, aiming for nothing more (Job 2:4). Satan thought he had discovered Job's weakness when all his riches were gone. He also tempted Christ to anxiously provide bread for Himself, and this fear of lack enslaves many.

Thirdly, another significant idol, which in some way encompasses all others, is one's life - their honour, credit, reputation, good name, and applause in the world, along with their own will, opinions, tenets, and judgments. Individuals are often so stubborn about these that they won't give up even a little for a lot of their well-being. Thus, individuals are said to live for themselves (2 Corinthians 5:15) in

contrast to living for God, when self-regard influences them to become lovers of themselves (2 Timothy 3:2,4) and lovers of their pleasures more than God, and self-willed (Titus 1:7, 2 Peter 2:10). Alas, who is free from this?

Fourthly, individuals of exceptional abilities or those who have done or could do some considerable good or harm to someone, or who have some extraordinary qualities beyond others, often become significant idols. Due to the fear, love, or trust people place in them, they are often made into great idols.

Fifthly, lawful contentments such as houses, spouses, children, to which individuals are often too attached, and with which they are often too preoccupied, can become idols. Even things that are intrinsically minor can sometimes gain undue importance and thus become idols.

Sixthly, self-righteousness can be an idol. A person's prayers, their repentance, their blameless conduct - these can, and often do, garner more confidence and bear more of the weight of their eternal peace than they should. The Jews, for instance, laid the great stress of their salvation on this idol (Romans 10:3).

Seventhly, outward religious practices in their purity, external forms, and profession of religion can be idolized when individuals rely on these and do not pursue the power behind them. This was the case with the Jews who extolled the Temple of the Lord, the covenant between God and them, and their external relationship with Him (Jeremiah 7:4, etc.).

Eighthly, any gift of God bestowed upon individuals, such as beauty, strength, wit, or learning, can become an idol when those who possess them place too much importance on them or think too highly of them. Even grace itself, the sense of God's love, and inner peace can replace Christ and be sought more than Christ Himself at times. When these gifts are depended upon and delighted in, while God is

neglected, or when they are missed and God is not delighted in, then they become idols.

Ninthly, ease, tranquility, and personal contentment often become significant idols. This is the case when an individual is so dedicated to their comfort that they cannot tolerate being disturbed. This was the case with the man in Luke 12:19, who said, "Soul, take your ease." His comfort was his idol, and he rested on it, making it the goal of all his construction and accumulation of wealth. But his riches were also his idol, as he based his expectation of rest on what he possessed. Similarly, many idle individuals who structure their lives to avoid trouble, even if they are not productive and spend what they have, make the pursuit of an easy life the focus of all their actions. When this preoccupation with comfort overshadows them as their ultimate goal, often leading to the avoidance and neglect of many necessary duties to avoid trouble, it becomes a prevailing idol.

Tenthly, wandering fancies and chimeras can become idols. These are cases where the mind takes pleasure in itself, delighting in entertaining these illusions, and pursuing them with a plan to find satisfaction in them. These are things that may never have existed, nor perhaps could exist, except in the individual's imagination. Such mental wanderings are described by Solomon in Ecclesiastes 6:9 as "the wanderings of the desire," in contrast to the "sight of the eyes" that others find pleasure in. This is seen when people expend their creativity and inventiveness on crafting romances, passionate love stories, stage plays, comedies, masquerades, balls, etc., or, in a more subtle yet frequently practiced way, when people construct imaginary narratives of revenge, delight, or prominence for themselves.

The means and secondary causes, such as physicians, armies, ministers, celestial bodies, and natural causes (which some refer to as Nature), through which God often works, are frequently so trusted and relied upon that they become people's idols. In fact, in recent times, many people have become increasingly interested in and infatuated with practices such as judicial astrology and palmistry,

while to a great extent, the scriptures have been neglected and set aside.

When asked which idols are the most subtle, the answer is:

1. An idol is most subtle when it lurks in the heart and primarily resides in a person's mind, aims, and internal satisfaction. People may internally attribute too much to such a thing, yet externally, there may not be much to reveal this.
2. Idols are most subtle when they exist in things to which some degree of fear, love, delight, etc., is permissible, such as in lawful things, which can be lawfully loved, feared, and sought to some extent.
3. Idols are more subtle when they lie in negatives, such as in omissions or ease, than when they lie in something people positively seek after, or in the commission of something forbidden.
4. Idols are particularly subtle when they masquerade under a lawful name. For example, when pride is disguised as honesty, or anxiety as legitimate concern, such idols are challenging to discern.
5. Idols can be particularly subtle when, in adhering to one idol, a person rejects all others (as they perceive) out of respect for God. This can be seen in instances such as a monastic life, rigid obedience, or a singular opinion that many people strongly adhere to and place significant weight on.
6. Subtle idolatry can also lie in means that have been or are sanctioned by God for achieving a certain end. It is challenging to maintain balance in this case, and equally difficult to detect the idolatry of the heart within it.

In all these scenarios, it's important to note that the idolatry in these things primarily lies in the excessiveness of the heart and affections towards them. It doesn't reside as much in our actions concerning them, but rather in the manner of our actions and the accompanying circumstances such as anxiety, high estimation, excessive care, and love.

To better understand the difference between this idolatrous love, fear, service, and the true expressions of love, fear, etc., consider the following rules:

1. Our love becomes idolatrous when it for creatures overshadows our love for God, causing us to neglect our duties towards Him, as exemplified by Demas.
2. It is now apparent:
3. How common this sin of idolatry is.
4. The significant guilt and risk people are incurring as a result.
This is because:
 1. Few people are aware of it.
 2. The guilt of idolatry often weighs heavily on many people's consciences for years.
 3. There is little repentance for it, even though one can easily and unknowingly slip into it in many ways

It may not be as crucial to inquire specifically which idol has the upper hand or takes up the most space, provided we acknowledge these three facts:

1. There can be, and often are, multiple idols at once, like legions, causing turmoil within a person and swarming in their heart.
2. These idols can successively change, depending on a person's temptations and circumstances.
3. People should strive to overcome all idols, giving God His rightful place, so that no idol is spared. If even one is spared, none are truly defeated.

Believers would do well, and it would be to their advantage, to frequently contemplate Scriptures such as these: Isaiah 30:22, Luke 14:8, and 1 Corinthians 10:5-15. They should strive to live in accordance with these verses, learning to detest idols and all creatures to the extent that they become idols to them.

We will now continue to explore the branches of this Commandment, which serves as a key to all the rest. Since God's Sovereignty is emphasized here, every sin can be traced back to it, as each is a disobedience to this Sovereign God. We will first identify some general ways in which this commandment is broken, then delve into specific instances.

More broadly, this commandment is broken in three ways, as has been previously stated:

1. By detracting from God that which is His due. Any contempt of Him, disobedience to Him, or harm to His infinite attributes, such as denying His omnipotence, omniscience, infinity, or providence to any degree, are violations of this Commandment. God is wronged when He does not receive in all ways what is rightfully His.
2. By attributing to God what does not align with His absolute perfection, purity, and holiness, such as claiming He can do wrong, change, not keep His promises, or not govern the world wisely. Suggesting He has any physical form or can be comprehended also infringes upon this Commandment.
3. When what is due to God, such as faith, hope, love, and fear, is given to creatures, whether literally to idols, or to humans, saints, angels, ordinances (like the sacraments), stars, herbs, gold, physicians, etc. This occurs when too much importance is placed on these entities or when anything not suitable to them is ascribed to them. As a result, practices such as witchcraft,

charming, covetousness, judicial astrology, etc., are rebuked, as they draw people's hearts away from the living God.

If one asks, "Can't some things in the world be loved, and can't some confidence be placed in people, means, etc.?" I respond, love can indeed be directed towards some things, and is naturally called for in certain situations. However, there are stipulations:

1. This love should not be unconditional, but rather subordinate to God. It should not be for the things themselves, but out of obedience to God, in recognition of their potential usefulness in helping us honor Him, and as they are His gifts.
2. We should not excessively love or rely on these things, but instead, out of love for God, we should be prepared to relinquish them, or even hate them, as Christ mentions in relation to father and mother in Luke 14:26.

Additionally, a certain level of confidence can indeed be given to some things, but with several conditions:

1. This confidence should not be unconditional or for the things themselves.
2. It should not always be given, nor in all circumstances.
3. However, this confidence must be subordinate to God's decree.
4. It must come with dependence on His blessing for making these means effective. Hence, we may expect health from food, drink, medicine, etc., as they are considered as means contributing to such an end, yet the Lord alone should be our ultimate reliance.
5. There may be comparative confidence, whereby we lean more on one means than another, like favoring a skilled physician over an unskilled one, or relying more on an army to defeat an enemy than when it's absent. This is because this confidence is placed in some external entity and does not concern salvation. It merely compares means among themselves, as they are ordinarily utilized by God to achieve these ends; however, in this scenario, the means themselves are not the ultimate object of confidence.

Next, we need to consider that this Commandment may be violated in all these ways, in four respects.

1. In Doctrine: This occurs when individuals uphold beliefs that dishonor God or attribute His due to creations, and then proceed to teach these beliefs, as in Matthew 5:33-38.
2. By Opinion or Judgment: Even if individuals do not openly express or promote such beliefs, they are guilty if they harbor such thoughts or beliefs in their hearts, as per Psalm 14:1.
3. In Imaginations: Even if such beliefs do not solidify into firm judgments, they may still infiltrate our imaginations. In such cases, any loose or inappropriate thoughts about God, or any misperceptions that degrade His honor, are entertained, as mentioned in Psalm 50:21 and Acts 17:29.
4. In Practice: This occurs when individuals live as if there were no God, as described in Psalm 36:1, as if He were not all-knowing, just, etc. Such individuals, regardless of their outward profession, are essentially denying God, as per Titus 1:16. All irreverent individuals who lead loose lives are guilty in this respect, as are formal hypocrites who rely merely on the appearance of religious duties.

In the third place, we should consider that this commandment, in its full extent, condemns the following:

1. All gross idolaters of any sort, commonly referred to as heathens.
2. Jews who do not worship the true God in His Son, Jesus Christ.
3. All heretics who deny the divinity of any of the Persons, such as Sabellians, who perceive only one Person; Arians, who see Christ as a created God; Photinians, who see Him as purely human; and all those who propose a plurality of Gods, or diminish the divine attributes, or attribute God's due to saints in worship or invocation. Furthermore, anyone who contradicts any truth or

upholds any error is included here, as they thereby implicate God and His Word, and wrong Him who owns no such thing. This category could also include all those who are ignorant of God.

4. All profane individuals, whether they are atheists in heart or in practice. Those who are disobedient are essentially denying God and not giving Him His due, which is obedience, regardless of their verbal profession about Him.
5. All hypocrites, who only offer Him superficial service and whose obedience is not sincere and perfect before Him.
6. All those who conspire with the Devil, who consult him or who depart from God's way to gain knowledge in an unlawful way. This involves meddling with God's secrets when He has not revealed them, relying on God's enemy, the Devil, for revealing such things, and using an unwarranted means, which has no promised blessing; therefore, it cannot be used as a means subordinate to God.
7. All charming through words, herbs, or other means that God has not appointed for that purpose, or which lack natural and physical efficacy to produce the desired effect. This includes seeking health from witches, relying on certain words repeated a certain number of times, or while fasting, or walking backwards, etc. Any undue emphasis on these or similar circumstances is included here.
8. All spells, fear of outcomes, and use of superstitious means to prevent these outcomes, such as placing pieces of timber at doors, carrying a Bible purely as a charm without using it, or considering certain days and times as unlucky and unfortunate. All these practices divert people's attention from God to some other thing. This category includes all divination by lots, stars, rods, or any other unwarranted method to discover secrets or predict the future, which is God's prerogative as per Isaiah 41. When the method used lacks efficacy or reason, the effect must be expected either from God or the Devil. But when God has neither naturally imbued the method with efficacy nor warranted it by His revealed will, it is deemed unacceptable.

Fourthly, the violations of this commandment can be understood from the duties that are required in it, such as Faith, Love, Obedience, Hope, Fear, Knowledge, and so on. Generally, we may fall short in these ways:

1. When we lack these virtues or fail to perform the required duties.
2. When they are insincere or not genuine; as when our humility is not authentic, or our prayers are not sincere, but only for show.
3. When they are deficient, as in the extent of Knowledge, Faith, etc., that we should possess.
4. When they devolve, as when knowledge turns into curiosity, faith into presumption, hope into vain confidence, and fear into disbelief and anxiety.

Through this, we can see how frequently this commandment is violated.

1. To better comprehend the breaches of this commandment, we should first consider God's Excellence and Attributes, and see how we sin against all these. As stated in Colossians 1:10, we should "walk worthy of the Lord". It's crucial to note here that His infinite Wisdom is offended when we don't submit to Him or take direction from Him. His Power is wronged when we do not employ Him, His Grace when we do not trust Him or misuse it for licentiousness. His Omniscience is insulted when we wish He didn't see certain things, when we hide them from others, and when we don't fear Him, merely going through the motions in His service. Similarly, His Justice is violated when we expect mercy without the use of a Sacrifice, when we do not fear His threats, when we do not dread sin, but instead risk His wrath. The same can be said for all His other Attributes, which are all transgressed either by ignorance, by the omission of something they require, or by the commission of something that is beneath them.

2. Consider God in His relations to us and how frequently He is sinned against in these roles. As a Father, how is His kindness abused, and is He not revered as the Creator from whom we have our being? Indeed, He is resisted and we do not live for Him from whom and through whom we live. He is a Spouse, yet we stray from Him, proving unfaithful in all our commitments to Him. He is a Redeemer of His people, a Master and Lord of all, but how much fear, love, and obedience does He receive from us, notwithstanding all these relationships?
3. Contemplate God's works for us, around us, and towards us, in terms of Creation, Providence, and Redemption. In addition to His specific dispensations of both Mercies and Judgments, all of which require something fitting from us. Yet, each one of them is disdained in more ways than one - by attributing either good or evil to chance, luck, or fortune, by being ungrateful to Him, and by misusing what He provides. And also by not studying these works, so as to admire and love Him who is the Worker.
4. Consider our obligation to God in all aspects of our Covenant with Him, sealed by Baptism, and the Lord's Supper. Surely, we should strive to be in line with all these Covenant-relationships and to fulfill these obligations. But alas, how shamefully we fall short in fulfilling them all.
5. Consider His revealed Will in His Word, and see how greatly we fall short in carrying it out.

Lastly, consider the extent of our efforts to use the means that may bring us closer to God and to avoid those things that pull us away from Him, such as sinful alliances, bad company, superficial and unsound books, unnecessary travels to unfamiliar places, and so on. All of these, and anything else that distracts our hearts from God, are violations of this commandment.

Next, we will delve more specifically into some clear violations that run contrary to the main and central purpose of this commandment.

Firstly, Ignorance is a direct violation; for the commandment requires us to know Him, as referenced in 1 Cor. 2:8-9. If He is not known, no other duty can be properly performed, as the knowledge of God is the foundation of all duties.

For clarification, consider that some things about God are hidden from us, while others are revealed to us. We cannot know those things which are kept from us. And firstly, they are either such that we cannot perceive now because they are incomprehensible in themselves, such as God's infinite Nature and Attributes. These, as they are in themselves, cannot be comprehensibly conceived, not even in Heaven. But while we are on Earth, we perceive but dimly, as through a glass, and our knowledge of Him is more akin to faith than sight. Or they are such things that are conceivable, but God has not chosen to reveal them to humans, such as when He will end the world, when He will take each person from this life, who are specifically chosen, etc. To be ignorant of these is not a sin, it is a duty not to seek to know them, indeed, curiosity in these matters is sinful. Ignorance here is referred to as a Nescience rather than Ignorance, which implies a lack of knowledge that people ought to have. Secondly, these things about God are such that not only may they be known in themselves, but also we should know them because they are revealed to us; ignorance of these is sinful. For instance:

1. It is a non-conformity to that knowledge and holiness after which God created us.
2. It is a result of original sin.
3. It is a cause of many sins.
4. It is a non-conformity to the Law, which requires us to know and acknowledge God as He has revealed Himself to us; and that in His Essence, in the Trinity of Persons, in His Attributes, Covenants, works of Creation and Redemption, and in His Relations to us. And that we should know Him in such a way

that we may thereby also know ourselves. And this is that great duty called for in this commandment, that we may know Him, and His will.

Further, this ignorance, as it pertains to things we ought to know, may be viewed as threefold, according to the diversity of its causes.

1. There is a natural ignorance, which is the product of our inherent corruption and blindness. This has seized people's memories and judgments and, as they believe, incapacitates them to learn. Indeed, it does so in terms of the spiritual and salvific understanding of God's matters, until the eyes of the mind are opened by the power of Grace.
2. There is a willful ignorance, when individuals have the abilities, means, and opportunities to attain knowledge, yet they choose not to know, but disregard and scorn the means, which often draws a judicial blindness along with it.
3. There is a lazy ignorance, whereby some people do not deliberately reject the means of knowledge, yet are so neglectful that they do not actively strive for the attainment of knowledge. Now, although there is a difference among these, even the least of them is sinful and will not entirely absolve, being a product of original sin (at best) sustained by our own neglect of such means as might have more effectively removed it. Thus, a dull wit or weak memory can no more simply excuse than other gross non-conformities to the Law in our natures (which appear more in some than in others) that follow upon original sin.

In summary, individuals may be guilty of breaching this Law in three ways, in terms of ignorance.

1. In terms of the subject matter of their ignorance, this can be lesser or greater, depending on how much less or more is known about what we should understand concerning God, and what He has disclosed. This is particularly true for substantial matters

that are more crucial to be known. There is a substantial difference between these and other things, which do not concern God as directly, such as chronological queries, some prophecies, cases, etc., which are nonetheless recorded in Scripture.

2. They might be guilty of lesser or more ignorance regarding the degree; thus, some individuals are entirely ignorant, others are merely uncertain, and not solidified in their understanding of God's truths, yet they do not have contrary impressions of these matters as others do.
3. There are various kinds of ignorance in people, some are guilty of willful ignorance, some are negligent, and some (even the best among us) are struggling with the remnant of natural blindness, who are nonetheless not negligent.

If the question is whether ignorance can excuse an individual, and to what extent it excuses. Ans. 1. There is no ignorance (properly so-called) that wholly excuses, pro toto, as it is inherently sinful, and individuals are obligated to discern what is sinful and what is not. Moreover, individuals can never act out of faith in ignorance, not knowing if what they are doing is inherently sinful or lawful. This is understood in terms of ignorantia juris, not ignorantia facti, or ignorance of the law, not ignorance of the fact (as it is called). For individuals can sometimes be ignorant of the latter and yet be innocent, such as when one is chopping with an axe, and it slips off the handle, etc. But in terms of the law, there is no invincible ignorance that can excuse anyone for not knowing God's intent, because they are obligated to know it.

2. Ignorance that is willfully maintained with neglect of means that might rectify it, is far from providing an excuse; rather, it exacerbates the faults caused by it because two faults coincide in that case. 1. Ignorance. 2. Another sin generated by it.

3. Natural ignorance, or ignorance arising from a lack of resources or less opportunity to learn, although not fully excusing, does provide a partial excuse. Hence it is said, those who do not know the Master's will shall receive fewer stripes; yet, Corazin, Bethsaida, and other places, having an abundance of means, shall not be sheltered under that excuse in the least, Matthew 11:22, 23, 24.
4. In certain situations, we need to distinguish between sinning ex ignorantia, out of ignorance, and sinning ignoranter, ignorantly. A person may do something out of ignorance (as Paul persecuted the Church) that they would not have done had they known it; it was not malice but ignorance that drove Paul to that sin of persecution, this partially excuses. However, to do something ignorantly is when a person is more immediately the cause of their own ignorance, as when, through drunkenness, passion, hatred, malice, etc., a person is so blinded and prejudiced that they cannot discern what is duty and what is sin. Thus, some of the Pharisees were, who could have recognized that Christ was God, and to be acknowledged as such, but prejudice hindered it. Therefore, a sin considered in itself may be less, but when considered more completely, will be found a far greater guilt; as suppose a person in drunkenness swears, commits adultery, or in passion commits murder, the murder or adultery considered in themselves, as done in drunkenness, or passion, are lesser than when done in sobriety; or deliberately. Yet these sins, when fully considered, make the person more guilty, because they have to answer for both murder and drunkenness, or murder and passion, which drunkenness or passion they brought upon themselves by their lack of vigilance, and all the effects that follow upon these are to be imputed to them, both as the actor and instigator of that which is the occasion, or rather the cause of them. Thus, you see in how many ways ignorance breaches this Commandment.

5. We will provide examples of how the commandment is broken in what opposes faith or confidence that flows from faith. This includes unbelief, diffidence, temerity, and tempting of God, which stem from unbelief and are contrary to faith. The infidelity of pagans and Jews, as well as the atheism of those who do not believe in the Word, are examples of this sin. Heretics who misuse the Word and apostates who deviate from the truth and oppose it are also guilty of this sin. Additionally, those who receive the Word in vain and do not rely on it, despite God's numerous invitations, make God a liar, despise Him, and reject His offers, indicating that they do not want Him to reign over them.
6. Anxiety regarding God's providence and distrust or diffidence regarding His promises are additional examples of the sin that questions the fulfillment of promises due to concerns about the Promiser's weakness or the methods used to bring about the achievement. Temerity, or tempting God, is also against confidence. This occurs when someone tries or attempts something without God's permission, which is required for any endeavor to be lawful. Questioning God's faithfulness is a sin of diffidence, while temerity offends His wisdom by failing to use the means He has prescribed and attempting to attain the goal by one's own means.

Dissembling the truth, fainting in the profession of faith, particularly in the case of confession, and behaving in a fearful, pusillanimous, and cowardly manner, are all contrary to faith and its profession. These actions dishonor God, and by appearing to attach little or no importance to the beliefs, they tempt others to believe that they do not truly believe what they profess to believe.

7. We may illustrate the violation of this Commandment in what opposes Hope, namely, Despair and Presumption, or vain Confidence; and because every virtue has many opposite vices, it

is easy to fall short in obeying this Commandment. Despair undermines many virtues; it is twofold, either total from lack of Faith, or partial from weakness of Faith. There is also a holy Despair and Diffidence that is good, as mentioned in Ecclesiastes 2:20, which is when we despair in ourselves, or from anything in ourselves or in the world to attain happiness, or what is promised. However, that is not what is meant here, for it is not absolute despairing, but such that still has a reservation with it: "If he helps me not," which implies hope. Presumption runs on the other extreme, expecting what is promised without taking God's way to attain it. It differs from true Confidence, which rests peacefully and boldly on God's Word and expects the promised thing in His way. The fault of Presumption is not that it accounts God's mercy too great or expects too much from Him, but that it accounts Him to have no justice and has no respect for His Holiness and Greatness. Similarly, Despair does not fall short in attributing too much Justice to Him, but in making it incompatible with His Mercy and Promises and extending sin, wants, and unworthiness beyond His mercy and help, as Judas and Cain did.

8. To identify the breaches of this Commandment related to love, consider the opposites such as lukewarmness, coldness of love, self-love, excessive love for creatures, hatred of God, and little reverence for Him due to prohibition of what they love and punishment for sin. It is impossible for individuals to serve two masters, such as sin and God, and thus one must love the other and hate the other. Love for sin and hatred for God appear ordinary, seen through a lack of zeal for Him and little reverence of Him.
9. Consider the opposites to Fear and Reverence, and there you will find carnal security and vain confidence in it, obstinacy, little trembling at God's Word, being unaffected by His judgments, rashness, and irreverence in His Service. A general fear is required in all our walk, while a peculiar fear is needed in

the Ordinances of His Worship. The opposite of this is that carnal fear and anxiety, which is commonly called servile and slavish fear, and the fear of man, which brings a snare.

10. Breaches of this Commandment can also be identified by considering what is contrary to the obedience we owe to God as our God. Internal and external obedience is comprehended in this, where we are to give away ourselves and the use of all our faculties and members wholly for the Glory of God and to Him only. This requires complete practice in the inward bent of the will and heart and all external parts. By seriously pondering this, individuals may find this Commandment broken often.
11. Impatience, which is opposite to the patience and submission owed to God in His ways and Dispensations, is a special breach of this Commandment. Impatience reveals itself in various ways such as fretting at events, not submitting cheerfully to God's way, wishing things had fallen out differently, limiting God, and prescribing to Him. Additionally, not behaving oneself thankfully for what He does, even when His Dispensations are cross and afflicting, is also impatience.
12. This Commandment is broken by many sins that are opposite to the adoration and high esteem that we should have for God in our hearts. He ought to have the throne and be exalted in our minds and affections. However, how many are there that go many days without having a single serious thought of him or being taken up with him or marveling at him and his ways with sinners, etc.?

Lastly, when invocation and prayer are neglected, this Commandment is broken. When we do not acknowledge him in everything by calling upon him, and particularly when internal prayer through frequent ejaculations to God (as Nehemiah 2:4) is neglected, we break this Commandment.

If we were to extend all of these to ourselves and apply them in thoughts, words, and deeds according to all the former general rules, how guilty would we be found in reference to his attributes, relations to us, and works for us? As these hold him forth to be worshipped as such, when that is slighted or neglected, it cannot help but infer great guilt, especially when his due is not given by such as we are to such as he is. It makes us exceedingly guilty. Although the same thing is often mentioned, it is under a different consideration, for as one thing may break more than one Commandment, so may one thing break one and the same Commandment in various ways by opposing or spoiling different graces and duties.

The Second Commandment

"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy 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 shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments." - Exodus 20:4-5

This commandment is more extensively explained than the previous one, serving to clarify its requirements and emphasize its importance.

The commanding aspect of this commandment can be seen in two parts: Firstly, the prohibition against creating any image, and secondly, the prohibition against worshipping such images.

Furthermore, it is reinforced in three ways: Firstly, through a reasoning, secondly, through a threat, and thirdly, through a promise. The repetition of these words is intended to provide a clearer and more comprehensive understanding of the commandment's intent.

The commandment prohibits the creation of any images for religious purposes. This is evident from the threefold restriction mentioned in the prohibition: Firstly, the prohibition applies to images of anything in the heavens, on the earth, or in the waters below. In other words, the likeness of any creature is not allowed for this purpose.

Secondly, individuals are forbidden from creating any form of image, whether it be engraved or sculpted in stone, wood, silver, etc., or produced through painting. All types of images are prohibited.

Lastly, worship or religious service must not be directed towards these images, whether it is a direct worship of the images themselves or an indirect reverence towards that which they represent. This is indicated in the second part of the commandment, which states that bowing down or serving these images is prohibited. In essence, all forms of external reverence are forbidden. The reason for this is given in the accompanying explanation that God is jealous and will not tolerate idolatry or anything that resembles it, just as a jealous husband will not tolerate any suspicious behavior from his wife.

To better understand the meaning and relevance of this commandment, let us consider its purpose and how it differs from the preceding commandment.

The scope of this Commandment extends beyond the mere prohibition of creating and worshipping images, which represents the most blatant form of misusing the worship of God. It encompasses all aspects of external worship and calls for precision and exactness in accordance with the Lord's prescribed rules. Therefore, this Commandment includes all the external rituals

commanded in the ceremonial law and forbids willful acts of worship and superstition not ordained by God Himself (Isaiah 29:13; Matthew 15:9). In the first Commandment, we are instructed on who is to be worshipped, while in the second, we are instructed on how God is to be worshipped. It is not in the manner that the heathens worshipped their idols, nor in any manner devised by human imagination, but as prescribed by God Himself.

In summary, this Commandment conveys three essential points. Firstly, God desires not only inward service in the heart, consisting of good thoughts and intentions (as prescribed in the first Commandment), but also outward service in confessing Him before others through external acts of worship, words, and appropriate gestures. By prohibiting certain external gestures and acts of worship before idols, it implies the requirement of their contrary affirmatives in all their various forms (according to the first rule mentioned earlier for understanding the Commandments correctly). This includes all ordinances such as the Word, prayer, sacraments, ceremonies, and so on. Failing to engage in these rightly constitutes a violation of this Commandment.

Secondly, it emphasizes that in this external service and worship, individuals should not follow their own preferences but rather adhere to the rules given or to be given by God. Without God's command, any worship offered is in vain (Matthew 15:9). Hence, the statement "Thou shalt not make to thyself" signifies that worship should not be according to personal inclinations, but rather in accordance with God's commands. This applies not only to the acts of worship but also to the manner in which worship is conducted. All must be done solely according to God's commandments.

Lastly, this Commandment emphasizes the need for a spiritual service to God. It requires us to approach worship with a spiritual mindset, devoid of any carnal conceptions of God, as if He could be likened to anything we can imagine (Acts 17:29). This is further illustrated in Deuteronomy 4:15 and other passages. Additionally, all

recklessness and carnality in external performances are prohibited under the prohibition of idolatrous images.

Therefore, in light of these three points, we can summarize the essence of this Commandment and distinguish it from the previous one. The distinction can be further elucidated through the following reasons:

1. The first reason is that this Commandment pertains to external worship and its regulation. This is evident because the prohibited acts, such as making images and bowing down to them, are external actions. Additionally, these acts are mentioned in the context of God's worship, as they are placed in the first table of the Law. The mention of images specifically highlights their use in the worship practices of the pagans (Leviticus 26:1), which God does not want His people to engage in (Deuteronomy 12:3-5). Moreover, the inclusion of images represents a broader category of abuses in external worship, as adultery encompasses all forms of uncleanness in the seventh Commandment. Thus, this Commandment condemns all forms of false worship and the various ways in which external worship can be distorted.
2. The second reason is that making and worshipping images are just one aspect of the broader issue of misusing external worship. It serves to demonstrate how God views any addition or alteration to His prescribed worship as a grave and heinous sin (Deuteronomy 4:23-25). This gross form of idolatry highlights the seriousness with which God regards any deviation from His Word. It is also worth noting that the nations, particularly Egypt, practiced such forms of worship, and it is a natural inclination of mankind, as evidenced by the practices of various nations (Romans 1:25) and the Israelites' worship of the golden calf (Exodus 32:1-7) and Jeroboam's establishment of false worship (1 Kings 12:28). However, the Lord insists on

being worshipped according to His commands (Deuteronomy 12:4) and not according to human desires.

By considering these reasons, we can grasp the essence of this Commandment and understand how it differs from the preceding one.

Another reason to support this interpretation can be found in the perfection of the Law, which condemns all sin and commands all duties. It is not only sinful to worship false gods, but also to worship the true God in a manner contrary to His prescribed way. Conversely, it is a duty to worship Him rightly according to His Word. If these sins are not forbidden in the second Commandment, then they are not forbidden at all. Similarly, if these duties are not commanded in this Commandment, then they are not commanded at all.

To further illustrate the sinfulness of worshipping God in a manner contrary to His commands, we can observe two forms of idolatry condemned in Scripture. The first involves planting groves and making images for idols, which the Israelites often did in their worship of pagan gods. The second form does not involve idols but centers around worshipping the true God in high places and groves, contrary to His commands. This is evident in passages such as 2 Chronicles 33:17 and Deuteronomy 12:2-4. In these verses, both the making of images for false gods (forbidden by the first Commandment) and the adoption of pagan worship practices for the true God (forbidden by the second Commandment) are explicitly condemned. The scope of the second Commandment is thus clarified, emphasizing that the people of Israel were not to serve the Lord as the pagan nations served their gods, but rather as He Himself prescribed.

Based on these considerations, it becomes evident that the second Commandment is distinct from the first. Firstly, it addresses different sins and duties. Secondly, there is a clear count of ten commandments, and this count cannot be achieved if the first two

are considered as one. Thirdly, this distinction is supported by the traditional understanding of the ancient Jews, as documented by Josephus, Ainsworth, and others. With this truth established, we can proceed to address questions related to images, explore what is required and forbidden in this Commandment, and examine how we commonly transgress it in our daily lives. Finally, we will delve into the reasons provided in the accompanying text.

Regarding images, there are two points of inquiry: 1. Whether any images are lawful, and if so, what kind of images are permissible? 2. Whether any use, especially religious use, of images is lawful, and whether any form of adoration should be given to them. Here are our answers:

1. The making of pictures or representations of visible creatures, whether they are natural or historical depictions (symbolic rather than realistic), is not inherently unlawful. For instance, Solomon made images of lions for his use. The skills of engraving and painting, like other gifts given by God, can be employed without abuse. However, there are situations where these images become unlawful when they are abused. This occurs when:
 - The pictures are obscene, indecent, or offensive, thus violating Christian modesty. Such images transgress not only this Commandment but also the seventh Commandment since they corrupt the eyes, just as filthy communication pollutes the ears.
 - Excessive time or expense is devoted to their creation.
 - People become overly fascinated with them, indulging in curiosity and various other abuses.

In particular, if these images are employed for religious purposes, they become unlawful, as we will clarify later.

2. Although the making of images itself is not forbidden by this Commandment, every representation of God (who is the object of worship) and every image used in religious worship are condemned. Civil and political images and statues used as decorations, symbols of honor, or reminders of certain events, for instance, are not condemned. However, religious images that are utilized in worship are prohibited. This is because:

- Such images inevitably give rise to carnal thoughts of God, which goes against this Commandment.
- God revealed Himself in Deuteronomy 4:15-16 and emphasized that He should not be represented by any likeness, but only through His Word. There should be no basis for comparing Him to anything.
- It is impossible to create a bodily likeness of God, who is a Spirit and an infinite Spirit. Therefore, every such image diminishes the glory of the invisible God by reducing Him to the form of a visible and corruptible creature. This is condemned in Romans 1:22-23, as every image implies some likeness. However, there can be no conceivable or imaginable likeness between God and anything we can devise.
- In Isaiah 40:8, the Lord asks, "To whom then will you liken God, or what likeness compare with him?" It appears that they were attempting to represent God by their images, which is the fault being condemned in the subsequent verses. Likewise, when we cannot properly conceive God and the mysteries of the Trinity and the Incarnation, it would be presumptuous to paint them.

In summary, the second Commandment prohibits the use of images in the worship of God, particularly those that aim to represent Him. While the creation of images itself may not be forbidden, any religious use of images is condemned due to the inherent limitations and misconceptions they entail.

Based on these grounds, we condemn the depiction of God, the Godhead, or the Trinity in any form. This includes images found on buildings or books, such as a sun with beams and the name of the Lord, Jehovah, within it, or any other representation. Such depictions are abominable to see and greatly diminish the majesty of God.

We also reject any representation of the Persons of the Trinity as distinct entities, such as portraying the Father as an old man, the Son as a lamb or young man, or the Holy Spirit as a dove. These representations severely diminish the glory of the Godhead. Although the Son is both God and man, having taken on human nature and united it with His divinity, He is not merely a human being. Therefore, an image that solely depicts one nature and resembles any ordinary man cannot accurately represent the Person who is both God and man.

If it is argued that while a person's soul cannot be painted, their body can be, and that picture still represents a person, we respond by noting that this is true because a person possesses only one nature. Whatever represents that nature represents the person. However, with Christ, His divinity is not a distinct part of His humanity, as a person's soul is necessarily present in every living individual. Rather, His divinity is a distinct nature, united with His humanity in the one person of Christ, who has no equal. Therefore, any representation of Him should not depict only a man, but should represent Christ, Immanuel, God-man. Otherwise, it is not His true image. Moreover, there is no biblical warrant for representing Him in His humanity, nor is there any credible means of doing so except through human imagination. Should such an image be considered Christ's portrait? Would any other person's portrait be deemed authentic if it were drawn at the whim of individuals, without regard for accuracy? Furthermore, there is no valid purpose for it. Either the image would be treated with the same common estimation as other images, which would diminish Christ, or it would be accorded a distinct reverence, thereby violating this Commandment, which prohibits any religious

veneration of images. Considering that Christ is God and the rightful object of worship, we must either divide His natures or acknowledge that such an image or picture does not truly represent Christ.

In response to possible objections regarding instances where the Lord appeared in the likeness of a man or the Holy Spirit descended as a dove or as cloven tongues of fire, it can be noted:

1. There is a significant distinction between a sign of the Spirit's presence and a representation of the Spirit.
2. There is also a distinction between what represents the Spirit as one of the Persons of the blessed Trinity and what resembles a particular gift of the Spirit. The image of a dove descending upon Christ signified the Spirit taking up residence in Him and equipping Him with gifts and graces, including holy simplicity and boundless meekness. Likewise, the appearance of cloven tongues of fire indicated the Spirit's impartation of the gift of tongues to the Apostles.
3. However, there is no biblical warrant for depicting the Spirit in these forms or for considering every living dove as representing Him. Similarly, there is no justification for drawing God in such likenesses, as they were temporary manifestations designed to provide visible indications of God's presence. These physical forms were assumed for a limited time as a precursor and foretaste of the Son's incarnation.

Moreover, it may be argued that painting angels could also be condemned since they are spiritual beings that cannot be accurately represented by anything physical. In addition, attempting to portray angels carries inherent risks. The cherubim mentioned in the Old Testament, made under God's direction, were likely symbolic representations of the nature and service of angels, illustrating their zeal and constant readiness to obey God's will, rather than literal depictions of their appearance. It is difficult to conceive of

representations of spirits, whether good or evil, without misrepresenting their true nature. While angels are finite spirits, and representing them poses a different kind of challenge and impossibility compared to representing God, who is an infinite Spirit, there are still difficulties in capturing their essence visually. Some suggest that the cherubim mentioned in the Bible did not represent the nature of angels per se, but rather depicted angels appearing in visible forms. In Ezekiel 1, various shapes are used to signify their readiness and suitability for service, rather than their inherent nature.

3. We assert that no image whatsoever, when used for religious purposes and beyond civil and secular contexts, is permissible. Such images are condemned by this commandment as they are incompatible with the nature of the Lord and His revealed will. When images, which may otherwise be lawful, are abused for idolatry, they become unlawful and should be orderly removed. We consider it more than a matter of civil or ordinary usage when there is a deliberate intention to offer religious worship or reverence to images, or when there is a risk of them being idolatrously abused. Some examples of such dangerous usage include images placed in places of worship, although having deceased individuals' images on their tombs or monuments in churches does not constitute idolatry. Images of angels, saints, and others can also be subject to idolatrous abuse if they are worshipped or have a high likelihood of being worshipped. Likewise, images erected with the purpose of aiding the acceptance of prayers and accompanied by altars, lights, or temples (which will be further clarified when we discuss religious worship and bowing) fall into this category. Pilgrimages and vows made to images, as well as touching them with an expectation of receiving fruit or advantage, particularly when healing is anticipated, also amount to abuse. Even if the help is believed to come not from the image itself but from the one it is claimed to represent, it is still a misuse. Additionally, when an image that was once lawful becomes abused, it should

be removed, just as King Hezekiah did with the bronze serpent. Lastly, images of false gods, such as Cupid, Venus, Apollo, Jupiter, and others that were previously worshipped, are included in this prohibition. Some of these idols are mere figments, but portraying them gives them the appearance of substance. Considering that the Lord commanded the breaking and destruction of all idols and images of false gods, it would be inappropriate to retain them as a means of remembrance, as it could provide future generations with an opportunity to engage in idolatry by having images of old idols in Christian circles. Moreover, if David and the saints found it necessary, as expressed in Psalm 16:4, to mention the names of idols with detestation, should God's people then look upon these images for mere amusement or pleasure? Zeal for God would abhor such curiosity, as they offer no edification.

Now, we turn to address the second question: Is any worship permissible, and what form of worship is due to images of any kind? Does giving any form of religious worship to them violate this commandment? We shall provide an answer to these inquiries.

1. It is important to note that there were two distinct forms of worshipping images even among the Heathens. The first form was more explicit, wherein the worship was offered directly to the image itself, as if it possessed some inherent divinity. This can be observed in the worship of idols like Baal and Asheroth, as well as specific images that were assigned special names. In this case, individuals were truly worshipping the works of their own hands, which directly violates the first commandment. The second form of worshipping images involved treating them as representations of God, wherein the worship was performed as a part of the service rendered to the true God. This form of worship was influenced by the practices of the Heathens, as seen in the worship of the golden calf (Exodus 32:1-7) and the offering of sacrifices in high places (2 Chronicles 32:17).

Furthermore, it is important to distinguish between direct worship of images as idols, wherein the images themselves or their own existence are worshipped, and indirect worship of images for what they represent, wherein individuals worship something associated with or symbolized by the images.

This distinction can also be made with respect to the object of worship, whether it is directed towards a false god or towards the true God.

2. Additionally, there are various forms of worship given to images of the true God or of saints. Firstly, there is a religious worship that exceeds the bounds of civil worship, yet falls short of the worship due to God alone. This type of worship, properly termed "latria" by Bellarmine, is given directly to the images themselves. Secondly, there is a divine worship offered to what is represented by the images. Many individuals bestow this worship upon images of God and Christ, which is referred to as "dulia." Bellarmine does not consider this form of worship to be proper or inherent to the images themselves, but rather describes it as accidental and subordinate to other purposes. However, Aquinas and his followers, particularly in Part 3, Question 25, regard images of Christ, Mary, and the Cross as deserving of "dulia" properly understood.
3. It is important to distinguish religious worship from civil and political worship. Religious worship differs from civil respect or honor given to living individuals or even images of kings or beloved figures, which is not considered worship in a strict sense. Religious worship involves specific considerations tied to religious beliefs. It can be distinguished from civil worship by several factors. Firstly, it depends on the object of worship. If the worship is directed towards something that falls under a religious category rather than a civil one, such as bowing to an image of a saint, a sacrament, or similar objects that do not warrant civil honor, then it is a different form of worship.

Secondly, the actions involved in religious worship, such as prayer, worshipping God, or engaging in sacrificial acts, are distinct from actions performed in a historical or civil context, such as relating a story or conducting everyday affairs like tying one's shoelaces. Lastly, the specific type of worship associated with idols or religious services to God, which is not suitable for any civil context, includes actions like bowing the knee, uncovering the head, praying, building temples and altars, making vows before them, swearing by them, carrying them for supposed religious influence, setting up lights around them, sacrificing, burning incense, and more.

4. It is worth noting that the principles discussed regarding images can be applied to all creatures and objects to which divine honor or religious worship in the service of God is attributed. If one form of worship is condemned, then all would be considered a violation of this commandment. Examples include the worship of angels or saints as mediators and helpers in our service to God, the adoration of relics of martyrs such as bones, dust, and clothing, and especially the divine worship given to the cross as the instrument of Christ's suffering, which includes offering divine sacrifices and the highest form of worship. Additionally, the adoration of objects used in worship such as temples, altars, bread in the sacraments, Agnus Dei, masses, and the images of God, Christ, saints, angels, and the cross is mentioned. These objects are claimed to be worshipped in relation to the true God, without derogating from His service.

To further clarify this matter, we must address a question that naturally arises: Is worshipping these mentioned objects, whether directly or indirectly, for themselves or for things they represent or signify, even when individuals claim that the worship is ultimately directed towards the honor of the true God, still considered idolatry and a violation of this commandment?

In addressing this question, we will clarify two important points. First, there can indeed be idolatry committed with images and means used in God's worship, even when those images are not considered to be gods themselves, but rather representations of God. This applies even when these worship aids are employed in the service of the true God. Second, we will emphasize that all such worship, being idolatrous, is prohibited by this commandment, regardless of any distinctions made regarding its nature. Whether the worship is more overt or subtle, it remains forbidden when performed as religious service.

Now, let us establish that idolatry occurs when people do not focus solely on the images themselves, but instead direct their worship to the God being represented by those images. This can be understood through various means.

Firstly, we can observe this in the practices of the ancient pagans. While not all of them considered their images to be actual deities, they regarded them as representations of their gods. We can find support for this in Romans 1:22-23, which states that they knew God, yet turned His incorruptible glory into the likeness of corruptible creatures such as beasts and humans. Their error lies not in considering these images themselves as gods, but rather in deviating from the worship of the true God by employing such images.

Secondly, we can see evidence of this in the frequent replacement of their images while retaining their previous gods. They would create multiple images of the same deity, often with different forms, yet ascribe them a unified identity. For instance, when it is mentioned that Solomon and other kings erected images for Asherah and Baal, it is unlikely that they believed these images to be the actual gods themselves. Instead, they were intended as symbols of honour (2 Kings 23:13). Similarly, when Manasseh fashioned chariots for the sun, he did not consider them to be the sun itself (2 Kings 23:11). Moreover, it was commonly acknowledged that Jupiter resided in heaven (Acts 19:39), and the image associated with him was

understood to represent him, rather than being the god himself. The same can be said for the fabricated goddess Diana.

By considering these points, we can discern that idolatry can occur even when people do not worship the images themselves, but instead direct their worship towards the God represented by those images. This is a crucial aspect to bear in mind when discussing the worship of images in relation to this commandment.

This can be further supported by the confessions and arguments of the heathens themselves when they were accused of worshipping the works of their own hands. They would often claim that they were worshipping the divine presence or spirit residing within the image, asserting that they did not worship the image itself or any devil. Some even contended that they used physical representations as visible signs to guide their worship. Additionally, when Christians challenged them by pointing out that what their images represented were not the true God but mere creatures (such as the sea represented by Neptune or fire represented by Vulcan), the heathens would respond that they worshipped the gods who governed those elements, not the physical bodies themselves. Augustine discusses this in relation to the idols of the Gentiles in his works, such as Psalm 113 (115) and City of God, Book 7, Chapter 5. He cites Varro's reasoning that the gods were portrayed in human form because the soul of man is a spirit that closely resembles them, and the body serves as its vessel, hence its representation. References to Chrysostom's First Homily on Ephesians, Homily 18, and Andrew's commentary on the Second Commandment can also be found. (See Augustine, Psalm 96 [97] (nobis)).

Furthermore, it becomes evident that the majority of the heathen gods, including the widely worshipped ones, were actually famous individuals who were deified after death. The statues and images made in their honor were intended as a tribute to these individuals, although the heathens believed that their gods resided in a special manner within these images and communicated through them.

Another piece of evidence can be found in the commandment in Deuteronomy 12:31, where the Lord not only prohibits the worship of idols but also specifically warns against worshipping Him through images. He instructs the people, "You shall not worship the Lord your God in that way." This implies that even if they claimed to be worshipping God and not idols, it was still a grave transgression because they were not truly worshipping Him but rather the idol.

These points collectively demonstrate that idolatry can occur with images and means used in worship, even when worshippers claim that they are directing their worship to the true God rather than the images themselves. This is a significant violation of the commandment, as it is not merely about the physical objects being worshipped, but rather the distortion of true worship and the substitution of God with idols.

We can further clarify that the true God may be worshipped (by idolaters) as they claim, but in the eyes of God, their worship is nothing but idolatry committed with their images.

We can provide four instances to illustrate this. The first instance is from Exodus 32, where it becomes evident that: 1. The image they erected was not acknowledged as God itself, but rather as something representing the true God. This can be deduced from the fact that they could not have so quickly forgotten what God had done and mistakenly believed that the newly crafted object was God. Their sin of forgetting God was practical rather than a complete mental lapse. 2. The image is referred to as Jehovah, the one who brought them out of Egypt, a mercy that had already occurred prior to the existence of the calf. Therefore, the reason for giving it this name must have been their intention to depict Jehovah through it. 3. It is unlikely that they would suddenly worship the gods of Egypt or attribute their deliverance from Egypt to them, especially considering that these gods had also been subject to plagues. It is inconceivable that Aaron would participate in this transgression if it involved such actions. 4. Can it be believed that they immediately considered it to be God,

only to easily abandon this belief afterwards? The words "That it may go before us" imply that they viewed it solely as a representation of Jehovah, not as a deity in itself.

The second instance demonstrates that they offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before this image. These offerings were the same acts of worship that were to be presented to the Lord, as stated in Exodus 32:5. Therefore, their sacrifices were directed towards the Lord, not the image itself.

The third instance involves the accusation that they had turned away from the right path due to their creation of a molten image. This implies that their guilt lay more in the manner of worship and the construction of the image for worship rather than completely forsaking God. They greatly erred in the manner in which they worshipped Him due to Moses' absence. They lacked the sign of God's presence they had previously experienced, and without such visible interaction with God, they felt a void. This lack of a visible sign (rather than a lack of God Himself) is what they attempted to address by creating the image.

This can be further supported by Acts 7:40-42, where it is stated that they fell into gross idolatry as a consequence of this sin. This would not have been possible if their idolatry had been of a cruder form.

The second instance comes from Judges 17, where we find that the idol made by Micah is not regarded by him or his mother as a god. Instead, they believe it will aid them in God's service. This is evident from several factors: 1. The idol is not attributed to any foreign god. 2. Micah seeks a Levite to serve as a priest for the idol and expects God's blessing through this arrangement, not the idol's blessings, as mentioned in verse 13. 3. It is stated that the priest sought counsel from the Lord on behalf of the Danites in Judges 18:6.

The third instance is that of Jeroboam, who sinned and led Israel into sin by setting up the golden calves at Dan and Bethel. These

calves were not intended to be worshipped as idols in themselves but as means to help the people worship the true God. This is evident from several points: 1. Jeroboam's motive was not to turn the people away from the true God, but to change their manner of worship and prevent them from going up to Jerusalem to worship, which he feared would lead to their allegiance to Rehoboam. The golden calves were meant to replace their pilgrimage to Jerusalem, as his reasoning for this alteration indicates. Thus, one form of worship was substituted for another without changing their God. The reproofs he receives from the prophets focus on his alteration of the manner of worship by introducing new symbols, locations, sacrifices, and priests. 2. The worship instituted by Jeroboam differed from the practices of Judah as well as from the ways of the pagans. Even idolatrous kings like Ahab, who are condemned for setting up foreign gods and Baal worship, are considered worse, implying a distinction between worshipping the true God through these images and worshipping actual idols. When Jehu destroyed the false gods, he retained this form of worship. There would be no reason to distinguish Jeroboam's sin from Ahab's or consider it any lesser if the only difference was in replacing the worship of one idol with the worship of another idol. The difference lies in the fact that one worshipped the true God through these images, while the other worshipped false gods. 3. This indicates that there was still some knowledge of God in the land, and the Lord occasionally sent prophets to them. Even when they were led into captivity and replaced by others, it is stated in 2 Kings 17:26 and onwards that they learned the ways of the god of the land, referring to the true God, although they also corrupted themselves by serving idols. This is reminiscent of the Samaritans who continued to worship without true understanding, although they claimed to worship the true God (John 4:22).

The fourth instance is the corrupt practice of setting up high places and groves in Judah. Although they did not intend to serve idols, they were reproofed for corrupting the worship of God through these practices.

It is evident that in Judah, and even more frequently in Israel, there were instances where they were charged with idolatry, yet the knowledge of the true God was not completely lost among them. They were not as brutish in their worship as the surrounding nations. Therefore, it can be concluded that they often worshipped the true God through images, without directly worshipping the images themselves.

The second point, that all worship of God through images, even if it is claimed to be directed towards the true God and not the image, is still unlawful and constitutes idolatry, forbidden by this commandment, can be supported by the following arguments.

Firstly, it aligns with the overall purpose of this commandment, which is not only to prevent the overthrow of God's service but also to prohibit all forms of will worship, even when mixed with the service. Colossians 2:8 mentions the worship of angels as an example of such subtle will worship, where they pretended to not detract anything that was due to God. Deuteronomy 12:8 clearly states that in God's worship, one should not do what seems good in their own eyes. Worshipping God before images falls under the category of will worship unless it can be demonstrated that it is prescribed by God.

Secondly, this mode of worship is explicitly condemned within the specific scope of this commandment. Its primary purpose is to reject any crude conceptions of God or His service. Just as God cannot be confined to temples, He cannot be worshipped through the works of human hands, such as images, as mentioned in Acts 17:24-25. The Athenians ignorantly worshipped the true God through their idols. Furthermore, this commandment aims to emphasize that God should not be worshipped in the same manner as idolaters worship their gods through images, as stated in Deuteronomy 4:22-32. This obliges us to adhere to the Word in all instituted worship and specifically restrains us from following the ways of idolaters. The commandment states, "You shall not do so to the Lord your God." It is important to note that the term "so" used in verse 4 relates to

groves, images, high places, and so on mentioned in verse 3. This passage not only prohibits the worship of idols but also the rendering of any such worship to God Himself, who rejects such worship. If it is evident that worshipping Him through groves and high places is condemned, then why not worshipping Him through images? The prohibition in this commandment extends to all.

Thirdly, this commandment has a general prohibition that encompasses all images, whether of God, saints, or anything else, for any religious use in any form. It forbids the creation of any image for religious purposes and prohibits all worship directed towards them, including outward acts of bowing or inward acts of service, or anything that follows from these. Therefore, no distinction made by idolaters can mitigate the matter or weaken the force of this commandment, especially considering that it provides guidance on how to worship the true God and does not simply prescribe who should be recognized as the true God, as addressed in the first commandment.

Fourthly, if heathen idolatry or the worship of God through images is condemned by this commandment, then the worship of God through images among Christians is likewise condemned. Since the worship of God through images by the heathens is condemned here, the argument holds. If heathens, who worshipped, for example, Jupiter and Vulcan and their images made of gold and silver, were considered idolaters not only for worshipping these deities and idols but also for worshipping gold, silver, and the images themselves used to represent them, then Christians must also be considered guilty of idolatry not only for worshipping what is represented by those images but also for the images themselves. The reasoning applies equally to both cases. If their exception, that they do not worship the images themselves but what is represented, does not absolve them from being found guilty of worshipping those specific images, then Christians cannot be exempted from guilt based on the same plea. "A consequence holds universally."

Fifth Argument: If the idolatry committed by the Israelites in the wilderness (Exodus 32), the idolatry set up in Israel by Jeroboam, and the idolatry of Manasseh (2 Chronicles 33) are to be condemned as idolatry, then the practices among the Papists in worshipping their images and God through them are also to be condemned as idolatry. The former instances are explicitly condemned in Scripture as gross idolatry because they deviate from the prescribed way of worship and lead God's people to engage in idolatrous practices. Therefore, the latter should also be condemned as idolatry.

The Papists have no valid exception to this argument, as similar exceptions could have been given by the Israelites.

1. If they claim that they did not worship the true God before these images, that has already been addressed.
2. If they argue that it was condemned because these images represented God, that is insufficient. Firstly, the commandment prohibits all images of anything. Secondly, the contrast mentioned in Deuteronomy 4, "You saw no likeness or image, but heard a voice," applies universally and argues against all such practices. Therefore, these images, mentioned in Psalm 115, which have noses and mouths but cannot smell or speak, are condemned just as those mentioned in Romans 1.
3. If they contend that it was unlawful then but is lawful now, they would be implying that the Gospel allows for more carnal ordinances than the Law, whereas the service of the Gospel is undoubtedly more spiritual.

From all this, we can clearly conclude that in such worship, there is a twofold idolatry being committed. Firstly, due to the supposed holiness and veneration attributed to these images and relics, religious worship (though inferior to that given to God) is directed towards them in and of themselves, as decreed in the Second Council of Nicaea. Secondly, they claim to worship the true God through such

worship, albeit in an idolatrous manner that is prohibited by Him. Additionally, Aquinas and his followers assert that the images of God, Christ, Mary, and the Cross are worthy of adoration themselves. This is not in line with sound reason and becomes a snare to those who worship them and a stumbling block to others. As Augustine argues against the expressions used by the heathens, referring to Psalm 113 and the Apostle's words in Romans 1 (after rejecting their images, interpretations, and excuses), he states that anyone who worships and prays towards an image is an idolater. For who, he asks, worships and prays towards an image without regarding it as if it can hear?

To summarize, the idolatry that goes against this commandment can be identified in the following aspects:

1. When the Godhead is misrepresented or distorted through visible signs, representations, or images, thus making God comparable to them. This is explicitly condemned in Deuteronomy 4:15-17, where any image created to represent the true God is deemed inappropriate.
2. When our worship is tied to a specific place, image, statue, or relic, as if they possess a greater divinity or a unique connection to God. This includes the belief that God hears prayers better at or through images or that there is a special presence of God or dispensation of grace associated with them. This parallels the belief of the ancient pagans who thought their gods dwelled invisibly in their images and responded to them there. The notion that something has inherent veneration and deserving of such respect is the foundation of all idolatry. The inward inclination and reliance on such objects is contrary to the first commandment, while the outward expression of this esteem and trust violates the second commandment. Examples include praying to rational creatures like angels and saints or to lifeless objects like empty images lacking divine presence or to inanimate objects like the cross or bread.

3. Idolatry occurs when idolatrous worship intended for idols is directed towards God in disobedience to His commandments. Deuteronomy 12:30-31 states, "You shall not worship the Lord your God in that way." Similarly, the keeping of groves for the worship of God and Jeroboam's invention of the golden calves are condemned as idolatry in 2 Chronicles 33:17.
4. When any aspect of external worship that is rightfully due to the true God is given, even partially, to something or someone else. This includes acts of worship offered to the cross, saints, images, etc., even if the intention is not to completely exclude God. This is referred to as the worship of those objects. The incident described in Exodus 32, compared with Psalm 106:19-20, demonstrates this, as they worshipped the golden calf while intending to worship God through it.

In summary, any act of idolatry involves misrepresenting God, giving worship to objects or creatures instead of God, offering idolatrous worship to God, or diverting rightful worship from God to other entities.

5. When any aspect of worship that is due to God is attributed to servants or intermediaries, as if they possessed some divine adoration and should be worshipped, even though they are not considered to be God Himself: This can be seen in the case of Cornelius worshipping Peter, as described in Acts 10:25-26. Cornelius, knowing that Peter was not God, worshipped him, and Peter rejected this reverence by asserting that he was merely a man and not God, and therefore worship was due to God alone. This reasoning dismisses any attempts to justify or excuse this type of idolatry. Considering the scope and the underlying reasons for worship, it becomes evident that all such practices are forms of idolatry.

Now, let us further consider the positive aspect of this Commandment, as well as what is forbidden within it.

Firstly, regarding the positive aspect of this Commandment, we believe that it extends to all external practices, including doctrine, worship, government, and discipline. We are commanded to maintain the purity of these aspects according to God's Word. Therefore, any deviation or error in these matters, when openly expressed or made public, violates this Commandment, just as secret errors infringe upon the first Commandment.

Secondly, it applies to all external acts of obedience, such as embracing the truths of God, submitting to the governance and discipline within His Church, becoming members of the Church, regularly attending and actively participating in the Word, not only on the Sabbath day as required by the fourth Commandment but also on all occasions whenever the opportunity arises. This includes the appropriate observance of the sacraments and the worthy reception of them, engaging in outward prayer (while recognizing that internal prayer is required by the first Commandment), confessing sins when necessary, proclaiming the truth during times of trial, and so forth. This obedience extends to both ordinary and extraordinary duties, such as making vows, taking oaths, fasting, and other practices as required by God's providence. It also encompasses external covenanting with God, which is an essential ordinance for maintaining the purity of public worship, as well as the performance of secret and private duties within families and Christian fellowship. Diligence in all these areas is vital.

Thirdly, it pertains to the right manner of performing these duties, emphasizing several key aspects. Firstly, they should not be carried out in hypocrisy, as God does not accept such insincere worship. Secondly, all our worship and duties should be directed to God through the mediator, understanding that we can approach God only through the appointed High Priest, Jesus Christ. Thirdly, our obedience and service should be characterized by a spiritual disposition.

Fourthly, it includes all external gestures and outward reverence in praying and hearing, such as fixing the gaze, maintaining a serious and dignified posture, avoiding laughter, and having a composed and respectful countenance. These aspects, particularly in worship, should be carefully observed.

Fifthly, it requires the promotion of any means that can enhance God's public service, such as educating and training individuals for the ministry, providing support and facilities for public worship, and all other necessary elements without which external worship cannot be carried out.

Sixthly, it demands the removal of any hindrances or obstacles to God's worship, or anything that is contrary to it, according to our positions and roles. This includes the appropriate condemnation of heresies and heretics, eliminating all forms of idolatrous worship, and addressing anything that could be used as a pretext for idolatry or has been abused for such purposes. It also entails purging the Church of corrupt and inadequate ministers and members.

Now, let us consider what is forbidden in this Commandment and how it is violated.

In the first place, just as the first Commandment directly concerns God Himself, this Commandment prohibits anything that directly contradicts His ordinances and appointments. Despite the frequent violation of this Commandment, people often believe they have not transgressed it. However, it is indeed violated:

1. In terms of doctrine or teaching.
2. In terms of practice.
3. In both doctrine and practice when false doctrines are disseminated, leading to corresponding external practices. This is exemplified by the doctrine of image-worship, which we have

already discussed, and represents a gross violation of this Commandment. The Lord identifies it as the most significant breach because it encompasses all forms of idolatry. It presupposes a violation of the first Commandment, as it involves attributing excessive significance and reverence to the creature being worshipped, as if it possessed divine qualities or the ability to provide assistance. Consequently, it leads to the external worship offered to it based on such beliefs. This form of idolatry is evident among Catholics, particularly when prayers are directed towards saints, relics, bread, the Cross, images, and other objects.

Now, let us further elaborate on the ways in which this Commandment is doctrinally violated, as these violations greatly influence how people break it in their practice. The service and worship of God are wronged by human doctrines in three main ways:

Firstly, when something is added to God's service that He has not commanded. This constitutes superstition and will-worship. Examples include the addition of five Popish sacraments to the two appointed by the Lord, the belief in additional mediators apart from the one Mediator, Christ, the acceptance of more meritorious causes of pardon and justification than the blood and merits of Christ, the establishment of unauthorized officers in His house such as bishops and cardinals, the introduction of extra ceremonies in worship (e.g., the inclusion of salt, spittle, and cream in baptism, and kneeling in the Lord's Supper), the establishment of additional holy days beyond those instituted by God, the recognition of other sources as the Word of God alongside Scripture, such as traditions and apocryphal writings. Popery, for the most part, consists of such additions.

Secondly, this Commandment is violated when God's ordinances are diminished, and elements He has commanded are taken away from them. This is evident in Deuteronomy 4:2, which prohibits adding to or diminishing from God's word. Examples of this violation include the withholding of the cup from the laity in the Lord's Supper,

depriving the people of access to the Bible in their own language, denying baptism to infants, removing discipline or excommunication from the church, abolishing the observance of the Sabbath and the public singing of psalms. We should also mention the blasphemous and somewhat pagan heresy of Quakerism, which overturns most, if not all, of God's ordinances, undermines true religion and Christianity, and has a tendency to reintroduce ancient paganism and barbarity.

Thirdly, this Commandment is broken through the corruption of God's worship. This occurs when the Word of God is misinterpreted and misapplied, prayers are offered in unfamiliar languages, the Word is mixed with errors, the Church lacks discipline and is misused in civil matters, which ultimately leads to the corruption of God's service. It also happens when unqualified individuals are appointed and retained in the ministry, when sacraments are relied upon and worshipped, similar to the abuse of the Brazen Serpent in the Old Testament, or when the Temple, originally ordained by God for noble purposes, is later idolized and misused.

Practically, this Commandment is broken in four ways:

Firstly, through gross profanity and neglect of the performance of known duties of worship. Those who contemptuously reject the sacraments, the Word, discipline, and other aspects of worship are guilty of this offense. It includes those who neglect these duties when they have the opportunity to engage in them, as well as those who do not approach them with the right spirit, whether in private, in their families, or in public. In places where there are abundant Gospel ordinances, this sin becomes even more prevalent. Additionally, atheists who disdain religion, those who claim to serve God solely with good intentions and inward devotion without any outward worship, are condemned. Furthermore, those who fail to testify to the truth and ordinances of Christ out of fear or personal advantage are also in violation of this Commandment.

Secondly, people sin against this Commandment by practicing will-worship and superstition in their service to God, engaging in duties that He has not required. This includes two aspects: 1. Will-worship in terms of the service itself, where actions that are not inherently lawful are performed as if they were duties to God. Examples of this include prescribed pilgrimages and penances. 2. Worship or service under the Gospel being restricted to a particular place, as if it were holier to pray in one place than another, assuming that God more willingly and readily hears prayer in one place over another. It also applies to bodily posture, suggesting that there is more religious significance in one posture compared to another, such as insisting on kneeling during the reception of the Lord's Supper or praying in a specific posture, unless such postures are guided by decency and prudential considerations. Furthermore, observing specific times, such as Christmas, Easter, and other occasions like these (commonly referred to as Yule or Paschal), without a divine warrant is considered an observance of times that God has not appointed.

Additionally, this Commandment is broken when it is tied to a specific occasion or incidental event. For example, praying when the clock strikes or when someone sneezes, as observed by Plinius regarding Tiberius, who was not a religious man but insisted on others lifting their hats and saying, "God bless you" when they sneezed, without any reasonable explanation. The act of prayer itself is commendable, but tying it exclusively to such occurrences is superstitious. Similarly, practices like Lightwakes and Dirges (as they are called), whether viewed as superstitious, profane, or at best as relics and causes of both, are to be condemned. In the times of Papal darkness, they were commonly misused or rather abused. Why should visits be limited to specific times rather than others? Such visits do not benefit the deceased, and they can be burdensome for the person being visited, especially when too many people gather, making it difficult to offer comfort or instruction. It cannot be considered a mere social visit since it is tied to a particular occasion. Certainly, such practices do not align with a Christian attitude towards the departed. Moreover, engaging in activities together after

the burial of the dead in the manner commonly practiced is superstitious. For instance, the tradition of giving and receiving gifts on New Year's Day, though prevalent among Christians, is a heathen custom. Gratian noted that in his time, Christians who observed it were excommunicated. Alcuinus and others wrote that the entire Catholic Church once appointed a solemn public fast to be observed on New Year's Day to lament the pagan interludes, sports, and lewd idolatrous practices associated with it. Other ways in which this Commandment is violated include placing undue emphasis on the number of words or repetitive prayers such as Ave Marias or Pater Nosters, or reading a specific number of chapters or saying a specific number of prayers. It is also improper when individuals select a particular word from Scripture upon opening the Bible or through a suggested thought, believing it to be more relevant to their situation without carefully considering the context of the passage. This is akin to treating the Book of God as a fortune-telling book, a purpose for which it was never intended. Similarly, people err when they consider sacraments more valid or attach greater importance to them when administered by certain ministers compared to others, even if both have the same authorization or because of the individuals partaking in them. Although some of these practices may be good in themselves, they are misused due to unwarranted timing or ascribing excessive significance to them beyond what is warranted by the Word of God. This alters the prescribed way established by God, leads to the preferential treatment of certain circumstances without justification, and creates a sense of necessity where God has given us freedom, thereby ensnaring us in bondage.

Furthermore, we can go astray in the performance of lawful duties in various ways, particularly in the manner in which we carry them out. For instance, when we fail to set the right end before us, when our motives are not aligned with the proper inward principle, or when we engage in hypocrisy and formality, relying on the outward performance alone. These shortcomings can be present in all duties and ordinances. In general, any deviation from the prescribed

manner of performing commanded duties is a violation of this Commandment.

Fourthly, we should also consider the violation of this Commandment by examining what is contrary to everything that is required. The lack of reverence in worship, the absence of zeal against false worship, and the failure to make every lawful effort to uphold and promote the true worship of God are all forbidden here. Likewise, the appointment and retention of unworthy ministers, the defamation, rejection, and removal of faithful individuals, the withholding or diminishing of their support—all these are grievous sins, though often overlooked and trivialized by people. Yet, before God, they bear significant consequences, hindering the free proclamation of the Gospel and obstructing the reconciliation between God and sinners, which faithful ministers, as ambassadors of Jesus Christ, strive to accomplish. By disregarding and discrediting these ministers, who are instrumental in bringing about salvation to the satisfaction of Christ's soul, individuals impede the fruitful outcome of their labor. Sacrilege, simony, and similar transgressions also fall within the scope of breaking this Commandment. Moreover, any partiality in church proceedings, the toleration of errors, the endorsement of their propagators, the neglect of discipline, unnecessary and unwarranted association with excommunicated individuals, and any unwarranted innovations in the external worship of God—all these constitute breaches of this Commandment. Furthermore, when we fail to aim and endeavor to bring our children, servants, and all those under our care into subjection and conformity to the ordinances and service of God, we violate this Commandment.

However, because this Commandment particularly pertains to public ordinances, let us now explore in more detail how it is broken within these contexts: 1. Regarding preaching and hearing. 2. Public prayer. 3. Praise. 4. Sacraments. 5. Fasting. In each of these areas, faults can be categorized into three types: those preceding the performance of

these duties, those following afterward, and those occurring during their execution.

Moreover, some individuals are guilty of breaking this Commandment by neglecting these duties, while others transgress by approaching them in the wrong manner.

Firstly, before hearing the Word, people violate this Commandment in several ways: 1. By neglecting to pray for the speaker. 2. By failing to pray for themselves, specifically in relation to benefiting from the Word. 3. By not preparing themselves spiritually and maintaining a composed frame of mind for such a task. 4. By not vigilantly preventing distractions or concerns that may divert their attention or narrow their focus when they come to hear the Word, and by not organizing their other affairs in a manner that avoids hindrances to receiving the blessings of the Gospel. 5. By not having a proper esteem for the Word. 6. By neglecting to express gratitude to God for the Word and any previous spiritual benefits received through it. 7. By not approaching the Word with a hunger and thirst, like newborn babies, putting aside anything that might hinder their desire to receive it (2 Peter 2:1-2). 8. By not acknowledging their own weakness in fulfilling this duty and therefore not relying on Christ. 9. By not recognizing that when they are called to hear, it is to meet with God in His ordinances. 10. By attending with prejudice. 11. By coming without an expectation and longing for the presence of God or an encounter with Him. 12. By not coming out of reverence for the honor of God or from a sense of duty, but merely out of habit or to conform to societal expectations.

Secondly, individuals sin against this Commandment when they are present at the act of hearing and during the duty of hearing itself. They commit these sins:

1. By not regarding the Word as God's Word, but as the word of man.

2. By allowing their minds to wander and be distracted during the preaching.
3. By falling asleep instead of attentively listening.
4. By failing to retain and meditate upon what they have heard.
5. By merely giving external attention with their ears and memory, without opening their hearts to let the Word deeply impact them.
6. By not understanding the Word when it is preached.
7. By quickly forgetting what they have understood.
8. By lacking a reverent fear and trembling in their approach to the ordinances of God.
9. By not having faith mixed with hearing, failing to believe God's Word when they hear it.
10. By becoming agitated and resentful at the reproofing aspects of the Word.
11. By stumbling over and unnecessarily objecting to certain expressions, even going so far as to mock them, which undermines the authority of the ordinances.
12. By prioritizing knowledge over obedience, focusing more on intellectual understanding rather than personal transformation of the heart and life.
13. By criticizing the Word instead of examining themselves.
14. By not making personal application of the Word, neglecting to consider whether they have the faults mentioned or whether they fulfill the prescribed duties.

15. By not being present before God to hear His Word, as Cornelius was (Acts 10:33).
16. By being more interested in novel expressions, words, and things rather than thirsting for the pure milk of the Word that leads to growth (1 Peter 2:2).
17. By giving more attention and weight to these novelties than to known duties and truths.
18. By showing favoritism in relation to individuals who deliver the Word, not receiving the same truth, expression, or Scripture citation with equal respect when spoken by different people, contrary to James 2:9.
19. By having idle looks and indulging in frivolous thoughts.
20. By behaving in a wanton, light, and irreverent manner.
21. By wearing immodest and inappropriate attire that is unsuitable for such a sacred ordinance.
22. By engaging in unnecessary speaking or conversation during the sermon, even if it is in the form of prayer, unless it is ejaculatory and in direct reference to what is being spoken at that moment.
23. By reading something, even Scripture, at an inappropriate time.
24. By fixating on good thoughts that serve as distractions from hearing the Word.
25. By being preoccupied with vanities during the sermon, such as the attire of others, the decorations in the building, or other similar distractions.
26. By failing to intermix ejaculatory prayers for ourselves, others, and the speaker, asking God to help them and us keep and apply

the Word when we are in need of it, and by not offering praise to God when a word is rightly spoken.

27. By suppressing convictions or disregarding the stirrings of affection awakened by the Word.
28. By becoming infatuated with the speaker or being overly focused on the manner of their expression, finding more delight in these aspects than in God or in the speaker's message or our own spiritual growth.
29. By not viewing and utilizing the preached Word as a means of conversion, but only as a means of confirmation.
30. By neglecting to embrace the promises offered in preaching, which are directed to us through an authorized ambassador of God, and by failing to give them the weight they deserve.
31. By rejecting the numerous gracious invitations of the Gospel and refusing to partake in the joyous feast of the King's Son.
32. By grieving the Holy Spirit who impresses the Word upon our hearts.
33. By demeaning the precious blood of Christ through our lack of appreciation for its immeasurable value.
34. By disregarding the weight and significance of the divine warnings and threatenings.
35. By lacking faith in God's providence and in the coming judgment.
36. By failing to accept and embrace Christ as our Lord and Savior.
37. By neglecting to depend on and rely upon Him for our salvation and sanctification.

38. By lacking reverence and respect when leaving the place of worship after hearing the Word.

All of these transgressions committed during the act of hearing the Word represent a violation of the fourth Commandment, as they demonstrate a failure to approach and engage with God's ordained means of grace with the reverence, attentiveness, and obedience that He requires.

After hearing as well, there are many ways in which we are guilty of breaking this Commandment. 1. Forgetting what we have heard. 2. Allowing our minds to wander and be preoccupied with other thoughts instead of meditating on what has been heard. 3. Failing to compare what we have heard with the Scriptures. 4. Not following up the Word with prayer for its nourishment. 5. Engaging in unnecessary discussions immediately after hearing the Word. 6. Disregarding it completely in terms of putting it into practice. Psalm 50:6-23. 7. Becoming irritated or agitated by certain things that have been spoken. 8. Spreading criticisms or giving excessive praise to the sermon or the preacher, as if that were all that matters. 9. Not supplementing the Word with self-examination and appropriate actions, striving to live out its requirements. 10. Failing to tremble at its warnings and refraining from what it prohibits. 11. Not helping others to make use of the Word. 12. Not repenting of any faults committed during the time of hearing. 13. Lacking joy in remembering what was heard. 14. Finding excuses to evade its directions or challenges. 15. Applying its teachings to others rather than to ourselves. 16. Misunderstanding the preacher's intentions in emphasizing certain points. 17. Misinterpreting his words. 18. Misreporting or misrepresenting what was said. 19. Not feeling troubled by the fruitlessness of our hearing, without deriving any benefit from it and remaining as unresponsive as a stone. 20. Considering attendance at church as a form of holiness, even if it yields no spiritual fruit. 21. Profaning words of Scripture or phrases used in preaching in everyday conversation; and especially, engaging in wanton and profane activities, jests, and ridicule involving them.

In all these ways, individuals can sin when they come to hear the Word. They also sin by their absence, neglecting the opportunities to partake in the Gospel. Furthermore, there are various sins that people often commit in relation to hearing, even on weekdays. These include: 1. Having little love for the Word or finding little joy in the opportunities to engage with it on such days. 2. Being too engrossed in worldly matters, leading to lukewarmness in hearing. 3. Disdaining opportunities to hear the Word on weekdays. 4. Carelessly putting ourselves in situations where we are unable to hear. 5. Not valuing the importance of having a Ministry that instructs us at all times, thereby lacking such opportunities. 6. Purposely discouraging the Ministers we have and using our wit to undermine them. 7. Not being mindful of the absence from weekday sermons. 8. Mocking those who are present. 9. Disrespecting the significance of the Ordinance for worldly or personal reasons, prioritizing trivial matters over it, and so on.

Let us now consider the violation of this Commandment in public prayer, which is an integral part of worship and greatly pertains to the glory of God. Undoubtedly, when public prayer is improperly performed, it represents a specific and significant breach of this Commandment.

We shall now focus on aspects related to public prayer, although it is important to acknowledge that we also fall short in private prayer and in giving thanks both individually and in our households. 1. Contempt for this remarkable practice leads many to disregard prayer in private and within their families, Jeremiah 10: ult, which clearly violates this Commandment, just as neglecting it in public does when individuals do not support sermons or prayer, yet engage idly in the streets or fields. 2. Criticizing prayer and reproaching it, labeling it as hypocrisy and those who engage in it as hypocrites. 3. Ridiculing the work of the Holy Spirit in prayer.

Before we engage in prayer, we commit sins. 1. We fail to be vigilant in maintaining a heart prepared for prayer at all times. 2. We miss

opportunities for prayer by not being attentive to them, resulting in the loss of many occasions. 3. We lack a genuine longing for prayer opportunities. 4. We neglect to summon seriousness within ourselves when we approach prayer. 5. We allow our minds to wander aimlessly when engaged in other matters, which hinders our readiness for prayer. 6. We have self-centered motives guiding our prayers. 7. We demonstrate little regard for relying on God's strength and seeking His Spirit for ourselves and those leading us in prayer. 8. We neglect to examine ourselves thoroughly, preventing us from knowing what to pray for specifically and what to confess. 9. We fail to meditate on the content of our prayers, hindering us from speaking in faith regarding the matters we bring before God. 10. We prioritize the pursuit and display of gifts over the cultivation of grace within us. 11. We approach this weighty and spiritual duty hastily and without due consideration.

Secondly, in the act of prayer, there are several ways in which this Commandment is broken. On the part of the speaker, we can identify various transgressions. Firstly, there is the sin of hasty and thoughtless prayer, where we engage our mouths without truly engaging our spirits, reciting prayers mechanically without life or sincerity. Secondly, there is the sin of praying in our own strength, neglecting to seek the influence and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Thirdly, there is the error of relying on our prayers alone, without placing our faith in Christ, mistakenly thinking that many well-crafted words hold more sway with God than exercising genuine faith in Christ and relying on Him. Fourthly, there is the issue of inattentive prayer, uttering petitions and expressions without true understanding. Fifthly, there is the failure to pray with humility and a sense of soul-abasement. Sixthly, there is the tendency to pray with the intention of pleasing men rather than sincerely seeking to please God, pursuing pleasing expressions rather than heartfelt sincerity. Seventhly, there is the problem of saying things we do not truly mean, lacking a genuine sense of the weight of sin when confessing it or the true desire for holiness when expressing it, sometimes feigning liberty and boldness and other times pretending restraint

and complaint. Eighthly, there is the sin of placing limitations on God in our specific requests. Ninthly, there is the issue of being lukewarm in matters of utmost importance. Tenthly, there is the lack of reverence and holy fear in our prayers. Eleventhly, there is the failure to have a right perception of the presence of a living God. Twelfthly, there is the neglect of praying for others and the lack of consideration for the condition of those with whom we pray. If we do pray for others, it is often done with coldness, merely for appearances' sake. If there is apparent zeal and seriousness, we must be cautious that it is not done with the intention of flattering and pleasing others rather than seeking spiritual blessings for them. Thirteenthly, there is the tendency to desire things for self-satisfaction rather than for God's honour. Fourteenthly, there is the habit of cutting short our prayers, failing to reach a state of liveliness and liberty, having begun lazily and without genuine life. Fifteenthly, there is the failure to persevere in wrestling with God when under spiritual constraints. Sixteenthly, there is the rush to utter words before allowing the heart to reflect on them or the affections to be stirred. Seventeenthly, there is the tendency to merely go through the motions of prayer for the sake of duty or appearances, without a genuine regard for God, love for the exercise, or any desire for spiritual profit. Eighteenthly, there is the weariness and lack of delight in prayer. Nineteenthly, there is the failure to seek God's presence or experience His tangible manifestations during prayer or to truly listen for His response to our petitions. Twentiethly, there is the greater desire for public liberty in prayer rather than private. Twenty-firstly, there is the tendency to become agitated when put under spiritual constraints or obligations. Twenty-secondly, there is the temptation to become vain and frivolous when things are going well in our lives, and to become carnal and negligent when we experience spiritual liberty. Twenty-thirdly, there is the misuse of Scripture words, either out of ignorance or in a vain manner. Twenty-fourthly, there is a hidden expectation of receiving something for our prayers, leading us to rely on the works themselves as if they have merit. Twenty-fifthly, there is the use of expressions that are not easily understood. Twenty-sixthly, there is

the use of indecent gestures and vulgar expressions, which are unbecoming of the solemnity of prayer. Twenty-seventhly, there is the failure to discern God's dealings with us and the state of our souls during the time of prayer, neglecting to adjust our requests accordingly. Many saints have ended their prayers in songs after beginning with a somber tone, responding to God's leading. Twenty-eighthly, there is the neglect of fervently praying for the advancement of Christ's kingdom and for the salvation of Jews and Gentiles. Twenty-ninthly, there is the tendency to prioritize the exercise of our gifts rather than the expression of genuine grace when we pray. These are sins committed by the speaker in the act of prayer.

Next, we should consider the sins of those who join in prayer. In addition to the general failings in the duty of praying, we often fail in the act of joining together. Firstly, many think that when someone else is praying, they do not need to pray themselves, but can leave the task solely to the speaker. Secondly, we fail to pay attention to what is being spoken, neglecting to actively engage and join in with the prayer. Our minds may wander, and we passively listen without actively praying. Thirdly, we may criticize the words or gestures of the speaker instead of focusing on prayer. Fourthly, our eyes or minds may wander to other things, allowing distracting thoughts to divert us from joining in prayer. Fifthly, some may fall asleep during the time of prayer. Sixthly, there may be confusion in our participation, failing to distinctly join in with what applies to ourselves and our own situation, and neglecting to pray for others alongside them. Seventhly, we may be more cold and indifferent towards the concerns of others compared to our own. Eighthly, we may be careless about being heard and answered when we are not speaking, as if our presence alone is enough, even though our hearts are not engaged. We may not be affected by another person's prayer and fail to exercise faith in it, quickly growing weary when others pray. Ninthly, we may not be edified by the prayers of others, failing to acknowledge our sins in their confessions or our duties in their petitions. Tenthly, there can be hypocrisy in our outward

participation while doing nothing internally. Eleventhly, we may not strive to have appropriate affections stirred within us that correspond to what is being spoken. Twelfthly, we may neglect to pray for the speaker's guidance and help in expressing petitions that meet our needs. Thirteenthly, we may be more indifferent when someone else speaks on behalf of the group and lacks liberty, compared to when we are required to speak ourselves, even though it is God's ordinance. Fourteenthly, we may not respond rightly to expressions we cannot fully join in, but rather stumble over them. Fifteenthly, we may be ignorant of the meaning of many expressions due to our own negligence, preventing us from fully participating. Sixteenthly, we may mutter our own words instead of joining in with what is being said. Seventeenthly, there may be a lack of clarity in our consent or saying "Amen" at the conclusion.

Thirdly, after prayer, both the speaker and those who joined in fail in various ways. Firstly, they do not watch over their hearts but quickly return to other things, as if they were then at liberty. Secondly, they do not wait for an answer and fail to observe whether their prayers have been answered or not. Thirdly, they lack thankfulness for answers when they come, and fourthly, they do not persistently request and press for an answer if it is delayed. Fifthly, they do not reflect on their own failings, both in speaking and in joining in prayer. Sixthly, they do not remember what they have uttered in prayer but immediately revert to a manner of living that is inconsistent with what has been spoken before God. Seventhly, they do not maintain a disposition for new opportunities of prayer. Eighthly, they do not strive for a continual walk with God between occasions of prayer. Ninthly, they rely on the act of prayer itself, thinking highly of it if they seem to have been helped in praying, or becoming spiritually disheartened and displeased if it has been otherwise. Tenthly, they do not humble themselves for the sinfulness and defects of their prayers. Lastly, they fail to approach the sprinkling blood of Christ by faith for pardon of these sinful defects. These are the ways in which both the speaker and those who join in prayer can fall short after the act of praying. It is essential for us to

be vigilant and watchful, guarding our hearts and maintaining a posture of thankfulness, persistence, and humility in our prayer lives. May we continually seek God's guidance and rely on His grace to correct our faults, and may our prayers be marked by sincerity, understanding, and a genuine desire to commune with God and seek His will. Let us remember that prayer is a precious and powerful means of connecting with our Heavenly Father, and it is through Christ, our Mediator, that our imperfect prayers are made acceptable in His sight.

We must now reflect on how individuals violate this Command in the aspects of praise and thanksgiving. In general, there are several ways in which we fail in this duty. Firstly, there is the complete neglect of this essential obligation. Unfortunately, we often overlook the importance of praising God in private, even though it is an act that brings Him great honour and is as clear a duty as prayer. Secondly, we mock and profane the act of praise by using psalms and hymns for our worldly amusement and entertainment. Thirdly, there is a tendency to neglect and trivialise this duty, engaging in it infrequently or without genuine devotion. Regrettably, we often diminish the significance of praise and fail to treat it with the reverence it deserves.

Furthermore, we sin even before engaging in the act of praise. Firstly, we neglect to prepare ourselves for this duty. Secondly, we fail to pray for the Holy Spirit's guidance and empowerment to enable us to praise. As stated in 1 Corinthians 14:15, we should pray for the ability to sing and speak with understanding. Additionally, we should pray for a steadfast and focused heart specifically for this task, as described in Psalm 108:1. Thirdly, we do not strive for a spiritual disposition that is conducive to this spiritual duty. Fourthly, we do not seek to have a proper appreciation of the Majesty of God and a clear understanding of our personal relationship with Him. Lastly, we lack an awareness of the excellence of God's ways and a deep comprehension of His Word. All these aspects are crucial for

the proper performance of this duty, and without them, our praise cannot be truly meaningful and fitting.

Thirdly, we must acknowledge the numerous faults committed during the act of praising. Firstly, we engage in praise without genuine regard for God's glory, merely doing it for appearances and conformity to custom. Secondly, there is hypocrisy in our praise, as we fail to offer it wholeheartedly, merely uttering the words with our lips while our hearts are elsewhere. Thirdly, there is ignorance when we lack understanding of the words we are expressing. Fourthly, we fail to have a suitable impression of God's greatness and goodness upon our hearts as we engage in praise. Fifthly, we neglect to pursue communion with God in this duty, lacking the desire, focus, and hope to praise Him forever. Sixthly, we do not experience spiritual and heavenly delight in God and the act of praising Him. Seventhly, we exhibit levity, laughter, or an excessive attachment to a particular tone or voice, prioritising superficial elements over a proper response to the content and making melody in our hearts to the Lord. Eighthly, we forget the words we are singing, with our hearts being absent and unfocused. Ninthly, our motivation for praise is not driven by love, but rather by habit or a sense of obligation. Tenthly, we fail to offer our praises through Christ Jesus, as urged in Hebrews 13:15. Eleventhly, we are easily satisfied in our praise, showing little concern for being properly prepared for it. We limit ourselves to customary patterns, offering few prayers beforehand and making few reflections afterward. Twelfthly, we neglect to intermingle ejaculatory prayers within our praises. Thirteenthly, there is much hypocrisy when we sing about the experiences, thoughts, and estimation of God by others, without seeking to align ourselves with their spiritual disposition and exercise. Fourteenthly, we do not align our affections in praise with the subject matter being sung, whether it be a somber situation, a joyful condition, a historical or prophetic theme. Furthermore, when imprecations are included in the song, we quickly lose focus or praise in the same manner throughout. Fifteenthly, we fail to sincerely bless God for past mercies shown to His servants, even if our own circumstances are not as favourable at

the moment. We do not wholeheartedly acknowledge His past deliverances of His Church and people in which we may not have personally participated. Sixteenthly, we do not appreciate His preservation of us from the afflictions and trials mentioned in the songs, nor do we praise Him for delivering others. Seventeenthly, we do not allow the Word of the Lord, which we sing, to deeply penetrate our hearts, engaging us and uplifting our spirits in righteousness. Eighteenthly, we do not wholeheartedly assent to and glorify God in acknowledging the justness of His severest judgments and the most fearful scriptural imprecations. Nineteenthly, we fail to discern the distinctions presented in Scripture songs, neglecting to differentiate between those things that should cause us to tremble and those that we should imitate and follow for our edification. Twentiethly, we become distracted by idle looks, to the point that some hardly even glance at their songbooks (even though they can read) in order to better grasp the meaning of what they are singing. Twenty-firstly, we do not differentiate between praying a petition found in a psalm and singing it, failing to experience the sweetness and encouragement that should accompany such prayers and the expectation of receiving what others before us have obtained. Twenty-secondly, when the matter being sung does not directly align with our present circumstances, we fail to contemplate its relevance in a way that can suitably affect us and enable us to glorify God in that duty. For example, when we sing of the exceptional holiness of certain saints, we should still bless God for the existence of such holiness, despite our own sinfulness, and maintain hope for forgiveness despite our failings and apparent distance from the ideal depicted in the song. Twenty-thirdly, some of us do not use our voices at all while singing, even though our tongues have been bestowed upon us as a source of glory so that we may glorify God in this manner.

