

This article aims to persuade readers that a more theologically unified, transferrable model for Reformed biblical counseling training is needed. This model would require a trustworthy Reformed source that has already condensed an integrative theory of theology and practice into a transferrable model. Any existing model would require adaptation to add fresh theological perspectives. This model would improve biblical counselors' ability to adapt their model to the needs of their counselees. From the perspective of what biblical counseling theory has developed in the past 50 years, Lambert notes that biblical counseling journals, booklets and books have mostly devoted themselves to matters of the Christian life and sanctification.¹ David Powlison, who went home to glory in 2019, was one of the most articulate spokesmen for the biblical counseling movement, as historian, visionary and apologist. He envisioned that biblical counseling teachers' ongoing goal should be "articulating biblical truth and developing our systematic theology of care for the soul, . . . for understanding and transforming human nature" and ultimately developing a "Grand Unified Theory" that "appreciate[s] the . . . historic resources of the Christian faith" . . . and "do[es] fresh theological work;" since it "arise[s] from Scripture, it will explicitly cohere with long-formulated Christian orthodoxy and orthopraxy" . . . and "cohere[s] intellectually and structurally with every other form of the church's ministry: worship, preaching, teaching, discipleship, child-rearing, friendship, evangelism, mercy works, missions and pastoral leadership."² He knew that existing models lacked explicit coherence with historic confessional standards. He saw that more integrative research work was needed to elaborate on connections between theology and practice in the confessions, develop a clearer understanding of the soul and how to care for it and align counseling with the larger discipline of practical theology.

What follows are my proposals to support Powlison's vision for developing a grand unified theory for biblical counseling training. It is a very abbreviated summary of my PhD thesis.³ The Westminster Standards provide a trustworthy Reformed source that has already condensed an integrative theory of theology and practice into a transferrable model. The thesis observes and adapts integrating motifs from the Westminster Standards.⁴ Four perspectives are developed using the structure of the *Westminster Larger Catechism* (WLC), specifically its integrating, symphonic motif of the moral law that I have named *lex Christi*.⁵

¹ Heath Lambert, *The Biblical Counseling Movement after Adams* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2011), 211, note 48. His *Theology of Biblical Counseling: The Doctrinal Foundations of Counseling Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016). reviews the standard topics of systematic theology in relation to counseling applications, but partitions the categories as separated topics and doesn't really help us see an integrated structure, similar to Jay E. Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling: More Than Redemption* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979). Robert W. Kellemen, *Gospel-Centered Counseling: Equipping Biblical Counselors* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014). orients counseling to God and the Gospel with memorable phrases, but doesn't really help us see how his counseling model coheres with long-formulated orthodoxy or confessional statements.

² David Powlison, *The Biblical Counseling Movement: History and Context* (Greensboro: New Growth Press, 2010), 278, 281-283, 299.

³ Thanks to Dr. Vern Poythress for contributing helpful ideas in the PhD thesis on *lex Christi* attribute names, and for offering important editorial suggestions on this journal article. Readers can consult his own adaptation of my thesis on his website <https://frame-poythress.org/introducing-the-law-of-christ-lex-christi-a-fruitful-framework-for-theology-and-life/>

⁴ The 310 page PhD thesis is titled *Adapting Westminster's Moral Law Motif to Integrate Systematic Theology, Apologetics and Pastoral Practice*, NorthWest University, South Africa, under Dr Henk Stoker, and its draft version is available on my website www.bethoumyvision.net home page, click on the green button. Many of the concepts in this article are given more detailed treatment as well as showing applications to Bible interpretation (creation-fall narrative, new creation Rev. 22-22, Wisdom literature), and practical topics of parenting, apologetics and psychology evaluation.

⁵ *Lex Christi* is my Latin adaptation of the phrase "law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2; 1 Cor. 9:21), purposely creating a less recognizable theological phrase, in order to define it using Westminster's nuanced meanings with less preconceived misconceptions.

I am assuming that the theological content of the Westminster Standards, including its *unified structural themes*, accurately represents what the Scriptures teach,⁶ even as many denominations have required their ordained elders and deacons to take this vow in explicit agreement: “Do you sincerely receive and adopt the *Confession of Faith* and the *Catechisms* of this Church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures?”⁷

While Powlison didn't frequently cite a deductive dependence on the WLC in counseling, Powlison emphasized the importance of the moral law in numerous articles⁸ and books. *Good and Angry* shows that good anger is shaped by indignation against disregard for the moral law (chapter 9). He clarifies that true guilt or anger at self should be shaped by these same moral standards, not simply cultural or social standards (chapter 16). He notes that the commandments prohibit any types of life-destructive anger (6th commandment) sexual immorality (7th commandment) or theft (8th commandment).⁹ *Making All Things New: Restoring Joy to the Sexually Broken* offers biblical counseling related to the entire second table of the law, not just the 7th commandment, since he deals with both sexual lust and sexual abuse.¹⁰ *How People Change* (a work derived from his teaching by his fellow counseling faculty) puts the whole moral law front and center, showing how heart idolatries displacing God in the first three commandments lead to breaking the other commands, how Jesus fulfilled those commands from his heart, suffered the curse for lawbreaking that we deserve, and sends the Spirit to write that law on our hearts by the new covenant so we can obey the commands such as those listed in Ephesians 4-6.¹¹ Without explicitly noting their coherence with the historic Larger Catechism, these examples anticipate the patterns I have identified and named in the WLC. His use of the moral law can be seen as intuitive examples of the ways in which WLC integrated its use of the moral law.

First Perspective: Supra-pedagogical

The first WLC perspective sets forth God and man in relation to each other. The WLC organizes its discussion under two headings: What the Scriptures principally teach us to believe concerning God and what the Scriptures principally require as the duty of man (WLC 91, 5). I call this the *supra-pedagogical* perspective.¹² The Westminster catechisms use Exodus 20:1-17 as the organizing framework that defines the Christian religion. The preface to the Ten Commandments found in Exodus 20:2, “I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt,” is adapted by WLC 101 as a summary of what to believe concerning God. Thus WLC 101 concisely summarizes WLC 1-90 into one terse sentence. The whole duty of man is

⁶ See Casselli's (2016, pp. loc. 4062-4078) “Summary Findings” that demonstrates how the theological formulation methods of Anthony Burgess, one of the Westminster Divines, whose published work *Vindiciae Legis* directly influenced the Confession's wording on the moral law (chapter 19), was based on careful original language exegesis of key biblical texts, study of the history of how those texts were interpreted, interaction with contemporary interpretation, ecclesiastical and pastoral concerns for the church in that day, and sensitivity to the progress of revelation that led to fulfillment in Christ.