Fourthly, after engaging in the duty of praise, we continue to sin. 1. We fall immediately into a worldly mindset, losing the spiritual focus. 2. We neglect to reflect or examine our performance in praising God. 3. We make few acknowledgements for the numerous

failings in our praise. 4. We show little repentance for those failings. 5. We fail to maintain a heart ready for the next opportunity of praise. 6. We do not keep a record of God's mercies in our memories and on our hearts, which would encourage us to praise Him. 7. We do not walk in the exercise of love, which should motivate us and bring delight in this duty.

These are just a few of the many iniquities present in our acts of worship. It is fortunate that we have a High Priest to bear them. What if all our sins were accounted for? How grave would they be? If our performances of holy duties contain so many sins, imagine the sum when the sins of a Sabbath are counted—hundreds of various kinds in praying, hearing, and praising. If we multiply these sins by every stray thought and every wavering or wandering of the heart, how numerous they become! How many unholy words slip from our lips! When we consider all the Sabbaths, sermons, prayers, and praises we have partaken in, they amount to hundreds of thousands. It is disheartening that many do not challenge themselves regarding these sins or focus on repentance, or recognize the necessity of employing the High Priest to cleanse them. Therefore, we should accept these challenges and entrust Him alone who can bear the iniquity of our holy actions. If this does not humble our self-righteousness and convince us of the necessity of a Mediator, what will?

Moving forward, let us now examine the sins associated with receiving the sacraments. These sacraments were significant aspects of God's worship in the Old Testament and continue to hold importance in the New. Our sins related to them directly contradict this Commandment, as it outlines our external worship. We should pay close attention to this, for there can be no more explicit act of covenanting with God—giving and receiving, presenting terms, and accepting them to finalize the covenant—than in the sacraments.

Before we discuss the faults we are guilty of regarding the sacraments, let us first address some general aspects concerning

them. Firstly, we should understand the purposes for which God has appointed them, so that we may have proper expectations regarding their significance. Secondly, we should comprehend how they fulfill their intended purposes, enabling us to approach them in the appropriate manner. These two aspects are closely related, and addressing one necessitates addressing the other.

However, before delving into these matters, it is important to acknowledge certain points. Firstly, throughout history, God has consistently included sacraments as part of His covenants. The Covenant of Works had its own sacraments, such as the Tree of Life given to Adam as a sacrament to affirm his faith in that covenant. Likewise, the Covenant of Grace, in all its administrations, also includes sacraments for confirmation. Prior to Christ's incarnation, circumcision, the Passover, and various sacrifices served as effective sacraments within the Covenant of Grace. Even before Abraham, there were sacrificial rituals as sacraments. Since Christ's incarnation, the sacraments within the Covenant of Grace are baptism and the Lord's Supper. Just as the Lord, for the sake of humanity, has chosen to interact with them through covenants and mutual commitments, He continues to utilize human customs of swearing, sealing, and confirming these covenants to provide greater consolation to those who are part of them (Hebrews 6:18).

Secondly, although the nature of the covenant affects how we approach the sacrament, there are essential elements that remain consistent across all covenants. Every covenant includes a promise and an agreement. Similarly, all sacraments share common features: they signify, seal, and strengthen the assurance of covenant participants, assuring them of the fulfillment of the promised blessings according to the covenant's terms. The Tree of Life, for instance, confirmed the promise of life to Adam based on perfect obedience, while circumcision confirmed it to Abraham on the condition of faith (Romans 4:11).

Thirdly, the sacraments of the Covenant of Grace, both before and after the coming of Christ, may differ in certain external aspects, just as the covenant itself differs between the Old and New Testaments. However, in their essential nature, they are in agreement, as they serve to seal the same reality and operate in the same manner.

Fourthly, there are certain fundamental elements that are common to all sacraments within a particular administration of the covenant. For instance, both baptism and the Lord's Supper serve to seal the covenant and represent Christ and His benefits. However, each sacrament may emphasize particular promises and benefits, and they have their distinct ways of sealing these shared truths. While believers are also affirmed in these realities through the Word, the sacraments provide a unique confirmation that is clearer, more tangible, and suited to our human weakness and need.

Fifthly, no sacrament possesses inherent validity or efficacy on its own. Its validity and efficacy stem from the covenant and promise to which it belongs. Therefore, a sacrament serves as a seal only to those who are part of the covenant and uphold its conditions. To them, it confirms the promised benefits, while also affirming the truth of the conditional promises. Thus, one can say that conditionally, the sacrament seals the truth of what is promised to all members of the Church based on such conditions. For example, the Tree of Life sealed the truth that those who maintained perfect obedience would have life. However, it did not seal to Adam that he would have life unconditionally, but rather conditioned on his perfect obedience. The same can be said of circumcision, baptism, and so forth.

Sixthly, it is important to note that every sacrament assumes the existence of a covenant, and the recipient's entry into that covenant to which the sacrament is related. Therefore, when we approach a sacrament, we do not enter into a covenant with God at that moment. Rather, the covenant is already established, and the sacrament serves as a confirmation of it. This can be seen in the

example of Abraham, where God first entered into a covenant with him, and then the seal of circumcision was added as a confirmation of that covenant (Genesis 17).

Seventhly, no sacrament grants a new right that the recipient did not possess before. Instead, it serves to confirm the right the recipient already had. The individual has access to the sacraments based on their external right or membership within the covenant community.

Eighthly, sacraments always confirm something that is future and yet to come. They are instituted to strengthen our faith and hope in those things which we are most prone to doubt. For example, the Passover served to reassure the Israelites against the fear of destruction, while the Tree of Life confirmed the promise made to Adam that had not yet been fulfilled. In this way, all sacraments help us believe in the fulfillment of promises yet to be realized. They serve as both an oath and a seal. When we proclaim the Gospel, we offer a covenant that is sealed and affirmed.

With these points in mind, we can now address the specific purposes for which the sacraments of the New Testament (which we are currently focusing on) have been appointed by God and utilized by us.

The first purpose of sacraments is to clearly represent the nature of the covenant and the promises contained within it. They vividly portray the washing away of sin, the person of Christ, his death and the benefits that flow from it, and the way in which we receive and apply these blessings through faith. The sacraments, through their signs and the accompanying words of institution, communicate this truth not only to our ears but also to our eyes and other senses. They not only present what is offered but also show us how to embrace and accept that offer. It is as if God, who invites us to be reconciled to him through preaching, is using the sacraments to visibly and tangibly confirm and ratify that covenant with us through his appointed ambassadors. In this sense, the sacrament can be called

the symbol and token of the covenant, as it is described in Genesis 17. Through the word and the elements, along with the accompanying actions, the sacraments bring to our remembrance the sufferings and benefits of Christ, as well as our previous condition without him and before we embraced him. All of this is represented to us as if it were happening before our eyes, making the path of the Gospel clearer to our understanding and aiding our memory. It serves as a reminder for those of us who may otherwise take these spiritual realities lightly or forget them sluggishly. Just as the Lord often used parables and figurative expressions to illustrate spiritual truths and make them more accessible, he has chosen to employ external signs and actions for the same purpose.

The second purpose of sacraments is to serve as seals and confirmations of God's revealed will and to remove any doubts concerning the truth of his promises. They provide a solid foundation for our faith and enable us to derive stronger consolation from the promises of the covenant. This is why they are referred to as seals in Romans 4:11, signifying that they authenticate the righteousness that is received through faith. It is not the righteousness of Abraham's faith itself that is sealed, but rather the righteousness that he obtained through faith and not by works. In other words, the sacraments confirm the covenant that offers and promises righteousness to those who believe. Just as the Tree of Life confirmed the promise of life to Adam, and circumcision served as a seal and confirmation of the Gospel promises to Abraham, so the sacraments fulfill a similar role for us. They function as visible signs and assurances of God's faithfulness, giving us confidence in his promises. The sacraments serve to strengthen our faith and provide a firm foundation for our trust in the covenant promises.

This confirmation can be understood in three ways: Firstly, it confirms the proposition that "he who believes shall be saved." The sacrament simply affirms this truth as something to rely on. Secondly, it partially confirms the assumption that "I, or such a person, have faith." While the sacrament cannot definitively confirm

someone's faith, it can encourage those who doubt to rest in Christ and find assurance in Him. It provides support for the act of assuming faith, even if one is not entirely certain of possessing it. Just as someone who prays according to God's will in the name of Christ can conclude they have been heard, the sacrament can contribute to the believer's confidence in being accepted.

Thirdly, when drawing the conclusion "Therefore, I shall be saved," the sacrament does not provide an absolute confirmation of salvation. It does not guarantee salvation in the same way it did not guarantee the fulfillment of the promise to Adam, who later broke the covenant of works and did not receive the promised outcome. Instead, the sacrament confirms the conclusion conditionally: "If you believe, you shall be saved." Therefore, the assumption of faith must be established through an examination of one's conscience before the conclusion can be confirmed by the sacrament. However, by strengthening the major proposition that "those who believe shall be saved," the sacrament also strengthens the conclusion. If this proposition were not true, having faith or seeking refuge in Christ would provide little comfort. Thus, the sacrament has an influence on the believer's assurance in the conclusion, similar to how God's oath and seal confirmed the promise made to Abraham and strengthened his faith in believing that it would be fulfilled (Romans 4:11).

Again, it is important to consider that the sacrament seals not only the general proposition that "all who believe shall be saved," but also the particular proposition that "you, if you choose to believe, shall be saved." The seal is attached to this conditional offer in such a way that the covenant stands firm not only for believers in general but for me specifically when I embrace it. It is as if God is personally singling me out, extending the offer to me, receiving my commitment, and placing the seal in my hand. Through the sacrament, faith is strengthened and supported more than by the Word alone. The sacraments serve a significant purpose by quieting our faith, assuring us that God will set aside His controversy, uphold His covenant, and

fulfill His promises to those who seek refuge in Jesus Christ, relying on His oath and seal.

In this way, the sacrament seals the major proposition simply, the minor proposition conditionally but specifically. We can imagine God speaking to us from the covenant, saying, "To those whom I offer Christ, they may receive Him, and all who believe and accept the offer shall receive the promised blessing. But I offer Christ to you; therefore, you may and should receive Him. If you accept the offer, you shall receive the promised blessing and be saved." Thus, the major and minor propositions are simply sealed, while the conclusion is conditioned on our acceptance. Alternatively, we can understand that the sacrament seals the offer itself simply, but the promise, as it is applied to a particular person, conditionally, contingent upon their acceptance of the offer. Therefore, there is no need to question God's offer or Christ's fulfillment of it when we accept it. In this way, the sacraments can be called testimonies of God's grace to us because they specifically seal His offer of grace to us, namely Christ and salvation through Him, and His willingness to give Him on the condition of our belief.

The third end and use of the sacraments is to exhibit and apply Christ or His benefits to believers. In the sacraments, we partake of Christ and receive Him. This is not achieved through any physical union of Christ or His benefits with the signs themselves. Just as in the Word, Christ communicates Himself when the Spirit accompanies the promises and hearers come with not only their ears but also their hearts and faith, so in the sacraments, Christ is communicated to us. We come to the sacrament with faith exercised on Christ, in accordance with His institution. He, by His Spirit, comes to us through the elements and Word, bringing the union with Christ closer and more tangible. This communion is spiritual, conferred by the Spirit and received by faith. Yet it is also real, with a genuine foundation, cause, and subsequent effects. These effects are not by the power of the sacraments themselves more than by the Word or prayer considered in isolation, but by the power of the

promises being embraced by faith. When the Word and sacraments are joined together, they work more effectively in bringing about the intended purposes of the covenant.

Fourthly, a believer's consolation arises from these sacraments. By strengthening faith, beholding Christ in the ordinance, and being confirmed in the hope of His coming again, the soul is greatly comforted. The believer has frequent encounters with Christ through the sacraments, and through them, Christ communicates Himself to their senses and spiritual perception.

Fifthly, the sacraments signify a mutual engagement between God and His people. God presents the contract, the covenant, and the offer. By our participation, we declare our acceptance of that offer on those terms and engage accordingly. We commit to making use of the righteousness held forth for our justification and the wisdom and strength offered for our guidance and sanctification. In this sense, our participation in the sacrament is referred to as our covenanting. In Genesis 17, it was deemed punishable to be without the seal of God's covenant. Thus, our acceptance and reception align with the Word, which presents the terms, while God seals and confirms the specific promises of righteousness and strength for the aforementioned purposes, strengthening our faith in utilizing them.

These are the primary and fundamental purposes of the sacraments, although they also serve as outward signs distinguishing God's people from other groups and individuals.

In summary, the Word offers Christ and His benefits, and the hearer accepts Him on the terms of the offer and consents to them. Both of these actions are presumed to precede the sacraments, although, in some cases, such as with the jailer in Acts 16 and others, this may occur within a very short time span. Yet, at least in terms of the natural order, these actions are prior, and then come the sacraments, which encompass several aspects: Firstly, they provide a clear view of

the agreement so that we can enter into it with understanding and know what we are receiving. Secondly, they serve as a solemn confirmation from God's side of the covenant and the specific offer He makes within it. Thirdly, they assist us in our belief by furthering our understanding and by conferring something that is offered. Fourthly, they bring comfort to those upon whom the blessings are bestowed. And fifthly, the receivers engage publicly and formally with God, committing themselves to observe and make use of all that has been offered. This fifth aspect can be seen as the second in order.

Now, we can turn our attention to the faults we are guilty of in relation to the sacraments. We will first address them in a general sense and then discuss them more specifically in relation to baptism and the Lord's Supper. We will not address the doctrinal errors that are common to Catholics and others, such as misconceptions about who may administer the sacraments (e.g., the belief that women can administer baptism). Instead, we will focus on the faults that pertain to our own practices.

Firstly, in general, we err when we place either too much or too little importance on the sacraments. When we attribute too much weight to them, it can manifest in various ways:

1. Believing that they are absolutely necessary for salvation.
2. Thinking that they automatically confer grace by merely participating in the outward elements, even without faith.
3. Relying on the act of outwardly receiving the sacraments as a means of gaining acceptance with God.
4. Superstitiously prioritizing them over other important ordinances, such as preaching and prayer. Some may neglect these essential practices while insisting on receiving baptism and communion.
5. Elevating the outward ordinance above Christ and the spiritual reality it represents. This occurs when people desire the outward baptism with water more than the inward baptism of the Spirit, or when they value external communion more than communion

with Christ Himself, which is where true spiritual fulfillment lies. It is disheartening when individuals are more distressed about missing a sacrament once than about lacking a close and ongoing relationship with Christ.

6. Approaching and departing from the external ordinances without truly depending on and seeking Christ, who grants the blessings. Some may erroneously believe that attending the ordinance is sufficient, regardless of their heart's disposition towards Christ.
7. Traveling great distances to partake in a sacrament at the expense of neglecting necessary moral duties that should be attended to at that time.
8. Placing more emphasis on the sacraments than on acts of mercy and charity, or becoming excessively attached to the sacraments to the point of neglecting these important obligations.
9. Treating the sacraments as so sacred that they may only be administered in consecrated places, as if one place under the Gospel is holier than another.
10. Adding to Christ's institution in the manner of administration, considering His appointed way as common and ordinary, and therefore inadequate for their expectations.

These are some of the ways in which we can err by attributing excessive significance to the sacraments and deviating from the true intent and purpose of Christ's institution.

Furthermore, the sacraments can also be undervalued or given too little esteem. This occurs when:

1. People view them as mere empty signs, devoid of recognition of their intended purposes.
2. There is a lack of reverence for God during the sacraments, failing to approach them with the appropriate solemnity commanded by Him.
3. Individuals approach them in a carnal manner, without proper preparation or observance, treating them as common and trivial

things.

4. The grace and goodness of God in condescending to us through the sacraments are not admired and praised.
5. There is a failure to contemplate and study the sacraments in order to understand their significance.
6. There is a lack of delight in participating in the sacraments.
7. Carelessness regarding whether we have or lack the sacraments.
8. Corrupting the Lord's institution by altering, adding to, or diminishing from His prescribed manner of observance, as if we have the authority to do so.
9. Little zeal in preserving the purity of the sacraments.
10. Neglecting opportunities to partake in the sacraments when they are readily available with little effort.
11. Esteeming one minister's administration of the sacraments as better than another's, or devaluing them because they are administered by certain individuals (though they may be lawful ministers), as if the worth of the sacrament is dependent on the person administering it.
12. Failing to place sufficient emphasis on the sacraments, derive comfort from them, or draw from them the full measure of spiritual benefit they offer.
13. Neglecting to wish and pray that others may experience the blessings of the sacraments.
14. Not being concerned about the potential abuse of the sacraments through indiscriminate and promiscuous participation, and failing to address and rectify such abuses.
15. Disregarding the breaking of commitments made during the sacraments.
16. Placing undue emphasis on the administrator's intention or the grace of fellow participants as determinants of the sacraments' effectiveness.
17. Exhibiting little zeal in combating errors that deny or corrupt the sacraments, such as the denial of baptism by Anabaptists or the corruption of the sacraments, as seen in the Mass.

Now, turning to baptism specifically, we can examine:

1. The sins of those who seek baptism for their children.
2. The sins of those who administer baptism.
3. The sins of onlookers, particularly those who are called to bear witness.
4. The sins of those who are baptized.

These are the various ways in which we can fail in relation to baptism and the sacraments in general.

The parents or presenters of children to baptism can fail in their responsibilities before, during, and after the administration of this ordinance.

First, before the baptism takes place, they may fail by:

1. Not taking the matter seriously and not recognizing the significance of what is to be done.
2. Failing to consider the spiritual condition of their child and the need for Christ in this ordinance.
3. Neglecting to understand the purpose and intention of the baptism.
4. Misunderstanding the role of Christ in the sacrament and not approaching Him first to receive the spiritual blessings signified.
5. Neglecting to pray for the child, the minister, and for God's blessing upon the ordinance.
6. Failing to express gratitude to God for the existence of the Covenant of Grace that includes our children, and not offering them to be engaged and received into it.
7. Not considering the simplest and most edifying way of approaching baptism, but rather following other misguided practices or rules.
8. Unnecessarily delaying the baptism for worldly reasons.
9. Being more concerned with the outward sign of baptism than with the spiritual realities it signifies.

Secondly, when they come to the baptism, they may sin by:

1. Neglecting to seek the renewal and assurance of their own covenant relationship with God, which grants them the privilege of bringing their children to baptism.
2. Failing to understand the grounds on which they claim this privilege for their children.
3. Not repenting of their own covenant breaches and not marveling at God's faithfulness to them despite their frequent failings.
4. Approaching the baptism without a proper sense of fear and reverence.
5. Attending to the baptism without paying attention or fulfilling their duties in response to what is spoken during the ceremony.
6. Merely making empty promises without genuine judgment or resolute commitment to fulfill their obligations in regard to the child's education.
7. Being ignorant of the significance of what is said or done during the baptism.
8. Not joining in prayer for God's blessing upon the child.
9. Failing to take up the responsibility, in the strength of Christ, to fulfill the duties that baptism calls for in relation to the child's spiritual upbringing.

Thirdly, after the administration of baptism, we often fall short. Firstly, we tend to forget all our commitments. Secondly, we become careless in maintaining the appropriate disposition, indulging in worldly merriment on such occasions. Thirdly, we fail to pray fervently for our children and neglect to persistently seek God's blessings upon them. Fourthly, we are unfaithful in fulfilling our commitments in their education. This includes imparting knowledge so that they may understand who God is, instilling the fear of God through frequent exhortations, setting a good example, applying appropriate correction when necessary (though sometimes we spare them to their own detriment), reminding them of their baptismal commitments, and most significantly, providing them with evil examples. Furthermore, we often turn a blind eye to their faults, advise them towards sinful actions, expose them to harmful influences, or allow them to go where they may encounter snares. We

focus on providing for their earthly needs without due consideration for their eternal life. We fail to equip ourselves adequately to fulfill our duties to them and neglect to consistently impress upon them matters concerning their souls. We mistakenly believe that occasional reminders are sufficient. We lack purposeful drive to ensure their well-being, rarely repenting for our numerous shortcomings and seldom lamenting over their sinful behavior when they disregard our faithful advice. These are areas that demand careful attention from both fathers and mothers, as well as all those who commit to the Christian education of the children presented in this sacrament.

Next, there are often various failings in the one administering baptism. Firstly, when it is routinely performed without considering its purpose. Secondly, when prayer for the child's salvation lacks genuine and sincere intent, being done merely for appearances. Thirdly, when administering baptism becomes burdensome. Fourthly, when little importance is attached to the fact that Christ welcomes such children into His house and Himself partakes in such mercies, instead regarding oneself as merely a dispenser to others. Fifthly, when the administrator fails to follow up privately with prayers for God's blessings. Additionally, there may be shortcomings in using unsuitable words or engaging in human ceremonies, etc., and a tendency to seek personal recognition rather than the edification of the listeners.

As witnesses and onlookers, we also fall short. Firstly, we become weary and impatient, fretting over the slight delay. Secondly, we fail to engage ourselves for our own edification in observing the proceedings and listening to what is spoken. Thirdly, we lack empathy in prayer for the child and its parents. Fourthly, we neglect to express gratitude to God for bestowing this significant benefit and ordination upon the child. Fifthly, we display a casual demeanor, whether in our looks, speech, or thoughts, as if we were not present at such a sacred ordinance of Christ. Sixthly, we do not earnestly

sympathize with the children of others because they are not our own. Seventhly, we depart prematurely and do not stay to show support. Eighthly, we forget about the child once the ceremony is over. Ninthly, we fail to assist them in fulfilling the obligations they undertake through baptism. Tenthly, we do not offer admonition when we witness parents and children walking in an unsuitable manner, nor do we testify against them or mourn the dishonor brought upon God through the unbecoming conduct of those who have been baptized.

Fourthly, all of us who have been baptized, whether to a greater or lesser extent, fail in significant ways. Firstly, we fail to recognize ourselves as obligated as we should be by the covenant we enter into through baptism. Secondly, we do not live and strive to be truly accountable to it. Thirdly, we lack gratitude towards God for admitting us to this sacred ordinance. Fourthly, we do not value it above all worldly privileges, no matter how great they may seem. Fifthly, we do not seek to fully understand the extent of the privileges and benefits conferred upon us and our children through baptism. Sixthly, we do not actively pursue the blessings promised to us in that covenant. Seventhly, we do not make a genuine effort to fulfill the condition of the covenant, which is to believe in and trust in Christ, of which baptism is the seal. Eighthly, we fail to recognize the strength and support our baptism provides for our faith in both spiritual and temporal difficulties, as if it were not a seal of the covenant. Ninthly, we often remain ignorant of how to effectively utilize our baptism. Tenthly, we do not consider ourselves wholly belonging to God, having been dedicated to Him in baptism, but instead live for ourselves. Eleventhly, we do not fight against our own desires, Satan, and the ways of the world in accordance with our baptismal vows. Twelfthly, we do not adorn our Christian profession with a holy life. Thirteenthly, we find ourselves in conflict with Christ rather than fighting under His banner. Fourteenthly, we fail to recognize the seriousness of our sins committed against this tie. Fifteenthly, we lack patience under suffering and fail to demonstrate genuine penitence and humility in the face of adversity, despite being

bound by our baptism to take up the cross. Sixteenthly, we neglect to meditate on our obligations and repent for our neglect. Seventeenthly, we do not strive to achieve the main purposes of this ordinance, which include evidencing our regeneration and grafting into Christ, surrendering ourselves to the Father, Son, and Spirit, cleaving to Christ on costly terms, seeking His guidance and walking in His ways, setting our minds on heavenly things rather than earthly things, mortifying our attachment to worldly desires, and utilizing this tie not only to bind us to these obligations but also to strengthen us in Christ, finding comfort in Him during difficult times.

These deficiencies are significant, and it is disheartening to see how much we neglect to draw upon the strength and resources available to us in Christ through our baptismal obligations and ties. We seldom turn to this rich source and storehouse for all our needs and challenges. This precious privilege is, alas, greatly underutilized and neglected by us.

Next, we must address the sins we commonly commit in relation to the Lord's Supper, which can be classified into various categories. Firstly, there are doctrinal sins that arise when the institution is corrupted, such as in the practices of Popery. However, we will not delve into that topic at this moment. Secondly, there are practical sins, which can be committed by ministers, elders, and those who are admitted or debarred from partaking.

First and foremost, it is important to recognize that individuals can sin against this ordinance by not participating in it. This occurs when: 1. They contemptuously and willfully neglect it. 2. They do not partake frequently, but rather carelessly disregard it when it is conveniently available. 3. They fail to plan and manage their affairs in a way that would prevent hindrance when an opportunity for the ordinance arises. 4. They render themselves ineligible for admission due to ignorance or scandal, and neglect to address and rectify these issues. 5. They become resentful when debarred or harbor ill feelings towards those involved in the process. 6. They do not repent for the

reasons that led to their exclusion. 7. They do not seek humility under such a weighty censure and fail to learn from it for the future. 8. They suspect that the debarring is motivated by worldly motives. 9. They spread false rumors about those who administer the debarring. 10. They neglect to pray for those who partake in this ordinance wherever it may be observed. 11. They focus more on the unfitness of certain individuals who are admitted and the perceived negligence of the office-bearers in the debarring process, rather than reflecting on their own shortcomings. 12. They lack sympathy for others and, based on this, absent themselves from partaking due to the faults of others.

In light of these points, we urge you to consider the following exhortations. Firstly, view the debarring of ignorant and scandalous individuals from the Lord's Table as an ordinance instituted by Christ. Secondly, reflect on the reasons for your own debarring, and recognize that it is not driven by personal prejudice or disrespect. Therefore, repentance and humility should accompany the causes that led to your exclusion. Thirdly, strive to rectify any deficiencies for the future. Do not regard yourself as less obligated to pursue holiness simply because you are prevented from partaking. However, it is important to note that some individuals refrain from participating not out of a genuine desire for a suitable frame of mind, but rather because they are not sufficiently affected by the deprivation of this sacrament. Such an attitude is sinful and should be addressed.

Furthermore, there are faults in those who are admitted to partake in the Lord's Supper, both among hypocrites and true believers. These faults can be observed before, during, and after receiving the sacrament.

Firstly, before partaking, there are several shortcomings: 1. Ignorance regarding the purpose and nature of this ordinance. 2. Failure to make an effort to understand it. 3. Insufficient cultivation of a heart that is rightly affected by it. 4. Neglecting to maintain a

high regard and holy reverence for the incredible love of God in giving His Son and the Son's loving condescension in sacrificing Himself for sinners. 5. Not seeking to firmly establish the covenant through faith before it is sealed by the sacrament. 6. Neglecting to resolve past conflicts and establish peace. 7. Failing to examine our own conduct and become well acquainted with our spiritual condition so that we may have a clear understanding of it when we come to partake. 8. Not diligently striving to cultivate a suitable frame of heart through prayer, meditation, and reading. 9. Neglecting to pray for a blessing, both for the one administering the sacrament and for those who will join us, in order to prevent sin. 10. Disregarding the instruction and guidance of those who are under our care. 11. Failing to renew our covenant (if previously embraced and consented to) before partaking. 12. Not focusing our hearts solely on this purpose and setting aside distractions. 13. Not fearing the possibility of missing out on the intended benefits and instead incurring guilt. 14. Neglecting to reflect on past sins committed during previous communions and repenting of them. 15. Not relying on the strength of Christ as we pursue these aims. 16. Failing to constantly strive to walk with God and maintain communion with Him in all aspects of life, which will grant us greater access to communion with Him in this sacrament. 17. Holding onto deep-seated prejudices and harboring hidden malice. 18. Neglecting to admonish those we know to be offended by such behavior, encouraging them to repent and change their ways. 19. Acting in an unstable manner in our pursuit of communion with God through the sacrament, approaching it more for personal satisfaction rather than out of genuine regard for the glory of God.

Secondly, as we engage in the observance of this ordinance, various faults often accompany our participation. These include:

1. Failing to give it the appropriate level of respect, either by underestimating or overestimating its significance, as mentioned earlier regarding the sacraments in general.

2. Neglecting to exercise faith in the present moment, in accordance with the covenant and Christ's institution.
3. Lacking the love that should constrain us and the hunger and thirst that ought to drive us toward Christ.
4. Failing to discern the Lord's body properly, which involves:
 - a. Distinguishing between the bread and wine used in the sacrament and ordinary bread and wine, recognizing their different purposes.
 - b. Recognizing the distinction between this ordinance and Christ Himself, who is signified and exhibited through it.
 - c. Acknowledging that this sacrament holds a greater weight than the Word alone, although it is of the same nature.
 - d. Perceiving the distinction between this sacrament and other sacraments. Thus, true discernment involves understanding its use and purpose according to its institution.
 - e. Regarding our manner of partaking not merely through our senses or physical organs but through faith and the faculties of the soul, looking upon and receiving Christ's body in this ordinance and spiritually feeding on it, much like in the Word but with greater clarity and sensibility. The sacraments do not provide anything new that the Word did not already offer and provide, but they present the same thing in a clearer and more tangible manner.
 - f. Seeking the blessing, not only for sustaining the body through the bread and wine, but also for a spiritual blessing to be bestowed by the Spirit for the benefit of the soul.
 - g. Discerning it in such a way as to utilize it for genuine communion between Christ and ourselves, spiritually feeding on

His body. Thus, if there is any shortcoming in these aspects, we fail to truly discern the Lord's body.

5. Sinning by lacking reverence, approaching the ordinance without holy thoughts or a divine frame of mind, and without love ravishing the heart, which is most fitting for such a time. Furthermore, we sin when we come with carnal, loose, or idle thoughts, or engage in irreverent gestures or attire during our participation.
6. Failing to demonstrate love toward others and to sympathize with those who are strangers to communion with Christ.
7. Neglecting to wholeheartedly embrace Christ, renew our covenant with Him, or commit ourselves to Him.
8. Mindlessly or insensitively partaking of the elements without any genuine affection, displaying a lack of earnestness and joylessness due to a lack of sensory experience.
9. Failing to encourage ourselves through faith to obtain and experience a sense of communion with Christ, and placing too little emphasis on sensory perception or comfort.
10. Neglecting to make use of this ordinance in relation to its general sacramental purposes or the specific ends we should aim for in this particular sacrament.

Firstly, the purpose of partaking in this sacrament includes:

1. Fellowship with Christ Himself.
2. Communion in His death and sufferings.
3. Sensing and experiencing the comfort derived from these.
4. Actively and vividly commemorating Christ's death and sufferings, as well as the love He demonstrated towards us through them, thereby stirring up our love for Him in return.

5. Strengthening ourselves in the pursuit of holiness by drawing strength from Christ through faith.
6. Keeping in mind His glory and eagerly anticipating His second coming.
7. Engaging our affections toward one another in a particular manner.
8. Making heartfelt resolutions to embrace suffering.

Lastly, during the participation in the sacrament, we should reflect on our hearts, discerning our intentions and motives. We should offer brief prayers to God in the moment, receiving the sacrament with our hands while also receiving Christ in our hearts through faith. We must truly feed on Him and find satisfaction in His real presence, just as He is truly present to our faith in His Word.

After participating in the sacrament, we are prone to fall into various faults, including:

1. Irreverently and carnally leaving the table.
2. Immediately forgetting the significance of what we were doing and engaging in loose words or thoughts.
3. Failing to reflect on our past conduct, considering our actions, frame of mind, and what we obtained from the sacrament.
4. Neglecting to repent for any wrongdoing or shortcomings in our conduct.
5. Failing to continue pursuing what we may still lack and not persistently seeking the blessing even after the communion has ended.
6. Neglecting to express gratitude if we have received anything from the sacrament.
7. Becoming frustrated or disheartened if we did not receive what we desired.
8. Displaying indifference and carelessness, regardless of whether we have received or missed out on something.
9. Becoming morally lax after participating in communion, as if we have no further obligations.

10. Becoming vain or prideful if we believe we have achieved something through the sacrament.
11. Failing to uphold the promises we made to God, continuing to live as we did before.
12. Digressing into discussing and passing judgment on what was heard or observed, rather than using it for our own spiritual growth.
13. Turning the sacrament into an occasion for contention and strife, focusing on perceived faults rather than promoting unity and love.
14. Failing to maintain tenderness and a disposition that would keep us ready to partake in communion again.
15. Neglecting to meditate on the significance of what we have just participated in.
16. Not longing for future opportunities to partake in the sacrament.
17. Failing to support and assist those who did not come or did not have the opportunity to participate.
18. Developing a sense of self-importance because we were admitted to partake in the sacrament.
19. Looking down upon others who may not have been admitted.
20. Mocking or secretly ridiculing those who approach the sacrament with more tenderness and fidelity than ourselves, engaging in spiritual envy and competition, which is dangerous and wicked.
21. Secretly harboring disdain for sincere Christians next to us, considering them hypocritical.
22. Straying from a life distinct from those who have been debarred, as if there should be no distinction between those who bear this badge and those who do not, or presuming that everything has been accomplished after participating in the sacrament.
23. Failing to be vigilant against recurring temptations and snares, becoming vain and conceited if we have attained anything and lacking compassion for those who did not experience a similar outcome.
24. Engaging in indiscreet speech, either praising or criticizing speakers and forms, without contributing to edification.

Lastly, we will address the question of whether the admission of scandalous persons pollutes the communion and whether it is sinful to partake in communion with such individuals. We can examine pollution in relation to four aspects: the sacraments themselves, the scandalous individuals who are admitted, the admitters, and the joint-communicants.

Firstly, in regards to the sacraments, there are two forms of pollution. The first is intrinsic and essential, which occurs when the institution of Christ is corrupted, rendering it no longer a sacrament. This can be seen in practices like the Mass or the addition of significant ceremonies devised by humans, contrary to Christ's institution. This corruption negates the sacramental nature of the act. The second form of pollution poisons the sacrament, making it necessary to partake in the sin actively in order to receive it.

Secondly, there is pollution that occurs externally and circumstantially, not affecting the essentials but the manner in which we partake. This involves the application of the sacrament to individuals for whom Christ does not permit it. In such cases, it ceases to be a sacrament for that person, but it retains its sacramental nature in itself. However, this pollution profanes it for us, making it common. Similarly, when the Word of Promise is applied generally in a congregation without proper separation in application between the precious and the vile, it profanes the Word. The priests in Ezekiel 22:26 are rebuked for failing to distinguish between the holy and the profane, the clean and the unclean. Despite this abuse, the Word does not cease to be God's Word, though it is misused. It is similar to casting admonition before a profane mocker, which is an abuse of something holy, yet it does not alter its nature. Just as a pearl cast before a swine may be tarnished and mistreated, but it does not change its intrinsic nature, remaining a pearl. In this manner, the Word and the sacraments can be abused in their application, but as long as the institution is preserved, they remain the ordinances of God. The temple, though profaned when used more commonly than allowed, still retained its status as the Temple

of the Lord. Therefore, the admission of scandalous persons can be described as polluting the sacraments in this sense, but not in their essential nature.

Secondly, let us consider pollution with regard to the persons who are admitted. In this case, the sacraments may be polluted by three types of individuals: grossly scandalous persons, hypocrites, and believers who do not exercise their graces. For these individuals, as the saying goes, to the pure, all things (lawful) are pure, but to the unclean and unbelieving, nothing is pure, as their minds and consciences are defiled. Therefore, their praying, sacrificing, hearing, plowing, and so on, are all considered unclean. Likewise, believers, though in a good and clean state, may still partake in the sacrament in an evil and unholy frame, and in that sense, the sacrament may be said to be unclean and polluted by them, to themselves.

Thirdly, in relation to the office-bearers who are responsible for admitting individuals, the sacrament cannot be profaned in its essence as long as the institution is kept pure. However, they can sin and be guilty of profaning it by opening the door wider than Christ has allowed and not maintaining the proper boundaries. Ministers can commit such sins not only in the promiscuous application of the promises and consolations of the covenant but also in the application of its seals. Both cases are sinful for them, but there are exceptions to be considered.

Firstly, when such a scandal is not made known to them, they may admit scandalous persons because they are not obligated to view them as such until their scandalous behavior is discovered.

Secondly, when such scandals cannot be proven judicially, even if they may be true in themselves, they may still be admitted against the admitters' inclination and affection. However, this should not go against their conscience because the admission of scandalous individuals is a serious matter in Christ's house, and his servants are not to act arbitrarily. Instead, they are to follow the rules given to

them, including the principle of not receiving an accusation without two or three witnesses.

Thirdly, there are circumstances in which the admission of scandalous persons may prove not edifying but rather harmful to the church or the individuals involved. This can occur in two situations:

1. When the scandalous matter is not explicitly determined in the Word but is deduced by consequence. For example, it may involve a point of theological disagreement among godly theologians or a practice (such as perjury) that is inherently evil but not explicitly addressed in Scripture. It could also pertain to matters that do not directly affect a natural conscience, such as fornication, drunkenness, or adultery, which are sinful but may not contradict any express truth.
2. When the scandalous behavior has become so common that it is difficult to address and discipline effectively, or when there is limited access to edifying means of resolving and censuring such matters. In such cases, a minister may choose to reprove these sins in doctrine but exercise discretion in issuing a judicial sentence, as Paul seemed to do with the Corinthians. Among the Corinthians, there were various types of offenders: incestuous fornicators who sinned against nature (1 Corinthians 5:3-5), those who propagated schisms and misled the people (1 Corinthians 3:3; 2 Corinthians 11:13), some who were weak and led astray into factions (1 Corinthians 13:1-4), and others who had improper conduct during the celebration of the sacrament (1 Corinthians 11). Paul reproved and sought to correct these faults, but he did not exclude or debar them from participating in the sacrament as he had done with the incestuous fornicators. It is unlikely that the communion was omitted or the people debarred since Paul does not reprove them for failing to debar these individuals, as he does in other cases.

The reason for exercising discretion in debarring and issuing censures is because the primary purpose of such actions is edification. When it becomes evident that debarring or censuring would not contribute to the edification of a person or the church as a whole, such measures may be set aside. Setting clear boundaries is necessary to avoid the entanglement of innumerable differences that would otherwise be inextricable.

In cases where a particular sin has become widespread and universal, it is essential to approach the matter with wisdom. On one hand, those who are more tender in conscience should be instructed to exercise sobriety and should be earnestly encouraged not to cause division or separation from the church when scandalous individuals are admitted, especially if they are otherwise qualified to partake in the sacrament. This is because excluding such individuals through a sacramental sentence might not achieve its intended purpose of edification. Moreover, it could weaken the authority of the ordinance of discipline and potentially jeopardize the liberty of the Gospel. On the other hand, ministers must be cautious not to err in the extreme of neglecting their duty or disregarding the concerns of tender consciences. They should not give the appearance of condoning or participating in these sins. Instead, they should diligently utilize the key of doctrine, openly separating the precious from the vile in a public manner, and engage in direct and honest private dealings, so as to commend themselves to every person's conscience before God. By doing so, they can navigate through the challenges and temptations while promoting true edification in the church.

It is important to understand that if some individuals are sinfully admitted by the church's office-bearers, it is not a pollution or sin for other communicants to partake in the sacrament with them. The sacrament can still be a means of blessing to them as Christ's ordinance, just as the Word can still be useful to tender souls even when it is unwarrantably applied or cast before swine. We offer the following reasons to support this truth:

Firstly, the Word and Sacraments are of the same nature and are used in the same way. The difference lies in the fact that the Word is usually doctrinally wronged, while the sacraments are disciplinarily wronged. Secondly, the unwarranted admission of others is the sin of the ministers, not the communicants. Therefore, it cannot harm the communicants more than the lack of preparation in others who partake.

Thirdly, another person's sin does not release me from my obligation to fulfill my duty. It is the duty of every individual to examine themselves and, being prepared through suitable self-examination, to partake (1 Corinthians 11:28). Even in the church of Corinth, many approached the Lord's Table sinfully. While the command to self-examine does not justify the failure of rulers to examine, it does warrant private communicants to conscientiously carry out the duty themselves, without being overly concerned about the actions of others as if their behavior were the determining factor for our approach to the Lord's Table.

Fourthly, the sacrament remains a sacrament without any mixture of corrupt human additions, and neglecting it would be neglecting a sacrament.

Fifthly, if scandalous receivers were to corrupt it for others, then a corrupt minister could never properly celebrate a sacrament. This would contradict the Lord's appointment of allowing ministers, even with their imperfections, to dispense His mysteries both in the Old and New Testaments. If a minister's corruption does not pollute the ordinance, even less so would the scandalous actions of others.

Sixthly, the practice of the Lord's people in receiving the sacraments in this way, both before and after Christ's incarnation, supports this understanding.

Lastly, it would be a great and unresolvable snare to consciences if the fruit of their participation in the sacrament depended not only on

their own preparation but also on the ministers and joint communicants. If the lack of preparation or failure in others brought guilt upon us, it would be impossible for us to receive the sacrament with a clear conscience.

It is difficult to conceive that a communion is celebrated with one or more individuals who should not be admitted. The admission of even one or two scandalous individuals would defile the ordinance. If we believed them to be scandalous or knew them to be unholy, we could not, in faith, participate in communion with them, lest we ourselves defile the ordinance by their presence.

The presence of a hypocrite would defile the sacrament to us because their hypocrisy defiles it for themselves. They have no right before God to partake, and our lack of knowledge would not justify our participation. It is not our knowledge of their sin that defiles the sacrament, but their hypocrisy and unworthiness. Furthermore, it would be difficult to argue that the same sacrament could be participated in warrantably by one who is unaware of the hypocrisy and unworthiness of another, while another who is aware would be unable to participate.

If believers are out of the proper frame, it would pollute the ordinance for us and render us incapable of receiving it. Their sinful state is a sin to them, and we should keep our distance from their sins just as we would from the sins of others. Moreover, if sin known in another person would defile the ordinance, then the same sin known in ourselves would have the same effect. If corruption known to be in others defiles it, then that same corruption known to be in ourselves must have the same effect. Therefore, if we cannot communicate with others due to their sin, it follows that we could not communicate with ourselves, for we also have corruption, and we know it to be present within us, just as we can know about the sins of others.

Regarding the argument that our own corruption is weakened by grace and not allowed, and therefore weighs less than the corruption in others, it should be noted that corruption is still corruption. Half-corruption in ourselves will have a greater impact than full corruption in others, especially considering that it partially pollutes all our holy things.

In response to the notion that we cannot be freed from corruption while on earth and therefore cannot perform any duty, it should be understood that a mixture of good and bad in the visible Church is inevitable, just as there is a mixture of grace and corruption in believers. If our own corruption, which leads us to sin in the manner of performing our duties, does not exempt us from fulfilling commanded duties, then neither should the sin and corruption of others. We are prohibited from communing with sin and corruption in ourselves just as much as we are prohibited from doing so with others. We are also commanded to purge our own hearts just as we are to purify the Church.

These principles are acknowledged by the more moderate proponents of Independent theology, even if their practice may differ in relation to others. Various writings, such as Hooper's "Survey," Amesius' "De Conscientia," Chapter 4, Book 1, and Morton's "Adversus Appellationem Responsio ad ultimam questionem," support this understanding.

As for other questions, such as how the sacraments seal, what they seal (the major or minor proposition), or whether the promise functions as a covenant or testament bequeathing Christ and His benefits to us, these require extensive discussions beyond the scope of our current work, and therefore we will not delve into them.

Lastly, we will briefly touch upon the breadth of this command in relation to the duty of fasting. It should be recognized that fasting is a solemn act of external religious worship when performed rightly

and with piety. However, individuals can be guilty of many sins in their practice and approach to fasting.

Indeed, fasting is recognized as a form of external worship based on several factors. Firstly, there are explicit precepts in the Scriptures commanding fasting. Secondly, we have examples of the saints in the Bible engaging in fasting. Thirdly, Scripture provides directions and guidelines to regulate our practice of fasting. However, fasting differs from prayer and sacraments in that it is an extraordinary form of worship. It is typically observed on special occasions, such as times of trial or imminent danger, or when seeking a specific blessing or outcome. Despite its extraordinary nature, we observe that the more holy individuals in Scripture were often more devoted to the duty of fasting.

It is important to note that fasting is not an immediate form of worship in itself, like prayer, but rather a means to assist and enhance other duties such as humbling ourselves, seeking God's face, or practicing self-mortification.

Furthermore, fasting can be understood in four different respects. First, it can be an individual act done in secret, where a person sets themselves apart for prayer and fasting. Many instances of this are found in Scripture. Second, it can be a private or slightly more public act carried out by a family or a small group of individuals coming together for fasting, as seen in the example of Esther and her maids. Third, fasting can be a public act performed by a congregation, as described in Acts 13:2-3. Lastly, fasting can be observed by an entire national church, involving the participation of the whole community. These various forms of fasting are mentioned in Zechariah 12:11-12, where we see the entire land, families together, families apart, and individual persons or wives engaging in this duty.

Fasting can be prompted by various causes. Firstly, there are public causes that call for fasting, as seen in the example of Daniel (Daniel 9). Secondly, there are particular and personal causes, such as David

fasting for his child (2 Samuel 12:16). Thirdly, there are occasions when we fast on behalf of others, as expressed in Psalm 35:13. Lastly, fasting is to be considered as a means to combat spiritual evils, to cast out demons, and to mortify lusts. It can also be observed in times of great sorrow or loss (Matthew 17:21; 1 Corinthians 9:27).

However, there are several ways in which we can sin in relation to the duty of fasting. These include:

1. Slighting or completely neglecting fasting, either by contemning it, considering it unnecessary, being negligent in preparing for it, refusing to set aside personal pleasures or work for it, or not esteeming it highly.
2. Failing to seek suitable opportunities to engage in fasting.
3. Viewing fasting as a burden or being afraid of it.
4. Mocking or criticizing others who practice fasting.
5. Not joining in affection and solidarity with others who are fasting.
6. Infrequent or sporadic practice of fasting.
7. Neglecting public or communal causes that call for fasting and only focusing on personal needs.
8. Not being affected by our neglect of the duty of fasting, lacking repentance or mourning over it, and failing to be humbled by the consequences of neglecting it.
9. Engaging in only part of the duty of fasting, neglecting some aspects of it.
10. Not earnestly pursuing the intended purpose of fasting, whether it be for prayer, self-examination, wrestling with God, or seeking spiritual transformation.

When approaching the duty of fasting, we should avoid two extremes: giving it excessive importance as if it merited salvation, could mortify sin, or replace true religious worship; and, on the other hand, minimizing its significance and disregarding its beneficial role in shaping our spirits, preparing us for prayer, self-examination, and

communion with God. Fasting should be recognized as a valuable means to achieve these ends, and its neglect should be avoided.

Before engaging in fasting, we can sin in several ways:

1. Mistaking the right purpose of fasting and failing to consider it as a means to help us attain a more spiritual frame of mind.
2. Neglecting to study and understand the specific reasons that call for fasting, and not allowing our hearts to be properly affected and convicted by them.
3. Fasting with selfish motives, seeking to be seen by others or merely following a cultural trend or fashion.
4. Not approaching fasting in obedience to God's command, but rather fasting for ourselves alone.
5. Failing to engage in a secret examination of our own hearts, neglecting to assess our spiritual condition, and not identifying the sins that may be prevailing within us.
6. Neglecting to have a personal interaction with God before fasting, seeking His enablement and assistance for the duty, both for ourselves and on behalf of others.
7. Neglecting to strive for a right relationship with God and failing to ensure that we are in good standing with Him before making our requests during the fast.
8. Neglecting Christ and falling into legalism during fasting, relying on our own efforts rather than depending on His grace and power.
9. Failing to separate ourselves from all other worldly affairs the night before the fast.
10. Being lazy and not rising early enough on the day of fasting as should be done.
11. Not seeking to keep our fasting private if it is meant to be so, rather than desiring to be seen by others.
12. Approaching fasting without seriousness and commitment, failing to set ourselves apart from distractions and arousing ourselves for the purpose.

These are important considerations to ensure that we approach fasting with the right mindset, motivations, and preparations, allowing it to be a meaningful and transformative spiritual practice.

During the time of fasting, we can commit various sins. Here are some examples:

1. Eating unnecessarily, even if it is just a small amount, when it is not required for sustaining us in our duties. While it is important not to hinder ourselves in prayer, we should allow our bodies to be affected to some extent by the act of abstaining.
2. Wearing flashy or overly fine apparel, similar to what we would wear on other days, instead of dressing in a manner that reflects the seriousness of the day.
3. Displaying inappropriate gestures or behaviors, such as laughing or behaving in a manner that is unsuitable for the solemnity of the day.
4. Engaging in hypocrisy by pretending to be more serious and burdened than we truly are.
5. Having wrong motives for fasting, such as seeking to appear holy, pursuing personal gain or political agendas, or using the fast as an opportunity to harm others under the guise of piety.
6. Neglecting works of mercy and failing to show compassion or assist those in need.
7. Engaging in regular work or exerting ourselves in lawful activities that are not befitting of the day.
8. Finding pleasure in temporal things and indulging in personal comforts instead of focusing on the purpose of the fast.

9. Allowing our thoughts and words to be preoccupied with lawful matters that divert our attention from the work of the day.
10. Viewing fasting as a burdensome task and wishing for it to be over so that we can return to our regular activities or pastimes.
11. Being negligent in prayer, lacking frequency, fervency, and pertinence to the day's purpose. There should be a specific emphasis in prayer on a fast day that is different from other days.
12. Failing to sincerely join with others in prayer, particularly in matters concerning others.
13. Showing little mourning or heart-melting, especially in private devotions, which should be more frequent, serious, and affecting on a fast day compared to other days.
14. Insufficient exercise of repentance or a lack of deep sense of sin, which is crucial for humbling our hearts and recognizing our own unworthiness.
15. Insufficient focus on God's holiness, His displeasure against sin, and the need for genuine repentance, which should be highlighted on a fast day.
16. Neglecting to enter into a distinct covenant with God and engage in a commitment to address our known sins and shortcomings. A fast day should be a day of covenanting with God, as seen in the examples of Ezra and Nehemiah.
17. Being deficient in reading and meditating on materials that would bring about humility, and even more so, when our looks, words, or thoughts undermine the right disposition and setting of our hearts.

18. Relying on fasting as a means of righteousness or falling into legalistic practices.
19. Failing to consider the well-being and edification of others, lacking sympathy for their needs and not ensuring that those within our family or charge observe the fast.
20. Not abstaining from sexual relations with one's spouse, as instructed in 1 Corinthians 7:5.

These points highlight the various ways in which we can sin during the time of fasting and emphasize the need for sincere and wholehearted devotion to God's purposes during this spiritual practice.

After fasting, we can still sin in various ways. Here are some examples:

1. Quickly returning to other thoughts and distractions, failing to maintain the focus and mindset cultivated during the fast.
2. Allowing the spiritual frame and disposition we had attained during fasting to diminish and weaken over time.
3. Forgetting the confessions we made and the commitments we entered into during the fast, falling back into previous sins, and neglecting the duties to which we had pledged ourselves.
4. Being harsh and inflexible with others with whom we interact, failing to extend grace and understanding.
5. Neglecting to persist in prayer for the things we sought after during the fast, failing to continue seeking God's intervention and guidance.
6. Failing to assess and observe whether the things we prayed for during the fast have been answered or fulfilled.

7. Neglecting to reflect upon our conduct during the fast, failing to evaluate how well we discharged our duties and to discern areas for improvement.
8. Not humbling ourselves under the recognition of our numerous shortcomings and failings during the fast.
9. Feeling relieved and glad when the fast is over, as if the restraint on our carnal desires has been lifted.
10. Resting solely on the outward performance of fasting, assuming that all necessary spiritual work has been completed.
11. Developing a sense of self-righteousness or superiority based on our outward observance of the fast.
12. Becoming vain or prideful if our fasting is well-regarded by others.
13. Failing to be vigilant and watchful in our subsequent actions and behaviors, neglecting to ensure that they align with the spirit and purpose of the fast.

These points serve as reminders of the potential sins that can occur after fasting and highlight the corresponding duties and qualities required for the proper discharge of these spiritual practices. If we prevent these sins and cultivate the appropriate manner of engaging in these duties, we will experience a more genuine and fruitful worship. Without the necessary manner and attitude, our prayers, praises, and worship may be questioned by the Lord Himself, as He asks, "Is this the kind of fast I have chosen?" (Isaiah 58:5) and "Who has required of you this trampling of my courts?" (Isaiah 1:12). These probing questions from the Lord should lead us to carefully examine and refine our prayers and worship, casting away anything that violates His commands.

In the manner of enforcing this command, three elements are employed: a reason, a commination, and a promise. These elements indicate that there is a propensity for people to fail in fulfilling this command and that God takes special notice of both the required duties and the forbidden sins within it. One may question the necessity for such strictness in worship and argue that as long as it is directed towards the true God, some mixture of previously abused practices should not be of great concern. To address this, God provides the reason: "I am a jealous God." This statement implies that God desires not only His Church and spouse to be honest and chaste in themselves but also to exhibit a chaste-like demeanor. It is akin to Caesar's statement that his wife should not only refrain from any impropriety but also avoid any suspicious behavior. God expects His people to conduct themselves towards Him with the same level of circumspection as a wife would towards a jealous husband, being mindful to avoid any action or appearance that could give cause for suspicion. Jealousy here implies two things. First, it signifies a readiness or inclination to suspect anything that might suggest the giving of what is due to God to someone or something else. Just as a husband is said to be jealous when he is prone to suspect a lack of love from his wife and interprets every circumstance as indicative of her affections turning towards another, even in the absence of demonstrative evidence. This is how jealousy is understood among human beings.

In addition to the first aspect of jealousy mentioned, it also implies a severe indignation against anything that gives grounds for suspicion. God's jealousy cannot tolerate actions or attitudes that seem to slight Him or incline the heart towards another. Jealousy is referred to as "the rage of a man" in Proverbs 6:34, indicating that such offense will not be tolerated even when other wrongs may be overlooked. Anything that appears to disregard or divert affection from God is intolerable to jealousy. These two aspects, when applied to God after the manner of humans (as many other things are), demonstrate that He will not accept anything suspicious in His worship. If His people deviate even slightly from the given rule, He will be provoked to

avenge such transgressions upon them. This is the force of the reason provided.

The commination or threatening further confirms this point. It states, "visiting the iniquities of the fathers on the children." To visit here means to punish the children for the sins of their fathers. Even if God were to seem to forget the breaches of this command and overlook corruptions introduced by humans in His worship, He declares that He will visit or take revenge on that iniquity not only in the present generation but also in the following generations, up to the third and fourth.

To understand this commination, let us examine several aspects: the punishment threatened, upon whom it is inflicted, how it is executed, and why the Lord does so. By clarifying these points, we can reconcile this passage with Ezekiel 18, where it is said that "the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father."

Regarding the punishment threatened, we do not believe that this passage speaks solely of temporal punishments, while Ezekiel 18 speaks of eternal punishments. The context and scope of both passages contradict such an interpretation. Ezekiel 18 is prompted by the people's current distress and directly addresses temporal judgments. Therefore, this distinction does not resolve the apparent contradiction. Instead, we understand that primarily spiritual and eternal evils are being threatened by God upon the children of wicked parents. However, it is acknowledged that temporal judgments also follow as a consequence, and they are included in the overall threatening.

The clarity of this issue can be achieved by considering the following points:

1. The punishment threatened in this command corresponds to the punishment deserved by the breach of this command or other

commands. It is the punishment that sinful parents deserve, as it states that God visits the iniquities of the fathers on the children. However, the guilt of parents warrants eternal judgment, not merely temporal punishment.

2. The nature of the punishment threatened here must be consistent with the nature of the promise given afterward, as they are opposite to each other. To limit God's mercy to temporal benefits alone would be an injustice to His mercy towards His people. Therefore, this threatening must also encompass eternal consequences.
3. The overall purpose of this command is to restrain parents from the forbidden sins because such sins not only bring wrath upon themselves but also upon their posterity even after they are gone. This reasoning would not carry as much weight if the plagues threatened to parents were eternal while only temporal judgments were inflicted upon their children.
4. This threatening serves to differentiate between the children of the wicked and the children of the godly. However, temporal difficulties and strokes do not adequately establish this distinction since the children of the godly often experience them as well. Therefore, the difference must primarily lie in spiritual matters.

Taking all these factors into account, it becomes clear that the punishment threatened in this command includes spiritual and eternal consequences, although temporal judgments may also be involved.

5. The punishment threatened in this command specifically affects the third and fourth generations, and it does not typically extend beyond that. It is commonly observed that the children of wicked people prosper outwardly for a few generations before

experiencing temporal judgments. Therefore, it cannot be limited to temporal punishment alone in this context.

6. Examples such as Cain and Ham demonstrate that there was a particular curse that extended to their posterity, indicating that something more than temporal judgment was involved.

Now, let's address the second aspect of this issue: the party threatened with such punishment. It is important to note that it is not solely the fathers who are mentioned, but rather the children after them, as seen in Jeremiah 32:18. In light of this, we should consider the following:

1. The children who are subjected to this punishment are not innocent in themselves. They are guilty before the Lord due to original corruption or a combination of original and actual sin, making them deserving of such plagues. Therefore, they have no grounds to claim that the punishment is unjust. Whether the judgments are temporal or spiritual, the children have merited them, and they cannot argue that they are being treated unfairly. This understanding reconciles this passage with the one in Ezekiel where God challenges them to recognize their own sin in their afflictions.
2. The threat against the children of wicked parents is limited to the third or fourth generation, indicating that not all their posterity is cursed. This limitation is due to God's kindness, which leaves a door of hope open for repentant sinners. Just as mercy provided a door of hope for fallen humanity in Adam, the threats of the new covenant are not so absolute as to shut the door of mercy on sinners. The third and fourth generations are specifically mentioned because they are closest to the parent and carry more of their nature. The Lord threatens them to deeply impact and affect the parents, as they often live to see the consequences experienced by these generations.

3. It is important to understand that in this threatening (as well as in the following promise), God is not establishing an unchangeable rule to which He must always adhere. To suggest such a limitation would undermine His election and the sovereignty of His grace. The scope of this passage is to declare what usually and ordinarily happens and what people may expect from God's justice. However, it should be understood that the son of a wicked person may be elected, and the son of a godly person may be rejected. God may choose to extend His plagues beyond the third or fourth generation, or He may choose to end them sooner according to His good pleasure. While this threatening serves to restrain parents from sin, it also leaves room for mercy towards many of these children. Similarly, the promise has exceptions for the children of godly parents who do not walk in the paths of their parents. Many instances in Scripture demonstrate both scenarios.

Now, we turn to the third question: How does God execute this threatening? Or, how does He subject children to eternal plagues for their parents' sins?

Answer: First and foremost, God certainly and justly executes this punishment. Therefore, we must not only consider the children as guilty, but also as guilty of their parents' sins. Here's how we can understand it:

1. Regarding the child of a wicked parent, who is born with inherent corruption, God chooses not to bestow His renewing and restraining grace upon them, which He is not obliged to confer. The Lord's decision may be influenced by the guilt of the parents, and this is just.
2. When grace is withheld, the child becomes susceptible to the same sins as their parents. The Devil tempts them, and their parents, through their example, advice, and authority, encourage them in wickedness. In God's justice, they are allowed

to express their natural corruption in these ways. Thus, they end up affirming and validating their parents' actions, as it says in Psalm 49:13.

3. As a consequence, God condemns the child, who is now guilty of their parents' sins, to eternal damnation alongside them. This is the essence of the threat. We can see examples of God's justice in this matter in the cases of Cain's children, Ham's children, and Esau's children. Although they were prosperous in the world for a long time, their prosperity was overshadowed by their wickedness, which was a significant part of their curse. Eventually, God visited them with severe temporal judgments as well.

It is important to note that this punishment primarily encompasses spiritual and eternal consequences, rather than solely temporal ones. However, temporal judgments may also be included in the threat.

If one asks why God punishes and threatens the children of wicked parents, here are some reasons to consider:

1. God does it to make sin detestable, as it often leads to the loss of spiritual blessings and various types of blessings for entire generations and families.
2. It serves to instill fear in others, causing them to be deterred from sin and to stand in awe of a God who is so dreadful that He marks the race and descendants of His enemies with infamy.
3. It serves to further impact and weigh upon the sinner. It is part of their punishment to recognize that, through their sin, they have not only made themselves miserable but have also affected their entire posterity.

These reasons can be seen in the natural order of things, where nations, by the light of nature, not only punish individuals for their

crimes but also hold their posterity accountable and mark them with shame for certain offenses.

4. It demonstrates God's sovereignty and greatness, teaching people to acknowledge how treason against the Most High is to be regarded.
5. It highlights the importance of holiness and the necessity of seeking enrichment for oneself and one's children in God and a good conscience, rather than relying solely on temporal riches.

By understanding these reasons, we can see the purpose behind God's punishment and threat against the children of wicked parents.

These same questions and answers can also be applied to clarify the meaning of the promise. By understanding the concepts discussed earlier, we can better understand the promise given by God.

It is important to note that the Lord describes wicked individuals as those who hate Him. This illustrates how even the smallest sin amounts to a rejection of God, an act of despising Him, and choosing to prioritize one's own desires over Him. If God were truly loved, His holiness (which reflects His image) would also be loved. However, since holiness is universally hated by sinners, it follows that they must hate God Himself. Sinners often wish that there were no such commands from God, as these commands are contrary to their desires. On the other hand, the promise is given to the godly, who are described as those who love God and keep His commandments. The outward obedience to God's commandments is proof of their inward love for Him. There is no middle ground between loving God and keeping His commandments or hating Him and disregarding or breaking His commandments. Consequently, there is no middle ground between God's gracious promise to parents and children and His curse upon both.

Lastly, it should be noted that while every sin entails hatred towards God, He specifically uses the term "hating Him" to emphasize the sin

of corrupting His worship and service. This highlights the special enmity and abhorrence towards God that exists in that sin, and underscores its particularly offensive nature to Him. Conversely, God regards zeal for the purity of His worship as a remarkable expression of love for Him.

Let us conclude this commandment with some practical considerations. Firstly, we can recognize the profound impact of disobedience or holiness on ourselves and our descendants, extending into eternity. O parents! How merciful it is for you, both individually and for your children, to be godly. Unfortunately, many children suffer under the curse of profanity from their earliest days. Why would you, as parents, mistreat your innocent infants? Why would you neglect that which is best for them? Conversely, parents who fear God can find great comfort in this promise. While it may not apply to every individual, it excludes no one and encompasses many. It allows us to trust for the well-being of our posterity until they themselves reject the covenant that includes this promise. Moreover, it provides a basis for believers to expect that God may choose to extend His election among their own offspring rather than others. Although there are instances when God chooses some from the descendants of wicked parents, often His grace elects the descendants of the godly. Finally, we can find reassurance that God will provide for the temporal needs of our children. These promises are not in vain (Psalm 37:26, 102:28, 112:2; Proverbs 20:17).

2. Let us humble ourselves before God, recognizing His jealousy.
3. Let us detest sin, for it is abhorrent.
4. Let us embrace holiness, for it brings benefits to us and our descendants. Firstly, our children will receive the necessary temporal blessings (Psalm 37:26). Secondly, they will partake in spiritual and salvific blessings. Thirdly, they will enjoy all the privileges of the Church as the children of those within God's covenant.

5. Children, be humble when confronted with the iniquities of your parents. Do not participate in their unjust gains, for without repentance, you become guilty of their sins. This is especially important for children whose parents have opposed the purity of God's worship and hindered its reformation. Children can be implicated in their parents' transgressions and subsequently face various forms of punishment, and we believe this forfeiture is more severe than usual. Thus, just as among people, certain crimes warrant specific penalties, the same principle applies here. Firstly, children are guilty when they follow in their parents' footsteps, imitating their sins, as Jeroboam's children did. Secondly, they are guilty when they endorse their parents' actions and words, as mentioned in Psalm 49:13. Thirdly, they are guilty when they turn a blind eye to their parents' sins and wickedness. Fourthly, they are guilty when they boast about their parents' acts of oppression and bloodshed, considering them acts of valor and manhood. Fifthly, they are guilty when they are content that their parents sinned if it resulted in gaining possessions. Sixthly, they are guilty when they possess and enjoy, without repentance, the fruits of their parents' sinful acquisitions. Seventhly, they are guilty when they squander what their parents greedily amassed. The parent's sin becomes the seed of the child's sin. Eighthly, they are guilty when they express sorrow for not having the opportunity to live in ignorance, profanity, or licentiousness, as their fathers did, as seen in Jeremiah 44:17-19. They do not humble themselves before God for their predecessors' sins, nor confess them to Him, as described in Leviticus 26:42. They also fail to make amends for the losses or injustices their parents inflicted upon others.

The Third Commandment

"Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his Name in vain.." - Exodus 20:7

This command is emphasized by a warning from the Lord, revealing His seriousness and intent to hold people accountable for its violation. The purpose of this command is to sanctify, hallow, and hold in reverence the name of the Lord among His people. It calls for the avoidance of anything that dishonours His holy name or makes Him appear contemptible. Leviticus 22:32 confirms this purpose by adding a positive instruction to hallow God's name among the children of Israel. Therefore, the command extends beyond its initial appearance, aiming to cultivate a sense of holy awe and reverence for God in the heart and a reverent approach to everything concerning Him.

To gain a clearer understanding, let us examine what is meant by the name of God and what it means to take His name in vain.

1. The name of God often refers to God Himself, as calling on His name is equivalent to calling on Him directly.
2. Specifically, it refers to His titles and attributes ascribed to Him in Scripture, such as God, Jehovah, the Lord, Holy, Just, and other titles that signify His excellent being.
3. In a broader sense, it encompasses everything He uses to make Himself known since He has no name apart from the titles and means by which He reveals Himself. This includes:
 - a. His attributes, such as mercy, justice, omnipotence, which are referred to as His name in Exodus 34:6-7.

- b. His Word or Gospel, described as His name in Acts 9:15.
- c. His ordinances, sacraments, discipline, and censures, which are the exercise of His authority, as mentioned in Matthew 18:20 and 1 Corinthians 5:4.
- d. Prayer, as it is an integral part of approaching His name, recognizing that He is a God who hears prayers (Psalm 65:2).
- e. His works, which reveal His nature and existence, as stated in Romans 1:20-21.
- f. All forms of worship directed towards Him, as outlined in Deuteronomy 12:5 and Exodus 20:24.
- g. Lots, as they were used to discern God's will, as seen in Acts 1:26.

Through these means, God reveals Himself and His will. Thus, any action or profession that makes Him known should be approached reverently, acknowledging His authority and submitting to Him. This includes using lots, as mentioned in Proverbs 16:33, and engaging in professions that express submission to Him.

By all these means, God is to be known, and they can be encompassed under the concept of His name. The first reason is that the purpose of this command is to hallow and obey everything He commands, as seen in Leviticus 22:32 and the first petition of the Lord's Prayer, "Hallowed be Your name." Comparing it with the following petitions clarifies this point. The second reason is directly implied in the command itself. The third reason follows naturally in order to fulfill the command's purpose. Therefore, every word and work of God relates to this purpose.

The next aspect to clarify is what it means to take His name in vain. To take His name (as seen in Psalm 50:16 and 16:4) is to mention or engage with any of the aspects previously mentioned (which are

different aspects of His name) in thought, word, or deed, whether through writing or in any other way. Taking His name in vain does not only encompass false swearing, blasphemy, or improper use of His name when the matter is correct, nor is it limited to unnecessary swearing when it could be avoided. Rather, taking His name in vain also refers to when His name is not mentioned or utilized for a good purpose that brings honor to God, edifies others, and builds up ourselves. Whenever God's name is engaged with without producing fruit, it is done in vain.

The scope of this command, then, is to emphasize the importance of showing reverence to God. This includes:

1. Esteeming His holy majesty highly.
2. Reverently participating in all His ordinances in the proper manner as He has appointed.
3. Conducting ourselves in a manner that adorns the doctrine of the Gospel, ensuring that His name, which is named over us, is not spoken of in an evil or contemptible manner by others because of our actions (Romans 2:24).
4. More specifically, honoring God by using His name in a right, reverent, and edifying manner in our thoughts, speech, prayers, reading, writing, swearing, making vows, etc. and abstaining from any irreverence in these actions. Each of these actions should be carried out in a manner that befits the greatness of God, using them reverently when called upon to do so.

To understand what it means to mention God's name reverently, consider the following guidelines:

1. It is necessary that the subject matter in which God's name is mentioned is lawful. This means that all heretics, charmers, cursers, perjurers, and blasphemers are clearly guilty of violating this command.

2. The subject matter should not only be lawful but also important and significant. Engaging in lotting (casting lots) for trivial matters or swearing over something of no importance is an abuse of God's name and a form of tempting Him.
3. The subject matter should also be necessary. If a matter can be resolved in other ways, then neither lotting nor swearing should be employed. In Hebrew, the verb "to swear" is typically used in the passive voice to emphasize that people ought not to swear unless there is no other option and there is a lawful call to do so.
4. The manner in which it is done should be serious, deliberate, and well-understood. It should be carried out with judgment and reverence, as emphasized in Jeremiah 4:2.
5. A good and honorable purpose should be intended. This purpose may involve seeking God's honor, benefiting others, or vindicating ourselves in a necessary matter, provided it is not done in vain.

By adhering to these guidelines, we can ensure that the mentioning of God's name is done reverently and in accordance with the commandment.

There is a distinctiveness in this command compared to others. In other commands, God expresses the highest degree of each kind of sin to frighten people away from violating those commands. However, in this command, God does not specifically mention perjury or blasphemy, but rather taking the Lord's name in vain, which represents the lowest degree of that kind of sin. By doing so, God teaches us the reverence we owe Him and emphasizes the extensive scope of this command. He wants us to be cautious, so as not to come close to anything that may seem to breach it.

If we ask why the Lord is so insistent on this command and emphasizes even the slightest transgressions, the answers are as follows:

1. God does so to display His own greatness and to instill fear and reverence in the hearts of His people. Therefore, He desires that we use everything that pertains to Him with reverence, ensuring that the proper distance between the heavenly God and earthly creatures is imprinted on us and maintained.
2. God's name, by which He reveals something of Himself or that infinite and excellent Being known as God, is great, awe-inspiring, and glorious. As a result, it deserves to be held in reverence. This demands extraordinary vigilance in showing our respect for it.
3. This command serves as a means to restrain atheism and profanity, which the Devil promotes by gradually reducing people's estimation of God and habituating them to profane His name. This is the path the Devil follows, and it often ensnares the young. Those who irreverently meddle with God's name are likely to become gross in other aspects as well.
4. God's name is precious and has been given to His people as a great refuge. Therefore, He does not want their unique blessing to be abused or misused. It is a matter of utmost importance.
4. God's name is precious and has been given to His people as a great refuge (Proverbs 18:10). Therefore, He will not allow that which is their singular mercy to be abused.
5. God is a Friend in Covenant, but this relationship does not diminish His honour or undermine the necessary distance we should maintain with Him. He is the great and dreadful Name, the Lord our God (Deuteronomy 28:58).
6. Reverence for God's name honours Him and adorns the profession of the Gospel before others, while irreverence in using His name dishonours Him in their eyes.

To delve further into the subject matter and the violations of this command, we will address the following points:

1. Swearing, making vows, or entering into public covenants with God.
2. Blasphemy.
3. Taking the name of the Lord in vain in worship, whether private or public, specifically addressing how it is done in vain through hypocrisy.
4. Taking the name of the Lord in vain outside of worship through careless and unnecessary usage.
5. How the name of the Lord is taken in vain in our daily lives, leading others to blaspheme God's name through our conduct.
6. Lots and similar practices.

We will consider these matters, particularly focusing on their practical implications. When discussing oaths, we will address the nature of an oath and its obligation. This command requires both the making and keeping of oaths, and it can be violated in relation to both aspects.

We will now distinguish between these four: 1. Oaths. 2. Asseverations. 3. Simple affirmations or assertions. 4. Imprecations or curses.

1. Oaths are made by directly invoking God using expressions such as "By God," "I swear by the Lord," or "By my holiness I have sworn" (Psalm 89).
2. Asseverations, also known as vehement assertions, are expressed by phrases like "As the Lord lives" or "As that light shines" as a way of emphasizing the truthfulness of a statement, invoking God's witness.
3. Simple assertions are made using terms like "in truth," "truly," or "indeed," which simply state that something is true or false.

These fall under the scope of the ninth commandment, which pertains to truthful speech.

4. Imprecations can be either self-directed, conditional statements such as "If this is true, then let me perish" or "May shame befall me if I do not do this or that," or they can be directed towards others, involving expressions like "May shame befall you," "May the Devil take you," or "May vengeance be upon you." These expressions are abominable and should not be used.

By distinguishing these categories, we can better understand the various ways in which the name of the Lord is invoked and the appropriate usage and reverence that should accompany each.

Let us now distinguish between two types of oaths: assertory oaths and promissory oaths. Assertory oaths confirm the truth of a statement, while promissory oaths commit the person swearing to fulfill a future action, either unconditionally or with specific conditions.

It is important to recognize that, when properly qualified, oaths are a lawful aspect of God's worship and should be used by His people. This truth is evident in Scriptures such as Deuteronomy 10:20, Deuteronomy 6:13, and Jeremiah 4:2. However, we will not delve into the topic of Anabaptists, who deny the lawfulness of oaths under the New Testament, as few hold such beliefs in modern times. Instead, we will focus on discussing the qualifications for proper swearing, addressing practical questions, and examining how this commandment can be violated with regards to swearing.

When considering an oath, we must examine: 1. Its subject matter. 2. Its form. 3. The reason or calling for the oath. 4. The specific words used. 5. Our approach and attitude towards it. 6. Our commitment to keeping the oath, which will be addressed separately.

In terms of the subject matter, assertory oaths must involve truthful and significant matters that we know to be true. Promissory oaths,

on the other hand, should pertain to just and lawful actions that are possible, beneficial, within our control, and known to us.

Regarding the form of the oath, it must be made by invoking the true God. This is because swearing by someone or something we cannot invoke is not in accordance with the worship of God. Therefore, idols, creatures, graces, and the like are excluded as objects of swearing, as they are not God.

Furthermore, the rise or reason for swearing must be for edification, which includes bringing glory to God, vindicating ourselves, promoting the good of our neighbors, or obeying the call of a magistrate. Swearing should also be used when there is no other means available for resolving or determining a particular matter. In such cases, we say that someone was "sworn" passively, as the Hebrew language does not have an active verb form for swearing, emphasizing that individuals ought not to swear but may be compelled to do so out of necessity.

Regarding the expressions used in the oath or the subject matter being sworn to, it is essential not only for it to be true according to the understanding and intention of the person swearing, but also for the expressions to be clear and intelligible to the one to whom the oath is given. In other words, the meaning should be evident and commonly derived from the words and phrases used. Additionally, the expressions should align with how they are understood by others, particularly the one who is requiring the oath. Engaging in equivocations or mental reservations is to be condemned in this context, as they involve ambiguity in words or holding a different meaning in our thoughts than what appears to be conveyed in our words.

When it comes to the proper manner of swearing, several aspects should be considered. Firstly, it should be done with understanding and knowledge of what is being sworn and the nature of the oath itself, recognizing that God is present as the ultimate witness. Fear

and reverence should accompany the act of swearing, as we recognize the solemnity of invoking God's name. Secondly, the intention should be sincere and honest, aiming not to deceive anyone but to express the truth faithfully. This is referred to as righteousness in Jeremiah 4:2. These characteristics and qualifications generally apply to oaths, asseverations, and imprecations.

Now let us address some questions to further clarify this matter.

The first question is: How do oaths differ from asseverations?

The answer is that both oaths and asseverations should be made in truth and judgment, with fear, and when called upon. However, they differ in that oaths specifically require the mention of the true God and swearing by Him. Asseverations, on the other hand, can be expressed in ways such as "As thy soul lives" (2 Kings 2:2, 4, 6), without swearing by the soul of any individual.

The second question is: What can we say about oaths made by invoking angels, saints, Mary, Paul, or other creatures, such as heaven, light, the world, or by using terms like soul, conscience, faith, etc.?

Our answer is that we need not delve into intricate distinctions, as we consider all of these oaths to be simply unlawful. First, none of these beings or things are God, and swearing is a unique aspect of His worship (Deuteronomy 6:13). Swearing by anything that is not God is condemned (Jeremiah 5:7). Second, we cannot invoke any of these entities or qualities, and therefore we cannot swear by them, as an oath entails invoking the one we swear by. Third, these entities lack the necessary properties associated with the one to whom this worship belongs, such as omniscience, omnipotence, justice, and sovereignty. Fourth, such oaths would go against the purpose of this command, which designates this worship as exclusively due to God and implies that He alone possesses these properties. Fifth, Jesus explicitly prohibits such oaths in Matthew 5:34, "Swear not at all,

neither by heaven nor by the earth," as heaven and earth are in a subordinate relationship to God. Sixth, since none of these things are God who can hold us accountable if we swear falsely, nor are they truly ours that we can offer them as a pledge, we should refrain from swearing by them. We cannot even change the color of a single hair on our head, let alone control our conscience or increase our faith, so we should not freely swear by these things. The passage in Matthew 5:36 supports this understanding. The passage in Matthew 23:16-17 speaks about the binding nature of an oath made sinfully, but it does not warrant the making of such oaths.

Let us now address the third question: What should be judged concerning asseverations such as "In conscience," "in good faith," "as I shall answer," "as I am a Christian," "as I have a soul to be saved," and similar expressions?

First, we believe that if these asseverations were used rightly and in the appropriate manner, they could be lawfully employed, as supported by Scripture. Furthermore, we believe that if any oaths are used, these asseverations should be employed first, and a person may be called upon to use one of these when not directly swearing an oath. However, we think they can only be used in necessary situations when less solemn affirmations would not suffice. They should be used with fear, reverence, understanding, and other necessary qualifications. Therefore, those who casually and frivolously use these asseverations in common discourse commit sin, which we believe is forbidden by this command. When these asseverations are not used conscientiously, they can lead individuals to a greater degree of the sin prohibited here, as we observe that some people start with asseverations, then progress to idle oaths, and eventually to imprecations, as Peter sinfully did (Matthew 26).

Here are the reasons for our position:

1. All these asseverations are implicitly oaths and contain contrary imprecations within them. For example, "Let me not be

esteemed a Christian, nor have a soul to be saved" refers to God executing these imprecations. Therefore, as indirect oaths, they should be treated as oaths and fall under this command.

2. The purpose of a vehement asseveration is to provide stronger confirmation than an ordinary assertion. In this sense, it functions as an oath. Since it aligns with the essential qualities of an oath, they are materially the same, even if expressed differently.
3. Frivolous asseverations go against the rule in Matthew 5:37 and James 5:12, which states that our communication should be straightforward, without unnecessary elaboration. Anything beyond a simple affirmation is considered evil in ordinary communication, and these asseverations fall into that category.
4. We do not find examples of saints in Scripture using asseverations such as "My conscience bears me witness" to confirm matters. They exercised great reverence, even in matters they used to confirm by oaths. Swearing is often connected to these instances (Romans 9:1-2; 2 Corinthians 11:31).
5. If asseverations are used, they either confirm something or serve no purpose. Moreover, the needless use of them habituates people to mock and profane sacred things, leading to greater irreverence. Hence, those who frequently employ them are typically less careful in their overall conduct, eventually resorting to direct swearing.

Regarding the expression "good faith," which can mean truthfulness and sincerity without dissimulation, we acknowledge its legal interpretation in certain contexts such as "bona fide" and "mala fide." However, in common usage, "faith" carries a different meaning. We should use words as they are commonly understood by others. Even if it is not inherently evil, it has the appearance of evil,

which should be avoided (1 Thessalonians 5:22). Regardless of what "good faith" signifies, in ordinary usage, it implies more than a simple assertion. If someone were to tell me an untruth and add "in good faith" to confirm it, it would be considered more than an ordinary lie, violating the ninth commandment. Breaking one's good faith would be seen as dishonorable. Therefore, asseverations carry more weight on natural consciences than simple assertions do. This indicates that they are more closely related to and intertwined with this command than initially apparent.

In conclusion, while asseverations may have their rightful place and lawful usage, they should be approached with caution and employed only when necessary. Frivolous and casual use of these expressions is to be avoided, as they can lead to a diminishing of reverence and ultimately contribute to the violation of the commandment against taking the Lord's name in vain. It is crucial to uphold truthfulness, simplicity, and integrity in our communication, relying on straightforward affirmations without unnecessary embellishments. By doing so, we honor the sanctity of God's name and demonstrate reverence towards Him.

The fourth question is, what can be said about imprecations? Answer: Let us distinguish between those used against oneself, such as "May I not see heaven if that be not true," or similar expressions, and those used against others (speaking of private individuals), like "Shame fall upon you," "May the devil take you," and so on. These imprecations may be conditional, such as "If you do not do such a thing," or absolute, without any conditions. Here's what we can say: Firstly, while keeping the qualifications previously mentioned, and required for an oath, one may lawfully use some imprecations in certain cases, even against oneself, as we find examples of such patterns in Scripture. However, this should be done with great caution, circumspection, and tenderness.

Secondly, cursing others by private individuals out of passion or revenge is strictly prohibited for several reasons. Firstly, it detracts

from the glory of God if we invoke Him to serve our passions and execute our revenge, or if we replace Him with the devil or some other entity in these imprecations. Secondly, it goes against the love we owe to others.

As for mentioning the devil in such imprecations, using phrases like "devil a bit" or "fiend," it is utterly abominable. By doing so, we employ the devil in the place of God and forsake Him. There is no basis to expect a hearing from God for such a plea, so we turn to the devil, praying to him, reverencing and worshiping him as if he were just in executing our judgment when God does not. Sometimes, through these imprecations, we call on the devil, the father of lies, to witness the truth. How abominable it is to witness such words among Christians! There is no need to seek devil worshipers among wild Indians or witches when there are many to be found among Christians! How freely do these words flow from some people's mouths without any fear! Why is it that Christians worship the devil and swear by him, just as Israel did by Baal? It is a horrible thing to contemplate.

There are still some aspects of promissory oaths that need clarification, particularly in relation to assertory oaths and vows.

Firstly, let us consider how promissory oaths differ from assertory oaths. Both types of oaths share the aim of truthfulness. However, they differ in that assertory oaths pertain to the present truthfulness of what the swearer says or affirms, while promissory oaths involve a twofold truth. The first truth relates to the swearer's intention to fulfill the promise, and the second truth pertains to the future fulfillment of the promised matter. The first truth concerns the person making the oath, while the second truth relates to the actual matter or thing being promised.

Secondly, we should distinguish between vows and promissory oaths. Vows involve God as both the party involved and the witness,

whereas oaths may have someone else as the party involved but always have God as the witness to the oath or promise. However, there is a significant similarity between vows and promissory oaths in terms of the matter involved.

When it comes to promissory oaths, we can inquire about their making, their obligation, the matters in which they may be made, the occasions for making them, and the conditions under which they may be undertaken. It is beyond dispute and clear in Scripture that individuals can make oaths binding themselves to certain matters in which they were previously free. Therefore, we may explore the specific matters, occasions, and conditions in which such oaths may be engaged.

And as for the matters in which promissory oaths may be made, they can be classified into three categories:

1. The first category includes matters that are morally necessary, such as fearing, serving, and worshipping the true God. An example of this is Jacob's oath and vow in Genesis 28:20-21, where he pledged to make the Lord his God. Many covenants mentioned in the Old Testament also fall into this category, along with David's swearing in Psalm 119:106 to keep God's statutes.
2. The second category consists of civil, lawful, and morally good matters. This includes duties owed to superiors or fulfilling obligations to others, such as oaths of allegiance to lawful authorities. Examples of this can be seen in the oath sworn by the spies to Rahab in Joshua 2:12, as well as the oath made by David to Jonathan. It is undeniable that these oaths, when properly qualified, are lawful and acceptable.
3. The third category encompasses matters that are indifferent or neutral, such as matters related to eating or abstaining from

certain foods or drinks, or observing specific days. While these matters are not inherently unlawful, oaths related to them should be undertaken with great prudence. It should be ensured that the swearer is not using the name of God unnecessarily and that they cannot achieve their purpose in any other way. Additionally, such oaths should not be taken superstitiously, as a means to demonstrate one's conscience being bound by voluntary acts of worship. It is common for individuals to falter in these oaths, failing to uphold God's honor or benefit others. Therefore, it is advisable to engage in such oaths rarely or not at all, unless done with careful consideration and appropriate conditions.

Furthermore, the occasions on which parties engage in these oaths can be divided into three categories:

1. Public oaths and promises solemnly undertaken when authority calls us to do so. This may occur in official or ceremonial settings, where individuals are called upon to make commitments and pledges on behalf of a larger group or community.
2. Private oaths may be taken when the edification or satisfaction of another person requires it. In certain situations, a Christian may be called upon to provide reassurance or credibility by invoking the solemnity of an oath, as Jacob did with Laban.
3. An individual may also make personal oaths in secret to God, binding themselves to lawful and necessary matters, as David did when he declared, "I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments."

However, regardless of the type or occasion of these oaths, they should always be made with the qualifications mentioned in Jeremiah 4:2. Firstly, they should be made in truth, encompassing both the veracity of the person making the oath and the truth of the

matter being sworn. Secondly, they should be made with judgment, demonstrating knowledge and deliberation, fully understanding the implications of the oath. Lastly, they should be made with righteousness or justice, ensuring that the oath aligns with principles of equity and fairness, not causing harm or injustice to God or others. Oaths themselves serve as bonds of equity and justice, not instruments of wrongdoing.

It is also important to note the implicit or explicit conditions present in all promissory oaths. These conditions may be tacit or expressed, such as "If God wills" or "if nothing prevents," acknowledging that the fulfillment of the oath is subject to circumstances and potential hindrances. Oaths should aim to fulfill their purpose as far as it is possible and lawful to do so. They should only bind individuals to lawful actions, using lawful means and methods. This particularly applies to indefinite oaths, where the scope of the commitment may not be clearly defined. Additionally, oaths remain valid only as long as the situation remains unchanged. If circumstances fundamentally alter, and individuals become enemies of the kingdom or commonwealth to which they were bound by oath, and if fulfilling the oath would lead to probable ruin or danger to that entity, then it is not within their power to fulfill it, considering the authority of higher powers.

It may be asked, how we should evaluate indefinite oaths, such as the oaths soldiers give to their officers, pledging obedience, or oaths taken in complex matters where the specific details are not obvious, such as oaths in colleges, corporations, towns, and the like.

The answer is that these oaths cannot be entirely condemned. Firstly, even though a person may not possess, or may not be capable of possessing, detailed knowledge of every particular aspect, they understand these oaths as binding them to all necessary and lawful obligations as required by the general conditions. Secondly, individuals take these oaths with the understanding that they bind themselves to the commonly accepted and understood sense of the

oath, encompassing the essential aspects relevant to the existence of that institution, without necessarily including every single particular strictly.

Based on these considerations, we can conclude the following: Firstly, trivial oaths should be condemned, such as oaths made in jest or as part of compliments, where individuals swear about insignificant matters like who goes first or expressing exaggerated hospitality. Secondly, hasty and thoughtless promises should be condemned as well, those made without due consideration or in a state of doubt. However, before discussing specific cases, let us examine what constitutes perjury, the most severe form of oath-breaking.

Perjury can be classified into different types, some being more direct and immediate, while others are more indirect or mediated.

The first type of perjury occurs when someone, under oath, asserts as true something they know to be false, or when they have doubts about its truthfulness. It can also happen when individuals make mistakes due to their own negligence, being uncertain about the accuracy of their statements, whether affirming or denying. For example, Naboth's false witnesses were guilty of this type of perjury, and numerous other instances can be cited.

The second type is when someone makes a promise that they have no intention of fulfilling and confirms it with an oath. In this case, they are undoubtedly guilty of perjury because there is a lack of consistency between their oath and their true intentions.

The third type is when individuals make a promise and genuinely intend to fulfill it, but later fail to do so without any justifiable reason. This also constitutes perjury because there is a lack of truthfulness in fulfilling the sworn obligation as specified in the oath. These examples represent direct acts of perjury.

Furthermore, a person can be said to forswear themselves in a broader sense. Firstly, when they swear to fulfill something that is simply impossible, especially when they are fully aware of its impossibility. This type of swearing is not done in a just and truthful manner; rather, it is a profane and wicked act of swearing, going against one's own knowledge and judgment by uttering a blatant lie. Thus, there is an inherent contradiction between the promise to perform such an impossible task and the actual fulfillment of it. For example, if someone were to swear to be in Rome tomorrow while they are currently in Glasgow, the act of swearing itself becomes a form of forswearing.

Secondly, one can forswear themselves by swearing to accomplish an unlawful or wicked act or by confirming it with an oath. This includes situations where the oath goes against a previously sworn duty. Swearing in such circumstances is not done in righteousness and justice. Moreover, it leads to a dilemma of either breaking the oath and thus committing perjury or carrying out the wicked act and becoming doubly perjured.

Thirdly, individuals become forsworn and perjured when they fulfill a wicked oath, as Herod did when he beheaded John the Baptist (Matthew 14). Although Herod appeared to uphold his own oath, in reality, this action contradicted and invalidated the nature and purpose of oaths in general. It transformed an oath, which should be a bond of equity (as there is no obligation except to fulfill one's duty), into a bond of iniquity. This undermines the very purpose for which oaths are instituted. In this regard, David acted wisely by not executing his rash oath and instead heeding the counsel of Abigail, thereby preserving the overarching goal of all oaths.

Regarding the question of whether one person can be an accessory to another's perjury by forcing them to swear when there is suspicion that they will commit perjury, we need to make some distinctions.

Firstly, consider the matter at hand. If it is a matter of grave importance, or if it is of little significance.

Secondly, distinguish between the public nature and the privacy of the situation.

Thirdly, distinguish between the parties involved, such as a judge who is responsible for making a decision and a party who is the plaintiff.

In light of these distinctions, we can make the following observations.

If a party pursuing their own interest, particularly in a matter of little significance, has a suspicion that someone will commit perjury, it is advisable for them to refrain from pressuring that person to swear. This is both to spare the individual and out of reverence for the name of God, as it is unlikely that the party will benefit greatly from such a situation.

However, when it comes to a judge, there may be circumstances where they are justified in allowing someone to swear, especially in cases involving public scandals. This is because only God truly knows the heart, and it is God's way of resolving disputes. A judge may have no other means to bring closure to a controversy, particularly when it pertains to a matter that Scripture designates to be decided by oath, as mentioned in Exodus 22:17.

Nevertheless, great prudence should be exercised when dealing with such situations, taking into account the specific circumstances and the guidance provided in Scripture for resolving disputes through oaths.

The question arises concerning a promissory oath, whether it can ever be rendered void and cease to hold its obligation, or in what circumstances that may occur.

It should be evident that not every oath is binding in a strict sense, and this requires no further explanation. In general, there are two ways in which the obligation of a promissory oath can cease. Firstly, when the oath itself is null and void from the beginning, having no binding force. Secondly, when there are external factors or events that occur, which release one from the obligation that was initially present in the oath.

However, it is crucial to emphasize that despite the possibility of an oath being released from its obligation, oaths themselves carry a profound and solemn obligation due to the inclusion of the great and awe-inspiring name of God. There are many things that, regardless of the weight placed upon them by human authority, do not free one from this obligation. We shall set aside these considerations for now and address them subsequently.

1. The loss of one's material possessions, reputation, or estate does not release a person from their oath or render it null and void. The engagement through an oath to something inherently indifferent does not free one from its obligation. Even if there were no other binding factor apart from the oath, once engaged, the oath holds its binding power. This is evident from Psalm 15:4, which emphasizes the obligation of an oath. An oath, by its very nature, carries its own inherent obligation, and individuals must fulfill their oath as stated in Numbers 30:2.
2. If the oath is made under deceit and trickery by others, but the matter itself is not sinful, it still binds us. This is illustrated in the example of the oath made to the Gibeonites, where deceit was involved.
3. Even if an oath is extracted through fear or violence, it still holds its binding force when the matter is lawful, due to the honor of God's name being interposed.

4. If an oath was initially made in a sinful or rash manner, as in the case of the oath with the Gibeonites, it remains binding if the matter itself is lawful. There is a significant distinction between an "unlawful oath" regarding its manner and an "oath regarding an unlawful matter."
5. If one attempts to devise an interpretation or meaning of the oath that may seem to release them from its obligation, but the intended understanding at the time of taking the oath was different, it will not absolve or excuse them from the guilt of perjury. An oath is strict and does not allow for interpretations that undermine its inherent truthfulness, as it would be considered deceitful swearing, as mentioned in Psalm 24.
6. Even if there may be a good intention in reversing or acting contrary to the oath, not driven by personal motives but for the presumed public good, it will not release one from the obligation of the oath or the guilt of perjury. This is evident in God's punishment of Saul's family for breaking the oath with the Gibeonites, despite Saul's zeal for the children of Israel and Judah, as explicitly stated in 2 Samuel 21:2.
7. Even if the object or immediate cause of the oath is a creature, as long as the oath has been made, it binds us due to the respect owed to God, who reveals Himself through His creation (Matthew 23:19-21).
8. If a sworn obligation becomes impossible to fulfill, and that impossibility could have been prevented through self-examination and diligence on our part, we are not freed from the guilt of perjury. This applies when the sworn matter could have been accomplished before the impossibility arose or if we could have prevented it through appropriate circumspection and effort.

9. Although a sinful oath, made based on a sinful promise, does not bind in itself, once the sinful condition has been fulfilled, the oath becomes binding. An example is the case of Judah, who promised a kid to Tamar based on the wicked condition of her prostituting herself to satisfy his sinful lust. Once that sinful condition was fulfilled, the promise became absolute. The sin was not in giving the kid but in the sinful condition that was made, which is now in the past.
10. It is even less valid to claim exemption from the guilt of perjury by asserting that one had a different meaning or interpretation of the words of the oath than what is commonly understood or intended by others, or by keeping a reservation in one's own mind. These actions—equivocation and mental reservation—have no place in a proper oath, which should be straightforward, sincere, and transparent.
11. A dispensation from any authority, including the Pope, who has no power to dispense in oaths, or from lawful superiors (except in matters where we are subject to their authority), does not loosen the obligation of our oath or free us from the guilt of perjury. If the matter of the oath falls outside the scope of their power over us, they cannot grant a dispensation in such matters.
12. The obligation of an oath cannot be nullified, and perjury cannot be evaded, by substituting or changing the thing that was sworn. We are bound by what has proceeded from our own mouths, as stated in Numbers 30:2 and Psalm 15:4.
13. Nor can the obligation of an oath be loosened and perjury avoided by subsequent oaths or commitments. The prior oath is not nullified by the later one; instead, the later oath is rendered null by the prior oath. This is because an oath made to God or any other party cannot be reversed or invalidated by a subsequent obligation, as no one can override or negate a prior obligation that exists by rightful claim.

But they are null and of no force in the following cases:

1. When the thing sworn is inherently sinful and unlawful. There is no binding obligation to engage in wrongdoing, as there is no bond of iniquity.
2. When it is unlawful for the person taking the oath to fulfill it, such as when an individual, who is a private person without the authority of a magistrate or minister, swears to perform a duty that is solely the responsibility of those in official positions. In such cases, the oath obliges the person to support and facilitate the fulfillment of the duty through appropriate means, but not to perform the duty themselves, as it does not alter their personal station.
3. When the thing sworn is simply impossible to accomplish, oaths cannot impose obligation in such circumstances.
4. When the person taking the oath does not have control or authority over the matter sworn, such as children, wives, servants, or subjects, who are subject to the authority of others in certain matters. In such cases, the oath binds them to make efforts to fulfill the obligation with the approval or permission of those who have authority over them, as seen in Numbers 31.
5. When the deception lies not in circumstantial details, but in essential aspects. For example, if someone swears to pay a debt or provide obedience to a person they believe to be someone else but is not, the foundation of the oath is null, and its obligation ceases. This is because such an oath wrongs the rightful recipient of the debt or obedience and is based on a false assumption of the condition.
6. When the oath prevents the fulfillment of a greater good or moral duty. For instance, if someone swears not to go to a certain place, not to speak to a particular person, or not to eat certain food, but fulfilling the oath would hinder their moral

duty or prevent them from pursuing a necessary obligation, the oath does not bind. A moral command may require them to go to that place for a specific responsibility or to speak to that person for their edification. However, this should be applied with great caution and discernment.

7. When the oath obligates the performance of something that leads to an evil end. For example, if a person swears to meet a woman for engaging in immoral acts or to provide weapons for harmful purposes, even though the individual acts themselves may be lawful, the specific intention behind them in this context is unlawful. Therefore, the oath is null and void.

For releasing from the obligation of a lawful oath, the following cases are recognized:

1. When it is contradicted by a superior who has authority in that specific matter, as seen in Numbers 31.
2. When the circumstances materially change, such as if someone swears to provide arms to a person who later becomes mentally ill or an enemy, or swears obedience to a commander who subsequently becomes a private individual and ceases to hold a commanding position. In such cases, the relationship on which the duty and oath were based ceases to exist.
3. When the party to whom the oath is made releases us from it. While no one can absolve themselves from a vow, in a promissory oath where a right accrues to one person from another, the person who is owed something can waive their right. For example, if someone forgives or partially releases another from the obligation to fulfill a sum of money they had sworn to give, the oath and its obligation are loosened to the extent that the forgiveness or discharge is accepted. However, in vows made to God, no person can grant dispensation since God is a party to those vows.

4. When an unforeseen and subsequent event renders the person completely unable to fulfill their oath, such as sickness or being robbed. In such cases, as long as the person is disabled, they are released from the obligation. The disabling condition is understood to be a necessary consideration when initially giving the oath, and the obligation to perform remains in place once the person becomes capable again.

It is worth noting, by the way, that often irreligious individuals are more scrupulous in keeping sinful oaths than lawful ones. The Devil, as a snare, places a strong sense of obligation on them regarding their sinful oaths, and their own corruption aligns with the oath in its content, making it appear compellingly binding to them.

If it is asked, "Wherein does an oath bind more than a promise?"

The answer is that an oath binds to nothing beyond what is promised, but it carries a stronger binding force. Therefore, breaking an oath is a greater sin than breaking a mere promise. This is because an oath not only engages our truthfulness towards others but also our reverence and respect towards God, whose holy name is invoked and solemnly involved in the oath.

In light of this understanding, perjury or false swearing, hasty and thoughtless swearing, trivial and meaningless oaths (such as swearing not to drink or to walk before someone), solemn oaths taken during religious ceremonies like communions or baptisms, or oaths made in lawful covenants that are not fulfilled—these all stand in contradiction to the doctrine of oaths. How often do we break these oaths, even when we could easily keep them? We exhibit irreverent swearing even in matters that are right and proper. We engage in grossly profane swearing, invoking God's soul, wounds, blood, and so forth. We employ strange and newly invented oaths, which undoubtedly originate from the cunning of the Devil. We curse others, mentioning the Devil and seeking his assistance in executing

our passionate and vengeful imprecations. Furthermore, our failure to be appropriately affected by the oaths of others, our neglect to admonish them and seek their recovery, our lack of diligence in preventing oaths by providing proper instruction and correction when necessary, and our failure to establish schools and educational institutions—all these contribute to making us guilty of oaths we may never have uttered ourselves, as they occur in individuals whom we should have taught and admonished.

There are certain practices closely related to oaths, such as adjurations, where we charge or solemnly command someone by the name of God to do or refrain from something. Examples of adjurations can be found in various instances in the Bible, such as when Saul bound the people with a curse (1 Samuel 14), when Joshua charged Achan (Joshua 7), when Jesus adjured the high priest (Matthew 26), and when Paul adjured Timothy (1 Timothy 5:21; 6:13).

Adjurations differ from oaths in that, with an oath, we bind ourselves to do or refrain from something or to tell the truth. With adjurations, however, we bind others by invoking the name of God to command, charge, or persuade them to do or refrain from something. It often implies, if not explicitly expresses, a threat or curse if the action is not performed or refrained from. There are three types of adjurations mentioned in Scripture: adjuring men, adjuring demons, and adjuring irrational creatures such as serpents. Let's consider each of these in turn.

Regarding the first type, we can say that there are occasions when people may adjure others in weighty matters that are fitting and necessary. It should be done correctly, not in a state of passion or for personal gain, but in a serious, solemn, and sincere manner for the immediate glory of God or for the benefit of others. Many examples in the Bible support this practice, and sometimes it becomes necessary when human considerations do not sufficiently weigh upon the conscience. By appealing to God's authority as a witness

and judge, this form of adjuration can have a convicting effect on individuals before God and can serve as a means, through His blessing, to make them take matters seriously. This type of adjuration can be distinguished in the following way.

To summarize the four types of adjurations:

1. Proper adjurations or charges: These are authoritatively laid on in the name of God or Jesus Christ by magistrates or ministers in their positions of authority. This is seen when Paul charges Timothy and gives him the responsibility to charge others. This type of adjuration is used in serious and weighty matters and should not be employed too frequently, as it can lead to the Name of God being treated with contempt. It carries the most weight and authority.
2. Obtestations: These involve serious and weighty entreaties and beseechings in the name of God and for Christ's sake, urging someone to do or refrain from something. Examples include Paul's beseeching of the Romans and Philippians by the mercies of God. Obtestations are most commonly made by inferiors, subjects, children, etc., to their superiors. They often carry an implicit threat if the matter is disregarded, as seen in Abigail's words to David.
3. Attestations: These involve seriously testifying to the truth or bearing witness to a truth asserted by another person. An example is Joshua attesting to Achan's guilt.
4. These forms of adjurations, attestations, and obtestations have a binding virtue in certain cases and should not be lightly disregarded. To disregard them would be to show contempt for God, who is invoked in these charges and before whom they are attested. While it may not be perjury for a person to remain silent when being attested or to speak something that is untrue, such actions still reflect contempt and are greater sins than if no

adjurations, attestations, or obtestations had been employed. If these forms of solemn appeals are deemed lawful, as we have shown in certain cases, then they should carry weight, or else they are used in vain. Jesus Himself responded to such charges after a period of silence, as seen in Matthew 26.

Overall, adjurations, attestations, and obtestations serve as solemn and serious means of appealing to the authority of God and should be treated with reverence and gravity.

In regards to these failings:

1. There is a lack of giving proper attention and weight to the charges and obtestations of ministers. When ministers deliver messages from the Word and Gospel, their charges should be treated as if a herald were giving a charge in the name of a magistrate, carrying the authority of the great God and Jesus Christ, the Prince of the Kings of the Earth. Ministers act as heralds charging you in their Master's name, and their words should be taken seriously.
2. When one of you does not earnestly urge and exhort others to forsake sin or practice a certain duty, charging them or rather obtesting them to do so, it reflects a failure. Just as we find in the Canticles where there are serious charges to the Daughters of Jerusalem, there should be a genuine concern and earnestness in urging others to righteousness.
3. There is a tendency to use obtestations and grave entreaties in an overly rash and trivial manner, merely for fashion or as a form of complement. When phrases like "for God's sake" or "for God's blessing" are used lightly and without genuine consideration, it becomes more than an ordinary misuse of God's name in common discourse. It is a serious sin because it assumes the authority to bind others in the name of God without proper understanding or necessity. This exposes the name of the

Lord to contempt and tempts others to disregard its significance. This sin is commonly found among beggars and is also committed by others who fail to be appropriately affected by it and neglect to address the issue. Additionally, casually and irreverently invoking God's name in requests for trivial actions, such as sitting down or rising up, is also a frequent occurrence and should be avoided.

These failings demonstrate a lack of reverence and seriousness towards the charges and obtestations that come from ministers and the name of God. It is important to rectify these shortcomings and approach such matters with the gravity and respect they deserve.

Concerning the adjuring of devils, there are lawful and unlawful ways to engage in such actions.

1. It is lawful to command devils in the name of God for those who are called and gifted to cast them out. This authority is given to individuals who have been specifically chosen and equipped for this task.
2. It is also lawful for anyone, through prayer to God and exercising faith in Him, to resist and repel the influence of demons. By praying and invoking the Lord to rebuke the devil, one seeks God's intervention and protection.

On the other hand, it is unlawful:

1. When someone who is not called or gifted attempts to adjure devils. This was exemplified by the sons of Sceva in Acts 19:13-14. The authority to cast out demons is a unique and extraordinary gift, and it should not be usurped without proper authorization.
2. It is unlawful to engage in exhorting, obtesting, or praying to the devil himself, treating him as if he were a friend or an object of worship. This implies a false sense of friendship with the devil,

offering prayers or worship to him, and establishing an obligation to him when he appears to obey. The devil will eagerly seek to exploit such situations, even if it is not through an explicit agreement, to deceive and gain influence over individuals. Practices such as necromancy, witchcraft, and exorcisms conducted in collusion with the devil are not only deceptive but also a breach of the Third Commandment.

Many sins are committed through these actions. Some arrogantly attempt to command the devil, as if they could bind him with mere words. Others seek health or other favors from demons or witches, believing that such benefits can come from them. These actions are clear violations of the Third Commandment.

Regarding adjuring unreasonable creatures, the same principles apply as with adjuring devils. It can be lawful or unlawful, depending on the manner in which it is done. Charming and invoking the Lord's name over diseases, as if certain words had inherent power, are condemned by this commandment.

Now, let us turn our attention to vows. Vows are bonds in which a person binds themselves to God alone as the party involved, willingly and after careful consideration. They differ from adjurations, as vows are made directly to God in matters pertaining to Him, while adjurations involve commanding or beseeching others. We can include sacraments, solemnly entered covenants, personal vows to God, and promises and engagements, whether inwardly in the heart or expressed outwardly to or before the Lord, under the category of vows. Even purposes expressed in prayer to God can be considered of the same kind, though not of the same degree, as vows.

In terms of practice, we do not wish to engage in speculative debates about vows but focus on their practical aspects. We affirm that such promises to God and engagements, when properly made and undertaken, are not only lawful but sometimes necessary. This is evident from the command to vow and perform, as stated in Psalm

76:11. Additionally, we have examples of saints in all ages making vows. David, in Psalm 119, expresses his commitment to keep God's words and his sworn determination to fulfill God's righteous judgments. Saying and swearing to God are closely related, and those who sincerely speak to God in secret may also articulate their vows in certain cases.

The purpose of vows is to bind us more tightly to something and demonstrate our greater desire and willingness to be bound. Therefore, when this purpose is particularly called for and it is probable that the desired end can be better achieved through the use of vows, they become necessary and cannot be omitted. Moreover, the Lord graciously accepts and approves of such engagements and vows. The Scriptures also contain promises and prophecies that commend vows as acts of good service from people to God under the Gospel (Isaiah 19:18, 21; Jeremiah 50:4, 5; Isaiah 44:5).

Indeed, I agree with your points. In certain cases, when it brings glory to God, edifies others, or is beneficial to ourselves, making a vow may be appropriate. However, if it contradicts any of these principles, then it is not fitting. We may feel compelled by the pressure of the Spirit or compelling reasons to make a vow, or there may be a great need that calls for it, as seen in the example of Abraham in Genesis 14, where he vowed not to take any spoil from the defeated kings.

Furthermore, vows should not be made in all things. The content of a vow must fall into one of two categories: it should either be a commanded duty, as seen in the vows of Jacob (Genesis 28) and David (Psalm 119:106), or it should be something related to worship or that aids in fulfilling a commanded duty or preventing a particular sin to which we are inclined. For example, someone may vow to rise early in the morning to overcome their laziness and stay at home more to avoid the temptation of bad company. The vow is not simply about housekeeping or waking up early; rather, these actions are

employed to serve those specific purposes. Thus, vows can only be made to God alone, as stated in Psalms 76:11 and 132:2.

Moreover, vows should be approached in the right manner. They should be undertaken deliberately and judiciously, as ignorance, haste, and rashness can have detrimental effects. Humility and a proper awareness of our own corruption are necessary, as we recognize our need for such commitments to restrain our sinful tendencies and to motivate us to fulfill our duties. Vows should be made with reverence, sincerity, and zeal for God, with a genuine love for His honor and true holiness. They should not be made for selfish ends or to satisfy personal desires or in a momentary conviction to silence a challenge and avoid its demands.

- A vow should be undertaken wholeheartedly and cheerfully, not as a form of bondage, but as an expression of true freedom. There should be no hesitation or reservation in making the vow. If there is doubt or hesitation in the very act of undertaking the vow, it raises questions about one's commitment to fulfilling it.
- Vows require self-denial. We should deny ourselves any notion that the vow makes us more religious or more pleasing to God, as if it merits something or strengthens us in any way. Rather, the vow should be seen as a means of engaging ourselves to the Lord and committing to fulfill what we have vowed.
- Diligence is crucial in carrying out the vow. We should actively and consistently pursue the fulfillment of our vows, continually progressing in our commitment and encouraging others to join us. This reflects the practice of God's people as described in Jeremiah 50:4-5.
- Vows should be accompanied by a vibrant exercise of faith, drawing strength from Jesus Christ according to His promise. We must rely on Him for forgiveness of past failures and guilt, as well as for the grace and strength needed to fulfill the duties and obligations we have vowed to undertake. Therefore, every act of engaging in a vow is essentially covenanting with God, and such covenanting can only be done through the intervention and

mediation of Jesus Christ. He is the foundation upon which our vows rest. A suitable frame of spirit for covenanting can be seen in Jeremiah 50:4-5 when approached with sincerity and seriousness.

Regarding the binding nature of engagements, we can affirm that they are inherently obligatory and binding to those who enter into them. In Numbers 30:2-3, vowing is referred to as the binding of one's soul. Additionally, in Psalm 56:12, it is stated, "Your vows are upon me, O Lord," indicating that vows carry a weight and demand fulfillment.

If the question arises as to how vows bind, we can respond as follows: In terms of moral duties, vows do not increase the obligation itself, for the command of God already carries its own authority and weight. However, there are two aspects in which vows add to the obligation. First, in terms of our own volition and consent, we join our approval and consent to the command, effectively binding ourselves through our positive, voluntary agreement. Thus, in some sense, we have two bonds (the law and our oath) for the same duty. Second, while vows do not intensify the inherent obligation, they do deepen the impression and impact of that obligation upon us. When a person is bound by a vow to a commanded duty, they will perceive themselves as more bound to fulfill it than before. The command will have a greater influence and weight in persuading them to act and in convicting them if they fail to do so.

Regarding things that are merely accessories or extrinsic means to a religious end, such as fasting or staying at home, vowing does not transform these actions into acts of religious worship in themselves. However, vowing does establish a religious tie to the observance of these practices. Therefore, without profanity, they cannot be disregarded except in cases of necessity.

As for our common and ordinary engagements, further clarification is needed to address their specific context and nature.

Regarding common and ordinary engagements, such as those made through baptism, the Lord's Supper, oaths in covenants, and private engagements to God through vows, purposes, promises, resolutions, and expressed in prayer, we can provide the following answers:

1. These engagements are undoubtedly binding and continue to be regarded as such. They hold significant weight as they are made to God Himself, not just before Him. The nature of the commitments and our own consent contribute to their binding nature. If interposing the name of God to others creates an obligation, it follows that it creates an even stronger obligation to God. Similarly, if solemnly ratifying a promise binds us to others, it certainly binds us even more to God. Therefore, our obligations in baptism and the Lord's Supper carry strength and conviction against us as we solemnly ratify and renew our covenant with God in these acts, openly before the world. Our failure to uphold these vows is considered a breach of God's covenant, with the obligation of the covenant being invoked, as seen in passages like Genesis 17:10 and 17:14.
2. However, these engagements do not bind us in an absolute sense, as the duty to be perfectly holy and without sin is incumbent upon us by the law itself, not solely by virtue of our vows. Our vows are to be understood in light of several factors: (1) our fallen and sinful nature, (2) our intentions and desires, (3) our self-assessment and acknowledgment of falling short, and (4) our obligation to strive for holiness and leave no stone unturned in our pursuit of it. Therefore, these engagements do not bind us absolutely or simply, but rather relatively. They bind us not in terms of achieving victory over sin, but in terms of actively wrestling and fighting against sin. They bind us not in terms of guaranteeing a specific outcome, but in terms of utilizing the means within our power to pursue holiness. Some may argue that they have not broken the covenant despite their sins (Psalm 44:17), as the focus lies on the ongoing striving and effort rather than on perfection.

3. Indeed, while these engagements do not bind us in a simple or absolute sense, they do bind us unequivocally in certain aspects:

1. They bind us absolutely to the main point of having God as ours in Christ. This is the central focus and purpose of our engagements with God.

2. In other matters, they bind us in the following ways:

- They bind us to live without knowingly and willingly engaging in sin, particularly outward sins, and to take no pleasure in sin.
- They bind us to fulfill all known duties and to make sincere efforts to perform them.
- Regarding the manner of fulfilling our duties, they bind us to approach them seriously and with genuine intention. While we cannot swear that we will be completely free from all corruption as long as we are on earth, we can commit ourselves to the following:
 - Not approving of our indwelling sin.
 - Leaving no means untried, within our knowledge, that may help us mortify our sin.
 - Making a sincere and earnest effort to aim at the mortification of sin through the use of these means.

Thus, the binding nature of a vow extends as far as our ability allows. It applies universally to the corresponding duty, and it remains a constant and perpetual obligation. When we make a vow, we should not let it remain unfulfilled but strive to be free from the sin it addresses. It binds us to renounce sin as well as to avoid it. It does not encompass all weaknesses and infirmities, making them breaches of the vow, but rather pertains to known sins or even the slightest sins that we persist in.

Indeed, the breach of vows is a serious and grave sin, and it greatly exacerbates the sinfulness of one's actions compared to situations where vows are not involved. The sins of Christians who break their

vows made in baptism, during communion, through oaths in covenants, in secret engagements, resolutions, and promises to God are far more significant than the sins of those who have not made such commitments. The Lord charges Israel with covenant-breaking, emphasizing the significance of their circumcision, which served as a seal of their covenant relationship (Deuteronomy 29:24, Jeremiah 22:8, etc.). This would not hold true if there were no peculiar obligation in those vows. Likewise, our baptism holds a binding obligation, and the breach of our baptismal vows is no less sinful (Colossians 2:11-12).

There is no reason to suggest that the breach of an oath to God should be any less considered a sin and an act of infamy than the breach of an oath to another person. Those who willingly engage in sins such as drinking, swearing, neglecting prayer, allowing their minds to wander, and not earnestly pursuing holiness should take note that their sins bear these aggravations, making them horrendous, infamous, and inexcusable. Consider the following:

1. There is evident perjury, a violation of God's oath, which even according to the Pharisees' doctrine in Matthew 15:33, is abominable: "You shall not forswear yourself, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord."
2. There is unfaithfulness and treachery, breaking trust and failing to fulfill the commitments made to God.
3. The offense is not merely perjury and treachery but specifically directed towards God, which is even more severe and carries a deeper level of culpability than if it were directed towards any other.
4. All of this occurs in matters that are just and equitable, and are for the individual's own good, which adds to the gravity of the situation.

5. The breaches occur not only against a single promise but against multiple promises and various other obligations.
6. The breaches happen frequently and in numerous aspects of life.
7. The consideration of these aggravating factors often fails to elicit a heartfelt response or deep remorse for the committed sins.

Therefore, it is crucial for individuals to realize the enormity of their sins and the severe consequences of breaking their vows, as it involves perjury, unfaithfulness, treachery towards God, and numerous other aggravating factors.

In response to the question of whether it is better to make no promises at all rather than subject oneself to the guilt and anxiety of breaking them, the following points can be made:

1. It is not within our freedom or discretion to choose whether or not to make promises when we are called to do so. Refusing to make such promises would be considered a sin, as mentioned previously. For example, it is not a matter of personal choice whether to be baptized or to participate in communion; therefore, those who would refuse to engage in these acts would be regarded as despising the Lord's covenant and would face appropriate consequences (Genesis 17:14, Exodus 12).
2. Those who refuse to make promises open themselves up to the temptation of being more easily swayed not to perform their duties or to be ensnared in sins. By not formally engaging through vows, they become culpably involved in strengthening temptation and weakening their resolution to fulfill their obligations. On the contrary, by making promises and engaging in them honestly, individuals strengthen their commitment and resolve.
3. If one truly intends to perform their duties, then it is reasonable to engage and make promises. Refusing to even make promises

and engage in commitments raises doubts about the sincerity of one's intentions to fulfill their duties. It should be noted that even those who genuinely make promises and engage in commitments still face challenges and difficulties in keeping them. Therefore, refusing to engage in promises may serve as a convenient escape route from fulfilling one's duty without facing strong accountability.

In response to the argument that simply omitting a duty is less sinful than omitting it after making vows and engagements, the following points can be made:

1. From a Christian perspective, one who neither engages to do a duty nor performs it fails twice, whereas one who engages but does not perform fails only once. However, the one who fails after making an engagement is more guilty in the breach of that engagement, which adds a significant weight to the sin.
2. The individual who refuses to engage is more responsible for their own fall, as they did not use the means available to prevent it. On the other hand, the person who engages but fails to perform is more guilty in the breach of their engagement.
3. By refusing to engage, one places themselves in a situation where they are more likely to sin. If they do not perform, they fail twice, as mentioned before. If they do perform, they still fail because they did not engage when called to do so. Thus, their performance does not fulfill the obligation of a vow to God, who requires both promising and performing in certain cases.
4. The individual who makes promises and vows and also fulfills them offers a more acceptable form of obedience to God. Their performance stems not only from the commandment but also from a willing and free offering to God. Their obedience becomes both compliance with a command and the fulfillment of a vow. This is not the case for the one who refuses to engage,

as their performance lacks the voluntary commitment to God and love for holiness.

5. The person who refuses to engage sins more inexcusably because they neglect to do something that is lesser and within their power. The omission of something that is easier, such as making promises and engagements, is a greater sin and more inexcusable. This may not be the case for non-Christians, as they were never called to engage or make such commitments. However, for Christians, this cannot serve as an excuse.

In response to the concern that no Christian will be free from perjury and will lack peace if they take these obligations seriously, the following points can be made:

1. It is acknowledged that the difficulty and struggle arise from our own corruption and weaknesses in fulfilling our duties, including keeping our vows and engagements. The fault lies within us, not in the holiness and righteousness of the vows themselves. The vows are holy, just, and good, and should not be blamed for our failures.
2. It is true that it is challenging to remain free from the aggravation of sinning against our engagements. Just as it is difficult to keep ourselves free from sin even when we have clear knowledge of what is right, it is also difficult to avoid sinning in the specific context of breaking our engagements. Therefore, in the manner of the people of God, it is safest to acknowledge and confess our failures and breaches, seeking forgiveness through Jesus Christ. We should focus on continually cleansing ourselves from the guilt of breaking our vows rather than denying any breach at all.
3. Despite the challenges, Christians can still experience peace in their vows and promises to God. In a gospel sense, they can honestly say that they have not turned back from God or dealt

falsely in His covenant. This does not imply absolute holiness or the exact performance of every aspect of the covenant, but rather that they have been sincere in their main commitments, intending to keep all aspects of the covenant, and have strived to live according to their engagements. They may have a testimony in their conscience that they have walked honestly before God and have made sincere efforts to fulfill their vows. By studying and relying on the strength of God's grace, a person can attain a measure of peace and quietness in their engagement and performance of duties.

To attain peace in engaging and to be helped in fulfilling our vows, the following points can be considered:

1. We should strive for clarity and peace regarding our past and present engagements. Examine the motives, grounds, ends, and manner of our engagements to ensure they are right and aligned with God's will.
2. If any wrongdoing is recognized, it should be acknowledged and corrected. Engagements should not be used as a means to temporarily evade accountability without making genuine efforts to fulfill them.
3. Pay attention to these directions: (1) Do not forget your vows and engagements; keep them in mind and reflect on them regularly (Jeremiah 50:4-5). (2) Do not delay in fulfilling your vows (Ecclesiastes 5:4, Deuteronomy 23:21). Procrastination and excuses weaken the weight and significance of the vow. (3) Maintain the same frame of spirit and disposition as when the vows were initially made—humility, tenderness, and awe of God. Often, we make vows in a good frame, but then let go of that frame or use the vow as an excuse, which is deceptive.
4. Follow through on the performance of what was undertaken, relying on the strength of God's grace and the life received

through Jesus Christ, both in making the vow and fulfilling it.

5. Consider the seriousness of the sin of breaking vows, regularly examine yourself regarding your faithfulness in keeping them, and confess and repent of any breaches. Allowing the weight of the sin to deeply impact your heart in the presence of God can lead to a different impression and a greater resolve to keep the VOWS.
6. Maintain a continuous sense of obligation. If one promise or resolution seems to weaken, make another. If one commitment appears to be diminishing in its impact, give another. By renewing engagements, not merely formally, but in a serious and sober manner, previous obligations can be reinforced and made more effective (Jeremiah 50:4-5). This is primarily applicable to private engagements. Public solemn oaths and covenants, as seen in Scripture, were not frequent but reserved for significant and weighty occasions to preserve their gravity and reverence for God's name.
7. Do not let breaches, no matter how small, linger without addressing them. Seek forgiveness and cleansing promptly, just as one would cleanse themselves from something foul and loathsome, to prevent them from leading to further and greater breaches.

Perjury and breach of vows and oaths to God are serious offenses. They can occur in various contexts, such as:

1. Baptism: The engagement in baptism extends to professing believers, committing them to the mortification of sin, the pursuit of holiness in both their relationship with God and their interactions with others, and a lifestyle that aligns with the teachings of the Gospel.
2. Communion: The same covenant is sealed and renewed during the participation in communion, and therefore, breaking this

covenant constitutes a breach of vows and oaths to God.

3. Oaths in Covenants: When making solemn oaths in covenants, such as in the context of church membership or other commitments, it is crucial to uphold the obligations taken. Failing to do so amounts to perjury and a violation of one's vows to God.
4. Private Engagements to God: In more personal and private engagements with God, whether through vows, promises, or resolutions, it is essential to remain faithful and fulfill what has been committed.

Additionally, individuals in specific roles or positions may come under particular oaths and engagements. For example, ministers, elders, and magistrates may have sworn oaths to faithfully discharge their duties. Husbands and wives have responsibilities toward each other, and parents have obligations to raise their children in godly ways. Even in common trades and callings, individuals may have made specific oaths or commitments.

It is important to be diligent and careful in these matters. Many people may find themselves guilty of perjury and breach of vows before God, even if these offenses are not easily recognizable by others. When individuals have the power and ability to fulfill their obligations but fail to do so, or when the weight and significance of the oath do not influence their actions, it profanes the oath and dishonors God.

Sadly, many individuals, according to their respective relations and stations, may be found guilty in these areas. They lack the fear and reverence of God in fulfilling their commitments, which is a grave matter that needs to be acknowledged and addressed.

In summary, the commandment not to take the name of the Lord in vain is broken in relation to engagements in three ways:

1. Avoiding making engagements when called to do so: When we are called to make vows, promises, or oaths before God, refusing to do so is a violation of this commandment.
2. Not making engagements rightly: When we do make engagements, they should be undertaken with careful consideration, in a manner that is sincere, deliberate, and aligned with God's will. Hasty or insincere engagements also go against this commandment.
3. Failing to fulfill engagements: Once engagements are made, it is our responsibility to honor them and fulfill what we have promised. Neglecting or breaking these commitments is a transgression of this commandment.

This commandment requires us to:

1. Absolutely comply with various obligations, even those beyond ordinary infirmities.
2. Avoid known sinful actions, such as swearing, and behaviors that lead to sin, such as drunkenness, unlawful gaming, and unnecessary contentions.
3. Perform all outward duties, including reading, hearing, praying, and other acts of worship.
4. Approach these duties with seriousness and sincerity, rather than engaging in a superficial or half-hearted manner.
5. Refrain from persisting in known sins forbidden by this commandment and not delay repentance, as these are within our power to avoid. It does not provide any excuse for failing to fulfill these obligations due to ordinary weakness.

In addition to the breaking of engagements, there are two other ways of using the name of God that are related to oaths:

1. Appealing to God to judge: This is when we invoke God as a witness and ask Him to judge between us and others, as seen in the example of David and Saul.

2. Attesting God as a witness: This involves making statements such as "The Lord knows," "God is my witness," or "My witness is in heaven." These statements are permissible when done appropriately and in the right circumstances. However, they should not be used rashly, hastily, or in unjust matters. Trivial or unnecessary attestations also undermine the sacredness of God's name and should be avoided.

It is important to handle these forms of using God's name with care and reverence, reserving them for appropriate situations and avoiding misuse or abuse of them.

Blasphemy against God is a grievous transgression of the third commandment. It involves wronging God's holy majesty through reproachful speeches or expressions that bring disgrace to His name. Blasphemy can be divided or distinguished into three categories:

1. Attributing unbecoming qualities or actions to God: This occurs when someone unjustly, unholy, or unmerciful is ascribed to God in words. An example is the complaint in Ezekiel 18:25, "The ways of the Lord are not equal."
2. Denying God's rightful attributes: This happens when someone denies God's eternality, omniscience, omnipotence, and other essential characteristics. For instance, Pharaoh and Rabshakeh blasphemed by questioning God's power and authority, saying, "Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice? Who is the Lord that is able to deliver you out of my hand?" (Exodus 5:2; Isaiah 36:18, 20).
3. Attributing what is due to God to a creature or oneself: This form of blasphemy occurs when the honor and worship that belong to God alone are given to a creature or arrogated by a person. The Jews accused Jesus of blasphemy because he forgave sins and claimed to be God (Luke 7:49; John 10:33). This category also includes boasting or exalting oneself or others

to the detriment of divine providence, as seen in Acts 12:22 when the people of Tyre and Sidon praised Herod as a god.

Blasphemy can be directed immediately and directly against God or any of the persons of the Godhead. It can also be indirect or mediate, targeting God's ordinances such as the Word, prayer, sacraments, or His people and the work of His Spirit in them. Indirect blasphemy occurs when these aspects of God's revelation and work are mocked or belittled. For example, calling Paul's profound understanding of the Gospel "madness" or labeling genuine repentance and holiness as conceitedness, pride, or fancy.

Blasphemy in any form is a serious offense, and it is crucial to guard our speech and attitudes to honor God and His holy name.

Blasphemy can be further considered in terms of intentionality, infirmity or rashness, and ignorance.

1. Deliberate and purposed blasphemy: This occurs when someone intentionally and purposefully speaks words or expressions that dishonor God's name, similar to the Pharisees who deliberately blasphemed Jesus.
2. Blasphemy out of infirmity, rashness, and unwatchfulness: This type of blasphemy happens when someone, due to their weakness or lack of caution, speaks without thinking, using overexpressions or inappropriate language.
3. Blasphemy out of ignorance: Like Paul before his conversion, some individuals may blaspheme out of ignorance, lacking knowledge and understanding of the truth.

Blasphemy can also be considered in relation to each person of the Trinity:

1. Blasphemy against the Father: This includes speaking against the Godhead itself or any of the attributes that are rightfully due

to God. It also involves denying the Trinity of persons, thereby blaspheming the Father's role in the Godhead.

2. Blasphemy against the Son: This occurs when someone denies the eternity of Christ's Godhead or rejects the distinction of His natures, denying His true properties. It also includes denying His offices, such as His role as a priest who satisfied divine justice for the sins of the elect. Blasphemy against the Son can involve setting up other mediators, alternative satisfactions, or denying His authority and kingship.
3. Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit: This form of blasphemy is mentioned in Matthew 12 and Mark 3. It involves attributing the works of the Holy Spirit to Satan or denying the Spirit's role in the Godhead.

Blasphemy against the Spirit can be understood in two ways.

1. It can be seen as blasphemy against the third person of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit, and therefore against the Trinity. This was a specific error associated with Macedonius or the "fighters against the Spirit." It involves opposing or speaking against the work and person of the Holy Spirit.
2. Blasphemy against the Spirit can also be understood in relation to the Spirit's work within an individual. This is the particular blasphemy mentioned in Matthew 12:32, which is described as unpardonable. It is considered the highest degree of blasphemy for several reasons:
 - a. It is not committed by believers or the elect.
 - b. It is rarely committed even by reprobates or non-believers.
 - c. The person guilty of this blasphemy may not fully understand or be aware of their offense, and others may also struggle to identify it.
 - d. It is never repented of and is believed to be unpardonable, unlike other sins that can be forgiven.

It is important to note that blasphemy against the Spirit is not every sin, nor is it any sin of weakness, ignorance, or even deliberate sin committed against the second table of the Law. It is a distinct and severe form of blasphemy that is considered unpardonable. Examples such as Peter's denial of Christ, though serious, do not fall under this specific category of blasphemy against the Spirit.

Blasphemy against the Spirit is a sin that primarily concerns the core of the Gospel and its saving work. It is not simply a sin committed in ignorance or weakness, but it involves deliberate opposition to the truth of the Gospel, even after being convinced of its validity. This opposition is not limited to a specific sin or act but represents a total and determined resistance to the truth, seeking to suppress it in others and eradicate it from the world.

This opposition arises from malice and hatred towards the truth, viewing it as unworthy and deserving of extinction. It is driven by envy and spite against the truth itself. The Pharisees exemplify this type of blasphemy as they not only rejected Christ for themselves but actively opposed him and sought to destroy the truth he represented.

Blasphemy against the Spirit is universal in its opposition to every aspect of the Spirit's work and is obstinately persistent without any remorse or fear, except for the fear of its ultimate consequence. It displays contempt and disdain for the specific means and works of the Spirit that bring about a sinner's repentance and renewal. This type of blasphemy is characterized by a deliberate and ongoing rejection of the Spirit and the application of Christ's redemption.

The unpardonable nature of this sin is not simply due to its lack of forgiveness, as many sins are unforgiven for the reprobate. Nor is it solely because it leads to final impenitence, as many sins can have that outcome as well. The unpardonable nature of this blasphemy lies in its deliberate opposition to the Spirit's work, even after being convinced and acknowledging it. It represents a rejection of the Spirit and is considered irremissible.

1. The unpardonable sin, specifically the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, is characterized by a willful and deliberate rejection of Christ and His work. It is a sin that ultimately rejects the only sacrifice available for forgiveness. This sin cannot be expiated or forgiven because the person consistently and maliciously refuses the remedy provided by God. The language used in Hebrews 10:26 emphasizes the severity and finality of this sin.
2. The person guilty of this sin cannot experience renewal through repentance because their heart maliciously suppresses the work of repentance. It is not due to the ineffectiveness of God's grace, but rather the person's persistent rejection of the Spirit's conviction and refusal to yield to His work. Repentance requires a willing heart, and the one guilty of blasphemy against the Spirit resists this work.
3. God, in His justice, has decreed that this sin is accompanied by impenitence and lack of forgiveness. It is a divine sentence that reflects the seriousness of the offense and serves as a deterrent against opposing the work of the Holy Spirit. This does not mean that God arbitrarily denies repentance to individuals, but rather that those who commit this sin are given over to spiritual impenitence as a consequence of their persistent rejection.

Fifthly, let us consider blasphemy in its various forms. 1. Doctrinal blasphemy refers to the heretical teachings held by certain individuals, such as the ancient heretics, Pelagians, Papists, and Arminians. They hold erroneous beliefs regarding Providence and the work of Grace on the human heart. 2. Blasphemy can also occur through thoughtless expressions, where offensive words or phrases are uttered without deliberation. 3. Blasphemy is evident in oaths when individuals swear by the wounds, blood, soul, or any other aspect of our Lord Jesus Christ. These oaths are not only deeply disturbing to hear but also a dishonor to His divine majesty. It is an abuse of His holy name. 4. Blasphemy can manifest in deeds, writings, paintings, or performances that denigrate the Lord. Such

acts misuse God's name for derogatory purposes. 5. Blasphemy can reach a high degree when individuals commit acts of blasphemy or fail to condemn it. We should respond with deep sorrow and detestation, tearing our garments metaphorically, as the princes should have done upon witnessing wicked deeds by the king (Jeremiah 36:24-25). When we fail to have a suitable hatred towards blasphemous doctrines, or worse, when we defend, advocate for, or minimize them, we become guilty. 6. Blasphemy can be committed not only through our own actions but also when we contribute to the blasphemy of others. This occurs when we tempt or influence others to blaspheme, leading them astray. David was guilty of this in his sin with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 12:14), and the Jews were condemned for causing others to blaspheme the name of God through their conduct (Romans 2:24). Therefore, Christians, especially those with a public profession of faith, as well as wives and servants, should be cautious, as their misconduct can lead others to blaspheme godliness and the duties of religion. They inadvertently provide an occasion for such blasphemy, although it does not diminish the guilt of those who blaspheme. We see this rebuked in Ezekiel 36:20. Oh, how careful should believers be in this matter! Unbelievers eagerly seize upon any opportunity to speak ill of godliness, using the failings of individuals to justify their inherent bias against true religion. They draw conclusions not only about the specific individuals who have stumbled but also about the entire body of believers and the way of God.

There are certain actions that particularly provoke others to blaspheme:

1. Gross acts of transgression, such as David's adultery.
2. Pride, anger, and contention among godly individuals when they walk according to the flesh, displaying a divisive and contentious spirit.
3. Covetousness and a preoccupation with worldly matters.

4. The display of insincerity and self-centeredness masked under the guise of religion, causing others to label all religious people as hypocrites.

5. Avoiding or evading suffering that is part of the Christian life.

6. Failure to fulfill duties in various relationships, including wives towards their husbands, servants towards their masters, and subjects towards their magistrates.

7. Embracing doctrinal errors among professing believers.

Furthermore, blasphemy can be observed in two ways: while individuals are alive, and when they find themselves in the place of torment. In the latter case, it is certain that their wicked nature and corruption remain unchanged. As they experience the severity of God's justice in their punishment, they are unable to view Him as He truly is but instead harbor resentful thoughts towards His power and justice. Even though they cannot escape the consequences of God's judgment, this blasphemy in the place of torment is considered a part of their cursed state and further contributes to their deserving condemnation.

Now, let us turn our attention to the more common ways in which we break this commandment, which can be categorized into two types.

The first type of blasphemy is more overt and occurs when the Name of God or anything associated with His Name, such as His ordinances (Word, sacraments, prayer, etc.), is treated with irreverence. This can happen in the following ways:

1. Mocking or scorning these things, which is a grave form of disrespect towards His Name.
2. Using Scripture phrases, expressions, or terms in a sinful and mocking manner towards others, even if not directly mocking the Scripture itself.

3. Unnecessarily using God's Name in ordinary conversations, even if swearing is not intended or perceived.
4. Employing irreverent and unwarranted exclamations that involve God's Name, such as using phrases like "O Lord," "O God," or making statements like "I hope in God" or "I trust in God" in a careless manner or even in moments of passion.
5. Using God's Name as a by-word or in irreverent prayers when expressing frustration or disappointment, like saying "God help me" or "God forgive me" inappropriately.
6. Using God's Name in mere compliments, such as saying "God keep you," "God be with you," or "God bless you," which have become commonplace for many.
7. Employing God's Name lightly in asseverations or indirect forms of swearing, like saying "God forbid" or "God knows" without genuine reverence.
8. Engaging in senseless and superstitious customs where God's Name is invoked on specific occasions, such as saying "God bless you" when someone sneezes or attributing the presence of God to certain situations like entering a house or the striking of a clock.

These actions demonstrate a lack of reverence and trivialize the sacredness of God's Name and His presence.

The second way in which we fall short of honoring this command is in the lawful and necessary duties of worship by engaging in them sinfully and unprofitably. In doing so, we often take the Name of God in vain and profane His holiness, which He holds dear. This failure can occur in two ways:

1. Regarding the manner in which we approach these ordinances or duties of worship:
 - a) When we do not sanctify the Lord in them and fail to adhere to the rules and manner prescribed by Him. This was exemplified in the actions of Nadab and Abihu, who offered

strange fire before the Lord (Leviticus 10). The Lord also rebuked Israel for this failing, as recorded in Isaiah 29:13 and Matthew 15:8-9, where they approached Him with their lips while their hearts were far away, worshiping Him in vain and teaching doctrines that were mere commandments of men.

b) When we do not derive profit from the use of such ordinances and the performance of these duties. If prayer, reading of Scripture, participation in the sacraments, listening to sermons, etc., do not bear their intended fruit, then the Name of God is taken in vain. In this sense, His ordinances are frustrated and rendered ineffective, as if they had not been utilized or carried out. As stated in 2 Corinthians 6:1, to receive the grace of God in vain is to miss or neglect the benefit of it, thereby thwarting ourselves of its intended purpose and use. This is the first way in which our duties become in vain before God, as He will not regard them.

It is important for us to approach these acts of worship with reverence and sincerity, adhering to the guidelines set by God, and seeking to derive spiritual profit from them, for in doing so, we honor His Name and ensure the fulfillment of His intended purpose in these ordinances.

The second way in which we take the Lord's Name in vain in ordinances and duties relates to ourselves. Here, we can consider it in two ways:

1. Simply, when there is no honesty at all in our approach to these acts of worship. It is mere hypocrisy, or at least hypocrisy displayed in specific acts. There is no fruitfulness or genuine devotion, but rather a façade of righteousness.
2. Comparatively, when there may be some degree of reality and fruitfulness, but considering what it should be and the means available to us, there is a significant deficiency. This challenges

us to recognize that we have not fully utilized or benefited from the means of grace we possess. This may apply even to those who have some sincerity but fall far short of what they could have attained in terms of knowledge of God and other spiritual blessings through the proper use of these means.

We can also identify a third way in which the Lord's Name is taken in vain, and that is in relation to itself or the ordinance or duty itself. It occurs when there is a significant disparity between the outward show and the substance of our devotion. Our sincerity, reality, inward reverence, and genuine esteem of God in our hearts do not align with the words we speak and our external profession. This was characteristic of the Pharisees and all hypocrites who bear God's name in vain, as they do not truly reflect what they claim to be. This can also be observed comparatively in relation to others, considering our adherence to the law, the means of grace available to us, and the consistency of our profession.

To ensure our understanding is clear, let us consider what is necessary for the proper performance of duty or the suitable mentioning of the Lord's Name. The absence or lack of any of these elements makes us more or less guilty of taking His Name in vain.

1. It is necessary to have a good and righteous purpose, directing our focus solely towards it. When engaging in any act of worship or mentioning the Lord's Name, the primary concern should be the honor of God, the edification of ourselves or others, and the obedience to the command in our conscience. However, those who engage in such acts seeking their own interests, out of envy, to be honored by men, for appearances or mere custom, or to make peace with God without regarding the Mediator will find their worship to be in vain.
2. There is a need for a good principle underlying the act of naming the Lord. This principle consists of both a moral and a spiritual aspect. The moral aspect involves conscience rather than mere

custom, aligning with the intended purpose. The spiritual aspect involves the Holy Spirit's influence, for no one can truly acknowledge Jesus as Lord except through the work of the Holy Spirit. Additionally, a renewed heart is essential, as duties should be performed with both understanding and the influence of grace. Therefore, whatever unrenewed individuals express in their acts of worship without the Spirit's influence and exercise of grace, they render themselves guilty by doing so, as their words may not align with their true sincerity.

3. It is necessary for that principle to act in the right manner. This includes sincerity, acting with fear and reverence, faith and respect towards Jesus Christ, and exercising judgment and understanding. Speaking of God without knowing what we say or to whom we speak would be disrespectful towards Him. Therefore, ignorant, passionate, rash, irreverent, and inattentive mentions of God or careless engagement in any ordinance or duty wrong Him and amount to offering vain oblations, which He expressly forbids.
5. It is necessary to approach the act with humility and self-abasement, recognizing our unworthiness before the holy God. We must acknowledge our dependence on His grace and mercy, realizing that we have no merit of our own. This attitude of humility guards against pride and self-righteousness, which can lead to the misuse and dishonoring of His Name.
6. It is necessary to engage in these duties and mention the Lord's Name with a contrite heart, confessing our sins and seeking forgiveness. The awareness of our own sinfulness keeps us humble and mindful of our continual need for His cleansing and renewal.
7. Finally, it is necessary to approach these acts and the mentioning of God's Name with a deep sense of awe and wonder. Recognizing the majesty, holiness, and greatness of God

should evoke reverence and adoration in our hearts. We should not take His Name lightly or treat it with irreverence, but rather approach it with profound respect and honor.

8. Whenever we mention God, we should strive to acknowledge Him as our own, our God and Father in Christ, in all acts of worship and duties. This involves: 1. Recognizing our natural distance from God. 2. Looking to Christ to bridge that gap. 3. Resting in Him and relying on Him for this purpose. 4. Delighting in the fact that God is ours. 5. Expressing thanksgiving and blessing whenever His name is mentioned, as the Apostle frequently does.
9. It is necessary to consider the use, fruit, and effect of our actions and the mentioning of God's name. We should expect something profitable to result from these acts, corresponding to the nature of the duty performed or the way in which God is mentioned. This may include: 1. Bringing honor to God. 2. Edifying others through instruction, conviction, reproof, or comfort. 3. Our personal edification and spiritual growth. 4. Finding exoneration and peace in fulfilling such a duty. If any of these aspects are lacking, repentance should be exercised, seeking forgiveness through faith. We should desire to have some fruit, a sense of lesson, convictions, discoveries, or edifying effects remain. The absence of these elements signifies a simple violation of this command, and even if some aspects are present but others are lacking, the command is relatively more or less broken.

Let us now examine these points individually. First, let us consider our profession. How often do we find emptiness in it, with more appearance and show than reality and substance? Do we desire to merely appear to be something rather than truly being it? If our professions were to be measured by our reality, we would discover a lamentable disproportion. The outer façade often exceeds the inner reality, even in cases of sincerity and authenticity.

1. Let us examine our participation in public duties. Do we not often take the name of God in vain while listening to sermons, praying, praising, and participating in the sacraments? How many libels could be drawn up against us based on our conduct during every Sabbath, prayer, or sermon? Often, we cannot discern what fruit remains from these acts, except for sin, guilt, and hardness of heart. Undoubtedly, His name is frequently taken in vain in these contexts.
2. Consider our engagement in private duties within our families: reading, praying, singing, discussing, catechizing, offering grace, seeking blessings, and giving thanks at the table. How little regard do we often have for the name of the Lord in these moments? How little care and effort do we put into following the previous guidelines during these times?
3. Reflect on our secret duties, those intimate interactions between God and ourselves. How do we pray in secret before God? Often, we pray in a manner that we would be ashamed to present before others. How do we read, meditate, and engage in other private acts? How do we participate in prayer with others, even when it is done privately? God knows how poorly we fulfill our responsibilities in these areas and how frequently we take His name in vain.
4. Consider our occasional duties, occasions where we have reason to mention God with or to others. This may occur during an emergent event of providence when we say, "It is God's will," "God has done it," or "God is good and merciful." It also includes our engagement in specific duties of Christian communion, such as instructing, comforting, admonishing, or debating with others. How often, when the Scripture and the name of God are on our lips, do we lack reverence and respect for God in our hearts during these interactions?

5. Let us examine how this sin of taking God's name in vain is present in writing, not only in treatises, but almost in every epistle or letter. There can be found prayers or wishes included, for the sake of appearance, wherein little conscience is given to truly engage the heart. How often do we irreverently use Scripture and God's name in letter writing, particularly in burial letters? Phrases such as "It hath pleased the Lord," "It hath seemed good to God," or "It hath pleased God or the Almighty" are used without proper reverence. I am not condemning the practice itself, but our abuse of it.
6. Consider the accidental mention of God, if I may call it that, in salutations like "God save you" or "God be with you." In prayers for children, it often reveals more fondness towards them than true love and reverence for the name of God. Praying for someone's safety, using phrases like "God save," or seeking God's blessing for favors, courtesies, or compliments. These can be good if used lawfully, as the Apostle said of the law. However, they are often used sinfully, rashly, ignorantly, and even profanely, with more regard for the person we are addressing than for God. I do not condemn the use of these phrases as they are duties, but I exhort you to guard against their abuse and to use a serious, reverent, understanding, and thoughtful manner when expressing them or anything similar.
7. Consider the narration of Scripture stories or other tales, questions, or anecdotes where the name of God is mentioned. Sometimes, when telling these stories, we may use them to entertain or make light of them. How often do we take God's blessed name in vain when recounting these stories? It would often be better to refrain from mentioning His name than to use it irreverently in such instances.
9. Consider the rash usurping of God's attributes or claiming an unwarranted interest in Him. It happens when people confidently assert, without any proper justification, that God is

theirs, that they trust in His mercy, or that Christ is their sweet Saviour and Mediator. Oh, how often is this glorious grace, which lies in God's goodness and mercy, shamefully and sinfully abused and profaned!

There is another particular that we must address regarding the third commandment, which concerns lots, omens, superstitious observations, and similar practices. In these, the name of God is not only disregarded and taken in vain, but the act of determining outcomes, which should be attributed to God, is instead attributed to chance, luck, fortune, and other such notions.

Let us proceed to discuss these matters:

1. We will explain what lotting or lottery entails.
2. We will explore its connection to this commandment.
3. We will distinguish between different types of lots.
4. We will clarify which forms of lotting are lawful and when they are permissible.
5. We will identify what forms of lotting are unlawful.

Lotting or lottery refers to entrusting the decision of a matter directly to divine providence, without the intervention or influence of any secondary cause, in order to determine the outcome. When the matter is resolved and decided, there can be no human explanation for why it turned out that way, except that the Lord was pleased to ordain it. An example of lotting can be seen in the selection of Matthias as the replacement for Judas among the twelve apostles (Acts 1). Proverbs 16:33 confirms that such a practice is considered a lot, as it states, "The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD." This is why in Proverbs 18:18, it is said to settle disputes and decide between the mighty, as no one can argue about an outcome in which human agency played no part.

A lot can be appointed in various ways, such as by throwing dice or similar means, or by using other methods to differentiate between

options, as determined by mutual agreement. For example, it could be decided by which animal one sees first, by a specific saying, or by which book one reads or looks at first. However, we believe that lots differ from omens or superstitious observations in the following ways:

1. Lots are used to decide between two options, while omens and superstitious observations are collections of signs or symbols that individuals interpret for themselves.
2. Lots are based on a predetermined agreement and are voluntary, whereas omens and superstitious observations may arise in different ways.

Several reasons demonstrate that lots, when used, relate to this commandment.

1. Anything that directly involves God's immediate action is particularly relevant to this commandment. This includes anything that requires God to reveal His will or make His presence known, and it implies an implicit invocation of Him. Lots or lotting fall into this category since: a. Only God can determine the outcome of lots (Proverbs 16:33). b. The outcome of lots reveals either God's will, the devil's influence, or random chance. However, it cannot be attributed to the latter two, so it must be God's will. c. Lots place a unique demand on God's involvement, surpassing that of prayer: i. They are used in extraordinary circumstances and are often combined with prayer. ii. They serve to manifest a hidden decree, allowing us to understand what God has predetermined and eternally decreed regarding a specific event.

Therefore, it is evident that lots, when treated with disregard, wrong God, but when acknowledged according to His authority, He is especially involved in the process, as He governs the entire matter.

2. Lots are either appointed by God as a means to understand His mind, or they are not. If appointed by God, then they are part of His ordinance and His name is involved in them. If not appointed by God, then they are being misused.
3. Meddling with God's secrets, His will, or the way He reveals it in His providence must pertain to this commandment. Lotting specifically involves all of these aspects, thereby falling under the scope of the commandment.
4. Anything that cannot be done without either wronging or honoring the name of the Lord necessarily relates to this commandment, as that is its purpose. Lotting cannot be done without either depending on God and acknowledging Him in the process, which honors His name, or neglecting Him and treating His name in vain. This can occur by: a. Misrecognizing His providence and seeking to decide matters through other means. b. Approaching the process irreverently. c. Attributing the outcome to something other than God. d. Failing to acknowledge God in the process and submit to the result.

Therefore, individuals can fail and take God's name in vain in three ways: before the lot, during the process, and after it is completed.

Lots are typically categorized into three types:

1. Divine lots, which are based on extraordinary warrants.
2. Devilish lots, where the devil is either invoked or involved in the decision-making process.
3. Human lots, which are commonly used among people.

Furthermore, lots can be further divided into:

1. Divinatory lots, used to discover hidden information or to discern a course of action.
2. Consultatory lots, which provide guidance in matters such as finding a suitable partner, as seen with Saul and Jonathan.

3. Divisory lots, used for dividing land or allocating resources, as exemplified in the division of the land of Canaan by Joshua.
4. Ludic (playful) lots, employed for recreational purposes. This division encompasses various degrees based on the significance of the matters at hand, whether they are significant or trivial.

Regarding consultatory and divinatory lots, except in cases of extraordinary warrant, they are deemed unlawful and a tempting of God. God has provided other means to guide us in determining what is appropriate for us to do.

As for devilish lots, there is no question about their abominable nature. Examples include fortune-telling, horoscopes, divination of deaths, and methods such as turning the ride.

However, we cannot condemn all divisory lots if they are carried out properly. This is because they are frequently used in Scripture, such as in Joshua 7:13-15 and Acts 1. Moreover, they appear to be recognized by natural light and their use is moral and perpetual, as stated in Proverbs 18:18 to cause contentions to cease and to part between the mighty.

When divisory lots are approached correctly, they honor God and manifestly acknowledge His providence. It is crucial that they are undertaken in the right manner, where the matter at hand should be weighty or significant in some way. It can either be inherently weighty or acquire weight through consequences or inconveniences. Engaging in divisory lots for trivial matters would only belittle God's ordinance, similar to swearing in a matter of no importance.

It is necessary that lotting be used only when there is no other feasible way to decide a matter without significant inconveniences. To expect God to reveal His mind in an extraordinary manner when there is an ordinary means available would be tempting God, akin to leaping over a wall instead of using the regular passage.

Lotting should be approached with due respect for God, acknowledging Him as the ultimate decision-maker, calling upon His name in the process, as exemplified even by the pagan sailors in Jonah 1.

Furthermore, it should be carried out in the right manner. Firstly, with reverence, as if we were about to hear God pronounce a sentence and communicate His mind. Just as the people stood before the Lord when Saul was being chosen (1 Samuel 10:19, 22). Secondly, with faith that God is guiding the lotting process, without anxiety or fear. Thirdly, with singleness of heart, fully committing the matter to Him, refraining from any fraud, tricks, or attempts to manipulate the outcome as a secondary cause. It would be a mockery of God to entrust the decision to Him while simultaneously trying to control the answer ourselves.

Lastly, after the lotting is done, there should be a reverent acknowledgment of God's decision, without fretting or grumbling, and a cheerful submission to it, as demonstrated in all the instances mentioned in Scripture. If these rules are followed, we believe that lots may be used for dividing stations, charges, or portions when there is no other reasonable alternative without causing offense or prejudice.

However, I must caution you with a few things. Firstly, refrain from using lots in trivial matters where the outcome is of no or very little value to you, or when you are indifferent to the outcome. If the matter is not of such weight that you would be willing to swear an oath on it, it is better to forgo lotting and accept some loss instead. Maintain a sense of reverence for God's name. All the cases of lotting in Scripture are weighty. When it comes to your ordinary business dealings, please keep these cautions in mind.

In addition, I advise you to make use of your reason and honest judgment in sharings and divisions to prevent the need for lotting. Sometimes people resort to lotting out of convenience, when in

reality, if they applied their reason properly, they could arrive at a satisfactory decision. God has not given us reason in vain; when reason can accomplish the task, try using it instead of lotting.

Furthermore, when engaging in lotting, make sure it is in a matter that you can seek God in and invoke His name through prayer. Lotting in a matter that people are unwilling or unable to pray about is not in line with scriptural examples or the tenderness that a believer should have in such circumstances. It should be reserved for matters that involve a promise or commitment.

On the contrary, we often see people failing in this regard. In weighty matters, they fail to maintain the right manner before, during, and after the lotting process, especially when the lotting does not bring an end to the strife. In trivial matters, people make lotting too commonplace, using it for almost everything, thereby turning something extraordinary into something ordinary, contrary to its nature. Lotting should be treated as an ultimate judge and decider, similar to an oath for resolving disputes. It is, in a sense, greater than Moses, for it is God Himself passing a decision through His providence. Lesser matters should be resolved through other means.

Finally, considering the nature of lotting, it is clear that games and pastimes that heavily rely on lotteries for their outcomes should be regarded with caution. These games have an immediate dependence on providence for their results, which aligns with the concept of lotting as their foundation.

Indeed, it is undeniable that games and pastimes based on lotteries possess the essential characteristics of lotting. They involve placing things in the hands of uncertain events as far as we are concerned, and those events are guided either by God or by some other force. Regardless of which force guides the outcome, we can assert that it would be a violation of this commandment. Taking the name of God in vain so trivially for our pleasure, as many people do, is sinful, for

no one can predict how such a thing will come to pass through reason alone.

Furthermore, it can be clearly demonstrated that engaging in such games or using lotting in this manner is a sin. Firstly, it goes against the purpose of lotting, which is to divide or decide in cases of controversy. Using it in a non-controversial situation perverts its purpose and becomes sinful, just as swearing in a non-controversial matter is a sin. Secondly, either there is no necessity at all to resort to lotting in these games, or the perceived necessity is self-imposed. Therefore, it amounts to tempting God. For instance, if the objective of lotting is to determine whether a certain amount of money should belong to you or me, undoubtedly, the question of rightful ownership could have been decided at the outset. Therefore, this mode of decision-making is in vain.

Moreover, lotting that lacks reverence for God, mocks His name, and is inconsistent with the proper manner of lotting cannot be considered lawful. These games indeed fall into that category. They not only violate the aforementioned rules in practice but are also inherently incompatible with them. This is evident from the frequency of lotting in these games, the minimal reliance on God for the outcomes, and the inability to maintain a spiritual dependence on Him while engaging in them. Can or dare people earnestly pray for God's guidance in every throw of the dice or shuffle of the cards? Can they genuinely expect God to reveal His decree through these means? And when the outcome is determined and passed, can they truly acknowledge Him in a fitting manner? People dare not approach these activities with such seriousness, as they are aware that it is not appropriate to do so.

Indeed, the method of lotting that leads to the dishonoring of the name of the Lord and His providence cannot be right. In such games, we must either deny the involvement of God in these matters, thereby denying His providence, or we must assert that God may be compelled to declare His mind through this common and trivial

means for our amusement and pleasure. This is a significant mockery and profanation of His name. It is no wonder that people often resort to swearing, cursing, becoming agitated, and expressing their frustration in these games of cards, dice, and the like, where chance, luck, fortune, and the like are exalted and almost deified. In the process, they completely overlook and disregard the majesty of God, as if He has no providence over such matters.

Moreover, if there is no scriptural warrant, neither in precept nor in practice, for engaging in such plays or games, which are fundamentally based on lotteries, they cannot be carried out in faith. These games do not merely incidentally or rarely involve lotting, as may be the case with other lawful recreations, where the outcome is an unforeseen and unexpected incident of providence. In contrast, in these games, the decision by lot is intentional, eagerly awaited, and the entire game revolves around it. It is inconsistent with the scriptural use of lots, which is always reserved for grave and important matters. This manner of employing lots in these games is clearly an abuse of their intended purpose.

Furthermore, if a practice has a natural tendency to diminish the value and respect for any ordinance of God, it cannot be deemed justifiable. Lotting in these games has precisely such a tendency, as it makes the ordinance of casting lots, and even the act of prayer that should accompany it, contemptible. This observation should be evident to anyone who seriously and impartially considers it. It is unreasonable to believe that an act that should be approached with such sacredness and accompanied by prayer to God, and serves an end similar to that of an oath, can be rightfully used in such vastly different ways and for entirely divergent purposes.

Indeed, if the use of lots is applicable to this command, then these lotting games are indeed unlawful. They cannot be reasonably argued to be commanded by this commandment, and therefore they must be prohibited. If lotting in trivial matters is considered unlawful, then it follows that these games, which not only fail to resolve strife and

contentions but often instigate and exacerbate them, are even more unlawful. The ancients have vehemently denounced such practices, considering them as sacrifices to demons and inventions of idolaters.

If it is claimed that these matters are of little importance to most people, it is true, but it is not surprising. Many people also lightly regard the breach of this commandment. However, their disregard does not make their actions any less sinful. Just as many individuals casually and thoughtlessly take the name of God upon their lips, their lack of consideration does not negate the sinfulness of their actions. God has provided a clear commandment precisely for the purpose of preventing people from trivializing even the slightest transgressions of this commandment.

Moreover, if it is argued that these games should be permitted just like other games where chance or fortune may occasionally come into play, the response is as follows: 1. While chance may incidentally play a role in those other games, it is only accidental. In contrast, lotting is intrinsic and immediate in these games and cannot be altered or influenced by the best efforts or skills of individuals. 2. In those other games, there is the involvement of second causes and the utilization of human abilities, both natural and moral, to achieve a specific objective, whether it be striking a ball with a club or throwing a bowl towards a hole. In these instances, individuals make rational decisions based on the guidance of second causes and the use of means, whether physical or mental. However, in these lotting games, this is not the case. Everything is left to extraordinary providence, akin to a person attempting to swim or walk on water when others choose to use a bridge or a boat.

Therefore, based on these considerations, it is evident that these lotting games are unlawful and should be avoided.

In conclusion, lots and oaths serve a similar purpose of resolving disputes and ending strife. Therefore, similar principles should be applied to both. Before engaging in lotting, we should heed God's call

and depend on Him. During the act of lotting, reverence should be maintained. And after the lot is cast, we should honor and submit to the outcome as God's decision, even if our own disposition or intentions were not entirely correct. Just as an oath, when taken in a lawful matter, binds even if it was taken hastily, by virtue of invoking God's name, lots also carry a sacred weight due to God's involvement in the outcome. God, in His wisdom, has chosen to reveal His will through lots in specific situations, and we should regard these decisions as sacred.

While games involving dice or cards may require some skill in managing specific moves or strategies within the game, the actual outcomes of the throws or card shufflings are purely the result of immediate providence. Therefore, they must be recognized as lotting, as they depend on either divine providence or other means that would also wrong God if attempted. Although skill may influence the overall outcome of the game, the specific throws or shufflings themselves are devoid of skill. If there is any perceived skill or artistry involved, it is merely deceptive, as the purpose of these games is to entrust the decision to providence.

The condemnation of such games was a prevailing doctrine among the ancients. Figures like Cyprian, in his work "De Aleatoribus," attributed them to Zabulus and referred to them as snares of the devil, likening them to idolatry. Ambrose, in his writings on Tobias, also criticized these games. Furthermore, some councils, such as the Apostolic Canons (Canon 42) and the Trullan Council (Canon 50), condemned them.

Therefore, based on the principles discussed and the historical perspective, it is clear that games involving lotting, such as those played with dice or cards, are considered unlawful and have been consistently condemned by both early Christian writers and church councils.

Indeed, the perspective presented aligns with the consistent and prevalent judgment of Protestant writers regarding this commandment. Some Protestant authors, such as Danaeus, have dedicated specific treatises to address the unlawfulness of lottery and its detrimental effects on individuals. The view expressed also finds resonance in the teachings of the Schoolmen, although it should be noted that not all Casuists hold such rigid positions on the matter. Additionally, this doctrine aligns with the stance of the Church, as these types of games have been condemned in the past. Specifically, in 1638, the General Assembly of Glasgow, following an earlier act from the Assembly held in Edinburgh in 1596, affirmed the prohibition of such unlawful games.

Indeed, it is important to consider the negative consequences that often accompany the use of such lottery games. Strife and contention are frequently caused or intensified by these games, which stand in stark contrast to their intended purpose of resolving disputes. Moreover, it is noteworthy that many individuals who engage in these games often find themselves profaning the name of God or experiencing heightened emotions, at best.

In addition, it is worth examining the concept of omens, signs, or tokens. This occurs when individuals set forth a specific condition or event and determine to interpret it in a certain way, either seeking it from God for that purpose or simply proposing it to themselves. Examples of this can be seen in Abraham's servant seeking a sign at the well to determine a wife for Isaac, Jonathan seeking a sign before attacking the Philistines, Gideon seeking a sign for success against the Midianites, and Mary seeking confirmation of her faith regarding the angel's message. It is important to note that this pertains to specific events or facts and not to general truths. However, when seeking signs out of doubt or curiosity, or unnecessarily putting God to the test to prove His power, will, or wisdom, it becomes sinful. This is exemplified by the Philistines' grave error when they returned the Ark and relied on the behavior of the cows to determine whether

the plagues were from God's hand or a mere coincidence (1 Samuel 6).

Indeed, when it comes to omens and observations, it is important to exercise caution and discernment. If these omens or observations do not align with the Word of God and our revealed duty, they should not be pursued or given significant regard. Instead, they should be completely disregarded because they tend to deviate from the truth and become excessive. It is important to note that the examples of those who were led by an extraordinary Spirit and used such omens or observations should not be followed by those who do not possess the same Spirit. Our safest course of action is to adhere to the trustworthy prophecies of Scripture and follow the infallible guidance of God's Word, rather than relying on extraordinary examples for which we have no warrant.

Superstitious beliefs and practices primarily revolve around specific actions or occurrences that are considered to be fixed rules of natural wisdom. These actions, however insignificant they may be, are regarded as signs, spells, or omens, serving as the devil's rudiments and grammar to lead people astray and undermine their faith. Superstitious observations occur when we draw conclusions about future events or outcomes based on these actions, for which neither the Word of God nor the course of nature provides any reasoning. These conclusions lack scriptural warrant and cannot be explained by natural causes or reasons.

For example, superstitious beliefs include considering it unlucky to meet certain individuals first thing in the morning (often called an "evil foot"), believing that a pregnant woman crossing a hair tether brings bad luck, associating sneezing while putting on shoes with misfortune, fearing salt falling towards oneself on the table, regarding the crossing of paths with a hare as ominous, interpreting burns on the right ear or bleeding as significant signs, and attributing good luck to spilled drinks, finding old iron, burns on the

left ear, or specific dreams. Many people still hold onto these superstitious beliefs, and only a few are entirely free from them.

Such superstitions have deep roots in human nature and have persisted throughout history, even among Christians. The prevalence of these beliefs tends to vary depending on the extent to which the gospel has been embraced and flourished. However, all Christians should strongly reject these superstitious practices as they demonstrate a profound ignorance of God and reflect elements of atheism and paganism that should be abhorred.

Similar to these superstitious beliefs, there are instances where individuals interpret certain words or passages in sermons or scripture as directly addressing their specific situations or doubts. They take these words as instant clarifications or resolutions without properly examining them according to the true meaning of the scripture and the principles of faith. They attach greater significance to these words, whether it be a word mentioned in a sermon or a randomly opened page of the Bible, solely because it appears to be more fitting to their circumstances. They place more weight on these words without giving them careful consideration, as if they were receiving special and extraordinary revelation from God regarding their particular issue. This practice is highly dangerous.

As we discussed earlier when examining the practical violations of the second commandment, this approach effectively transforms the Book of God into a fortune-telling or divination tool, which was never intended by God. It is a perilous practice that religious individuals, especially those facing difficulties and uncertainties, are prone to engage in. There have been astonishing instances of such behavior that should serve as a warning against venturing into such practices that are not rooted in the Word of God itself. God has given His people the Scripture to be used with Christian prudence, according to its own principles, and not to be randomly employed or relied upon to determine their state or make decisions based on groundless fancies and imaginations.

Now let us consider the warning or certification that emphasizes the severity of the punishment for violating this commandment: "The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His Name in vain." This statement contains three important aspects:

1. The Fearfulness and Terribleness of the Judgment and Punishment: The Lord will avenge the breach of this command with great severity. The punishment for such an offense is fearful and terrible, indicating the gravity of the consequences.
2. The Extent of the Punishment: It applies to every individual who is found guilty. No one will be exempt or escape punishment. It does not matter who the person is or what their position may be. If there is even a single offender, they will not be overlooked. The punishment is all-encompassing.
3. The Peremptoriness and Infallible Certainty of the Punishment: God will not be dissuaded or persuaded otherwise. He will not change His judgment or alter the sentence. The punishment is certain and unavoidable. There is no escape from it.

The punishment implied by the phrase "not to be held guiltless" is more significant than what is explicitly stated. It includes three elements:

1. Unforgiveness and Absolution: The offender will not be forgiven or absolved. As a result, they will never experience God's favor and friendship, which no person can enjoy without forgiveness. This aspect of the judgment is negative in nature, implying that the offender will never enter Heaven or behold the face of God unless they repent.
2. Condemnation: Positively, it signifies that the offender will be found guilty and treated as a guilty person. They will be eternally condemned, excluded from God's presence, and cast into Hell to suffer torment for eternity.

3. **Severity of Punishment:** Emphatically, it suggests that the degree of punishment will be particularly severe. This sin will bear a weightier curse compared to others and will be classified among those sins that God's justice will most severely punish. An example of this can be seen in the case of hypocrites, whose judgment in Hell will be among the most severe. The portion of wrath assigned to hypocrites will be extensive.

The peremptoriness of the punishment is implied in the statement, "The Lord will not hold him guiltless." These words signify the following:

1. Sinners will be called to account for their sins, and this sin of taking the Lord's name in vain will be specifically noted during the judgment. It will not go unnoticed or be disregarded.
2. All sinners will be summoned to stand before God's judgment seat, where they will face accusations regarding their specific sins. The sin of taking the Lord's name in vain will be prominently featured in these accusations as a significant charge.
3. A sentence and verdict will be pronounced upon the guilty. Those found guilty of this sin will experience the weight of Divine Justice as a severe sentence is handed down.
4. The sentence will be executed with holy rigidity and without mercy. Those who are sentenced for this sin will face a high degree of divine wrath. The execution of the punishment will be firm and unyielding.

If someone asks how to understand this threatening, we should make a distinction between those who, repenting of their sin, make peace with God through faith in Christ, and those who continue in it without repentance. Here is the answer:

1. The threatening is not to be understood as if the breach of this command is declared to be unforgivable for anyone guilty of it. Such an understanding is inconsistent with the Gospel's foundations and contrary to our experience, which shows that grace often extends to pardon even such sins.
2. However, it is a sin that is deeply detestable to God and one that brings great wrath upon all who are guilty of it. Before God's judgment seat, it will be revealed as a serious offense.
3. Those who are guilty of this sin, without having made peace with God through Jesus Christ, and even to some extent afterwards, should consider themselves highly culpable. Those who are not forgiven should see themselves as liable to this stroke of wrath and under the specific sentence of the law pronounced against them.
4. This sin greatly endangers a person's eternal salvation, and repentance for it is rare, making pardon infrequent. Experience shows that those habitually involved in taking God's name in vain seldom repent.
5. When repentance does come, those guilty of this sin will be particularly challenged and find bitterness in reflecting on it. It will affect their peace and hinder the perception of God's favor and the joy of salvation. We see this in David, who made God's name to be blasphemed and, therefore, cried out repeatedly for the joy of God's salvation, seeking the removal of that scandal (Psalm 51).
6. This sin can bring temporal judgments, as it did for David (2 Samuel 12).
7. Even after pardon, the sad remembrance of this sin will lead individuals to loathe themselves, walk in humility, contrition, and bitterness of soul. They will think much of, magnify, and wonder at the grace that pardoned such sinners, as seen in Paul,

who loathed himself and highly exalted grace because it pardoned him, a blasphemer.

For those who do not seek pardon or obtain mercy, this sin has the following effects:

1. It leaves their conscience open to the severe and grievous accusation of this sin, subjecting them to the sharp threat pronounced against it. As this sin is despised and God is greatly wronged, it cannot help but gnaw at the conscience even more.
2. Justice has a clear basis to proceed against them, not only as sinners in general but as specifically guilty of this sin. Therefore, they are in a special manner liable to wrath because of it.
3. There will be an eminent degree of wrath in Hell. Just as there are different degrees of torment in Hell, undoubtedly this sin will cause those guilty of it to experience a high degree of that torment.
4. It further hardens and incapacitates the individuals guilty of it, making them less inclined to receive pardon (though not inherently impossible).

If it is asked why this sin is threatened and punished even more severely than other sins, here is the answer:

This sin carries the most heinous aggravations, thus incurring the greatest guilt. Here are the reasons:

1. It is a sin directly against God Himself. Unlike sins of the second table or even other sins of the first table, which may involve turning away from God or neglecting His worship, this sin directly and intentionally targets God Himself. It is a bold and audacious affront, disrespecting and challenging the very nature of God, who has revealed Himself through His name.

2. It is a clear sign and symptom of gross atheism and enmity against God. Taking God's name in vain is characteristic of His enemies (Psalm 139:20). This sin is deeply intertwined with atheistic tendencies, indicating a lack of true knowledge and faith in God's greatness, holiness, power, justice, and other attributes. It reveals a disregard and contempt for God. Often, those who are frequent offenders of this sin also display gross behavior in other areas. It cultivates an environment conducive to atheism and ingrains a habit of despising and belittling God. Conversely, if someone has a conscientious disposition, they will regard this sin with seriousness.
3. It brings the greatest dishonor to God and gives occasion for blasphemy. Like David's sin, it provides ammunition for those who seek to discredit and blaspheme God. False prophets and deceivers, along with their followers, are known to commit this sin (2 Peter 2:1-2). When this sin prevails, true religion is treated as mere superstition or empty fancy. Therefore, God will punish it severely to uphold His honor.
4. It is often the sin of those who profess to acknowledge God but deny Him in their actions and fail to worship Him as they ought. This sin goes against one's own convictions, knowledge, and profession of having a relationship with God. Hence, there is an added emphasis in the commandment: "The name of the Lord your God."
5. Unlike other sins that may be driven by pleasure or profit, this sin is not typically motivated by such factors. It often stems from outright atheism or a profane custom that exacerbates its seriousness through its customary nature.

The second reason why the Lord threatens and punishes this sin is to uphold His holiness and instill the awe-inspiring nature of His great and dreadful name, "the Lord our God," in the hearts of all people. The manifestation of God's name is one of the greatest blessings

bestowed upon humanity. When that name is abused, which is the abuse of the greatest thing and therefore the gravest abuse, it is met with severe retribution. In this way, the Lord ensures that His holiness and greatness are recognized by all His creatures. Therefore, those who belittle and profane His blessed and holy name will come to realize its true significance when God rises to take vengeance.

Thirdly, God threatens and punishes this sin because people take liberties and indulge in it through formal prayers, rash swearing, jesting, writings, doctrines, disputes, games involving lots, and so on. He affixes a greater mark of His indignation on this sin to either restrain people from such liberties or to make them suffer the consequences. Since men rarely impose severe punishments for this sin, God Himself takes up the task.

If anyone asks why people generally pay so little attention to this commandment and frequently sin against it, it may seem perplexing at first. Considering the commandment's firm and explicit threats and the fact that it often results in shame and visible judgments even in this world and before others, it is indeed astonishing that people still persist in committing this sin. It lacks the allure of profit, reputation, or the immediate gratification of carnal desires that tempt and drive people towards other sins. Yet, despite all these factors, the frequency of this sin remains as abominable as it is baffling. However, we may surmise that it stems from the following causes.

1. One of the causes for the disregard of this commandment is the prevalence of atheism and the lack of reverence for God and His majesty. The absence of faith in God's justice and His unwavering commitment to fulfill His threats leads to carelessness and a lack of vigilance. When a person's heart denies the existence of God, it paves the way for the sin of taking His name in vain. This is evident in the case of Sennacherib, who arrogantly asked, "Who is the Lord?" before treading upon His name (Isaiah 37).

2. There is a natural pride and stubbornness in people that rebel against God. It stems from the aforementioned atheism and results in daring defiance of the living God. They consider it a display of courage not to fear Him and, like Goliath, they defy and scorn the Almighty. This contempt for God and His holiness is most evident in the profaning of His name. It is worth noting that where this sin prevails, there is either an extreme state of apathy and insensitivity or a devilish boldness in despising God and all aspects of religion. They view spiritual exercises such as prayer as unfitting for those who are considered strong or spirited individuals. They erroneously perceive defying God and rejecting religion as signs of true knowledge and evidence of bravery and superiority. This mindset reflects a terrible state where individuals effectively say, "Who is the Lord, that I should reverence His name?"
3. The devil, well aware of these tendencies, takes advantage of the situation. He provokes individuals, offering occasions for them to unleash their anger and frustration. Through habitual exposure and the influence of others, he reinforces this sinful behavior. By diverting their focus towards this sin, he keeps them away from other sins they may have been prone to commit. In God's righteous judgment, He allows the devil to harden individuals in this particular sin.
4. There may be something inherent in the nature of this sin that makes it more tempting for people to commit. Unlike sins that directly harm others or involve deliberate falsehoods, the sin of taking God's name in vain often occurs in the context of truth, duty, or worship. It can also be committed unintentionally, without premeditation or deliberation. The devil takes advantage of these aspects, driving individuals to engage in profanity or thoughtless and empty discharge of religious duties. Because this sin does not always have immediate negative consequences for others and is not perceived as a personal offense, individuals may feel less fear and accountability for it.

In conclusion, it is crucial to recognize and seriously consider the nature of this sin, the wrath it deserves, the extent of its guilt, and the severe judgment that awaits. Reflect on the tremendous risk you face and the sentence that awaits you when the day of judgment arrives. None of us will be able to absolve ourselves from this guilt. This pronouncement will make many tremble as the Lord says, "You took my name in vain in such company, at such a play or sport, in such a contest, in such an oath, or even in such a prayer." This will be the righteous sentence, regardless of whether we believe it or not. This is the truth of God, and it should make us tremble and consider our ways.

Therefore, let me earnestly exhort all of you—old and young, godly and profane, rich and poor—to pay closer attention to this sin and be vigilant against it. Think deeply about it and be cautious in every way it can be committed. Take all necessary measures to prevent it, fear to irreverently mention the great and awe-inspiring name of the Lord our God. Tremble when you hear it spoken, and when you read, hear, pray, or engage in any duty, do so with utmost reverence. Seek to avoid this curse and threat and strive to be found guiltless on the day of the Lord by shunning the sin of taking His name in vain.

To help you in this endeavor, I recommend the following:

1. Make a sincere effort to walk in the presence of God's greatness and let your heart be filled with reverence for Him. When the fear of God is present in the heart, it will naturally manifest in respectful expressions of His name.
2. Believe and be convinced of the reality of the truth regarding the severity of the judgment for this sin and the fearful consequences that will undoubtedly follow.
3. Use and mention God's name reverently in your prayers, during worship, in conversations, and other contexts. Avoid falling into formalistic routines in these duties, as it often paves the way for

more flagrant violations of this command. Strive to be deeply moved even when recounting stories or events where His name is mentioned.

4. Let this sin trouble and affect you. When you hear others committing this sin, be deeply affected by it and seek to make them aware of its gravity. By doing so, you will train yourself to abhor and reject this evil.
5. Never let this sin pass in yourself without serious reflection and admonishment. Look back on your life and consider moments when you were grossly guilty of this sin. Evaluate your worship and identify any omissions or deficiencies, especially in relation to what you could have been. Learn to despise yourself for these failings and feel a sense of bitterness. Particularly if these transgressions have occurred recently, do not let them go unnoticed, for they may lead to a hardening of the heart and the continued validity of the divine sentence against you. Will you sleep while this word stands recorded in the Bible as a decree against you?

Therefore, I urge you to take heed, repent, and seek forgiveness for this sin. May you find grace and mercy in the sight of the Lord, and may His holy name be revered and honored in your thoughts, words, and actions.

6. Seek the abundant presence of the Holy Spirit in your life, for it is only through the Holy Spirit that one can confess Jesus as Lord (1 Corinthians 12:3).
7. Make it a regular and earnest prayer to the Lord, "Hallowed be Your name" (Matthew 6:9).

Now, let me address what has already taken place. If we truly understand the gravity of this sin, it should cause us all to tremble and realize the urgency of repentance and seeking refuge in Christ. Let me ask you, dear listeners, do you believe the truth that this guilt

poses such a tremendous danger? Are there any among you who do not bear the weight of its consequences? If so, what will you do? You must flee to Christ or remain in your current state. Can anyone feel secure while lying under the weight of God's curse that has been pronounced?

Oh, you atheists who have never trembled at the name of the Lord, who casually use His name in your everyday conversations, and you who make it a by-word and mock or jest with it, those who are not bound by any oath, and all you hypocrites who profane the name of the Lord while pretending to honor it in His ordinances—I implore you to heed my two charges, and I do so under the solemn warning of a third charge.

First, I charge you to repent of this sin and urgently seek forgiveness through Christ. Do not delay, for the curse is at the doorstep, and the sentence has already been passed. Oh, do not sleep until this curse is removed.

Second, I charge you, in your various roles as parents, masters, magistrates, church officers, schoolmasters, and teachers, to strive to prevent this sin in yourselves and others. It is a grievous matter that many children are raised in this sin, and the majority of people live in it. Our streets are filled with it more than the streets of heathens. Take heed of this charge, every soul.

Or thirdly, I charge you to stand before the great and dreadful God, who will not consider any guilty of this sin as innocent, and to answer to Him for it.

May these charges weigh heavily upon your hearts, and may you respond with repentance, seeking forgiveness and transformation through Christ. Do not take these words lightly, for the consequences are grave. Seek the mercy and grace of God before it is too late.