⁷ “The Book of Church Order of the Presbyterian Church in America,” (2019), <https://www.pcaac.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/BCO-2019-with-bookmarks-for-website-1.pdf>. chapter 21-5.

⁸ David Powlison, “Counsel Ephesians,” *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 17, no. 2 (1999); Charles Spurgeon, David Powlison, and Jay E. Adams, “The Law Written on the Heart,” *ibid.* 12 (1994); David Powlison, “The Sufficiency of Scripture to Diagnose and Cure Souls,” *ibid.* 23 (2005).

⁹ *Good and Angry: Redeeming Anger, Irritation, Complaining, and Bitterness* (Greensboro: New Growth Press, 2016).

¹⁰ David Powlison, *Making All Things New: Restoring Joy to the Sexually Broken* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2017).

¹¹ Timothy S. Lane and Paul David Tripp, *How People Change* (Greensboro: New Growth Press, 2008), 153-60, 180-181, 190, 196-198, 203.

¹² See the author's website link in footnote #8, PhD thesis 2.2.4 for the detailed explanation of this perspective.

reorganized under the headings of the moral law (WLC 91-151), followed by specific expansions of the meaning of the 2nd and 3rd commandments defining the means of grace (WLC 152-196 explaining the Word, sacraments and prayer).

Details of WLC's *Supra-Pedagogical Perspective*¹³

God: What God is, defined by his attributes and Triune persons (WLC 6-11)

Summarized in the preface to the moral law (WLC 101; Exod. 20:2) In the outline below readers can notice the Triune persons perspective

Revealed in his decrees concerning angels and men (WLC 12-13)

execution of his decrees in creation and providence (WLC 14-90)

creation of the world, angels and man in *lex Christi* righteousness (WLC 15-17)

providence about angels:

permitted some angels to irrecoverably fall for his glory, limiting their sins, while establishing the elect angels to administer his *lex Christi* glory (WLC 19)

providence about man, preserving and governing by *lex Christi* and ordering them to his glory (WLC 18, 20):

covenant of life/works to first Adam by *lex Christi*; all mankind falls into sin under his headship, some left in sin (WLC 20-30)

covenant of grace to second Adam, Christ: all the elect restored to *lex Christi* righteousness under his headship (WLC 30-56)

Christ the mediator of the covenant of grace (WLC 36-56)

His person as God-man, the Lord Jesus Christ (WLC 36-41)

His execution of the offices of prophet, priest and king (WLC 42-56)

His humiliation (imputing Adam's *lex Christi* disobedience, suffering its curses) and exaltation (rewarded for perfectly obeying *lex Christi* in the covenant of works) (WLC 46-56)

Christ's mediatorial benefits

to preserve the witness of the visible church (WLC 60-63)

to redeem the invisible church by the Spirit and Word (WLC 57-59, 64)

faith-union with Christ in effectual calling (WLC 65-68)

communion with Christ in full *lex Christi* righteousness (WLC 32, 65, 69-90)

in grace: justification, adoption, and sanctification (WLC 69-81)

in glory: this life, intermediate state, and resurrection (82-90)

What duty God requires of man : Exercise the benefits they have received in the covenant of grace from Christ the mediator.

The meaning, use and interpretation of the moral law (WLC 90-101)

Duties to God (WLC 102-121)

Duties to man (WLC 122-148)

The whole moral law reveals man's sinfulness and his deserved wrath (WLC 149-152)

awakening man's conscience to flee from God's wrath by faith and repentance and diligent use of the means of grace (WLC 96, 153-196) which are defined as duties to God (2nd & 3rd commandments; WLC 108, 112) and duties of ministers to their flock (5th commandment) to properly represent God in these means

Word (WLC 155-160)

sacraments (WLC 161-177)

prayer (WLC 178-196)

Why is this *supra-pedagogical* perspective important? Westminster's use of Exodus 20:1-17 text provides a simple biblical text for training children (Westminster Shorter Catechism) or adults (WLC). Further, Exodus 20:1-17 can serve as an outline for the entire seminary curriculum because it emphasizes what to believe about God and his work, which is the scope of systematic theology, and what duty God requires of man, which is the scope of practical theology. This perspective provides vital theoretical formation for biblical counselors. Lay counselors usually get exposed to how-to resources as the primary formation tools since the prominent biblical counseling certificates by CCEF and ACBC mostly provide

¹³ A simpler chart structure is developed by Robert J. Cara, "Redemptive-Historical Themes in the Westminster Larger Catechism" (2004, p. 11) which can be read online <https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/view/25891752/redemptive-historical-themes-in-the-westminster-larger-catechism> or found in *The Westminster Confession in the 21st Century* edited by Ligon Duncan. Vol. 3, chapter 2 (Mentor 2009, pp. 55-76),

methodology and sanctification-related resources. Training institutions need a reawaking to the value of WLC's condensed pedagogy. Heeding Powlison's visionary appeal to show how counseling "explicitly cohere[s] with long-formulated Christian orthodoxy and orthopraxy" can be answered, in part, by a retrieval of the WLC adapted to all levels of counselor training.

Why is this perspective important in the weekly practice of counseling? It provides a framework for evaluating the relative pastoral needs of counselees. Church member Jack shares how he can't seem to overcome his self-condemnation for leaving his wife and daughter for a two-year affair with another woman, though now his marriage and membership has been restored after repentance. Jack needs strengthening and encouragements related to his understanding of God's redemptive work, "what to believe concerning God," and similarly any like him who struggle with assurance of forgiveness, assurance of salvation and God's providence over suffering. Young church planter David comes to you after his elders have pointed out his sins of dominating and manipulating others using condemning words and explosive anger. David and others like him need help to understand and practice their 5th and 6th commandment moral law duties, while learning how to resist the prohibitions. Generally, however, counselees need a combination of support in strengthening both categories. Why? Counselors who understand WLC's pedagogical structure will know that *every redeeming work he performs* in effectual call to faith-union and communion in grace and glory provides the grace to perform *every required duty of the elect toward God and man*. "What to believe concerning God" shows his divine decree to save through the covenant of grace in effectual call to union with Christ as mediator by imputing, imparting and preserving the duties required to have communion in grace and glory. Those same duties to have communion in grace and glory through faith-union with Christ are commanded as our *lex Christi* responsibilities. God graciously gives the elect what he requires of them, then commands the elect to exercise what they have been given through diligent use of the means of grace in the trials and tests of life. In the words of Augustine, "Give me the grace to do as you command and command me to do what you will."¹⁴