The Fourth Commandment

"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it." - Exodus 20:8-11

The Lord, in His infinite wisdom and goodness, has considered human frailty and summarized our obligations in these Ten Commandments, also known as the Ten Words. Through this concise summary, He provides guidance to overcome our sinful ignorance and weaknesses. The first commandment pertains to our duty towards God, emphasizing the worship of the one true God. The second commandment restricts us to worshiping God only as He has prescribed. The third commandment instructs us to show reverence to God in all His ordinances and to approach them with a respectful attitude.

This fourth commandment points out the specific time that the Lord has solemnly set apart for His worship. It is a time when He, who is the Lord over us and our time, demonstrates the portion that He has reserved as a tribute to Himself. He has generously granted us rest, and this time is meant to acknowledge that. However, it is not to be understood as exclusive, implying that only that time should be spent in worship. There is no exclusive determination of the frequency or duration of worship in Scripture, meaning that it should be of a specific length or frequency and no more or less. Rather, God precisely designates this time as an acknowledgment from us, just as when He gave Adam the use of all the trees in the Garden but

reserved one. In the same way, He gives us six days and keeps the seventh for Himself.

This commandment is positioned between the two tables, serving as a transition from one to the other. It encompasses both duties of immediate service to God and acts of charity towards others. In a sense, it reconciles the two tables and brings them together, highlighting their harmony. It is expressed in greater detail and with more variety of expressions and words than any other commandment. However, throughout history, it has been particularly attacked and undermined. Satan seeks to obscure its meaning and loosen the strict obligation to observe it. This has been attempted not only by those who oppose Sabbath observance or hold corrupt theological views but even by those who are generally orthodox. In these times, there is a generation that harbours animosity towards all ordinances and commandments of the Decalogue, specifically targeting this commandment because it forms a crucial foundation of godliness. It is a great presumption for people to challenge and attack God's authority, especially in a commandment where He has provided more detailed explanations and emphasized the duties and prohibitions more explicitly than in any other commandment. Therefore, before addressing the practical aspects of piety related to the sanctification of the Christian Sabbath or Lord's day, whether in terms of what should be avoided or embraced, it is necessary to speak doctrinally to three points in order to clarify the precept.

We need to address several points:

1. Whether this commandment is moral and binds us in its literal form, like the other commandments.
2. What is the specific moral aspect of it and the literal meaning of the words.

3. How does the observance of the Lord's day relate to this commandment? Does it require the same sanctification, even though its institution arises from a different basis than the seventh-day Sabbath? We must discuss all of these points, and we will first address the question of morality before discussing the meaning. This is because everything hinges on this aspect, both in terms of interpretation and practice. If it is not moral and eternally binding, there is no need to explain it or emphasize the importance of its practice. However, if it is found to be moral, then there is no doubt that it concerns us and requires the same moral sanctification of a day as it did before.

Our assertion, therefore, is that the duty of setting apart and sanctifying a portion of time, as specified in the fourth commandment for the purpose of worshipping God, is a moral duty, and the obligation to observe it is perpetual, just like the obligations in the other commandments. The obligation to this duty is no less dissolved than the obligations to the other commandments, although there may be differences in the degree of obligation based on the specific content of each commandment. In simple terms, it is as necessary to keep a day holy unto God, one day out of every seven, now (assuming God determines the specific day), as it is necessary to uphold the worship prescribed by God. It would be sinful to replace it with another day, just as it would be sinful to substitute divinely prescribed worship with any other form of worship. The time is fixed and determined by the fourth commandment (referring to a solemn and principal time), just as the worship itself is determined by the second commandment.

To clarify this, consider the following:

1. When we say that the observance of the Sabbath is moral, we do not mean moral-natural, as if it were binding without any positive law. No, we mean moral-positive, which means it is imposed by a command that still stands and binds us by the authority of the Lawgiver, just like several other commands and

precepts. For example, the commands concerning sacraments, which fall under the second commandment, and the commands concerning monogamy and prohibited degrees of marriage, which fall under the seventh commandment. These commands have been broken by many saints and have been subject to dispensation in certain cases. Therefore, it cannot be assumed that they are naturally moral, as the Lord does not dispense with them in the same way. It would be unreasonable to think that His servants would have been ignorant of such a naturally moral obligation. So, when we speak of the moral aspect of the Sabbath, we are referring to its positive nature, which binds us by a positive law.

2. In considering this question, it is important to distinguish between two statements: saying that the seventh-day Sabbath observed by the Jews was moral, and saying that the fourth commandment is moral. The former may be abolished because another day has taken its place, while the latter, the commandment itself, remains in force because it morally obligates us to observe a seventh day, although the specific day chosen by the Lord may be different. Even though the day of the week may have changed, the principle of setting apart one day out of every seven remains intact.
3. It is necessary to distinguish between the moral essence of a command and certain ceremonial aspects associated with it. Therefore, it is possible that the fourth commandment may have included ceremonial elements related to the seventh day or the manner in which that seventh day was sanctified. These ceremonial aspects, such as double sacrifices and reasons specific to that people mentioned in the preface to all the commandments, may no longer be applicable. Just as the sacraments of the Old Law, which are associated with the second commandment, contain ceremonial elements but are still necessary and moral in the Church, both a Sabbath day and sacraments are important. So, what we argue for is not

everything connected to this command that is specific to a particular administration or incidental to the sanctification of a Sabbath. Instead, we argue that the command, in terms of its main purpose, content, and essence, is moral-positive and still binding and obligatory for us. Neglecting or omitting it would be sinful. It should be sufficient to say that if this command has never been repealed in its essence and has not been superseded by anything else, then it must still be binding. It was once proclaimed as obligatory by the Lawgiver himself and has never been repealed in essence. It is not harmful in its nature and is just as necessary now as it was then. It is true that the seventh-day Sabbath has been replaced by the institution and substitution of the first-day Sabbath or the Lord's day, but that qualifies the command rather than repeals it. Firstly, it affirms that a day is moral and necessary. Secondly, it affirms that a day out of seven is moral and necessary, which is exactly what we are saying. And why is it necessary? Undoubtedly, it is in accordance with this command. From this, we can argue that if the essence of this command is maintained even when the specific day is changed, then the command is moral (as this change confirms). And this is indeed true based on experience. Therefore, it follows that the law remains unrepealed. It is evident that the day, in terms of its number, frequency, duration, and the manner of its sanctification, is part of the essence of the commandment. However, the specific order of the day (whether it is the first, second, or seventh) is not essential because the first day is immediately associated with matters of religion, God's honor, and the well-being of souls, which the other days are not. This argument holds true against all who acknowledge that this law was given by God until they can demonstrate a repeal.

To provide a more specific explanation of this, we will establish the morality of it by considering: 1. How the Scripture speaks of it in general. 2. How it speaks of the Decalogue. 3. How it speaks of this specific command. 4. By presenting some Scriptural arguments in support of it. Regarding the first point, when the Scripture addresses

it in general terms, if it speaks as frequently about clarifying the fourth commandment or the Sabbath (which pertains to its morality) and if it presses it with equal seriousness, applicable to all periods of the Church, as it does with any other moral duty, then we can conclude that this command is morally binding and perpetual. To ascertain this, we will demonstrate: 1. the frequency with which it is mentioned; 2. the seriousness with which it is emphasized; 3. its affirmation as applicable to all times and conditions of the Church.

1. If we examine the entire Scriptures, we will find references to the sanctification of a Sabbath. It is mentioned first in Genesis 2, immediately following the creation. It is also referred to in Exodus 16, prior to the giving of the Law. Furthermore, in Exodus 20, it is explicitly stated in the Law as a distinct and specific command within the first table. It is reiterated multiple times thereafter, such as in Exodus 31 and Leviticus 23:3, where it is designated as the primary feast before all the extraordinary ones, indicating its perpetual nature. Moreover, it serves as a rule or standard by which the sanctification of extraordinary Sabbaths or feasts is regulated. It is repeated again in Deuteronomy 5 along with the other commandments. In the historical parts of Scripture, such as Nehemiah 9:13, it is mentioned. It is also referred to in the Psalms, particularly in Psalm 92, which is titled "A Psalm or Song for the Sabbath day." The prophets, too, do not overlook it, as seen in Isaiah 56:2, 58:13, Jeremiah 17:21-22, and Ezekiel 20:12, 20. In the New Testament, the observance of a day or Sabbath is mentioned in the Gospels, such as Matthew 24:20, Luke 23:56, Acts 13:14-15, 21, and Acts 20:7. It is also mentioned in the Epistles, like 1 Corinthians 16, and in the book of Revelation, specifically Revelation 1:10. It is as if all these passages have converged with a common purpose of affirming the significance and enduring nature of this duty.
2. Consider how weightily, seriously, and insistently the Scripture speaks of it. First, it is mentioned in Genesis 2 with a reason

provided. Second, the Law describes its specific sanctification. Third, it is presented as a mercy and unique privilege given by God to His people in Exodus 16, Numbers 9, and Ezekiel 20. Fourth, numerous promises of blessings are made to those who conscientiously and rightly observe it, as stated in Isaiah 56 and 58. Fifth, the violation of it is severely threatened and punished, as seen in Numbers 15, Nehemiah 13, Jeremiah 17, and Ezekiel 20. Sixth, there are many examples of the godly individuals who took great care in keeping it, as recorded in Nehemiah 13, Luke 23:56, Acts 20, and Revelation 1:10. Seventh, the specific duties associated with it are outlined, such as resting, praying, reading, delighting in God, and performing works of mercy. Eighth, in the Old Testament, it is claimed by God as His own day, referred to as "My Holy day" in Isaiah 58:13 and acknowledged by the people as His holy Sabbath in Nehemiah 9:14. This ownership is asserted in contrast to the other six days. All of this suggests something more than a temporary nature in the duty of setting apart a seventh day for God (excluding the specific day).

3. If we examine all periods and conditions of the Church, we will find that the observance of a Sabbath is distinctly marked. Firstly, in innocence, it was instituted and distinguished from other days, receiving a blessing. In Hebrews 4, it is referred to as the rest that has existed since the beginning of the world. Secondly, even before the giving of the Law, the need for its sanctification was hinted at. Thirdly, during the giving of the Law, it was emphasized and a command was given to remember it. Fourthly, after the Law, the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah upheld its importance, and the godly individuals observed it, as mentioned in Psalm 92. Fifthly, during and after the time of captivity, its violation was reproved in Ezekiel 20, and its observance was restored by the godly leader Nehemiah.

The challenge arises when we consider whether the Scriptures speak of the Sabbath as applicable to the days of the Gospel. To address this, we can examine the following hints: Acts 20:7 and 1 Corinthians

16:2. These passages specifically mention Christians engaging in the moral duties of the Sabbath on a particular day. Additionally, the title in Revelation 1:10 directly appropriates a day to the Lord. These verses will be further explored when we address the last question.

Furthermore, we can present three passages to support the idea of a Sabbath belonging to the New Testament, although not necessarily the exact day observed in the Old Testament. These passages include two prophecies and one from the Gospel. The first prophecy is found in Isaiah 66:23. The second is in Ezekiel, specifically in chapters 43, 44, 45, and 46, which describe the new temple. In these passages, it is evident that they relate to the days of the Gospel, and although they prophesy about the services of the Gospel using terms associated with the Old Testament administration, such as sacrifices, they also mention the sanctified and set-apart time of the Gospel using the term Sabbath. It is important to note that these prophecies do not imply that the exact same day as observed in the Old Testament is to be observed in the Gospel, just as the change in services does not negate the continuing validity of the second commandment. Therefore, there is no reason to deny the ongoing validity of the fourth commandment in its substance, even with the change in the specific day.

Moreover, it is evident that from the mention of these services, the conclusion follows that there should be established ordinances and a mode of worship in the New Testament, just as in the Old Testament. It is clear that there should be a solemn and designated time for the Sabbath that people ought to sanctify. Other times should not be regarded as equal to it, just as any service or worship not authorized by God or contrary to the second commandment should not be accepted. The passages indicate a sequence of mentioning services and then solemn times and Sabbaths, which implies that both external services and a designated time for them are part of the New Testament. Therefore, many theologians draw conclusions from these passages, such as the necessity and continuation of a standing ministry, the need for church discipline and separation of the

righteous from the wicked, and the continuation of a church and its ordinances.

Based on this, I argue that if the prophesying of sanctifying a Sabbath as an act of worship to God is attributed to the New Testament, then we are obligated to observe the sanctification of a Sabbath as a necessary duty. However, the continuation of Sabbath observance unto God is specifically prophesied and foretold as a form of worship in the New Testament. Therefore, it follows that we are bound to the sanctification of the Sabbath as a necessary duty.

The third passage is Matthew 24:20, where the Lord implies that just as traveling in winter is physically challenging, it would be mentally burdensome for the godly (since he is speaking to his disciples) to travel on the day specifically and solemnly set apart for God's worship, which is the Sabbath. If there were no Sabbath to continue after Christ's ascension, or if it were not meant to be sanctified, there would be no reason for the grief and trouble they would experience in having to travel on the Sabbath day and not being able to wait until it had passed. Therefore, there would be no need to pray for their flight not to occur on that day. However, our Lord's exhortation implies that the Sabbath was to be observed as a fixed and certain day, just as the winter season is fixed. It is evident that this cannot be referring to the Jewish Sabbath because: 1. The Jewish Sabbath was soon to be abolished. 2. Traveling on the Jewish Sabbath would not have caused grief to the disciples if all days were considered equal; they would not have been concerned about it in this case. 3. Furthermore, if there were no Sabbath to be observed, it would have been clearer for Jesus to say, "Do not stand and grieve to travel any day," but his words indicate the opposite—that there was to be a solemn Sabbath. 4. He specifically mentions the Sabbath day and not the other festivals of the Jews, which were also meant to be kept holy. By doing so, he distinguishes the weekly Sabbath from those other days and presents it as the only holy day on which they should avoid traveling if possible. Therefore, they would pray for it to be prevented. In the New Testament, the Sabbath mentioned as the

solemn time for worship always refers to the weekly Sabbath, while other holy days are referred to as the first or last day of the feast. If the Lord's intention was for them to pray that their flight would not occur on any of the Jewish holy days, mentioning only the weekly Sabbath would not be sufficient for that purpose.

To suggest that the reason for praying not to be put to flee was to avoid scandal does not negate the previous reasons. Additionally, at that time, the apostles and other Christians had separated themselves from the Jews and did not concern themselves with avoiding scandal in relation to them. As the Apostle says, in reference to the Jews, "Wrath has come upon them to the uttermost" (1 Thessalonians 2:16), indicating that they were not weak but malicious, and therefore should be dealt with as the Lord dealt with the Pharisees. Taking all these factors into consideration, it is evident from our Lord's words that the Sabbath was to be sanctified among Christians for about 40 years after his death, which proves that the Scripture mentions the sanctification of a Sabbath under the New Testament.

We now turn to the second way of demonstrating the morality of this commandment, which is by examining how the Scripture speaks of the entire Decalogue. We reason as follows:

1. If all the commandments of the Decalogue are moral, then this commandment must also be moral because it is one of them. If it were not moral and binding, there would not be Ten Words (as they are called by the Lord in Deuteronomy 10:4), but only nine. This would seem strange and absurd to those who have learned from God's Word that there are ten commandments. It is universally acknowledged (except by the Papists who deny the second commandment and exclude it from their catechisms) that all the commandments are moral and binding. And it can be shown that they must all be equally moral and binding in the following ways.

2. In the Old Testament, all the commandments had the same authority, privileges, and prerogatives that the judicial and ceremonial laws did not possess. For example: 1. They were pronounced distinctly by God himself, without any additions (Deuteronomy 5:22). 2. They were written by God's own finger on tablets of stone (Exodus 31:18). 3. They were placed and kept in the Ark of the Covenant (Exodus 25:16). If these and other prerogatives made a distinction and indicated that a distinction should be made between the other nine commandments and all the judicial or ceremonial laws, why would this not also apply to this commandment? 2. In the New Testament, they are all equally affirmed. When the law is mentioned in general, none of them are exempted, and therefore this commandment is necessarily included.

To support our argument, we turn to the passage in Matthew 5:17, where our Lord specifically intends to uphold the moral law, including the fourth commandment, and to emphasize holiness in moral duties to his listeners, in a different manner than the Pharisees. He says, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Therefore, whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven..." It is evident that by "Law" in this context, the moral law must be understood. Jesus was accused of transgressing it, particularly in relation to this commandment, as his sermon in Matthew follows his confrontation with the Pharisees regarding Sabbath observance (John 5:10, etc.).

The purpose of Jesus' statement is to refute the accusation and how does he do it? By emphasizing that he still upholds the moral law, even more rigorously than the Pharisees. Moreover, it was the moral law specifically that the Pharisees had corrupted, and Jesus undertakes its vindication. Their failure primarily lay in obedience to

the moral law, not the ceremonial law. Furthermore, the offense and misconception among Jesus' listeners that he seeks to address require this clarification. Many of them believed that with the coming of the Messiah, there would be a relaxation of the requirements of holiness outlined in the moral law. Therefore, Jesus tells them not to think that way. It is worth noting that relaxation from other laws could have been considered legitimately, but for the moral law, teaching its abrogation at any time is sinful and harmful. Hence, it is undoubtedly the moral law that is being referred to.

Furthermore, we reason in the following manner: Whenever Jesus speaks of the Law (τὸν νόμον) or uses the term in an eminent sense (referring undoubtedly to the Decalogue), he speaks of all its commandments equally, including the least of them, which includes the fourth commandment. He also declares that he did not come to destroy the Law, something he never claimed about the ceremonial laws but rather foretold their abolition. For example, he predicted the end of worship in the Jerusalem Temple. Additionally, when Jesus clarifies the true meaning of the Sabbath, refuting the corrupt traditions of the Pharisees, he does not weaken its previous obligation or imply its weakness. Instead, he reveals its original intent, which not only allowed for acts of piety and mercy but greatly facilitated both.

Another passage that confirms the authority of the entire Decalogue, or rather asserts its authority, is found in the Epistle of James, specifically James 2:10: "For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it." Why? Because it is the same God and Lawgiver (not a servant or angel) who spoke all the commandments, including the fourth. In this passage, James clearly refers to the Decalogue as the "Royal Law," as there is no other law mentioned or available with similar authority during that time. It is also evident that James attributes equal authority to all the laws spoken by the Lord at that time; otherwise, his reasoning would be flawed if one of the Ten Commandments could be cited as abrogated and non-binding. Therefore, it logically follows that the

fourth commandment, being one of the Ten, possesses the same authority as the rest.

It is worth noting that James, similar to Jesus and the apostles when they reference the Law, does not grant new authority to the laws he cites. Rather, he assumes their existing authority and utilizes them as confirmations of his argument. This would not be possible if their authority were dependent on or derived solely from their present citation.

Thirdly, we further reason as follows: Either there is some moral duty contained in this command that is not found in any of the previous commands, or there is only a ceremonial aspect within it that can be attributed to one of them. The perfection of this law necessitates that all essential elements for the worship of God should be encompassed within it. The very purpose of this command, which is to summarize all requirements, demands that there should be nothing in it that is unnecessary, redundant, or could have been omitted.

If the subject matter of the command is indeed moral and not covered in any previous command, then the command itself must be moral, as a moral substance and matter determine the nature of a command. Moreover, it must be moral to avoid redundancy in this concise compilation of duties, especially moral duties.

On the other hand, if it is not moral but contains some ceremonial aspect that can be attributed to one of the three previous commands, then: 1. It could have been included among other ceremonial aspects. 2. Other ceremonial aspects could have been included alongside it. 3. An explanation should be provided as to why all ceremonial aspects are not attributed to a single moral command. 4. If the content of this command can be reduced to another command, it cannot be regarded as a distinct command and should have been included within another command instead, such as the rest for servants and animals, which is subsumed within this command. 5. It should be

demonstrated to which command it can be attributed if it is indeed a ceremonial aspect. 6. A rationale must be provided for why, out of the Ten Commandments, only one stands apart so distinctly from the others. If the denial of its moral substance leads to all these absurdities, then to avoid them, we must conclude that it is indeed moral. Therefore, the fourth commandment is moral.

Fourthly, we reason as follows: If the commandment is not moral, then it must be either judicial or ceremonial in terms of its matter and substance. However, it is not judicial, meaning it does not pertain primarily to external policies and civil society in a particular nation. No such duties are primarily included in any commandment of the first table, which teaches duties toward God, as opposed to duties toward others, which are addressed in the second table. Furthermore, it is not ceremonial. All ceremonial practices that are typological in nature originated after the fall and relate in some way to the coming of Christ. But the commandment to sanctify one day out of seven originated in the state of innocence and was given to Adam in paradise before the fall. Therefore, it cannot be properly classified as ceremonial any more than the commandment for a man to leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife, as mentioned by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 5. Moreover, if it were ceremonial in substance, it would be symbolic of something to come, which is difficult to demonstrate. In addition, it would not be lawful to retain it, as ceremonial practices in their current use are not only obsolete but also detrimental. However, this moral obligation, which is essentially the same as the commandment we advocate for, was retained by the apostles and the early Church. Therefore, it cannot be ceremonial, and it must be moral.

To suggest that the commandment is partly moral and partly ceremonial in terms of its substance does not hold for several reasons: 1. There is no such law that combines both aspects. 2. It would create confusion between ceremonial and moral aspects, which the Lord himself seems to have intentionally kept clearly

distinct. 3. Whatever may be ceremonial, that which was allowed and commanded to Adam in paradise, and which we can agree with under the gospel, cannot be considered ceremonial. Neither of these states, the state of innocence or the gospel era, are capable of proper ceremonies, but both recognize the significance of observing a seventh day. Therefore, it is not ceremonial.

The third way to establish the morality of this command is by examining it on its own merits. We argue as follows:

If it is not only included in the Decalogue along with the other moral commands, but is also more extensively explained and emphasized within it, then it is certainly moral and perpetually binding, just like the rest. And indeed, it is presented and expressed in the Decalogue in this manner, receiving even greater emphasis than the other commands, possibly because its basis is positive and requires more elaboration. Similar to the second commandment, we can conclude that it is moral. This is evident through the following observations:

1. It shares in all the common privileges with the other commands listed in the Decalogue, all of which were spoken and written by the Lord himself and preserved in the Ark.
2. It is presented in both a positive and negative form: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy" and "you shall not do any work" – whereas the other commands are expressed in only one of these ways.
3. It possesses the particularity found in all the other commands, addressing individuals directly by using the singular form "you shall." This indicates that it speaks to each person individually. Although all the commands apply to everyone, only this command explicitly mentions sons, daughters, male servants, female servants, and strangers as encompassed within its scope.
4. There is a special equity demonstrated in the allocation of time. Six days are given for labor, and therefore, it is only reasonable

that the Lord should have the seventh day. If the granting of six days for work is considered moral (as all time belongs to God and we can only use it with His permission), and since no other grant of time is mentioned, the division and allocation of time between God and us, in which we receive the majority of the time (six parts out of seven), must also be considered moral. Therefore, the act of setting apart the seventh day is likewise moral. Thus, the command itself, which encompasses both the sixth day given to us and the seventh day reserved for God, must stand or fall together. They mutually support each other: "You shall labor for six days and rest on the seventh; you shall rest on the Sabbath day and labor for six."

5. This day is claimed by the Lord as something in which He has a special ownership. It is the Lord's day, for though He gave six days, He reserved the seventh. Can anyone dare to say that He relinquished or transferred it to someone else? If not, then it still belongs to Him, and it would be sacrilege to use it otherwise.
6. Obedience to this command is emphasized by a weighty reason derived from God's own example, which clearly relates to its initial institution in Genesis 2. It is stated that He rested on the seventh day after six days of work, and so should we. This reason is particularly effective in proving the morality of this command because: 1. It existed even in innocence, without reference to any type or ceremony. 2. It is universal, applicable to all people as God's creatures. Therefore, if the reason is perpetual, so must the command be.
7. This command, unlike any other, is explicitly emphasized for masters and rulers not only for themselves but also as a responsibility they bear for those under their authority. They are urged to ensure the sanctification of the Lord's day within their families, thus highlighting the extent of this command in more explicit terms than any other, although it is implied in others as well.

8. The observance of this command is encouraged by a special blessing that God has attached to the designated time. He blessed it, meaning He made and continues to make it beneficial and refreshing as a special blessing to His people who observe His ordinances and seek Him on this day. This day holds a double portion of blessing and abundance, surpassing any other day, providing rest, edification, comfort, and a sense of His presence. To deny the morality of this solemn time would be to deprive the Church of a great blessing, as this day set apart by God for His service carries a unique blessing beyond any other commanded day, and it has been frequently experienced as such by His people.
9. It is specifically and uniquely introduced with a "Memento" or "Remember," which is not mentioned in any other command. Shall we think that when God says "Remember," there is nothing significant to take notice of? Or shall we think that it only meant "Remember back then" and not "Remember now"? And if so, who can justifiably forget what He commands us to remember? It is not about merely keeping the seventh day, but about keeping the Sabbath holy unto the Lord. When we consider all these distinct characteristics present in this command (which are not found collectively in all the other commands), can they not convince us that it is the Lord's intention for this command to remain obligatory in its essence until the end of the world? It is so emphatically stressed that even if there is little guidance from natural understanding to determine the specific day or emphasize its observance, it can still be firmly upheld through clearer and weightier reasons.

And thus, we come to the fourth method proposed for establishing the morality of this command, which is by presenting arguments derived from Scripture.

The first argument is: If the law remains binding under the New Testament, not only in terms of its subject matter as natural law or

its repetition in the New Testament, but also by the authority that enacts it, then this law of the fourth command, even if not explicitly determined by nature and not explicitly mentioned in the New Testament, must also be binding because it possesses that same authority. The first part of the argument is true and generally acknowledged by theologians (with few exceptions), and it is evident from Christ and His apostles citing it, as they consider it to be binding. Therefore, the latter part must also be true.

The second argument is: If this command is based on moral grounds, then the command itself must be moral. But the grounds on which it is based are moral. Therefore, the command itself must be moral. The reasons presented in the command itself, such as the division of time into six parts for us and one part for God, God's rest after six days of work, and His establishment of a seven-day week with six days for work, etc., are all moral and continue to be binding now as they were before.

The third argument is: If all moral duties are encompassed by the Ten Commandments, then this Command must necessarily be moral. The first part of the argument is true. Therefore, this Command includes a moral duty that is not found in the preceding Commands, namely, the establishment and determination of a specific and principal time to be set apart for God's worship, one day out of seven. While it is true that time is commanded to be allocated for God's worship in the other Commands where the acts of worship themselves are prescribed, the determination of the chief time is solely addressed in this Command. From this, two conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, an indefinite time for worship or for the performance of positive duties contained in the other Commands cannot be considered the essence of this Command's morality, as it is presupposed as necessary for the fulfillment of every positive duty. Therefore, its morality lies in the determination of the specific time. Secondly, we can understand why there is no new Command specifically addressing this in the New Testament, as it is already established in the Law. Similarly, Commandments such as "You shall

not swear" or "You shall not kill" are not mentioned as new Commands in the New Testament, yet they still remain binding. The mention of certain Commandments in the New Testament may serve to rectify misunderstandings or misapplications. Thus, this Command is upheld and confirmed without being explicitly reiterated.

The fourth argument is: If it is not permissible for individuals to arbitrarily determine God's appointed time for worship, then this Command is moral, as it restricts that freedom and no other Command does so. It is not free for individuals to choose any time they please or carve out their own schedule for worship. While there may be some debate on this matter, the argument is strengthened by the following points.

If it is permissible for individuals to determine arbitrarily the solemn and principal time dedicated to God's worship, then it means they can either choose no time at all or select a duration longer or shorter than what is prescribed in this Command. However, neither of these options holds true. The first option is clearly untenable, as worship requires dedicated time. The second option also fails to align with the intended purpose. If the chosen time is shorter, it encroaches upon what is due to God and hinders the spiritual well-being of our souls. If it is longer, it encroaches upon the time allotted for our worldly responsibilities. Can anyone truly restrain themselves when God has granted them such freedom?

Furthermore, if it were permissible for individuals to freely determine the solemn and principal time for God's worship, it would lead to either all people collectively agreeing on a specific day or each country or individual choosing their preferred day. However, neither of these options is feasible or conducive to edification. Therefore, the determination of the day must be prescribed to them, and if so, it is undoubtedly done through this Command. Hence, it remains binding and cannot be altered without sin, as was the proposition to be demonstrated.

The fifth argument is: The existence of a moral aspect in observing a seventh day can be supported by four renowned and significant witnesses.

The first witness is the universal practice of all Christians (leaving aside the discussion of non-Christians). The Apostles and the early Christian community, as a whole, have consistently believed in the observance of one day out of seven, and have accordingly practiced it to varying degrees.

2. Similarly, the consensus and opinions of all, which are often more reliable than mere practices, affirm the importance of this Command. Can we find any churches that do not include this fourth Commandment in their catechisms and canons, along with the others? Do not all commentators on the Decalogue comment on this Commandment and emphasize the sanctification of the Lord's day derived from it?
3. As a third witness, we can turn to people's consciences, which frequently and sharply convict them for no sin more than the desecration of the Lord's day. Consciences directly invoke this Commandment, along with its reminders and other reasons, to intensify the sense of guilt for violating it. Yet, they remain silent regarding the seventh day. Consciences rigorously demand obedience to this first day out of seven, and no reason challenging its morality can pacify them. The more sensitive Christians are, the more their consciences exert pressure for obedience to this Commandment. Even the slightest transgression of this Commandment leads to a sense of guilt and self-reproach.
4. God's dispensation of blessings or punishments, particularly in spiritual matters, testifies to this truth. Experience tells us that those who conscientiously observe this Commandment often thrive the most as Christians, displaying overall holiness, sensitivity, and a closer and deeper communion with God. Any

deviation from their usual seriousness or the improper sanctification of even one Sabbath causes them great setbacks. Conversely, it becomes evident that those who are gross and careless in their observance of this Commandment often exhibit similar characteristics in their conduct. They suffer spiritual afflictions such as hardness of heart, spiritual deadness, and hypocrisy at best. In some cases, they may even engage in gross acts of profanity or fall into errors in their beliefs, which are the unfortunate outcomes of desecrating this day. Those who disregard its blessings subject themselves to the curses associated with it. If the blessings of this Law persist, then the Law itself must be moral and perpetually binding. Obedience to it consistently yields blessings to varying degrees, while the desecration of it usually results in spiritual afflictions, if not more.

There are objections raised against the morality of this Command, and I will address three of the most common ones.

1. Objection: This Law is not mentioned as being renewed or confirmed in the New Testament.

Answer: The authority of this Law does not depend on its explicit mention in the New Testament. The Law is God's Word and possesses its authority just as the New Testament does.

2. If some other clearly moral and binding Law had been omitted or not mentioned in the New Testament, like the absence of a clear and explicit command against the use of images (though there is one against idolatry), it is sufficient that it is not repealed in the New Testament, just as it is not repealed here, as mentioned earlier.
3. There are other positive laws that remain binding even though they are not explicitly mentioned in the New Testament, such as the prohibition of marrying one's sister or aunt.

4. In terms of practical confirmation, we will see that the Lord's day, which is one day out of seven, is clearly upheld in the New Testament. On the other hand, this Command, along with the one concerning idolatry, is not extensively mentioned because the Jews, after the Captivity, were not as deficient in obeying these commands but rather inclined towards superstitious excesses. Christ addresses and corrects the abuses related to the fourth Commandment, but He never annuls it. Similarly, the third Commandment regarding swearing could be said to be abrogated based on the limited positive affirmation of it in the New Testament.

Objection: The Apostle, in Romans 14:5-6, Galatians 4:10, and Colossians 2:16, seems to disregard the distinction of times, especially Sabbath days, which would contradict the morality of this Command.

Answer: The Apostle's intention cannot be understood as simply rejecting the observance of all days as a form of bondage, thereby making all times equal. This interpretation would contradict his own practice and the practice of the other Apostles, as it is clear that they distinguished the first day of the week from other days, referring to it as the Lord's day. If all times were truly equal and any distinction were reproved, then there could be no designated time set apart for observance, which would contradict the notion of indifferency. If observing a day by God's command disrupts this indifferency, then observing a day by human command would have an even greater effect, and consequently, there could never be a Sabbath.

Therefore, we must understand these passages not as rejecting all days and times categorically, but rather as addressing ceremonial and Jewish days or days invented by humans. The context of these passages is directed against the imposition of ceremonial worship as necessary. The Apostle, in Romans 14, cautions against hastily condemning certain individuals who still observed specific days, similar to how he addresses the matter of eating certain foods. Yet,

there remains a distinction, as in the case of bread and wine in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, which is not nullified by the Apostle's discourse. The same applies to the observance of days.

In the Epistles to the Galatians and Colossians, the Apostle speaks about days but not specifically about the weekly Sabbath, which is usually referred to as a day. It is more likely that he is referring to the extraordinary feasts of the Jews, as the false teachers were pressuring the Galatians and Colossians to adhere to the ceremonial law as still necessary. The Apostle's focus is on the sinful observance of days that led people astray from grace and the Gospel, similar to other ceremonies. However, this cannot be applied to all days or the observance of one day out of seven. Therefore, the Apostle's statements do not undermine the morality of the fourth Commandment.

Objection: The fourth Command specifically commands the observance of the seventh day from Creation, but that is not moral. Therefore, the Command itself is not moral.

Answer: This objection is based on the misunderstanding that the precise seventh day is still commanded as the main substance of the Command. However, our subsequent discussion on the true scope and meaning of the Command will clarify this misconception. If a seventh day, and not that specific seventh day, is commanded as the primary substance of the Command, then the objection loses its ground.

Furthermore, it is important to distinguish between the mandatory aspect of the Command and the additional statements made to emphasize its observance or explain its meaning. The strict precept is to "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." It instructs to remember the Sabbath or the Holy rest, regardless of the specific day it falls on. Similarly, it is stated that "He rested on the seventh day," but it is also mentioned that "He blessed the Sabbath," shifting the focus from the precise seventh day to the Sabbath itself. This is

comparable to the second Commandment, where making no image is specifically commanded, but in general, all God's commandments concerning worship, even if they were ceremonial for a time, should be observed along with others. Therefore, this fourth Command explicitly commands the observance of one of the seven days, as the recurrence of that time is bounded, and it is generally any seventh day that the Lord chooses.

It is important to note that our discussion not only clarifies the true purpose of the Command but also underscores the necessity of observing the time that the Lord has sanctified for Himself. Additionally, we should differentiate between ceremonial and mutable aspects. All judicial laws are mutable, and even the Decalogue itself, in terms of its curse and as a covenant giving life, has undergone change and abolition. However, this does not mean that it should be regarded as purely ceremonial and non-obligatory. (Although all ceremonials are mutable, not all mutables are ceremonial.) Moreover, the change is not in the essence of the matter. Therefore, it is reasonable to consider that the seventh day in order, which was observed from Creation until the resurrection of Christ, could be changed to the first day of the week while still maintaining the seventh-day count. Such a change does not abolish the morality of the fourth Command.

Among other aspects of this Command, there is explicit mention of the whole family joining in this duty, which is not found in other Commands. Therefore, since it is a relevant duty to us and a specific element included in the Command, we will address the topic of family worship before discussing the second proposed point regarding the particular morality of this Command and its wording. This will help you understand that family worship is not a mere human invention but something that is called for and emphasized.

First, we will demonstrate that this Command encompasses family or domestic worship. Then, we will provide further confirmation from other Scriptures and logical reasoning. Next, we will explain the

specifics of family worship and identify who primarily bears the responsibility for its fulfillment. Finally, we will outline the advantages of faithfully practicing family worship and the consequences of neglecting it, along with the seriousness of that sin.

The existence of family worship within this Command becomes evident by considering the following points: 1. The general concept of worship to God. 2. The idea of family worship. 3. The requirements set forth in this Command.

1. Worship refers to the reasonable creature offering tribute to God, the great and sovereign Creator, whether it is paid directly and immediately to Him, such as prayer and praise, or performed for Him and at His command and for His honor, such as preaching, listening to sermons, and participating in sacraments. These acts are considered worship when carried out correctly. In short, we reserve the term "worship" more strictly for duties related to the first table of the law, which are commanded for the glory of God and not primarily for our own or others' external benefits. Although duties related to the second table of the law are also commanded, they cannot be called worship in the same sense, let alone immediate worship. For example, teaching others the duties of piety may be considered worship, while teaching the duties of any other ordinary occupation is not.

2. Family worship refers to the worship performed by specific relationships or by all members of the family collectively. It is distinct from individual or personal worship, as it involves the joint participation of the constituent members of the family.

Family worship can be distinguished from other forms of worship: 1. It differs from secret or solitary worship, which individuals perform alone in the presence of God. 2. It is distinct from public worship, which involves joining a congregation of multiple families together. 3. It is also different from occasional worship that occurs during

mutual fellowship among believers or individuals from different families.

Family worship is not occasional or sporadic but rather regular and frequent. It is not a matter of personal choice or occasional gatherings; it is a necessary duty for the same individuals within the family. Family worship is performed based on domestic relationships, not solely on Christian fellowship. The regulation of family worship may include an authoritative role within the household. For example, the head of the family can authoritatively command family members to pray and observe the Sabbath, and appropriate correction may be applied for neglecting these duties. In contrast, other forms of worship rely on Christian communion and admonition.

To further illustrate the concept of family worship, we can consider the example of the Jews' observance of the Passover. During the Passover, there were different aspects of worship: 1. Secret worship, which likely involved individual prayers and devotion. 2. Public worship, represented by the holy convocations on the first and last days of the feast. 3. Specifically, there was family worship, where families gathered within their households to eat the Passover meal. If a family was small, two families would join together for this purpose. In this context, all members of the family or those two families that were circumcised were required to be present and participate. This exemplifies the practice of family worship.

We can also understand the existence and nature of family worship by considering various Scriptures. For instance, in Psalm 101, David mentions different aspects of his life: 1. His private devotion and longing for God, walking in a perfect way. 2. His public role as a magistrate, cutting off the wicked from the City of God. 3. His participation in public worship, as mentioned in Psalm 122 and 2 Samuel 6. 4. His fellowship with other godly individuals, being a companion to those who feared God (Psalm 119:63). However, in addition to these, David also refers to his conduct within his house

with a perfect heart, which distinguishes it from all the other mentioned aspects. This indicates the performance of religious duties or the exercise of worship within his household, specifically related to his position. It implies a joint exercise of worship because it is something he exclusively does at home, whereas if it were praying for others or something else that he could do separately, he would not need to return home to do it. Furthermore, in 2 Samuel 6:20, after the public worship, David goes home to bless his house, clearly indicating a unique duty performed by him within his family, as he resolved in Psalm 101.

Additionally, in Zechariah 12:10-14, there is a description of mourning: 1. Public mourning by the entire land. 2. Mourning by various families together. 3. Mourning by individual families separately. 4. Mourning by wives individually, and by every person in secret. From this passage, we can deduce that there is a worship of families in addition to public and secret worship. This family worship involves the same duties that individuals perform in secret. Therefore, family worship is a form of worshipping God within the context of domestic and familial relationships, performed jointly by the members of the family.

Lastly, it can be established that this Command requires family worship distinct from public and secret worship, and it entails certain acts of worship among related individuals that are not required of others.

1. The command in this Fourth Commandment undoubtedly calls for worship, even immediate worship, as it pertains to the first table of the law and the sanctification of the Sabbath.
2. This command encompasses all domestic relations, including parents, children, sons, daughters, masters, servants, men, women, and even strangers who may be temporarily residing or present on that day. These constitute the members of a family.

3. The requirement for them is not simply to cease from labor, as that is also commanded for the beasts (so as not to hinder or interrupt their owners' holy rest by attending to them). And surely, no one would argue that children or servants are expected to do no more than beasts. Moreover, the negative command, "You shall do no work," includes the affirmative command, "You shall sanctify that day to the Lord." The same duty is imposed on all, fathers and sons, masters and servants alike. Therefore, if worship is required from fathers and masters for the sanctification of the day, it must also be required from children and servants.
4. The manner of performing this worship, which involves sanctifying the Lord's day through holy duties, is not limited to public or secret worship alone. It is to be performed jointly by the members of each family and separately from other families.

Regarding the first point, the command cannot be understood to require worship only in public together. This is because, firstly, there may be situations where access to public worship is not possible, yet the command to sanctify the Lord's day still applies to families. Secondly, attending public worship is just one aspect of sanctifying the Lord's day and only a part of it. Therefore, there must be something else included in the command.

As for the second point, it cannot be understood as the master of the family individually instructing the members of the family to seek and worship God separately, while engaging in their own holy duties. While that may be a form of worship, it does not constitute worship from individuals in their capacity as members of a particular family. Even though it could be said that specific individuals sanctified the Sabbath, it cannot be said that the family as a whole did so. Just as families or individuals worshiping God in secret cannot be considered as fulfilling their obligation in a congregational setting, their individual service to God does not substitute for family worship. According to this command, both congregations and

ministers have the responsibility to sanctify the Lord's day and come together for that purpose. Similarly, families and the head of the family also have that responsibility.

According to this command, more than solitary or individual sanctification of the Sabbath is required. It calls for a distinct sanctification within each family, separate from the worship of other families. Firstly, it goes beyond solitary worship because the mention of the entire family in addition to the individual would have been unnecessary if it only referred to individual worship. The enumeration of family members implies something more, as individual responsibility is already implied in all commands. Therefore, the specific enumeration in this command suggests a distinct form of worship.

1. it is a peculiar worship that is specified within the confines of one's own gates or doors, distinct from congregational worship or the worship of individuals from other families, at least in the ordinary sense. It pertains to the members of a particular family within the household. Therefore, it must be a distinct family worship primarily performed by that family together.
2. the requirement here is not simply worship in general, but worship specifically as a member of a particular family. It is not solitary worship because seeking God and performing moral duties in secret apply to individuals in all places and families equally. However, this command draws a distinction between families, thus dividing one family from another. This highlights the duty as more binding to those within a particular household, within their gates or doors. Consequently, it implies joint worship since, in private worship, all individuals are equally obligated regardless of their specific family membership.
3. If this command requires something more in terms of worship on the Sabbath from a member of a family in relation to that family, as opposed to someone who is not a member of that family or in relation to another family, then it necessitates a distinct family worship. There is no other interpretation that can

be understood, except that it requires a collective engagement in sanctifying the Sabbath within the family, involving a closer and more intimate communion among its members than with individuals and families to whom they are not as closely connected.

4. If this command only required secret and public worship, then we would sanctify the Lord's day equally with other families and individuals who are not part of our own family. However, there is something specific and distinct required here that cannot be performed by all in the same way. Therefore, it must be family worship that is specifically required.
5. His command requires masters (such as ministers or magistrates) to sanctify the Sabbath and worship God in a different manner with their families compared to other families. The command addresses the master and all those within their gates or doors who are members of their family. This indicates a joint participation in duties of worship. They may exhort one another, attend public worship together, set an example for their family after public worship by engaging in private exercises, and as magistrates or ministers, they may command other families to sanctify the day. Therefore, the specific requirement for their own families is to join with them in the duties of worship.
6. If domestic worship were not required on the Sabbath, then members of a family would not have an opportunity to interact with one another. They cannot engage in their own work or have their own conversations. Therefore, their fellowship on this day must be in exercises of worship. It is evident that such worship is required by this command.
7. This command requires something different from a member of a family who seeks God compared to a person in a pagan family. It also requires something different from individuals scattered among pagan families compared to when they are united

together as members of one family. When the husband, wife, children, and servants are all Christians and share the same true religion, there is a distinct requirement for them compared to when only one of them is a believer. If they were scattered among heathen families, they would be obligated to seek God individually. Therefore, when they are together as members of one family, joint-seeking of God is undoubtedly required.

8. When this command mentions "all within his gates or doors," it signifies that the master of the family has a specific obligation when he is at home with his family compared to when he is separated from them. Even if a master is at a distance, he can command everyone in his family to worship and pray to God, and they can worship God individually if they are scattered. Hence, when they are together, there must be something else required of them by this command, which undoubtedly includes worshipping God together.
9. The duties to be performed on the Sabbath will necessitate joint participation, such as instructing, exhorting, admonishing, comforting, strengthening, and discussing the Word among one another (Deuteronomy 6:7-8). These duties cannot be fulfilled without coming together and actively engaging in them collectively. Therefore, it strongly implies that family worship, at least on the Lord's day, is commanded here. If families are called to worship God jointly on the Lord's day according to the appropriate worship for that day, then by the same principle, they are also called to worship Him jointly on other days according to the suitable worship for those days. The same reasoning applies to all occasions.
10. The duties that need to be performed on the Sabbath, such as instructing, exhorting, admonishing, comforting, strengthening one another, and engaging in discussions or conversations about the Word (Deuteronomy 6:7-8), clearly necessitate joint participation. These duties cannot be fulfilled unless there is

collective engagement and cooperation. Therefore, it strongly implies that family worship, at least on the Lord's day, is commanded. If families are called to worship God together on the Lord's day with the appropriate worship for that day, then it follows that they are also called to worship Him jointly on other days with the suitable worship for those days. The same principle applies to all occasions.

11. Lastly, what is required of families is a worship that should be performed by them even if there were no public worship or any other family worshipping God in the world. Joshua resolved, "But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15), which includes sanctifying the Sabbath as a crucial part of their service to God. Even if there were no worship of God anywhere else in the world except within one family, that worship should still be conducted jointly, as indicated by Joshua's words. Otherwise, we would have to say that there could be multiple worshippers of God in the world without any joint worship, which is illogical and contradicts Joshua's religious resolution.

Having established that family worship is commanded by this commandment, we shall now explore how the Scriptures present it in other ways.

1. When we examine the Scriptures, we find that they highlight the reverence shown by eminently godly men in their families, considering it as a noteworthy part of their piety. Examples include Abraham (Genesis 18:19), Joshua (Joshua 24:15), Job (Job 1), and David (Psalm 101). The fact that such attention is given to their honoring of God within their families indicates that it is a duty commanded by God and worthy of commendation.
2. Family worship is mentioned throughout various parts of the Scriptures, such as in Genesis 18, Exodus 12, Deuteronomy 6,

Joshua 24, Job 1, Psalm 101, and Psalm 30. When David dedicated his house, it surely involved some form of special worship and seeking God's blessing. Similarly, when houses were built, they were to be dedicated or consecrated because they were considered offerings to the Lord for the purpose of seeking and worshiping Him within them. Altars, as seen in Numbers 7:84, were also said to be dedicated when set apart for God's service. In Nehemiah 12:27, the walls were dedicated with the involvement of the Levites, indicating a religious significance. It is unlikely that they began with prayer and praise, as David did, and then ceased such practices afterward. In the story of Esther, both Esther and the maids of her house, along with the rest of the Jews in their respective families, fasted and prayed. The prophets, such as Jeremiah 10 and Zechariah 12, mention family worship, which is seen as a prophecy of the believers' conduct under the New Testament. It is also referenced in 1 Timothy 3:4 and 5:8, as well as Titus 1:6.

3. Family worship can be traced back to the time before the Flood, and it continued to be practiced by individuals such as Abraham and Job in their families after the Flood. Even during the period of the Law, family worship was observed, particularly through the ordinance of the Passover. It was upheld during the captivity, and after the return, it was renewed, especially through the ministry of Zachariah. The significance of family worship is further reaffirmed in the New Testament, underscoring its importance throughout history. Considering these examples and references, it becomes evident that family worship holds a special place of commendation and value.

If we examine the various ways in which the Scriptures emphasize this duty, we will find that it is one of the most clearly expressed and emphasized duties. It is pressed:

1. By command: The Scriptures command the practice of family worship.

2. By examples of godly men held up as patterns for imitation: We see righteous individuals in the Scriptures who practiced and prioritized family worship.
3. By promises made to it: God promises blessings and favor to those who engage in family worship.
4. By blessings conferred on its practitioners: Those who faithfully practice family worship receive blessings from God (Genesis 18, Deuteronomy 11:18-21).
5. As evidence of sincerity: Family worship is seen as an outward expression of genuine faith and devotion to God (Genesis 18, Joshua 24).
6. As making individuals liable to the curse and wrath of God when neglected: Neglecting family worship brings about guilt and offense in the sight of God (Jeremiah 10:25).
7. As a fruit of the Spirit and a companion of true repentance: Family worship is seen as a result of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and as a mark of genuine repentance (Zechariah 12).
8. As a commendable and adorning qualification: Those who practice family worship are commended and adorned with a virtuous quality, while its absence is seen as scandalous. It is also considered a necessary qualification for those in public positions of leadership (Genesis 18, 1 Timothy 3:4, Titus 1:6).

Therefore, the argument holds strong: A duty that is commanded in Scripture, commended through examples, and pressed through various motivations, and neglect of which brings guilt and offense, is undoubtedly a necessary duty. Family worship meets these criteria, and therefore, it is a necessary duty.

Furthermore, Deuteronomy 6:7-8 and Deuteronomy 11:18-19 reinforce the commandment to engage in family worship. These passages indicate that the observance of God's law is not solely the responsibility of the head of the family, but also includes the religious duties of teaching, discussing, and emphasizing it within the family. The commandment to write God's law on the posts of the door signifies that religion must be present in the family and in the

lives of all who enter, just as wearing the word on their foreheads reminded them of the distinct and specific sanctification required of them.

Indeed, the commendation of family worship can be seen in the examples of Abraham and David. Abraham not only circumcised his children and servants but also commanded and charged them to serve the Lord, indicating that there were other duties of worship involved in their family life. David, after participating in public worship, went home to bless his family, signifying that he engaged in religious duties with them. It is evident that David distinguished between public and family worship, spending part of the holy solemnity in public and part in family duties, without neglecting secret worship (2 Samuel 6:20).

The practice of dedicating houses with prayer can also be observed in Scripture, as seen in David's dedication of his house in Psalm 30. Additionally, Job's example in Job 1 demonstrates the performance of sacrifices in his family and his sending for those who were absent to sanctify themselves, indicating a desire for them to join in the worship with those who were present. This highlights the importance of worshiping God together as a family, even if it means finding ways to do so when physically separated.

These examples show that family worship was not only practiced but also commended in Scripture. It emphasizes the need for a distinct worship that takes place within the family, in addition to public and secret worship.

Indeed, the neglect of family worship is strongly admonished in Jeremiah 10:25, where it states, "Pour out your fury on the nations that do not acknowledge you, on the peoples who do not call on your name." If the absence of worshiping God in families is identified as a characteristic of families destined for destruction and is threatened with a curse, then it can be concluded that prayer worship in families is indeed a necessary duty.

From this passage, we can understand that "calling on God's name" refers to worshiping God in general and specifically includes prayer, which is a significant aspect of worship. It also indicates that "families" refers to specific groups or communities, whether small or large, that lack this worship and are therefore subject to the mentioned curse. This further underscores the importance of engaging in prayer and worship as a family, recognizing it as an essential and necessary duty.

The objection suggests that in Jeremiah 10:25, the term "Families" refers to people and nations, particularly heathens who do not call on God. In response to this objection:

1. This interpretation actually supports the argument that family worship is a necessary duty. If heathens, whether kingdoms or families, are characterized by their lack of calling on God, then it follows that a kingdom without public worship, an individual without private worship, and a family without family worship can all be considered heathenish. Therefore, the absence of family worship would align a family with heathenism.
2. The curse in this passage is not specifically directed at families as families, but rather at those families that do not call on God's name. The curse applies to them because of their neglect of worship. From a logical standpoint, the principle "from the greater to the lesser" applies here, meaning that if neglecting worship brings a curse upon nations, it would also apply to particular families.
3. Whether the term "families" in this context refers to smaller or larger societies is inconsequential, as the fault of neglecting God's worship applies to both. If it is considered a fault for nations to neglect worship, resulting in a curse, then it is likewise a fault for individual families to neglect worship, leading to potential consequences.

4. The inclusion of families in the passage is significant since they are explicitly mentioned. Although larger groups may be implied, the explicit reference to families indicates that the curse extends to them as well. Families are named to demonstrate that the curse encompasses all societies, both smaller and larger, that share the characteristic of neglecting worship. Additionally, since nations are composed of families, there is a connection between the religious practices of families and the overall state of the land.
5. The comparison between Jeremiah 10 and Psalm 79 does not weaken either passage. Instead, when these passages are considered together, they demonstrate that the Holy Spirit intends to emphasize both family worship and national worship. What is implied in one passage is expressed in the other, illustrating that God desires public worship from entire kingdoms and family worship from individual families as integral components of these kingdoms.
6. Regardless of the interpretation of the term "family" in this passage, the underlying principle remains the same: neglecting the worship of God as a society leads to the curse. Therefore, this principle applies to all societies in general, regardless of the specific understanding of the term "family" in this context.

I mentioned earlier that having family worship is regarded as a special qualification, and the absence of it is seen as a scandal and offense. Why? Firstly, who should be appointed as elders or deacons? Is it not those who possess the qualification of managing their own households well? (1 Timothy 3:4, Titus 1:6). Even widows are to be evaluated based on this criterion, as they are expected to have raised children in a Christian and religious manner, which is nearly impossible without worshipping God with them (1 Timothy 5:10). Secondly, if this qualification of managing one's own household is found lacking, such individuals are considered unfit to lead in God's house (1 Timothy 3:5).

From these points, we can reason as follows: Anything that renders a person unfit to assume a leadership role in Christ's house, regardless of their other qualifications, is an offense and a scandal. However, the absence of family worship does precisely that. Therefore, the lack of family worship is scandalous.

In these passages, it is evident that managing one's own household refers not only to external and temporal matters but also, if not primarily, to matters concerning the honor, service, and worship of God. Firstly, it involves the management of both servants and children (1 Timothy 3:4-5). We know that children are to be brought up in the fear of the Lord. Secondly, this form of management distinguishes those who are gracious, a quality that is not demonstrated through temporal affairs alone, as many natural individuals excel in those matters more than the children of God. Thirdly, many who are less suitable for managing such household matters can still be fit to lead in God's house, as experience has shown. Lastly, the phrase "having children in subjection with all gravity" denotes a Christian and religious order to be maintained in the house or family, which undoubtedly includes family worship.

However, it is important to note that the passage does not merely refer to the inability to manage, but primarily to the failure to utilize the ability given by God for effective management. Thus, it does not say that one who cannot manage their household should be disqualified (although there is some truth to that), but rather one who does not manage it well. This is linked to excessive drinking, violence, pride, and other grave sins, as they all indicate an incapacity for such positions. Therefore, the test is not whether one has the gifts suitable for managing their household, assuming they possess them, but rather whether they actually exercise effective management. This demonstrates the proper utilization of their gifts. Consequently, managing one's own household and leading in the church, or the house of God, are viewed as two aspects of the same concept. Both require not only the gifts necessary for fulfilling their

respective responsibilities but also conscientiousness and faithfulness in employing those gifts.

Although we won't delve into the numerous mentions in Scripture of churches existing within families for the purpose of this discussion, we shall proceed to provide six or seven additional reasons or grounds that further support and clarify this matter.

The first reason is derived from nature itself, which not only teaches that the true God should be the sole object of worship, but also that individuals should utilize their gifts and abilities, according to the positions God has assigned them, for a higher purpose beyond their own benefit or advantage — namely, for His glory. As people have a unique fellowship bestowed upon them as a gift from God, there should be a corresponding and distinct acknowledgment rendered to Him. Since the institution of families is an ordinance established by God, and He bestows certain children and servants upon some families while withholding them from others, it is only reasonable that a tribute should be offered to Him as a result of that familial relationship and society. This is why, even before the Law, the patriarchs had their worship specifically within their families. Additionally, even the heathens, alongside their public idolatrous worship and temples, had their household gods, known as Penates, whom they relied upon for protection and deliverance specific to their families.

The second reason is based on the nature of Christian communion among believers. Just as it requires the performance of Christian duties according to the providential callings of individuals, it also necessitates the utilization of the familial ties or relationships that exist in order to foster and enhance that communion. This is because such relationships provide a special means for achieving that end. Consequently, it is believed (as previously mentioned) that certain Christian families are referred to as churches due to the presence of multiple Christians gathered together, living in a Christian manner by engaging in all the ordinances applicable to their families.

The third reason is that the Lord, through His covenant, particularly (though not always) extends His mercies to families as a collective unit, making promises to them and conferring privileges upon them. For example, Abraham's entire family was included in the covenant (Genesis 17). Likewise, in the New Testament, whole families were baptized together. Such inclusion in the covenant entails a specific manner of responding to these privileges and obligations. One significant and appropriate way to fulfill these responsibilities is by worshiping God together as a family and joining in the expression of gratitude for His mercies, as well as praying for grace to live in a manner befitting those privileges.

The fourth reason is the shared interests and circumstances of family members necessitate the act of seeking God and worshiping Him together. Since they are collectively impacted by the same dangers, sins, trials, responsibilities, and blessings, it is fitting for them to unite in confessing their sins, acknowledging their blessings, praying for protection, and fulfilling their duties.

The fourth reason is private worship is beneficial for all aspects of a family. It is an act of acknowledging and honoring God, helps the head of the household maintain their authority, promotes mutual respect among family members, and prevents many conflicts. In fact, through experience, we often observe that families where religious worship is practiced tend to be more civil compared to those where it is not. Furthermore, the children and servants in such families are more likely to thrive, receive God's blessings, and benefit from public religious ordinances.

The fifth reason is the Lord desires a clear distinction between those who serve Him and those who do not. In terms of family relationships, what distinguishes a professing Christian family without joint worship of God from a heathenish family? Heathens live, eat, and work together, and from an external perspective, they appear similar. Similarly, in a nation where there is no public worship, even if individuals privately seek God, there is no apparent

public distinction between that nation and a heathen nation. Likewise, in the former case, it would be difficult to identify any significant difference in the nature of these families.

Moreover, it is challenging to argue that a person should prioritize the material well-being of their family while neglecting their spiritual development. It is essential to engage in communion with one's family in matters pertaining to temporal affairs, but even more so in spiritual duties, as they are both more necessary and more excellent in nature.

After establishing that family worship is presented in the fourth commandment and supporting it with additional Scriptures and rational arguments, it is now necessary, according to the proposed method, to demonstrate how the Scripture specifically describes its nature. The Scripture describes it in four ways.

1. In general, it is referred to as "keeping the way of the Lord" and "serving the Lord" in the cases of Abraham and Joshua. These expressions encompass a wide range of actions and include the sanctification of the Sabbath, which entails performing the necessary duties to properly observe that day. In short, we believe it involves engaging in these activities in a joint family manner that a servant of God can and should do individually, such as praying, reading, singing psalms, and so on. It also includes engaging in domestic practices that Christians, brought together by divine providence, can participate in, such as praying, reading, aiding each other's spiritual growth through sermon recitation, spiritual discussions, instruction, exhortation, admonition, and more. They are bound by their common faith in Christ and, in addition, by the familial relationship, which does not nullify the former but strengthens and adds further importance to it. It makes family worship more necessary, regular, and authoritative for edification, which

cannot be achieved solely through the simple bond of Christian fellowship.

2. The Scripture also speaks of specific duties in which families should participate. Firstly, it emphasizes the sanctification of the Sabbath, which involves engaging in all the necessary duties of that day. This adds an additional aspect to family worship on the Sabbath compared to other days, as well as to our private worship. The Sabbath was meant to have a double offering. Secondly, it mentions the importance of prayer. In Jeremiah 10, it is implied as part of the mourning described, and in Zechariah 12, it is a fruit of the outpouring of the Spirit of Grace and Supplications. In 2 Samuel 6, David's blessing of his family refers to his interceding before God on their behalf, not in the same manner as his public prophetic role, but as a specific duty fulfilled by him as the head of the family. Thirdly, it includes family fasting or setting aside special time in the family for fasting and prayer. This is seen in the solemn mourning described in Zechariah 12 and in the example of Esther, where she and her maids (who constituted her household) and all the Jews in Shushan engaged in fasting and prayer, even though they did not have the opportunity for public fasting in that location. Fourthly, it emphasizes the duty of instruction, which is of utmost importance in teaching the family the knowledge of God. The command explicitly states in Deuteronomy 6:7, 8 and 11:19, 20 that we are to talk about the Law within the house, diligently teach it to our children, and even write it on the posts and walls of our homes. This is done so that the house becomes a place of knowledge and where the knowledge of God's Law is taught and learned. It would be unreasonable to assume that the walls alone could teach while the head of the house remains silent. Moreover, considering that these things were written for the benefit of the family, what if there were members of the family who could not read? It is clear that there must be additional teaching beyond what is written on the walls. When Abraham commanded his household to keep the way of the Lord

and to serve Him, it is certain that he instructed them on who God is and how He should be worshipped. By extension, other practices conducive to edification and worship of God are included, particularly praise, as seen in Psalm 30, titled "A Psalm or Song at the dedication of David's house."

3. The Scripture also addresses the specific duties of individual family members in relation to their respective roles and relationships within the family. Husbands and wives are instructed to live together as heirs of the grace of life, ensuring that their prayers are not hindered. Parents are called not only to provide for their children's physical needs but also to nurture and admonish them in the ways of the Lord (1 Timothy 3:4, 12). Children and servants are mentioned together in these instructions.
4. The Scripture speaks of establishing a special family discipline and authority, which is likened to the exercise of ecclesiastical discipline in the church and is considered an indication of fitness for that role.

This discipline includes three main aspects:

1. Making wise domestic laws that govern every aspect of family life in a way that promotes godliness and edification among family members. This includes proper timing of activities so that each duty is performed at the appropriate time.
2. Exercising paternal or parental authority and masterly authority to ensure that children and servants are kept in subjection. It is inappropriate and unacceptable for masters to command in their own business while treating matters of God with mere persuasion.
3. Holding individuals accountable for their obedience and administering discipline for disobedience. Job and David

reprimand their wives based on the authority of their headship. David declares that he will not allow a wicked person to remain in his house, indicating his willingness to take action, such as removal, when commands and rebukes are ineffective.

If the question arises regarding who bears the primary responsibility for fulfilling the duties in the family and the role of chaplains, I would not completely condemn the use of chaplains. Masters may avail themselves of assistance, and God has often blessed such practices. The mention of Levites being present in families in Deuteronomy 12:13, 18-19 suggests that there may have been, and could have been, some form of this arrangement, which would be beneficial if properly utilized. However, if the appointment of chaplains is solely for the convenience of masters, absolving themselves entirely of the burden of these responsibilities because they have chaplains, or if it reflects a low regard for these duties or a belief that they are beneath them to catechize and instruct servants or to pray in their families, or if it is due to an inability to dedicate time to these duties while having ample time for idle pursuits, then such attitudes are blameworthy and inexcusable.

The primary and chief burden lies with the master, and therefore he can never fully divest himself of it any more than he can divest himself of other necessary responsibilities, except when more pressing public matters call him away or when illness or infirmity prevents him. The command directly and immediately addresses the master, as stated in the example of Abraham, where he commands his household to keep the way of the Lord. Job himself offers sacrifices, and David personally blesses his house, despite having other pressing engagements. The qualification for an elder includes ruling one's own house well. Having a chaplain does not provide significant evidence of the master's own diligence. However, it is permissible to seek assistance to better accomplish the desired outcome, although one cannot completely delegate the burden to another. Furthermore, if the master is negligent or absent, the duty

falls upon those in the family who are capable and qualified, and upon whom the weight of the master's affairs would normally rest in their absence. In such cases, they should fulfill this duty, either collectively or by designating the most suitable and qualified individual in the family.

Based on what has been discussed, family worship is convincingly clear, necessary, and important. Any objections or doubts against it are of little significance and can be easily addressed and resolved. Therefore, it is unnecessary to delve into them in detail. However, there are numerous advantages associated with the conscientious and appropriate practice of this duty. We will briefly touch upon a few:

1. Family worship has God's special approval, testimony, and commendation. He takes great delight and pleasure in those who diligently and faithfully practice it (Genesis 18:19).
2. It leads to a deep intimacy with God and is accompanied by sweet communication of His mind, as He sees fit (Genesis 18:19, comparing verse 19 with verse 17 and 18).
3. It often brings varying degrees of success towards the spiritual well-being and edification of servants and children, both during the master's lifetime and after his departure. Abraham, for example, commanded his children and household to keep the way of the Lord, and they were emphatically instructed to do so. Promised blessings are bestowed upon the master or head of the family as a result (Genesis 18:19).
4. It serves as a significant means of propagating and increasing the knowledge of God. If all masters of families conscientiously performed their family duties, there would be a wealth of knowledge and growth in the Church. Particularly, if they diligently catechized and instructed their families in the principles of religion, the impact would be immense. A single

minister in a large congregation cannot achieve as much in this regard if most masters of families are negligent. Yet, these masters have the responsibility to answer to God for the souls of their children and servants, just as ministers are accountable for those under their charge. This responsibility is evident in th

5. It greatly enhances the family's ability to profit from the ministry of the Word and participate in public worship services, with God's blessing.
6. It serves as a suitable and promising means for the members of the family to fulfill their respective duties in their various capacities, with God's guidance.
7. It contributes significantly, through God's blessing, to the prevention of public scandals within the Church, which would otherwise bring dishonor to God's name and discredit the profession of faith.
8. The ability to rule one's own house well prepares and qualifies an individual, who is otherwise suitable and called, to effectively lead and govern in the house of God. By extension, it equips them for other public responsibilities and roles they may be capable of fulfilling.
9. Family worship brings about a sense of peace, satisfaction, and contentment, especially during times of distress and, most notably, at the hour of death. Neglecting or inadequately performing these family duties, on the other hand, leads to regret and bitter self-recrimination, as evident in David's last words: "Although my house be not so with God..." (2 Samuel 23:5).

Considering these and similar advantages, it becomes apparent that the terrible consequences of neglecting family worship, a duty clearly commanded, highly commended, and earnestly pressed upon us, as well as the benefits derived from its practice, are readily discernible.

The seriousness of this sin and its grave implications cannot be overlooked by anyone who takes even ordinary consideration of these matters.

Having established that this command is moral, not regarding the setting apart of time for duty (which is implied in every command), but rather specifying a specific amount of time, clearly defined in the command, we now turn to examine what is specifically commanded here. The command can be divided into a mandatory part, stated in the initial words, and an explanatory part, which further clarifies and emphasizes the command. The first part states, "Remember the Sabbath day to sanctify it, or keep it holy." To fully understand the meaning of this command, we must consider three key words.

The first word is "remember" or "remembering." It appears at the beginning and seems to imply a reminder of something already commanded, rather than the introduction of a new command. It suggests that a day had previously been instituted and set apart for God, and this command serves as a reminder to God's people. There are four aspects to this remembrance. First, it entails a constant and continuous duty at all times and on all days. It means that we should remember that God has set apart the seventh day for Himself, and thus we should order our affairs in a way that does not hinder us from sanctifying that day. We should strive to keep our hearts in a state that is prepared for the Sabbath, so that we are not caught unprepared when it arrives. This affirmative part of the command applies always, binding us at all times, and its negative aspect applies likewise, on other days as well as on the Sabbath.

Second, it implies timely preparation for the approaching Sabbath. This remembrance calls for proactive action in anticipation of the Sabbath. Before it arrives, a person is obligated to cultivate a mindset that is ready to embrace the Sabbath and engage in its duties. If the Sabbath comes upon a person while they are in their usual state of mind, unprepared and unresponsive, it indicates that they had not been remembering it beforehand.

Third, "remembering" implies a sense of seriousness and earnestness in approaching the duties of the day when it arrives. It should be sanctified with great care and individuals should be mindful of the required duties, lest their hearts become distracted, sluggish, and formal in performing them. This word is considered moral as it serves as a means to facilitate the important duty of sanctifying the Lord's day or Sabbath.

Fourth "remembering" may also imply that even after the Sabbath has passed, it should not be quickly forgotten. We should reflect upon the past Sabbath in order to remember it, so as not to forfeit its benefits and make ourselves guilty of profaning it.

The next word is "the day of the Sabbath." Here, Sabbath refers to rest, as explained by the Apostle in Hebrews 4. It is not just any kind of rest, but a holy rest from our own works, allowing for the positive sanctification of that day. The sanctification of the day itself is the ultimate purpose, and this rest is a necessary and assumed aid without which the day cannot be sanctified in holy duties. Holy duties and our ordinary works are incompatible during that time. Moreover, the rest on this day is not only required as a cessation from our regular activities during the time of worship, as is expected on any other day, but it is particularly and solemnly required in relation to the day itself. While our duties at other times require a specific duration, and therefore that time cannot be devoted to other ordinary work and worship simultaneously, on the Sabbath, the Lord demands that time and rest be sanctified. Therefore, we are to perform holy duties during that time because it is meant to be sanctified. Other times and rests follow after worship, but this time and rest necessarily precede worship. This is why only the Jewish religious festivals were called Sabbaths, distinct from civil or political Sabbaths like their yearly ones, because they encompassed a rest designated for a holy purpose.

The main questions regarding the day mentioned in this Command can be divided into four aspects: 1. What type of day is it? 2. How

often does it occur? 3. Which day of the seven is it? 4. When does it begin?

To answer the first question, we can identify two types of days mentioned in the Scripture. One is the artificial day consisting of twelve hours, as the Jews divided their day. They adjusted the length of their hours based on the length of daylight, but they always maintained the same number of hours. The other type is the natural day, which is one-seventh of a week and consists of twenty-four hours. It encompasses the time from the moment the sun begins to rise after midnight, the nocturnal solstice, until it reaches its highest point at noon, and then returns to that same point of midnight. This is the natural cycle that occurs every twenty-four hours, including both the artificial day (from midnight to noon) and the artificial night (from noon to midnight).

In the context of this Command, the mentioned day refers to the natural day because it is the seventh day, corresponding to the other six days of the week. Since the six days in which God created the heavens and the earth are natural days, it follows that the seventh day, the day of rest, should also be a natural day consisting of the same number of hours.

Let us now speak a few more words for further clarification and guidance in our own practice. Firstly, we affirm that it is a complete natural day, which means it is to be employed in a similar manner to how we usually spend our time on any of the other six days, carrying out our own work. Just as we allocate a certain amount of time to our ordinary occupations on those days, we should dedicate the same amount of time on the Lord's Day or Sabbath to God's worship—both privately and publicly. We ought to give as much time to God, our souls, and our spiritual well-being on that day as we typically give to our work.

Secondly, it is important to understand that this does not imply a rigid requirement to spend all the hours of the day in immediate acts

of worship. Rather, it refers to our working and walking time, taking into account our weaknesses and our responsibilities. We should be careful not to encroach upon God's day under the pretext of infirmity and give Him less time than we give to ourselves or should give Him. In Scripture, the time between waking up and going to bed is considered the work of one day or a day's work. While God has granted us six days, allowing for specific times of worship each day to maintain our communion with Him, on the seventh day, He permits the necessary convenience of sleep and other forms of refreshment that serve the main purpose of the day. These include acts of mercy and activities that are essential for our well-being, as Christ Himself allowed on the Sabbath, which was made for the benefit of humanity, not the other way around.

However, we must be cautious not to misuse these allowances and excessively indulge in our own desires, using what belongs to the Lord unnecessarily for our own gratification. If we are able to wake up for ordinary business and maintain a particular diet on other days, even if others who are no stronger than us can do it, the excuse of infirmity will not justify our failure to prioritize God's work. It is worth noting that it is rarely the case that timeliness and earnestness in God's work on that day have proven harmful. We can consider it as a part of God's blessing on the seventh day that less food and sleep can be as refreshing as more on other occasions. This covers the duration or continuance of the day.

Secondly, one might question how often this day, by virtue of this command, recurs. Is it one out of seven days, or is it specifically the seventh day? Does this command designate a particular day as the seventh day after Creation, or does it generally refer to any one day out of seven as determined by the Lord or as previously determined? In other words, does the command restrict us to a specific day, or does it leave room for God to prescribe a different day for His service after Christ's coming? Assuming that a seventh day is indeed commanded as a moral requirement, we need to inquire whether it is

the seventh day in terms of its numerical position as one out of seven, or the seventh day in terms of its sequential order.

In response, we acknowledge the significant distinction between these two questions. The fact that there is a seventh day pertains to the essence and substance of piety, while the specific choice of which of the seven days it is concerns more circumstantial details. Both are important if appointed by God and accompanied by His blessing.

Furthermore, it is common for God in His commands regarding worship not to initially specify a particular day, but rather to present it under the broader category of a general and indefinite command. The specific day or days may be subsequently revealed by clear inference or deduction, as if various species falling under one genus.

For example, consider Deuteronomy 12:5, where God commands His people to offer sacrifices in the place He would choose. Initially, this command tied them to the location where God revealed His presence, such as the Ark, which was moved from place to place until it was brought to Jerusalem. After the Temple was built and chosen as the designated place, the people were then bound to worship there. However, with the destruction of the Temple and the coming of Christ, worship is no longer restricted to a specific location but is to be offered to God everywhere in spirit and truth. Although this example pertains to a ceremonial precept and does not apply universally, it demonstrates that God can command a specific day, such as one out of seven, without immediately determining it, allowing for different days to be observed as God reveals His will. Just as one command required successive obedience in various places, the same principle can be applied to different days.

Another instance is seen in the second commandment, where God requires a worship that He Himself prescribes (the moral affirmative part) and prohibits worship through images (the moral negative part). By virtue of this command, believers were obligated to offer sacrifices, practice circumcision, and observe the Passover. However,

for us as Christians, we are bound to practices such as baptism and the celebration of the Lord's Supper. These particular obligations are not explicitly and directly commanded in these statements but are understood indirectly and by consequence. Similarly, the fourth commandment tied the Jews to abstain from work on the seventh day and observe it as a day of rest, as evidenced by Exodus 16:26, where the gathering of manna is described over six days with the seventh designated for rest.

A third example can be seen in the requirement of tithes, which involved giving a portion of their wealth or possessions, just as the Sabbath command involves setting apart a portion of their time. In the case of tithes, God commanded the giving of one-tenth of their increase, while here in the Sabbath command, He commands the setting apart of the seventh part of their time. However, in determining their wealth, God did not specify an exact and precise order, but rather required the proportionate giving of their possessions, whatever they may be. Similarly, if the day of the week had not been determined in another way apart from this command, it would not have implied any specific and definite day out of the seven.

We should also note that although the seventh day is referred to as moral, as expressed in the command, it is a moral positive, meaning it is subject to change according to the will of the Lawgiver. Therefore, the question would not be significantly different if we acknowledged that the seventh day was commanded to the Jews as one of the seven days, but maintained that the specific seventh day is no longer obligatory and that any one of the seven days could be observed instead.

However, in order to avoid appearing to admit something changeable in the Command itself when specifically considered, we should distinguish between the commanding part of the Law and its explanatory part. The command itself may be moral and indefinite,

even if there are some reasons and motives that are not. The preface, which applies to all the commands, and the promise attached to the fifth command, contain some elements that were specific to that particular people. However, we cannot disregard the entire command because of those specific elements. For instance, if the command had simply been "remember to keep the day of rest holy," it would not have implied the seventh day. Nevertheless, we believe that the Jews, due to the previous sanctification of that day, would have been obliged to observe the seventh day by virtue of this command. Although there may be certain peculiar elements in the explanations or reasons that apply specifically to that people (which cannot refer to any other day than the seventh day, at most), the moral aspect of the command remains intact. This means that the day of rest should still be remembered. If it can be demonstrated that it was determined for the Jews to sanctify the seventh day (even if it is mentioned in the reasons), and for us afterward to sanctify the first day, both days will be regarded as a seventh day and a day of rest, and thus should be remembered and sanctified. This essentially leads to the same conclusion. However, we consider it safer to assert that in this command, God has set apart a seventh day to be sanctified by us through its dedication to holy purposes. The command does not explicitly and directly bind us to the seventh day, but rather indirectly and consequentially, as it was previously declared by God. Therefore, it now obliges us to sanctify the first day of the week, as it has been revealed by God. This is similar to the examples we mentioned earlier.

To conclude, it can be argued that a seventh day (whichever day God chooses) and not the specific seventh day in order is to be sanctified by virtue of this Command, as it emphasizes the sanctification of a designated day as its substance and essence.

Argument 1: The substance of this Command is moral and perpetual, as we have previously demonstrated. It has been upheld in the Church by the Apostles through their observance of the first day of

the week, while the seventh day has been disregarded and not used. Therefore, it was not the specific seventh day that was primarily commanded in this Command, but rather a seventh day in general. Just as no particular positive service is prescribed in the second Command, but the observation of what was prescribed or should be prescribed is included, the same principle applies here with regards to the day. We can infer that the second Command did not primarily enjoin specific ordinances that are now abolished, and that the negative prohibitions, such as the prohibition of making images, are moral because they are still upheld and images are to be rejected. Likewise, we can conclude that a seventh day was primarily commanded here and is moral because it continues to be observed, while the specific seventh day was not commanded because it has been rejected and set aside.

This argument is particularly evident in the designation of the Lord's day. If the specific seventh day was the substance of this Command, then either it should continue to be observed as moral, which contradicts the teachings of the New Testament where different ordinances and a different chief solemn time for worship, namely the Lord's day, are established by Christ. Alternatively, we must conclude that this fourth Command does not apply to us at all, which contradicts the evidence we have presented. Therefore, it follows that it was not the specific seventh day but rather a seventh day in general that is addressed by this Command, and it applies to us as it did to the Jews, just like any other Command (including the second Command) does.

Argument 2: If God has distinguished in some way between the Sabbath commanded here and the day of His own rest, the specific seventh day, then it implies that it is not that specific day that is being commanded. The distinction is evident in two aspects: first, in the mandatory part where it says "Remember," but does not specify the seventh day, rather it says the Sabbath day or the day of rest; second, in the blessing, it does not say that He blessed the seventh day, but rather the Sabbath. Therefore, this distinction is significant

and intentionally made, suggesting that it is not solely the seventh day that is being commanded. If the sole purpose of the Command was to specify the seventh day, it would have been clearer to state it directly. No other plausible reason for this distinction can be given.

Argument 3: There are two possibilities: either a seventh day is primarily commanded and the specific seventh day is secondary and consequential (since both were commanded to the Jews), or the specific seventh day was primarily commanded to the Jews, and one of seven days was consequential (as both were commanded to them) with the first, namely the seventh day, being in use prior to the Command. However, it cannot be claimed that the specific seventh day was primarily commanded and one of seven days was consequential only, because the general instruction is given first, followed by the particular. For example, when God required tithes of increase and cattle, He first commanded the proportion of tithes, and then determined the specific order, such as the tenth beast, through a particular command in Leviticus 27:32-33. If the specific tenth had not been specified, the general command would have applied to the tenth of cattle, just as it did for sheaves or bushels of corn. Similarly, in the case of the day, the Command primarily requires one day out of seven, and the determination of the specific seventh day follows from another instruction.

Argument 4: If the moral grounds and reasons that support this Command primarily refer to a seventh day rather than the specific seventh day, then it indicates that it is a seventh day, and not the seventh day, that is primarily commanded. The moral reasons that accompany the Command particularly emphasize what is moral and intended. However, these reasons more directly advocate for a seventh day and indirectly for the specific seventh day as it was instituted at that time. Therefore, it follows that the reasons directly advocate for a seventh day, and their relevance to the specific seventh day is secondary. This demonstrates that the Command primarily requires a seventh day rather than the specific seventh day, as the moral reasons align more closely with a seventh day.

1. If the reasons equally apply to the first day and its observance (assuming it is now observed according to Divine warrant), then they do not primarily apply to the seventh day. Rather, the reasons equally apply to the first day. Therefore, the major point is clear: the same thing cannot emphasize two different days primarily or equally. (Page 150)

If we consider the reasons to be applicable to us as well, assuming the aforementioned condition, the following points support this:

1. The reasons are universal and not exclusive to a specific people. The concession of six days applies to everyone, and God's example of resting pertains to all.
2. If the violation of the Command is equally sinful for us as it was for them, and if it contradicts the fairness of the Command and God's example in both us and them, then these reasons are relevant to us as well. We must either accept that they apply to us and intensify the sin of profaning our Lord's day, just as they intensified the sin of profaning their Sabbath, or we must deny that they have any relevance to us. Moreover, the weight of the conscience's challenge based on these reasons would leave no doubt in a tender heart. Considering that God has granted us six days for ourselves, just as He did for them, and that His example is presented to us for our consideration, as it was for them, the same general principle of fairness applies to both situations.
3. If the reasons serve as a sufficient basis for allowing us to work six consecutive days, specifically the last six of the week, just as they did for the first six for them, then the reasons do not primarily determine the seventh day as the day of rest. Instead, they allow us to work six days, including the last six of the week. Therefore, they do not primarily determine the seventh day. The connection of the major premise appears to be very clear: Firstly, if the concession (if we may call it that) applies to us in the six working days, then the reservation of a seventh day must

also apply. Secondly, just as the concession applies to us in the six working days, the prohibition of work on the seventh day of rest must also apply, for one determines the other. If the concession is for six days in number, then the prohibition must be for the seventh day in number. However, if the concession is for six days in order, then it is the seventh day that is to be reserved. If the prohibition of work refers to the seventh day, then the concession must pertain to the first six days, which it does not, as we have demonstrated. Therefore, considering that the concession of six days pertains to six in number, indicating the number of days we may or should work together, the prohibition must also relate to the number, specifically the seventh day, and not the seventh day itself. The minor premise will be clear to the discerning reader through a particular application of the reasons given in the fourth Commandment.

Furthermore, if the concession does not pertain to the number, but to the order (as it must if the prohibition of work on the seventh day relates to the order and not the number), then 1. where do we find the warrant for our six working days? If it is not found here, where else can it be? Surely, we cannot assume God's time without His order and authorization. 2. Moreover, in that case, we would not be able to argue for the allowance to work six days different from the first six by virtue of this Commandment. If that were the case, we would not be bound by the Commandment to sanctify one day (since one implies and determines the other, and they must go together), which would be absurd.

Yet another way to demonstrate that the reasons pertain to a seventh and not the seventh is by considering the words and the force of the consequence in both.

The first reason states, "Six days shalt thou labour, but the seventh is the Lord's." 1. It does not say, "Take the first six," but rather, "Take six out of seven to labour, and give the Lord the seventh," for He has

set it apart for Himself. 2. The same equity applies to the inference for a seventh, if not more. He has given you six, therefore give Him a seventh. This conclusion is more formally valid than "give Him the seventh." A seventh is the seventh part of time, just as the seventh day is, and this is the equity upon which the Commandment is based. 3. If the Commandment intended to primarily infer the seventh, it would have been expressed more clearly as, "He has given you the first six, therefore give Him the seventh."

The second reason, derived from God's example, leads to the same conclusion. He worked six and rested on the seventh. Therefore, do likewise. Thus, both those who work six and rest on the seventh (as we do now) and those who worked six and rested on the seventh in the past follow God's example.

Arg. 5. If the positive part of the Commandment must be explained by the negative and vice versa, then it pertains to one of seven, not the seventh. The first proposition is true. 1. The positive part commands a day without regard to its order, so the negative part does as well. 2. The negative part should be understood as "you shall not work more than six," not as "you shall not work more than the first six," as evidenced by the outcome. 3. If it is not the first six, but six in general, as the concession indicates, then it is not the seventh, but a seventh that is prohibited. The first point is clear, and therefore, etc.

Arg. 6. If this Command, in its essence, applies to us as a moral obligation and binds us equally to the first day and its sanctification, just as it obligated the Jews to the seventh day, then it primarily refers to one day out of seven and not the seventh day. But it binds us to the first day. Therefore, it is established that it is moral and binds us now. Here's how it can be explained: 1. It either binds us to this day or to nothing. Hence, it primarily grants six days for labour, and consequently, it primarily intends a seventh day for rest, not specifically the seventh day. 2. If it is a sin to violate the Lord's Day or Christian Sabbath, then it directly obliges us to it. Indirectly and

consequently, the violation of the Sabbath is a sin against any or all of the three preceding commands. 3. If the prohibition against profaning the Sabbath is based on the fact that it belongs to the Lord (as stated in this Commandment), then the prohibition against profaning the Lord's Day is equally applicable, as it also belongs to the Lord and is now designated according to His will. 4. The testimony of people's consciences and their consistent acknowledgment (when tender) of guilt for breaking this Commandment whenever they profane the Lord's Day convincingly demonstrates that this Commandment pertains to them. They act as witnesses to this fact and prove that it is not the seventh day specifically, but rather a seventh day (whether instituted or to be instituted by God) that is the essence of the Commandment and is primarily commanded within it. Neglecting to sanctify the seventh day is never considered a breach of this Commandment, and the consciences of well-informed Christians do not accuse them of such a breach. However, they vehemently challenge themselves for the violation of the Lord's Day, as mentioned.

In summary, if the first day were already instituted and the command were to sanctify the Sabbath, we would understand it to refer to the first day because it is already established. The same reasons that apply to the seventh day would also support the observance of the first day. The term "Sabbath" does not signify a specific day, but rather any day that God solemnly sets apart for holy rest. The command would apply to our observance of the Lord's day, assuming its institution, just as it did for the seventh day. Although it directly binds the Jews, it does so as a reason, similar to how the preface preceding all the commandments and the promise attached to the fifth commandment have literal relevance to them but are binding insofar as they are moral. This is evident from the Apostle's application of the promise in Ephesians 6:2 without specific reference to a particular land or people, but as applicable and relevant to any land or people who conscientiously obey God's commands.

However, an objection may arise: "The Jews kept the seventh day." In response, firstly, they did not do so by virtue of this command but by its prior institution, just as they were obligated to sacrifices and circumcision by the second commandment, even though those practices were not explicitly mentioned in it. Secondly, we are obliged to observe the first day of the week by this fourth commandment, but it does not mean that it is expressly commanded in it, especially since there is no specific day primarily instituted in it.

Another objection may be raised: "But God rested on the seventh day." In reply, God's rest is not primarily presented as the reason for the observance of the seventh day but as an indication that He rested after six days of creative work. It serves to establish the number, not the order of the days, otherwise, it would not be relevant to us. Additionally, the term "seventh" does not refer to the sequential order of the days of the week (one, two, three, etc.), but it is called the seventh in relation to the preceding six days of work.

We have covered the frequency and duration of the Sabbath, and now we turn to the question of when it begins (which relates to the "quando" aspect) and from which point we should start counting. It is universally acknowledged that the Sabbath is a natural day. The main question is whether its beginning should be reckoned from the evening, around sunset or darkness, until the following day's sunset, or if it should be reckoned from the morning. According to our understanding, the morning starts when the Sun begins to rise towards us after midnight, which is a broad definition of morning. Similarly, the evening is broadly understood as the time when the Sun begins to decline after midday.

In this discussion, we understand morning and evening in a broad sense, as they divide the entire natural day. Morning is considered from midnight to noon, and evening is from noon to midnight. This division aligns with how Moses divided the natural day into morning and evening in Genesis 1, where each day is made up of morning and evening. The week itself is composed of seven natural days. The

reckoning from God's example is undoubtedly presented for our imitation in this matter. For instance, the morning watch takes place before daybreak, and the morning sacrifice occurs around nine o'clock, while the evening sacrifice is around three in the afternoon, and the evening watch is around nine at night.

Furthermore, it is universally acknowledged and evident from this command that just as we consider the six working days of the week, we should do the same for the seventh day. One day must begin where another ends, and if one day starts in the evening or morning, the same applies to all the others. It is our belief that the ordinary Sabbath was sanctified from morning to evening. However, it's important to note that for extraordinary Sabbaths, such as the Passover (Exodus 12) and the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 23), there were specific reasons for beginning in the evening. Although these Sabbaths were to be sanctified like other Sabbaths, the mention of their evening start time was added as a special solemnity for these occasions. This exception does not contradict our assertion but rather reinforces it since it indicates a departure from the ordinary rule. It is not disputed that people can prepare for the Sabbath on the evening before, which is encompassed by the command to remember. However, if we consider the Sabbath to begin in the evening before, it would be regarded as part of the actual day, thereby concluding that the observance of the day ends at the next evening.

We believe, especially for us Christians, that the day should begin in the morning and continue until the next morning. Our reasoning for this is as follows:

Argument 1: Just as other days begin or as days began initially, this day should follow the same pattern. Ordinarily, days commence in the morning.

If the first six days of Moses' reckoning begin in the morning, then this day also begins in the morning. It can be supported by Genesis 1,

where it is stated that the evening and the morning constitute the first day after the Creation.

1. If in Genesis 1, the morning and the evening fully divide the natural day, then the morning must come before the evening, with each morning having its own corresponding evening. And indeed, they do divide the natural day, as all six days are encompassed by them. Therefore, the consequence is evident: according to natural understanding, the morning precedes the evening. The morning, which is the first part of the natural day, starts at midnight, thus serving as the beginning of the day.

Furthermore, when considering whether to reckon the evening or the morning first, it appears necessary to reckon the morning first. If the evening were to be considered first, it would lead to certain implications:

1. The evening would have to be the evening of a day preceding the morning, as every evening presupposes a morning preceding it in proper speech. (And I assume that the account of the Creation in Genesis 1 is not presented metaphorically.)
2. Alternatively, it would be an evening without a morning, which is not only absurd in proper speech but also seems impossible in nature. It would imply a subsequent evening or afternoon without a preceding morning or forenoon, which is akin to an effect without a cause.
3. Another possibility is that the evening follows its own morning, resulting in the loss of the morning preceding the first recorded evening in Genesis 1: "The evening and the morning were the first day." This affirmation would not only be absurd but also introduce a discrepancy in the calculation of time in the Scriptures, suggesting the loss of a day.

In both common speech and Scriptural phrase, it is challenging to place the evening before its own morning since each day must have

both morning and evening. Moreover, the Scripture only mentions evening when referring to the approach of night, which implies that the morning of the same day has already passed. Alternatively, we would need to divide the day in the middle of the artificial day and consider the natural day as commencing at noon, which contradicts the Scriptural phrasing that regards the entire artificial day as belonging to one natural day. The artificial day and night are the two parts of a complete natural day.

The entire force of the opposing argument rests on the fact that the evening is mentioned first, therefore it must come first. In response, it must be understood that Moses' intention is not to demonstrate the chronological order of the parts of a day, but rather to divide one day from another and illustrate what constitutes a complete day: an evening and a morning, not just a morning alone. The combination of the evening and the preceding morning forms the first, second, third day, and so on. It is most fitting to begin with the evening in this account because it presupposes the morning and, when added to it, completes a day. On the other hand, it is not as appropriate to say "morning with the evening," but rather "evening now added to its morning completes the first day." It was with the evening, not the morning, that God marked the end of the first day, as the evening completes the day and separates it from the following day. One might liken it to saying, "the afternoon along with the forenoon constitutes a complete day," and the afternoon or evening is mentioned first because: 1. the day is not complete without it, as it brings about its completion, and 2. the day cannot extend beyond it, thus signifying the closure of the first day as its evening arrives.

Arg. 2. The time of day when God began His rest is the time when we should begin ours. God began His rest in the morning of the seventh day, with the artificial night occurring between that and the sixth day. This is evident for the following reasons: 1. God's rest on this day is more significant than His rest during the other nights of the six days, as it is universally accepted that He did not create anything during the night. 2. Otherwise, there would have been no

interruption between His labor and His rest, which is implied by the distinction between the days.

Furthermore, if, by virtue of the command to sanctify a day, we were to start the night or the evening before, it would lead to several absurdities: 1. We would confuse the preparation (as indicated by the word "remember") with the day itself. 2. As Christians, we could also, based on the concession of six days for work, begin working on the night before Monday, just as the Jews, according to this assumption, could have started their work on the night before Sunday. 3. We would almost immediately have to interrupt the sanctification of the day to engage in our ordinary tasks, and once its sanctification is completed, we would have to return to our usual occupations.

Arg. 3. If, by this Command, a whole natural day is to be devoted to worship duties, as another day is dedicated to our regular work, then it must begin in the morning. The antecedent is undeniable, and the consequent is supported as follows: If people consider all their work during their working hours from one night's rest to another as belonging to one day, then they must begin in the morning. Otherwise, they would have to regard what they work after the first evening as belonging to another day. However, such a way of reckoning has never been heard of, as the twelfth hour belongs to the same day as the first hour.

Moreover, if, by this Command, a whole artificial day (that is, our waking and working time between two nights) is to be devoted to God's worship, then it must start in the morning. If the latter or following evening belongs to this natural day before sleep time arrives, then the preceding evening cannot belong to it, as it cannot have both. However, according to this Command, a complete waking day or artificial day is to be sanctified together, and both the evening after it and the morning before it should be included. Therefore, it must begin in the morning and not the evening before.

Furthermore, if, by virtue of the concession of six working days, we are not allowed to work on the evening after, then the day begins in the morning, as the weekday following must begin as the Sabbath did. And the former statement is true. These points support the minor premise: 1. It is difficult to reconcile working immediately after it grows dark with this Command. 2. In Luke 23:56 and 24:1, it is mentioned that the women rested on the Sabbath day according to the commandment, and early in the morning, they went to the Sepulchre. 3. Christ considers a whole natural day to last until people cannot work. 4. God's working days (so to speak) were like this; He did not create anything on the evening before the first day. 5. The common phrase "Tomorrow is the holy Sabbath" in Exodus 16:23 implies that the present day lasts until tomorrow comes, and tomorrow always includes an intervening night. Therefore, if on the forbidden day, people are not allowed to work until tomorrow, then that evening belongs to it according to this Command. And if on the sixth day, the seventh does not come until tomorrow, after the intervening night, then it does not begin in the evening. This is evident in those passages and phrases.

Moreover, it is evident that in all examples of ordinary Sabbath-keeping and sanctification in Scripture, they began in the morning. For example, it is stated in Exodus 16:27 that some of the people went out to gather on the seventh day, undoubtedly in the morning, as they knew that none of it would be found after the sun grew hot. They could have prepared it the night before and not been criticized, as they were forbidden from gathering on the Sabbath. The evidence from the previous argument sheds light on this as well.

That day and the time of the day when the Lord began to rest after completing the work of Redemption and arose should be our Sabbath. And that day was the First day of the week, in the morning. Therefore, this strongly obliges us, who consider the day on which He arose to be our Christian Sabbath.

The second argument is derived from the History of Christ's Passion and Resurrection, where the following points are noteworthy: 1. He was laid in the Grave on Friday night, which was the preparation for the great Sabbath that followed. 2. The women, who rested and did not come to the Grave until Sunday morning (using our common terminology), are said to rest according to the Commandment, implying that coming earlier would not have been in accordance with it. 3. His time in the Grave must be accounted for before Friday ended, otherwise, He could not have been in the Grave for three days. Therefore, a portion of Friday night is attributed to the First day, the entire Sabbath or Saturday is the second day, and finally, a portion of the night, starting from midnight and belonging to the First day or Sunday, stands for the third day. He arose on that morning, while it was still dark, around the time when the women arrived at the Grave, as soon as they could after the Sabbath. Hence, their Sabbath on the seventh day ended then, and the Sabbath of the First day began.

Now we move on to the third general question regarding the change, namely, the change from the seventh day to the First day of the week. First, we will summarize what is moral in this Commandment. Then, we will clarify the change and its consistency with this Commandment through several propositions.

To address the first point, this Commandment morally and perpetually obliges us to the following: 1. That a designated time be set apart and observed for worship. 2. That this time should be one day out of every seven. 3. That it should be the specific day that God commands, the appointed Sabbath, regardless of which day it may be. 4. That it should encompass a full natural day of twenty-four hours, while also considering the unity of the artificial day. 5. That six, and no more than six, working days intervene, occurring together within a week. Therefore, 6. The Sabbath should be a boundary day, distinguishing one working week from another. Consequently, if six working days are to be included in one week and

to be consecutive, it logically follows that the Sabbath must be either the first or last day of the seven.

As for the propositions that clarify the change and its consistency with this Commandment, the first proposition is as follows:

The Sabbath may be changed from the last or seventh day to the first day of the week without diminishing the authority of this commandment or being inconsistent with it. This is because all the moral aspects of the commandment, such as the requirement of a day and one day out of seven, and the boundary of a seventh day with six working days, remain unaffected by the change. Furthermore, since the seventh day does not derive its institution directly from this commandment but rather incidentally (whether it is the Jewish seventh day or the Christian first day of the week, assuming its institution or future institution elsewhere), and its initial institution in Genesis 2 was a positive and temporary law, it can be changed while the fourth commandment remains intact. Further elaboration on this proposition is unnecessary, as much has already been discussed on this topic.

2. Proposition: Not only can the seventh day be altered from what it was under the Law to another seventh day under the Gospel, but it is fitting and appropriate (even within the Commandment) that it should be so.

For 1. If we consider these two eras, before Christ and after him, as distinct worlds, and if the Redemption by Christ at his coming is seen as the making of the new world, just as God's Creation was the making of the old world, then it is fitting that when the world is renewed through Redemption, the Sabbath day should be changed to commemorate that, just as it was initially instituted to commemorate the former. The same reasoning applies to both cases. Moreover, these eras are viewed as two separate worlds and are referred to as such in Hebrews 11:2. The new world is distinguished from the former in Hebrews 2:5, and the redemption of one is regarded as the

making of the other. Therefore, from that day onward, the day of rest should be one that relates to both worlds. By changing the day to the first day of the week, it reminds us of God's rest at Creation by distinguishing six days from the seventh, and it also reminds us of the new Creation by replacing the former with Christ's Resurrection.

Argument 2: If the new world, when begun and completed through the work of Redemption, is as much for the glory of God and as comforting to humanity as the making of the old world, then the day of rest in the new world should be made to relate to that. Moreover, if the Redemption of the world is even more for the glory of God and the comfort of humanity, then, based on the same foundation on which the seventh day was initially instituted, it should be changed again. Both of these propositions are true. Therefore, if the basis that led to the selection of the seventh day as the Sabbath in the old world has changed in the new world and if that basis aligns better with another day, then it should be changed. There are now reasons to prefer another day for the same purposes. Therefore, it is fitting that the day be changed. Alternatively, if the completion of the work of Redemption and the rest of the Mediator after it are as significant to be remembered as the work of Creation and God's rest after it, then the day should be changed. And indeed, this is the case.

Argument 3: If in the new world, through Christ, all the Levitical services and ceremonial worship of that day are changed, then it is appropriate for the day itself to be changed. Firstly, to demonstrate the cessation of that worship and law, making it difficult to maintain that day and distinguish it from the former Jewish worship. Secondly, to prevent Christians from becoming too influenced by Judaistic practices and to separate them from the abolished services of the Sabbath. Just as no particular family now holds the priesthood as Levi did before, and no specific nation has the Church confined within it as the Jews did (although these were not strictly typological), so the day should be one that signifies the fading away of former ceremonies, which the introduction of the first day accomplishes abundantly.

Argument 4: If the worship and ordinances of the new Gospel world are primarily founded on Christ the Mediator and are in some way related to his past redemption, then it is fitting for the Sabbath day to be changed so that it may depend on him, just as all other worship does, whether it be moral-positive or positive-moral. This cannot be accomplished effectively if the former day remains unchanged, or at least not as effectively as when it is changed. However, the former proposition is true. All Gospel worship, including sacraments, prayer, praise, ministry, etc., derives its authority from Christ. (Now, sacraments, insofar as they serve as seals, are not ceremonial, for the Tree of Life was instituted as a seal of the Covenant of Works in the state of innocence before the Fall, when there were no typological institutions of a coming Savior. Therefore, sacraments, as seals, can be continued as perpetual acts of worship without the risk of typifying a coming Savior.) Thus, Christ instituted new ordinances with a relation to his completed work of redemption. That is why his prayer or model prayer is called the Lord's Prayer, and his sacrament of the Supper is called the Lord's Supper, as they were instituted by him and relate to him. In this sense, it is specifically stated in Hebrews 2:5 that God subjected the world to come to him, distinct from what was before. He is also positioned as the Son in the New Testament, taking the place of Moses, who was the lawgiver and faithful servant in the Old. This is evident in Hebrews 3. Based on these grounds, we believe that the day is called the Lord's day in Hebrews 1:10, to establish its dependence on Jesus Christ and to signify its relation to the completed work of redemption.

Argument 5: If the day of solemn public worship is a part of God's worship that can bear a relation to Christ's coming and falls within the domain of the Mediator's kingdom, then it is appropriate for it to be changed when he comes in the new world. Firstly, to signify his arrival. Secondly, to demonstrate his absolute authority over the house and worship of God. Thirdly, in some way, to proclaim his grace and redemption through the very act of changing the day. This is indeed a piece of worship and a tribute of our time, as mentioned before, and it is a form of worship that can be instituted and

remembered by him (thus referred to as the Lord's day). This could not be possible if a day of worship were not capable of such a relationship. It falls under the authority of Christ, who, as stated in Matthew 12, is the Lord of the Sabbath. And why would his power be asserted specifically in relation to the day if not to indicate that, through his coming, the Sabbath is to be understood as under his authority, just like all other forms of worship that were established by God's positive command, including the Sabbath?

Argument 6: If, according to this command, the day of rest is to align with God's most solemn work, then after Christ's coming (but not before), it is the first day, not the seventh, that is to be observed. And the command confirms the former to be true. Furthermore, if that day is to be observed in reference to any solemn work of God, which was the first day after its completion, then the first day is to be observed. And again, the command confirms the former to be true. This is because our day of rest is to be observed in reference to the work of redemption, and therefore it must be on the first day, which was the day following its completion and perfection in terms of Christ's suffering and labor, although not in terms of its application. Just as the seventh day was observed in reference to God's rest from the work of creation, but not from his works of providence.

Argument 7: If the seventh day, which the Jews kept, had any particular tie or motive that has now been removed by Christ, then it was fitting that day should be changed at his coming. Here, we understand that there might have been something unique or symbolic about their seventh day, but not in the fourth commandment itself, which commands one day out of seven, but not specifically the seventh. Although we cannot pinpoint exactly what is typified or peculiar about it, we can conceive that there may be some significance, as with tithes, offerings, etc., even though the specific typology may not be explicitly stated. Here are some considerations:

1. If their day began in the evening (as some believe), it had a particular reason tied to their exodus from Egypt at evening, as

mentioned in Exodus 12. In that sense, it would be peculiar to them. However, with Christ's resurrection in the morning, the significance is changed.

2. The observance of the Sabbath was emphasized in relation to God's redemption of them from Egypt. They were to remember that there was a time when they did not have the liberty to rest on any day, and therefore, they were to provide rest for their servants (Deuteronomy 5:14-15). This holds especially true if their freedom from Egypt began on the seventh day, as indicated in Exodus 12 (which was later designated as the first day of their year, the day after they ate the Passover), as some argue.
3. The unique experience of God providing manna from heaven for six days and withholding it on the seventh day was specifically revealed to them.
4. The seventh day was accompanied by special ceremonial services beyond what was required on other days.
5. God's manner of dealing with them before Christ was to emphasize duties through temporal and external incentives explicitly, and implicitly through spiritual blessings. Therefore, it was most appropriate for that time and context to emphasize the seventh day, which reminded them of the benefits of creation. However, the approach is different for the Church under the Gospel. Hence, their sacraments had external reference to their deliverance from Egypt and temporal matters, whereas ours are purely focused on spiritual realities.

Argument 6: The Apostle Paul includes their Sabbaths along with other days in Colossians 2:16. Although he does not include all days equally, it is difficult to deny that their seventh-day Sabbath is encompassed there when all Jewish times are mentioned together. Therefore, it appears that there is a typological aspect, not in the command itself, but in that specific day, albeit indirectly in relation

to its worship, purpose, application, etc. taken as a whole. Hence, this seventh-day Sabbath has at least expired, if not repealed, since the days and times observed by the Jews are enumerated with their other services that have become obsolete. Just as when the Apostle condemns disputes over food and drink, he is not condemning the distinctions made in the Lord's Supper in the New Testament but those stemming from the Old, the same can be said about days. It is their old distinctions he is denouncing.

Proposition 3: Just as it is fitting that the day of worship under the Gospel should be different from that under the Law and therefore be changed, it is also fitting that the change should be to the first day of the week and no other day. This is because:

1. No other day has been honored with as many Gospel privileges. First, it was the day of Christ's resurrection (Matthew 28), marking the first day of his victory and rest. Second, Christ appeared to his disciples at least twice on this day, singling it out from other days. The fact that the Evangelist John specifically records his appearances on that day implies something remarkable about it compared to other days. Third, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2) is found to have taken place on the first day of the week. No other day can claim as many privileges and various ways of relating to Christ.
2. If the reasons that made the seventh day preferable under the Law align only with the first day of the week in this renewal of the world, then the first day should succeed; and indeed, these reasons proportionally apply only to the first day under the Gospel, which corresponded to the seventh day under the Law. Therefore:

The reasons that made the seventh day preferable were:

1. God had completed all his works on the sixth day and rested on the seventh, making it the first day after Creation. Similarly, the

first day of the week is the day on which Christ rose, having accomplished the work of Redemption and triumphed over death, under whose power his body lay for a time. Through his resurrection from the dead, he was manifestly declared to be the Son of God (Romans 1:4).

2. The example set by God holds true here as well. God made the world in six days and rested on the seventh, so you should also rest with Him. Likewise, Christ, after enduring for a time, fully overcame on the first day and entered into His exalted state. Therefore, rest with Him and rejoice on that day, for it marks the beginning of this new and joyful world.
3. No other day can replace the old seventh day while preserving the essence of this command. Therefore, it must be the first day of the week that takes its place. This command requires one day out of every seven, allowing the other six for work, and those six days must be consecutive. If the Sabbath had been assigned to a day beyond the following week, it would not have been one day out of seven. If it had been the second, third, or fourth day, the six working days would not have been consecutive. However, by appointing the first day as God's portion, next to the seventh, and having six consecutive working days for us, the same week is maintained. God has one day, and we have six days of the same week.

If an objection is raised here, stating that this way the new world begins with a Sabbath, whereas the Sabbath marked the end of the old world, the answer is as follows:

1. God loses nothing of what He required, for in this way, no week lacks its Sabbath.
2. It is most appropriate for the old world to end with a Sabbath and for the new world to begin with a Sabbath, as it allows the worship of the new world (which most clearly signifies the change) to preach the change more immediately and convincingly. This could not have been done as effectively if

working days from both worlds had overlapped, or if a working day from one world and the Sabbath of the other had been observed. Furthermore, although the old Sabbath was the seventh day in chronological order from Creation, it was the first day after the creation of mankind. In a similar way, when people are brought into this new world or experience a change, God will start it with gladness and joy for them.

Proposition 4. The day of solemn public worship, as required by this command, was actually changed from the seventh or last day to the first day of the week, based on the aforementioned reasons. That it was truly changed can be supported by the following points:

1. After Christ's resurrection and ascension, the Apostles and early Christians had their appointed day for gathering to worship God. However, they neither exclusively observed the seventh day among themselves nor commanded its observance, nor did they refer to it as the Lord's day. It is true that they sometimes observed it in conjunction with the Jews, such as during Pentecost, either due to the opportunity for larger gatherings on those days or to pay respects. They temporarily practiced some of the Jewish rituals that had become obsolete for their own benefit until they were fully informed of their abolition. However, in established Gentile churches, we never read that they observed the seventh day, but rather another day.
2. The Apostles and early Christians kept and highly regarded the first day of the week as their solemn day, surpassing all other days, and considering it as the Christian Sabbath. Firstly, they regularly gathered on that day, not sporadically, but intentionally and purposefully, as seen in John 20:19 and 26, which clearly refer to the first day. Secondly, they were intentionally gathered together, not out of fear (as fear causes dispersal), but while they were together, they locked the doors for fear. It is highly probable that they were led to gather on that day based on the news of the Resurrection. Furthermore, in

verse 26, they meet and Christ appears among them. While it is possible that they may have met on other days as well, there is undoubtedly something distinctive about this day and a lesson to be learned from it. Firstly, Christ's appearance to them is especially associated with that day and their togetherness. Secondly, when they met at other times before his appearance, it is never mentioned that they were or came together on the second, third, or fourth day of the week, but specifically on the first day. Why then does the Holy Spirit repeatedly mention that day or their gathering on that day while omitting the mention of other days? It is to draw special attention to the exercises and activities on that day. Although other days may have been similar in their exercises, the repeated mention of this day and the omission of others suggest a distinction. Clearly, they are not all the same in this regard. This concludes our discussion of John 20, which is the first scriptural reference we use.

The second reference is Acts 2:1-2. In this passage, it is stated that they were all in one place with one accord when the day of Pentecost arrived. Here, several points can be observed. Firstly, Pentecost fell on the first day of the week, as it was the fiftieth day after the Feast of Unleavened Bread. According to the Jewish account, their Passover day coincided with the Sabbath, referred to as a "high Sabbath" in John 19:31. It is evident that Christ remained in the grave throughout that day, which corresponds to our Friday, known as the preparation day for the Feast. By calculating fifty days after that, we arrive at Pentecost, which falls on the first day of the week. This is not only noteworthy because they gathered on this day, but also because God sent the Holy Spirit upon them as a special blessing on that day, in accordance with His promise. Moreover, it is clear that they gathered together on this specific day. Their gathering was not a daily or regular occurrence, as seen in John 21 when they went fishing, indicating that they sometimes went their separate ways. In Acts 2:1, it is emphasized that their coming together on that day was not an ordinary occurrence. Lastly, their gathering was not in

relation to the Pentecost feast itself, as they were already in Jerusalem for that purpose.

Firstly, they are gathered together, separate from the general population. Secondly, they are not in the Temple but in a suitable house where they can come together for public worship. This indicates that it is their Christian Sabbath, the appointed time for their solemn gathering.

The third reference is Acts 20:7. "On the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached to them, etc." From this passage, the following points can be deduced:

1. The purpose of this gathering was for public worship, as indicated by the breaking of bread and preaching.
2. There is significance in the mention of it being on the first day of the week, rather than any of the preceding six days, during Paul's time in Troas. While it is probable that they also had meetings and preaching on those days, the main distinction is that their gatherings on those days were occasional and perhaps limited in scope, whereas the fixed and regular assembly of all believers typically occurred on the first day.
3. This coming together on the first day for worship is portrayed as a customary and constant practice, not something new or sporadic. They gathered intentionally for the observance of ordinances.
4. By specifically associating these activities with that particular day and highlighting it, it becomes evident that the first day of the week held special significance as their most solemn day, rather than the old seventh day being necessarily prioritised.
5. It is unlikely that Paul, who was ready to depart, would have waited specifically for the first day of the week if there were no significant worship taking place on that day. Likewise, he would

not have bypassed the old seventh-day Sabbath, especially if the level of sanctity and requirement for worship were equal between the two days. Furthermore, Paul's emphasis on religious public worship on the first day indicates that the former seventh day was not utilized for such services. In the context of a church composed primarily of Gentile believers, there is no mention of observing the old Sabbath, as it is regarded as just another regular day of the week.

Moreover, the fact that Paul devoted the entire day to these services, extending his sermon until midnight while still considering it as one continuous day of worship, further supports the notion that this day is more than ordinary or the same as the other days of the week. It is specifically set apart for these sacred activities and completely devoted to them.

It is mentioned that the disciples "came together" on that day, signifying that they willingly gathered, being accustomed and called to do so on that day. They recognized it as the proper time for engaging in these specific duties and exercises.

From these observations, we can argue that if the apostles and early Christians observed the first day of the week as their primary and chief time for solemn public worship, while disregarding the old seventh day, then the day has indeed been changed from the seventh to the first day of the week. This conclusion is supported by the previous instances we have examined.

Furthermore, if these gatherings on the first day were not similar to what took place on the former seventh day, we must ask why their meetings on the first day are specifically recorded and mentioned more frequently, while their meetings on the other days of the week are not. Why is there an emphasis on the first day and a silence regarding the other days? Additionally, if their gathering on the first day after Christ's ascension is not akin to Christ's attendance at the synagogue on the seventh-day Sabbath and his observance of specific

activities on that day, then what is the reason for the shift? The Scriptures' emphasis on the first day and silence regarding the seventh day are purposeful and serve a specific intent.

And just as the practice of the Church indicates the change of the day, the title given to the first day of the week, known as the Lord's day, in Revelation 1:10 confirms the same. From this, we argue:

If the title, which in the Old Testament was given by the Lord and His people to the seventh-day Sabbath and by which He claimed a seventh day in this commandment, is not given to the seventh day in the New Testament, but to the first day of the week, then the day has indeed changed from the seventh day to the first day, and the first day now falls under the purview of this commandment, just as the seventh day formerly did. And indeed, this is true—the first day is styled in a similar manner as the seventh day was, and as this commandment designates and claims the day to be observed for the Lord. Therefore, the Sabbath has now changed from the seventh day to the first day of the week.

The titles that distinguish the Sabbath from other days and that mark it as belonging to God, as stated in this very commandment, undoubtedly indicate the day that He has set apart and claims by applying those titles. Thus, if these titles are now given and applied to the first day, it must signify the succession of that day to the former seventh day. During the observance of the seventh day, these titles were not, and could not be, applied to the first day, as at that time no day other than the seventh was acknowledged as the Lord's day.

In the Old Testament, we find that the Lord used these titles to refer to the seventh-day Sabbath and claim it as His own. Firstly, it is called the "Sabbath of the Lord" or "to the Lord," signifying that it belongs to the Lord, distinct from the six days that are given to us. It is a day that He has the right to, not us, and therefore called the "Lord's Sabbath." Secondly, in Isaiah 58:13, the Lord claims it as "my

holy day." This title serves to distinguish it from other days and to emphasize its sacredness and purpose, as it is not meant for our use but for the Lord's own purposes—it is uniquely His.

But in the New Testament, after Christ's resurrection, the seventh day is not referred to with the same titles and claims, whereas the first day of the week is mentioned as the Lord's day in Revelation 1:10. In this passage, the following points are evident:

1. After Christ's Ascension, there was a specific day that belonged to the Lord, distinct from other days.
2. It was not the old Sabbath, as John's intention was to specify the time of the vision by referring to the day that was distinct from other days, not to the Sabbath still observed by the Jews. In fact, calling it the Lord's day would have made it less clear if it were referring to the Sabbath. Moreover, by using the phrase "the Lord's," it implies a connection to Christ the Mediator, which cannot be said of the seventh day Sabbath.
3. It was not just any day that belonged to the Lord. There is a significant difference between "the Lord's day" and "the day of the Lord." The former signifies a constant and special right and a unique interest that God has in that day, distinct from other days. It is not an indefinite day of the Lord, as that would be unclear and contrary to John's intention.
4. The Lord's day referred to in Revelation is a day that was commonly set apart by Christians for God, with a recognition of Christ the Mediator. Based on previous practices, it is evident that this day is the first day of the week—the Lord's day—attributed to the Lord Jesus Christ who, having conquered death and achieved victory, claims this day as a tribute to Him.

This being clear, that no other day can claim this title, and that the first day has good reason to claim it, we can firmly conclude that it is indeed the first day or no day at all. If it were not the first day, then

the designation of that day would serve no purpose, as it has not been applied to any other day, nor can it be.

This truth has been uncontested in all of history and by nearly all writers, with the exception of Gomarus who recently began to question it. Rivet defends this position against Gomarus in relation to this Command.

Now, assuming that it is undeniable that this is indeed the first day, we must investigate if the title applied to this day is the same as the one in the Command and that was commonly given to the old seventh-day Sabbath, or if it refers to the Lord's day at that time.

And it is clear that this title claims this day for God as His day. It is possessively expressed, similar to phrases like "the Lord's Throne," "the Lord's Altar," "the Lord's Sabbath," and so on.

Furthermore, it distinguishes this day from other days, implying that those other days are not as exclusively the Lord's but are rather ours. It is akin to the Commandment stating, "Six days shalt thou labour," implying that the other six days are for our use, but the seventh is for the Lord. Similarly, the first day claims a unique relationship to the Lord, indicating that we have less right to use it for our own purposes compared to any other day. This claim of the first day as the Lord's implies a concession or dispensation whereby the last day becomes ours. If there were two days belonging to the Lord, one day could not be distinctly called His. This is similar to how in 1 Corinthians 11, the Lord's Supper is distinguished from their own supper, just as the Lord's day is distinguished from other days.

It imposes the necessity of using it for the Lord's purposes and not for our own, because it belongs to Him. It implies the same moral duties and objectives that the Commandment obligates us to.

It implies an appointment by Christ Himself, wherein He designates that day for His service and claims it as His own. This is evident because He calls it His day. Just as in the fourth Commandment,

there is no explicit institution of the seventh day, but since the seventh day was referred to as the Lord's and was indicated in His previous ways and dispensations as a day to be kept for Him, the Jews understood and accepted it as an institution because He claimed it as His. Similarly, we can conclude here that there is an institution and appointment of the first day to be the Lord's, because He claims it as His own. Although there may not be a clear and explicit institution of the first day like other ordinances, it is evident that the institution of days is generally inferred. From all of this, we can deduce the conclusion that the first day of the week is attributed with the same distinctive titles claimed by the Lord expressly as His right and due, and on equally valid grounds under the New Testament as the seventh day was under the Old. Therefore, the seventh day has now been changed, and the first day has taken its place, which was the point we sought to prove.

Lastly, we argue from the Apostle's ordinance in 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 regarding contributions for the saints. Paul states, "On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside." From this, we assert that it is not the seventh day, but the first day that is the primary solemn day for worship after Christ's Resurrection.

If the Apostle specifically and prominently selects the first day of the week, and does so in various churches as the most appropriate time for expressing their charity, then there must be something remarkable about the first day that provides a basis for such an appointment and ordinance. The Apostle singles out that day from others for this purpose, and the only reason can be that the day, being especially and directly designated for God, is most suitable for the duty of charity, which is a work of mercy. It is evident that the Apostle specifically chooses that day over others. Therefore, it follows that there is something significant about the first day.

To strengthen the argument, consider the following points. Firstly, it is clear that the day referred to is the first day of the week, as the same phrase used by the Evangelists (Matthew 28:1, Mark 16:2, Luke

24:1) is employed by the Apostle. Undoubtedly, the Apostle follows the phrasing of the Evangelists, and his use of that phrase may suggest a reason why he commands charity to be practiced on that day or sets it apart for that purpose above other days, namely, our Lord's Resurrection.

Secondly, it is evident that he does not consider it indifferent or insignificant which day it is done on, nor does he view all days as equal. Therefore, he specifically chooses the first day, and not in one church only, but in many.

Thirdly, this instruction is not merely commended to them, but commanded and enjoined, even with respect to the day. Would the Apostle burden churches with commands in that aspect without a reason, and would he universally prefer one day over another, even insisting on uniformity in the choice of the day in the Church of Corinth and other churches if it were unnecessary? Let it not be said, nor even thought.

Fourthly, it is evident that this command was given even to the churches of Galatia, among whom the observance of certain days had been condemned by the Apostle. Therefore, it appears that he does not consider the preference of the first day as one of those prohibited and condemned days, nor does he want it to be set aside. He purposely excludes the seventh day from the category of days that should not be observed and retained, but rather set aside.

Fifthly, the action required on this day is a Sabbath duty, as it involves performing a work of mercy. Isaiah 58 specifically mentions giving bread to the hungry as one of the duties of God's holy day.

Sixthly, the mention of the first day of the week should be understood in relation to and in comparison with the practice of holding solemn meetings on that day. This command to perform acts of charity on the first day of the week carries more weight and implies something more significant when compared with other

passages, than if such things were not recorded elsewhere about the first day.

Seventhly, this command assumes that they are already aware of certain special privileges associated with the first day in comparison to others. The Apostle uses this as a motivation for them to be more charitable, emphasizing that it should be done on that particular day.

8. It is evident that there must be something unique about this day that makes it suitable, or even more suitable, for performing acts of charity on it than on any other day. The Apostle's command to do so, given in multiple churches, necessarily implies that he has a reason for it, drawn from the fitness of this day in comparison to others. Now, if we inquire, there can be no reason found other than the expiration of the seventh-day Sabbath and the institution of this first day in its place. Otherwise, any day would be the same. In fact, it might seem more reasonable for people to set aside their offerings at the close of the week, as God had blessed them, rather than waiting until the beginning of another week. Shouldn't the first day be especially sanctified while the last is considered an ordinary working day?

The fitness, therefore, stems from the fact that the first day of the week is a day of solemn communion with God and with one another, a day when they partake most abundantly of spiritual blessings from Him. It is on this day that their affections are most likely to be stirred, and they are most inclined to be generous in their giving to those in need. This is particularly significant when considering that the collection or contribution was intended for the benefit of the Jewish believers. The Apostle uses this argument extensively when appealing for charity to the poor Jews from the Christian Gentiles, as seen in Romans 15:26-27. The Gentiles are indebted to the Jews in temporal matters because they have received spiritual blessings from them. This argument carries even more weight and power when believers, on the first day of the week, commemorate God's privilege of granting them His ordinances and giving them His day in place of

the ordinances and day that the Jews once had. Therefore, this argument serves as a fresh and compelling motivation for the specific duty of charitable giving.

If anyone suggests that the choice or naming of the first day was accidental and arbitrary, merely because one day had to be chosen and it didn't matter which, I would counter with the following points:

1. Why is this practice universal? If it had originated from just one church, one might argue that it was a local preference. However, the fact that this duty is called for on that day from multiple churches suggests that it holds more significance.
2. Why does the Apostle not merely recommend it, but actually command it, indicating that the choice of the day is not a matter of indifference?
3. Can we believe that so many privileges and significant events are associated with that day by sheer coincidence? Why are so many things recorded and commanded specifically in relation to that day, while other days are not given the same attention? If it were a matter of chance, we would have to conclude that the writers of Scripture were incredibly biased. But such a conclusion would be blasphemous, considering that they wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we must acknowledge that these distinctions are intentional, designed to emphasize the preference given to that day.

Even if one single passage might not be sufficient to prove that the first day, rather than the seventh day, was preferred by the Apostles as the primary day of solemn public worship, when we consider all these factors together, it becomes clear that a preference exists for that day. The authors of Scripture have deliberately marked and recorded numerous things regarding God's worship on that day, while not once mentioning solemn services on the second, third,

fourth, or fifth days. We must conclude that this was not done inadvertently but with the intention of highlighting the exceptional status of the first day as the most solemn day for Christian worship. It is the day claimed as the Lord's, kept for Him, and uniquely distinguished from other days. Therefore, this first day is indeed His day, confirming the preference given to it.

Proposal 5. The change of the day, in which the seventh day is set aside and the first day is substituted in its place, is of divine authority and institution, and not merely a human or ecclesiastical decision. I believe there is no middle ground here between a divine institution, which carries the stamp of God's warrant and authority and is to be observed as a matter of conscience, and human or ecclesiastical decrees, which may pertain to external matters but cannot bind the conscience or impose them as necessary. Now, to prove that this change is not the result of the latter but the former, we provide the following arguments.

1. If it is not human or ecclesiastical, then it must be divine. It is indeed not of human or ecclesiastical origin, therefore it is divine. This is evident in two ways: First, if it reaches the conscience directly, it cannot be of human origin but must be divine, and it does so. Second, if no individual or church on earth has the power to alter God's appointed day, then it is not human or ecclesiastical in nature. And indeed, no one has the power to change it, as can be demonstrated by the great absurdities that would follow if such power were claimed. If any church claims to possess this power, let them demonstrate it. The ancient church did not have it, nor does the contemporary church, as has been established in the previous discussion.
2. We now proceed to demonstrate this change to be by divine institution through four further arguments.
 1. From reasons derived from Scripture or logical deductions from it. Firstly, if through genuine and logical deductions

from Scripture, something is imposed in such a way that it cannot be altered or neglected without sin, then it is of divine institution. In the case of the change from the seventh-day Sabbath to the first day, there are logical deductions from Scripture that, if we assume the change, strictly apply it to the first day in such a manner that it cannot be altered or neglected without sin. Therefore, it is of divine institution. The question remains only regarding the minor premise, which is established in the third proposition as follows:

If the very reasons that argue for the convenience of the change inherently argue for the convenience of the change to the first day, then, through clear and reasonable deduction, the first day is chosen and cannot be passed by, altered, or neglected without sin, unless we deny the weight of these reasons. However, these very reasons are found to advocate for and apply specifically to the first day of the week. Therefore, in addition to all other days in the new order, it can be referred to as the day specially ordained by God, as it is the day of Christ's rest from the work of redemption, corresponding to God's rest after creation, and so on. Consequently, being most conducive to that purpose, the first day cannot be passed by, neglected, or altered without sin.

2. Another way to argue for the change being of divine institution is as follows: If the very day of Christ's rest in the new order is to be observed and sanctified as the Sabbath, then the first day is to be observed and sanctified. By drawing an analogy from the works of creation, we can see that the first day of rest after the completion of the work of redemption is to be sanctified. Therefore, it follows that the first day is of divine institution. This reasoning is supported by Psalm 118, which contains a prophecy of Christ and mentions a day that God has specially made for us to rejoice in. That day is the day when the rejected stone becomes the cornerstone, which, according to Romans 2:4, is clearly the day of resurrection. Even if that day in Romans

2:4 refers to the time of the Gospel in which we should rejoice, the first day is still, by proportion, the day on which Christ's victory was manifested and therefore the day on which Christians ought to rejoice, especially.

The second way we can reason for the change being of divine institution is based on this command: If, assuming a change, according to the moral principles of this command, the seventh day can be changed to no day other than the first day of the week, then the change to the first day must be of divine institution (since anything done by virtue of a command is necessarily divine). However, according to this command, no other day can be considered. Each week consists of six working days for us and one day of rest for God. By changing it to the first day, God receives one day and we receive six days together. If it were the second, third, fourth, etc., the six working days would be interrupted, which goes against the moral principle of the command that distinguishes our days from God's, so that after a full week has passed, we can more freely give God his day.

The third way we use to prove that the change of the day is by divine institution is as follows: If, according to the practice of the Apostles who were guided and inspired by the Spirit in matters pertaining to their office infallibly, this day was observed as distinct from other days, then there is a divine institution of and warrant for this day. By the practice of the Apostles, this day is indeed celebrated as different from and preferred to other days, indicating its divine nature. Therefore, it is of divine institution. If the divine practice and example of the Apostles in matters that are moral and common to all do not either presuppose a divine prior institution or imply a subsequent one, then their practice and example, which are infallible and unerring in these matters, would carry no more weight than the example of others, which would be absurd since their examples are specifically emphasized for us. And if their example is divine in any matter, it must particularly apply to this matter, which is so well-documented and detailed. Since their meetings are not recorded to

have taken place on any other second, third, etc., day, their practice is certainly not merely insignificant but rather highly meaningful. In matters of positive worship, the Lord has chosen to provide us with more examples to draw from (so to speak) and has left us with more room for inference compared to matters of negation. For example, in positive aspects such as taking oaths, admitting church members, governing, baptism, and partaking in the Supper, Scripture does not always explicitly state the institution, but we can still find grounds or examples for them.

The divine institution of the change can be argued from the title in the following manner: If that which is referred to as "the Lord's" is designated as such by divine institution and separation from other things that are not given that designation, then this first day must be designated as "the Lord's" by divine institution and separation from other days. And indeed, all that is referred to as "the Lord's" is His in this manner. Let the minor premise be confirmed through these three ways:

1. By considering what is generally referred to as "the Lord's" in the Old Testament, such as His house, His altar, His priests, His tithes, etc. Are they not His because they were set apart by Him for distinct uses in His worship?
2. By looking more closely at how the seventh day was called His day or the Sabbath His. Is this not because it was appointed by Him for His worship alongside other days? And can any reason align better with this?
3. By examining how anything is referred to as "the Lord's" in the New Testament. There is no better phrase or designation to compare with than that found in 1 Corinthians 11:20-21, where "the Lord's supper" is contrasted with "our own supper" (common supper). Similarly, this first day, called the Lord's day, is contrasted with our ordinary or common days. Just as the Lord's Supper is named as such because it was instituted by Him

for specific spiritual purposes, there can be no better basis for understanding why this day is called the Lord's day in contrast to others. Therefore, by comparing it with other scriptures, we can see that if this phrase implies a divine institution in other matters, why not in this case? I do not mean to claim that this proves a clear and explicit institution, but rather that it suggests the existence of one and that it is divine, for God is the one who chooses, not us.

Once again, we can refer to the four witnesses previously attested to for the morality of the fourth commandment: the general practice of early Christians, their collective opinion and judgment, individual consciences, and the dispensations of God. All of these testify clearly regarding the change of the day.

Proposition 6: Although we do not know the exact time when this day was instituted and the first day sanctified, and whether it was immediately instituted by Christ himself or mediately through the inspiration of the Apostles, this is not of great importance to the main point of its institution. However, it is most probable that our Lord either personally instituted it from the very day of His Resurrection, as mentioned in Acts 1:3 when He taught them about the Kingdom of God, or He inspired His Apostles to observe it from that time forth. There are several reasons supporting this probability:

1. If it was not instituted at that time, the Church would have been without a Sabbath for a period of time since the seventh-day Sabbath expired with the Resurrection.
2. The reason for the change and the preference given to the first day over others, in terms of its capacity for sanctification, came into effect from that time onward.
3. The practice of the Apostles meeting and Christ joining them has been observed from the very first change, even on the first two

first days of the week, as stated in John 20:19 and 26.

4. All the practices and other evidence supporting the change presuppose the existence of an institution preceding them, indicating its ancient nature.

In conclusion, we summarize the six propositions as follows: 1. The day can be changed from the last to the first. 2. It is fitting and has good reasons for such a change. 3. The change can only be to one first day. 4. The change has actually occurred. 5. The change is not by human authority but by divine institution. 6. The institution of the first day of the week as the Lord's day appears to have originated with the rise of the Gospel Church and the very day of Christ's Resurrection. From these propositions, we infer the following: 1. We have good warrant, even God's warrant, to devote the seventh day to ourselves, as God seeks only one day in seven, and now He has chosen and claims the first. 2. We have God's warrant to sanctify the first day as the Sabbath or the Lord's day, as His institution. 3. The Lord's day is to be sanctified by us Christians, based on the authority of this Command, just as the seventh day was sanctified by the Jews according to its own grounds.

Now let us discuss the sanctification of this day, which is the main objective, and for which all the preceding points are intended. We will first consider the precept, and then the reasons by which it is enforced.

The precept is to sanctify or keep it holy. The act of sanctifying it is mentioned twice in this Command. Firstly, at the end, it is stated that God hallowed or sanctified it, meaning that He separated, designated, and appointed it for holy purposes and as a part of worship. Just as He sanctified the Temple and Altar, He did not infuse any inherent holiness into them, but rather appointed them for holy uses. Only God can sanctify a day or any other thing in such a way as to make it a part of worship, and no human or earthly power can do that. Secondly, in the precept itself, we are commanded to

sanctify it, which means to apply it to the purposes for which He has set it apart. We sanctify what He has sanctified when we use it and employ it according to His appointment. Therefore, we are to consider the sanctification of this day in the duties called for from us on it.

This sanctification is described in two ways. Firstly, in terms of its cessation and rest, separating it from other uses and keeping it distinct from the common uses to which other days may be applied. Secondly, in its special application to and involvement in holy uses.

For clarity, let us consider this sanctification. Firstly, in terms of rest, what we are to abstain from. Secondly, in a comparative sense, how it differs in strictness from what was required from the Jews. Thirdly, in an eminent sense, what additional holiness is expected on this day compared to other days, and how it surpasses them. Fourthly, in a positive sense, what duties should be undertaken. Fifthly, in a comprehensive sense, in terms of what is required for the proper sanctification of the day before it begins, during its duration, and after it has passed, both in public and private life, and by all individuals in their various roles, such as masters, servants, etc. It encompasses the entirety of a person, including their thoughts, words, and deeds, throughout the entire day. Sixthly, in a negative sense, what constitutes a breach of this Command and the aggravations of the sins that violate it.

Let us first consider the aspect of rest that is required, taking into account that there are extremes. Some give it too little, as the Jews did before the captivity, while others go to the other extreme of being overly superstitious, as seen in the practices of the Jews after the captivity and the Scribes and Pharisees during the time of Jesus, who stretched the concept of rest too far. Therefore, we need to examine this matter more closely and specifically to bring peace to our consciences, for the Jews were reprov'd by the prophets (Ezekiel 20, Jeremiah 17) and by Jesus (Matthew 12) for their respective extremes.

In this regard, we affirm firstly that there is a required rest, which extends to a person's words, thoughts, and actions, whereby many things that are lawful on other days become unlawful on this day.

However, we also assert that not all actions are condemned by this rest, but only those that are inconsistent with the purpose and intent of this Command, as evidenced by other Scriptures and the practices of Christ and the saints. Therefore, we believe the following actions are permitted:

1. All acts of piety, such as sacrifice in the Old Testament or preaching, hearing, and participating in the sacraments in the New Testament. In this sense, as stated in Matthew 12, our Lord said that the priests profaned the Sabbath yet were blameless. This does not mean they formally profaned the Sabbath or actually broke the Commandment, but rather that in a material sense, they engaged in activities such as the slaughter of animals, which would have been unlawful if not done within the context of religious exercises.
2. All things that serve as necessary aids and means for the performance of the aforementioned acts of piety are permissible, such as attending the congregation to hear the Law, signaling the assembly for worship through trumpets, bells, or voice, journeying or traveling to church, and so on. These are allowed because the duties of the Sabbath cannot be properly fulfilled without some of these actions and not at all without others.

If one were to inquire about the concept of a "Sabbath day's journey" mentioned in Acts 1:12 and its origin among the Jews, as well as how it may be defined or limited among Christians, the following answer can be given. Among the Jews, it was approximately 2,000 cubits, although there are variations in the measurement based on the different interpretations of the length of the cubit. Scholars generally agree that this distance of 2,000 cubits constituted a Sabbath day's journey.

The designation of this distance as a Sabbath day's journey arose from two reasons: Firstly, their interpretation of Exodus 16:29, which states, "Let none go out of his place," understood it as "Let none go beyond the bounds of the city." They believed that the city, along with its suburbs, encompassed an area of approximately 2,000 cubits or about a mile. Secondly, they believed that the Tabernacle of the Congregation was situated at a certain distance from the tents of the people in the wilderness, as described in Numbers 2. They also inferred from the account of the priests maintaining a certain distance when carrying the Ark across the Jordan River in Joshua 3-4. Based on these circumstances, they concluded that a person could travel to the Ark or place of worship, even if it was at a distance, but no further, on the Sabbath day.

But we assert that we cannot restrict a Sabbath day's journey to a specific number of miles, whether fewer or more, based on superstitious beliefs or customs (for those are merely traditions). The distance of a Sabbath day's journey must be determined based on a person's circumstances and their proximity to the place where the ordinances are administered. One person may have to travel many miles without profaning the Sabbath if they cannot access the public ordinances nearby, while another person may break the Sabbath by simply going to their neighbor's door or even walking within their own house or to their door, if it is done idly or with a worldly purpose that is not suitable for that day. It is not about remoteness or proximity, but rather about our motives and intentions that need to be examined.

3. All acts of mercy are permissible on that day, such as setting aside something for the poor (1 Corinthians 16:1), sending or providing assistance to those in need (Isaiah 58:7), and visiting others to offer comfort, strength, or edification in a Christian manner. However, idle and worldly visits (which unfortunately occur too frequently) are not allowed.

4. Good deeds, as Jesus stated in Matthew 12:12, are lawful on the Sabbath. This includes administering necessary medical treatment, seeking the help of physicians, saving a person's life, and exerting effort for such purposes. These good works can be categorized either as acts of mercy or as acts of necessity, as they serve as examples of doing good on the Sabbath.
5. Works of necessity are also permissible on the Sabbath. This includes feeding animals, leading them to water, and rescuing them from ditches if they have fallen into them on that day. It also involves preparing food in a modest and sensible manner for the sustenance of the body. Just as the disciples plucked ears of corn (Matthew 12) and the Jews dressed the manna on the Sabbath (Exodus 16), although they were not permitted to gather it, they were allowed to bake and cook a portion on the sixth day and keep a portion for the next day, but not for the day following that. Therefore, they had to prepare it as well. Jesus Christ Himself attended a feast on the Sabbath (Luke 14), using the opportunity to provide spiritual discourse and edify the company, which indicates that it was not unlawful to cook food on the Sabbath. However, His conduct at that feast was notably exemplary, serving as a pattern for those who may be invited to eat with others on the Sabbath. If the purpose of such gatherings is for spiritual edification, it does not readily detract from the sanctification of the day, although this is often the case. Examples of justified actions on the Sabbath include fleeing from a life-threatening enemy (Matthew 24) and defending ourselves against unjust violence.
6. Works of decency that contribute to honest and respectable conduct, such as dressing modestly and ensuring the cleanliness of the house from any impurities that may occur during the Sabbath, are also permitted.

Through all of these, believers are allowed: 1. for acts of piety, 2. for acts of charity, 3. for attending to the needs of their animals, 4. for

attending to their own necessary and appropriate actions or behaviours. Anything beyond this is not necessary. The Lord has not imposed strict limitations on them, nor has He restricted them to absolute necessity. Instead, He has entrusted them to exercise Christian prudence (while avoiding excess). It is possible for the disciples to have endured hunger without plucking the ears of corn, and animals can go without water for a day without significant harm. Some types of food can be prepared in advance and served without the need for cooking. Furthermore, a person can live with little or nothing for a day. However, the Lord has chosen not to burden them excessively, making His day and worship a wearisome burden. The Sabbath is intended to be a source of refreshment for humanity, not the other way around. He does not want their consciences to be entangled in insurmountable scruples. He leaves it to individuals, using Christian prudence, to determine how much to eat and drink on other days (while still avoiding excess). Thus, there is some flexibility for conscientious reasoning. One person may engage in certain actions at one time but not at another, and one individual may exert more effort in maintaining their body than another, depending on their strength. It is impossible to establish specific rules that apply to everyone. Individuals should consider: 1. their purpose, 2. their need, and 3. what is suitable for achieving the intended purpose.

However, it is necessary to provide some qualifications and cautions here, to prevent people from indulging themselves excessively and exceeding the bounds under the pretext of the aforementioned liberties that the Lord has graciously granted to them.

1. It is important for individuals to discern whether the necessity is genuine, such as when someone is genuinely ill and needs to stay at home, or when there is a real danger that prompts them to flee or remain at home. It should be a necessity that cannot be conveniently avoided or foreseen in advance.

2. People should ensure that the necessity is not brought upon themselves. If the task could have been done at another time, the excuse of necessity will not suffice. However, if one has committed a sin in bringing about the necessity and repents of it, seeking forgiveness through Christ, they may proceed with the task lawfully, even though they had previously brought the necessity upon themselves. For example, if someone had been warned a day before to flee or acquire a specific medication but failed to do so, they have sinned. However, when the necessity arises, they can still perform the action, though not with a clear conscience until they acknowledge their previous negligence.
3. It should be considered whether the task can be done at another time or if it can be reasonably delayed until the next day without significant harm. Taking or administering medicine on the Lord's day, engaging in ordinary social visits, or embarking on journeys will not hold weight before God if people do these activities on that day merely to have their own workday free, thereby neglecting the proper duties of the Lord's day for things that could be done on the following day or days. For instance, rest is commanded even during sowing time and harvest (Exodus 34:21) because the necessity is not clear-cut but depends on ordinary provide
4. It is essential for individuals to be cautious not to find pleasure in such necessities occurring on the Sabbath and not to be glad to have diversions from the proper duties of the day. They should approach such tasks with a sense of solemnity, albeit with a clear and peaceful conscience regarding their lawfulness. Hence, Christ said to his disciples, "Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath" (Matthew 24:20) because it would weigh heavily on God's people to flee on that day, even though it was lawful.
5. We must ensure that these actions do not disrupt our spiritual disposition and that, in performing them, we do not become

preoccupied with worldly concerns as we would on other days. Our mindset should still uphold a reverence for the day (as emphasized by the command to "remember" in the Scriptures), and even when our hands are engaged in other tasks, our hearts should not be consumed by them, but only to the extent necessary for their execution.

6. It is important to carry out these actions without irregularity, ensuring that they do not cause offense to others. That is why Christ always provided reasons for what he did on the Sabbath, so that those around him, who might not be aware of his necessity, would not consider him guilty of breaking the Sabbath or be compelled to do the same without necessity.
7. Individuals should have a profound regard for the purpose behind these works and the motives that drive and compel them. If the motive is merely external gain or the fear of temporal loss, such as a physician choosing to work on the Sabbath solely for monetary gain rather than on another day to save a person's life, it becomes a servile work, akin to their ordinary weekday occupation. Similarly, if a minister preaches with the intent of gaining wealth or applause on the Sabbath, or if anyone visits another person for purely secular reasons, as one would on any other day, without a suitable regard for spiritual edification or the advancement of piety, all their actions will nullify the sanctity of the Sabbath and be deemed a violation.
8. We should be cautious not to spend excessive time on these matters, but rather strive to handle them promptly and efficiently, and to schedule them appropriately.

Engaging in activities such as cooking, grooming, adorning oneself, or dressing up should not occupy an excessive portion of the Sabbath if they hinder other duties and consume too much time, as is often the case for many individuals.

All of this serves as a reminder for us to be vigilant in these matters, lest our freedom be transformed into license, and lest we become idle or worldly on that day.

Now, let us consider the extent of this rest. It encompasses:

1. Rest for the entire person, both outwardly and inwardly, in our actions, words, and thoughts. As stated in Isaiah 58:13, we should refrain from speaking our own words (and, by extension, thinking our own thoughts) or indulging in our own pleasures.
2. It encompasses the entire day. While not every minute of the day can be devoted to positive duties, it is nevertheless prohibited to engage in any work (inconsistent with the aforementioned qualifications and purposes) at any moment of the day. The negative aspect of the commandment, "you shall do no work," applies *ad semper* (always).
3. It extends not only to oneself but also to those under one's care, including children, servants, and others. We are responsible for ensuring that they also rest and must not give them cause to work.
4. It applies even to the smallest and most insignificant tasks that are unnecessary, such as gathering sticks or speaking our own words. Engaging in such activities constitutes a breach of the Sabbath.
5. This rest applies to all actions or types of actions or circumstances that are not covered by the aforementioned exceptions, which are permitted or consistent with the sanctification of the Sabbath. For example:
 - All works that aim at our external profit, pleasure, satisfaction, etc., and all the works related to our occupations that contribute to the increase of material gain and profit, and those through

which we typically sustain our lives—these are referred to as "our own works" in Hebrews 4:15. Here, it includes works that are typically carried out during the six days of the week. It is engaging in our own pleasures alongside these works, as mentioned in Isaiah 58.

- Works that primarily serve the external gain or profit of others, such as when servants work for the profit of their masters, but still profane the day.
- Works that are not necessary on the Sabbath, such as ploughing, sowing, reaping, or gathering crops, even during the seasons of planting and harvesting. Similarly, fishing or operating mills, etc., are not permissible unless they are essential for the preservation of life, as they are not necessary outside of that specific circumstance. There is no extraordinary dispensation that deems these works necessary, as the weather is subject to ordinary providence, which we are to respect. Therefore, even if the weather is rainy, it is not lawful to harvest or gather crops on the Sabbath because the risk involved is common and arises from ordinary immediate providence. However, if a river were carrying away the crops or if winds were likely to blow them into the sea, it would be permissible to take action to prevent such losses and preserve them. This is because: 1. Such circumstances occur due to a more than ordinary dispensation of providence in the weather and pose a greater risk to these specific crops. 2. There is no likelihood of recovering these crops in an ordinary manner, even if the weather changes. However, there is hope of gathering those crops that are not within the reach of such hazards in the fields, if the Lord alters the weather.
- Works done for carnal pleasure or worldly purposes, such as playing, gaming, excessive laughter, etc., which are primarily for our own pleasure, are not permissible on the Sabbath.
- It is important to note that all things that hinder the purpose of the day and are inconsistent with its duties are prohibited. This

includes activities like buying and selling, except in cases of urgent necessity. Engaging in these activities prevents us from being spiritually focused and engaged. Playing and gaming are no more compatible with activities like praying, reading, and having meaningful discussions than ploughing or similar work. In fact, they are even more disruptive and hinder our ability to fulfill the duties of the day.

- Anything that is not in line with the rest and the worship duties required from ourselves and others is prohibited. Unnecessary travel or walking, even if one intends to engage in meditation, does not constitute the required rest. Moreover, aimless wandering in groups on the streets or in fields, neglecting personal and family responsibilities, is not in accordance with the sanctity of the day.

In summary, anything that is not related to religious and spiritual exercises, or does not contribute to or assist in such exercises, is inconsistent with the rest and sanctification of the Sabbath. This includes sinful, scandalous, or unsuitable actions that divert from or hinder the performance of holy duties and the worship of God on that day. The purpose of rest on the Sabbath is not for its own sake, but as a means to facilitate the fulfillment of sacred duties. Therefore, our rest should be regulated in a way that best contributes to that goal. Any activity that undermines this objective, whether it be work, idleness, indulgence in worldly pleasures, playing, gaming, or other forms of amusement, is a violation of the sanctity of the day.

This understanding is further supported by the fact that playing or engaging in sports does not sanctify the day, as it is neither a religious duty nor a necessary means of relieving physical exhaustion, which is not typically present on the Sabbath due to spiritual engagement. Changing and varying spiritual duties can provide refreshment and prevent weariness. Moreover, playing does not set the Sabbath apart from other days, as it is a common activity on any day. Playing is not a religious duty, and it does not fulfill any

necessary function in relation to the sanctification of the Sabbath. Therefore, it is inconsistent with the requirements of this commandment.

Now, let us proceed to the second aspect of the sanctification required, which involves comparing it to the strictness demanded of the Jews and to which they were bound.

We are not discussing ceremonial duties here, as their entire service might have been more burdensome than ours, particularly their Sabbath services, which involved additional requirements on that day. Instead, we are focusing on moral duties. In that regard, we affirm that the obligation to sanctify this day is equal for us as it was for them. This can be seen in various aspects:

1. The duration of the obligation is the same for us now as it was for them then, namely a natural day consisting of twenty-four hours.
2. It prohibits work and demands holy rest to the same extent as it did back then. Any work that contradicts the letter or purpose of the Commandment and hinders the performance of sacred duties is still prohibited.
3. It calls for positive sanctification through holy duties such as preaching, prayer, meditation, and does not allow for idleness or unnecessary activities.
4. It requires the same level of spiritual devotion and mindset in performing these duties as it did in their time.

Therefore, the moral obligations and requirements of sanctifying the Sabbath are consistent for both us and the Jews, highlighting the enduring nature of this commandment.

Regarding the first point, if the Commandment is moral, then there is no change in moral duties. It remains the same Commandment for us as it was for them, with the exception of ceremonial aspects.

Secondly, if the same actions that are permitted for us were also allowed for them on the Sabbath, and if we are not allowed to do more than what they were permitted to do, then the strictness of observance is equal. And indeed, the first part is true, as works of piety, mercy, and necessity are allowed for us, just as they were for them. This can be seen in Christ's reasoning against their superstitious interpretations.

Furthermore, our allowances are derived from the practices of Christ and His reasoning with the Pharisees. In those disputes, the aim was not to establish that more was permissible due to Christ's coming, but rather to clarify what was already allowed. God has always emphasized mercy over sacrifice, as evident in those passages, which clearly support our practices.

Lastly, the spiritual service we have now is no less than what was present in the past, and there is no doubt that the promise of the Holy Spirit for aiding us in holy duties remains. Therefore, we should strive to make the most of this promise and engage in our duties with equal fervor.

Before we continue, there are some Scriptures that may appear to contradict or oppose our perspective, specifically Exodus 16:23, 29, and Exodus 35:3. In these passages, it seems that going out of the place, dressing meat, and kindling fire were forbidden, while we believe they are allowed for us. Here's our explanation:

Firstly, we are speaking about the meaning of the fourth Commandment. If there were any additional prohibitions for the Israelites under specific judicial laws, it does not contradict our assertion, as those specific laws may no longer be applicable while the commandment itself remains.

Secondly, we believe that, regarding gathering sticks, kindling fire, and dressing meat, we are not granted more permission than the Israelites had. In other words, unnecessary labor in and around these

activities is unlawful for us now, just as necessary labor in and around them was allowed and lawful for them. We can infer this from Christ's actions and His reasoning with the Jews, as well as from the allowance given for their livestock.

Thirdly, these Scriptures cannot be interpreted literally and universally. It is implausible to think that the Israelites never went out of their place, kindled fire, or dressed meat under any circumstance. The allowance for necessity, Christ's participation when invited on the Sabbath (Luke 14), and His defense of His disciples' actions in plucking and rubbing ears of corn (Luke 6) suggest the opposite. Furthermore, Exodus 16:23 does not explicitly forbid dressing meat; rather, it implies the opposite. The Manna that remained from what was prepared on the sixth day was to be preserved until the seventh day, or the Sabbath, but not until the day after the Sabbath. This implies that they had to prepare it on the Sabbath, at least by boiling, as grinding it in mills or other means was unnecessary on the Sabbath unless there were extraordinary circumstances. Therefore, the prohibition against dressing meat and kindling fire pertains to unnecessary labor, servile work, or engaging in ordinary business for personal gain.

Moving on to the third perspective, if someone were to ask what additional holiness is required or can be attained on the Sabbath compared to other days, considering that a believer is called to strive for perfect holiness every day, I would answer as follows:

Firstly, while a believer is called to perfect holiness every day, it does not mean that every day is dedicated to immediate worship. On the Sabbath, a believer is called to be holy according to the specific engagements and duties of that day. The people of God in the past were indeed called to perfect holiness throughout the entire week, but the Sabbath held a special place within their overall pursuit of holiness.

Secondly, although all parts of every day should be spent in holiness, there are certain parts that hold greater significance, such as the time devoted to prayer, reading the Scriptures, and so on. Similarly, on a fasting day, more is required from those who participate than on regular days. Likewise, on the Sabbath, there are specific requirements for sanctification.

Thirdly, there is a distinction between living a holy life in general and being holy in the sanctification of the Lord's day. Even though a person should strive for holiness every day, it does not mean that every day is meant to be sanctified in the same manner as the Sabbath requires.

Now, let us discuss the sanctification of this day and what it entails:

1. On the Sabbath, there is a greater need for abstaining not only from sinful things but even from lawful temporal activities. It requires a spiritual mindset that separates and sets a person apart from ordinary thoughts. We can say that just as the Greek word for "unclean" also means "common," a mindset that is common or suitable for everyday life will be considered unclean for the Sabbath. Therefore, a different mindset of the heart is required, one that is distinct from the mindset of ordinary days and is suitable for the sanctity of that day.
2. The sanctification of the Sabbath involves engaging in its exercises in a more pronounced manner compared to other days. On other days, we may participate in worship activities arbitrarily, but on the Sabbath, it becomes necessary. While one can and should be holy on other days through their work and other activities, on the Sabbath, holiness is specifically manifested in immediate worship to God, such as praying, reading, hearing, conversing, meditating, and so on.
3. The sanctification of the Sabbath lies in the fact that the entire day is to be consecrated. On other days, only certain parts are

typically dedicated to religious service, but on the Sabbath, the entire day is to be used in this manner. One should be engaged in worship throughout the whole day, just as one would be during the time of prayer on other days.

4. The Sabbath calls for an increase in duties, including more private and secret prayers, reading, and other acts of worship. There should also be a greater emphasis on public worship. This is akin to the double sacrifices that were offered on the Sabbath under the Law, even though sacrifices were offered on other days as well.
5. There would be in the duties of this day more intenseness of Spirit, and a further degree of spiritual affections, than in these duties of other days; because this day is purposely set apart for that end▪ and by continuance in duties we may attain to more of a spiritual frame, and because not onely the Exercises of Wor | ship, praying, reading and hearing▪ &c. call to Holiness on this day, as they do on other days, but even the very day it self doth call to it; even as on a solemn day of humiliation men ought to be more affected and deeply humbled than on other days (though daily they should repent and be humbled) because that day is so | lemnly set apart for it; so ought our worship to be more intense and solemn this day suitable unto it, wherein we are, as it were, dyeted for insisting and persisting in duties of worship; where as these duties in this respect, and in comparison, are on other days, but as starts, worship is here some way the only work of that day.
6. There would be more heavenliness and spiritual sence breathed after that day in the frame of the heart; it would be near God, and the work of the day would be delightsome and sweet, the Sabbath would, as it is Isaiah 58. be cal | led a delight, and we would endeavour as it is Heb. 4. to enter into his rest, to pass through the outward rest into his, to be within his chambers, yea even in his arms, as it were, all that day.

7. On the Sabbath, there should be a greater sense of divinity in our holiness, a majesty that is evident in our conduct, resembling the Sabbath itself and the God of the Sabbath. We should rejoice in God on that day, seeking to have our hearts specially warmed in the exercise of love towards Him and to be abundantly engaged in praising Him. Our entire worship should be directed towards the honour and glory of God as its immediate goal, more so than on other ordinary days where our prayers and worship may be more focused on our own needs. On the Sabbath, God's honour is the primary focus, both inwardly in our hearts and outwardly in the nature of our worship. This is how we make the Sabbath of the Lord honourable, by honouring and glorifying Him in it, as described in Isaiah 58. There is a sense of special majesty in the worship of that day, as it is wholly dedicated to the extraordinary singleness of praising God, just as His name is sanctified in heaven by angels and perfected saints. Therefore, it is fitting to begin the Psalm of Praise for the Sabbath day, such as Psalm 92, with the words, "It is good to give thanks to your name," as these duties further His praise in a particular manner on that day.
8. All of these aspects encompass both our words and thoughts. Nothing should hinder them; all our words and thoughts on that day should be dedicated to God in a special manner. We should spend ourselves as belonging to Him and strive to have a heavenly perspective, making an attempt to experience the exercise of glorified saints in heaven. The Sabbath should serve as a glimpse of that eternal Sabbath and rest in the presence of God, where our words and thoughts are wholly His.

The fourth way to consider the sanctification of the Sabbath is in a positive sense, focusing on the specific duties that should be performed on that day. These duties include all forms of immediate worship, whether they are internal or external. Internally, this involves engaging in meditation, self-examination, heartfelt prayers (whether brief or extended), and genuine sorrow for sins. Externally,

it entails vocal prayers, singing of Psalms, reading the Scriptures and other religious books, and listening to sermons. These duties can also be categorized as either private or public. Privately, individuals and families may read the Word, discuss its meaning, review sermons, and pray together. Publicly, it involves participating in the prayers and praises of the congregation, listening attentively to the reading and exposition of the Word, attending sermons, partaking in the sacraments when administered, and joining in solemn acts of repentance and thanksgiving when appropriate or convenient on the Sabbath. Alongside these duties, it is also fitting to engage in acts of generosity by setting aside and giving to the poor according to one's ability and as God blesses, even though it is not a duty of immediate worship.

The fifth way is to consider the sanctification of the Sabbath comprehensively, before it arrives, during its occurrence, and after it has passed.

1. The night before (without neglecting a suitable remembrance throughout the week), remember to:
 - Leave worldly business in a timely manner, as it greatly encroaches upon the Sabbath. It is common for people to work longer on the night before the Sabbath than on any other night of the week, as if trying to gain a day of rest from Saturday night through Monday morning.

Instead of idly spending the time after leaving work, engage in endeavors to:

- Divert the mind from other tasks, not only physically but also mentally, and prepare the heart to be in a lively state. Focus on the tasks and duties of the coming day, and strive for suitability to them. If you wonder what it means to be suitable, the answer is:

- Strive to approach the Sabbath as if you were about to meet God, treating it as a visible and solemn encounter, entering into a sacred union with Him.
- Seek to resemble Heaven and in some way imitate God, as if you have already entered into His rest and have ceased from your own works.
- Consider it as if you were facing your own mortality and stepping into eternity. This rest should remind us of that, and it was and still is specifically appointed (although without ceremony) to remind us of God's act of setting us apart for Himself, so that we may rest eternally with Him.

Then, 3. to further this preparation, reflect on the past week and strive to resolve any lingering issues before the Sabbath arrives. Ensure that all past quarrels have been settled, so that there are no ongoing disputes to begin the Sabbath with.

2. We would engage in solemn private prayer, dedicating more time to it than on other days, with persistence and specific petitions related to the day, approaching it with utmost seriousness.
3. We would examine our hearts to see how we left them the night before and strive for clarity in our relationship with the Lord, maintaining or renewing it as necessary.
4. We would avoid spending too much time on dressing or adorning our bodies, or making excessive preparations. Since the entire day is to be devoted to worship (as we have previously explained), a portion of it should be set aside for private reading, and even for secret praise, thanksgiving, and singing, which are fitting exercises for that day, as indicated in the aforementioned Psalm for the Sabbath day.

5. If you are the head of a family or live in fellowship with others, it is important to gather the family together in a solemn manner, with each member participating. Here, prayers and other religious duties should be multiplied, following the ceremonial doubling of sacrifices on the Sabbath under the Law. In secret, in families, and in public, there should be more devotion on that day than on other days.
6. Care and oversight should be taken, as far as possible, to ensure that no one in the community neglects secret or private duties, or abstains from public worship. Each person should encourage and spur one another on, especially those in leadership positions, to engage in the appropriate sanctification of the day in all its duties. Additionally, it should be ensured that no one in the family unnecessarily stays at home from public worship or is absent from family worship.
7. Arrive at public worship in a timely manner (so as not to be discomposed by haste), dressed modestly (it is shameful to see how some come in flashy attire on the Lord's day), and walk with gravity. Be cautious and deliberate in your words, ensuring that they are spiritually uplifting and appropriate. Watch over your eyes so as not to be distracted by worldly things or thoughts, and especially guard your hearts, keeping them in a spiritual frame.
8. When you enter the place of public worship, if you arrive early, remain vigilant, and become even more watchful as the service approaches. Temptations will be ready to divert or disturb your focus. Offer frequent short prayers in reference to various matters, essential for attaining and maintaining composure.
9. When public worship begins, strive to be present, like Cornelius in Acts 10, actively participating in prayer and praise, attentively listening to what God has to say, receiving it, storing it in your heart, being appropriately affected by it, and resolving, by God's

grace, to put it into practice. Remember that true blessedness lies in not only hearing the word but also doing it. Approach these activities with delight, aiming towards the desired outcome of the ordinances, as mentioned earlier in relation to the second commandment.

10. When the initial part of public worship concludes, do not let your minds become worldly. Depart reverently, finding solace in God, keeping the convictions, exhortations, directions, and instructions that you have encountered in your thoughts. Meditate on them rather than engaging in idle conversation or turning your attention to non-spiritual topics that do not contribute to edification.
11. As soon as you can, go into a private place and seek to establish and strengthen the connection between God and yourself. Let that be your first task, and use the time between the different parts of public worship until you return to be spent in a manner befitting the day and its purposes.
12. When all the public worship is over, follow the previous tenth direction. Take some time alone to reflect on your conduct in public, and also consider what good you have gained from the day. If you have noticed any mistakes, neglects, or shortcomings (which, with careful examination, will likely be revealed), humble yourself, seek forgiveness through Christ, and resolve, with God's grace, to improve in those areas. Consider what was said and, like the noble Bereans in Acts 17, put it to the test by examining the cited or discussed Scriptures. Strive to have your heart deeply affected by them in private.
13. Then gather your families and come together after seeking God in secret. First, inquire from one another what you remember from the day's teachings so that, by pooling your memories, you can assist and remind each other. Secondly, do this not merely to repeat the words but to ensure that the doctrines and their

applications are firmly grasped and that you are personally impacted by them. Therefore, incorporate other duties such as reading, singing, and spiritual conversations as the occasion allows, accompanied by prayer to God before and after. Continue in these activities until you once again retire in private to conclude the day as you began it.

14. Engage in acts of charity, generously contributing according to your ability and providing assistance to those in need, as you become aware of their circumstances. Make inquiries about such matters.
15. Strive to have your heart in the right frame of mind as you close the day. Reflect on your behavior throughout the day, and be cautious not to go to sleep with unpardoned guilt or without experiencing some special fruit from the day's duties. Do not be hasty to retire earlier that night than on other nights, with the intention of being at work earlier the next day. Such a mindset reflects a weariness of the Sabbath and a longing for it to end, which the Lord condemned long ago (Amos 8:5). Instead, aim to go to sleep with thoughts as you arose, entrusting yourselves into God's care, with regard to the eternal Sabbath that is to come.

When the Sabbath is over and the next day comes, do not instantly discard all thoughts of it. Begin your work as if you have just ended the Sabbath, being cautious not to let the sense of it fade away. Strive to retain the impact and impression of the Sabbath in your conduct throughout the week. Especially be mindful not to carry the guilt of Sabbath transgressions into your daily tasks. Make every effort to have that guilt removed and, throughout the week, keep one eye on the Sabbath that has passed and another on the Sabbath that is approaching. Let the reminder to remember the Sabbath or the Lord's day and keep it holy resound in your ears. Nourish your souls throughout the week in preparation for communion with God in the duties of the upcoming Sabbath.

It will now be easy to identify when this commandment is transgressed (which was the sixth way we discussed in considering the sanctification of the Sabbath, either positively or negatively). This is done by committing anything contrary to the rest or sanctification of the Sabbath, by neglecting any of the required elements for its proper observance, or by having an unsuitable frame of heart in performing the required duties.

To further understand the weight of this commandment, let us consider its reasons, how it is explained, and how it is emphasized. This is done by establishing its fairness and scope (verse 9-10) and by urging its observance based on God's example.

Regarding the first reason, verse 9 states, "Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work." These words can be understood in several ways. First, as a generous concession, indicating that although all days belong to the Lord, He has granted six days specifically for us to complete our work and labor. Therefore, it is only fair to give Him the seventh day in return. It is a small offering to return a seventh day after having six at our disposal. Second, these words can be seen as a restriction, signifying that all necessary work should be done within the six days, but none on the seventh. Third, it can be viewed as a command through which God distributes our time, designating six days for our work and the seventh for His. Thus, these words discourage idleness and command lawful diligence during the six days, which we believe is implied here.

1. God is not designating specific idle time for us, but rather instructing us to dedicate our time to both our own lawful works and His work. It is unreasonable to think that He gives us six days for idleness. Therefore, our lives should be spent on matters that directly concern ourselves or God. The purpose of this command is to allocate our time between these two priorities, and whatever time is allotted for each implies an intention to utilize it for that specific purpose.

2. This interpretation is supported by the contrasting aspect. The six days are meant for our work just as the seventh is meant for God's. It goes beyond mere permission. If the negative aspect of the command, "thou shalt not work," is imperative, then the positive aspect, "six days shalt thou work," can be understood similarly.
3. God's example reinforces this understanding, as we are called to follow His example not only in resting on the seventh day but also in working during the six days, just as He did.
4. Working during the six days serves as a means to facilitate and prepare for the sanctification of the seventh day. By attending to our tasks and responsibilities, we create more freedom to rest on the seventh day. On the other hand, idleness often leads to sin and can tempt us to break the Sabbath, creating a desire for it to pass quickly. This passage reproves idleness and commands diligence, as avoiding idleness and practicing diligence enable us to give God His due on His designated day.
5. Similar to the eighth commandment, "Thou shalt not steal," where idleness can lead to stealing and hinder acts of charity and appropriate diligence in our lawful pursuits, this command encompasses both aspects. Diligence prevents one from falling into temptation and facilitates charitable deeds and suitable diligence in our work. It is not uncommon for the same sin and duty to be forbidden and commanded in different commandments based on various considerations. This interpretation aligns well with the words and purpose of this command.
6. Finally, considering God's wise and benevolent design, our labor is commanded to enhance the enjoyment and refreshment of His rest for us.

The tenth verse contains three elements for clarification. Firstly, it emphasizes that the seventh day is exclusively reserved for the Lord. It belongs to Him, is set apart by Him, and is intended for His purposes. Secondly, as a consequence of this ownership, the day should not be used for any of our own works, not even the smallest task or activity. No work, word, thought, or deed of any kind is permitted, except in certain exceptional cases. Thirdly, this requirement applies to all individuals in various relationships and positions, including parents and children, masters and servants, and so on. It extends to oneself, as well as to those under one's care and responsibility, such as sons, servants, strangers, and even animals. Although animals cannot sanctify the day in the same way as humans, this serves as a reminder of the master's responsibility to ensure their rest as well. God commands the complete cessation of one's own work on the Sabbath and expects a solemn observance of the day. The phrase "all within thy gates" not only refers to masters and those within their households, but also to magistrates, governors, and all within their jurisdiction. It signifies their responsibility to ensure the sanctification of the Sabbath, and if anyone under their authority violates it, it becomes their sin for failing to prevent or correct it. Nehemiah understood the significance of this command when he exercised his authority not only in dealing with the native nobles but also in confronting strangers to prevent them from desecrating the Sabbath.

From this, we can infer two points. Firstly, idleness is a sin, and those who are not diligent in fulfilling their responsibilities and duties in a lawful calling throughout the six days of the week will find it difficult to truly worship and honor God on the seventh day. It is often observed that such individuals are lazy and careless on the Sabbath, treating it no differently than any other day, except perhaps for attending church.

Secondly, it is evident that human, whether ecclesiastical or civil, appointments of fixed days for worship that extend throughout the entire day, in addition to the Sabbath, do not align with this

commandment that allows for six days of labor. While it is true that God could sovereignly impose limitations, once He has granted liberty (even if by concession), who can impose further restrictions?

Regarding days, we establish the following four points:

1. No day can be solemnly set apart for any creature; hence, the observance of saints' days is unlawful. The Sabbath or day of rest belongs to the Lord alone. It is a unique act of worship directed towards Him, as He has divided time between His worship and our work. Even if people were to keep the day but alter the worship, it would be a misappropriation of something that was never commanded, leading to offense. Similarly, retaining other elements in worship that have been abused and are unnecessary is also offensive.
2. No one has the authority to institute a day, even to the true God, as part of worship in a way that binds consciences or equals it with the Sabbath. Sanctifying and blessing a day is a royal prerogative that belongs exclusively to God.
3. Even those days claimed to be set apart for God, but not as part of worship, cannot be imposed as constant and regular observances (like anniversary days and feasts) because God has given six days for work according to His ordinary rule, unless there are extraordinary circumstances that require a deviation from it.
4. However, in exceptional cases, such as occasions of humiliation, joy, or thanksgiving, days may be set apart for God without violating the principles mentioned above. Just as we may work on the Sabbath in extraordinary times, even though it is not allowed under normal circumstances. This time allocation serves as the ordinary rule, but it allows for exceptions in extraordinary situations.

Furthermore, we understand that masters and parents have a special responsibility to oversee the worship of God within their own families and especially in relation to the sanctification of the Sabbath. There is a unique communion in worship among the various members of a family.

We understand that magistrates and all those in positions of authority have a responsibility to restrain vice and ensure the performance of outward duties, particularly those related to the sanctification of the Sabbath. They should not only abstain from certain behaviors and fulfill their own obligations, but also oversee those under their authority to observe the ordinances of religion and honor the Sabbath. It is just as scandalous and sinful for a magistrate to neglect his duty in ensuring the sanctification of the Sabbath and the practice of religious ordinances among those he governs as it would be if he personally engaged in such sins or disregarded the ordinances and broke the Sabbath himself or allowed his family to go without the worship of God. After all, those under his jurisdiction are within his gates, and he is accountable for them. He is appointed to govern for the sake of God and their spiritual well-being. He should be a deterrent to evildoers and an encouragement to those who do what is right. It is the duty of individuals, according to their positions and responsibilities, to act on behalf of God and the good of others. However, this should not be seen as coercing or forcing consciences. Rather, it is the exercise of the power that God has entrusted to them to ensure that people fulfill their duties and refrain from dishonoring God. Punishment is administered if they do otherwise, and in this regard, the magistrate does not bear the sword in vain.

The second and main reason is given in verse 11, where this commandment is further emphasized in three ways. Firstly, God's example is presented. He worked for six days (although He could have created everything in one day) and rested on the seventh, not before it. This pattern is intended for men to follow, as God intended it for their imitation, as stated here. God's rest on the seventh day is not absolute and all-encompassing, as He continues to work through

His providential acts of sustaining, preserving, and governing His creation and their actions. However, all things necessary for the completion of the world were made and finished during that time. Hence, by observing this pattern, we should ensure that all our necessary works are done and completed within the six working days so that we can rest on the Sabbath, just as God did.

The second way this commandment is emphasized is through God's blessing of the Sabbath day. When it says God blessed the Sabbath day, it should be understood not simply in relation to the day itself, as the day cannot receive a blessing, but in regard to those who are true observers of it. God blesses the Sabbath day to them and blesses them in it. This blessing can be understood in three ways:

Firstly, it means that the rest of that day will not hinder them in their work throughout the week. Their labor will be blessed so that they will not suffer any loss by observing the Sabbath. This is similar to how the Lord blessed the seventh year, the year of rest, and ensured that His people did not lack anything even though they rested. It is likely that if we were to compare those who conscientiously sanctify the Sabbath with those who think they gain by breaking it, we would find at the end of the year that the truth of this blessing is evident.

Secondly, God has set apart that day for a spiritual blessing and the communication of it to His people. Just as the bread and wine are blessed in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper to be a means of conveying spiritual blessings to worthy receivers, the Sabbath day is designated for the reception of such blessings. Isaiah 56 and Psalm 92 speak of this spiritual blessing.

Thirdly, God will abundantly manifest His gracious presence and multiply His spiritual blessings upon those who duly observe the Sabbath, more so than on other days when He is also sought. Since there is a double worship on this day, both in terms of the duty performed and the day itself, there will be a double blessing beyond what is experienced on other days. This is similar to how prayers

offered in and towards the temple, which was a separate place appointed by divine command, received a blessing that surpassed prayers in other locations. We see a parallel in how Christ blessed the loaves and fishes, multiplying them to feed far beyond their ordinary quantity. Likewise, the blessings of service on the Sabbath day increase as it is faithfully observed. This highlights the connection between overall spiritual growth, grace, piety, and obedience to this command, particularly in the diligent sanctification of the Sabbath. It also sheds light on why so few make progress in godliness, as they fail to properly keep the Sabbath holy as they should.

The third way this commandment is emphasized is through God's hallowing or sanctifying of the Sabbath day. God sanctified it by appointing it for holy purposes and setting it apart from other days. The inference of this hallowing points to the reason or purpose for which God did it, which is to provide an example for men to imitate and to bind this duty upon them, not only through His command but also through His own example.

If we ask why God wants a day to be set apart for holy exercises in addition to other days, we can provide several reasons. Firstly, it is fitting that God is acknowledged as the Lord of our time by reserving this tribute to Himself. Secondly, because human understanding is finite and corrupted, we cannot intensely focus on both spiritual and earthly matters simultaneously or at the same instant. Even Adam in his innocence could not do so. Therefore, the Lord graciously set apart a day to assist mankind in this matter. Thirdly, it is to teach humans that their primary purpose is to commune with God and to live in His presence. They should order their affairs throughout the week in such a way that the Sabbath can be duly sanctified and be a time of sweet soul-reposing communion with Him. Fourthly, it reveals to man where his true happiness lies, which is in walking and conversing with God and participating in His worship. This is his rest. Fifthly, it demonstrates the excellence of religion and the works of piety, or God's worship, compared to worldly and earthly pursuits. For Adam in his innocence, abstaining from his labor for the worship

of God was a Sabbath, representing spiritual rest and ease, which stands in stark contrast to the ordinary perspectives of those in the world.

Now we understand the magnitude and seriousness of the sin of breaking this commandment and the importance of treating this day with care and reverence.

Firstly, it is a commandment of the first table of the law, and therefore, in some respects, breaking it is even more significant than committing acts such as murder, adultery, or theft. It is encompassed within the first and greatest commandment.

Secondly, among all the commandments, particularly those of the first table, the religious observance of the Sabbath is emphasized with greater force through numerous reasons and detailed explanations. This is because all the other commandments are, in a way, dependent on this one, and obedience to them is often aligned with the same readiness as the day is devoted to God's service. The vitality of all the commandments is sustained by the proper observance of the Sabbath. When people are lukewarm in observing the Sabbath, they tend to be lacking in their adherence to the other commandments as well. Furthermore, the Sabbath is a true test of one's love for God. It reveals whether one takes greater delight in God's company and service or in worldly pursuits. It serves as a notable indication of one's spiritual state and disposition. How individuals habitually spend their Sabbaths reflects their overall character and devotion.

Thirdly, the violation of this commandment carries significant aggravations. Firstly, it goes against reason and fairness, considering the many good reasons God has given for its observance. Secondly, it exhibits ingratitude, for the Sabbath itself is a mercy bestowed upon us. Indeed, it is a great blessing to have the privilege of spending an entire day each week in worship and communion with God. Thirdly, it contradicts love. The Sabbath has been instituted by God's love,

and in response, our love should be expressed in a special manner towards Him on this day. Fourthly, it is an act of cruelty against oneself. By breaking the Sabbath, we deprive ourselves of the special blessings that come with its faithful observance. A properly kept Sabbath brings about holiness and a closer relationship with God. It fosters conformity to Him and facilitates communion with Him. Hence, it is particularly applicable here that those who sin against this commandment are sinning against and forsaking their own mercy.

Fourthly, no sin reveals greater overall insensitivity and, when particularly flagrant, it signifies a very sinful and somewhat atheistic mindset, as can be observed from the example in Nehemiah 13.

Moreover, fifthly, Sabbath-breaking gives rise to and fosters other sins. It leads to a habituation of sinning and a hardening of the heart against conviction. Those who neglect the sanctification of the Sabbath often become morally lax and prone to scandalous sins. The Sabbath, being a catalyst and nurturer of all duties, serves to unite the two tables of the Law. It is not uncommon to hear individuals who have fallen into gross misconduct and scandalous behavior (some even ending up on scaffolds or gallows) attributing their downfall to Sabbath-breaking as a significant contributing factor. This sin breeds defiance against conviction and formality in private worship, eventually leading to a complete abandonment of spiritual obligations.

Sixthly, no sin receives sharper convictions and faces sadder judgments than transgressions against this commandment. When individuals are deeply convicted of their sins, particularly in moments of death, whether natural or violent, sins against the Sabbath commandment are often among the foremost offenses they express and acknowledge. The disregard for the Lord's Sabbath resulted in the burning of Jerusalem with fire (Jeremiah 17:27). In Ezekiel 20, 21, and 24, severe punishments are threatened, not only in temporal matters but also in spiritual plagues to which they are

given over. It is worth noting that a man was stoned to death for gathering sticks on the Sabbath (Numbers 15:32-36). Similarly, in Exodus 16:28 and Ezekiel 22:8, the Lord considers Sabbath-breaking as a rejection of His commandments and laws, as well as a despising of His holy things. How is it possible for a person to be well and find delight who breaks the Sabbath?

If someone were to ask whether the breaches of the fourth commandment are greater sins than the breaches of the commands of the second table, and if God will severely avenge them, we provide the following answer (while keeping in mind that sins of a similar nature should be compared, meaning sins of presumption with sins of presumption, and sins of infirmity with sins of infirmity):

We affirm that a presumptuous sin against the fourth commandment, even if it is as trivial as going unnecessarily to the door or gathering sticks, is a greater sin than a presumptuous murder, because it directly strikes against God. And a sin of infirmity against the fourth commandment is greater than a sin of infirmity against the sixth commandment. However, we acknowledge that a presumptuous murder is a greater sin than a sin of infirmity against the fourth commandment, because the audacious and deliberate manner of sinning, even in a comparatively lesser matter, directly defies God and carries an additional high level of aggravation. This is in addition to the inherent gravity of the sin itself. While it is true that our judgments and punishments for presumptuous Sabbath-breaking, though still significant sins as mentioned earlier, are often less severe under the Gospel. Even among the Jews, it was not ordinary to stone those who profaned the Sabbath in a presumptuous manner. However, it would be incorrect reasoning to conclude that because punishments for transgressions of the first table are not executed as strictly as those for transgressions of the second table, transgressions of the second table are therefore greater sins than transgressions of the first table. Such reasoning would risk prioritizing the commands of the second table over the laws or commands of the first table. It is important to note that temporal

punishments are influenced by the preservation of peace and order in civil societies. Therefore, the measurement of the greatness or smallness of sins in the sight of God and in relation to His righteous and absolute judgments should not be based on these temporal measures. Instead, we should inquire about what God has done, will do, and what sinners can expect from Him. While human judgments may sometimes overlook or dismiss these sins, God often takes notice of them and brings about afflictions even in this life. Moreover, if sinners do not repent, they will face eternal consequences in the future.

In conclusion, we exhort, beseech, implore, and charge all of you, as in the presence of God, who is a strict punisher of transgressions, to be vigilant against the sins that violate this commandment. Specifically, be cautious of the following:

1. Neglecting to prepare for the Sabbath or failing to remember its sanctity. Many profane the Sabbath even before it begins, in various ways.
2. Allowing worldly and carnal thoughts to dominate your mind, and having a common mindset that is focused solely on your own circumstances. Instead, strive to go beyond that and be deeply moved by God and His wondrous works of creation and redemption. Offer Him praise for His marvelous goodness on this day. Unfortunately, there is often a lack of genuine delight and praise in His worship, even on His sacred day.
3. Engaging in unedifying conversations, discussing trivial matters such as current news, health concerns, and other topics that are not necessary for the day.
4. Failing to derive spiritual benefit from the preaching of the Gospel and not growing in knowledge and practice. Many

Sabbaths are profaned in this way, with few people receiving or seeking the blessings that come with it.