Further, one of the most significant theoretical debates in church-based counseling is the relationship it should have with the various psychologies. WLC *integrates* various topics of biblical truth using a moral law motif. However, extra-biblical knowledge cannot be *integrated* with this truth, but merely supply illustrations and applications of this truth. First, Westminster *describes* the authority of Scripture to reveal God's triune nature and attributes, and his works of creation and providence to angels and men. The first heading of the *supra-pedagogical* perspective (WLC 1-90) provides the supreme presuppositions for all other *descriptive* knowledge. True knowledge of God, his purposes in creation and providence and knowledge of man must come from Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16-17) and from those who proclaim its truths (Eph. 4:11-16). *Descriptive* extra-biblical knowledge from science or psychology, for example, may contribute merely illustrative or applicational knowledge about God's works in creation as a whole and the behaviors of man under God's providence, but unfathomable mysteries abound (Job 38:4-41). Second, Westminster *prescribes* the moral law as binding on all men, informing them of God's nature, his moral will, their duty, revealing their sinful bondage and inability to keep it, humbling them to seek Christ for mercy and credited righteousness (WLC 93, 95). The second heading of the *supra-pedagogical* perspective *prescribes* duties to God and man, that can function as the presuppositions under which all other

¹⁴ Augustine's *Confessions*, Book 10, Chapter 29, p. 233; https://www.sas.upenn.edu/~cavitch/pdf-library/Augustine_ConfessionsX.pdf

prescriptive extra-biblical knowledge can be engaged. WLC 102-121 duties of man to God and WLC 122-148 duties of man to man (and to creation as it impacts man) can function as an epistemic filter, especially relevant for evaluating any *prescriptive* knowledge from the social sciences (economics, histories, political sciences, sociologies, psychologies, anthropologies).¹⁵ Christians can apply any *prescriptive* extra-biblical knowledge conforming to these scripturally defined man to God, man-to-man and man-to-creation duties, reform any knowledge that can be taken captive to Christ (2 Cor. 10:5), or reject any knowledge that cannot comply with God's moral vision for human flourishing (Acts 17:24-31)!¹⁶ Using the moral law to engage psychological *prescriptions* for man coheres with the way the Westminster Divines used the moral law to engage man's worldviews.¹⁷ While Reformed counselors acknowledge that these applications will not always be certain due to limited knowledge, such as whether *describing* attachment theories related to infant care-givers and God or whether *prescribing* certain psychiatric medications conforms to the duty to be pro-life (6th C), we can at least begin to reframe our engagement with any truth-telling psychologies as *descriptive* and *prescriptive* applications of Westminster Standards' epistemological presuppositions. WLC provides anchor points to an irreducibly complex, interdependent, *indicative-imperative* system of new covenant transformation, union-with-Christ-in-grace-and-glory truth, that helps guard against importing *descriptions* of man divorced from the context of God's sovereign providence or mere *prescriptive* moralism, E.Q., cognitive therapies or positive psychology disconnected from faith-union with the risen Christ (Col. 2:19-3:4).

Second Perspective: Unified Morality

The second WLC perspective provides the basic building block for the framework and for the other perspectives. We can observe the *interdependence* of each commandment on the others. Man's obedience to God must be obedience to all commandments together as an inseparable unity, to speak and act according to the whole law of liberty (Jas. 2:10-12). WLC 99 shows patterns of using each commandment as a way of interpreting other commandments. For example, the heart sin of coveting (10th C) is a root of many other sins, so it defines each commandment as having spiritual or heart dimensions (WLC 99:2). According to each one's role of authority, submission or equals (5th C), each is to model, explain and use their role to represent and encourage obedience to all the commands and prevent or resist what disobeys the commands (WLC99:7-8). There are many inter-connections and parallels in meaning between the first four commands and the last six commands. The 3rd C honoring the Lord's name has parallels with the 9th C honoring the name of our neighbor truthfully and mercifully. The aggravations of sin in WLC 151 also show the interdependence of each commandment on the others: 10th C whether sin was committed only in the heart (with delight in sin, willful foolish presumption, pride, anger, malice), or also includes 1st-9th C's multiple combined sins against various commandments, and against our promises, contracts or vows related to those commands, (with repeated relapsing, in public view); if against God (1st C) his proper worship (2nd C) and against means whereby he makes himself known and our use of

¹⁵ See the author's website link in footnote #8 above, PhD thesis chapter 9 for an example of engaging psychology using biblical presuppositions, both *descriptions* of the moral conscience (Rom. 2:14-15) and *lex Christi prescriptions* for counseling related to those suffering dissociative identity symptoms due to trauma.

¹⁶ See the author's website link in footnote #8 above, PhD thesis 1.3.3 for an example of reframing Esther Meek's Polanyian epistemology in *Loving to Know: Introducing Covenant Epistemology* (2011) under a *lex Christi* rubric.

¹⁷ For another author who used the moral law to engage psychology, see Paul Ackerman, 1988. *The Integrated Model for Relating Psychology and Christianity: A Critique in the Light of Biblical Creation*. <https://creationism.org/csshs/v10n4p07.htm> Accessed 13 July 2020.

them (prayers, covenants, vows to God; 3rd C), against the purpose of the Lord's Day and during or around that time (4th C), if committed by a superior, if sinning against his witnesses whether superiors or equals or inferiors and their lawful restraints, admonitions and discipline (all 5th C related); whether the reputations of others are scandalized, and whether the damage cannot be repaired (9th C). This perspective identifies an irreducible complexity to the entire set of moral law commandments such that they cannot be separated and must be received as a whole coherent system in order to functionally control the way Christians develop epistemology for any other *prescriptive* knowledge, apologetics to engage world-view *prescriptions* and *prescriptive* ethics. I call this the *unified-morality* perspective.¹⁸

Why is this important in counseling? Nancy comes to your pastoral office complaining with many tears about her husband John. Both are long-term church members who affirm the five *solas* of faith, Christ, grace and Scripture, all to God's glory. Though counselors should always be cautious when only hearing one side of the marital story, you know Nancy is well-respected among the church sisters and you get enough detailed data to verify her story. She shares how John recently threatened her in anger for her refusal to tell him about her personal finances. This type of threatening behavior only occurred once before in their 25-year marriage. You ask detailed questions about their marital history and discern that John, a former bank employee, has a pattern of pride about his acumen in family finances (disobedience to the 5th C) coupled with repeated condemnation of Nancy's forgetfulness in paying her half of the mortgage payments (disobedience to 9th C). However, Nancy has a deeply held belief than if any man ever threatened her, she should divorce him. She has been crying in hopelessness for the past three months about their impending retirement future, not wanting to share a life with a man who threatened her. She has been unwilling to share her variable monthly income for fear that John, who recently lost his high-income job, will demand that she pay more of the monthly mortgage, leaving her less to care for their daughter's college costs. Their established pattern has been to share half the monthly payments. The *unified-morality* perspective provides a tool for you as counselor to look at *lex Christi* interdependence, how each commandment operates or is neglected in family dynamics. When Nancy brings a reluctant John in for the next counseling appointment, you use this tool to reorient them both to balanced representation of each other's reputation and honoring each other's reputation wherever each has been faithful to any commandments (obedience to 9th C). Nancy has over emphasized John's 5th C misuse of authority and 6th C anger and threats, while John has over emphasized Nancy's 8th C financial forgetfulness. They both lack contentment (10th C) and confidence in God's daily provision (1st C). The *unified-morality* perspective provides a total marital health check-up, pointing the couple to the biblical requirement of interdependent love, delight, thankfulness and contentment in each commandment's righteousness and hatred and grief to repent of each commandment's unrighteousness. It reminds them to diligently use the means of grace to restore trust that God will not suddenly forsake them in retirement (1st-3rd Cs). It reminds them that God dynamically orders their times and places, and calls them to *theosynchrony*, to participate in God's *chrono*-order, from a macro-historical perspective of God 'joining them together' (Matt. 19:6) to a weekly micro-scheduling of time together rebuilding trust after this emotional fallout (4th C). It encourages John to use his authority to build up Nancy, while she should not throw away her respect for him over one emotional incident (5th C). It teaches John to repent of his emotional outburst and Nancy to repent of her bitterness and unwillingness to forgive, and for John to frequently praise Nancy's God-given strengths used to protect family health, physical life and peace (6th C). It points John

¹⁸ See the author's website link in footnote #8, PhD thesis 2.2.1 for the detailed explanation of this perspective in WLC 99 and 151.

to greater appreciation for their differences in gender and sexuality, living with Nancy in an understanding way (1 Pet. 3:6; 7th C). It teaches both to be patient with their shared property stewardship: Nancy to repent of her unfounded fear of disclosing her monthly income to John and to frequently praise John's God-given financial acumen (8th C). It reorients each to God's way of speaking about those united to Christ (Rom. 8:1; Phil. 1:3-6; 9th C). It warns them both against coveting an unrealistic retirement dream home with a mortgage they can't afford (10th C), repentance from proud, take-control-planning for the future (Jas. 4:13-16), coupled with submission to God's providence in John's recent job loss and their new income realities (1st C). You send a follow-up email reminding them of this counsel above, reminding them that God's covenant of grace promises to accomplish this moral law renewal in them both and give them the WLC 91-151 moral law section to ponder for homework. Nancy reports to you a few months later that this *unified-morality* perspective proves vital to restoring their marital trust and joy and led them to sell their unaffordable retirement home and buy something within their adjusted income range.

Third Perspective: Supra-Morality

The third WLC perspective is that *all* biblical morality falls under the scope of the Ten Commandments. This perspective is summarized in love for God and love for neighbor (WCL 102, 122) and on these two Great Commandments the WLC builds its understanding of the moral law. The WLC uses the Decalogue's imperatives (eight 'you shall not . . .' and two 'you shall . . .' ["Remember," "Honor"] Exod. 20:3-17) to create ten sets of duties and prohibitions drawn from logical connections to any related biblical morality from anywhere in Scripture (WLC 102-149). I call this the *supra-morality* perspective.¹⁹ For example, in WLC 108, the 2nd C prohibition 'you shall not make or worship idols' creates a contrasting set of duties to 'receive, observe, and keep pure the use of prayer, the Word, sacraments, church government and discipline, fasting and vows' developed logically from the entire Bible related to proper worship under the terms of the covenant. Then showing that this biblical *supra-morality* perspective can be further expanded, the WLC 152-196 further explains that brief summary of 2nd C duties with even greater detail related to effectual use of the outward means (Word, sacraments, prayer) to receive the benefits of Christ's mediation in the new covenant. The biblical teaching about prayer (WLC 178-185) is an expanded explanation of the duties of the 2nd C, and to that is added the specifics of the Lord's Prayer (WLC 186-196) as a structure for worship and intercession to receive new covenant *benefits* (expansion of Christ's kingdom, forgiveness, deliverance from temptation and evil and removal of its sources, provision of daily bread) and enable performance of new covenant *duties* (hallowing God's name, doing his moral will, forgiving debtors). As an example of the biblical legitimacy of creating this logical *supra-morality* perspective, notice how Paul reframes the 8th C as a prohibition and duty in one verse: "Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need," (Eph. 4:28 ESV).²⁰ Further, by examining the

¹⁹ See the author's website link in footnote #8, PhD thesis 2.2.2 for the specific summary of WLC 103-149 on the moral law.

²⁰ David Powlison, highlights more connections in "Counsel Ephesians." *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 17, no. 2, 1999, p.7, "[In Ephesians] the Ten Commandments are reworked and enriched in Christ and by present purposes—not contradicted, but extended and deepened." Also note 2: ". . . Ephesians resonates with each of the Ten Commandments, though only the fifth is directly quoted [Eph. 6:1-3, but extended with Paul's "Christ-loaded" words to "children obey parents *in the Lord* to live long on the *whole earth*]. The language of the coveting command is specifically reiterated in 5:3, 5, and more broadly applied in discussions of lust-*epithumia* in 2:3 and 4:22. The false testimony command threads through a wide-ranging treatment of harmful and constructive speech (4:25-27, 29-32). Positive implications of the theft command are developed in 4:28. The

Scripture index to the WLC²¹, readers note that its primary use of Proverbs as proof texts are organized under the rubric of its moral law exposition, illustrating that many of its themes can be restructured under individual commandments.