5. Engaging in activities such as going to fields and visiting neighbors to save time on other days of the week, under the notion that there is more to accomplish then. By doing so, you not only hinder your own spiritual growth but also influence and tempt others to follow your example. It shows a lack of regard for duties in your family or personal devotion, or perhaps neglecting both to a significant extent. If you were conscientious about these matters, you would find less time for unnecessary outings. Reserve another day for recreation. If you claim to have other things to do on that day, ask yourself, do you have nothing to do on the Sabbath? Are you taking more boldly from God's day than from your own? Is sacrilege less significant than taking what belongs to you? Consider the consequence if everyone were to behave in the same manner. What would our Sabbath day become? A remarkable word in Exodus 16:29 states that on the Sabbath, no one was allowed to go out of their place. Though it does not restrict acts of piety, necessity, or mercy, as we discussed earlier, it does suggest a restraint regarding leisurely strolls and visits.
6. Choosing to sit far away in the church where one can barely hear, deliberately allowing for private conversations and discussions unrelated to worship. By doing this, individuals show little intention to benefit spiritually. It is as if they keep the appearance of attending church yet are guilty of profaning the Sabbath. Many also fall asleep, become mentally disengaged, and resemble lifeless statues within the church.
7. Allowing young children and boys to run around, play, and make noise, and permitting servants to wander about. This responsibility falls on the shoulders of magistrates, ministers, elders, masters, and parents, who should diligently employ appropriate measures to correct and prevent such abuses, and

discipline those who persist in such behavior. Pay close attention, especially when few people speak up or take a stand against these sins.

8. Avoiding idle loitering and sleeping excessively on the Sabbath. Idleness is a sin on any day, and it should be even more diligently avoided on this day.
9. Taking little care to sanctify the Sabbath when away from home or when not attending one's own congregation or being in one's own house, or lacking someone to provide oversight. Many take undue liberty in this regard, and there are numerous complaints. Brethren, does the Sabbath not require the same strict sanctification wherever you may be?

If anyone asks for remedies to these and similar problems, I know none better than those found within the commandment itself.

First, remember. What should you remember? 1. Reflect on past failings and repent of them. 2. Keep in mind the future judgment, so that you may stand before it in peace, free from guilt, and strive to prevent any wrongdoing. 3. Remember to maintain a consistent attitude of worship and devotion throughout the week, both in your private life and in your daily conduct.

Secondly, be engaged in worthwhile activities throughout the week, avoiding idleness or laziness in your specific responsibilities and in spiritual exercises. Without such diligence, it is impossible to sanctify the Sabbath fully. Therefore, do not be sluggish in your business, but be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord (Romans 12:11).

Thirdly, ensure that nothing inappropriate for the sanctity of the day is allowed, not only in actions but also in words and thoughts.

Fourthly, each person should be vigilant and mindful of others, fulfilling their respective responsibilities in ensuring the sanctification of the Sabbath.

Fifthly, take God's example in other aspects of life as a model for imitation, and by doing so, you will also be better able to imitate Him in the observance of the Sabbath.

Sixthly, strive not only for the performance of the duty but also for the blessing that accompanies it. Rely on God for the necessary strength and vitality to fulfill the duty, and approach it with joy and delight, trusting in His blessing. Recognize His immeasurable goodness in granting you the privilege of His day and its worship. Continually wait upon Him and place your trust in Him for every good thing that may come to you on this day.

The Fifth Commandment

"Honour thy Father and thy Mother, that thy days may be long upon the Land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." Exodus 20:12

Our Lord Jesus Christ, in Matthew 22:37, summarises the entire Law in these two statements, which he refers to as the two great commandments: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind," and "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." These two principles form the foundation of practical piety. The first encompasses our duty to God, which is reflected in all Ten Commandments but is particularly emphasized in the first four, as we have discussed. The second encompasses our duty to our neighbor, which is specifically outlined in the last six commandments, which we will now address. Unfortunately, many people ignorantly and wickedly perceive their duty to others as separate from their duty to God and religion. However, both have equal authority, both are encompassed in the sum of the Law, both are inscribed on tablets of stone by the Lord's own finger, and both are placed within the Ark. Therefore, we should inquire with equal earnestness about what God requires of us in relation to others as we do in relation to Himself. We should have an equally strong conscience in obeying both.

Before we delve into the fifth commandment, let us briefly address two points: 1. Why love for God is called the first and great commandment, and love for our neighbor is considered the second and similar to the first (Matthew 22:38), and 2. why the Lord has prescribed our duty towards others alongside our duty towards Himself.

Regarding the first point, consider that the authority that commands the second Table of commandments is equal to the authority that commands the first Table. The one who says, "You shall have no other gods before me," also says, "You shall not kill," and so on (James 2:11). In this sense, it is said that the second commandment is like the first (Matthew 22:39). Secondly, when we compare the content of both Tables and the immediate object of each commanded duty, we find that the duties of the first Table are greater, while the duties of the second Table are lesser. The first Table pertains more directly to religion, expressing our love for God, which is rightly called the first and great commandment, for the first four commands, the duties required are inherently acts of worship and are to be directly offered to God. They involve a direct and immediate expression of devotion and reverence towards Him. On the other hand, the duties commanded in the remaining six commands are not primarily, formally, and immediately called for as specific acts of worship towards God. However, they can be seen as consequential acknowledgments of Him and can be indirectly related to worship.

As for the second question, why the Lord has explicitly stated our duty to others in such a concise summary, alongside our duty to Himself, and has shown how each person should treat one another, we shall address it. There are six commands in the second Table and only four in the first Table, yet the Lord, in praising the duties of the second Table, has said that it is like unto the first, because He desires it to be carefully observed alongside the first. The Apostles, too, in emphasizing holiness, often cite the duties of the second Table, as seen in Luke 10:26, Matthew 5:27, Romans 13:8-10, James 2:8, 11, etc. The reasons for this may be as follows:

Firstly, to teach His people that it is His will for them to be holy in all aspects of life. Therefore, every duty is encompassed within a command, even the smallest things like eating and drinking, and whatever they do should be done for the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31, 1 Peter 1:15-16). They should strive to be holy not only in

church but also in the marketplace, in the shop, at home, and abroad; not only in prayer, but also in their daily work.

Secondly, to demonstrate the extensive nature of holiness and the level of holiness that God requires of His people. The Pharisees made a grave mistake by placing the main emphasis of religion on the performance of external duties related to the first Table. However, the Lord combines both Tables to emphasize that they must go hand in hand in practice. True holiness, in the eyes of God, cannot be attained by performing one set of duties while neglecting the other.

Thirdly, the Lord desires His Law to be a perfect rule so that His people may be perfect and thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:17). Therefore, the second Table is given to guide how we should interact with others, whether as masters or servants, and to ensure that none are left to their own discretion, but are bound by a set rule.

Fourthly, because people are prone to disregard holiness in relation to the second Table. There is a certain fear of God regarding the duties of the first Table, preventing them from completely neglecting prayer and hearing the Word. However, they may show little or no regard for loving their neighbour or demonstrating acts of mercy, as seen in the example of the Pharisees.

Fifthly, it is equally necessary for Christians living together, for their existence, well-being, and mutual thriving, that they fulfill their duties towards one another as commanded. How can people live harmoniously in a family or any other community if they do not fulfill their obligations towards one another? Neglecting these duties would result in a divided household or community, which cannot endure.

Lastly, the Lord desires to have a clear and compelling basis for holding those accountable who disregard these commands and live in envy, malice, oppression, etc. None can claim ignorance of these

sins, for the Lord has shown what is good in Micah 6:7, "He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" He begins with the duties of the second Table to close their mouths, in case they should claim ignorance of how to be holy in these matters. The Lord can say that He has clearly instructed them.

For these reasons, and others similar to them, the Lord has provided such specific commands and has attached His authority to the commands of the second Table, just as He has to those of the first. This is so that we may place greater importance on them and recognize their significance in our lives. We are called to uphold both our duty to God and our duty to others, knowing that they are inseparable and equally essential in our pursuit of holiness. Let us, therefore, diligently follow these commandments, treating our fellow human beings with love, justice, mercy, and kindness, just as we devote ourselves to the worship and obedience of our Heavenly Father. In doing so, we honor the Lord's perfect and complete Law, and we contribute to the harmonious functioning of our families, communities, and society as a whole.

From the Connection of the two Tables, we may observe these three generals, first, That there is no part of a mans conversation in reference to his walk with others as well as God, what ever be his Calling or Station, but he ought to be Religious and holy in it; God hath directed men how to carry in all things. 2. That it is a necessary part of Religion in respect of the command of God enjoying it, and in order to our thriving in holiness, to be conscientious in duties to others, as well as in immediate duties to God, who in his Law requireth both. 3. That where kindly and true Obedience is given to the first Table, Obedience will be given to the second also, where Conscience putteth to pray and keep the Sabbath, it will also put to do duty to our Neighbour; he purposely putteth these together in the Gospel, when the Pharisees would separate them, and what God hath conjoynd let no man put asunder.

It may be asked: What does it mean to be religious in our everyday duties towards others? The answer is that while religion permeates every aspect of our lives, we can focus on a few key points. Firstly, it is necessary that the duty we perform is commanded by God. Secondly, we should approach these duties with respect and consideration for God's command. For example, a person should not merely provide for their family, but do so in a religious manner. A master should not mistreat their servants, and servants should not take advantage of their master's trust, but instead obey with reverence and humility (Ephesians 6:5, Colossians 3:22). These instructions given by the Apostle Paul to servants with heathen masters can be applied to all individuals in various callings and stations, guiding us on how to be religious in our everyday responsibilities.

In terms of the manner in which we carry out these duties, several elements are important. Firstly, our end goal should not be merely serving others, but serving the Lord and seeking His glory. We should aim to adorn the Gospel and contribute to the edification of others, recognizing that our actions should have a higher purpose than self-interest or pleasing people. Secondly, our service should be motivated by religious devotion, not driven by the desire to gain favor or approval from others. We should perform our duties in obedience to God's command, rather than solely because our masters or employers have instructed us to do so. Thirdly, our service should be carried out with sincerity and wholeheartedness, done willingly and cheerfully. Finally, we should consider the promise of reward that accompanies our faithful service, finding encouragement in the knowledge that our work is not in vain, and that we are accepted by God through Christ (Ephesians 6:8, Colossians 3:24). Therefore, even in the most mundane tasks, such as sweeping a house, Christian servants can look to the heavenly reward, just as they do in the religious duties of direct worship to God.

To help us understand the commands of the second Table, we can

turn to four Scriptures that provide guidance in this regard. The first and most important is Matthew 22:39, which instructs us to love our neighbour as ourselves. This command emphasizes the need for genuine affection towards others, opposing feelings of hatred, revenge, malice, and inward grudges. When we love our neighbour with the same warmth and care that we have for ourselves, it significantly aids in comprehending and fulfilling all the duties outlined in the second Table.

The second Scripture is Matthew 7:12, commonly known as the Golden Rule: "Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them." This rule of general equity stands in opposition to partiality and self-centeredness, which undermine the proper execution of the duties outlined in the second Table. It applies universally to interactions with all individuals and in various contexts, including buying and selling, relationships between spouses, neighbours, masters and servants, and so on.

The third Scripture is Philippians 2:4, which advises us not to solely focus on our own interests but also to consider the concerns of others. This is a notable manifestation of love, not only wishing well for our neighbours but actively seeking and promoting their welfare. It opposes selfishness and indifference towards the well-being of others, especially when we are already content with our own circumstances.

By following these scriptural principles of love, equity, and concern for others, we can better understand and faithfully fulfil the duties outlined in the second Table of the Law. They guide us in treating our neighbours with kindness, fairness, and a genuine desire for their well-being, reflecting the love and care that God calls us to exhibit in our interactions with others.

The fourth Scripture is Romans 12:10, which instructs us to be affectionate towards one another with brotherly love and to honour one another. We are encouraged to genuinely show kindness and

affection to our neighbours, not merely through empty compliments, but with heartfelt sincerity. James refers to this as fulfilling the Law, and the Apostle John describes it as both an old and a new commandment. These common acts of love and kindness hold more significance in our religious devotion than many realize, surpassing mere knowledge, speculations, and empty notions. However, it is evident that we often fall short in these everyday duties that are within our reach.

Now we turn to the fifth commandment, which serves as the first commandment of the second Table. It consists of both a precept and a promise. In fact, the Apostle Paul refers to it as the first commandment with a promise in Ephesians 6:2. There are two possible reasons for this designation. Firstly, it may be because it is the first commandment that includes a specific promise, as the promise mentioned in the second commandment is general and applicable to all the commands. Secondly, it could be because it is the first commandment within the second Table, which is often emphasized in the New Testament when discussing duties between individuals. Even though it is the only commandment in the second Table that has an explicit promise, it is not unreasonable to understand it as the first commandment of the second Table. The mention of the promise serves to emphasize the importance of obeying this commandment. This is the intention of the Apostle in urging its observance.

In the precept, we are instructed to consider the object, which is our father and mother, and the duty, which is to honour them. Firstly, concerning the object, it should be noted that this command encompasses the duty we owe to all our relatives, regardless of whether they are superior, inferior, or equal to us. This is evident from Christ's summary of the second Table, including this command, in the comprehensive statement, "Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thyself." Therefore, our neighbour in general is the object of this command, as well as the other commands, encompassing all the acts of honour that everyone owes to one another, regardless of their

position. Every individual is called to show honour and respect to others. This is exemplified in Ephesians 5:22, where wives are urged to show honour towards their husbands, and in 1 Peter 3:7, where husbands are called to honour their wives. These instances must be included in our understanding of this command. Thus, the terms "father and mother" should be broadly understood, representing all types of relations in a figurative manner.

Secondly, the term "father and mother" also includes all superiors in position, whether in the Church or the Commonwealth, who are referred to as fathers in Scripture. This includes magistrates, both higher and lower, ministers, church officers, teachers, overseers, and all those who hold a position of authority. Even those who are esteemed as fathers for their learning, wisdom, grace, piety, or worldly means and outward status, as exemplified by Joseph in Genesis 45:8, or those who deserve reverence due to their age, as seen in 2 Kings 2:12, can be included under the broad category of fathers. In short, any form of eminence places someone within the realm of fathers, although they may not be fathers in the strict sense.

Thirdly, we are initially called to focus on the duties within domestic relations, such as the duties of a master towards a servant or a husband towards a wife. Then, the general conduct towards one another is addressed. Although the specific duties of parents, whether immediate or extended, towards their children or nephews are primarily intended in a literal sense, the broader concept of all related duties is included through the use of figurative language.

If the question arises as to why the mother is added in this command, the following answers can be given:

Firstly, the mother is included because, although she may not possess the same qualifications for ruling and governing children as the father, she is equally entitled to their acknowledgement and parental honour due to her labor, toil, and tenderness in their birth

and upbringing. Just as the members of the body have an excellent harmony and balance, as mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:22-24, God's wisdom is evident in balancing the greater authority of the father with the greater pains and care of the mother. This ensures that the children's duty of love, honour, and gratitude is given equally to both parents.

Secondly, the inclusion of the mother highlights that honour is not only due to the most prominent superiors or neighbours, but also to those who may have more weakness, especially the mother. This is why in the Proverbs, whenever duty towards the father is emphasized, the mother is also mentioned alongside him. This serves to remind children that they should not consider less respect to be due to the mother compared to the father. In fact, at times the mother is even mentioned before the father, as in Leviticus 19:3, "You shall fear every man his mother and his father." This is done to counteract the tendency of many to diminish their duty towards their mother. Furthermore, we are called to honor our mothers even in their old age, as stated in Proverbs 23:22, and to guard against despising them during that time, which is a common temptation. In this way, the Lord provides guidance in His Word to counteract our corrupt inclinations, which often exploit the weakest aspects of our character.

If it is further questioned why all superiors, and even all neighbours, are referred to as fathers and mothers in this command, the reasons are evident from the purpose of the command:

Firstly, it is to demonstrate that the duties outlined in this command are mutual among all relationships. It specifies the obligations of superiors towards their inferiors, teaching them how to behave as fathers to those under their authority. This highlights that the relationship entails a reciprocal bond. Therefore, this command not only guides inferiors in their duty towards superiors but also instructs superiors in their duty towards their inferiors.

Secondly, the use of the terms "fathers" and "mothers" fosters a sense of sweetness and kindness in their mutual subjection and reinforces their interdependence and corresponding duties. When subjection is given as a son to a father, and when it is expected and demanded as a father from a son, it can serve as a gentle motivation for fulfilling mutual obligations and as an encouragement to overlook weaknesses and failures. Thus, the designation of the natural relationship is utilized to establish and strengthen the positive relationship, which may not have the same binding effect on the conscience based solely on natural understanding. This is done to promote unity, understanding, and compassion in fulfilling the duties towards one another.

These considerations clarify the significance of the object of this duty.

The duty called for in this command is honor, which encompasses both inward esteem for others in our hearts and outward expressions of this honor in our behavior. This command reveals that there is some eminence in every person, and it instructs us to recognize and honor that eminence in others. But what does it mean to honor them?

Honoring others does not merely involve superficial compliments or outward gestures of reverence. It primarily consists of the following:

1. Observing and acknowledging the outstanding qualities or characteristics in individuals, whether it be their natural abilities, spiritual grace, social standing, or other incidental factors. Even if there is nothing remarkable about a person, they are still to be honored as bearers of God's image or as fellow Christians and members of Christ's Church.
2. Holding a genuine esteem for others and regarding them as being superior to ourselves in certain respects.

3. Demonstrating love and showing affectionate reverence, as mentioned in Romans 12:10.
4. Involving obedience according to our respective positions, stemming from a willing disposition to obey. (Hebrews 13:17)
5. Extending to our thoughts and secret behavior, so that we do not despise or wish ill upon others even in the privacy of our chambers. (Ecclesiastes 10:20)
6. Including a reverent fear that should accompany our honor and respect for others. (Leviticus 19:3)

These elements encompass the concept of honoring others as prescribed by this command.

Once honor is firmly established in the heart, it is expressed in various ways:

1. In words, by speaking respectfully and reverently, addressing others with proper titles and showing deference in requests or petitions. For example, Sarah referred to her husband as "Lord" (1 Peter 3:6).
2. In gestures, by bowing, rising, maintaining silence at appropriate times, and engaging in acts of courtesy, such as greetings. Job, for instance, refrained from answering when others spoke (Job 29), and Paul instructed slaves to show respect to their masters (Titus 2:9).
3. In actions, through obedience and demonstrating respect. This is often referred to as gratitude. The command to honor parents in Ephesians 6:1 is derived from this command, which emphasizes obedience based on relational responsibilities.
4. In our resources, by contributing when it is necessary. This includes paying tribute to whom it is due (Romans 13:7) and

giving double honor to elders who govern well (1 Timothy 5:17), which aligns with the idea of honoring the Lord with one's substance (Proverbs 3:9).

5. In our prayers, by interceding for others (2 Timothy 2:1).

6. In covering their weaknesses or faults, as demonstrated by Noah's sons in Genesis 9:21-22.

The violations of this command can be easily deduced by considering the opposite of these expressions of honor and obedience. It is crucial to remember that this honor and obedience must always be given in the Lord. This means reserving the highest reverence for God, the supreme Father, and recognizing that our respect for earthly authorities is subordinate to our devotion to the Father of Spirits (Hebrews 12:9). Therefore, we must prioritize God's commands above human commands, understanding that it is better to obey God rather than man (Acts 4:19). Refusing to comply with unjust commands is not disobedience to parents but rather obedience to God, as long as it is done respectfully and in the appropriate manner.

Once again, the implications of this command are vast. It calls for two essential aspects: love and honor. Anything that opposes or contradicts these principles is a violation of this command. We should take note of the following:

1. The object of our love and respect is all humanity. We are instructed to honor all people and love the brotherhood (1 Peter 2:17). The term "neighbor" here is used in its broadest sense, encompassing all individuals.
2. We must recognize that the act of love and honor required is incredibly profound. We are commanded to love our neighbor as ourselves, which extends to great lengths.

3. This love and honor encompass every aspect of our neighbor's life, including their name, reputation, status, and well-being. Above all, it entails a love for their salvation, as their eternal welfare is of utmost importance.
4. It includes employing all appropriate means to uphold their true honor and to defend their name when it is slandered. Psalm 15 highlights the character of those who walk blamelessly, refusing to entertain malicious rumors or false reports about their neighbor.
5. However, it is essential to note a distinction between expressing love and demonstrating honor. While we are instructed to love our neighbor as ourselves, when it comes to showing respect and honor, we are to prioritize others above ourselves. This means that we should love our neighbor just as genuinely as we love ourselves (for we are also objects of our own love), but in terms of honor and respect, we are to place others before ourselves.

If the question arises as to how this can be accomplished, two inquiries are often raised: First, should we love all people in the same way and to the same extent? Second, should we truly prioritize every individual above ourselves?

Regarding the first question, we respond as follows:

1. This command requires that we love all people, without excluding anyone from our love, regardless of their character or disposition towards us. We are called to love both the good and the bad, including friends and enemies. We are even instructed to love those who hate us and bless those who curse us.
2. When it comes to the desired outcomes or the things we wish for others, our love should be equal towards all. Our love consists of desiring the greatest good for every individual. This encompasses peace with God, reconciliation through Christ, eternal life, sanctification, repentance, and all that leads to these

blessings. There is no distinction or inequality in our desires for others, nor are there different levels of heaven to be sought for different individuals.

3. If we consider the act of loving itself, it is equal in its kind. We are called to love sincerely, wholeheartedly, and with genuine affection for every person. Our love should be perfect, lacking in no aspect, towards all individuals.

Therefore, if you ask in what aspects there may be differences allowed in our love, we respond as follows:

1. Effects: The manifestations and expressions of our love can vary towards different individuals. We may pray more fervently for some than for others, and we may provide greater support and assistance to certain individuals based on the opportunities and specific relationships and callings that God has placed us in. For example, we may prioritize our own children and household in our acts of love and care. Similarly, we may pray more frequently and earnestly for those who are in greater need or who have a closer connection to us.
2. Frequency: Our love may be more frequently expressed towards some individuals than others. It is natural for our love to be more active and present in relationships where there is greater closeness and interaction.
3. Sympathy: We may feel a stronger emotional response and desire for the well-being of certain individuals, being more deeply touched by their hardships or dangers. This can result from natural relationships or from the presence of special bonds and mutual familiarity. For example, a mother may have a unique and intense love for her child, and close friends may have a heightened level of empathy and concern for one another.
4. Circumstances: Depending on the specific circumstances and needs of individuals, our expressions of love may differ. We may

desire temporal blessings for one person and temporal correction or discipline for another, always with the underlying motive of seeking their spiritual well-being.

5. Complacency and Delight: There may be differences in the degree of satisfaction and delight we experience in loving different individuals. We may find greater pleasure in loving those who exhibit more holiness or exhibit commendable qualities, whether they are believers or not. However, if someone possesses both godliness and other positive attributes, our love and delight in them may be even greater.

In summary, while the command to love all people equally remains, there are variations in the expressions and manifestations of love based on circumstances, relationships, needs, and personal qualities.

If it is asked where these differences in the effects of our love originate, we can say that they may arise from various factors:

1. Natural relations: Love and care may be heightened towards individuals who have closer familial connections or relationships.
2. Differences among individuals: The varying behaviors, personalities, and other factors of people can elicit different levels of engagement and response from us.
3. External circumstances: Factors such as acquaintance, familiarity, and specific obligations or commitments can influence the expressions of our love.
4. Favors received: We may feel a greater inclination to love and appreciate those who have shown us kindness and generosity.
5. Civil relations and interests: Social roles, associations, or shared interests can contribute to differences in the way we express our love.

6. Religious and Christian relationships: We are called to love fellow believers in a distinct manner. Our love for them is not only greater in degree but also based on their status as members of the same spiritual family, loved by God, and bearing His image. We may have a deeper delight and sense of satisfaction in loving them, and our expressions of love may take on a different form both in spiritual and practical aspects. This love for the brethren is highlighted in Scriptures like 1 Peter 2:17 and Galatians 6:10.

Regarding the difference between love for the godly and common love, it is evident from the mentioned Scriptures (Psalms 16:3, 1 Peter 2:17, and 2 Peter 1:7). The distinction lies in the following aspects:

1. Acquiescing complacency: Love for the godly involves a higher degree of delight and satisfaction compared to love for others.
2. Different account: Love for the godly is based on their being loved by God, which sets it apart from general love. It springs from a different source and has a different motive.
3. Intensity: Love for the godly should be exercised in a more fervent and passionate manner, recognizing the special concern of God for them. While good should be done to all, there is a particular emphasis on showing kindness and care to the household of faith.

The manifestation of our love even towards the godly can vary based on the extent to which God's goodness is evident in them and their conduct aligns with His ways.

If it is further asked, how we can love wicked individuals and whether their wickedness should not hinder our love for them, we clarify that we are not referring here to those who are excluded from the prayers of God's people or those who have committed the sin against the Holy Spirit. Final enemies are generally excluded from

our love. However, we are saying that other wicked individuals, in terms of their persons (while still hating their evil deeds), are to be loved in the sense previously mentioned.

Nevertheless, their wickedness may have certain effects:

1. It may hinder complacency, meaning that we cannot and should not take pleasure in their actions or enjoy their company.
2. It may affect the manifestation of love, as Christians may need to withhold or limit certain expressions of love in order to bring about shame or correction, as instructed by the Apostle Paul in 2 Thessalonians 3:14.
3. It may influence the way love is exercised, leading to seemingly contradictory actions, such as desiring and carrying out temporal consequences that are adverse or challenging for the purpose of bringing about their greater shame and humility. This can be seen in the psalmist's prayer in Psalm 83:16, "Fill their faces with shame, that they may seek thy name, O Lord." Correction or temporal punishment may be administered out of love, with a focus on their eternal welfare.

If it is then asked whether and how one should love oneself, we acknowledge that self-love is inherent to our nature. It is, in fact, a natural result of our sense of life and is closely tied to the enjoyment of various pleasures and the preservation of oneself. Our Lord Jesus Christ even pointed to self-love as a measure for the love and duty we owe to others. Self-love allows us to experience and understand God's goodness and the extent of His blessings. However, self-love should primarily be directed towards God as the source of all goodness and love. It should refer to Him as the fountain of all things, as He is the embodiment of love. Nonetheless, it is important to note that self-love can sometimes lead to excessive self-focus and disregard for others.

1. Individuals exceed in self-love when they prioritize their own desires and interests above the things of God and the well-being of others, even when those situations require preference to be given to others. This goes against the rightful order of priorities.
2. Self-love becomes excessive when it is solely focused on pursuing earthly and temporal matters, neglecting the pursuit of spiritual growth and neglecting the higher aspects of life.
3. When self-love is directed towards gratifying and indulging in sinful desires, seeking pleasure for oneself without regard for moral boundaries, it becomes corrupt and should be guarded against.

In response to the second question about self-love, we affirm that self-love, or love for oneself, is permissible when it is accompanied by certain qualifications:

1. It should be subservient and secondary to higher purposes. A person should be willing to risk and deny themselves for the sake of God's honor, the greater good of society, and the well-being of others. A righteous person, when faced with the choice, will sacrifice their own interests for the benefit of a Christian friend, the safety or spiritual growth of the godly, or the defense of Christ's cause.
2. Self-love should be directed towards spiritual growth and the pursuit of spiritual virtues. One's focus should be on personal growth in grace, maintaining a good conscience, salvation of the soul, and the mortification of sin.
3. When desiring external things, such as material possessions or provisions, it should be for the purpose of advancing the aforementioned spiritual goals. It is appropriate to pray for daily bread and other necessities, as long as they are seen as means to achieve spiritual ends. One should be willing to forego these

things when they hinder spiritual progress and desire them only insofar as they are beneficial for the pursuit of higher purposes.

While excessive self-love hinders our duties towards God and others, properly regulated self-love can enhance and align with those duties, guiding individuals in a strong yet harmonious manner.

The Command to honor our parents is given a special place as the first commandment in the second table of the Ten Commandments. It is accompanied by a promise to emphasize the importance of the duty it entails. The purpose of this commandment is to regulate the respect and honor that individuals owe to one another. It is meant to promote the proper treatment of one another, with honor being the first expression of love and the foundation for fulfilling the other commands and duties of the second table.

God, in His wisdom, considers honor and respect between individuals to be of great significance. He desires not only to provide for the security of their persons and possessions but also for the preservation of their honor and esteem. In this sense, the command to honor one another takes precedence even over commands such as not killing or stealing, which pertain more directly to physical well-being.

Despite the universal desire for respect and esteem from others, people often fall short in fulfilling this duty. The neglect and denial of honor towards one another is a common transgression, and it goes directly against the principle of love and the general equity of treating others as we would like to be treated.

Therefore, it can be understood that God has elevated this commandment above the others in the second table, backing it with a promise and stating it positively: "Honor your father and mother." This is intended to highlight that it is not enough to simply refrain from despising them; we are also required to actively honor them.

Similarly, just as it is not sufficient to merely abstain from profaning the Lord's day but also necessary to sanctify it positively. This duty is emphasized because it is a crucial element in maintaining Christian and civil fellowship, ensuring that people respect the boundaries and limits that God has established for them in their relationships.

The duty of honoring our neighbor includes five aspects:

1. Respect for our neighbor's person: This involves valuing and treating others with dignity and recognizing their inherent worth as human beings.
2. Respect for our neighbor's place: It entails acknowledging and honoring their position or role, whether it be in the family, community, workplace, or any other context.
3. Respect for our neighbor's qualifications: This includes recognizing and appreciating their abilities, skills, talents, and virtues, both natural and moral. It extends to acknowledging their character and their growth in godliness if they are believers.
4. Respect for our neighbor's external possessions: This pertains to acknowledging and honoring their external possessions or circumstances, such as wealth, reputation, or influence. It involves giving due recognition to their accomplishments or status in society.
5. Respect for our neighbor's actions: It entails showing honor to our neighbor based on their actions, whether they have done something deserving of recognition or have contributed in a way that brings benefit to the church or the community.

Honoring others differs from love in that love is a broader and more general consideration of individuals as beings capable of receiving and experiencing good. Love encompasses a genuine desire for the well-being and welfare of others. On the other hand, honor focuses

more specifically on recognizing and bearing witness to the qualities and actions that are worthy of respect in a person. It involves giving proper recognition and esteem to those who deserve it based on their character, achievements, or status.

Regarding outward expressions of honor, it is not always necessary to give explicit external evidence of honor, especially when it comes to honoring God. Internal acts of devotion, such as heartfelt prayers or worship, can be a form of honoring God. However, when it comes to honoring others, it is important not to limit honor to mere superficial compliments or empty gestures. Genuine honor should be accompanied by outward expressions, such as gestures, words, or other appropriate ways, as situations may require, to bear witness to the honor we have for them.

Honour encompasses various aspects and actions:

1. Charitable constructions of men's actions: This involves giving others the benefit of the doubt and interpreting their actions in the best possible light. It prevents us from hastily judging others as wicked, false, or graceless based on little information. Instead, it encourages us to refrain from harsh conclusions about others and to withhold negative judgments unless we have sufficient knowledge.
2. Humility: Honor includes the virtue of humility, which moderates a person's behavior and prevents them from excessively exalting themselves over others. It involves not seeking undue recognition, status, or preferential treatment, but rather willingly serving and esteeming others above oneself. Jesus exemplified this humility and taught his disciples to avoid seeking the highest positions of honor.
3. Esteem and vindication of others: Honor involves valuing and upholding the reputation and good name of others. It includes esteeming them and working to ensure that they are well-

regarded by others. It entails defending and vindicating their name when they are unjustly accused or maligned.

4. Praise: Honor includes giving commendation and recognition to others for their praiseworthy actions or qualities. It involves acknowledging and affirming the good that others have done or the virtuous qualities they possess. Praise is a way of expressing honor towards others.
5. Rejoicing in another's good: Honor entails rejoicing and celebrating the successes, blessings, and achievements of others as if they were our own. It involves genuine happiness and delight in the well-being and prosperity of others.
6. Mercy and charitable communication: Honor encompasses acts of mercy, compassion, and generosity towards others. It involves extending help, support, and communication to meet the needs of others and to promote their well-being.

These aspects of honor reflect the importance of respecting, valuing, and uplifting others in our interactions and relationships. They promote unity, harmony, and mutual esteem among individuals and contribute to the overall well-being of society.

Now all these effects of honor should be displayed according to the positions we hold and the relationships we have. It also depends on how we relate to others based on their positions and relationships, such as husband, wife, servant, master, son, father, friend, and so on. Without a doubt, showing more outward respect in these areas would greatly contribute to our heartfelt and comfortable coexistence.

These are some of the commanded duties, and the opposite vices are prohibited. One such vice is rash judging, forming prejudiced opinions based on uncertain grounds that cannot support such judgments. This can arise either from ignorance or from a malicious intent towards the person in question, which makes one more

inclined to interpret things negatively about that person and their actions compared to others. The first kind of judgment can be corrected, and the person who is at fault would desire to have it corrected. They would hold the person they had misjudged in higher esteem once the misunderstanding is cleared, just as Eli did for Hannah (1 Samuel 1:17).

The second vice is not easily removed and does not allow for means to remove it. It leaves no room for receiving information, making apologies, providing vindication, and so on.

Pride and presumption are condemned here. Pride is when someone, like Diotrophes, seeks superiority, a higher position or precedence, the first greeting, the best seat at the table, and so on. Presumption is when someone is ready to take on tasks or responsibilities beyond their abilities, as if they were more suitable and capable than they truly are. On the contrary, pusillanimity is being afraid to reach for and undertake tasks that one is capable of and called to.

Vanity or vain glory is the excessive display of our own good actions, or taking pleasure in making them known to others for the sake of receiving praise.

Ostentation is the act of showcasing the good qualities within us and pursuing what is good in a way that draws attention from others, like the Pharisees who sought their own glory in their prayers and charitable acts.

Envy is a sorrow and sadness over another person's honor, that they have received a good fortune or are being honored, followed, or respected. It is as if their honor and preference diminish one's own reputation and honor. Envy differs from fear, which is sadness over an enemy being preferred because of the potential harm and danger they may bring. Envy primarily stems from pride, as people desire to monopolize all honor and what is honorable for themselves. It is a clear manifestation of the flesh (Galatians 5:21) and a significant and destructive enemy to grace. Envy is prevalent in this hypocritical age

and often found among religious individuals, especially ministers and those with gifts. It is an ambitious disposition that desires to excel and overshadow others around them. However, it would be more Christian and fitting for someone who has been given more by God than others to humbly defer and intentionally diminish themselves in certain situations, so as not to sadden or eclipse others or draw excessive attention to oneself.

Emulation is the seeking to surpass another in esteem, not out of love for virtue, but merely out of an envious desire to surpass and undermine the reputation of that person. It follows from the previous vice.

Detraction is a vice where individuals whisper things that may dishonor another person, even if it is true. They use insinuations and seemingly respectful manners towards the person being detracted to make the smear and infamy stick. For example, they may give the person many compliments, not out of genuine respect, but to make a reproach against them more believable and easily accepted, as it comes from someone who supposedly respects and loves the person.

Contention and strife are also contrary to this command. Any action, direct or indirect, that reflects negatively on the fame and reputation of our brother is in opposition to this command. This encompasses a wide range of behaviors.

Mocking, disdain, taunting, and similar actions are clearly against this command and are prohibited by it.

There are some questions that arise from what has been said:

1. Question: Should all men be honored? Even wicked men?

Answer: 1. Wicked men, known to be such, cannot be honored as if they were righteous. Nor can any position or title, solely by virtue of its status, be attributed with the qualities of grace without guilt. This is the sin that James rebukes in James 2:1, which involves considering wealthy but wicked individuals to be more religious than

others who are not as wealthy. It is possible that there is much guilt of this sin in titles and dedications of books, where the most religious or pious are often unwarrantably included among the ranks.

2. However, there is a civil honor that can be given to them for various reasons: 1. On account of their position, if they are magistrates. "Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor" (Romans 13:7). 2. On account of their relationship, if they are fathers, mothers, etc. (1 Timothy 6:2, 1 Peter 2:17). 3. On account of their other qualifications, abilities, or for other reasons. Even on the general basis that they are human beings with immortal souls capable of grace and being restored to God's image, it is appropriate to show them honor.

2. Question: Should rich men be honored?

Answer: Riches themselves, for their own sake, are not honorable, and they cannot make the possessor honorable. However, riches can enable someone to do more good and be more useful in the church and society. Therefore, a rich person may be deserving of honor. It is important to respect a rich person as a steward entrusted with resources to be used for the honor of God and the well-being of others. When riches are well utilized for these purposes, they become beneficial, and in such cases, those who possess them should be honored. However, when riches are abused, the person becomes more contemptible. For example, David initially honored Nabal as a father and called himself his son, but when Nabal's rudeness and ill-treatment became evident, no honor was due to him nor given.

Regarding the discourse of the Apostle James in James 2:1-2, he does not simply condemn the act of showing respect to rich men. Rather, he condemns it when: 1. It is done based on religious considerations and in religious matters; 2. When there is a focus on accommodating the rich while neglecting the poor, as if the poor had no interest in the Gospel solely because they were not rich. The

combination of honoring the rich and disregarding the poor produced bad fruit. 3. James condemns it because it was done with an evil motive, namely, to flatter the rich, and he reproves those who engaged in such behavior because they were self-serving, seeking only their own advantage. 4. The acceptance of persons is condemned when rich individuals are preferred as more religious simply because they are rich, without considering that poor individuals may have more religion than them.

3. Question: What is the difference between the respect to be given to a good man and that to be given to another when both are similar in outward circumstances?

Answer: 1. In terms of outward signs and expressions of respect, there may be no difference, and both individuals may receive equal courtesy. But 2. There is a difference in the heart's testimony and respect, as seen in the conscience of others, particularly in the case of Paul with his gracious hearers. This is an approval that the person is worthy of honor, not only for their outward capacity to do good, but also for their actual dedication to utilizing that capacity for its intended purpose. This goes beyond mere outward civility.

2. There is a distinction in the respect given to the good man compared to that given to the natural man who may be in the same station. The good man, in addition to other commendable qualities, exhibits a gracious conformity to the Image of God. Therefore, he should be (or at least should be) more pleasingly delighted in than the natural man, even though they may be in the same outward circumstances.
3. Honor naturally flows more readily towards the godly, as they possess qualities that naturally attract honor towards them.

If it is asked whether a person may seek their own honor and fame, and how to do so, the answer is as follows: A person should not seek honor in the same manner as worldly individuals do, aiming to

satisfy their pride and worldly desires. Honor should not be pursued excessively or beyond one's rightful position, and it should never be pursued as the ultimate end or the most important thing. Honor is a testimony of excellence and a good name is a testimony of virtue within a person. Therefore, one should first strive for virtue itself, as it is the true and substantial good, whether or not a good name (in the eyes of others) is separate from it. However, honor can be sought in a desirable and good manner, as long as it is sought in conjunction with virtue. A good name is considered to be more valuable than great riches. The pursuit of honor should always be conducted through virtuous actions and well-doing, as flattery and deceit are never permissible. In the pursuit of goodness, one should be prepared to face both ill report and good report. Honor is to be sought in matters related to godliness, rather than in wealth, status, eloquence, or extensive knowledge. It is sought in honesty, faithfulness, and holiness. For instance, Paul rejected seeking the acclaim of being a learned or eloquent person, instead focusing on faithful, sincere, and zealous discharge of his ministry among the Corinthians. Seeking the approval and commendation of others in their consciences can be pursued with a holy ambition, but not merely in external displays of honor. It is desirable to be commended and approved in the consciences of those we live among, as Paul himself aimed for. However, this respect should always be pursued as a means to a higher end, so that all our respect may be utilized for the honor of God.

Question 5. If it is asked how and in what manner we are to pursue or seek our own honor, we can turn to what the Scripture says: "Them that honour me I will honour" (1 Samuel 2:30). Firstly, honoring God is praiseworthy and honorable in itself. The radiance of godliness and virtue, which honor God, is more brilliant than gold, more beautiful than a ruby or diamond, and more glorious than the sun's light. However, if this radiance is obscured due to human frailty or other disadvantages, or if people fail to recognize or value this worthiness due to ignorance, foolishness, or malice, the Lord takes charge of the situation. He assures us that those who honor

Him will be honored. That is why we often find in Scripture that honor is attributed to seemingly low and insignificant things, such as taking instruction, yielding to correction (even when unjust), submission to parents, humility, forgiveness, and abstaining from strife. In short, the path to honor lies in humility, the fear of the Lord, obedience, submission, and self-denial. The Lord, in His wisdom, desires honor to be His pure gift rather than something we strive for or acquire on our own.

Question 6. If it is asked how we can fulfill the part of the command that instructs us to prefer others over ourselves, it should not be universally and simply understood as if we are required to do so in every situation and towards every person. We must recognize that some individuals may be more ignorant or more wicked than us in certain practices, guilty of things from which we are free. Therefore, we are not obligated to judge against the truth. However, in some aspect, we can still prefer others. They may excel in certain virtues such as humility, sincerity, zeal, or diligence, even if they are inferior to us in other areas. They may possess qualities of goodness that we are unaware of. Additionally, we are more aware of our own faults and sins compared to theirs. We know more about the severity of our own wrongdoings than we do about theirs. Therefore, in a general sense, we can genuinely prefer others over ourselves, although there may be specific situations where we cannot give everyone precedence in everything without hypocrisy.

Now let's discuss the promise that is added to encourage the serious observance of this command. Regarding its nature, it is a temporal promise specifically applied to Israel here, but it generally applies to all, as affirmed by the Apostle in Ephesians 6:2-3. He uses the term "earth" to signify any land where God may choose for a person to reside or inhabit, not just limited to Judea.

If it is asked whether this promise should be understood without any restriction, and its fulfillment expected without limitations, the answer is as follows: While this promise may have had particular

significance in the context of the Old Testament, where the temporal rest in the land of Canaan prefigured the saints' everlasting rest, and where the manifestations of life and immortality were less clear compared to the Gospel era, which provides more explicit and assuring promises of spiritual blessings, we can still apply the promise to us today. When believers, through God's grace, obey this command, they can expect from God outward blessings that are beneficial to their spiritual well-being. They can confidently trust that whatever they possess in the world and however many or few days they may have, all will be accompanied by God's blessing and peace. They can also trust that their death will never be untimely. Even if they may seem to lack long life on earth, this will be more than compensated for by eternity in heaven. Therefore, few days on earth pose no prejudice or harm.

From the inclusion of this promise with the command, two clear conclusions can be drawn: First, there are temporal promises given to godliness. Second, a godly person has a unique right to inherit the earth that others do not possess.

If it is asked whether or not a wicked person has a right to anything in the world, the answer is as follows:

1. There is a creature-right, which means that any of God's creatures have a right to anything in His creation that is necessary for their use, when it is essential and not already claimed by another in similar need. For example, if a person is starving, they may take food for themselves or their brother (if they are in the same condition) from someone else's field when the owner cannot be found. This is to prevent death by hunger. Similarly, this principle applies to other things since all things were originally made for the use of humanity. The orderly division of land and possessions among individuals was intended to further this purpose, not hinder it. Therefore, it is permissible to make use of resources when necessary, even if they do not belong to us. God, as the ultimate ruler, has given

mankind a stewardship over creation, and He reserves the right to use it for the good of other creatures when needed. For instance, He provides for crows, ravens, and other creatures from the resources belonging to individuals.

2. There is a positive or civil right among people, where one person has a right to a particular piece of land, while another does not. Both a wicked person and a righteous person can possess these rights, and there may be cases where good people lack land or the right to it. In a civil dispute over land or any other similar matter between a good person and a wicked person, the qualifications of the individuals do not affect the validity of their rights. Leviticus 19:15 illustrates this principle.
3. There is a right by grace, which sanctifies the previous rights and enables a person not only to have a lawful claim before others but also before God. This right allows a person to enjoy the blessings of creation, visit God's presence, and partake in lawful refreshment without sinning. Job 5:24 expresses this idea. A believer and a godly person have this unique right granted by God's grace, which others, regardless of their possessions, cannot claim. It is only through godliness that one has the promise of both this life and the life to come, as stated in 1 Timothy 4:8. Therefore, it can be confidently said that godliness is truly beneficial and rewarding.

If it is asked, what advantage godly men have from these temporal promises, the answer is as follows:

1. Their advantage does not lie in constantly abounding in outward possessions. This is not the case in actuality, nor should it be expected to be so. However, they have a promise of what is necessary and useful in terms of temporal things, which wicked individuals do not have. They will lack no good thing, as stated in Psalm 84. Even though lions may suffer from hunger, those

who seek the Lord will not lack any good thing, as mentioned in Psalm 34:10.

2. They have the privilege of praying for these things as long as they are needed and can confidently expect them, approaching God in accordance with their rightful claim. It is their daily bread by allowance and promise even before they receive it, as indicated in Matthew 6:11.
3. While a non-believer cannot guarantee the continuation of their meals or even their life until the next day, a believer may anticipate the provision of necessary food. If they have nothing, they can confidently promise themselves both life and food for the following day, if it is required, even more so than a wicked person who possesses more wealth, health, and outward protection.
4. They can expect the blessing and sanctified use of what they enjoy, which others cannot.
5. They can experience peace, whether they have an abundance or a scarcity of creature comforts because they have a rightful claim to them. The scarcity of these comforts does not stem from a lack of entitlement, but rather it is God, like a wise and skillful physician, withholding food for the sake of health where there is abundance in the right measure, to be given when necessary. Therefore, in comparison to a wicked person, whether they have an abundance or lack, whether they enjoy plenty or experience scarcity, a godly person always has the advantage. This should increase our love for godliness, considering the significant advantage it brings.

Thus, to summarise, there is much more to be said about the promise attached to this command. However, delving into the specific details of all the various relationships covered by it, such as those between magistrates and subjects, church officers and members, husbands

and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, would require a lengthy discussion beyond the scope of our current undertaking. Some aspects of these relationships have already been addressed in previous sermons, particularly in the third and fourth chapters of the Epistle to the Colossians, which the esteemed author explained to the congregation during his Sabbath afternoon sermons. Many of these duties are known but unfortunately not practiced as widely as they should be. Nevertheless, in God's eyes, we are accountable only for what we sincerely desire, aim for, and strive to practice through His grace. True understanding comes to those who keep His commandments (John 13:17; Psalm 111:10).

If the general principles we have mentioned in our explanation of this command are well understood, deeply pondered, and conscientiously put into practice with the Lord's strength, they will, with His blessings, greatly assist us in fulfilling our specific duties in these various relationships. Therefore, we will refrain from providing specific details and only offer a general remark about the duties associated with these roles and relationships. It is worth noting that a serious follower of Christ and a genuinely good person can be found particularly in the faithful performance of these duties. When carried out with sanctified appropriateness and timeliness, these duties adorn the teachings of God, prevent them from being slandered, and provide a tangible testimony to the truth and reality of religion in the lives of its practitioners. Moreover, they serve as a powerful means of convicting and winning over those who do not obey the Word, as evident in passages such as Luke 3:10-14, Titus 2:5, 10, 1 Timothy 5:14, 6:1, 1 Peter 2:13-15, and 3:1-2.

Before we proceed, let's address a couple of questions that may arise:

1. Should a father love his son more, or should a son love his father more? The answer is that the son should love his father more, as the father represents more of God's authority. Similarly, the father should love his son more, as the son embodies more of

himself. Such mutual respect can outweigh each other on different grounds.

2. What if the father and the magistrate give conflicting commands? Which one should be obeyed? If the command pertains to matters within the magistrate's jurisdiction, such as where one should live or what role they should hold in the community, all other things being equal, the magistrate's command should be followed. These matters are sought by the magistrate from the individual not as a son, but as a member of the community, with the overall welfare of the community in mind. However, if the command pertains to matters that fall under the father's authority, such as whom the child should marry, the father's command takes precedence, regardless of any contrary command from the magistrate.

The aim of this commandment is to temper excessive desire for honour, to guide and regulate the giving of respect to others, and to caution against undermining the reputation of others more than their personal and material well-being. Before we conclude our discussion on this topic, it is fitting to briefly touch upon the subject of humility and its opposing vices.

The relevance of humility to this commandment and its inclusion within it can be seen in passages such as Romans 12:10 and Philippians 2:3. Humility is a necessary and beneficial virtue for Christians, deserving special attention. It can be understood in three ways:

1. In relation to God, humility should be present in rational creatures towards their Creator. Recognizing our insignificance and utter dependency on Him, we acknowledge that we are nothing and of no gain or profit to Him.

2. Humility can be considered in our interactions with others, not merely as a form of flattery or empty compliments, but as an attitude that humbles ourselves in our conduct towards them. It stems from a recognition of our own shortcomings and willingly acknowledging the superiority of others in areas where we fall short. (Philippians 2:3)
3. Humility also applies to our own selves. It keeps us grounded and restrained in our thoughts and estimation of ourselves and our possessions. It helps us to recognize our own weaknesses and limitations, as mentioned in Romans 12:3.

While the first aspect of humility is more closely associated with the first commandment of the first table, the second and third aspects, which involve moderating our thoughts, esteem, and actions in relation to others and ourselves, are encompassed within this commandment. These aspects of humility are encouraged and emphasized here, and the following points should be noted in relation to it.

1. Humility towards others differs from humility towards God due to the vast disproportion between God and His creatures. No comparison can be made between God and anything else, and it is impossible for us to benefit or profit Him (Job 25:7). However, among creatures, there can be comparisons and usefulness, which humility does not negate (Job 29).
2. Humility is not in opposition to magnanimity, boldness, and zeal. It is compatible with these qualities, as demonstrated by Christ, the Apostles, and other saints. Boldness and magnanimity, when exercised in the strength of Christ and according to proper grounds, involve venturing into what one is called to do. Humility, while causing us to acknowledge our own weaknesses, also moderates these qualities in accordance with right reason. Therefore, as long as both humility and boldness are ordered according to reason, considering the call, occasion,

object, and specific circumstances, there is no inconsistency between the two. They can coexist within the same person and at the same time.

3. From this, we understand that humility is distinct from fainting, despondency, or a timid spirit that hesitates to respond to a call for seemingly difficult actions. Humility, being a virtue that acts according to reason, is not characterized by excessive or irrational fear. In contrast, a lack of courage for truth or a cowardly disposition is condemned as a sin (Jeremiah 9:3). Examples of Moses (Exodus 4:10, 14) and Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1:6) demonstrate that even they were rebuked for some degree of this tendency. In pursuing difficult but worthy goals (which often pose the greatest challenges), two factors are important to consider. First, there is the bonum, the desirable good that one seeks to achieve, such as performing an extraordinary feat or undergoing a significant change. Humility moderates desires and designs according to one's abilities and capacity, restraining excessive ambition, covetousness, rashness, and the like, thereby offering great advantages.

Furthermore, when striving for such goals, there is the inherent difficulty that may intimidate us and cause us to falter in our pursuit of duty. Here, zeal and magnanimity serve as safeguards, sustaining individuals and preventing them from succumbing to discouragement or despondency, which would be the deficiency on the other end of the spectrum.

4. Humility, as a virtue, is distinct from mere civility and outward compliance with others. First, it arises from a conscience-driven principle, rooted in the inward recognition of our own shortcomings and an appreciation for the worth of our neighbors. Second, it is sincere and devoid of any ulterior motives to please people or any other considerations, existing purely for the reasons previously mentioned.

This grace of humility, which the moralists among the heathens were completely unaware of, sets Christianity apart. While they possessed their moral virtues as remnants of natural understanding and vague resemblances to certain graces found in the Gospel, these virtues, lacking the principle of faith, which is essential to please God, and not being directed towards the proper end— the glory of God— could not be acceptable to Him. Moreover, the scope and purpose of the Gospel far surpass what moral philosophy could offer. The Gospel aims to reconcile and save sinners through faith in Christ, making them partakers of holiness in the present and glory and happiness in the future. Thus, the Gospel, through its transformative power, replaces mere appearances of virtues with genuine graces flowing from Christ as their source and directed toward God as their true purpose. It introduces specific graces like repentance, faith, humility, and others, to which the moralists were entirely oblivious.

Regarding humility, the Gospel reveals to us the lost and wretched state into which sin has plunged us and the free and astonishing love through which we are rescued from it. In accordance with this commandment, the Gospel instructs us in lowliness and self-denial, traits completely foreign to the teachings of the ancient moralists. Christian humility is so intrinsic to the spirit of the Gospel that their characteristic is precisely the opposite— pride. These self-proclaimed self-improvers eventually became self-glorifiers to such an extent that figures like Lucretius and Seneca, on behalf of their esteemed schools of thought, attempted to elevate their virtuous man even above their gods through argumentation. The best among them would have regarded Christian humility as a base and unworthy abasement of spirit. However, they are not the only ones tainted by this vice. Pride is undeniably the downfall of those who are without God and the stumbling block for those who pursue righteousness without faith. Thus, humility is inseparable from faith, and it comes as no surprise that it is a virtue highly praised and indispensable for Christians.

1. The commands that emphasize humility in Scripture include:

- 1 Peter 5:6: "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you."
- Romans 12:3: "For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned."
- Philippians 2:3: "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves."
- James 4:6, 10: "But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.' Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you."

2. The weighty expressions used to convey humility in Scripture are:

- 1 Peter 5:5: "Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.'"
- Matthew 11:29: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."
- John 13:4-18: Jesus exemplifies humility through washing the disciples' feet.

3. The commendations of humility include:

- It reflects Christ-likeness.
- It is considered an ornament to be adorned with.
- It enables the suitable discharge of duties.
- It leads to the increase of grace.
- It is more valuable than worldly achievements, as it grants mastery over oneself.

- It is accompanied by promises of exaltation, riches, honor, and long life throughout Scripture.
- It serves as a safeguard against vices and promotes the development of virtues.

Humility prevents various evils and vices commonly experienced even by Christians, such as ambition, covetousness, curiosity, and self-confidence.

Lastly, when considering humility in relation to a person of notable abilities or high position, it prevents:

1. Disdain towards those who are inferior.
2. Disregard for the counsel of others and excessive reliance on one's own understanding.
3. Dependence on wealth and riches, avoiding the notion of superiority based on such possessions.

Moreover, there is a type of pride that arises when individuals have accomplished remarkable things. They may seek applause, hold their achievements in high esteem, and pursue personal glory. However, this pride, with all its negative characteristics, is prevented and suppressed by humility. Humility does not aspire to lofty things, but instead passes by wrongs, forgives, and thinks soberly of itself. It does not boast, but humbly acknowledges the grace at work. Humility forgets its own good deeds, attributing them to grace rather than personal merit.

In summary, humility extends to every aspect of a person's conduct as a human being and encompasses all duties related to their Christian faith. On the contrary, pride, self-conceit, and presumption infiltrate every action and are like dead flies that taint everything.

And as it is praiseworthy, it is also very necessary in many aspects. Firstly, in external matters concerning our interactions with others, it is necessary for a person's reputation and to be held in high regard. In God's righteous judgment, the proud are often despised. Secondly,

it is necessary for personal matters, such as maintaining peace with God, keeping ourselves grounded, avoiding traps and snares, nurturing communion with God, and enabling us to fulfill our duties effectively. It would make our preaching and your listening more fruitful. It would bring stability and firmness amidst the turmoil of these times, which can disturb and cause spiritual distraction and madness. It is the humble whom God gives grace to, reveals His secrets to, and grants great promises and commendations. Therefore, let us learn to be humble and modest, without aspiring to be wiser than is fitting. This grace of humility is especially needed at this time, considering the stumbling and falling of many, and its absence often precedes and predisposes one to a fall.

In conclusion, we must acknowledge that wherever pride exists, there is also an opposing humility. Pride can manifest in external things, such as wealth, social status, lineage, and employment, as well as in intellectual and spiritual matters. It can stem from one's abilities, knowledge, creativity, or experiences, where God may have made someone stand out. It can even arise from one's good deeds, in which God has used them as an instrument beyond the ordinary. There is also a prideful curiosity that drives people to seek forbidden knowledge or to venture beyond their calling, which is condemned by the Lord. In response to pride, humility serves as the opposite virtue. It humbles a person, causing them to have a modest opinion of themselves, regardless of any distinctions God has bestowed upon them. It leads them to wait for God's will to be made known in His own way, through chosen instruments, and prompts them to earnestly practice it when revealed. This stands in contrast to pride. Thus, we see both the extensive nature and the necessity of this excellent grace of humility for Christians in all stations. It is a special adornment of Christians, displaying beautiful conformity to the meek and humble Jesus.

The Sixth Commandment

"Thou shalt not Kill." - Exodus 20:13

In the fifth commandment, the Lord established the principle of humility and the importance of showing respect to one another in their respective roles and relationships. Now, He proceeds to provide more specific instructions regarding matters that are deeply significant and necessary for human beings. Firstly, He addresses the matter of preserving life in the sixth commandment. Secondly, He addresses matters related to purity and self-control in the seventh commandment. Thirdly, He addresses matters concerning one's possessions in the eighth commandment. Fourthly, He addresses matters concerning truth and, particularly, the reputation of our neighbors in the ninth commandment. Lastly, He addresses matters concerning the inner disposition of our hearts in relation to our own well-being and the well-being of others in the tenth commandment.

For understanding the command "You shall not kill," we can consider: 1. Its object, 2. Its act of killing, and 3. Its subject, which is "Thou" (referring to oneself).

Firstly, this command cannot be understood as relating to animals, as if they were not to be killed. God gave all the beasts to man for his use, including for food (Genesis 9:3). We are also permitted to eat whatever is sold in the market, for the earth and everything in it belongs to the Lord (1 Corinthians 10:25). Additionally, these commands are directed towards man's relationship with his neighbor, not towards animals. However, it should be noted that by mistreating or striking an animal, a person may still commit an offense. This can occur when the strike wrongs the neighbor to whom the animal belongs, or when there is unreasonableness in expecting the same capacity from animals as from rational creatures. It can also happen when anger and passion are unleashed towards animals,

indicating our own impotency when irrational passions control us. Finally, it occurs when there is bitterness and cruelty in the act of striking. The Lord reproved such behavior when Balaam's donkey spoke and rebuked the madness of the prophet who unreasonably struck her (Numbers 22:29). A just person, on the other hand, shows compassion towards his animals and regards their lives (Proverbs 12:10).

To better understand the object of the command, we will now address the act of killing. If we consider killing in relation to oneself, it is certainly included here. The command to love our neighbor as ourselves is the essence of all the commands of the second table of the law. Therefore, it must be understood as repeated in each of them. In the case of this command, it means not killing our neighbor more than ourselves, or preserving his life as we would our own. This implies that it is not permissible to harm oneself more than to harm others. The reasons the Lord gives to restrain us from killing others also apply to restraining us from harming ourselves in any way, including actions that harm our bodies or souls and disturb their tranquility and well-being, or actions that contribute to or hasten our own death. It is clear that if it is a sin to harm, hurt, or torture others, both physically and mentally, and to contribute to or seek their death, it is equally sinful to do these things to ourselves. Love for ourselves is the pattern by which we should love others.

We can violate this command in relation to ourselves not only through acts but also through omissions. This occurs when things necessary for the well-being and health of the body are intentionally neglected or neglected with excessive disregard for health and life.

We can also violate this command in relation to ourselves directly by intending harm to our own bodies, or indirectly by unnecessarily exposing ourselves to dangers, consuming known unhealthy food, engaging in excessive and immoderate labor, indulging in unchastity, drunkenness, and gluttony (which cause the destruction of many

more lives than the sword, as the common saying goes, "more perish by the belly than by the sword"), and in many other ways.

When considering this command in relation to others, we can understand it in reference to three aspects of life that we should strive to preserve and promote in them. Any act or omission in relation to these aspects can constitute a breach of the command.

1. There is a life of the body, and any action that harms it, whether directly through physical violence like striking, challenging, or assaulting someone, or indirectly by withholding something that could be helpful to someone in need, makes us guilty of the sin of killing in relation to their physical life. I mentioned duels under the previous category because although the pride and corruption of men often commend vain bravery and gallantry or offer excuses based on honor or self-defense, the righteous judgment of God condemns such actions as exceedingly sinful. They exhibit mental weakness, excessive passion, contempt for public laws and civil order, usurpation of the magistrate's authority, and an encroachment on God's right of vengeance, which He has expressly reserved for Himself. The acceptor of the duel, who typically shows no more restraint in their defense than there was necessity for the engagement, has no more excuse than the challenger. In effect, although the immediate cause may be attributed to the challenger, the sin is shared, and it represents a clear combination of hatred against our neighbor, contempt for the laws and authorities appointed by God, and a reckless disregard for death, judgment, and eternity, which are imminent in such encounters. How much more heroic and noble it would be for men to emulate the wise and mighty King's choice: "He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city." To heed the words of the One higher than the princes of the earth, who commands us to love our enemies, bless those who curse us, do good to those who hate us, and pray for those who mistreat us, and to confirm all by His own perfect example. Lastly, to strive

for the divine goodness that embraces both good and evil, just and unjust, and to aspire to the highest felicity and glory by being perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect. But let us proceed.

2. There is a spiritual and eternal life of the soul, and in this regard, sin brings death and kills people. Therefore, anyone who is unfaithful to others in matters concerning their souls, causing them to sin or providing sinful occasions for them to sin, becomes guilty of soul-murder. As stated in Ezekiel 3:18 and 33:6, "His blood I will require at your hands," declares the Lord to the prophet.

Men become guilty of this not only by commanding, as Saul did when he commanded Doeg to kill the Lord's priests, and David did when he commanded Joab to have Uriah killed. They also become guilty by counseling and advising, as Jonadab did to Amnon regarding his sister Tamar. They become guilty by alluring and outright tempting others, as Tamar did to Judah. They become guilty by consenting to the sins of others or in any way assisting, supporting, or encouraging them in their sins, as Saul consented to the death of Stephen and stood by keeping the clothes of those who stoned him. This can also occur in relation to false teachers, as mentioned in 2 John 10-11. Men become guilty by provoking others and inciting them to sin through reproaches, insulting speech, quarreling, and challenges to fight, and so on. Furthermore, they become guilty by setting a bad example, as David was involved in the sin of the adversaries' blasphemous reproaches through his actions. The Apostle often implies that Christians can be guilty in this way through their improper conduct in the various relationships they have. This can happen by engaging in actions that have the appearance of evil, or even by doing things that are lawful in themselves but unwise because they are done at the wrong time and cause offense. In this way, one Christian may contribute to another's stumbling and sinfully risk the destruction of those for whom Christ died, as the Apostle discusses regarding offenses even in things that are not inherently sinful. Men become

guilty by failing to faithfully warn before sin is committed, as evident in Ezekiel 3:18. They become guilty by failing to reprove after the sin is committed and allowing it to remain unaddressed, as stated in Leviticus 19:17. They become guilty by not providing a suitable and proportionate reproof in accordance with the magnitude of the sin, but rather giving a soft and gentle rebuke without demonstrating the proper indignation. This was the guilt of Eli, who, although he did not completely neglect or omit to reprove the profanity and gross wickedness of his sons, did not reprove them with the holy severity demanded and commensurate with their heinous and villainous wickedness. He did not frown upon them or deal with them firmly as he should have, as can be seen by comparing 1 Samuel 2:22-25 with 1 Samuel 3:13. Men become guilty by recklessly appointing individuals to positions for which they are not qualified or sufficiently qualified, and as a result, these individuals are likely to commit many sins, especially in the office of the ministry, as mentioned in 1 Timothy 5:22. They become guilty by not endeavoring, through all appropriate and lawful means within their power and calling, to prevent the sins of others and restrain them from committing those sins. Eli was challenged by the Lord on this account, as stated in 1 Samuel 3:13. They become guilty by promoting, teaching, and spreading heresies and false doctrines. Antichrist is notoriously and primarily guilty of this sin of soul murder, and all false teachers and seducers are guilty to a greater or lesser extent depending on the nature of the doctrine they teach and their diligence in propagating it. Likewise, all who tolerate and do not restrain them, despite their obligation to do so according to their authority, are also guilty. In these ways, and through others, men become accessory to the sins of others and thus make themselves guilty of this great and cruel sin of soul murder.

This kind of murder is widespread and prevalent, and yet it is specifically forbidden by this commandment, and its prevention is therefore necessary. It is a stronger indication of love for our neighbor to be concerned about their soul rather than their body, as the soul is more valuable. Despite false prophets, teachers, and

seducers often appearing to be most considerate of people's well-being and eager to please them, they are horribly guilty of this kind of murder.

3. There is a life of contentment, characterized by a peaceful mind and a calm spirit filled with comfort, joy, and cheerfulness. In support of this, Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 3:8, "For now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord." It is said of Jacob in Genesis 45:27 that when he heard that Joseph was alive, his spirit was revived, as if it had been dead before due to the great sorrow he experienced from the assumed death of his son. We become guilty of this sin of killing when we obstruct or disrupt our neighbor's spiritual comfort, joy, inward contentment through fear, heaviness, restlessness, discouragement, and so on. By doing so, we make their life bitter and undermine their tranquility, causing harm and hindrance. Just as Joseph's brothers were not only guilty of shedding his blood but also burdened their father and dampened his spirit, which was later revived upon hearing the news of Joseph being alive, people can be guilty of the same towards their ministers when they cause them to perform their duties with grief instead of joy, as mentioned in Hebrews 13:17.

Murder, in relation to the bodily life of our neighbor, can be either direct, such as Cain's murder of Abel, or indirect, as Saul's murder of the Lord's priests, David's murder of Uriah, and Ahab's murder of Naboth.

Furthermore, killing can be intentional, like Cain's murder of Abel and Joab's murders of Abner and Amasa, or unintentional, which can be divided into two categories: 1. Innocent, which, according to God's law, does not violate this commandment and occurs when a person, while fulfilling their duty, unintentionally causes harm or death to another without any prior neglect or carelessness. 2. Culpable, which occurs when the outcome goes beyond the person's intention but is caused by negligent behavior. For example, if

someone is using an ax that they either knew or should have known to be loose and did not inform those around them, and it accidentally injures or kills someone, they are not innocent. However, if the person was unaware that the ax was loose or that anyone was nearby, and it falls off and kills their neighbor without any negligence on their part, they are not guilty. Similarly, when the Lord commanded the construction of battlements on the roofs of houses to prevent people from falling, the homeowner was not at fault if someone fell where the battlements were absent, but they were guilty if they failed to provide them.

Murder can also be considered in terms of whether it is committed with provocation or without any provocation, which greatly aggravates the sin, although provocation does not make it cease to be a sin. It can further be viewed as the murder of evil and wicked individuals or of good and religious individuals, particularly due to their faith, which is a horrific aggravation of the crime.

Lastly, this murder can be ordinary, involving equals or inferiors, or extraordinary, intensified by the status of the person murdered, whether they are a superior like a magistrate or a parent, or a close relative such as a brother or kinsman, etc.

Let us now consider in more detail the extent and nature of the sin forbidden here (which is not to be understood as prohibiting taking a life through public justice, lawful warfare, or necessary self-defense, so that we may better understand the contrary duty commanded). It implies causing harm, which can be observed in the following ways: 1. In the heart, 2. In words, 3. In gestures, 4. In actions. We assume that it goes beyond the external act itself, as Christ's explanation in Matthew 5 clearly indicates.

The heart is the source and storehouse of all evil. It is where all wickedness originates, including this act of murder. "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders..." (Matthew 15:19). It is stated in 1 John 3:15, "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer." In

essence, anything that opposes love in the heart is a violation of this commandment. Hatred, which is malicious and wishes harm upon our neighbor simply because we do not love them, is an example of this.

"No, Zabidus, I do not love you, I cannot say that, but I can only say, I do not love you."

So Cain hated his brother without cause. 2. Anger assumes a perceived wrong and desires revenge, often based on ingratitude or a sense of injustice. 3. Envy causes grief over another's good fortune, falsely believing that it hinders our own, leading to attempts to undermine it. Anger is cruel and wrath is outrageous, but envy is even more destructive and irreconcilable, as Solomon noted. There is often hidden hatred in such cases that is more stubborn than when there are clear and significant reasons for it. 4. Rage pushes revenge beyond what is just, even if it is carried out lawfully in outward actions. 5. Brutality or cruelty derives pleasure from harming others. All these and similar emotions are generally referred to as hatred and anger.

If someone asks whether all anger is unlawful, the answer is no. There is a natural aspect to anger, and at times it can be rightfully expressed in certain duties, such as zeal for the dishonor of God, as seen in the case of Moses in Exodus 32. Indignation towards wicked individuals in certain circumstances may also be lawful and even required. However, carnal anger is prohibited. It includes desiring revenge when no wrong has been done to us, seeking disproportionate and excessive vengeance, desiring it without proper justice, seeking it for the wrong reasons (such as personal gratification rather than seeking justice), and displaying immoderate and corrupt behavior that brings dishonor to God. This unlawful anger is called grudge when directed towards a superior, rancor when directed towards an equal, and disdain and contempt when directed towards an inferior. The latter two often follow from the first.

2. This commandment is also violated through injurious words. As stated in the fifth chapter of Matthew, anyone who says to their brother, "You fool," is guilty. Just imagine the guilt that will be found in curses, curses, angry wishes, disdainful and passionate speeches when Christ calls people to account for breaking this commandment.
3. It is also violated through gestures such as haughty looks, fierce expressions, grinding of teeth (as seen in Acts 7:54), foaming at the mouth, and similar behaviors that even our blessed Lord and His servants have encountered. Just as adultery can be committed through looks, so too can murder. Cain had such looks in Genesis 4:5.
4. It is violated in actions that result in death, such as injuring, striking, oppressing, withholding the means of life, engaging in extortion, usury, contentious arguments, violent coercion, inflating rents for land or houses beyond what is just, and exploiting and mistreating poor laborers and tenants without proper consideration for them or their work. The sin of exploiting laborers and tenants is frequently overlooked and disregarded, despite being a glaring and significant sin. Furthermore, it is broken by withholding assistance and support that could be helpful and comforting, such as neglecting the sick and distressed, lacking hospitality, especially towards the poor. All of these are sinful transgressions, whether committed directly or indirectly. It is not enough to merely avoid committing some of these sins; we must also conscientiously practice the corresponding duties.

Lastly, let us briefly address the subject of "thou." In short, we need to distinguish between private individuals and public figures, particularly magistrates who hold authority and bear the sword. This commandment does not restrain them from carrying out justice. However, even magistrates can sin in their emotions, unjust exercise of authority, and carnal approach to punishment and sentencing,

even when acting within the bounds of justice. Thus, magistrates can become guilty of breaking this commandment due to additional circumstances accompanying the execution of justice. This concludes our discussion on this commandment.

The Seventh Commandment

Thou shalt not commit Adultery. - Exodus 20. 14.

The Lord, having addressed sins related to human existence in the previous commandment, now turns to provide guidance on matters concerning a person's life and conduct. It is evident that, in one way or another, the previous commandment is often broken through our passions, hatred, and anger, to varying degrees. Likewise, the sin that is now being discussed, which is utterly detestable, is unfortunately not as uncommon among Christians as one might reasonably expect.

The wretched sin of uncontrolled desire and lust entered humanity very early after Adam's fall. It is one of the bitter fruits of original sin, and this corrupt aspect of our nature manifested itself quite early on. This is evident in Scripture when it speaks of Adam and Eve's nakedness and their subsequent shame, which implies a sinful and disorderly state they were not previously tainted with. It also reveals the resulting shame and affliction. Since this corrupt nature still exists in humans, it is challenging to discuss or hear about these matters in a holy manner. Therefore, both holiness and wisdom are necessary to avoid breaking this commandment even while speaking of it or listening to it. However, given the prevalence of this sin and the scriptural emphasis on addressing it, along with its inclusion as a separate and distinct commandment, it is necessary to discuss it to

some extent while staying within the bounds of scriptural expressions. But be cautious not to sin in the act of hearing. Remember that the Lord sees and particularly abhors the vile imaginations that can be aroused by His holy command that instructs us to do the opposite, which indeed serves as evidence of the sinfulness of sin, as the Apostle Paul speaks of in Romans 7.

To gain a better understanding, let us consider the intention of the commandment, which we believe is prominently and clearly presented in a few passages of Scripture that promote holiness concerning a person's character and condemn all forms of impurity. For instance, in 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5,7, it is stated, "For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God... For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness." Similarly, Ephesians 5:3-5 urges, "But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving."

For you know that no fornicator, unclean person, or covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. (Galatians 5:19) The works of the flesh are evident, which include adultery, fornication, uncleanness, and lewdness. (Romans 13:13) Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. (Colossians 3:5) Therefore, mortify your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. In these passages, we can see that the sin forbidden in this commandment is described using highly detestable terms, such as "works of the flesh," "fornication," "adultery," "uncleanness," "lewdness," "passion," and "evil desire." Conversely, a virtuous and honorable life is commanded as the opposite. Thus, we can understand that the scope of this seventh

commandment is to live honestly, decently, modestly, chastely, temperately, and in holiness. This understanding sheds light on its meaning and extent.

If we were to examine it more closely, we would find that there is no commandment that is more emphasized, fully explained, and more severely punished when violated than this one. It wrongs God, the society of men, and others, including our own children, ourselves, our bodies, our estates, and our reputations. It stains the soul in this life and in the hereafter. It takes away wisdom, courage, and even the very heart, rendering men foolish and senseless. It had such an effect on Solomon that a man given to it is compared to an ox and a fool. It is likened to the neighing of horses and associated with the wages of a whore and the price of a dog. The madness, folly, and bewitching power of it are exemplified in the story of Jezebel. Ephesians 5:6 describes it as a work of darkness that brings God's wrath upon the disobedient, just as it brought destruction upon Sodom, the ancient world, and the Canaanites. It is often accompanied by other gross sins, such as drunkenness, murder, and idolatry.

To further understand this commandment, let us consider: 1. The specific faults condemned and the virtues or graces commended. 2. The ways in which one can be guilty of breaking this commandment, which, being spiritual like the other commandments, extends to the heart and affections. 3. The sins that are indirectly encompassed within this commandment, such as idleness, gluttony, drunkenness, impudence, immodesty in clothing or nudity, dancing, singing indecent songs, keeping inappropriate company, and anything that hints at or leads to this evil or serves as evidence of it. 4. The opposite virtues and useful means for overcoming it, such as chastity, modesty, shamefacedness, temperance, lawful marriage, and other remedies, which are required by this commandment and contribute to a holy life.

It is undeniable that these matters should be discussed. The perfection of the Law demands it, and their relevance to one of the

commandments becomes evident when considering their nature and their connection to the sin condemned or the duty commanded in this context. The sin of adultery serves as a key aspect of the carnal nature of humanity, encompassing the other related sins to emphasize their abhorrence.

Now, when examining the prohibited act of vileness, we can: 1. Consider the perversions that are simply unnatural, which individuals guilty of these acts are referred to as "the abominable" in Scripture. These include: (1) those who engage in the abomination of filthy fellowship with supposed devils; (2) those who commit bestiality, an utterly detestable act among rational beings, also referred to as confusion; (3) those who engage in homosexuality, mentioned in 1 Timothy 1:10 and Romans 1:26-27, and commonly known as sodomy or going after strange flesh. These acts were abhorrent practices that led to the condemnation and punishment of those involved, as demonstrated when God rained down something akin to hellfire from heaven, burning and causing their agonizing demise. Such acts are abominations against nature, and both divine and human laws strictly condemn them (see Leviticus 18 and 20, Deuteronomy 22).

2. The forbidden act of vileness also encompasses acts of uncleanness that are, to some extent, against nature, although not as blatantly or grossly so. Examples include sexual relations between individuals within degrees of consanguinity and affinity, known as incest. These relationships are explicitly listed in Leviticus 18, 20, and Deuteronomy 22. Incest was so repugnant that it led to the expulsion of the Canaanites, and even among the heathens, it was regarded as abhorrent (see 1 Corinthians 5:1, etc.). The evil of incest stems from the unnaturalness of blurring the distinct relationships and degrees established by nature. For instance, when one engages in sexual relations with their father's wife, they violate the sacred bond of motherhood and fail to show the reverence and respect owed to parents. Incest typically occurs within the direct or indirect line

of descent, excluding collateral relationships beyond siblings, which are the initial connections within collateral lines and closely tied through common parents. Therefore, engaging in sexual relations with a distant and remote relative from a direct line constitutes incest, but the same does not apply to the first relative in a collateral line, except in cases of brother-sister relationships. Marrying one's cousin-german is permissible because husband and wife become one flesh. Such relationships are considered incestuous when they fall within the prohibited degrees for the wife, just as they would be if they applied to the husband. This is also referred to as confusion in Leviticus 20:12-14.

3. Consider it as a violation of a bond or covenant known as the Covenant of God (Proverbs 2:17). This can be understood in three ways:
4. When both parties involved are married, as in the case of David and Bathsheba. This is particularly abominable and is referred to as double adultery.
5. When the man is married and the woman is single or unmarried.
6. When the woman is married and the man is single or unmarried. These latter two cases are also serious offenses, with the latter being considered even more grievous. It carries additional aggravations, such as disturbing the peace of the neighbor's family, corrupting their offspring, alienating their inheritance, and therefore, not only the first case but even the third has commonly been punished by death among human societies. The guilt of the second case is certainly not inferior and may be equal to either of the other cases.
7. It shares the same wickedness as adultery since it violates the Covenant of God.

8. It is likewise sinful as it goes against the remedy of uncleanness and disorder that marriage was ordained for by the Lord.
9. It disrupts the tranquility and prosperity of families, arousing jealousy in the wife, causing emotional harm by diverting affections, and often impeding the lawful propagation of children, thereby undermining their upbringing and the parents' responsibility for their well-being. These observations should not be limited to the man alone, as if he were solely responsible. When a free woman engages in adultery with her neighbor's husband, she willingly participates and thus incurs the same guilt. According to the Law of God, if a free man lies with his neighbor's wife, all the aggravations stemming from her married state are attributed to the man, and he is condemned as the adulterer. Therefore, by the same reasoning, in the case of a married man with a free woman, she is equally guilty of the consequences. It is not a valid excuse for the woman that the man is often the tempter. Although women may possess greater vulnerability due to their natural weakness, and their modesty provides a level of protection, the righteous law of the Lord is binding on both without distinction. Hence, it is reasonable to understand that all three forms of adultery are prohibited by the same laws and subject to the same penalties. Consequently, we can concur with Job 31:9, 11 that adultery, without restriction, is an iniquity punishable by the judge for both men and women.

Also included in this category is bigamy, which refers to marrying two wives simultaneously, and polygamy, which involves marrying multiple wives and keeping concubines alongside wives. However, God's original design was for there to be one male and one female, and He ordained that each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. Although some righteous men have erred in this regard, we cannot exempt them from sin. Nor can we attribute it to God's specific dispensation to them, as we dare not make such practices as common as they were. Particularly considering the abuse

and negative consequences it led to, as exemplified in the cases of Solomon, Lamech, and the detrimental effects it had on families and future generations, such as Abraham, Jacob, and Samuel's father Elkanah, which turned marriage into a source of vexation contrary to its intended purpose. However, our Lord, by reestablishing marriage according to its original institution, has clearly abolished such practices in the New Testament.

4. Consider it in the context of free and unmarried individuals, where it is referred to as fornication. If it is coerced or forced, it is punishable by death according to God's law, though only for the man. In the case of the woman, who is free, it is considered rape. If fornication is continued in, it becomes prostitution and filthiness. If it involves one woman, it is called concubinage, an unwarranted abuse of the institution of marriage and a disrespect for it. If it involves multiple partners, it is regarded as prostitution and is most abominable. Regardless of the specific circumstances, it remains abominable and brings upon the wrath of God. It should not even be mentioned among the saints (Ephesians 5:6, Colossians 3:6). Whether marriage follows or not, it is still a sinful act.

There are several aggravating factors to consider:

1. If it occurs during times of enlightenment or knowledge.
2. If it involves persons with whom one should not associate.
3. If it takes place within families professing godliness.
4. Especially if the person involved is a prominent religious practitioner.
5. If it occurs during a time when God is chastising or contending with an entire society or nation, issuing warnings of His judgments against all.

Despite the numerous aggravations and heightened relevance in the present time, this sin still prevails and remains distressingly common.

5. Let us also consider this prohibited act of vileness within the context of married individuals living in conjugal society. The use of the marriage bed is not left to arbitrary discretion any more than the consumption of food and drink. It is governed by the Lord, both in the establishment of the marital bond and in the enjoyment of it. When these boundaries set by the Lord are transgressed, the transgressors are guilty. Thus, men and women may initiate their marriage in a carnal manner, such as engaging in carnal courtship, which renders them guilty even if it does not go further than that. Marrying individuals of different religions or other unsuitable disparities is also a violation of this command, as such marriages do not provide the lawful remedy for fornication. Similarly, if temporal considerations and the satisfaction of fleshly desires outweigh conscientious regard for what God allows and right reason dictates, and if all things are not referred to God's glory, then the purpose of marriage is contradicted and marriage becomes a cover for covetousness or impurity. Thus, guilt may be incurred even before marriage.

Furthermore, married individuals can break this command if they do not possess and enjoy one another in holiness and honor (1 Thessalonians 4:4-5) and if they do not show each other the due benevolence required in the marriage relationship. Men sin through deficiency by not cohabiting, by withdrawing from one another without mutual consent, and by becoming a snare to one another. The Apostle refers to this as defrauding one another (1 Corinthians 7:5). Many acts of unkindness between married individuals, which are unbecoming of the honor and respect they should have for one another, can be encompassed within this category. However, men more frequently and gravely sin in excess, specifically through engaging in carnal behavior with their own lawful married wives and using marriage for lustful purposes, living according to the desires of their flesh, as the Gentiles did even in their marital unions (1 Thessalonians 4:5). The Apostle also describes it as inordinate affection (Colossians 3:5), an affection a man has towards his wife as

if she were a prostitute, rather than the affection that befits a wife. When these behaviors are rebuked, one should not take offense, but rather look to the Lord for cleansing from such shameful filthiness that is even disgraceful to mention.

This immoderation can manifest in various ways, including frequency, untimeliness, and carnality in the manner. There is no need to elaborate further on this. It can also occur among married individuals when their conjugal intimacy hinders them from setting aside time for extraordinary devotions, which they ought to do, as indicated by the words of the Apostle in 1 Corinthians 7:5. However, excess in this area should also be avoided. During times of trouble and private or public calamity, when the call is for the bridegroom to come out of his chamber, married individuals may easily fall into immoderate behavior. It is worth noting that there were specific restrictions under the law, where a man was not allowed to touch even his own wife, to emphasize the need for purity within conjugal relationships and the absence of unrestricted liberty in this matter, just as in other aspects such as eating and drinking. While not all pleasure derived from food and drink is sinful, carnal sensuality is. Therefore, what is natural, appropriate, and timely is permitted, while immoderation is prohibited. Thus, guilt can be incurred during the marital state.

Furthermore, men can sin in this manner by unjustly dissolving marriages, such as through abandonment, divorce without just cause, or expulsion, all of which go against the nature of the solemn bond and covenant. It should be acknowledged that divorce is not always necessary even in cases of adultery; the Lord is not offended by reconciliation when the punishment of the guilty party is not carried out by the magistrate. However, if a divorce is granted and the woman subsequently remarries, her return to her first husband, even after the lawful dissolution of her second marriage, is considered an abomination and highly defiling, as stated in Jeremiah 3:1. Thus, guilt can be present in the dissolution of marriages.

Lastly, this impurity can also be considered in the actions and abominable imaginations of a solitary individual when they are alone in the darkness. These actions and thoughts are so detestable that they are better left unmentioned. Yet, it is important to remember that even these things done in secret are seen by God, although it is shameful to speak of them. See Ephesians 5:11-12. This hidden impurity can occur in a person while awake or while sleeping, as mentioned in Leviticus 15. It is undoubtedly a matter of guilt for both men and women, depending on how they have invited it or disposed themselves to unsuitable thoughts. Even when there is no pleasurable recollection, no savory or pleasing memory, and a holy horror follows as a result, there is still guilt. We touched upon this matter in the Preface to the Commandments.

These abominations are not limited to the outward act alone but extend further, and there are many ways in which people commit this wickedness:

1. In the heart: Christ referred to a man lusting after a woman as committing adultery in his heart (Matthew 5:28). This heart-adultery can have varying degrees depending on the intensity and extent of the lustful thoughts. It is deemed as burning in 1 Corinthians 7:9 and Romans 1:27. It is detestable to the Lord and harmful to the inner being. Even when individuals do not have the intention to act upon these thoughts, they become guilty by not abhorring such imaginations and allowing them to dwell in their thoughts. It is crucial to beware of giving in to carnal thoughts in this regard.
2. Men are guilty of this wickedness when they permit their outward senses to indulge in sinful pursuits. Scripture speaks of eyes being full of adultery (2 Peter 2:14), and a lustful look is equated to adultery in Matthew 5:28. Job 31:1 declares that one will not gaze upon a maid. Likewise, obscene pictures, delighting in them, or other similar spectacles defile a person. Ears can be defiled by listening to obscene and filthy conversations,

drunkenness, lewd songs, or light wanton amorous songs. Touching and embracing can defile through improper physical contact, and the mouth through kissing. Proverbs 7:13 provides an example of such gestures. There is much guilt contracted through these actions, although it often goes unnoticed and is not mourned over.

3. Guilt can also be incurred through indecent and immodest gestures and postures that go against civility and godliness. Proverbs 6:13-14 and Isaiah 3:16 mention the opposite of honest walking, which is commended in Romans 13:13, and the reproof of carnal wantonness.
4. Individuals become exceedingly guilty of this evil through scurrilous and obscene speeches. It is inappropriate to even mention this sin, yet some engage in reading obscene and amorous ballads or books as if they were discussing such matters. Taunting and reproaching others in a way that corrupts good manners is also a form of guilt. Jest that is not appropriate, especially when directed at someone who has fallen into an act of filthiness, or engaging in any conversation that is sinful or unsuitable, contributes to this sin (Ephesians 4:24, 5:3-4).
5. This sin is also committed through too familiar or unnecessary association with light, vain, and loose company, particularly engaging in private companionship that not only appears to be sinful or a snare to sin but is inherently evil and loose in itself. The Apostle refers to this as "chambering" in Romans 13:13. Solomon advises against going near the door of a promiscuous woman's house, let alone entering it (Proverbs 5:8).
6. People fall into this sin through wantonness, immodesty, lack of shamefacedness, or any other means by which they yield to their loose and carnal desires.

It is important to recognize and guard against these various ways in which this sin can manifest in our lives.

There are many other sins that are closely related to and tied to the sin of uncleanness:

1. **Idleness:** Idleness breeds unstayed looks and entertains carnal imaginations. It leads to gadding about when individuals do not have a lawful calling or are not diligent and serious in their work and duties (1 Timothy 5:13). Idleness is often the breeding ground for various vices and hinders the cultivation of virtues.
2. **Lightness and unstableness:** This is associated with Reuben's defilement of his father's bed (Genesis 49:4) and is condemned by the Apostle. Keeping at home, which is connected with chastity, modesty, and shamefastness, is juxtaposed with this sin (Titus 2:5). It refers to a gadding about, especially in women, particularly young women, which is offensive and yet prevalent. It can be described as impudence or boldness, as it leads them to engage in all sorts of spectacles, conversations, and inappropriate company, contrary to the modesty and shamefastness expected of them.
3. **Wantonness and excessive carnal mirth:** Wantonness, too much indulgence in carnal mirth, and foolish jesting that is inappropriate are associated with this sin. They serve as evidence and catalysts for loose thoughts and behavior (Ephesians 5:3). It is important to recognize that there is no lawful freedom in such revelry and jollity, as it goes against the call for chastity and modesty (Romans 13:13).
4. **Indecent conversing and socializing:** Going abroad in the company of others with rash and offensive freedom is admonished. Scripture prohibits entering the house or even coming near the doors of a prostitute (Proverbs 5:8). The negative consequences of such behavior can be observed in the

account of Dinah going out without a specific purpose (Genesis 34:1-2). Joseph, in the fear of the Lord, fled from Potiphar's wife when she sought to involve him in her company.

5. Dancing: The people of God have historically condemned dancing, especially mixed and promiscuous dancing, as a form of dishonest recreation. This can be seen in the canons of several councils throughout history, as well as the stance taken by our own and other reformed churches.

These sins, along with the sin of uncleanness, contribute to a lifestyle that is contrary to the standards of holiness and purity. It is important to be aware of these behaviors and strive to avoid them in order to maintain a righteous and honorable life.