Why is this supra-morality perspective important? Pastor Bob has met with married church member Lisa, mother of a three-year-old daughter, and learned of her tragic seven-year history of bondage to many food related health and diet rules with related pills by day combined with her indulgence in junk food frenzies and vomiting by night. For homework Pastor Bob emails her his own notes providing a full *lex Christi* perspective on food and drink to discuss at their next counseling session.²² All Lisa's eating should fulfill the Lord's command to seek first his kingdom and righteousness. Her eating should be an act of communion with God, seeing his eternal power and divine nature in food even as she prays that God would provide her daily bread (1st C; Rom. 1:20-21; Matt 6:11). The Lord uses food metaphors to lead Lisa into new covenant worship and calls her to taste and see that he is good in the Lord's Supper (2nd C). Lisa must praise and bless God for the food she receives (3rd C). Lisa learns a historical perspective on food in noticing seasons of God's provision, such as Thanksgiving holidays (4th C). Most evidently, Lisa needs to yield herself to God's design to eat with family relationship-building purposes (5th and 7th Cs) to rule over the earth's produce to serve her health and life and share with those in need (6th C), spend her food budget on *lex Christi* purposes (8th C) aiming for a *lex Christi* honoring reputation rather than a secular world-imposed body image reputation (Jas. 2:1-5, 12; 9th C) and find freedom from her particular forms of food and body image coveting (10th C). Pastor Bob knows all these *lex Christi* neighbor-love designs come from the Triune God by the new covenant writing of the law on Lisa's heart (Heb. 10:16), though her actual transformation will likely be a daily battle of dying to sin and living to righteousness. Proper self-care under *lex Christi* is reinforced by knowing who God is and what he has done for her rescue from bondage through Christ, the mediator of the covenant of grace, by his Spirit, with the support of the visible church. Here Lisa may need more than just verbal counsel, as various addictions usually require larger interventions with the support of the visible church that remove her opportunities to sin until she develops self-discipline. The *unified* and *supra-morality lex Christi* perspectives above need to be coupled with the next WLC perspective below to prevent their legalistic application.

Fourth Perspective: Symphonic *Lex Christi*

The fourth WLC perspective uses the repeated motif of the *lex Christi* as a perspective to help understand specific aspects of systematic and practical theology. *Lex Christi* is a unifying thread running through the

adultery command is broadened to include general immorality and filthy-mindedness (5:3-5). The murder command is also broadened, with several pointed comments about anger and the gracious alternatives (4:26f, 31f). The sabbath command appears remotely, in the call for kindness to servants, and perhaps in the seating of Christ as rest from his re-creation labor. The command not to take the name of the Lord in vain appears in broad strokes in the call not to return to a futile life (4:17-24; 5:5-11), and perhaps in its narrower aspect in 5:3f. The idolatry command is given its wide, metaphorical application in 5:5, where it merges with the desire-drivenness of the tenth command. The command to have no God but the holy LORD obviously runs through the entire letter. Furthermore, the two great commandments that summarize the will of God—love the LORD God and love neighbor—permeate the entire book, appearing with particular directness in 6:24 and 5:1f.”

²¹ <https://www.pcaac.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/WCFScriptureIndex.pdf>

²² See the author's website link in footnote #8, PhD thesis 7.2.1-7.2.2 offering a related example of using the *supra-morality* perspective to reorganize themes in *Instructing a Child's Heart* by Tedd and Margy Tripp (2008).

main topics of the Catechism. I call it the *symphonic lex-Christi* perspective.²³ The *symphonic lex-Christi* perspective can be understood in two ways. First, it means the recurring *lex Christi* motif, most commonly summarized by the terms righteousness or unrighteousness, throughout the topics of Westminster's systematic and practical theology. Scripture trains in righteousness. The LORD is righteous. The Lord elects some men to righteousness. The LORD creates Adam righteous and gives him His entire righteous law in Eden. The LORD permits man's fall into unrighteousness, and passes by some, leaving them in their sins unto final judgment. The LORD promises Christ, the Righteous offspring of the woman. The LORD renews his righteous covenant at Sinai. The LORD accomplishes righteousness in Christ. Knowing and worshiping God as Trinity, becoming more intimately conscious of all his glorious attributes, brings joy to believe the perfection of those attributes in Christ as God-man and share those reflective aspects as new *lex Christified* creatures in Christ, regenerated to *lex Christi* desire by the Spirit & Word, credited with *lex Christi* righteousness in justification, imparted with *lex Christi* wisdom in sanctification, appropriating the means of grace in communion with the saints to exemplify, proclaim, intercede and administrate these *lex Christi* virtues in all assemblies of two or more. The LORD leads his church to discipline according to *lex Christi*. The saints hope for a perfected *lex Christi* world and relationships in glorification. The LORD consummates judgment on unrighteousness and eternally prepares a home of righteousness in the new heavens, new earth, while hell is the application of justice, a place filled with the total chaos of anti-*lex Christi*.²⁴

The second meaning of the *symphonic lex Christi* perspective is that the attributes of God are revealed throughout the topics of Westminster's systematic and practical theology to, on, in and by his creatures (WCF 2:2).²⁵ Deductive research and extrapolation of the logic discovers the rudiments of an integrative theology between the doctrines of God and man.

The Lord's Attributes: Perhaps seven attributes of God's being are noted as derivative in the creation of man: The LORD is living, unchanging, almighty, determinate, all knowing, eternal, spirit (WLC 7-8; WCF 2:1). God's holiness is reflected in the moral law (WLC 7; WCF 2:1). God differentiates his expression of relational attributes of wrath and justice to law non-conformists outside Christ and mercy-grace-patience-goodness-truth to his people who conform to that law in Christ (WLC 13, 93; WCF 3:5-7).

Man's Derivative Reflections: All men reflect God's being as living, changeable, enabled, reasonable (choosing), knowledgeable, immortal soul (WLC 17; WCF 4:2). In Christ man must be renewed in

²³ I use the *symphonic* metaphor as described by Poythress to mean the coherence of various biblical themes into a symphony God's blended music, and specifically in one of its meanings, as themes viewed throughout Scripture and theology, see Vern S. Poythress, *Symphonic Theology: The Validity of Multiple Perspectives in Theology* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2001).

²⁴ See the author's website link in footnote #8, PhD thesis 2.2.3 for the specific symphonic WCF patterns cited and adapted in 4.7 with biblical texts. See chapter 5 using *lex Christi* to interpret creation, fall and final renewal, and chapter 6 to interpret Wisdom literature. See a related article highlighting two theologians who use this perspective after the Westminster Standards were published, Richard Muller, "The Covenant of Works and the Stability of the Divine Law in Seventeenth-Century Reformed Orthodoxy: A Study in the Theology of Herman Witsius and Wilhelmus A Brakel," *Calvin Theological Journal*, 29 (1994): 75-101.