I shall briefly state these points: First, you will not find dancing mentioned in Scripture as an activity of righteous individuals. It is more fitting for someone like Herodias's daughter than for religious believers. Second, it is evident that dancing hinders the practice of godliness and is, at best, hardly compatible with a devout, lively, or sober mindset. Third, it not only disrupts a person's seriousness and distracts them but also diminishes their reputation. This frivolity is like a dead fly that spoils the perfume. Fourth, in Scripture, we find examples of dancing associated with profane and immoral people, regarded as a mark of their stain or disgrace, rendering them infamous. Often, dancing is accompanied by traps and snares, such as with the Israelites in Exodus 32 or the daughters of Moab with the people of Israel. It is also speculated that the people whom Dinah went to see in Genesis 34 were engaged in dancing at a feast or similar event where she was ensnared and violated. Fifth, dancing is frequently the consequence of prior looseness and sensuality. Excessive wantonness typically leads to the manifestation of dancing. Can God's people rightly engage in such works of darkness? Can they, if they are guilty themselves, rebuke others for it? Cicero refers to dancing as the "last of vices" because it often follows previous immoral conduct. Sixth, there is no legitimate form of recreation

beneficial to the body that cannot be sanctified through the Word and Prayer. However, I believe dancing does not fall into this category, nor would anyone consider it suitable or consistent with a prayerful disposition or a sincere Christian walk. A Christian's posture should always be prepared and vigilant, ready to meet death or the coming of the Lord. Dancing, as described, goes against the gravity and reverence of walking, instead seeking to display an artificial elegance. Many engage in this practice today, but should it not displease the Lord as much as other forms of dancing? The Lord favors a natural and modest way of carrying oneself, as Junius and Rivet describe, rather than the affected mincing or tripping that imitates an artificial manner of walking or standing.

In addition to the general behavior mentioned earlier, there are also matters related to our clothing and diet that need to be addressed. These aspects are crucial because we ought to demonstrate Christian qualities such as sobriety, gravity, and modesty in everything we do. One area where our frivolity, vanity (often associated with outward appearance), pride, wantonness, and excess are prominently displayed is in our choice of attire. Therefore, the apostle Paul, in 1 Timothy 2:9, links modest clothing with shamefastness and sobriety, just as the apostle Peter does in 1 Peter 3:2-3. Throughout history, adorning oneself in an extravagant manner to seek attention and affection, as seen in the example of Jezebel and others, has always been considered a significant form of moral laxity. It is astonishing that people take pleasure in indulging in clothing, which, in fact, signifies their faithlessness and was originally intended to cover their shame and nakedness. It is worth noting that the Hebrew word "eged" signifies both clothing and faithlessness, deriving from the word that means to break a covenant. Thus, the Lord, through the very concept of our garments, intends to humble us and remind us of our initial breach of covenant with Him. Yet, in our wickedness, we boast in what should be our shame, treating it as a special ornament. Whereas clothing was initially meant to cover nakedness, prevent provocation to lust, and ensure decency, it is now often used, akin to Jezebel's actions, as a means of inciting such desires. See Proverbs

7:10. In His first provision of clothing, God intended to discourage vanity and encourage honorable modesty by making coats of skins for our first parents.

Therefore, we assert that both men and women are condemned by the Lord in the following aspects of their clothing:

The excessive costliness and extravagance of apparel, as stated in 1 Timothy 2:9. This does not mean that we should promote filthiness or baseness, nor does it imply that everyone should be equal in their attire regardless of their position or status. Rather, it admonishes against exceeding reasonable limits. It is astonishing to see how sometimes the poorest and lowest in social standing, often lacking in qualifications, prioritize their appearance as if it were the best or only way to enhance their worth. It is completely unacceptable for individuals to invest more in their clothing than in their overall well-being.

The adoption of strange and ever-changing fashion trends and extravagant styles, while the natural shape of the human body remains unchanged. The Scripture repeatedly warns against wearing strange or unusual apparel, which refers to what is commonly known as fashion or new fashion, depicting a novel and unfamiliar style. It is evident that individuals' minds can be corrupted with lascivious thoughts and lustful desires through the use and sight of flashy and vain clothing. Furthermore, individuals with light, frivolous, and conceited minds often reveal themselves through their choice of apparel and fashion.

The immodesty and lightness in clothing, including the use of vibrant colors, excessive adornments, and elaborate hairstyles. This can be observed in the excessive use of hairdressings, powders, laces, ribbons, and accessories, which are popular among fashionable individuals of the time. In particular, the Scriptures focus on condemning such practices among women, as seen in Isaiah 3:16-17 and other verses. While some of these elements may not be

inherently unlawful, especially for individuals of higher status and on specific occasions, the specific practices mentioned are deemed unacceptable.

1. Coveting and desiring extravagant clothing, making it an object of lust and desire, akin to those who prioritize their physical desires above all else (Philippians 3:19). This can occur even when clothing itself is simple, as the lust and craving for them can be great.
2. Arrogance and vanity in clothing and dress, when we believe that we are better or more esteemed because of what we wear, considering ourselves superior or at least equal to others. This can lead to an inflated sense of self-importance based on external appearances.
3. Excessive indulgence and luxury in clothing, going beyond what is appropriate for our position and means. This encompasses the superfluous and costly nature of clothing that exceeds our station in life.
4. Indulging in wantonness and immodesty in clothing, particularly through the exposure of certain parts of the body that should be modestly covered. Women, who have clothing as a covering, should utilize it for its intended purpose. The stretching out of necks mentioned in the Scriptures likely refers to women deliberately exposing and emphasizing their necks and breasts in an indecent manner, contrary to the virtue of modesty. It is both astonishing and disheartening that women would need to be reproved for such actions.

This behavior is both gross and impudent. It is gross because even the most innocent person, when asked about the reasons behind such immodest displays, would have to admit that the initial intention was to please and entice the carnal desires of others. It is impudent because if complete nudity is considered shameful and

highly likely to provoke lust, then partial nudity, to a lesser extent, would also be the same. Thus, it becomes a glorification of their own shame, as nakedness has always been regarded as a reproach. In the past, it was customary for dignified individuals to cover themselves with a veil, and even in 1 Corinthians 11, the practice of married women going uncovered in public is deemed unnatural. We can only imagine how those individuals would react to the prevailing trends of our times. It is our belief that the gravest among women are most averse to this evil, while the most frivolous are most inclined towards it. Since all women should possess gravity and modest shamefastness, embracing such immodesty indicates a disavowal of these virtues. Therefore, if there is any sense of shame or conscience remaining, we expect that those touched by the importance of gravity will set a good example for others and earnestly work to restore gravity and modesty as fashionable virtues once again.

There is a reprehensible effeminacy in men's clothing that somewhat emasculates or undermines their masculinity. This can be seen in their indulgence in things that women often obsess over, such as hairstyling, powdering, washing, wearing excessive rings, jewels, and so on. These behaviors are mentioned and reprovved in relation to the daughters of Zion in Isaiah 3 and are even more unsuitable for men. The interchange of clothing between genders is also condemned, where men wear women's clothing and women wear men's clothing. This goes against the distinction of sexes established by the Lord and is denounced in the Scriptures as a confusion, an absurd and unnatural act, and a gateway to wickedness. The Dutch Annotators, along with many Church Fathers before them, in their commentary on 1 Corinthians 11:14, even consider men nurturing and growing long hair as a form of this behavior, as it is given to women not only as an adornment and covering but also as a distinguishing feature of the female sex.

Having briefly addressed this vain obsession with hairstyling, which now comes in almost as many different styles as there are clothing fashions, particularly prevalent among women, it may not be

irrelevant to share a remarkable story mentioned by the learned, pious, and venerable Mr. Bolton in his work "The Four Last Things" (page 40). He recounts an account from the renowned Hercules Saxonia, a professor of medicine in Padua, about a loathsome and horrifying disease called "plica" that affects the hair. This disease, previously unheard of in earlier times, emerged due to modern luxury and excess. It primarily afflicts women and causes the hairs on their heads to become glued together in a monstrous and repulsive tangle, sometimes resembling a large snake or multiple smaller serpents. It is filled with filth, vermin, and a foul odor. What is most astonishing is that when these tangled hairs are pricked with a needle, they release bloody drops. Initially appearing in Poland a few years ago, this dreadful disease has now spread to many parts of Germany. Mr. Bolton remarks that our extravagant fashion enthusiasts, both male and female, should be in constant fear and trembling, as those who nurture their absurdly excessive hairstyles and those who unnaturally and wickedly cut their hair may unwittingly invite such a disease upon themselves and within our own kingdom.

It is worth noting that Tertullian, in his book "De Cultu Feminarum" (On the Apparel of Women), addresses the various vain hairstyles of Christian women. He urges them to abandon the bondage of excessive adornment and frivolous dressing of their hair. Instead, he reminds them that God commands them to be covered and veiled. Tertullian expresses his desire to be humble among the people of God, even if it means being at their feet, in contrast to the extravagant appearance they strive for. He questions whether they will rise from their graves adorned with cosmetics, white and red paint, and elaborate head-dresses when they meet Christ in the clouds. He also highlights the need to shake off the delights and vanities that can weaken the virtue and strength of faith.

Tertullian further reflects on the discomfort that may come when accustomed to wearing rings, bracelets, and other ornaments, being confronted with chains, stocks, and constraints. He suggests that

women should meditate on hardships and relinquish these luxuries and indulgences. He encourages them to be prepared to face any challenges, being unafraid to let go of material possessions. He emphasizes that true adornment comes from inward qualities such as shamefastness, quietness of spirit, obedience to Christ, and the practice of good works. By clothing themselves in goodness, virtue, holiness, and purity, women will be adorned in a manner pleasing to God.

These teachings align well with what the Apostles instruct in 1 Timothy 2:9-10, emphasizing modest apparel, shamefastness, sobriety, and good works. Similarly, in 1 Peter 3:2-5, women are urged not to focus on external adornments such as elaborate hairstyles, gold, pearls, or costly clothing, but rather to cultivate a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in God's sight. The Apostle Paul also highlights the importance of women adorning themselves with good works in Titus 2:4-5.

It is evident that these teachings call for a focus on inner beauty, humility, and virtuous conduct rather than the pursuit of extravagant external appearances.

In addition to what has been said about dressing our bodies, it is worth mentioning the dressing and decorating of houses, beds, and household furnishings. In these aspects, there can be a temptation towards lust and an excessive attachment, as even small things can ignite and inflame our desires. In Proverbs 7:17, we see an example of a woman who dresses like a prostitute, prepares her bed, provides luxurious furnishings, and fills the chambers with incense and perfumes—all of which are used to entice and cater to the great lust of uncleanness. It is astonishing to witness the extent to which some individuals provide for the flesh and indulge in its desires. Christians should not allow their homes to become a place where they live without boundaries or restraint, just as they should not be unsuitable to their stations in their personal appearance.

Excessive indulgence can also be seen in the frivolous and immodest ways houses and buildings are adorned with obscene paintings, pictures, statues, and similar items. These practices, among others, are condemned in Ezekiel 23:14. Christians should be mindful of the way they decorate their homes, ensuring that it reflects modesty, purity, and a reverence for God.

However, in what we have discussed regarding these excessive behaviors that are even present among professing Christians, we do not want to be interpreted as advocating for rigidness. We acknowledge that there are lawful recreations, and there is nothing wrong with behaving and dressing modestly and appropriately. We do not assume that everyone who engages in the criticized behaviors does so out of lustful intentions. But for further clarification, we should consider the following points:

1. We are addressing these things as they are abused and specifically condemned in this Church.
2. We should consider the origins of these practices, even if a particular user has innocent intentions.
3. We should be mindful of others who may be tempted to lust or judge others based on these behaviors. We aim to prevent such temptations and judgments.
4. We should not only avoid evil but also abstain from anything that may appear evil. The things we have discussed can be misinterpreted by others, potentially beyond our own intentions.

It is worth considering the views of even non-Christian sources, as well as the opinions of Church Fathers, Councils, and the theologians cited by Rivet and Martyr in relation to this commandment. For example, the Council of Lado, Canon 53, states, "Let Christians, when they go to marriages, abstain from dancing, but dine or sup." Another statement says, "No man almost dances that is sober unless perhaps he is in a fit of distraction or madness."

The dancing of David and Miriam, being part of worship during extraordinary celebrations, does not serve as an endorsement for the dancing that is commonly practiced today. Their dancing was not promiscuous, with men and women together, but rather men or women separately. Furthermore, if the sight of vain objects provokes lust, the circumstances and incitements of dancing would exacerbate this issue. It is often argued that if the promiscuity is removed from dancing, the practice itself would lose its appeal. It is worth noting that dancing is not defended or enjoyed for its recreational motion but rather for its promiscuity with women, which not only provokes lust but also requires a significant investment of time and resources without yielding any benefit.

What we have discussed regarding these evils can also be applied to excesses in sleeping, laziness, and so on, as seen in the example of David (2 Samuel 11:2). Vain curiosity and lasciviousness in singing and playing can also be included, as an excessive indulgence in these activities may indicate wantonness and riotousness, as some interpret the significance of Romans 13:13. All these excesses, being contrary to sobriety, modesty, shamefastness, and gravity, fall under the category of wantonness. The following points fall under the realm of intemperance.

The Scripture strongly condemns the sin of intemperance, which we believe primarily consists of gluttony and drunkenness. Although these sins technically fall under a specific commandment (although they indirectly violate all commandments), we believe they are especially condemned here, where temperance is commanded. Scripture associates these sins with a particular focus on the sin of uncleanness, which is explicitly forbidden in this commandment. The sin of Sodom, for example, is linked to fulness of bread and gluttony, serving as the source of their filthiness (Ezekiel 16:49). Drunkenness is also highlighted, particularly as it leads to such sins (Proverbs 23:31-33). Therefore, we find it fitting to address these two evils here, as they are inherently detestable but unfortunately prevalent among those who are called Christians.

It is important to note that both eating and drinking require consideration. Firstly, we should consider natural needs, as some may require more food or drink than others. Secondly, we should consider people's positions and stations, where different allowances may be made in terms of quantity or quality (as we mentioned in relation to clothing). Lastly, there are certain occasions that permit more freedom and cheerfulness, while other times call for more restraint and abstinence, even in lawful pleasures. Therefore, we cannot impose the same strict rules on all individuals at all times.

Christian liberty should also be considered, as God, in His goodness, has granted allowance for the use of these things not only out of necessity but also for refreshment. The virtue of temperance and sobriety, like all virtues, does not consist of rigidly fixed rules where a person must eat and drink exactly a certain amount, neither more nor less, without any flexibility. The Lord has not placed such strict limitations on the consciences of His people but has provided boundaries within sobriety that we may navigate, as long as we do not exceed these boundaries. It is not every satisfaction or enjoyment derived from food or drink that should be condemned (since it is natural), but rather that which degenerates and becomes carnal.

Therefore, let us examine the sinful nature of gluttony and drunkenness, as these two evils are closely related and can be discussed together for the sake of brevity.

We believe that both gluttony and drunkenness are sinful, and that individuals can fail in various ways in the consumption of food and drink. The Bible contains many prohibitions and commands regarding the proper use of food and drink. For example, 1 Corinthians 10:31 instructs us to do all things, including eating and drinking, for the glory of God. Romans 13:14 advises us to put on the Lord Jesus Christ and not make provisions for the flesh to fulfill its lusts. Romans 14:20 warns against causing offense through the consumption of food. Proverbs 23:20-21 cautions against associating

with winebibbers and riotous eaters, as excessive indulgence can lead to poverty and ruin.

Scripture also reproves those who exceed in their eating and drinking. Ezekiel 16:49 identifies pride, gluttony, and idleness as the iniquities of Sodom and its daughters. Luke 16:19 tells the parable of a rich man who lived in luxury and abundance. There are numerous examples of severe judgments and consequences inflicted upon those who engage in gluttony and drunkenness. Deuteronomy 21:20 mentions a rebellious son described as a glutton and a drunkard. Proverbs 23:21 warns that gluttons and drunkards will come to poverty, and their excesses can lead to sorrow, strife, and physical harm.

Based on these passages, it is evident that gluttony and drunkenness are not only sinful but highly reprehensible.

Indeed, if we consider the purposes for which God has given us these creatures (which excess perverts and damages), namely, His honor and the good of ourselves and others, the rules He has given to regulate our use of them, the holy frame He calls for from us at all times, and the distinction that should exist between His people and the people of the world in their use of these things, we will find that excessive indulgence in these pleasures is sinful. It goes against the holy nature and law of God, as well as the holiness and sobriety that should characterize a Christian. It is no less contrary to God's design than fornication and other forms of uncleanness. Therefore, no sin has more woes pronounced against it by the Holy Spirit than drunkenness (almost always accompanied by a woe), and it carries great shame with it. In the past, drunkards would drink in the night, as if they were ashamed of their behavior (1 Thessalonians 5). However, nowadays, many are drunk during the day, and even in the morning. Those who are addicted to it are extremely difficult to recover (Proverbs 23:35).

Furthermore, we acknowledge that these sins can be separated and distinct from one another. One can be guilty of excessive eating or gluttony while being free from drunkenness, and vice versa. As the holy man Augustine said, "Drunkenness, O Lord, is far from me, but gluttony has often prevailed over me" (Confessions, Book 10, Chapter 17). Therefore, we should not consider ourselves free from sin when both of these vices cannot be attributed to us. It is not uncommon for individuals who consider themselves sober to be more vigilant against drunkenness than gluttony. It is also common for some to encourage others to indulge excessively in eating, while being cautious about drinking, as if there were not the same dangers in one as in the other, and as if the same rule did not apply to both.

Additionally, we recognize that there are multiple ways in which individuals can become guilty of these sins, and there are varying degrees of involvement. While not all may be equally gross, all are sinful. Therefore, we should consider these evils from various perspectives, establish general boundaries that we should not cross, and provide some specific examples.

For Gluttony in general, there is a Latin verse:

"Eating too quickly, luxuriously, excessively, eagerly."

In these five words, there are five ways of being guilty of it:

1. By hastening, that is, desiring food and drink before it is appropriate. Thus, eating and drinking out of habit, for socializing, for carnal pleasure, etc., rather than out of hunger or thirst, is gluttony, and is condemned in the Bible, Ecclesiastes 10:16-17: "Woe to you, O land, when your king is a child... Blessed are you, O land, when your king is the son of nobles and your princes feast at the proper time."
2. By indulging in luxurious and expensive kinds of food and drink. Lavishly provided feasts are often guilty of this excess, as

mentioned in Proverbs 30:8: "Give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread." Similarly, the rich glutton in Luke 16:19 is described as "feasting sumptuously every day."

3. By overindulging in quantity, consuming too much food to the point of physical discomfort, hindering us from fulfilling our general Christian duties and our specific callings. Ecclesiastes 10:17 warns against this: "Blessed are you, O land, when your king is the son of nobles and your princes feast at the proper time—for strength and not for drunkenness!"
4. By desiring food too eagerly, approaching it with a lustful appetite. Proverbs 23:3 states: "Do not crave his delicacies, for that food is deceptive."
5. By preparing food excessively, specifically when it is extravagantly dressed and presented to please carnal appetites and taste preferences, emphasizing its fineness and other unnecessary intricacies.

In particular, we can sin by exceeding the proper limits of food and drink, as well as by failing to meet those limits, which can also hinder us from glorifying God and being fit for our duties. Paul exhorts Timothy to use a little wine as needed (1 Timothy 5:23), recognizing that moderation is important.

2. Let us also consider the sin of gluttony in relation to the food and drink we consume. Some may fail, as mentioned earlier, by being overly particular about the quality of their meals, in addition to consuming excessive quantities. Moreover, many approach eating and drinking in a very sensual and carnal manner, satisfying their appetites excessively. Solomon speaks of this in Proverbs 23:1-3 and Isaiah 5:11-12.

3. We should examine this sin both in terms of how it affects ourselves and how it influences others. When we cause others to eat or drink excessively, we lead them into sin, and both ways are sinful. The latter is particularly condemned in Habakkuk 2:15, although worldly individuals often view it as a form of entertainment. Even those who appear more restrained are often unconcerned about this matter, while many seem to believe that they cannot truly welcome guests into their homes unless they encourage them to indulge in excess.
4. Gluttony should be considered in terms of the action itself and the desire for it. Just as there is fornication in the act and desire for it, the same applies to drunkenness and gluttony. As stated in Philippians 3:19, people become slaves to their appetites, and their primary concern is to satisfy their physical cravings. To be given to wine (1 Timothy 3:3) and to delight in it when it sparkles in the cup (Proverbs 23:31) are condemned.
5. We must recognize that failing in this area is morally inappropriate for anyone, even according to the standards of non-believers, and spiritually unsuitable for a Christian. When a person's eating and drinking is governed solely by sensual or, at best, physical considerations and customary occasions, without being guided by Christian principles and without aiming for the ultimate goal of bringing glory to God, it falls short of what is expected of Christians.
6. We can view these sins either in terms of the action itself or its consequences. The act refers to the excessive consumption of food and drink, regardless of whether negative effects follow. The effects can manifest as personal disturbances or causing conflict with others. The sin primarily lies in the act itself, although the sinfulness of the effects should not be underestimated, as some may believe. Even if there are no visible signs of misconduct or disturbance in a person's behavior, the act itself can still be sinful. Hence, Isaiah 5:22

pronounces a woe upon those who are mighty in drinking wine, not because they are strong (which is a natural quality) or because they become intoxicated, but because their strength enables them to consume more, relying

7. Let us also consider the circumstances of eating and drinking. Sometimes it is acceptable to partake in slightly more extravagant meals and enjoy them cheerfully. At other times, abstinence is required. While there is no specific time set for abstaining from food and drink or for fasting, as God has left that to our discretion, it cannot be denied that if someone refuses to ever skip a meal or forgo supper in order to have more time and be in a better state for prayer, to promote self-discipline, or to show empathy with Joseph's affliction, they would be guilty of this sin. See Isaiah 22:13-14, where some are cursed for slaughtering oxen and sheep, eating meat, and drinking wine. Indeed, there are occasions when God calls for restraint in the otherwise lawful enjoyment of His creation.
8. We can consider eating and drinking in terms of the expenses we incur for our meals and the affection or delight we have towards them. This also relates to the time we spend on them. Hence, the curse mentioned in Isaiah 5:11 warns those who rise early and linger long over strong drink. Spending excessive time in this manner, even when the more obvious negative effects are absent, will bring a curse from God. He has given us time for other purposes, and He expects us to value it as much as our possessions, health, or any other blessing. If we refrain from squandering or misusing our resources in eating and drinking due to the fear of sin, why should we take more liberty with our precious time?
9. Consider eating and drinking in terms of their appropriate use for their intended purposes, such as providing strength, maintaining health, and honoring God. When they are used without regard for their intended purposes and without proper

timing (as God provides all things, Psalm 145:15, and as we should pray for all things, Matthew 6), it becomes excessive and sinful, as stated in Ecclesiastes 10:16-17. The land is cursed when its leaders fail to observe the boundaries set for these activities, which implies that consuming food and drink without considering their intended purposes and appropriate timing is a breach and excessive.

10. Finally, we should consider eating and drinking in terms of either crossing the line into evil or having the appearance of evil. In either case, there is a transgression, as we are not only called to abstain from evil but also from anything that even appears to be evil, as mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 5:22.

What has been said applies to both sins of drinking and eating. Now, we will provide some general guidelines that, if observed, will help uncover the sins present in the use of food and drink, whether it be through excess or deficiency.

The first rule is to have the right intention in both eating and drinking, which has three aspects:

1. The highest aspect is to eat and drink for the glory of God, as stated by the Apostle in 1 Corinthians 10:30. We can sin either by being deficient or excessive, by rendering ourselves incapable of fulfilling any duty in God's worship or by neglecting this purpose. Therefore, this rule states that we should be guided by the desire to glorify God the most in the quality, quantity, timing, and other aspects of our eating and drinking.
2. The subordinate aspect is to consider others in all these matters. Hence, in 1 Corinthians 8:9 and Romans 14:20, there is a warning that those who eat causing offense will face consequences. By frequently visiting taverns, for example, even if we do not exceed in drinking, we can encourage others to follow our example to a greater extent, or it may give them a

reason to misjudge and misinterpret our actions. Similarly, indulging in unlawful enjoyments in a too carnal and jovial manner can give carnal individuals the impression that we find happiness in these things, just as they do.

3. Another aspect is our own well-being and refreshment in the use of food and drink. Therefore, if we weaken and impair ourselves through excessive indulgence, we are sinning against this purpose.
4. Consider the act itself of eating and drinking. If it involves excessive indulgence in delicate or extravagant types of food and drink or consuming too much in quantity or spending an excessive amount of time on them, it is sinful.
5. Consider the manner in which we seek and excessively delight in creaturely enjoyments. If we eagerly pursue them, become restless and anxious about them, as mentioned in Matthew 6:25, and become overly preoccupied with them to the extent that it hinders contentment and disturbs the peaceful state of mind, then there is sinful excess.
6. Consider the effects in various aspects:
7. In relation to a person's financial situation or family, one sins when they eat or drink beyond what they can afford or sustain, causing themselves, their spouse, and children to experience scarcity or deprivation afterward.
8. In relation to one's occupation, excessive eating or drinking can distract a person from their work, causing them to break appointments and neglect their responsibilities. It can also hinder their ability to speak or perform tasks related to their profession.
9. In regard to the body, excessive indulgence in food or drink weakens, dulls, or negatively affects one's physical condition.

This is referred to as "inflaming" in Isaiah 5:12 and is not acceptable.

10. Consider its impact on a person's reason, as it can impair their ability to think and judge properly. When it leads to a state of fury or madness, turning individuals into irrational beings in their behavior, it is excessive and should be avoided.
11. Examine its effect on the spiritual duties of a person's Christian calling, such as prayer, reading, hearing the Word, and repentance. Since these obligations are constant, and our refreshments should contribute to a more cheerful performance of them, anything that hinders or makes one unfit for them, leading to omission, formality, or drowsiness, is not beneficial.
12. Consider its influence on the serious inward frame of the mind required for those who walk with God, maintain communion with Him, and are filled with the Spirit. Anything that obstructs spiritual consolation, weakens the graces of the Spirit, or hinders their exercise is sinful. Feasting ourselves may appear to foster laziness, sensuality, and other lusts, feeding our flesh instead of promoting mortification.
13. Examine its impact on our corruptions and the promotion of mortification. If it dulls and weakens the graces of the Spirit or encourages sinful desires, it is sinful. Feasting ourselves can be seen as fostering our corruptions of laziness, sensuality, and other lusts.
14. Consider it in relation to its opposite, sobriety and temperance. Anything that is not sober is excessive, and vice versa. Sobriety not only avoids excess but also involves a controlled and moderate use of created things. Thus, excess occurs when both the mind and body lack sobriety in the use of these things.
15. Consider it in relation to its end (as mentioned earlier). If it does not lead to the honouring of God, if it hinders us from being

useful to our loved ones and others by consuming our time or resources that could have been used to provide for them, if it hinders us from fulfilling our duties or contemplating our own mortality, then it is sinfully excessive.

16. Consider it in light of death and the second coming of Christ. Our disposition and conduct in everything should be such that we are not caught off guard. In Luke 21:34, Jesus warns against being overwhelmed with surfeiting, gluttony, drunkenness, and the cares of this life, lest the day of His return comes upon us unexpectedly. He connects these sins with worldly concerns, indicating that even from an inward state of mind, influenced by sensual desires, one can be unprepared for that day, even if it doesn't manifest outwardly.

Now, put what has been said to the test, and you will find that not only those who become incapacitated, stagger, vomit, or lose their reason due to excessive drinking are considered guilty of these evils in Scripture. Many more will be sadly revealed when the Lord comes to hold them accountable. If He were to call many to account for their eating or drinking at the moment, it would be a terrible surprise for them. It is noted (Matthew 24:39) as evidence of the sensuality and complacency of the ancient world that they continued eating and drinking without knowledge until the flood came. And what the Lord says afterward is even more terrifying and distressing: "So shall it be at the coming of the Son of Man." Oh, fear and reflect seriously on this when you are indulging in your cups, and after them. Do not imagine that you are only guilty when you are behaving like mindless beasts; for the condemnation of drunkenness in Scripture includes all excess in drinking and any behavior that hinders us from fulfilling our responsibilities, even if our reasoning is not always impaired.

Drunkenness does not require the person to intentionally and purposefully seek to get drunk; it is enough that they willingly drink (as their will cannot be completely forced), even if they do not desire the ensuing effects. It is the act itself, not just the effect, that is the

true sin. If there were any fear of God, sense of duty, or shame of dishonesty, there would not be a need for many admonitions against these evils. Holy men who have committed these sins have brought sorrow upon themselves and invoked curses upon their children, as seen in the examples of Noah and Lot. Their falls and examples should not be imitated or used to diminish the gravity of the guilt, as they unfortunately often are. Instead, they serve as warning signs to scare and deter people from such actions.

It is not easy to determine which type of individuals it is most unbecoming for, as it is unbecoming for every person. It is even bestial and against nature, as it not only temporarily suspends the exercise of reason (like sleep), but also renders individuals incapable of acting reasonably and transforms them into a beastly fury. How unbecoming is it for elderly people who should set an example of sobriety? How unbecoming is it for young people, whose youth should be spent differently? How unbecoming is it for average individuals, who should be moderate in their behavior? And most notably, how abominable is it for women, even in the eyes of the pagans? In summary, fornication, wine, and new wine "take away the heart," as stated in Hosea 4:11. They dehumanize and feminize men, as previously mentioned, transforming them into beasts. In the past, people were so ashamed of drunkenness that those who indulged in it typically did so during the night (although some did rise early in the morning to pursue strong drink, Isaiah 5:11). When people do not distance themselves from the sin of drunkenness at the outset but instead take liberties and find cheer in it, they soon fall under its power and become enslaved beasts. They become bewitched by it, making it incredibly difficult to break free from its allurements and entanglements (Proverbs 23:35, last verse).

If it is asked whether men or women, when their health requires vomiting, may excessively drink as a substitute for medicine?

Answer: 1. It cannot be denied that in some diseases, certain types of drinks are allowed in larger quantities than in good health. 2. A

distinction should be made between different types of drinks. Some are not intoxicating, meaning that consuming a large quantity of them will not impair one's reasoning abilities. Others are such that excess consumption not only affects the body and mind but also completely impairs and eliminates the use of reason and judgment. The first type of drink (which is more properly medicinal) may be consumed lawfully. However, it is never permissible for a person to exceed in the consumption of a drink that disturbs their reason. This is sinful in itself and expressly against God's command. It defaces His image in us, which is manifested in knowledge. It is derogatory to this image and is considered a work of the flesh (Galatians 5:21). It excludes individuals from the Kingdom of Heaven, just like fornication and theft. Therefore, it cannot be deemed lawful under any pretext. See 1 Corinthians 6:11-12. It is also contrary to an honorable Christian walk and the putting on of Christ (Romans 13:13). It is always true, as stated in Romans 3:8, that evil is not to be done so that good may come of it. God has not made exceptions for drunkenness any more than for fornication, for which some may try to find justifications. Furthermore, inducing vomiting is not the proper purpose of drinking (referring to the aforementioned type of drink, which has never been approved). Moreover, excessive drinking leads to many other sins. Who can tell if, in a state of drunkenness, individuals may blaspheme, curse, commit adultery, murder, or similar acts? Should they actively impair their reason through a practice that may lead to such abominations? Is it not possible for death to come in such circumstances? Should it not always be anticipated? In such a state, what condition would a person be in to face death? Furthermore, the ailment that follows excessive drinking is not like the effects of medicine, which only make one sick or temporarily indisposed, with any influence on the brain and reason being incidental and indirect. However, with the disorder that follows drunkenness, the person is put into a state of fury and confusion, in which the carnal and unregenerate part of them often gains a significant advantage.

If it is further asked, what is to be considered regarding actions committed in drunkenness?

Answer: Some points were mentioned regarding this in relation to the first commandment, but further we say:

1. Drunkenness being a voluntary act, it cannot excuse but rather makes the person doubly guilty. Firstly, it makes the individual guilty of the act itself. Secondly, it brings upon them the incapacity that disposes them to commit that act and many more. In this respect, a person who commits murder or any other sin while drunk is more guilty than another person who commits the same sin without being under the influence of alcohol, because two sins coincide in the former and not in the latter. Therefore,
2. Although the act of murder, swearing, etc. by someone who is sober may be considered more deliberate and intentional, and in that sense more gross than the same acts committed by someone who is drunk, because the former is more immediately the result of deliberation and choice, it does not lessen the guilt of the person under the influence of alcohol. Drunkenness aggravates guilt due to the reasons mentioned. Once, when someone was asked to spare a person who had committed murder while drunk and to attribute it to the influence of alcohol, the reply was that they would do so, but they would hang up the flagon from which the wine came. It was just that the person faced punishment since they made themselves in such a state. If they had not indulged in that wine, the sin might have been prevented.

Let me mention some specific offenses that may be more prevalent and less scrutinized than bestial drunkenness but are nonetheless detestable to God. Please do not take offense at the mentioning of these, as they can be condemned by the previous rules through logical deduction.

The first is the unrestrained liberty taken by people in relation to food, as if only their appetite or desire were their guiding principle. This can be observed in excessive and extravagant feasting, where sensuality prevails over usefulness. Often, those who are most wasteful and extravagant in this regard are lacking in charity. They may indulge their own flesh or gain the reputation of being good-hearted and generous hosts, even though it is for those who have no need, while little or nothing is provided for the support of the needy saints or others. Much more is withheld in this manner than is appropriate, yet they consider it to be acceptable.

2. Another issue to consider is excessive drinking, even if one does not become drunk. The practice of drinking for extended periods, commonly known as "four hours" drinking, is clearly not done for the purpose of gaining strength. As it is evident from Ecclesiastes 10:16-17, it can be categorized as drinking for the sake of drunkenness. If people were to examine this closely, they would discover that more money is spent on such drinking in a year than is given to charitable causes. More time is devoted to these activities than to religious duties, and there is greater enthusiasm for attending them than for hearing sermons. People find it difficult to go out for any other purpose, or to attend to their business, but when it comes to drinking with their companions, they can manage both. Proverbs 23:29-30 asks, "Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaints? Who has needless bruises? Who has bloodshot eyes? Those who linger over wine, who go to sample bowls of mixed wine." Here, we can see who are the ones that experience woe, God's curse, and other problems—they are the tipplers, those who spend a long time drinking strong drink, regardless of the quantity. Isaiah 5:22 pronounces a woe upon those who are "mighty to drink wine" and "men of strength to mingle strong drink." Surely, God has created human beings and given them time for a purpose other than this, and He has not given His creatures to be abused in this manner. This cannot be considered eating and drinking in due season, and I am

convinced that it is not for necessity, for our own health, for the edification of others, or for the glory of God.

What then can be said in its defense? The claim that it helps to pass the time (which many use as an excuse) is actually part of its guilt and a just accusation, for it wastes the time that should be spent more wisely and diligently. Moreover, the cheerfulness often associated with such drinking is often carnal. Spiritual discussions and edifying conversations are rarely found in such gatherings. When do you pray for the sanctified use of that time? Is fellowship centered around drinking? If at all, it is infrequent. Some indulge in cursed four-hour drinking sessions, despite the fact that all of God's creatures are good when sanctified by the word and prayer. I urge you to refrain from this practice, especially those of you in positions of government, whether civil or ecclesiastical. Do not cause others to stumble through your example, nor strengthen them in their wickedness (you, who should be examples of good), by encouraging them to engage in drunkenness at taverns or alehouses when they see you indulging. It is disgraceful to hear of the extent of drunkenness of this kind, even among young men and others from whom we would least expect it.

3. Another issue to address is the frequent drinking that occurs during business transactions, without regard for the true purpose and nature of drinking. It seems as if drinking is honored and treated as a means to aid in negotiations. Unfortunately, this has become an epidemic practice, and it is difficult for a person with many business dealings to completely avoid it, considering the attitudes of others involved. However, if everyone were to make a concerted effort, it would not be difficult to reform this behavior. But if some individuals do not initiate the change, how can it be accomplished? It is truly strange and unnatural that a person's appetite, health, the time of day, or their regular diet should not determine when or how much they drink. Instead, the timing and amount of drinking are dictated by the occurrence of specific business deals or

transactions. What kind of creature would allow itself to be governed in such a manner? It is disheartening to observe the irrational and almost beastly practices that exist among us.

4. Another issue that needs to be addressed is the practice of drinking toasts and pressuring others to join in (known as pledging), thereby forcing, tempting, or causing others to drink, even though they may do so willingly. This is one of the most provoking behaviors associated with drunkenness and a severe distortion of the purpose for which God has given us food and drink. Neither health nor necessity justifies this practice. Firstly, it is specifically condemned in Habakkuk 2:15: "Woe to him who gives his neighbor drink." It serves as a great incitement and provocation to drinking, often leading to drunkenness. Secondly, while each person should be guided by their own appetite when it comes to drinking, this practice allows one person to dictate the quantity and type of drink for others. It is unreasonable to expect everyone to drink the same amount and the same kind of beverage at the same time. Even in the case of King Ahasuerus' feast in the book of Esther (Esther 1:8), this practice was forbidden.

Furthermore, what is the purpose of drinking toasts? It cannot be for the health of another person whom we respect, because that should be sought through the approved means of prayer, which is the way in which Christians ought to have fellowship for one another's well-being. Moreover, those who are most eager to drink toasts are often the least fervent in their prayers for the health of those whom they claim to respect. It was a wise saying of a notable person, when urged to drink the health of the king: "By your leave, I will pray for the king's health and drink for my own." Regardless of the intention behind drinking toasts, the numerous negative consequences associated with it, such as drunkenness and quarrels that arise from it, and the resentment that people feel if they perceive being slighted either during their own drinking or when their name is mentioned in a toast, demonstrate that those who engage in this practice place

more importance on the act of drinking than on any other form of respect. They argue that if someone does not drink as much as they do, they are not showing proper regard.

In social settings, if individuals drink toasts only when necessary (and even then, it is merely a formality) and do not pressure others to join them, it may be considered indifferent. However, considering the abuses associated with it, the potential for offense it carries, and how it often becomes a catalyst for others to indulge further and continue the practice beyond the original intention of the initiator, it is much safer to abstain from it altogether. Alternatively, if people drink unnecessarily and pressure others to do the same, it is abominable. The perspectives of the Church Fathers on this matter can be found in Mr. Bolton's directions for walking comfortably with God.

If we closely examine the practice itself (although long-standing customs can weaken our understanding of things), it is likely to have originated from pagan idolaters who offered libations to Jupiter, Bacchus, and others. If it is assumed that drinking toasts helps the health of others, that cannot be expected from God, as He has made no such promise. Therefore, it must come from the Devil. Among the heathens, it was known as "Phiala Jovis," and drinking toasts was considered a form of drink offering or sacrifice to their idols on behalf of those mentioned in the toasts. There is no trace of this practice in Christianity, nor any logical reason for it. Experience has shown that many people become somewhat superstitious in its use, as if refusing to participate would be detrimental or disrespectful to the person mentioned. The Devil has likely used it as a vehicle to introduce excessive drinking into the world. It is therefore safest to abstain from it altogether, and there is no risk in doing so. References supporting this viewpoint include Ambrosius' "De Ieiunio," chapters 13 and 18, Augustine's "Sermon on the Seasons," 231-232, Basil's "Sermon 14 on the Epistle to the Corinthians," and Cartwright's Confession. In line with this, the following Latin lines are worth noting:

"Una salus sanis nullam potestare salutem, Non est in pota vera salute salus."

Which can be translated as:

"To drink no healths is good health for the whole, In drinking healths, true health we do not behold."

We believe that expressing genuine goodwill towards a person who is present while drinking to their health can be distinguished from the aforementioned practice. Furthermore, taking the opportunity to remember others who are absent may also be acceptable. Since eating and drinking together is a way for us to express our familiarity and closeness to one another, having some signs or occasions to show kindness and remembrance to those we respect would not be inappropriate.

Another questionable practice is drinking at the birth of children, not only during their christening or baptism (where, as seen in the example of circumcision, some degree of Christian joyfulness may be permitted), but also during subsequent visits while the woman is in childbirth or recovering from it. It becomes a debauched time for many, as they engage in constant drinking instead of attending to their responsibilities and the purpose for which God has called them. It is disheartening that neither the receiver nor the giver considers the burden and expense involved, yet both willingly partake in it.

In cases where women in such condition are in need, it would be acceptable to provide them with some drink or, even better, with money to purchase it themselves. However, when there is no lack but rather an excess of drink, adding more serves no purpose other than maintaining a supposed social status. This is not the intended use of such gatherings, nor does it foster the kind of fellowship that Christians should have with one another.

Considering the sinful misuse of time, food, and drink that occurs in this custom, along with the shame associated with accepting drinks

as if one were poor or in need of a favor, it is best to refrain from it. Unless one is genuinely in need, it is advised not to allow strangers or others to bring drinks into their homes. Instead, strive to embrace Christian fellowship. It is also worth considering that fewer visits in such cases would be more appropriate, providing greater comfort and benefit to the person who is unwell.

Another concerning practice is drinking at Lick-wakes or Dergies, as you call them, which occur after the death and burial of friends or neighbors. It is as if the occasion serves as a call and gathering to drink. However, if drunkenness and excessive drinking are unsuitable at any time, they are especially inappropriate on such occasions. Is this the way to embrace a Christian mindset, to contemplate one's own approaching death and prepare for it? Instead, it turns the house of mourning into a house of feasting, causing people to forget the inevitability of death that the living should reflect upon.

Is it right to burden a grieving family, who have lost a loved one, by imposing yourself and feasting in their house? Does this enable the living to properly grasp the impact of the loss, or does it distract them by requiring the provision of food, drink, and servants for your enjoyment? It is likely that prayer is neglected in such circumstances, and sorrow is overshadowed by this heathenish way of attempting to drown care and thought. If the grieving parties are already sad, this type of fellowship is entirely inappropriate. If they are in danger of not fully recognizing the severity of the situation, such practices only serve to stumble and divert their attention. It is a heathenish, hateful, and abominable custom.

Where has it ever been observed that frequent company, particularly of this kind, during such a time proves beneficial? Often, it has led to abuse and unfortunate consequences. It seems that remnants of old, superstitious Popery have not been fully eradicated from the hearts of some.

If what we have said is true, that eating and drinking should be done in moderation and at appropriate times for strength and for the glory of God, we are convinced that it contradicts all these harmful practices, which are unbecoming of Christians. Therefore, if you value the truth of God or your own reputation and esteem, let go of these things and abandon them. Are we burdening you excessively? Doesn't the alternative proposed by us appear more Christian and civilized? If we cannot persuade you in matters that are detrimental to yourselves, and where reform is within your power, how can we convince you? Surely, those who are nearing the end of their lives find such practices repulsive, and their conscience condemns them. Therefore, since we are only stating what your conscience will confirm, let us prevail upon you to bring about a reformation of these harmful practices that dishonor God and are detrimental to yourselves.

There is one more matter I will briefly address: The excessive number of tavernkeepers, vintners, and hostlers is likely a violation of this commandment and serves as an occasion, if not a direct cause, of intemperance in drinking. The vast number of such establishments cannot be deemed necessary for legitimate use but rather seems to exist to encourage the abuse of alcohol. This occupation has become so prevalent that those desperate for a means of livelihood resort to it as a last resort. Those who engage in this profession often become partakers in the sins committed within their premises, which they overlook for their own personal gain. Particularly, they may become complicit in the sins of impurity and promiscuity, as habitual drunkards tend to be immoral and lascivious individuals. Therefore, those in this profession should actively discourage nighttime drinking by refusing to serve those who request it, in order to avoid becoming participants in their sins.

From what has been said, it is evident that these types of drinkings and tipplings, which are neither in season nor for the right purpose, are base and unbecoming of Christians. We cannot pray for them in

good faith, nor can we expect God's blessing upon them. When the Lord comes, those who have indulged in these sins will undoubtedly wish they had engaged in other pursuits. This concludes the discussion on the Seventh Commandment.

The Eighth Commandment

Thou shalt not Steal. Exodus 20:15

We now come to discuss the Eighth Commandment: "Thou shalt not steal." In the previous commandment, the Lord addressed the lust of the flesh and the misuse of our bodies. In this commandment, He regulates our behavior regarding wealth and possessions, setting limits on our desires and covetousness.

The overall purpose of this commandment is to guide us in our dealings with the material possessions of ourselves and others, ensuring that we do not wrong them or excessively profit at their expense. Any misconduct in this regard is encompassed under the category of stealing, emphasizing its detestable nature.

From the general intention of this commandment, we can observe the following points: 1. The Lord approves of the concept of ownership among His people, as stealing would be meaningless otherwise. 2. Individuals do not have the freedom to handle worldly possessions according to their own whims and desires; there are rules set forth to govern their conduct in relation to these matters. Engaging in activities such as buying, selling, and the like carries a religious aspect, just as praying and listening to the Word do, despite the differences in their nature.

To further explore the commandment, we should consider the following: 1. The sin of stealing and the corresponding positive duties that accompany it. 2. The various forms and types of theft that can occur. 3. How theft can be committed. 4. Additional aspects worth considering, such as specific sins that are prohibited, corresponding duties that are commanded, and questions that may arise regarding topics like charity, usury, making bargains or contracts, and the pursuit of wealth, among others.

The essence of this commandment can be understood from Ephesians 4:28: "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth." Additionally, 1 Thessalonians 4:6 states, "That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified." Leviticus 19:11, 13, 35-36 also provides guidance: "Ye shall not steal, neither deal falsely, neither lie one to another... Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbor, neither rob him... The wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee all night until the morning... Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in meteyard, in weight or in measure. Just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin shall ye have: I am the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt."

Theft is strictly defined as taking something that belongs to another without their knowledge and to their detriment. However, in a broader sense, it refers to any impropriety concerning wealth, whether it involves wronging our neighbor or excessively profiting ourselves. This encompasses the acquisition, retention, and use of riches. Though expressed concisely, it encompasses much.

1. Inordinate behavior refers to individuals misunderstanding the proper purpose and balanced use of wealth. It occurs when they exceed the appropriate limits or fall short of them, or when they employ improper means to achieve their goals. This excessive love of money or riches, which is the root of all evil, becomes idolatry when riches become the ultimate end pursued solely to satisfy worldly desires. Alternatively, when the love of money serves as a means to gratify other lusts, such as the pride of life, it is also considered inordinate as it extends beyond what is necessary for us.
2. Inordinate behavior can also manifest through excessive desire for wealth, determined to become rich at any cost, as mentioned

in 1 Timothy 6:9. This dangerous attitude disregards the importance of maintaining proportional measures. It involves both excess, spending excessive time seeking more than what is necessary, and deficiency, wasting time in lazy, careless, and negligent pursuits.

3. Inordinate behavior can also occur through the use of improper means to acquire or retain wealth, such as through unlawful conquest or engaging in forbidden occupations. These unlawful methods can be categorized as theft, robbery, and extortion, which will be further discussed later.

Furthermore, we refer to this inordinate behavior when either our neighbor's property or our own is harmed. Our neighbor's estate may be wronged even if our own is not benefited. For instance, acts of destruction, arson, and the like carried out out of hatred or malice can cause harm. Negligence can also lead to harm, affecting both our neighbor and ourselves. However, such negligence is condemned in Scripture. Exodus 22:5 and the subsequent verses provide laws concerning this matter.

In addition, inordinate behavior can manifest in terms of profiting ourselves or our neighbor and improving our own or their estate. There is no doubt that inordinate behavior can occur in the acquisition, retention, and utilization of our own or our neighbor's possessions. This includes obtaining them unlawfully or at an unjust price due to another's foolishness or negligence, among other factors.

To continue, we will examine the forbidden sin in this commandment, which can be categorized under the aforementioned three aspects: rapine (forcible seizure or robbery), theft, and shameful gain.

Rapine encompasses all forms of violence, both on land, whether carried out by smaller parties like robbers and plunderers, or by stronger entities such as conquerors and army generals who meddle

with what does not belong to them, which is considered robbery in the eyes of the Lord (Habakkuk 1:6). At sea, this is known as piracy. There is a true and pointed response attributed to a pirate who was captured by Alexander the Great, when asked how he could live that way. The pirate replied that he was doing the same as Alexander, only on a smaller scale, as Alexander took away kingdoms while he only took a portion of their means. Alexander exerted greater strength on land, while the pirate used less strength at sea.

Regarding piracy, whether it involves capturing or robbing the goods of innocent seafarers, as is practiced by many today, I urge all pirates and their associates in Christian kingdoms and commonwealths to seriously consider the words of the highly learned Hugo Grotius in his book "On the Law of War and Peace," particularly in Book 3, Chapter 18, Section 2, and more specifically Section 4. In these sections, he asserts with great reason (as he was a master in this regard) and with religious considerations, that even when strict justice is not violated, a person can still sin against the duty of loving others, especially as prescribed by Christian law (which here only confirms the moral law, the perfect and perpetually binding rule of life and behavior). Therefore, if it is evident that such acts of capturing, robbing, or spoiling will primarily harm the innocent, subjecting them to great calamities and miseries, even including those who owe us debts, it would be a merciless and cruel act. Moreover, if such spoiling or robbing is of no significant importance, neither bringing an end to the war nor diminishing the public and main force of the enemy, then such gain should be considered unworthy of a morally upright person, and especially of a Christian, as it is solely derived from the misfortunes of the times. Plutarch criticized Crassus for amassing most of his wealth through robbery and spoiling during times of turmoil and conflict, viewing the calamities of his era as his greatest gain. Whatever arguments may be made for pressed men and other subjects who, under the direct call of the authorities, engage in naval battles and are not obligated to scrutinize the justness of the war as long as it does not appear unjust to them, undoubtedly those who go pirating and their

accomplices, seeking a share of the plunder, are obliged to rigorously and carefully examine the justness of the war. They willingly offer themselves to such actions and even seek access to it as a special privilege, which they can choose to avoid if they wish. Therefore, in this case, on the slightest doubt or hesitation, they ought to refrain. If they continue and do not seek satisfaction for their consciences regarding the utmost justice of the cause, they make themselves as guilty in their position as the prince, state, or commonwealth that engages in an unjust war, as whatever is not done in faith and from a conviction of its warrantableness is sin.

Even if a war were unquestionably just, the principles laid down by Grotius should be considered, especially by those who, driven by a covetous desire for gain (though often only using the weak pretext of weakening the enemy, which is usually the least of their intentions), engage in this course of action. Such actions not only crush many innocent individuals but are also often accompanied by bloodshed and loss of life. It cannot be readily denied that individuals have the right to defend themselves and their property, which are the means of their livelihood and the support of their families, earned through hard work and risk. If they can strive to preserve their possessions and protect themselves against those who would spoil and rob them, then it is worth serious consideration whether, in this case, the assailants who wound, maim, or kill poor individuals peacefully pursuing their occupations for their sustenance, in their lawful (at least not yet deemed unlawful in this particular circumstance by Grotius) defense, can be completely free from the charge of murder, especially if the justice of the war is doubtful or not conscientiously examined. And if the aggressors themselves are wounded or killed by these defenders, whether they will not bear some culpable responsibility for their own self-murder, and thus be implicated in the guilt not only of violating the Eighth Commandment but also the Sixth Commandment. Furthermore, whether goods and an estate acquired or increased through such means can be enjoyed and possessed with true peace and the well-founded expectation of God's blessing, which enriches without adding sorrow. This, I emphasize,

calls for serious consideration. Additionally, it has been observed that such actions have sometimes caused these acquired estates to quickly dissipate and become a detriment to the previously improved condition. It is worth noting that not unrelated to this matter is the Christian and serious Act enacted against Prize-goods by the Town Council of Edinburgh, the capital city of this kingdom, during the time of the esteemed Mr. Knox (as one blessed fruit of the Gospel among many others) on May 10, 1561, the very year following the public establishment of the Reformed Protestant Religion in Scotland. The content of this Act is as follows: It is ordained that no one within this city shall purchase any Prize-goods, under the penalty of losing their freedom forever and facing punishment at the discretion of the civil magistrate, as it is contrary to a good conscience and because we are obligated to treat every Christian brother as we would like to be treated. Furthermore, the goods are not to be sold by any godly individual within this city.

This act of rapine, when accompanied by a certain pretext, becomes oppression. It occurs when an individual, through power, favor, or similar means, goes beyond their rightful claim and causes more harm to the party they contend with than their title or right would justify. This can be seen in the actions of great men over their inferiors, such as masters over servants, landlords over tenants, and magistrates over people or subjects. In all these cases, those who use their position of power to distress others, to force them to relinquish their rights or withhold what is rightfully theirs, or to exact from them something that is detrimental to their property, even if the person being oppressed appears willing to comply, are guilty of oppression. Additionally, overpowering others in legal disputes and courts, and using money to suppress their rights, is viewed by God as oppression.

Moving on to theft, it specifically refers to all ways in which one wrongs another without resorting to violence. Theft can be further divided into four categories.

1. If it involves wrongdoing against a Commonwealth, it is called *peculatus*. This term encompasses not only private individuals or magistrates stealing or robbing public treasure, but also collectors, treasurers, and others in similar positions. When they misappropriate what belongs to public use, they become guilty of *peculatus*. This also applies to those entrusted with the custody and distribution of assets belonging to corporations and societies. If they misappropriate these assets, as Judas did in a certain respect when he misused the funds entrusted to him for unauthorized purposes, they are considered thieves, even though the crime may also involve sacrilege.
2. When theft relates to something designated for religious purposes, it is called sacrilege. References to this can be found in Leviticus 5:15, Malachi 3:8, and Acts 5:2-3. Although we may not have items deemed holy through consecration, anything set apart by God's command for sacred purposes cannot be misappropriated without sin. Examples include churches or buildings constructed for worship, funds designated for the support of ministers and religious practices, and money collected for the poor. If these things are specifically allocated for their intended uses, why should their property rights be violated more than other forms of property? Even if someone argues that these are gifts from the magistrate and can be used as the magistrate pleases, I am not discussing the extraordinary power the magistrate may have in cases of necessity, where individual property rights may need to yield to the public good. In ordinary circumstances, however, the rights of the Church in these designated uses are no less significant than an individual's rights over their own property. Moreover, these items are given to God, so it is not within the magistrate's power to determine their usage as they please. The magistrate is duty-bound to allocate, maintain, and preserve them as an act of faithfulness in fulfilling their office.

3. There is a more severe form of theft related to kidnapping, which was more prevalent in the past when slavery existed and people took advantage of slaves. This can also occur when someone takes or entices another person's servant to the detriment of the servant's master or mistress. It is considered clear theft, although it is often practiced and not given much attention. Similarly, seducing children into false religions, bad marriages, evil company, drinking, prostitution, robbery, etc., or enticing them to run away from their parents and leave the country without justifiable cause, is condemned by the law and in 1 Timothy 1:10.
4. The fourth category is individual theft, which involves wronging a person in their personal and private property. This includes stealing money, clothing, household items, crops, livestock (horses, cows, sheep), merchandise, books, tools, etc., when they are taken without the owner's knowledge. This falls under the general concept of theft mentioned earlier.

Filthy lucre, or ill-gotten gain, refers to profit acquired through unlawful or dishonest means. This includes:

1. Niggardliness, where a person seeks to make significant profit even from the smallest and least valuable things. Such a person is often referred to as a miser or a niggard, someone who would cut a cumin seed and sell it.
2. Taking excessively and greedily when receiving gifts, to the detriment of the giver or others who are equally or even more in need, thus preventing them from receiving what they deserve.
3. Engaging in lowly occupations and positions solely for the sake of worldly gain, without any necessity, and thereby demeaning one's own station. This includes high-ranking individuals taking on menial jobs, depriving the poor, who have traditionally relied on such employment, of their livelihoods. It also applies to

ministers of the Gospel involving themselves in secular trades during times of peace within the Church, or resorting to the lowest forms of employment during times of trouble, even though there are other options available for their necessary support.

4. Resorting to vice and villainy for the sake of financial gain, such as engaging in prostitution, acting as a pimp or procurer, operating brothels, committing perjury, willingly promoting excessive drinking and drunkenness for the sake of profit, and enticing others to do the same, as long as it brings advantage to the tavern keeper, etc.
5. Exploiting others under the guise of legality, such as through usury, forging legal documents, using influence and bribery to manipulate the legal system and deprive others of their rights, purchasing disputed or encumbered estates to defraud creditors or force disadvantageous settlements, etc.
6. Undertaking excessive and unnecessary travel and labor to gain very little or insignificant returns.
7. Engaging in robbery and murder, as described in Proverbs 1:10-20.
8. Desecrating the dead, plundering tombs, taking offerings or valuable items from sacred places.
9. Participating in gambling, dice games, and stage plays, and gaining through any other dishonest or crooked means.

These actions are considered ill-gotten gain and are condemned.

Let us now delve further into the first division of inordinateness regarding rapine, theft, and unlawful or filthy gain. Consider the following:

1. How it harms others alone or how it benefits us as well.
2. Whether it involves direct theft or is carried out under the pretext of legality.
3. Whether it involves acquiring gifts or through mutual contracts and agreements.
4. Whether it concerns ourselves or others.
5. Whether it involves attaining, in which case it is called avarice or greed, or retaining, referred to as tenacity, niggardliness, and sordid parcimony, by not spending proportionately or not returning what has been unjustly acquired or taken from others, known as restitution (as spoken of by Zacheus in Luke 19:8).
6. Whether it occurs through an improper pursuit, such as gambling, or through the misuse of a lawful occupation.
7. Whether it involves wastefulness, depriving others of what should be bestowed upon them, or excessive hoarding that deprives us of the joy and comfort we could find in our possessions. These are characterized by prodigality or sordid parcimony, as mentioned in Proverbs 11:24.
8. Whether the wrongdoing is initially due to ignorance or continues even after becoming aware of it, in which case restitution must be made, as exemplified in Leviticus 5:15-16 and Abimelech's restitution of Abraham's wife after realizing the truth.

Oh, how people's attachment to worldly possessions leads them to devise various schemes to satisfy their desires with them! This Commandment is so broad that it becomes challenging to address all its specific aspects. In further exploration, we shall not confine ourselves to a rigid structure but instead strive to identify the direct violations, making it easier to discern the positive obligations and required duties.

Let us, therefore, consider its breach in terms of how it harms others, how it harms ourselves, and how it wrongfully seeks to benefit us or improve our own estate.

Regarding the first point, consider it in terms of quantity. Theft is theft whether it involves small or large matters, as long as it constitutes a real harm to others by taking what belongs to them. Just as a lie is a lie regardless of the subject, whether in major or minor things, this act of theft, whether in small or significant matters, will exclude one from the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:10). Similar to how drunkenness can occur with any amount of drink, not necessarily the largest quantity or the finest drink, theft can occur with small or ordinary things.

Consider, secondly, that theft is not only about physical action but also encompasses the intentions of the heart, much like adultery and murder. It is part of the evil treasure that resides in the heart, as mentioned by Christ (Matthew 12:35; 15:18-19).

Thirdly, theft may occur when the perpetrator is unaware of their wrongdoing, assuming that they are entitled to something that is actually unjust or owed to them. This happens when they neglect to seek knowledge or, even after knowing the truth, fail to restore what is due.

Fourthly, theft can be completely hidden, where the person who is wronged remains unaware of it. For instance, when someone deliberately withholds a right that would support the other person's case to their own detriment, and convinces them that they have no such right, it is still theft before God, even if the victim does not contest it.

Fifthly, theft is direct when someone knowingly takes something that belongs to another against their will.

Sixthly, the severity of theft can vary based on the perceived necessity or lack thereof on the part of the thief. If the stolen item is genuinely necessary for survival, it may not be considered theft. Similarly, if the item is commonly accepted and allowed by society, it may not be theft. For instance, the disciples plucking ears of corn,

which did not belong to them, were not considered thieves. The sin becomes more serious when it involves sacred or public property, when things are taken through violence and endangerment of life or when it causes significant harm to the neighbor. It is also more serious when it becomes a frequent practice or when it occurs within a position of trust.

Seventhly, theft can occur in contracts or bargains that harm our neighbors, such as by excessively sticking to clauses in legal documents beyond the original intent of the parties involved. This goes against the purpose of such contracts and the law.

Eighthly, theft can take place in buying or selling. In this case, it occurs when: 1. We prioritize our own gain without regard for our neighbors' well-being; 2. The item being sold is of poor quality, like the "refuse of wheat" mentioned in Amos 8:6; or when we intentionally sell something for more than its worth or deliberately degrade the value of an item during a purchase; or when we use counterfeit money as payment. 3. The measurement or weight is insufficient, falling short of what it should be, as mentioned in Amos 8:5. 4. The manner of selling involves the buyer devaluing the item and the seller exaggerating its worth, as described in Proverbs 20:14. Though some degree of this may be unavoidable, when done knowingly and deliberately on either side, it is a fault.

Lastly, theft can occur in the realm of just debts. This includes: 1. Non-payment; 2. Partial payment; 3. Delayed payment, which harms the creditor as much as withholding a portion of the debt; 4. Attempts to diminish the amount owed through manipulative means.

1. By pressuring and forcing a person to give up a portion of their property.
2. By employing indirect methods to lower the amount owed.
3. It is committed when advantage is taken of someone's necessity, such as: 1. Forcing them to sell at a lower price than what is fair

and without loss; 2. Selling at a higher price to a neighbor because we know they have no other option; 3. Imposing unreasonable terms on someone who needs money. These types of transactions are akin to the reprov'd act of selling the poor for a pair of shoes in Micah 8:5-6. It is worth noting that in certain cases, if others would not purchase such items and we do not need them ourselves, except for the benefit of our neighbor, seeking a reduction in price may be permissible.

4. It can occur through lawsuits, even when the law may appear to favor one party, as "summum jus" (strict application of the law) can often result in "summa injuria" (the highest injustice). Examples include: 1. Unnecessarily forcing others to sue for what is rightfully theirs; 2. Persisting in a case to the detriment of another based on a legal technicality that goes against the principles of fairness and equity. The first situation is condemned in 1 Corinthians 6:1 and the second in Job 31:21, where Job expresses his refusal to take advantage of the fatherless in the gate. Proverbs 3:29-30 also speaks to this matter.
5. A breach of this commandment occurs when we wrong our neighbor while in a position of trust, which represents a significant degree of theft.
 1. By giving advice to his detriment when he relies on and trusts our counsel.
 2. When advocates are not faithful.
 3. When business partners and those involved in negotiations are not faithful to one another.
 4. When servants, agents, treasurers, etc., are not faithful, entrusted with responsibilities like Joseph who had everything committed to him, or like the unjust steward who manipulated accounts dishonestly.
 5. Tutors of orphans and fatherless children particularly fail in this regard. With these individuals entrusted to their care,

their actions revolve around preying upon their estates, as long as they can do it discreetly and without detection. This is theft, robbery, oppression, and deceitful behavior at its highest degree.

6. There is a violation of this commandment through bribery when judges allow themselves to receive gifts, presents, bribes, or inducements, whether for perverting justice or for carrying out justice, which they are obligated to do without such influences. Those who allow themselves to be bribed for rendering just judgments may easily be tempted by a bribe to render unjust judgments. They all forget that judgment belongs to the Lord (Deuteronomy 1:17), that they should not judge for men but for the Lord (2 Chronicles 19:6), that they should be God-fearing, truthful individuals who detest covetousness (Exodus 18:21), that they should not show partiality in judgment but hear the small as well as the great (Deuteronomy 1:17), that they should not show favoritism to the poor or show deference to the powerful, but instead administer righteous judgment (Leviticus 19:15). They should not pervert justice or accept bribes, as bribery blinds the eyes of the wise and distorts the words of the righteous (Deuteronomy 16:19, Exodus 23:8). The Lord strongly disapproves and will severely punish those who violate this commandment, especially because they represent Him directly as they occupy the seat of judgment.
7. There is a violation when there is inequality between our personal gain and what we expend for others, or when we exhaust their entrusted funds on things that are unnecessary and not useful. This occurs when we cause others to spend money needlessly on things that are not useful but rather harmful, such as excessive drinking, lavish feasts, frivolous clothing, vanity-driven fashion, playing unlawful games like cards and dice excessively, or engaging excessively in dancing and frivolous entertainment. Those who encourage others to pursue these activities or obtain money from others for these purposes are considered

thieves. Moreover, all idle vagabonds, play-fairs, performers, minstrels, stage-players, and similar individuals who live at the expense of others are guilty of violating this commandment.

8. There is a negligence and slothfulness in wronging our neighbor's estate when we fail to do what we ought to do for their well-being. This is especially seen in tutors, servants, and others who hold such relationships with others that they are obligated to care for their interests.
9. We wrong others by involving them as sureties for us, when we cannot see a way to relieve them from that responsibility. The ones who provide the guarantee also become guilty of breaking this commandment, except in cases where fairness and charity necessitate their involvement. In this manner, many individuals are deprived of their estates.
10. It is committed by holding onto what rightfully belongs to our neighbors;
11. This commandment obliges us to restore:
12. What we have unjustly taken from or gained from others in any way, as Zacchaeus did (Luke 19:8). It is recorded of Selim I, the Turkish Emperor, a ruthless man, that when he was dying, one of his officials requested him to build a hospital with the wealth taken from Persian merchants. His response was, "Would you have me, Pyrrhus, bestow other people's goods, wrongfully taken from them, on works of charity and devotion for my own vain glory and praise? Surely, I will never do it; rather, let them be returned to their rightful owners." This was immediately done accordingly, to the great shame of many Christians who have no intention of restoring ill-gotten goods, whether acquired by themselves or their ancestors, but choose to allocate small fragments of a vast sum of ill-gotten wealth to some charitable or religious cause, as they call it. Zacchaeus' repentant proclamation consisted of two parts: restitution and distribution.

13. It even obliges children who have inherited something from their parents, acquired unjustly, to restore it; otherwise, they make themselves guilty. In all these cases, we distinguish between the court of the Lord, or conscience, and civil courts. Thus, it may not justify the heir before God (although it may before men) to retain what they possess simply because their father left them a right to what he acquired unjustly. Perhaps it is this very act that causes great estates to diminish in the hands of children, as it has been inherited in such a manner. By this, the Lord wants people to understand that true wealth does not lie in having the most left to them, but in acquiring it rightly with God's blessing.
14. Consider it also when it does not directly take from our neighbors but still wrongs them and diminishes their estate. For example, people may mistreat the house they dwell in, the horse they ride, or anything loaned or given to them. They may mistreat the instruments others use to make a living. Similarly, we wrong others when we take up their time by making them wait idly or burdening them with unnecessary tasks, visits, and the like. We also wrong them when their physical well-being is compromised due to any of these actions. The Lord requires reparation for lost time, just as for lost resources (Exodus 21:19).

Many heavy drinkers are thieves in this way, stealing from each other and from themselves, though they may think little of it. God will hold them accountable for it, regardless of how insignificant they consider it. 20. There is a wronging of our neighbor without compensation, and there is a wronging with a pretended compensation. This occurs when the thing offered is not as good in itself or not as good for the other person. For example, Ahab was guilty of desiring Naboth's vineyard in 1 Kings 21. Even though he offered Naboth a replacement, it was not as good for Naboth because it was his father's vineyard and held sentimental value. Similarly, one can steal another person's contentment. Even if the object of their contentment is of

little or no value, if it holds sentimental value for them, such as a small piece of jewelry, a pet hawk, or a hound, and brings them pleasure, wronging them in that regard is not only a violation of the sixth commandment by causing them grief but also a violation of this commandment by depriving them of their contentment. In some respects, this is a greater wrong to them than taking something of far greater worth from them would have been.

There is a failing through incompetence, such as when someone takes on a position and receives wages or payment for it without being qualified or suitable for the role. This often occurs with physicians, lawyers, and judges who, due to their ignorance, steal from people. It also applies to ministers who serve in charges they are not fit for and consume resources that should be used to support others. In the case of ministers, this sin is often more a result of unfaithfulness, as they are meant to benefit the people but instead become harmful. Christ referred to false prophets as thieves and robbers in John 10:1. Indeed, the worst gain in the world is when unskilled and unfaithful ministers starve and harm the immortal souls of people.

We wrong others when we fail to assist them when they are in need and we have the ability to help. Additionally, by being idle and wasteful, we render ourselves incapable of providing for the needs of others, as Ephesians 4:28 makes clear.

Furthermore, this commandment encompasses all buying and selling of things that should not be bought or sold, such as positions in the church or state. This act, known as simony, was named after Simon Magus in Acts 8:18-19. It is a grave sin, making something sellable that the Lord intended to be free. It includes not only giving money but also offering any other thing to secure certain positions or receiving anything in exchange for influence, whether it be a gift of action, speech, or physical goods.

1. A gift of the hand refers to money or tangible items that are typically given. 2. A gift of the tongue includes sweet words, flattery, and persuasive speech. 3. A gift of action refers to acts of service, dependence, waiting, and courtesies used to gain favor from others. In all these three cases, people can greatly sin when they actively seek and desire them. For example, when judges or magistrates sell justice for bribes, or when individuals bear false witness or lie for monetary gain. Lawyers, in particular, are often guilty of this when they knowingly plead for unjust causes in exchange for fees. Moreover, people may give such gifts to gain even more advantage over others. For instance, when bribes are used to buy justice or, even worse, injustice, or when lies and false testimonies are purchased to manipulate or obstruct justice.
2. There is guilt in consenting to, encouraging, turning a blind eye, or justifying those who commit this sin or those who receive and handle stolen goods, as it strengthens and emboldens them. See Psalm 50:18 and Proverbs 1:10.
3. Seizing other people's belongings under the pretext of escheats, as done by admirals in the case of shipwrecks and similar situations, without justifiable grounds to deprive the rightful owners, is considered open violence before God. It is a cruel act of adding affliction to those who are already suffering. In conclusion, the sin of theft, concerning our neighbors, can manifest through violence, deceit, negligence, unfaithfulness, ignorance, incompetence, and more. Even after considering all these aspects, a tender heart will still require self-examination, as there are coun

Now let us consider how a person is guilty of wronging their own estate (for there is a skill and cleverness in managing unrighteous wealth). We can examine this in two ways:

1. When they diminish and harm their estate by not taking prudent care to preserve and increase it, or by not being as frugal as they should be. When someone is lazy and slothful instead of being diligent and frugal, they commit a breach of this commandment. This is because they render themselves unproductive and expose themselves to the danger of poverty and want, which is the specific snare of the sin of stealing. This leads to the disposition for it, as mentioned in Proverbs 30:9. This poverty that ensnares is brought about by:

1. Sinful spending and squandering of one's wealth and time, similar to the prodigal son in Luke 15:11 and onwards.
2. Unnecessary waste through prodigality and extravagance, which Judas unjustly criticized in the woman in John 12:5. Excessive spending requires ample resources to sustain it, and it often reveals a greedy or covetous nature. To satisfy one desire, the prodigal person engages in another. However, since they are mere stewards of what they possess, their prodigality not only deviates from the proper use of the resources God has given them but also brings about poverty upon themselves.
3. Negligence, laziness, and carelessness in a lawful occupation (for those inclined to sleep or idleness will come to poverty, as the wise man states) or being without any occupation at all. It is disheartening when individuals possess physical or mental abilities bestowed upon them by God but remain unproductive and engage only in sinful activities, becoming snares and reproaches to Christians and Christian religion. All idle individuals, regardless of their status as gentlemen or others, bearing the name of Christians, are observable in this regard. It is noteworthy that both before and after the fall, God assigned the task of work to humankind, commanding them to labor. There are numerous other foolish ways through which a person can

descend into poverty and become guilty of not providing for themselves or their family. Additionally, many individuals are burdened and brought low through suretyship. While suretyship is not inherently condemned more than giving freely, it should be regulated by charity and prudence to assist our neighbor in their immediate need while also ensuring our own future relief, lest our own families suffer from the debts of others.

2. We can also consider a person's failure in relation to this commandment as they wrong themselves and steal away the freedom and enjoyment of their own estate. Solomon speaks of such individuals in Ecclesiastes 4:6, 8 and 6:1-2. A person fails to steward the world well when they possess it but cannot find it in their heart to live contentedly with what they have, living as if they have nothing at all. In this regard, a person wrongs themselves, particularly in the following ways:
 1. By coveting an excessive amount of wealth, being discontent with having enough and desiring to be rich. This is avarice or greed, even if the means used to acquire wealth are lawful.
 2. By anxiously and obsessively seeking even what is necessary. For example, someone may worry and be excessively anxious about their next meal, as mentioned in Matthew 6:31, caring about tomorrow's food and drink. This is a burdensome preoccupation.
3. There is a failure in keeping anything of the world that we have acquired when we cannot part with it, either for charitable purposes (whether public or private) or even for honest uses. This is niggardliness. When this behavior is universal, both towards ourselves and others, it becomes extreme hardness or callousness.

4. Some individuals may spend lavishly on themselves but cannot part with anything for the charitable support of others. This is exemplified by Nabal in 1 Samuel 25, and it is considered churlishness.
5. There are those who cannot even provide themselves with what is sufficient for food, drink, or clothing, as described in Ecclesiastes 6:1-2 and chapter 4:8. They may possess much, yet they cannot enjoy a good night's sleep or eat heartily. This reflects sordidness. All these individuals are overcome by the world; it dominates and conquers them, whereas Christians should master and overcome the world.

Now, if we turn our attention to how a person can better profit from and improve their own estate, it becomes challenging to provide specific instructions. God certainly allows prudence and appropriate frugality, while disapproving and discouraging extremes of deficiency or excess. Thus, we should aim to find the middle ground, as they say, and discuss the positive aspects through the following questions:

1. To what extent can a person strive to increase their estate? By what means and for what purposes?
2. How should we conduct ourselves in business transactions and negotiations?
3. How should we approach charity, alms, and the distribution of resources to others?
4. How should we manage our estate in terms of gathering, preserving, and utilizing it?
5. How should we view and deal with usury (commonly known as interest)?
6. How should we regard the punishment of theft in human courts?
7. Why were the covetous individuals so condemned and excluded from Heaven and church fellowship in the early days, as mentioned in 1 Corinthians 6:10 and Ephesians 5:5? What are

the identifying marks of this sin? In this discussion, we will touch upon the evils of covetousness and offer words of discouragement from engaging in it.

Firstly, it cannot be denied that one may lawfully increase their estate or possessions, provided it is properly qualified. Jacob, as found in Genesis 30:30, recognized the necessity of providing for his family. Even unbelievers are taught by nature itself to do so, as stated in 1 Timothy 5:8. The crucial aspect is to qualify it rightly in terms of the end, measure, means, way, and manner.

1. Regarding the end, there are several considerations: a) The primary and ultimate purpose is the glory of God, that we may be able to serve Him with our resources in our lifetime and refrain from stealing and lying, as mentioned in Proverbs 30:8-9. b) The good of others, that we may be helpful to them. It is appropriate for individuals to work with this end in mind, even if they have enough for themselves. Ephesians 4:28 supports this perspective. c) Our own well-being should also be taken into account, considering necessity, convenience, and honesty.
2. Necessity encompasses three aspects: a) Providing for ourselves. b) Providing for our family, as stated in 1 Timothy 5:8. c) Providing for our position and station, similar to Nehemiah in Nehemiah 5:14 and onwards. Tribute is permitted for magistrates, given their significant and public roles in serving the people. In these cases, we should strive to rely on our own resources as much as possible, following the wise instruction found in Proverbs 5:15.
3. Convenience goes beyond necessity and should be taken into consideration, as seen in Proverbs 30:8, where Agur prays for what is neither excessive nor lacking but suitable.
4. Honesty holds even greater significance and extends beyond mere convenience. We should aim to provide things that are

honorable and upright in the sight of all, which is a commendable goal. Pursuing honesty before others is not a matter of pride but is praiseworthy, as emphasized in Romans 12:17 and 2 Corinthians 8:21.

When considering the measure to be kept in increasing our wealth or possessions, it is difficult to determine an exact limit. However, individuals are not left to gather as much as they possibly can by lawful means without any bounds on their desires, plans, and efforts. The relentless pursuit of accumulation, adding one thing to another until one feels alone in the world, is rebuked in Isaiah 5:8 and Habakkuk 2:9. Unfortunately, many people are plagued by this boundless craving that can never find satisfaction. Agur recognized the excesses of riches and prayed against it, just as he prayed against poverty. It is similar to the consumption of food and drink—moderation is good, but excess leads to gluttony and burden, as mentioned in Luke 21:34 and Habakkuk 2:6.

Here are some general principles that can be established:

1. One should aim for what is necessary, convenient, and honest to fulfill the aforementioned ends. Going beyond that is unnecessary.
2. Since riches are not promised, but rather what is convenient, our endeavors should focus only on what is commanded and promised. The promise is that we shall not lack any good thing (Psalm 34:10; 84:11), which can be understood broadly and extended to include what is honest. Hebrews 13:5-6 reinforces this promise to guard against covetousness and alleviate fears of lacking what is necessary and sufficient.
3. A person may strive to be as wealthy as they can pray for in a justified manner, but not more. Their prayers are guided by the promises and commands, such as "Give us this day our daily bread," and by the approved examples of saints, such as Agur's

prayer in Proverbs 30:7-8.

4. The measure can be evaluated by considering whether the omission of something can be justifiably challenged. If it is deemed a duty to pursue it and one does not, it becomes a sin. Personal inclination or affection should not guide this decision. Conscience may challenge individuals for not aiming for sufficiency, but not for seeking to be rich. However, it should be noted that the same measure cannot be applied universally to all individuals, as people have different burdens and responsibilities. Jacob, for example, felt the need to provide for his growing family in Genesis 31. Likewise, the same person may not have the same measure at all times, as demonstrated by Baruch and Nehemiah in their respective situations.
5. Success should not be the sole criterion for determining the measure. Some individuals believe they are absolved as long as they make an effort to provide for themselves, finding peace in their endeavors regardless of the outcome. Others, even through lawful means, seek and achieve more than what is suitable for them, justifying it based on their success. However, efforts should align with the aforementioned ends and rely on God's blessing, regardless of the outcome (Psalm 127:1-2).

When it comes to the means of acquiring wealth, it should be done in a righteous manner. This implies the following:

1. It should be through a lawful occupation, excluding any gains from activities such as gambling or wagering.
2. The occupation should be useful to others, not solely focused on personal profit. The aim should be to serve the Church or the State in our generation, and gain becomes lawful as the wages for that service. Tradesmen and individuals in positions of authority should see themselves as officers serving the Church or State, and they have the right to earn a living through their

work. However, trades that contribute to vanity or harm the community, such as excessive wine trading, are questionable and may not be beneficial for society.

3. Unlawful practices like deceit, lying, or other dishonest means should not be employed within a lawful occupation, as they would compromise its integrity.

Regarding the manner of acquiring wealth, the following qualifications apply:

1. It should be in obedience to God, recognizing His authority and serving Him in our chosen calling or trade. We should acknowledge Him in all aspects of our financial gains.
2. It should be accompanied by faith in God, trusting in His provision and waiting for His blessing (Psalm 127:1).
3. It should be pursued in a Christian manner, willingly accepting crosses and setbacks without being stubborn or anxious. We should maintain a calm and prayerful attitude, as emphasized in Matthew 6.
4. It should be accompanied by proper management of our worldly affairs, allowing for the advancement of our spiritual growth. We should not become entangled or overly consumed by our material pursuits, as stated in 2 Timothy 2:4. Our attention to our financial matters should not hinder our engagement in more essential and necessary pursuits. In summary, our approach should enable us to maintain a good spiritual state, being able to pray, praise, and commune with God, even in the midst of our financial endeavors. Otherwise, we may become overwhelmed by cares related to lawful matters and find ourselves unfit for spiritual duties, just as gluttony and drunkenness can hinder a person's disposition.

Therefore, let there be moderation in all these aspects. Otherwise, as the Scriptures say: 1. A person who desires to be rich burdens themselves with heavy clay (Habakkuk 2:6). 2. They expose themselves to thorns and briers, as riches are compared to them (Matthew 13:22). 3. They indulge themselves excessively, similar to a drunken person (Luke 21:34). 4. They ensnare themselves, bringing upon many sorrows and even piercing themselves through with them (1 Timothy 6:10). Oh, many souls will greatly lament this excessive pursuit of wealth one day.

Furthermore: 5. They bring a woe upon themselves from God (Isaiah 5:8). 6. They tend to become haughty and proud (1 Timothy 6:17). 7. They are in significant danger of placing their trust in these uncertain riches (1 Timothy 6:8). They are at great risk of deviating from the truth and embracing falsehood, which may seem strange but is indeed true (1 Timothy 6:10). 9. They are in great danger of becoming oppressors (James 2:6, 5:4). 10. Immoderate pursuit of riches brings harm to the one who possesses them, leading to many foolish and destructive desires that result in perdition and destruction, as Agur's prayer, Hezekiah's experience, and 1 Timothy 6:10-11 make evident.

Now, regarding trading and merchandise, we shall briefly address this matter. In general: 1. Trading itself is lawful as a means to the proposed ends, as mentioned earlier, provided it is well qualified (as previously discussed) in accordance with the qualifications of the ends, means, and manner. 2. Both buying and selling can have faults, as people generally aim to buy at a lower price and sell at a higher price. This inclination was once revealed by a Heathen to a group of people. 3. A merchant or tradesperson, dedicating their time, effort, and resources to trading, may rightfully receive gain as the reward for their hard work, just as a servant receives wages for their labor, and teachers and physicians earn a living from their professions since they are necessary. Thus, the worker deserves their fair compensation, but it should be a worthy endeavor.

However, a person's guiding principle in bargaining should not be to take whatever they can get, nor always insist on selling at the price they bought, especially if they bought the item at a high price or if the demand for the goods has decreased since their purchase. The price should not always be inflated simply because the goods have become scarce, unless they hold greater value to the seller. Instead, people should consider the following: 1. The intrinsic worth of the item itself, taking into account the necessary and fair circumstances of their occupation and trade. They should be willing to pay the same amount they demand if they were buying the item themselves. It is important not to offer less to others than what one would expect for themselves, although it is common for people to act contrary to this principle, as seen in Proverbs 20:14. 2. Neither the seller should use tactics to overvalue their merchandise nor the buyer to undervalue or despise it below its true worth, as stated in Leviticus 19:11. 3. People should not solely focus on their own advantage in buying and selling, but also consider the advantage of others. They should engage in transactions that benefit both parties, guided by the principle of charity, as mentioned in Philippians 2:4. 4. The buyer should not deceitfully conceal information that would increase the value of the goods, nor should the seller hide factors that would decrease its worth. For example, if one knows that certain goods will soon become cheaper or more expensive, they should not intentionally transfer the loss to their neighbor or seek personal gain without regard for their neighbor's loss. 5. Honesty is crucial in buying and selling. Practices such as haggling or attempting to lower the price through deceptive means are not commendable. Both the buyer and seller should place a fair value on the goods and adhere to it. Engaging in manipulation, falsehoods, and lying is contrary to proper conduct, as highlighted in Ephesians 4:25 and Proverbs 20:14. 6. Exploiting another person's necessity, ignorance, or simplicity should be avoided. 7. In summary, people should sell and buy, treating others as they would like to be treated. They should refrain from engaging in any faults they are aware of regarding the goods they sell. It is important to provide fair measures and use valid currency. All these considerations fall within the realm of trading

and merchandising, and as much as possible, a fair and just price should be maintained.

If the question arises about determining a just price, it is difficult to provide a definitive answer that will satisfy everyone. However, one should consider the following:

1. Reflect on what one would be willing to pay for the goods if they had a need for them or were in a position to buy them, taking into account one's own knowledge of the goods.
2. Take into consideration the judgments of knowledgeable individuals regarding the value and price of the goods. If there are regulations set by authorities, the price is already determined.
3. Consider the general cost of the goods among those who are knowledgeable and conscientious.
4. Reflect on what one would be willing to pay for similar goods in the future, taking into account a reasonable profit.

In summary, there are three types of prices: rigid, where sellers demand any price they desire for their goods; easy, where sellers give in to demands when the goods are specifically requested but it is not always necessary or obligatory; and the moderate price, which is neither extreme and lies in the middle. When there is a question about whether to accept a certain price or a different price, it is safest to lean towards the side that benefits oneself. Additionally, one should consider how they would feel about the transaction if they were to die immediately after, and conduct their bargains accordingly.

Riches have many important uses, some of which benefit ourselves and some of which benefit others. It is equally important to show mercy and provide for others as it is to pay our debts or take care of our own needs.

God has not left one duty, whether it be showing mercy to others or taking care of oneself, as less important than the other. To understand this better, let us consider that God, the ultimate owner and proprietor of all creation, has distributed riches to some individuals as stewards, to be used for the benefit of His household. This can be inferred from Luke 16:10-12. Therefore, giving alms is not a matter of personal preference or choice; it is an absolute duty. Neglecting or being deficient in giving alms is tantamount to theft, unfaithfulness, cruelty, and hatred towards our fellow human beings. Just as it is unacceptable for a steward entrusted with providing for a household to use the resources for personal gain or self-indulgence, so it is equally unacceptable in this case. Giving alms, when properly qualified, is highly esteemed in Scripture. It is recognized as a characteristic of a righteous person (Psalm 112:9), commended at the day of judgment (Matthew 25:30), commanded as a duty (Deuteronomy 15:7, 11, 14, 21; 26:11), and emphasized and expounded upon in 2 Corinthians 8-9.

Now, let us consider the nature of alms-giving. Firstly, it is not simply giving in general, as that could be done out of debt or to a wealthy person, driven by pride or social expectations. Rather, alms-giving has a specific focus on a needy recipient from whom we can expect nothing in return. It is an act of honoring our Creator and expressing love for Christ. Secondly, the object of alms-giving is one's neighbor, but specifically the one who is in need. The Scriptures urge us to consider the poor and needy, who may be experiencing varying degrees of need: common need, where they can manage with some difficulty; pinching need, where they struggle to make ends meet; and extreme need, where they cannot survive without assistance. In cases of common need, individuals can give out of their abundance without causing themselves financial strain. In cases of pinching need, they should be willing to make some sacrifices to provide assistance, even if it means giving away possessions they have in excess. In cases of extreme need, individuals should be willing to go above and beyond their capacity to help, even if it requires selling all they have and dividing the proceeds. However, it should be noted

that such extreme measures may not always be necessary or expected in every situation.

2. Consider them in two categories: those who are capable of working but are idle, often causing their own need, like many beggars and loiterers of higher social standing. These individuals are not deserving of charity, as it is their own fault that they are in need (2 Thessalonians 3:11). Alternatively, consider those who have capable and wealthy friends such as parents, children, and relatives. The burden of supporting these individuals should not fall on the Church or individual persons (1 Timothy 5:16). Lastly, consider those who are lacking in all comforts and are weak, described as desolate by the Apostle (1 Timothy 5:10). These are proper recipients of charity and alms.
3. Consider them in three ways: firstly, as relatives to whom we are naturally connected, and it is our duty to provide for their needs; secondly, as recipients of grace; thirdly, as fellow human beings, to whom we should do good, with a particular emphasis on caring for those in the household of faith (Galatians 6:10). However, our charity should be proportionate to our relationships. It may be appropriate to give more to a natural child who is unregenerate than to a regenerate neighbor, but if able, we should provide for both.
4. Now, who should give? The answer is that all who have sufficient means and the ability to give should do so. Those who have nothing are not obligated to give, and this includes children and wives, as they may not have the power or capacity to distribute resources, except within the limits of their assigned allowances. The roles of wife, son, etc., provide some flexibility in this regard, assuming that the husband or father is not opposed to it. Specifically, we affirm that: firstly, wealthy individuals are obligated to give, even if they are wicked, for even unfaithful stewards are obligated to distribute resources; they may be compelled to do so in certain circumstances, even if they refuse

rudely. Secondly, those who have little are still obligated to give, even if it is a smaller amount, just as the poor widow gave her two mites (Luke 21:2, etc.), and as Christ spoke about giving a cup of cold water (Matthew 10:42). Thirdly, those who are capable of working should do so, with the purpose of having something to give, even if their own sustenance depends solely on their work (Ephesians 4:28). Unfortunately, little conscience is given to these principles, and few are willing to work harder for the purpose of giving.

Consider how charity or alms should be distributed in terms of manner and measure. It should be done: 1. Generously, without hesitation or reluctance; 2. Cheerfully, without considering it a burden; 3. Timely, without any delay when there is a need (Proverbs 3:28); 4. Prudently and sensitively, so as not to embarrass or shame the poor, but rather to help them discreetly, as Boaz commanded to let fall handfuls for Ruth to gather more; 5. Judiciously, based on genuine need and where it is most needed; 6. Humbly and discreetly, without seeking recognition or acting superior to those receiving our alms (Matthew 6:3).