²⁵ See the author's website link in footnote #8, PhD thesis 3.3.1-3.3.3 for the details comparing the WCF terms with the adapted terms which are also reorganized into three sets of attributes (*supra-valency*, *lex Christi*, and *covenant-relational* attributes). WCF 2:3 also uses a Triune person's perspective: each person of the Trinity has a role in systematic theology and pastoral practice (Father decrees, Son accomplishes decree and Spirit applies decree) with the purpose that the Lord would be glorified and enjoyed forever, which John Frame uses as his tri-perspectival origin.

holiness as defined by the moral law. Man must then exercise various differentiations of justice and mercy toward other men (e.g. WLC 135, 6th C duties that overlap with all other Cs). Yet renewal of moral attributes and their covenant relational differentiations integrates with a summary definition of man's created essential being, "the frame and disposition of the whole man, soul and body" (WLC 17, 93).

These three deductive Westminster threads of attribute reflections in man could benefit from a more intentional categorizing, exposition and adaptation. We could reclassify the attributes above as three types of derivative attribute reflections in man: a) essential being, b) holiness as defined by the moral law and c) covenant-relational differentiations. In computer language, perhaps we could use a metaphor of a) essential hardware, b) operating system and c) software applications. We can adapt and augment the WCF 2:1 list and arrange them into three attribute sets named *supra-valency* (essential being), *lex Christi* (holiness defined by moral law), and *covenant-relational* (differentiation based on relation to covenant). These three sets are revealed in symphonically repeating motifs throughout Scripture and distilled in systematic and practical theology. The entire three set of attributes are noted in order to situate the adapted set of *lex Christi* attributes within the WCF 2 attribute list and highlight that the origin of the *lex Christi* motif is from God himself. In addition, I will suggest that all Westminster's divine attributes have derivative reflections in man.

The first set, called *supra-valency* attributes, are sometimes called attributes of God's being: "I am the Lord your God," I AM, supremely . . . determinate, faithful, present, mysterious, powerful, independent, eternal, perfect, knowing, boundless. These ten are respectively reflected in man's soul as *valency abilities*: "i am" (self-consciousness) with decidability, reliability, availability, complexity, ability, dependency, endurance, perfectibility, teachability and luxuriance. These are illustrated below in the core of each star, with the Lord's *supra-valency* attributes in the inner core of the right star and the derivative *valency abilities* in man in the inner core of the left star. They are called *valency* because they can combine with any of the outer attributes without losing the distinctive meanings of each.

Supra-lex Christi attributes (one to represent each commandment in order of the Decalogue, followed by a derivative reflection in man): "I am the Lord your God," I AM, supremely . . . 1st C superior, 2nd C holy, 3rd C blessed, 4th C dynamic, 5th C harmonious, 6th C living, 7th C beautiful, 8th C sufficient, 9th C truthful, 10th C contented, respectively reflected in man's soul as *lex Christi virtues*: pro-Lord, pro-covenantal (meaning the elect can only approach his holiness through his covenants), pro-blessing, pro-theosynchrony, pro-harmony, pro-life, pro-marriage, pro-stewardship, pro-truthful, and pro-contentment. These are illustrated above in the middle ring of each stars, with the Lord's *supra-lex Christi* attributes on the right and the derivative *lex Christi virtues* in man on the left.

Covenant-relational attributes:²⁶ *covenant-reconciliation* attributes of loving, gracious, merciful, patient to save, good, forgiving, rewarding, self-controlled, disciplining and rejoicing and a second set of respectively paired *covenant-enmity* attributes of hating, jealous, wrathful, patient to judge, just, condemning, penalizing, angry, abandoning and grieving. These are located around the outer ring of each star using identical terms, but in man's soul, I call the set *covenant-relational (reconciliation or enmity) affections*.

²⁶ Ten pairs summarizing common ways that God relates to those in covenant compared to those outside covenant. The list is not exhaustive, but suggestive of many other relational words in Scripture.

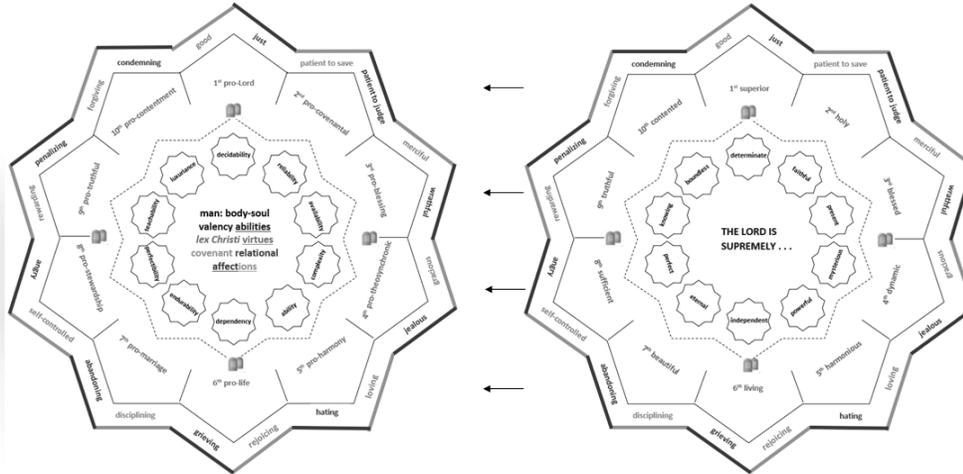
Why is this symphonic *lex Christi attributes* perspective important? This proposal seeks to harmonize the often-abstracted doctrine of God from man who is made in his image. It proposes a clarified link between three sets of God's attributes reflected in three imaging sets of derivative *abilities*, *virtues* and *affections* in man for further exploration. This contributes to the development of an enriched systematic theology of soul care that understands and transforms human nature envisioned by Powlison. The WLC begins with knowing the Triune persons and attributes, while the symphonic perspective clarifies details of His *lex Christi* character and reflects those details throughout his works in creation and providence. Thus, the perspective nuances the doctrinal categories as follows. The elect receive forgiveness for *lex Christi* failure (unrighteousness) and are renewed in *lex Christi virtues* (righteousness). Communion with Christ in grace means that His *lex Christi* virtues are imputed in justification, imparted in sanctification and awaiting perfection in glorification. The visible church should choose leaders that exemplify, proclaim, intercede and administrate *lex Christi* virtues and discipline *lex Christi* failure.

This implies that the other two sets of *valency abilities* and *covenant relational affections* describing man's soul, by the instrument of man's body, are meant to be used to please God and promote human flourishing as a supernatural corollary to the renewal of core *lex Christi virtues*. For example, *lex Christi* virtues command duties of love for all men within the details of the second table of the moral law. When nuanced with the covenant-relational *affections*, counselors can distinguish between the duties of love to those in covenant and those outside covenant. While imitating God's display of patient common grace love to all, there should be a special display of *covenant-relational reconciliation affections* to "one another" in the visible church (Matt. 5:44-45; Rom. 9:22-23; Gal. 6:9-10; Eph. 4:1-6:4). Since God loves the saints as new creature in Christ and shows them his *covenant-relational reconciliation* attributes, all the assemblies of believers need to show these same affections to one another, whether in contexts of marriage, family, schools, businesses or churches. And likewise, current models of counseling lack a clarified category for how the visible church imitates God's *covenant-relational enmity* attributes in biblically defined ways, hating sin, grieving over and separating from unrepentant sinners, giving men up to their lusts, punishing under government-citizenship laws, and waiting for God Last Judgment justice (Rev. 2:5; Heb. 1:9; Eph. 4:30; Rom. 9:2; Matt. 10:14; 15:14; Acts 13:46; Rom. 13:3-4; Rev. 6:10). These nuances contribute to a systematic theology for soul care.

The *symphonic lex Christi* attributes trace a more specific logic between the character of God and all new creatures in Christ, providing counselors with ways to reveal the Triune God-in-covenant-by-a-mediator and show how the *lex Christi* renewal commanded by Christ is fulfilled by the covenant of grace. Beyond a formulaic approach to the texts that they use to counsel, counselors should learn to instinctively notice themes that lead to knowing and loving the Triune God and to Christ as mediator *together with his* benefits in the covenant of grace. These are themes highlighted in WLC's pedagogical structure and adapted in the *symphonic lex Christi* attributes perspective. Counselees need to grow up into the maturity of how the Father's election to union with Christ applies the benefits of the new covenant *lex Christi* righteousness declared in justification to be practically written by the Spirit on the heart in sanctification within the teaching, modeling and discipline of the visible church.²⁷

²⁷ For similar ideas expressed in this paragraph, see Sinclair Ferguson, *Some Pastors and Teachers* (Banner of Truth), chapter 18, "Preaching the Law of God: Reformers and Puritans", chapter 28, "Reformed Theology-Reformed Lifestyle", chapter 34, "Preaching Christ from Old Testament Scriptures" (also available as online PDF through PT media) mentions the danger of

Symphonic attributes perspective on *lex Christi*-DRL



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

Within the *supra-pedagogical* perspective is contained the other three perspectives: the *symphonic lex Christi* perspective and the *supra-morality* perspective, which contains the *unified-morality* perspective.

Lex Christi-DRL (Dominion of the Righteous Lord)

Supra-pedagogical perspective

Exodus 20:1-17 is WLC's micro-scalable teaching model: The entire WLC can be organized under Exodus 20:1-17 outline.

Exodus 20:2 Preface to Ten Commandments

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

Exodus 20:3-17 Ten Commandments

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

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

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

Symphonic *lex Christi* perspective

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

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

Lex Christi model is a repeated relation in systematic theology and pastoral practice

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

Supra-morality perspective

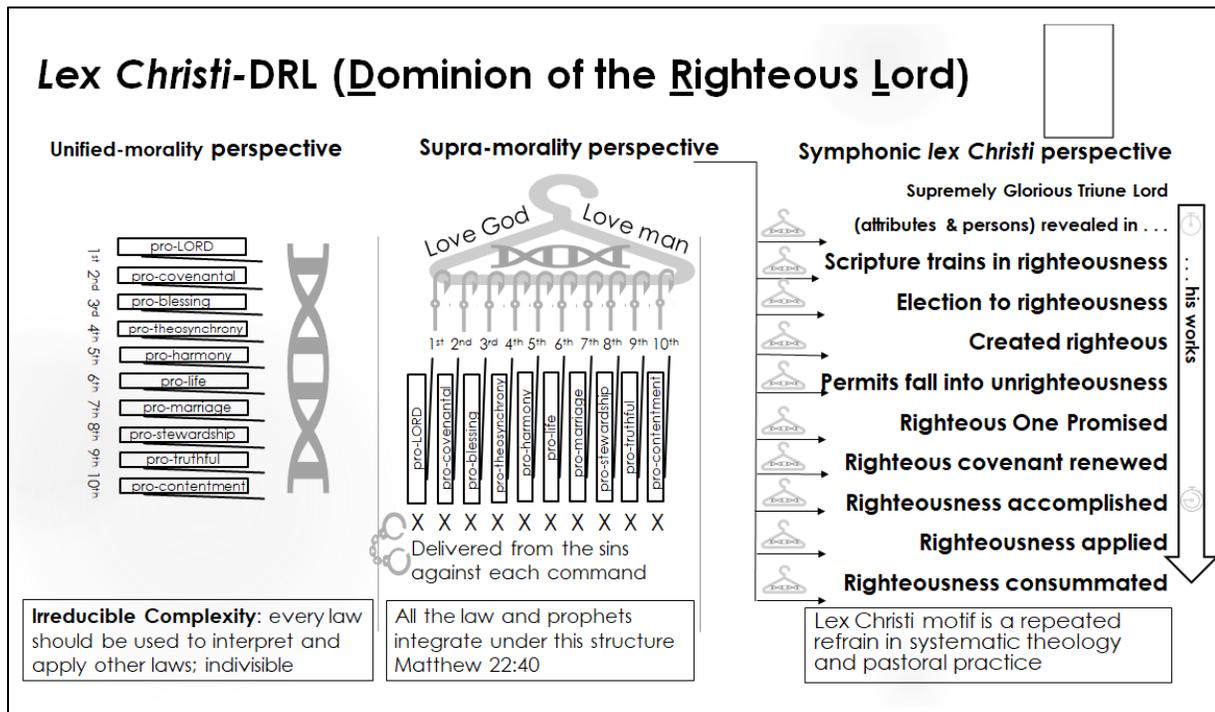
Delivered from the sins against each command