As general guidelines for this matter, I suggest the following: 1. Set aside a portion of your estate or income dedicated to charitable purposes, so that you have it readily available when specific opportunities arise. It is advisable not to wait until you are asked, but to have a "poor box" or a designated fund for the poor. Just as the Law commanded a certain tithe for widows, orphans, etc. (Deuteronomy 14:22; Deuteronomy 16:12; Numbers 18:21), it implies that a proportion of our resources should be allocated for charitable use. The apostolic directive in 1 Corinthians 16:1 to set aside a contribution on the first day of the week confirms this practice. By doing so, a person can discern the appropriate proportion of what they are able to spare for such purposes, which may not be possible in specific situations where needs are not known. However, they can allocate a general portion for the common good and then subdivide it wisely based on considerations and

emerging needs. Furthermore, in cases of extreme necessity, one should exceed their ordinary allocation. This approach would also prevent temptations that might dissuade us from giving, as we would have something set aside for that purpose. It would also bring peace of mind and conscience to those who are conscientious, knowing that if they fail in certain instances, it is not because they are withholding for their own benefit, but rather because they are contributing according to their ability.

2. This should be done on a monthly or weekly basis, as the Apostle Paul suggests in 1 Corinthians 16:1. It is reasonable to allocate a portion for charitable purposes regularly, whether it be weekly or monthly. Giving in smaller increments consistently will likely be easier and less burdensome than giving a larger sum at once.
3. It is important not to wait for the needy person to seek assistance. In fact, those who do not ask for help may be in greater need. Poverty is not a source of shame, but rather it is vagabond begging and lazy idleness that should not be tolerated among Christians. However, those who are genuine recipients of charity should be provided for. In the spirit of Nehemiah 8:10, portions of aid should be sent to them.
4. Therefore, there should be a wise and respectful way of identifying people's needs and ensuring that charity is conveyed to them in the fairest manner. This process should be least burdensome to their dignity. Similar to how Boaz privately commanded his servants to let fall some handfuls for Ruth, some individuals or organizations may have greater access to information and skills in carrying out these acts of charity. Therefore, it would be fitting to establish friendly associations with the purpose of some giving and others distributing aid.

If we specifically inquire about the quota that should be allocated for charitable giving, it must be understood in ordinary circumstances (as extraordinary situations cannot be regulated). It is difficult to

establish specific rules because it varies: 1. according to the giver's financial situation, 2. according to the needs of the recipients, and 3. according to the individual burdens of the givers, who should extend their charity more or less accordingly. Some may have their own poor children or friends whom they must support, and therefore cannot give as much as others who do not have such responsibilities. Therefore, consider these general rules: 1. Charity should be generous and not driven by greed. Giving too little is a fault, and giving too much may also be one, although not as significant as the former. See 2 Corinthians 8:12. 2. Let charity be guided by Christian prudence, with conscientious deliberation and determination, as stated in 2 Corinthians 9:7: "Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give..." If one carefully and impartially considers their act of charity, it will bear good fruits. Many may not perceive their actions as genuinely charitable and giving if they were to honestly and impartially examine their intentions. 3. People should strive for equality in giving, as indicated in 2 Corinthians 8:13-14. No one person can fully meet all needs. Therefore, it is proportionate if an individual, considering the circumstances of the needy and other obligations, determines the amount that would be useful and necessary for them. They should then give their part accordingly, just as others do. This is akin to the principle of giving proportionate tithes under the Law. However, it also means that individuals should occasionally go beyond their capacity when others fall short. 4. People should set aside half of their unnecessary surplus so that they can give out of their abundance. This means that when families are sufficiently provided with food, clothing, and possessions, any excess should be dedicated to this purpose. This will not burden them, and before God, it is appropriate to give as much to the needs of others as we spend on our own luxuries. Additionally, if we were to allocate as much to charity as we spend on unnecessary indulgences such as extravagant food, wine, lavish homes, household decorations, fancy clothing, laces, and other similar items, it would amount to a significant contribution. 5. In the Law, the Lord mandated a tenth, or approximately a tenth, of the people's income or produce. In Numbers 18:21, one tenth was given exclusively to the

Levites, who were required to give a tenth of that to the priests. This portion could be consumed anywhere. Furthermore, in Deuteronomy 14:22 and Deuteronomy 26, there was a second tithe that was to be eaten for two years before the Lord by the individual and their household, as well as the Levite, the fatherless, the widow, etc. However, in every third year, it was designated solely for them. Although not insisting dogmatically, based on this proportion, it seems that the Lord expects a significant portion, approximately a tenth of our free income or profit, to be dedicated in this way. This would not be an excessive burden, and with God's blessing, we can manage the remainder.

Therefore, you can see that it is not insignificant to navigate the worldly matters with wisdom. While holiness opposes covetousness, it also opposes prodigality. There is a middle ground between these two extremes known as frugality, which is in harmony with piety. Frugality neither obsessively accumulates nor carelessly neglects nor wastefully squanders or throws away. It involves saving and spending, acquiring and giving according to proper reason. To further explain frugality, I will remind you of the following Scriptures, which contain many characteristics, qualifications, evidences, and commendations of frugality:

1. Frugality ensures honesty before God and others (2 Corinthians 8:21, Romans 12:17).
2. It requires a person to take care of their possessions, diligently managing their herds and flocks, and being industrious in a profitable and righteous occupation (Proverbs 27:23, Romans 12:11).
3. It avoids vanity and extravagance. A frugal woman, as described in Proverbs 31:10 and onwards, conducts herself with honesty, provides for her husband, children, and servants, and manages their clothing, food, etc., without excessive spending. She makes her own clothes and ensures the family is provided for in an

honest and thrifty manner.

4. Frugality is prudent without being covetous, as exemplified by the ant that lays up provisions in the summer (Proverbs 6:6). Similarly, the virtuous woman in Proverbs 31:16 sees and considers a field and makes a purchase.
5. It concerns itself with necessary things rather than superfluous ones, as seen in John 13:29 where the disciples thought Judas was sent to buy what was necessary, not what was excessive.
6. Frugality avoids wastefulness and prevents unnecessary loss. It follows the teaching of Jesus in John 6:12: "Gather up the fragments that remain, so that nothing is lost."
7. It exercises moderation in giving, avoiding both covetousness and prodigality, guided by discretion as described in Psalm 112: "The good man guides his affairs with discretion."
8. The frugal person achieves success without causing harm to others. They rely on their own industry rather than taking advantage of others' simplicity. Their diligence and skill are their strengths, rather than deceit and cunning. They act in accordance with their conscience, avoiding sin that would lead to regret. In summary, frugality is a pursuit of wealth with God's blessing, seeking both material prosperity and spiritual well-being. It recognizes that it is the blessing of the Lord alone that truly enriches without adding sorrow (Proverbs 10:22). Other forms of wealth, without this blessing, bring multiplied sorrows (1 Timothy 6:10). The truly frugal person prioritizes the Kingdom of Heaven and what is truly necessary. They do not allow themselves to be overwhelmed by many things, as Martha did (Luke 10:41). They choose the right time and season, understanding that there is a time to scatter as well as to gather (Ecclesiastes 3:6). They know when to be generous and carry charity with them, never wronging it in their pursuits.

Before we proceed with this command, let us consider the punishment for its violation, examining it from three perspectives. Firstly, in the sight of God, it is unquestionable that it excludes one from the Kingdom of Heaven. The covetous and others are explicitly barred, as mentioned in 1 Corinthians 6:10. It is a sin that the Lord detests (Psalm 10:3). Secondly, let us consider it in terms of ecclesiastical discipline within the Church. Based on various passages of Scripture, it appears that the covetous have been subject to such disciplinary measures. In 1 Corinthians 5:10-11 and elsewhere, the covetous are distinguished from extortioners. In this context, the Apostle seems to refer to someone whose primary pursuit is worldly gain, even if they are not guilty of direct theft or oppression. This is described as "minding earthly things" in Philippians 3:19 and "setting the affections on things of the earth" in Colossians 3:1-2. These traits can be discerned through a person's conduct, their devotion and attachment to the world, the limited time they dedicate to God's service, their lack of usefulness to others, their miserly nature preventing them from giving or making proper use of their possessions (as mentioned in Ecclesiastes 6:1), their failure to fulfill other duties arising from this mindset, their impoverished state relative to their means and social position, their opportunistic pursuit of gain even at the expense of others (such as exploiting legal loopholes), and their cruelty towards others when they are unable to resist, reminiscent of Laban's treatment of Jacob in Genesis 31:41. These are some of the characteristics by which the covetous can be identified and examined. Moreover, when they attempt to justify and persist in these unseemly methods of acquiring wealth, or when they resort to unlawful means, it is likely that they have faced ecclesiastical reprimand, or at the very least, experienced a withdrawal of fellowship to indicate disapproval, similar to how drunkards and extortioners are treated. As seen in 2 Thessalonians 3:14, the Apostle commands that those who were guilty of the opposite sin of idleness be marked with a sign of shame.

Although it can be difficult to pinpoint covetousness in specific

instances where there is no wrongdoing involved, generally, when a person displays excessive covetousness, there will be a widespread perception of them as such in their dealings, as discerned by those who can recognize it. There will also be numerous complaints against them from almost everyone, and they will be held in low esteem. From the aspects that have been discussed, it becomes somewhat apparent that those who are commonly referred to as stingy, harsh, and inflexible, even if they are not inherently dishonest, are guilty of the sin of covetousness and, consequently, the violation of this commandment. However, when covetousness becomes scandalous and can be proven, it falls within the realm of church discipline. Certainly, covetousness, even when it does not involve direct theft or oppression, can often be scandalous and offensive. It seems that during the time of the Apostles, there must have been a means of establishing this and, based on certain evidence of the scandal, brethren would address it with one another. If the admonition was not heeded, further steps were taken, and at the very least, individual Christians were to avoid close association with those who behaved in a disorderly manner by pursuing wealth too eagerly, as well as with those who fell into the opposite sin of negligence and idleness (2 Thessalonians 3:14).

Regarding the third consideration of the punishment for theft, we will not delve into the specifics of civil courts and magistrates here, as it is beyond our scope. However, we will touch upon the punishment for direct and evident theft, which is commonly recognized and punished among people. Blasphemy, adultery, and other sins are, at the very least, equally if not more deserving of capital punishment than theft. It is known that generally, theft was not punished by death until Draco, a tyrant known for his brutal laws, introduced such measures. The laws and customs of nations have varied, but it is important to note that the Mosaic laws, whether political or judicial, were characterized by tenderness, conscientiousness, equity, and wisdom. They were divinely inspired and highly beneficial to the commonwealth. However, these laws did not prescribe death as the punishment for theft. Instead, they

required the thief to make restitution double, fourfold, or fivefold, depending on the worth of the stolen item and the harm caused to the victim (Exodus 22:1-2). If the thief had nothing to repay, he was to be sold as a slave to compensate for the loss (Exodus 22:3). In cases where a person was attacked while breaking into a house at night, it was not considered murder. This exception was based on the violation of common security and the presumption that such an audacious act was intended to harm or endanger lives. In instances where robbers disrupt public peace and pose a direct threat to lives, such as making it unsafe for people to travel or carry out their daily activities, they may be deserving of death. However, this is not primarily due to the violation of this commandment but rather the sixth commandment. The reason is that there is no proportionality between stealing someone's possessions and taking someone's life. In matters of justice, where circumstances do not significantly aggravate the crime or bring it under a different consideration, the punishment and retribution should be proportionate to the offense, such as "an eye for an eye" or "a hand for a hand." Otherwise, it would be more justifiable and safer to pluck out someone's eye than to steal their horse or sheep. Therefore, in cases where a person causes harm to someone's life, there is no requirement for restitution, but rather the offender is to be punished in a manner consistent with the principle of "lex talionis" (the law of retaliation). However, in other situations, restitution was required.

Now we need to discuss Usury, which has been the subject of much debate and, without a doubt, is accompanied by many sins in practice. Due to custom, the term Usury has become synonymous with unlawful gain obtained solely through lending money. In this case, the Scripture is unequivocal, leaving no room for questioning its sinful nature.

If we set aside the word itself and consider the matter at hand, namely whether it is lawful to seek some advantage in exchange for lending money, it becomes another question. Here, due to the corrupt nature of people who cannot maintain boundaries, there is a

great risk of going astray. However, we believe that there are two extremes to be avoided in response to this question. We cannot simply say that it is lawful in all cases, nor can we say that it is universally unlawful.

It is not simply lawful because there is a sin directly condemned in the Law (Exodus 22:25; Deuteronomy 23:19). On the other hand, it is not simply unlawful, meaning it is not to be allowed in any circumstance. For instance, consider someone who is unable to work and possesses only some money without any land or visible assets. Or imagine individuals entrusted with the means of orphaned children. Is it not permissible for that person or the guardians of those children to lend money to those who are capable of making a profit from it and receive a reasonable advantage in return for the loan? We believe that there is no grounds to entirely deem it contrary to principles of equity or charity.

It is not contrary to the principles of equity that when one person greatly benefits from another's wealth, the owner of that wealth should share proportionately in the benefits gained. Without the owner and their money, the other person would not have reaped those benefits. Similarly, it is not against the principles of charity. While charity commands us to lend to our neighbor in their time of need, it does not mean we should lend to enrich and advantage them. It would be strange for a person who only possesses money to be obligated to freely lend it to wealthy individuals who would make a profit from it, while the lender receives nothing in return. The principle of treating others as we would like to be treated does not preclude the lender, whose money allows another to acquire property or gain profit, from seeking a proportionate share of the gain. It is difficult to argue that someone could use my money to purchase a piece of land and gain a profit from it, while I am left without any entitlement to ask for compensation. If I were the borrower and landowner, I would think differently and consider it fair for the lender to participate in the profits derived, to some extent, from their own money.

Further consideration of usury reveals the following:

1. All the commandments are against the injustice of exacting usury from the objects of mercy, such as the poor brother or even a poor stranger. In such cases, lending money should be done freely, and sometimes even given freely, without expecting interest or repayment. This can be seen in Luke 6:34-35 and other passages. However, while the commandment prohibits exacting usury from a poor brother, it does not imply that a person cannot ask for their own money back, including the principal sum, from those who are able to repay it.
2. The Lord allowed the collection of interest on lent money from strangers (Deuteronomy 23:20). However, it cannot be said that He allowed anything that is inherently contrary to moral law or the principles of nature, or anything that is sinful in itself. It is true that God established laws for his people and for strangers, including provisions for the treatment of poor strangers (Leviticus 25:35-36), and He commanded that strangers should not be oppressed among them in various ways. Therefore, the allowance of taking usury from rich strangers is even more binding.

To address this point more clearly, I believe that there may be something specific to the state and commonwealth of Israel, which can be considered as part of the Divine Law known as the Judicial Law. It was primarily intended for that particular nation and holds direct authority over them. However, there are also principles of equity and charity that are applicable to all people, as exemplified in the eighth commandment. What I consider to be common to all is the guidance provided for lending to the poor. We can see that God's law binds us to lend to both an Israelite and a stranger, indicating that we should lend to them freely, without seeking personal profit, but rather to provide them with assistance and relief through acts of charity. We should allow the free use of our money without expecting strict repayment terms. Regarding the security of repayment, we

should approach it with fairness, moderation, and equity, just as we would expect if we were in need of borrowing. Furthermore, this principle should guide our conduct when collecting the debt, ensuring that it is done without harshness and with such kindness that even the loss of the principal, if it were to occur, would not be a cause for resentment or disappointment.

However, what I believe to be specific to the Israelite people is that the practice of lending or loaning for profit was strictly prohibited among themselves. This is evident from Deuteronomy 23:19, which distinguishes between an Israelite, from whom usury was not to be taken, and a stranger, from whom profit is allowed. The reasons behind this command were likely to prevent harsh lending practices, encourage honest and diligent labour (which borrowing hopes and lending profits often hinder), and address other considerations that are often neglected in various states and societies. Additionally, it may have been influenced by other aspects of their unique circumstances, such as the equitable distribution of their land ensured through Jubilees and the potential impact of their location and their people's rigid and covetous disposition. It is clear that the prohibition on the lending trade and the statute of the seventh year of release align closely.

However, for us and other people who are not specifically commanded by the Lord and are under a different governance and distinct circumstances, I do not see why lending for profit in a fair and just manner should be considered prohibited. The distinction between lending money for profit and other forms of trade and exchange can be blurred and confused due to their similarities and common usage. We will speak on both topics that are relevant and edifying, without delving into overly intricate distinctions but focusing on useful ones. It is known that some scholars, based on principles of equity, acknowledge that there are cases where one may make a gain by lending money. These cases include when the lender foregoes certain benefits they could have received, experiences any losses due to the loan, or when their money is more beneficial to

someone else at a particular time. However, the evaluation should be made based on the specific circumstances at hand. They also discuss situations where a person advances money before actually receiving the purchased item, in which case the seller may receive a lower price due to their delay in enjoying the benefits of the transaction. Conversely, if the seller has to wait for payment after delivering the sold item, they may be entitled to charge more. In essence, it involves taking compensation for the use or lack of money. Additionally, some scholars argue that although money itself does not naturally increase (which is a key point in their argument), when considered as a tool of trade and a means of negotiation, it can generate more money, similar to how sown corn grows to a greater yield.

4. It is not without reason that our Lord uses the parable of the talents, where he certainly does not intend an unlawful form of trading, but rather that which was commendable in its appropriate circumstances.
5. When it comes to sharing and charity, the Apostle emphasizes equality in 2 Corinthians 8:13-14, stating that no one should be burdened while others are free. Now, let's consider a scenario where someone of lesser means possesses only money. Should they be obligated to strain and burden themselves to lend more, and that too freely (in the context of charity, as there is no other intention here), compared to someone wealthier who may not have the money on hand? Where is the equality in that?
6. Right reason, aligned with Scripture, can clarify this matter. Suppose one person sells another a piece of land for a certain sum of money, and the buyer wishes to retain a portion of that money. Should the seller now be prevented from receiving anything less for their property in monetary form compared to when it was in land? Is it not still their property and of the same value? Therefore, can it not yield an equivalent through moderate usury or interest?

7. If it were absolutely denied, then these absurdities would follow:
8. Some estates would be rendered useless to their owners, while others would not.
9. Certain individuals, such as ministers, orphans, and those unable to engage in trade, would be unable to make any use of their estates or provide for their families solely based on their circumstances or the condition of their estates.
10. One would not receive any repayment, not even the principal sum, if the debtor could only repay it by selling a portion of their estate (since seeking more than the principal would harm them), as it would be considered not lending freely according to their principles.
11. Converting one's estate from money to land would be discouraged because it would prevent lending freely.
12. There would be no need for selling or buying land among neighbours (as it was limited among the Jews until the year of Jubilee). This is because if people could obtain money freely, they would likely keep their estates and not pay their debts. Additionally, if no increase could be obtained for money itself, one could not purchase another person's possession that would yield the same principal sum and additional annual profit. This implies an increase as well.
13. Regarding lending, if charity is said to be the rule, it is granted. However, as long as someone's estate is better than mine, can it be expected that I am obliged to give or lend to them without receiving anything in return? If equity is proposed as the rule, it is not equitable for the borrower to possess their own estate and mine as well, without giving anything to me when they benefit from my loan. If someone can give money for land and then collect rent, why can't someone give the same money to another person and allow them to possess the land bought with it,

expecting rent in return? In their calculation, they consider the possession of money to have a certain rate of increase and benefit, possibly exceeding the rent or value of the money. If interest could not be charged, people would only borrow or lend out of pure necessity, and this would disrupt the significant benefits of trade and commerce.

It should be noted that people are called to equity and charity not solely based on the quality of their estates, but rather on the quantity or value, so that there may be equality. If a person who possesses money is obliged to lend it freely, then is it not reasonable to expect that a person who owns land should sell it in order to be capable of doing the same? Certainly, when necessity requires it, one is obligated to give, even if it means selling their land for that purpose. Considering the usefulness of money (for it can fulfill various needs, as stated by Solomon in Ecclesiastes 10:19) and the fact that it is unlikely for a thrifty and frugal person to keep a significant sum of money without benefiting from it through trade, land acquisition, or other means, there is no strong reason to condemn this practice outright. Moreover, considering that some individuals possess money while others have the skill, health, occupation, etc., but lack money, which hinders the exercise of their abilities, it seems reasonable that if one person's money makes another person's skill profitable, then the skill of the latter should also make the former's money profitable for both parties, in proportion to their respective contributions. In this way, just as one cannot utilize another's labor without their involvement, likewise the other person cannot make use of their money without their participation, thus achieving equality.

The main question is whether one may enter into an agreement or contract for a specific amount of liquidated increase on their lent money. While some may argue that if one is willing to bear the risk of another person's trade, there is no issue, the extent to which this can be done is a matter of debate.

The answer is that such contracting and covenanting cannot be disputed, just as it is possible in the sale of land or houses (although the lent money may be entrusted to the borrower without any prior agreement or covenant, and the increase thereafter proportioned to the borrower's gain). However, it is advisable to exercise moderation within the bounds of what can be reasonably expected, considering that the lender is free from risk. The specific limits of "how much" can be determined by applying these principles.

1. A person may enter into an agreement for an amount that their money would otherwise yield through a fair transaction. For example, if someone could obtain a certain amount of land rent by investing that sum in land, why should they not let their money for the same purpose? This would not constitute filthy or dishonest gain. Usury, in its proper sense, refers to gaining excessively or unlawfully through lending, beyond what is reasonable or to the detriment of another.
2. If the borrower can achieve certain gains from the loan, such as acquiring additional rent or retaining funds that would otherwise be unavailable, they do not suffer any loss.
3. When a person, without extraordinary skill or effort, can generate more profit through trading than the interest they pay for the loan, so that the additional gain is uncertain, the taking of five or six percent per annum has never been considered Usury. This is because any prudent and frugal individual could earn even more within a year. As Exodus 22:19 suggests, there should be compensation for the time involved, which should be equivalent to the loss the other party may have experienced or the advantage they could have gained during that time. One perspective is based on "lucrum cessans" (as acknowledged by the Schoolmen), while the other considers "damnum emergens."

However, it is worth noting that the fault more often lies in the other extreme of taking too much, as evident from the frequent reproaches

of the Prophets and the lack of conscientiousness surrounding this issue. Therefore, we should approach the suggested allowance with these caveats in mind.

The gain should never exceed the permitted increase according to the Law. We may, and sometimes should, be below or within the allowed limits, but never above or beyond them. Furthermore, 2. we must not violate the principles of charity and equity by denying assistance to the poor or by granting them loans only under the same conditions as the wealthy. This goes against the Law as stated in Exodus 22, Deuteronomy 15, and the command of the Lord in Luke 6:34-35, which instructs us to lend without expecting anything in return when the borrower is in need. 3. No increase should be demanded from those who do not benefit from increasing or retaining their own portion, unless what is gained is used for their necessary sustenance. Similarly, if they are in dire straits involuntarily and not due to negligence, or if they have little to spare and cannot afford to give an increase while sustaining themselves, nothing should be demanded from them. This is their livelihood and sustenance, as stated in Deuteronomy 23. 4. People should not lend so much to rich individuals (if they can spare any) that they become incapable of lending freely to the poor. Otherwise, they may frustrate the primary purpose of this Command and fail to adhere to the principles of charity. 5. Unlawful usury should be avoided when people do not consider how the borrower uses the money, whether they squander or spend it recklessly, as long as the lender's increase is secure. It is also important to consider if the borrower has suffered significant losses due to unforeseen circumstances beyond their control, as equity dictates that such considerations should be taken into account and one should not be driven solely by personal gain. 6. People should not engage in usury as a regular trade (which should be limited to situations of necessity) to enrich themselves or avoid productive work, thereby hindering lawful occupations. It should only be done when another's necessity requires it or when the inability to engage in other forms of trade justifies it, such as due to weakness, being underage, and similar circumstances, as is the case

for orphans, widows, ministers, and others whose positions prevent them from pursuing other trades but still allow them to provide for their families. Those who can engage in other forms of trade may not make the same argument for exception. 7. People should decide whether to lend or not based not only on their own security but also on the borrower's necessity and their own sense of duty, as clearly stated in the Lord's Word in Luke 6:35.

The Ninth Commandment

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour. -
Exodus 20:16

The Lord, after instructing us in previous commands on how to conduct ourselves in relation to others' honour, life, chastity, and property, now addresses the importance of truthfulness and honesty. He directs us in this command to be careful not to wrong our neighbour in this aspect, but rather to make every effort to preserve truth for their benefit, to prevent anything that may harm their reputation, and to remove any false accusations. The main objective is to uphold truth and honesty among people, as stated in Colossians 3:9, "Do not lie to one another," and Ephesians 4:25, "Speak the truth." Furthermore, in Ephesians 4:15, it is emphasized to speak the truth in love, as any other form of speech contradicts the purpose of this command, which is to protect our neighbour's reputation out of love. The sin prohibited here is specifically false testimony, particularly when given before judges, as that represents the most blatant and overt way of spreading falsehoods. Under this command, as in others, all lesser forms of dishonesty are also forbidden.

Although there are various types of sins in speech that involve wronging others, we believe that not all of them fall under this commandment. Injurious and angry words are covered by the sixth

commandment, and filthy words by the seventh. However, in this commandment, we encompass words that are contrary to truth and specifically pertain to lying or damaging our neighbour's reputation. Truth is the alignment or correspondence between a person's words and the reality of the matter being expressed. Lying, on the other hand, is the opposite of truth. We can consider lying in two aspects: 1. Regarding a person's intention to speak in accordance with their inner thoughts, as stated in Psalm 15:2. This is the first criterion by which lying can be identified, if our speech does not correspond to the internal conception we claim to express. This is known as a "formal lie," which involves expressing something differently from what we truly think, with the intention to deceive. 2. There must also be conformity between our thoughts and the actual reality of things. Individuals must ensure that their understanding of things aligns with the objects or concepts themselves, so that they can express them accurately. When there is a discrepancy between a person's words and the reality they are supposed to represent, it is known as a "material lie," which violates this commandment that demands truth in both substance and manner of speech.

To summarize this broad commandment, we can consider it broken in various ways: 1. In the heart, when one's intentions are deceitful. 2. In one's gestures, through actions or body language that convey falsehood. 3. In writing, when falsehood is expressed through written means. 4. In spoken words, when lies are uttered orally.

Firstly, a person can fail in their heart in several ways. 1. By unjustly suspecting others, which is referred to as evil surmising or, as it is in the original text, evil suspicion (1 Timothy 6:4). This occurs when individuals suspect someone of wrongdoing without any basis, similar to Potiphar's suspicion of Joseph. It can also be called jealousy when such suspicion is mixed with fear of harm to an interest we hold dear, as Herod was jealous when Christ was born, or when neighboring kings were jealous when Jerusalem was being rebuilt. I acknowledge that there is rightful suspicion, such as Solomon's suspicion of Shimei, or when Gedaliah failed to believe

Johanan's information about the conspiracy against his life. 2. By hastily and unjustly judging a person's state, actions, or intentions, as Job's friends did, or as Eli did in assuming that Hannah was drunk due to her moving lips. It can also involve making false assumptions about someone's motives, as the Corinthians did with Paul, accusing him of covetousness when he accepted wages and of lacking love when he did not (see Romans 14:4 and 2 Corinthians 11:14). 3. By prematurely passing judgment in our minds based on apparent evidence of internal thoughts or intentions that may not be reflected in outward actions. This is hasty and premature judgment, as cautioned in Matthew 7:1. 4. There is also the tendency to make flimsy judgments, relying on arguments or premises that cannot bear the weight of the conclusions drawn from them, similar to Job's friends, or like the barbarians who suspected Paul of being a murderer when they saw a viper on his hand (Acts 28:4). King Ahasuerus, too, hastily trusted Haman's false accusations against the Jews. 5. In the heart, one can also breach this commandment by harboring ongoing suspicions about a neighbour's failing without seeking means to be satisfied or reconciled, contrary to the instruction in Matthew 18:15: "If your brother sins against you." Instead of seeking clarification and resolution, we may rely on presumptions when they seem plausible.

Secondly, this commandment can be violated through gestures such as nodding, winking, or similar actions (and sometimes even through silence) when they carry an implicit negative insinuation according to our usual mannerisms, particularly when they are intended for that purpose or when we know that others will misunderstand them and we allow the misconception to persist.

Thirdly, this commandment can be violated through writing, as seen in examples like Ezra 5:6 and Nehemiah 6:5, where enemies of the Jews and Nehemiah wrote and sent slanderous libels against them. This kind of violation is still prevalent in our present times.

Fourthly, it is in words that this sin is most commonly manifested, whether they are spoken or written, as it is through words that our conformity or lack thereof to the truth becomes most apparent.

2. Lies are commonly divided into three types based on their intentions: 1. There is malicious or harmful lying, *mendacium perniciosum*, when it is intended to harm another person, as seen in the lies of those who bore false witness against Christ and Ziba against Mephibosheth. 2. There is officious lying, *efficosum mendacium*, when it is for a supposedly good purpose. An example of this is the lie told by the midwives in Exodus 1:9. However, denying something to be true, even when acknowledging it would cause harm to another, goes against the truth. We should not do evil in order to bring about good, and it undermines the purpose of communication when we express something differently from what we know or believe it to be. Just as a person cannot lie for their own safety, they also cannot lie for someone else's sake. Even lying for God is considered a fault, as it is regarded as speaking deceitfully and wickedly on His behalf, asserting that He may or may not do something to avoid what we consider dishonourable, when in fact the opposite is true (Job 13:4,7). 3. There is *jocosum mendacium*, lying for the sake of amusement to make others laugh and be merry. However, this is sinful in itself and should not be a source of lawful entertainment to bring laughter to others. 4. We can add one more type, *mendacium temerarium*, when people lie without any specific purpose, but out of carelessness and habitual looseness, speaking in a way that does not align with the truth. This is referred to as the path of lying (Psalm 119:29) and is certainly sinful, as seen when they falsely informed David that all the king's sons were killed when only Amnon was killed, due to hasty conclusions without proper verification.

3. Lies or untruths can be considered in two aspects: doctrinal matters and matters of fact. In doctrinal matters, false teachers and their followers are guilty of spreading lies. Such teachers are

described as speaking lies in 1 Timothy 4. They also engage in false predictions, which involves a high degree of lying about what the Lord intends or says, ascribing to Him thoughts and commissions that He never had. In matters of fact, individuals are guilty of lying when they claim that certain actions have taken place when they have not, or when they misrepresent how actions have truly occurred.

4. We can examine this sin in people's actions, either in relation to God, such as hypocrisy and inconsistency with our profession, which is considered lying (Psalm 78:36; Isaiah 29:13). Or we can consider it in the context of human interactions, which is more directly addressed here. Furthermore, we can look at how a person wrongs another in three ways: 1. Through false reports, speaking untruths; 2. Through slanderous reports, which aim to shame the person, as mentioned in Deuteronomy 5:20 where this Command is reiterated as "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour"; 3. When the reports are malicious, whether they are true or false, and are intended to harm the reputation of our neighbour. Additionally, we can consider it from the perspective of the guilty person, either as 1. the originator or carrier of a tale, whether true or false, that harms the neighbour, making them the creator of a lie; or 2. as a listener or receiver of tales, similar to how a receiver is to theft, and if people did not listen to gossip, there would be fewer carriers. However, when people give ear to lies, especially those in positions of authority, their servants often become wicked tale-bearers and spreaders. Lastly, we can consider it as 3. the sufferer (even if not the initiator) of a lying tale about their neighbour, either allowing it to persist without correction or possibly even taking it up and repeating it, which is condemned in Psalm 15:3. In that verse, a person who picks up an evil report about their neighbour, even when others may have discarded it, is seen as someone who will not dwell with God. Thus, one person invents a lie, another spreads and utters it, and a third receives it, resembling counterfeiters who produce, circulate,

and receive false currency. Merely hearing that someone said something does not justify repeating it.

5. We can consider the harm inflicted on our neighbour through words, whether unjustly and without any basis, making it a false accusation or calumny, as Ziba falsely accused his master Mephibosheth. This is referred to as calumnia in Latin. Or when there is a basis for the words but they are spoken to the person's detriment, this is called convitium. If the person suffers for the sake of truth, it is especially unjust. Additionally, if a person's past faults are brought up after they have repented, it is as if they are being called a blasphemer, just as Shimei insulted David even after his conversion and repentance.
6. Both types of lies can either be spoken or received, and if not rejected afterwards, they can cause harm. For example, David too hastily accepted the false report made by his servant Ziba about Mephibosheth, and without further investigation, he concluded it to be true and did not reject it later on. However, sometimes lies are initially accepted but then rejected upon receiving better information.
7. Furthermore, this act of wronging our neighbour through words can occur when they are absent, and this is known as backbiting. It often happens under the pretence of showing respect (to make the report stick more firmly), using phrases like "I wish him well" or "I would be reluctant to hear any evil of him." This is clearly whispering or susurrating. Alternatively, it can occur when the person is present, resulting in reproach or indignity, or the act of upbraiding.
8. Moreover, backbiting and reproaching can be either direct, making it obvious that we dislike the person, or indirect, where we seemingly give some commendation but use prefaces that are intentionally designed to deepen the wounds inflicted by our words. These individuals may appear to have kind words, but

they have sharp swords in their hearts. This is the dissembling love that David complains about.

9. Sometimes, the act of reproaching and slandering our neighbour stems from spite or malice towards them. Other times, it arises from envy, with the intention of elevating oneself by tearing others down (this is spreading ill fame about one's neighbour). Sometimes, it is done with a specific purpose, to insinuate oneself with those we are speaking to, to show our freedom to them, please them, or gain their praise by belittling someone else. This serves the itching desire of those who crave the approval of others, even if we have no knowledge of faults in the people we speak to. We remain silent about such faults and do not openly discuss them, even if they are true.
10. We can violate this Command by speaking the truth: 1. With an evil intention, as Doeg did (Psalm 52:2). 2. By revealing something true out of revenge. 3. When it is done without discretion, causing more shame than edification. Christ's words in Matthew 18:15 are to tell someone their fault privately, but we often use it as an opportunity to expose them, which is certainly not right. 4. When the truth is minced or not fully told, which could have lessened the impact, or when it is twisted and distorted for a wrong purpose, as the witnesses did against Christ.
11. We can break this Command and fall into the extreme of speaking excessive praise of, or to, our neighbour, just as we can by speaking evil of them, if the praise is not true. This includes: 1. Excessive and hasty praising and commendation, going beyond what is deserved, showing partiality, or going beyond what we do for others of equal worth. 2. Excessive praise for the sake of flattery, especially when done in front of the person to win their favour, and even more so if done groundlessly. Flattery is a base and harmful evil, detrimental to human society, yet pleasing to those who are flattered. 3. We fail in this extreme

when we justify, defend, or excuse our neighbour to a greater or lesser extent when it is unwarranted.

12. Under this sin forbidden by the Command, all deceitful speeches are included, whether through equivocation (expressing something ambiguously or doubtfully) or through mental reservation, a trick that can justify the grossest lies. Mental reservation plainly contradicts truth in speaking, when only half of the sentence is expressed. For example, if a Roman Catholic Priest is asked, "Are you a Priest?" and he answers, "I am no Priest," while reserving in his mind, "I am no Priest of Baal." By giving or expressing the answer in this way, an untruth and deception remain with the questioner, and the answer does not correspond with the question as it should to avoid lying.
13. This falsehood can be observed in relation to the things we speak about, such as in buying or selling, when we describe something as better or worse than it truly is or than we believe it to be. Oh, how much lying occurs in this manner every day for many people.
14. Included in this sin forbidden by the Command are: 1. Railing or abusive language. 2. Whispering or gossiping. 3. Tale-bearing (mentioned before). 4. Babbling of busybodies who don't know how to engage with others or pass time without telling ill tales about someone. 5. Pravercation, the sin of inconsistent individuals whose words do not align, saying one thing and then another, contradicting themselves and not remaining consistent.
15. Let us consider falsehood or bearing false witness, as it involves the breaking of promises, which is forbidden (Psalm 15:4). When someone fails to fulfill what they promised or promises something they have no intention of fulfilling, it is deceit and falsehood.

16. Just as we can sin by speaking against others, we can also sin in relation to ourselves in many ways: 1. When we give others reason to speak ill of us. 2. When we are not careful to maintain a good name and take appropriate measures to rectify any harm that may affect it. It is commonly observed that when people have a good reputation, they are eager and diligent in preserving it, but once they have lost it, they become careless. We should not be extravagant with our reputations any more than with our lives or possessions, as losing them greatly hinders our ability to edify others. 3. When we boast vainly about ourselves and promote our own praise, as if a person were to consume too much honey. 4. When we refuse to admit a fault and instead deny, excuse, or downplay it, as Joshua exhorted Achan to avoid. 5. When we exaggerate the negative aspects of our situation and deny, perhaps even in terms of our spiritual condition, some of God's goodness towards us, thus lying against the Holy Spirit. 6. When we readily accept good reports about ourselves and enjoy being flattered. There is an open door to this tendency in us. As the pagan philosopher Seneca said, "Pleasant things are rejected when they are not accompanied by flattery." It is often observed that we seemingly reject what we actually desire to be emphasized. Due to our self-love, we believe that it is others' duty to commend us, so we often view them as good people for doing so. On the other hand, we do not hold much regard for those who do not commend us, considering them to be lacking in their duty. This is a sorrowful state of affairs and deserves much lamentation. Few things lead us to love or hate, commend or disapprove (and we believe this to be with good reason) more than the fact that others love and commend us, or do not love and commend us.
17. We can also be guilty of this sin by withholding the testimony to the truth and not clearing another person when we have the power to do so.

However, what is particularly forbidden here is the act of publicly lying and wronging another person judicially, whether in their person, reputation, or property. This can occur in several ways: 1. By the Judge, when they pass a sentence hastily without hearing the matter and thoroughly investigating it. Job disavows such behavior, asserting the opposite of himself (Job 19:16). It can also happen out of ignorance or perversity, for corrupt motives such as being bribed. 2. By the Recorder, by writing false and damaging statements or by inserting clauses in decrees, sentences, or writings that are more favorable to one party and more detrimental to another than intended. 3. By the Witnesses, who either conceal the truth, express it ambiguously, refuse to testify, or assert what is untrue. 4. By the Advocate, by undertaking to defend or pursue something that they cannot justify morally, by concealing information from their client that may harm their case, by denying the truth when asked about it, or by not presenting the strongest defenses available.

Regarding the first point about Advocates, it is lamentable (as a distinguished theologian in the neighboring Church has recently expressed passionately, in his characteristic manner) that any known unrighteous cause should have a professed Christian defending it in the presence of a Christian judiciary. But it is even more disheartening that almost every unjust cause finds a patron. It is unfortunate that some lawyers are more willing to defend a morally indefensible person for a (hefty) fee than a malicious person would be to do wrong.

I do not speak here of innocent mistakes in cases of great difficulty, nor do I excuse the defense of a fundamentally unjust cause, but (to borrow the words of a great man) when money can hire people to advocate for injustice and manipulate the legal system to harm the righteous and hinder their cause, I would not trade my conscience for all the wealth in the world, nor would I want to be held accountable for their actions. God is the ultimate protector of innocence and the advocate for every just cause. Anyone who dares to oppose Him better have a substantial fee to protect themselves.

5. The Accuser or Plaintiff is guilty of breaking this Command when they unjustly claim what does not belong to them or falsely accuse another of something they should not or cannot. 6. The Defender is guilty when they deny or manipulate what they know to be true, and so on. And all of them contribute to the wrongdoing when they unnecessarily delay and prolong legal proceedings, causing harm and prejudice. This is why Jethro advised Moses to quickly and diligently resolve matters so that the people may return home, but the unnecessary lengthening of processes obstructs and burdens the people, making the law and lawyers, meant to bring ease and relief, a grievous and burdensome weight. Those in such positions will have much to answer for before God, the righteous Judge of all the Earth, when they stand before His terrifying Tribunal. There will be no need for witnesses to prove guilt, as each person's conscience will be a thousand witnesses. The cleverest mind, the most eloquent tongue, the finest pen of the most skilled lawyer, judge, advocate, notary, or litigant found guilty there will not be able to escape.

Therefore, all their pretenses and excuses will crumble under the Judge's scrutiny, unable to hide the shame of their violations of this Command. The greatest displays of wit and eloquence used to undermine truth and justice will be deemed feeble, foolish, and childish tricks. They will remain silent, laying their hands on their mouths, for eternity. It is, therefore, wise for the guilty to acknowledge their wrongdoing, resolve not to repeat it, and seek forgiveness from the Advocate with the Father, Jesus the Righteous, who faithfully pleads their case and never fails to secure victory.

In summary, the positive aspect of this Command aims to preserve and promote truth, honesty, simplicity, and integrity among people. It encourages a genuine and heartfelt concern for each other's reputation and good name, along with a deep inner satisfaction and joy in maintaining that reputation. It also involves a proper love for and care of our own good name.

The Tenth Commandment

"Thou shalt not covet thy neighbours house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbours wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbours." - Exodus 20:17

The Lord has added this commandment as a means for humbling and deeply abasing oneself, and it encompasses more than all the others, as it pertains not to a new object (since it concerns wife, house, etc.), but to a new way of acting in relation to that object. It directly condemns a sin that is not explicitly condemned in any of the previous five commandments, serving as a comprehensive and clearer explanation of the spiritual obedience required in all the others.

In this commandment, we need to consider two aspects: the act and the object. The act is not to covet, as the Apostle expresses it in Romans 7:7, "Thou shalt not lust." This implies an undue dissatisfaction with what one has. The positive aspect, then, is contentment and satisfaction with one's own circumstances, as Hebrews 13:5 states, "Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have." Therefore, any desire or inclination that is inconsistent with contentment and unreasonably seeks a change in our condition is condemned here.

The object is exemplified through specific examples, such as our neighbour's house, wife, servants, etc. However, it is clarified in the following general statement that it includes everything pertaining to

him, his position, reputation, or anything related to the previous commandments.

You shall not begrudge your neighbor's well-being, nor seek to harm him, nor be discontented because your own circumstances may not appear as good. The reason for adding this commandment is made clear by its scope, which seems to be the following: I not only require you, as the Lord says, not to steal from your neighbor or covet what is his (as in the eighth commandment), not only to refrain from adultery or determined lust in your heart (as in the seventh commandment), not only to abstain from taking his life (as in the sixth commandment), and from speaking falsely against his name (as in the ninth commandment), or from wronging those in authority through forbidden desires (as in the fifth commandment). I require such holiness that no inordinate lust or inclination be entertained in your heart, even if it never gains consent. On the contrary, in your interactions with your neighbor in relation to all these commandments, there should be complete contentment with the portion that God has allotted to you. There should be no hint of any improper desire or inclination to the contrary, which would be incompatible with love for your neighbor or with genuine contentment and a well-composed spirit within yourselves.

From this, we can see that Papists unreasonably and unjustly divide this commandment into two commands, one concerning the neighbor's house and the other concerning his wife and what follows. However, this concupiscence or lust is not limited to the seventh and eighth commandments alone, but it also pertains to the fifth, sixth, and ninth commandments, as there is an inordinate affection towards the neighbor's life, honor, and estimation as well. The two examples of the neighbor's house and wife are mentioned because they are more noticeable and common. This shows that God encompasses this inordinateness of the heart under one command, regardless of the object it pertains to. Otherwise, we would have to say that either the commandments are incomplete or that there is no

such inordinateness towards other objects of other commandments (which is absurd). Alternatively, by the same reasoning, we would have to multiply commands for those objects as well, which even the adversaries themselves do not do.

Furthermore, the Apostle in Romans 7:7 includes all forms of inordinateness of the heart towards any object in the commandment "Thou shalt not lust," which means not desiring your neighbor's wife or anything else that belongs to your neighbor. Moreover, the inversion of the order in Deuteronomy 5:21, where the wife is mentioned first before the house, indicates that the commandment is one. Otherwise, what is the ninth in one would be the tenth in the other, and vice versa, thereby confusing the order of these ten words, as they are called by the Lord.

However, the most important aspect we need to investigate is the meaning of this commandment. Papists, unwilling to acknowledge the desperate condition of corrupt human nature and aiming to maintain the notion of inherent righteousness and justification by works, make this sin of lust, which is forbidden in this commandment, a very general thing. As a result, we tend to underestimate the seriousness of this sin in our daily lives.

We would therefore state the following:

1. Concupiscence should be distinguished and considered in two ways. Firstly, as spiritual in a renewed person, as there are motions and stirrings known as "Lustings of the Spirit against the Flesh" (Galatians 5:17). Secondly, as partly natural to human beings, arising from the natural faculty and power of desire. For instance, even Christ, as a human, desired food and drink. This natural aspect of concupiscence was present in Adam before the fall, and just as the will and understanding are not inherently evil, neither is this natural desire. However, it is important to note that this commandment does not pertain to these aspects of concupiscence.

2. There is a sinful concupiscence, referred to as "evil concupiscence" (Colossians 3:5), and the lusting of the Flesh against the Spirit. This is the inordinate desire or concupiscence that deviates from its natural course towards what is evil. It is this sinful concupiscence that God forbids in this commandment and sets boundaries for the desiring or concupiscible faculty.
3. We can consider this sinful concupiscence in two ways. Firstly, as it pertains solely to the sensual part and the lower faculties of the soul, such as desires for food, drink, and impurity. Secondly, we can view it as extending further and reaching higher, having its seat in the heart and will, and influencing the entire range of emotions and even the whole person. In this regard, the individual is referred to as "Flesh" in the Scriptures (Galatians 5:17), and heresy and other evils are attributed to it. Similarly, in Romans 7:23-24, it is called the "Law of the Members" and the "body of death," and it possesses a wisdom (Romans 8:7) that is hostile towards God, corrupting everything and inclining towards wrongdoing in every aspect. Consequently, due to this concupiscence, a person does not have the correct use of any faculty within them. This concupiscence, which resides not only in the sensual part but also in the rational part of the soul, is what is intended in this commandment and serves as the source and origin of all other evils. For "out of the heart proceed evil thoughts" (Matthew 15:19), and it is the "evil treasure of the heart" (Matthew 22:25).

3. We can understand this Lust in the following ways:

Firstly, as it is habitual and present even in young individuals and when people are sleeping. It not only creates a disposition towards evil but also an inclination towards wrongdoing. It opposes the Spirit (Galatians 5) and is hostile to God's Law (Romans 8:7). It lusts and gives birth to sin (James 4:5; James 1:15). This is the unfortunate consequence that all individuals experience by nature as a result of Adam's original sin. It is contrary to God's Law and is referred to as

the "Flesh" (Romans 7:5) and the "law of sin and death" (Romans 8:2). In one respect, this sin is like a body or an old person (Romans 6), and in another respect, it has specific desires to which it gives laws and demands obedience.

Secondly, we can consider it as stirring and manifesting itself in various degrees. It habitually stirs like a raging sea (Isaiah 57:20). Just as grace tends towards good, this Lust constantly works as a habitual distortion, bending or crooking what should be straight. It is like a defect in a leg that may not be noticeable when one is not walking, but the defect remains. Rather, it is like a venom that remains poisonous. It is referred to as the "motions of sin in the Flesh" (Romans 7:5). Furthermore, we can also examine the more active stirrings of this Lust: from its initial rise, when it may not be consciously recognized and lacks direct hatred or actual approval; to being checked and rejected, as Paul did (Romans 7:15; 2 Corinthians 12:9); to being delighted in, even without explicit consent, but with a sense of desire and pursuit, which is known as "*mor•sa delectatio*"; to being resolved upon and seeking means and ways to commit the sin after inward approval and liking have influenced the mind, such as unjustly acquiring an estate or engaging in acts of immorality with a specific individual.

In a more general sense, we can consider this Lust in relation to thoughts about wealth, covetousness, or impurity, without necessarily focusing on any particular thing or person. It encompasses the thoughts directed towards these areas without specific targets.

We would like to distinguish between objectively injected temptations by the Devil, as he did to our Lord Jesus (Matthew 4:1), and the Lusts that arise from an internal principle, which are more common (see James 1:14). The first is not our sin itself, unless it is either entertained in some way, not rejected, or not weighed upon and grieved for the ill effect it leaves behind. Since we have such combustible matter within us, hardly does a temptation come from

outside without setting us on fire. Rather, since we have the kindling within, the Devil only comes to blow on it and stirs up what is already within us. This is why seldom does a temptation assault us without some guilt remaining, because there is not a complete abhorrence of these abominable intruders that enter the heart.

This Lust can be considered in two ways: first, in natural individuals where it resides, and thus it is called reigning sin and the dominion of sin. It involves yielding to sin and willingly obeying its Lust, like a servant obeying their master (Romans 6:12-13). Second, in renewed and regenerated individuals, it is indwelling sin without dominion, being actively opposed and sought to be expelled. It acts as a law within the members and is constantly active, but it is counteracted by a contrary desire (Romans 7:23-24).

Now let us clarify: 1. what Concupiscence falls under this Command; 2. how it differs from other Commands that are spiritual and also reach the heart; 3. we can consider the sinfulness of this Lust and provide some insights regarding its actions and stirrings.

1. Under this Command, we include habitual Lust, as it predisposes and inclines towards evil in its root, though not primarily, but consequently. This is because its streams and branches, which flow from and clearly indicate it as the source and root, are primarily understood. The reasons why it must be included here are: 1. Because habitual Lust in its root is sin (as it conceives sin, James 1:14-15), and if it is sin, it must be against one of these Commands, which are the substance and content of the Covenant of Works that prescribe all duties and forbid all sins. 2. If this Law requires absolute purity, then that inclination must be condemned by it. Since it demands absolute purity and perfect holiness according to God's image, any inclination that is inconsistent with it must be condemned here. In the other Commandments, acts that are resolved and fully consented to in the heart are forbidden. 3. If the rise of this habitual Lust was condemned and forbidden to Adam by this Command, when he

looked at the fruit and entertained that motion or allowed himself to be disposed towards walking away from God, or if this Command prohibited his fall and the onset of that Lust, and if it was a breach of this Command when it was in him, then it is also a breach for us. Adam was certainly commanded by this Command to keep himself free from the root of such evils, if the fruits themselves are evil, which is undeniable. 4. If this evil is a transgression of or nonconformity to the Law, then it must pertain to some Command, at least in a reductive sense. The former is certain, and it cannot be more properly reduced to any other Command than to this one. Therefore, it is condemned here as sin. 5. If it resides in the heart and gives rise to actual sins, then it must be forbidden in this Command (since, as we now consider it, it precedes determination and can exist even where actual sin is absent). The former is true, as it conceives other actual sins as their mother (as in James 1:15), therefore it must be forbidden here. 6. Furthermore, our blessed Lord Jesus, in His complete absence of and freedom from all corruption, conformed to the Law. It was part of His conformity to this Command, rather than any other, that the Devil had nothing in Him, not even the slightest inclination to sin, nor any root from which it could spring.

If it is objected that this Lust exists in individuals prior to any formal will of their own, and even before they have the power and ability to resist it or choose not to will it, and therefore cannot be supposed to be forbidden to them.

Response: 1. Many things are forbidden to them that, after the fall, they do not have the power to prevent. 2. This Law is to be seen as given to humanity in its innocence, which required them to preserve and keep the Image of God, according to which they were created, undefiled and intact. It now condemns them for their lack of it. The purpose of the Law is to point out perfect holiness, without considering a person's ability or present condition, but rather their

duty. Although they initially received the power from God to fulfill this duty, they lost it through voluntary transgression of the Law. And no one can deny that if having such a polluted nature is a sin, then the Law must require it to be otherwise.

But if it is argued that this sin is involuntary.

Response: It is true that it is not deliberate, but it is voluntary in the sense that it has its origin and rise in the will, as well as in other faculties. Therefore, the will cannot be considered free.

If it is said that this sin is greater than any sin forbidden in any other Commandment, and therefore the Commandment forbidding it should not have been last.

Response: In some respects, it is greater in itself, but in terms of its palpability and obviousness, it is lesser. Furthermore, this Commandment forbidding it introduces a further degree and step into all that precedes it, and therefore it is appropriately added at the end.

2. We include under this Command all initial movements that arise from that habitual Lust, in relation to more complete acts, even if they are immediately checked and suppressed. This applies whether they are directed towards specific objects or if they are wandering and unsettled motions of any inherently sinful Lust. It applies regardless of whether there is pleasure or lingering on the forbidden object, consent to it, or resolution to follow it. This is evident in the case of Paul, as stated in Romans 7. Firstly, such movements are the offspring of a sinful mother, habitual lust. Secondly, they have sinful effects and tendencies as they incite to commit sins. Thirdly, they are inherently sinful in nature as they are in conflict with God's holy Law. Even if they are quickly suppressed, it is assumed that they existed at some point. If they existed, they were either good or evil. If they were good, they should not have been suppressed. If they were evil, then they

possessed the inordinate nature that is forbidden here, and that comes from our own hearts or inclinations that gave them existence. Therefore, they must leave a sense of guilt behind. Otherwise, these evils forbidden here would not differ from the spiritual evils forbidden in other Commandments that forbid Lust with consent and pleasure. Our blessed Lord Jesus could not have experienced any of these, and therefore, possessing them would be inconsistent with His Image, as He was like us in all things except sin. Furthermore, Paul's assertion in Romans 7:7, that he would not have known this sin of Lust if it were not for the Law, makes it clear that the Commandment refers to Lust that is not easily discernible (in fact, he himself did not recognize it until he was renewed). Thus, it speaks of Lusts that, after regeneration, are most restricted to his awareness and sensitivity. Now, no one can claim that he had more resolutions to sin or more delight in them than before, but rather a heightened sensitivity to these stirrings and irritations of sin compared to what he had experienced previously.

3. Here we include indulging in excessive pleasure or entertaining extravagant imaginations (such as thoughts of honour, greatness, lust, pleasure, etc.) with delight. It refers to when the heart creates such fantasies and finds satisfaction in meditating and dwelling on them. Ecclesiastes 6:9 refers to this as the wandering of desire, and in other parts of Scripture, it is called the imaginations of the heart of man (which even nature itself can teach to be sinful). This can be seen as a part or degree of this sin and as evidence of being discontented with one's own circumstances (while contentment is the positive aspect of this Command). It is a form of heart's desire seeking after vanity, palpably satisfying itself in its fantasies and notions. This applies not only when the heart is fixated on sinful objects but also on vain objects, which David despised (Psalm 119:113). This restless and longing heart is always directed towards someone else's portion or at least what is not ours, and it tends to imagine

something that is not, as an addition to our own good, implying discontent with what we have.

4. We also include in this Command such Concupiscence that, although it does not approve of unlawful means to pursue its inordinate desires, is too eager in its pursuit and discontented when it falls short. For example, when Ahab wanted to buy Naboth's vineyard and pay for it or when a person desires to marry someone lawfully, assuming they are available and there is mutual consent, neither act is stealing nor adultery. However, both cases imply a sense of discontent when the desire for possession is too intense and when there is an imbalance in the affection or desire for it. It can be seen when someone adamantly insists on having a certain thing or wishes for something to be a certain way, saying, "I would love to have this or that" or "Oh, if only this or that were true," similar to David's longing for a drink from the Well of Bethlehem. In short, we include anything that opposes or contradicts satisfaction with our own circumstances and love for our neighbour. This Command, like the others, encompasses even the slightest tendencies towards discontentment or anything that leads to dissatisfaction within ourselves. It is true that not every desire to add or improve something in our lives should be condemned, but only when it becomes excessive: 1. when the thing is unnecessary, 2. when the desire is too intense, and 3. when the thing overly affects and even causes discontentment until it is accomplished.

Now, considering the scope and essence of this Command, we can understand the vast extent of its violations. Is there a single hour when numerous evil thoughts do not flow, run, and wander through the heart? Ah! How many discontentments with providence, grumblings, and vain wishes are there? While all these, as they relate to God, go against the first Commandment, they also imply discontentment within us regarding our own circumstances, or as they are rising of the heart towards evil (even if they are wrestled

against and the Spirit gains victory), they go against this Commandment. Thus, not only do vain imaginations formed with delight go against this Commandment, but even those that are barely allowed to exist, yet having once come into being, are against this Commandment and sinful. Firstly, they break a law and are in disagreement with what we should be. Secondly, in the case of Paul in Romans 7 (who did not give in to these thoughts), they are called sin and the body of death. He wrestles against them and cries out under their burden, desiring to be free from them (verse 24). If they were merely punitive, such cries and complaints would not resemble him, for whom a combination of the most severe afflictions could never elicit a single groan. However, this body of death caused him to cry out. They also lust against and oppose the Spirit (Galatians 5:17), thus going against the Law of God (Romans 7) and inclining towards obedience to the Law of Sin, furthering the execution of its decrees. These thoughts are of the nature of original sin, a branch growing from that root, and thus what is born of the flesh is flesh—the branch must be of the same nature as the root, and if the tree is corrupt, so must be its fruit. Furthermore, these thoughts pave the way for other sins, keep the door open for temptations to grosser evils, and give the Devil access to kindle the fire. They hinder many good inclinations and obstruct the performance of many duties, rendering one unfit for them. They hinder communion with God, who should have the fullness of the soul, heart, and mind. Surely, if He had His due, there would be no place for these thoughts, just as there will be none among the spirits of the righteous made perfect. These sinful stirrings in the heart burden a tender walker, who groans under the habitual frivolity and vanity of the mind in its wanderings, idolatries, and departures from God. Because of these thoughts, one cannot wholly and uninterrupted delight in Him. Although one delights in the Law of God according to the inner man, they cannot fully conform to it in practice. When one desires and resolves to do good, ill is present with them before they know it, and their heart is chasing after one foolish pleasure and vanity after another. Paul's discourse about these lustful stirrings of the heart clearly indicates that this

Commandment speaks of such lusts that he had not recognized unless the Law had said, "You shall not lust."

Nowadays, people naturally understand that giving inward assent to sin, even before it is acted upon, is sinful. Paul himself knew that he had these corrupt inclinations within him, but he did not know that they were sinful until he learned it from the Law, particularly after its spiritual meaning was revealed to him. This is why those who are regenerated often see more sins in themselves than they did when they were unregenerate. Not because they have more sins, but because they now have the Spirit and a contrary principle within them, enabling them to discern what was previously unnoticed as sinful.

Furthermore, the frequency of this sin of inordinate desires in the initial stirrings and motions of the heart is a significant aggravation. There is hardly an hour in a person's waking life, and even in sleep, as Rivet acknowledges, where one may not be guilty of it in their dreams. Is the mind ever truly at rest? Does it not often yield consent to these motions? How few good intentions are actually carried out? Unfortunately, very few.

The extent of this sin is vast. One can sin in this way with regard to all the Commandments, and even concerning as many objects as their neighbor or themselves possess. Moreover, one can have fantasies about things that do not exist or may not even be possible, yet these fantasies become enticing.

The occasions and traps for this sin are abundant and frequent. Everything we see readily inflames this Lust, just like fire. Hence, we constantly need to metaphorically pour water on it. Is there anything that is inherently lovely and desirable that we hear or read about, which does not incite an inordinate stirring of desire within us?

There are numerous pretexts and disguises that this sin uses to conceal itself, and sometimes they are quite plausible. As a result,

people are seldom held accountable for it unless it reaches the point of explicit consent or at least delight. How often do we utter wishes with our mouths, and even more so in our hearts, that violate this Commandment, yet we do not even realize it? Especially when those wishes pertain to knowledge or some good thing possessed by another, or some commendable action performed by another. In those instances, the language of the heart often becomes "Oh, if only we had it!" or "Oh, if only we had done it!" There is thus a secret discontentment towards our neighbor, which often leads to envy or at least dissatisfaction with our own circumstances. This is particularly true when it concerns spiritual matters. We also allow these discontented wishes and grumblings to enter into the sin forbidden here. Similarly, the pursuit of excessive reading and the production of many books, as mentioned in Ecclesiastes 12:12, can fall under this sin when one desires excessively to possess or create numerous books to showcase their knowledge, especially when it involves trying to outdo what others have accomplished.

This inordinate tendency that exists in the motions of the heart is evident in various ways:

1. It becomes apparent in the initial stirrings of passions and discontentment that often remain internal, yet still constitute significant breaches of this Commandment. These breaches can either disrupt the loving and kind disposition we should have towards others or undermine the internal serenity and tranquility we ought to maintain within ourselves. The melancholy commonly observed in passionate and discontented individuals often arises from or leads to either of these two states: passion or discontentment.
2. It manifests itself in our reactions to others' good bargains, such as when we hear about someone obtaining a good deal or entering into a successful marriage, or when they experience positive outcomes in their endeavors. There is often a hidden

resentment within us that we did not acquire the same or achieve similar success.

3. The excessive thoughtfulness and anxious concern that frequently accompany our negotiations, seeking to secure the most advantageous outcomes, are particularly relevant here. While there is a proper diligence associated with lawful pursuit, this anxiety accompanies it sinfully due to our own inordinate disposition.
4. It reveals itself in the numerous regrets and repentances that often follow our actions, accompanied by wishes that they had never occurred. These regrets are not inherently sinful when they are justified, but they tend to be excessive and disordered in most cases. We should certainly feel genuine remorse and sorrowful reflection for the sinful aspects of our actions, including those mentioned above and similar instances. However, it is improper to grumble against God and His infinitely wise governance, resenting the providences, events, and consequences that are solely within the realm of His sovereign control.
5. This inordinate inclination of the heart becomes evident in the troubling afterthoughts and reflections upon our actions, not so much due to their sinful nature, but because they bring shame upon us or do not align with our desired outcomes. It is on this account that we feel discontented and possess an excessive and unsatisfied desire for things to have been done differently. Discontentment serves as proof and evidence of this Lust, revealing its presence. When our desires (even if they are confused and directed towards any good, as in Psalm 4:6) are not fulfilled, heaviness and discontentment follow, whereas satisfaction brings about tranquility.

Therefore, we understand that this Command, in its positive aspect,

1. Demands love for our fellow human beings and a sense of

satisfaction in their prosperity. Any motions that are inconsistent with this are forbidden, even if they never manifest in actions, as we would not want others to entertain such motions towards us. 2. Requires contentment, condemning discontentment, discouragement, despondency, anxiety, restlessness, and the inability to be satisfied with our own circumstances, as stated in Hebrews 13:5. 3. Calls for a holy disposition of the heart, a delight in God's Law, and conformity to it, as expressed by Paul in Romans 7:22. Thus, these motions are considered contrary to the required state, even though Paul wrestled against them, and they are the imaginations of people's hearts. Conversely, this Command demands a serene and tranquil composure of the heart, where everything is subject and subordinate to God's Law. 4. Requires complete conformity to God's Law and perfect love for and delight in Him. Therefore, this Command is violated whenever there is any stirring of the heart that is inconsistent with perfect love for God and His Law. Obedience to this Command is demonstrated when we cast off the old self and put on the new self created after God, as mentioned in Colossians 3:9-10, and attain a settled, composed, established, and steadfast heart, which is highly praised in Scripture.

The distinction between this Command and the previous ones lies not in the object but in the nature of the lustful inclination. For example, specific lust pertains to the seventh Commandment, while here it is the wandering and unsettled thoughts that cannot be labelled as adultery but are truly lustful that are forbidden. Likewise, vain wanderings concerning ideas and notions fall under the category of Lust in this Command and are sinful, as they are incompatible with a composed state of the heart.

To conclude, let us briefly consider these words from Romans 7:7: "I had not known lust except the law had said, 'You shall not covet.'" I will only add this one point, that it is something unique to this Commandment that people by nature do not fully grasp its significance. Before his conversion, Paul knew that giving consent to

a desire for an unlawful thing was a sin, but he did not understand the specific limitation implied by this Commandment.

From these words, we can understand three things. Firstly, there is a great sinfulness and disorder in people's hearts, even in the smallest matters, often unnoticed by them. Secondly, in general, people by nature do not pay attention to this and are never truly humbled by it. Thirdly, there is such an indwelling lust as mentioned here, even in the heart of a believer. The believer will strive to obey this Commandment just as earnestly and will be equally troubled and affected by its violation as with any of the other Commandments.

Regarding the first point, I will first ask you a few things. 1. How often does your mind wander and fluctuate like the raging sea? 2. How often, or rather how seldom, can you say that these thoughts and stirrings align with God's Law, or are in line with true love for God and delight in Him and His Law? Are there not wondrous swarms of vain imaginations in your hearts that you cannot explain, and cannot tell how they come and go? Yet, all of these are breaches of this Commandment. 3. How often do you take notice of them, or are appropriately affected by them?

To further convict you of the sinfulness of this, consider the extent of the Commandment. 1. By breaking this Commandment, one can be guilty of breaking all the others. 2. Its scope is extensive in terms of the occasions one has to break it. Your eye will be fixated on nothing but this lust, taking occasion from various stimuli to sin. Hearing certain things can awaken a desire to engage in them, even though the impossibility of acting on it may impede your determination. 3. It is extensive in terms of the perpetual bad state of the heart. It is difficult for a person to examine their heart without finding this sin of inordinacy in their thoughts, accompanied by its consequential plagues.

For further conviction, consider the magnitude of the sin. 1. It not only pursues specific objects, the coveting of which is against other

Commandments, but it also foresees and invents objects in the mind. Thus, this Lust is broader than the existing objects one desires, such as desiring to be rich without knowing how. 2. We can gauge the greatness of this sin partly from its nature, referred to in Scripture as enmity against God (Romans 8:7), and partly from its fruit and outcome, known as the fruit of the flesh. Moreover, it brings forth death and begets other sins, not only by rendering one unfit for their duties but also by actively inclining and predisposing one to evil. When the Devil comes to tempt, he merely needs to fan the flames of the Lust that is already within, without needing to ignite new flames. Our intention in all this is to make you aware that such an inordinate Lust exists within you, and that it is exceedingly sinful. You cannot deny that the Devil and Lust stir within you as much as they did in the regenerate and eminently holy Paul. Yet, why is it that you remain as calm as if it were not within you at all? Souls that are truly serious and perceptive, having rightly seen this, will abhor themselves, considering themselves most polluted and unclean because of it, and will cry out, "Oh! We are vile."

Regarding the second point in the passage, it may take people a long time before they recognize this sin, and generally, individuals by nature are unaware of it. There are many vile sins in the heart that have never been deliberate or fully consented to. When this sin is revealed to Paul, he gains a new understanding of the nature of sin, surpassing what he would have previously believed. People are seldom affected by Original sin, which contradicts and opposes the Law of God. They are rarely burdened by this habitual Lust, which stirs even within believers, as their renewal is only partial, and thus, this Lust is only partially destroyed.

It is a significant and misguided misconception to think that grace entirely eliminates it. Sometimes, individuals may fret, feel discontented, and discouraged, not so much because of the sinfulness of the sin itself, but rather because it exists within them. There is a distinction between sincerely wrestling against this Lust and lamenting it, and being perplexed about it. For instance, one

may fret that something could have been done better, yet there is no genuine sorrow solely due to the wrongdoing itself. There is an inordinate inclination where the flesh prevails, even in complaints about sin and desires for what is good. Thus, this Commandment governs our desires not only in relation to the object but also in terms of the manner and approach of pursuing it.

Regarding the third point mentioned in the passage, it is undeniably clear, as we have just mentioned, that this Lust or Concupiscence exists in the believer. This is evident from what the Apostle asserts about himself and deeply laments in that chapter, as well as from the universal experience of the saints. We do not need to provide further specific details on this matter beyond what has already been said. However, it may be asked how this Concupiscence in the believer differs from that in natural men. Here is the answer:

1. Sin not only dwells but also commands and reigns in the natural man. Although corruption dwells in the believer and may sometimes captivate him, he does not willingly yield to it with the consent of his soul.
2. A natural man is entirely united in his corruption, or if there is any conflict or discord, it is only one lust contending with another. The believer, on the other hand, is divided (as they say). He has two opposing parties or sides, and when corruption prevails, grace will be saying, "Oh, that it were otherwise."
3. The believer discerns his lusts much better than he did while unregenerate and sees them as numerous evil spirits dancing and reeling within him.
4. This indwelling corruption is one of the believer's heaviest burdens, even heavier than all external afflictions and, in some respects, heavier than actual transgressions. For when the believer lets down his guard, his evil inclination attacks him. This is his struggle, it disrupts his peace, and it causes him to

loathe himself, even when the world sees nothing reprehensible in his conduct. This burden afflicted Paul much more than his persecution and led him to cry out, "What shall I do? O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" None of the outward afflictions and tribulations he faced elicited such a response. Through grace, he could rejoice and even glory in the midst of them. However, this inward struggle made him lament his own misery. Indeed, it is the very thing that, in itself and in the believer's estimation when he is in his right mind, makes him consider himself as wretched and miserable above all else in the world. If faith in Christ were not upheld, the believer in this condition would despair and give up. However, this is neither the natural man's struggle nor his burden.

5. The natural man lacks a spiritual sense to appreciate and savour the things of God, and he has little internal awareness of his corruption that opposes the grace of God. Outward things are the only or most pleasant to him. The believer, on the other hand, delights in spiritual things, but remaining corruption hinders his satisfaction even in external matters. The more he finds satisfaction in them, the more dissatisfied he becomes with himself. If he indulges in excessive satisfaction, he experiences greater discomfort and must vomit it out, as it were, until he gets rid of it. God's people are not allowed to drink from the things of the world with complete satisfaction like natural men do. The believer, having two parties within him, grace and corruption, which constitute his nature while outside of heaven, can never find complete contentment in what satisfies the other. However, the natural man, having only one party and being entirely composed of corruption, takes more delight not only in sinful things but also in worldly things than the believer.

The purpose of all this is to expose your superficiality and negligence in examining yourselves, to urge you to be more serious in that necessary and beneficial exercise, and to instruct you in which commandment you should primarily examine yourselves. It is the

tenth commandment, as it provides the clearest and most thorough self-discovery and helps to distinguish between you and hypocrites. It should lead you to gratefully acknowledge and admire God's surpassing goodness in providing and giving a Mediator upon whom He has placed the countless iniquities of all His people, which would have otherwise eternally crushed them under their unbearable weight. It should also make you recognize how absolutely necessary, unspeakably beneficial, and steadfast He is to sinners who are guilty in so many ways. Furthermore, it should prompt you to rely on and make use of Him to remove both the guilt and filth of sin, for when God, for the sake of Christ, graciously chooses to do so, every believing soul will have reason to proclaim and sing in praise of His grace: "Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity? Bless the Lord, O my soul, who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases." To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, be glory and dominion forever.

Amen.

POSTSCRIPT

Christian and candid reader,

You can see that in this epistle, which was mostly written over two years ago, I briefly mentioned stage plays, profane interludes, comedies, and so on, which were prevalent among us at that time and for several years before. Now, I would like to add a few more words, tracing their infamous, idolatrous, devilish, and damnable origins, and provide you with a brief account of the judgment of the ancient Christian Church concerning them. This is so that those who were involved in them, both the actors and those who patronised and

frequented them, may reflect upon their past participation in such inappropriate and ungodly practices with greater dissatisfaction. And also, so that everyone else may learn to fear and never engage in such unchristian activities again.

I am prompted to do this because the esteemed author of this treatise only mentioned them in passing as a violation of the seventh commandment, as they were completely out of use at that time. It never even occurred to him that after such a bright and glorious illumination of the Gospel, the generation would, so quickly and to such an extent, degenerate and allow themselves to be tempted into any association with such unfruitful works of darkness.

Therefore, I affirm that stage plays, in their various forms, were prohibited, rejected, and condemned by the canons of several specific councils, as well as some general councils. I will refrain from listing the canons in full for the sake of brevity, but I will mention a few. They were condemned by the fifth canon of the First Council of Arles in France, held in the year 314 during the time of Constantine the Great. They were condemned by the twentieth canon of the Second Council held there, in the year 326 or, as Fr. Longus a Coriolano suggests, more likely in 389. They were condemned by the fifty-seventh, sixty-second, and sixty-seventh canons of the Eliberine Council in Spain, in the year 305. They were condemned by the eleventh and thirty-fifth canons of the Third Council of Carthage, held in the year 397 (which is the same as the thirteenth and thirty-fifth canons of the Council of Hippo in Africa, held in the year 393, as described by Longus a Coriolano). The sum of the canons formulated at Hippo is included at the end of the canons made in this third Council of Carthage. They were also condemned by the twelfth canon of the African Council held in the year 408, in which Augustine was present. The canons of both of these councils presuppose the excommunication of individuals involved in such practices and provide for their reconciliation with the Church if they repent and turn away from these activities to the Lord.

And by the fifty-first and sixty-second canons of the sixth general council (referred to by some as the fifth) held in Constantinople in the year 680, and the canons of which were renewed in the council held in Constantinople in the year 692, known as Quinisextum, these two canons are very explicit and decisive on this matter. Can Christians, then, rightfully and without sin, amuse themselves by watching such plays, when the actors in them deserve to be excommunicated? Is there no better, more innocent, and less offensive way? Or is this the only or the best way to entertain people, refine their minds, sharpen and polish their intellects, persuade them to despise and avoid vice, and to love and pursue virtue? To acquaint them through history, to imprint in their minds the memory of, and to inspire them to imitate the noble and truly praiseworthy actions of illustrious heroes and other great individuals? To cultivate in them a fitting confidence, to make them eloquent and articulate speakers, and to assist them in presenting themselves appropriately in all actions, places, and social settings? The wise and esteemed leaders and luminaries of the Church never saw any such benefits in them. On the contrary, they have unanimously judged them to be the most effective and efficient means to make people weak, dissolute, and sensual, and in a sense, to emasculate or even brutalise them. They have consistently declared that the frivolity, lasciviousness, and immorality hidden beneath the superficial veneer of learning, history, eloquence, invention, wit, and art in these plays only made them more dangerous. They have asserted that Satan displayed his pernicious and malevolent strategy by tinting, sugaring, and gilding these poisonous pills, so that they could be more easily swallowed, their effects less perceptible, and their impact more profound. Furthermore, while some shallow and effeminate, vain and wicked Roman emperors embraced such plays, some of the gravest and most sober, manly and courageous heathen emperors opposed and eradicated them. Guevara even noted that it was one of the distinguishing characteristics to discern a virtuous or vicious prince of Rome, namely, whether he supported players, jesters, and jugglers among the people or not. This opposition to such plays was shared by

many senators, Christian emperors, and well-governed republics, both pagan and Christian, as they regarded these activities as unbefitting exercises and effeminate arts that brought dishonour and corruption to the state. They considered them to be breeding grounds for vice and unbearable harm within the commonwealth.

And undoubtedly, whatever supposed good is claimed to be derived from a playhouse or the stage (hardly without a prevailing mixture of evil), can be learned just as well, easily, and much more safely, if not more affordably, elsewhere. As they have been prohibited and condemned by councils, I say, more specifically, they have been unanimously denounced by the Church Fathers on these and similar grounds: 1. As a violation of the seventh commandment, which many modern theologians writing on this commandment agree with. 2. As a conformity to and participation in the idolatrous and superstitious practices of pagans, expressly forbidden to the people of God in Scripture. This led Cyprian decisively to conclude that Scripture has eternally condemned all types of such spectacles and stage plays, as it removed idolatry, the mother from which all these monsters of vanity, frivolity, and immorality emerged. 3. As a contradiction and practical renunciation of the baptismal vow of Christians, in which they pledge to renounce the Devil and all his temptations and works, of which they consider the acting in and watching of popular stage plays to be. 4. As the abandonment of a distinguishing characteristic of Christians from heathen Gentiles, who, as Tertullian says, mostly distinguished men by the fact that they abandoned and renounced all stage plays. 5. As unsuitable to, if not inconsistent with, the Gospel, which forbids Christians from making provision for the flesh to fulfill its lusts, from catering to their corruptions, and from conforming to the world. The Gospel commands them to walk circumspectly, diligently, even with spiritual precision and strictness, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time that has been tragically wasted and squandered in this manner, to abstain from all appearance of evil, to rejoice in the Lord, and when they are merry, to sing psalms and express their joy through songs of praise to God, not in this licentious manner. The Gospel also warns them that evil company

corrupts good manners. 6. As a corruption of morals, an incentive to frivolity and lust, and a breeding ground and nursery for lewdness and impurity. And 7. as having their lineage, origin, and institution from the Devil, the inventor of them, and initially celebrated in an idolatrous and superstitious manner to honor and, for many centuries, dedicated, devoted, and allocated to the worship and service of heathen devil gods.

As Augustine affirms in Book 4 of "The City of God," Chapter 36, titled "On Stage-Plays," the gods themselves demanded these plays to be performed in their honor by their worshippers. They forcefully and cruelly commanded the exhibition of these plays, threatening calamities if they were not carried out, and harshly avenged any negligence or omission related to them. However, if improvements were made to rectify previous oversights, they would show satisfaction and be appeased. This can be further supported by a few instances mentioned in famous writings. One such instance is mentioned by Pol. Virg. in "On the Invention of Things," Book 4, Chapter 14, where he states that plays were primarily celebrated for the health and safety of people with lectisterns. These were beds dressed up in temples to lull and pacify their gods when they were enraged. The origin of these plays, according to Pol. Virg., was clearly the work of the Devil. He recounts the story of a wealthy Roman named Valesius, who, prior to the establishment of the Consular office, had three sons afflicted with a deadly plague. When he prayed to his household gods, they instructed him to go to Tarentum and fetch water from before or beside the altar of Pluto and Proserpina to give to his sons as a drink or to wash them with. After following these instructions, his sons were restored to health. In gratitude, the infernal spirits commanded him to hold night plays in their honor, and he complied, organizing the plays for three consecutive nights.

Another instance may be the one reported by Titus Livius in Book 2 and mentioned by Augustine in Book 4 of "The City of God," Chapter 26, with additional notes by Lud. Vives. It concerns a man named Titus Latinus or Larinus, during the second consulship of M.

Minutius and Aur. Sempronius in the year 263 from the founding of the city. When the gods were displeased, Titus Latinus was warned in a dream to go to the Senate and inform them that they were not satisfied with the performer or dancer in the previous plays. The gods took pleasure in these plays and were entertained by them. Unless the plays were renewed with greater grandeur and extravagance, referred to as "religious ceremonies" by Florus in his summary of that book, a great calamity would be inflicted or the present calamity would not be removed. However, Titus Latinus hesitated out of reverence for the Senate and fear of being considered insane. As a result, his son was taken away from him. Still, he delayed, and he was afflicted with a tormenting disease that rendered him immobile. Finally, at the urging of his friends, he decided to inform the Senate. After delivering his message, he was immediately restored to health. This demonstrates the power granted to the Devil by the righteous judgment of God to seduce and hold people in his worship and service. The Senate was greatly impressed by this and immediately commanded the plays to be celebrated with greater care, expense, and spectacle than before.

The third instance mentioned by Titus Livius in Book 7 took place during the consulship of C. Sulpitius Petieus and C. Lucinius Stole in the year 390 from the founding of the city. It occurred during a time of a great and raging pestilence when Furius Camillus, the Dictator and Deliverer of Rome from the Gauls, died. In an attempt to gain the mercy of the gods, a lectisternium (a type of religious rite) was performed. However, despite all efforts and divine intervention, the plague continued to ravage the city. In their superstitious mindset, it is said that stage-plays were invented, referring to plays in a pompous, comical, effeminate, and luxurious manner on the stage that had never been seen before in the city (although there had been several plays previously). This was a strange development for a martial people who were accustomed to witnessing games of athleticism and strength in the grand circus. From this small beginning, as Titus Livius states, this folly grew into a madness that became intolerable even for the most opulent states and empires.

However, these plays, introduced and presented as new and strange religious practices, did not alleviate people's scruples and superstitions nor provide any relief for their bodies.

Thus, these plays are condemned as superstition and a departure from their old religion by these two renowned pagan historians. The fourth instance may be the one mentioned by Titus Livius towards the end of his 40-book, concerning Fulvius Flaccus, who was a fellow-consul with his German brother L. Manlius Occidinus in the year 575 from the founding of the city. Fulvius Flaccus declared that before he would attend to his official duties, he would fulfill his obligation to the gods by fulfilling the vows he had made on the same day as his last battle with the Celtiberians. These vows involved celebrating plays in honor of the mighty and gracious god Jupiter and building a temple for Fortuna Aequestris. To finance these endeavors, he levied a substantial tax, which had to be reduced due to its excessive nature.

The fifth and final instance is mentioned by Pol. Virg. in the same passage, concerning the Romans' care for Apollo's plays. These plays were initially dedicated to Apollo during the Second Punic War to seek victory from him and drive Hannibal out of Italy. Additionally, Spondanus, in his Ecclesiastical Annals, reports on Zozimus' account of Constantine the Great when he returned triumphantly from his victory over the Germans to Milan. Constantine completely neglected and disdained such plays, much to the dismay of the pagans. They argued that these plays were instituted by the gods to cure diseases, including the plague, and to avert wars.

From all these examples, it is evident that the origin of these stage plays and others like them can be traced back to the devil. They were celebrated by the pagans as religious sacrifices to their devil-gods, either as acts of appeasement or offerings of gratitude. The Scriptures strictly prohibit any form of association or fellowship with such idolatries and superstitions.

Let us now hear from some more of these Fathers who express their own thoughts and the thoughts of the Church regarding stage plays, with respect to these grounds we have discussed. Clement of Alexandria, in his exhortation to the Greeks, refers to stage plays, comedies, and amorous poems as teachers of adultery and corrupters of the mind with fornications. He states that not only should the use, sight, and hearing of stage plays be abolished, but even the memory of them should be eradicated. In another writing, he advises Christian youths that their educators should not lead them to plays or theaters, which can aptly be called breeding grounds for vice. These gatherings, where men and women come together indiscriminately to observe one another, are the cause of lewdness and serve as venues for the promotion or plotting of wicked actions.

Cyprian, in his treatise on spectacles, refers to theaters as the brothels of public chastity and the domain of obscenity. He asserts that attending these plays is not lawful for faithful Christians; in fact, it is entirely unlawful. He also states that a woman who may have come as a chaste matron to the plays leaves as a harlot from the playhouse. (In a similar vein, the satirical poet Juvenal remarks that in his time, one could hardly find a virtuous woman from the entire audience of a playhouse, and that all women who frequent stage plays are infamous and lose their good reputation. It would be wise for women who love and attend such plays to consider this. Additionally, there is a report about Sempronius Sophus, a noble Roman, who divorced his wife for the sole reason that she attended stage plays without his knowledge, which could make her an adulteress. The entire Roman Senate approved of this divorce, as it was seen as a means to preserve women's chastity. Such was the great threat to chastity that these plays were believed to pose, as mentioned by Rhodiginus in his *Antique Lectures*, Book 28, Chapter 16.)

Tertullian refers to the playhouse as the chapel of venery, the house of lechery, and the court of impurity. In his *Apology* against the Pagans, he makes a plea to Christians not to participate in the

amusements of the theater, which are associated with idolatry and the worship of false gods. He urges them to separate themselves from the immorality and corruptions present in these theatrical spectacles.

We renounce your spectacles and stage plays, just as we reject their origins, which we know to have originated from superstition. We have nothing to do with the madness of your circuses or the immorality of the theaters. We do not attend your plays. Origen, in his letter to the Romans, states that Christians must not set their eyes on stage plays, as they are pleasurable delights for corrupted eyes that can inflame one's lust. Lactantius, in his work on true worship, affirms that these interludes, which people find enjoyable and willingly attend, are the greatest temptations to vice and the most effective tools for corrupting the mind. He advocates for their complete abolition among us.

Gregory of Nazianzus, in his treatise on proper education, refers to stage players as servants of lewdness and stage plays as the indecent and inappropriate teachings of lascivious individuals who consider modesty to be filth. He describes playhouses as the lewd dens of all kinds of impurity. Ambrose, in his commentary on Psalm 118, calls stage plays the spectacles of vanity through which the devil entices pleasure into people's hearts. He urges us to turn our eyes away from these vanities and stage plays. Jerome, in his letter to Salvinia, advises against having any involvement with stage plays, as they are pleasing instigators of lust. Augustine, in his work *City of God*, condemns stage plays as spectacles of filthiness that overturn goodness and honesty, drive away modesty and chastity, and exhibit wicked and shameful shows. He calls them the art of malicious villainy, even causing modest pagans to blush at their sight. These are devices of lewdness through which the devil gathers countless groups of wicked men to himself. In another passage, he refers to theaters as cages of uncleanness and public displays of wickedness, and stage plays as the most provocative, impure, shameless, wicked,

detestable offerings to filthy devil-gods, which are most abominable to true religion.

And in other instances, he declares that when the Gospel began to spread throughout the world, stage plays and playhouses, the very dens of filthiness, nearly fell into ruin in every city, as they were deemed incompatible with Christianity. Hence, the Gentiles complained of the Christian era as evil and unhappy times. Epiphanius, in his work against heresies, states that the Catholic and Apostolic Church condemns and prohibits all theaters, stage plays, and similar pagan spectacles. Chrysostom, in his homily on the Gospel of Matthew, expresses his wish for theaters and playhouses to be demolished, even though they have long been desolate and ruined in his time. He further asserts that nothing brings greater contempt to the oracles and ordinances of God than admiring and attending stage plays. According to him, neither sacraments nor any other of God's ordinances can benefit a person as long as they indulge in stage plays (pay careful attention to this, for how often is it sadly proven true?). Bernard, in his sermon to the knights of the temple, states that all faithful soldiers of Jesus Christ abhor and reject dice games and stage plays as vanities and false frenzies. Let Salvian's weighty words in his work "On the Governance of God" conclude this brief account of the judgment of these ancient Fathers regarding this matter. He affirms that in stage plays, there is a certain apostasy from the faith. For what is the initial confession of Christians in their baptism, other than their declaration to renounce the devil, his pomps, spectacles, and works? Know this, Christian, that when you knowingly return to stage plays, you are returning to the devil, who is present in his plays. You have renounced both together. Many Fathers concur with him, united in their condemnation of stage plays. They denounce them for being commonly filled with the names, histories, characters, fables, rites, ceremonies, villainies, incests, rapes, applause, oaths, imprecations, and invocations of the idol gods. The actors cry out, "Help Jove, Juno, Apollo, Bacchus," and exclaim, "O Jove! O Cupid! O Venus! O Apollo! O Mars! O ye Gods!" They swear by Jove, Mars, Venus, the celestial gods, and

more (in addition to these, they are often laden with wicked and profane mockery and jests, abuses of Scripture, and bitter invectives against piety). They entice people towards profanity, idolatry, and atheism.

Finally, to demonstrate the perfect agreement between the early Church and the Protestant Church regarding such plays, it will be relevant and hopefully edifying to include the judgment of the renowned Reformed Protestant Church of France (in which other reformed Protestant Churches concur, and the majority of Protestant Divines align in this regard), as declared in a National Synod held at Rochel in the year 1571. In this Synod, the following Canon was unanimously established: Congregations shall be earnestly instructed by their Ministers to censure and prohibit all dances, mummeries, and interludes. It shall not be lawful for any Christians to participate in or attend (take careful note) any comedies, tragedies, plays, interludes, or any other such entertainments, whether in public or in private chambers. It is important to consider that these activities have always been opposed, condemned, and suppressed by the Church due to their corrupting influence on good conduct, especially when the holy Scripture is profaned. The Scripture is not meant to be acted or performed, but solely to be preached.

What is commonly said in defense and reformation of stage plays, aiming to retain them, has long been argued by witty and pleasure-seeking pagans, but solidly refuted by the Fathers. Several modern writers, particularly Dr. John Reynolds, Mr. Stubbs, and notably Mr. Pryn (to whom I am greatly indebted for his tireless diligence in collecting and astute judgment in presenting many of the discussed particulars), have addressed these arguments. Moreover, much can be deduced from what has been mentioned here about their invention and origin, their nature, purpose, and use. Furthermore, considering the highly dangerous and alarming tendencies, consequences, and effects of stage plays, as well as their flagrant abuses, there are ample reasons to advocate against their use. They

are neither necessary nor beneficial, and therefore should be completely abolished. God is jealous and will not be mocked.

Farewell.

July 10, 1675.

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Table of Contents

[To the Right Honourable Marquess of ARGILE.](#)

[TO THE CHRISTIAN READER.](#)

[TO THE READER.](#)

[TO THE CHRISTIAN READER.](#)

[Preface of the Ten Commandments](#)

[The First Commandment](#)

[The Second Commandment.](#)

[The Third Commandment.](#)

[The Fourth Commandment.](#)

[The Fifth Command.](#)

[The Sixth Commandment.](#)

[The Seventh Commandment.](#)

[The Eighth Command.](#)

The Ninth Command.

The Tenth Commandment.

POSTSCRIPT.