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

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

artificial formulas and focus on the subjective listeners rather than an instinct for preaching Christ himself developed from biblical theology, chapter 36 "Preaching the Atonement" highlighting the need to preach the person of Christ, his atoning exchange revealing his love and the implications of union with our new covenant head, dying to sinful attitudes toward Christ and others while living for him, and chapter 39, "A Preacher's Decalogue" the 9th principle exhorting preachers to, "expound the Scriptures in a way that makes clear that the indicatives of grace ground the imperatives of faith and obedience and also effect them." This is the exact structure taught in WLC's *supra-pedagogical* perspective, as noted above. See Ferguson's similar counsel in "Preaching Christ: Comment, Caution, Counsel" at <https://www.uniontheology.org/resources/bible/biblical-theology/preaching-christ-comment-caution-counsel>

The other three major perspectives are illustrated in the diagram below and explained from left to right. In the illustration below, I use a DNA symbol on the left to represent the *unified morality* perspective since it represents an irreducibly complex model of morality. Next to the DNA symbol in the rectangles, I offer a summary of each commandment's duty or virtue following the decalogical order, creating a new set of phrases: pro-Lord, pro-covenantal, pro-blessing, pro-theosynchrony, pro-harmony, pro-life, pro-marriage, pro-stewardship, pro-truthful, pro-contentment. Anything contrary to these duties is sin. I use a hanger symbol in the center to represent the supra-morality perspective since it represents a metaphor for hanging all biblical teaching about righteousness or unrighteousness under its outline of two/ten [duty/prohibition] commandments. Matthew 22:40 encourages this type of scalable supra-structure in noting that all the law and the prophets depend on the two great commandments. These two symbols are nested into the right *symphonic lex Christi* diagram because they form a repeated motif throughout various doctrines and redemptive events along the timeline of history (symbolized by the downward pointing arrow symbol).

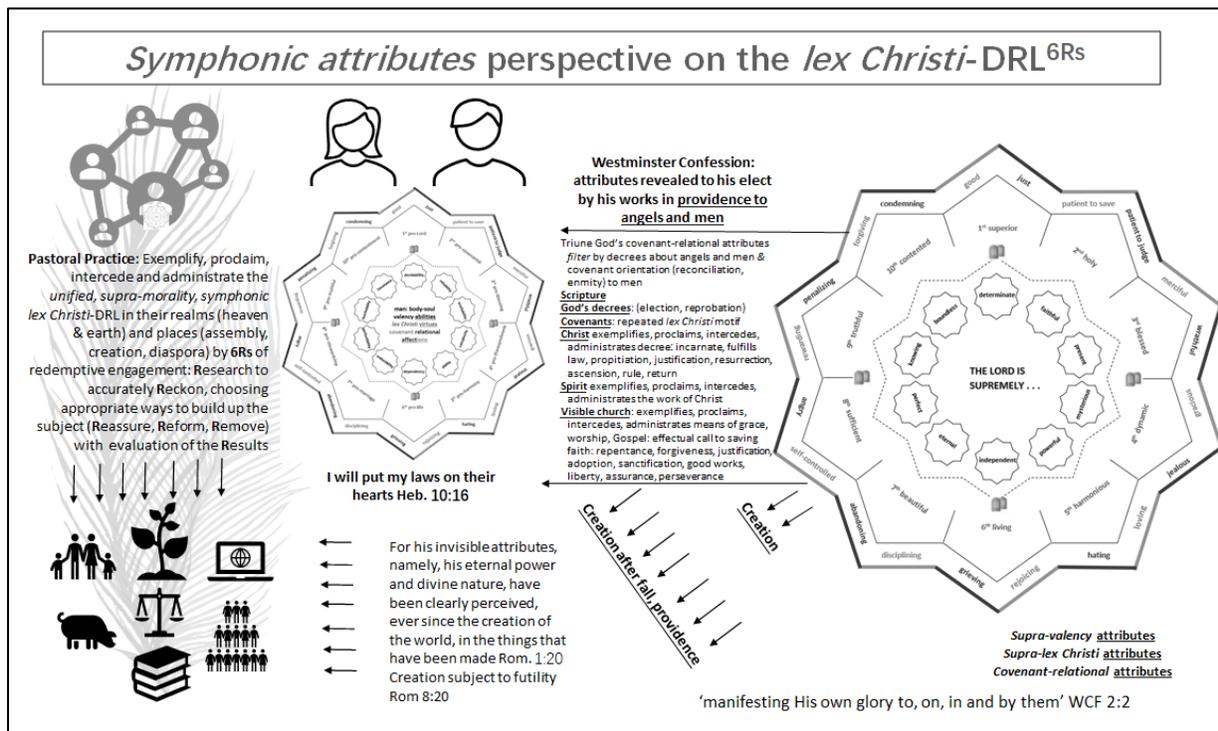


Assembling all the perspectives for practical theology: *lex Christi-DRL*^{6R's}

Another key contribution of my thesis is to propose a method to use the four *lex Christi* perspectives in a wholistic biblical counseling practice. *Lex Christi-DRL*^{6R's} is the Father-decreed ministry of the risen Lord Jesus Christ to Spirit-indwell and send his linguistically and culturally adapted ambassadors to exemplify, mercifully proclaim, boldly intercede and skillfully administrate the past, present and promised Dominion of the Righteous Lord by the *lex Christi* in their realms (heavenly & earthly) and

places (assembly, creation, diaspora) to their subjects using six 6R's of redemptive engagement: Research revealed reality to accurately Reckon, choosing appropriate ways to build up the subject (Reassure, Reform, Remove) in such a way that the engagement is received by the subjects with the intended Results.²⁸

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



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

²⁸ See the author's website link in footnote #8, PhD thesis 4.8 for an explanation of every phrase in this definition together with questions to consider asking counselees during 6R's counseling process. The 6R's can be used as a counseling report form.



Symphonic lex Christi-DRL Perspective

These four perspectives are vital to Reformed, cross-cultural missions, using the Westminster Standards as our core counseling resource, both for counselor training and counselee homework, together with biblical theology-oriented Bible book studies built on its foundations with applications to all of life! The Spirit-anointed Servant has come to bring *lex Christi* justice to the nations, not growing faint or being discouraged until he has established *lex Christi* justice on the earth, and “for his righteousness’ sake, to magnify his law and make it glorious!” (Isa. 42:1-12, 21; cf. Deut. 4:6). If the Servant will not grow faint or be discouraged until *lex Christi* justice was established in Saul as a bruised reed he would not break, using Paul to bring his law to the Gentile coastlands, let us share in his work of restoring bruised-reed teachers-of-counselors in our day by a retrieval of the luxuriant *lex Christi* in our age.