



THEY  
WILL  
BE DONE

The Ten Commandments

and the

Christian Life

Gilbert Meilaender

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**BakerAcademic**

*a division of Baker Publishing Group*

Grand Rapids, Michigan

# Contents

Preface ix

1. The Law of Christ 1
2. The Marriage Bond 17
3. The Family Bond 37
4. The Life Bond 53
5. The Possessions Bond 79
6. The Speech Bond 95
7. The Great and First Commandment 113

Index 127

❧ CHAPTER 1 ❧

# The Law of Christ

The Church lives by the “fathers” of Israel, by the fellowship of the spirit with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Moses, David and Elijah. . . . These fathers of Israel, and they alone, ought in strict justice to be called the “fathers of the Church.”

Karl Barth<sup>1</sup>

It is obvious that the Decalogue has played a central role in the church’s understanding of how Christians should live. In their confessions, in their preaching, and perhaps especially in their catechetical instruction, churches have used the Decalogue as a framework for understanding the will of God for our lives. Jesus himself seems to regard the commandments of the Decalogue as an articulation of the goodness God requires (e.g., Luke 18:18–20). And in Galatians (5:14) St. Paul draws these

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This chapter is a revised version of the article “The Decalogue as the Law of Christ,” which appeared in *Pro Ecclesia* 27, no. 3 (2018): 338–49. Used with permission.

1. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* II/2, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1957), 204.

“ten words” into one, writing, “The whole law is fulfilled in one word, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” A similar passage in Romans (13:8–10) indicates clearly that the commandments Paul is drawing together in this one are those of the Decalogue.<sup>2</sup> Would, however, that things were really this clear and simple. Readers of St. Paul will know better than to suppose that they are.

### The Problem

St. Paul seems to hold two seemingly incompatible beliefs—that Christians ought to obey the law’s moral demands *and* that the time of the law ended with the coming of Christ. The same apostle who characterizes the content of neighbor-love in terms of the commandments of the Decalogue can also write that those who live in Christ have “died to the law” and are “discharged” from its demands (Rom. 7:4–6). We should therefore not be surprised that Christians have disagreed—sometimes vehemently—about what role the moral law should play in their lives. Although we often suppose that we can find the solution to this question in the writings of St. Paul, perhaps it is better to think of him as setting for us the terms of a problem that we must sort out for ourselves.

One very common—and by no means foolish or obviously mistaken—attempt to solve this problem has been to distinguish

2. “Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. The commandments, ‘You shall not commit adultery, You shall not kill, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,’ and any other commandment, are summed up in this sentence, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.” We may wonder whether this does not overlook the very different “words” traditionally understood as the “first table” of the law—words that treat our relation not to our “neighbors” but to God. I set this question aside for the moment and will eventually return to it.

several different kinds of law found in the Old Testament. First, there is the sort of law we call “moral,” of which the Decalogue is the foremost example. Although the Decalogue is not the only example of moral law in the Old Testament, it clearly occupies a special place, making it unsurprising that Christians have so often taken it as a pattern for instruction in the moral life.<sup>3</sup> The special place of the Decalogue can be seen in the fact that it is spoken to the people of Israel directly by God, not mediated through Moses. And, as has often been noted, its commands are apodictic. That is, they are expressed as short prohibitions, seemingly universal in scope. Rather than being the sort of case law intended to govern the political life of a community, they seem to express standards of behavior or conditions of association that apply to all human beings and societies (past, present, and future). Though often disobeyed, these commandments outline a widely held sense of decent behavior. This does not mean that we always govern our behavior in accord with these laws. It just means that, as C. S. Lewis put it, “the moment anyone tells me I am not keeping it, there starts up in my mind a string of excuses.”<sup>4</sup>

In addition to moral law, Old Testament legislation includes laws intended to govern both Israel’s political life and its cultic life. Examples of the first include laws related to conditions of servitude, cities of refuge, war, and testimony in legal cases.

3. The Decalogue is by no means the only part of Old Testament legislation that has the look of moral law. Many of the prohibitions of the “Holiness Code” in Leviticus—in chaps. 17 and 18, for example—enunciate requirements similar to those of the Decalogue and seem to apply not only to Israelites but also to “sojourners” living with them. However, the “ten words” also occupied a special place in early Judaism. Until the second century after Christ they were read regularly in the synagogue. But, writes Robert M. Grant, “Jewish enthusiasm for the Decalogue diminished as a result of Christian use in the second century, and it was withdrawn from the synagogue liturgy” (“The Decalogue in Early Christianity,” *Harvard Theological Review* 40 [January 1947]: 2).

4. C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan, 1960), 6.

Examples of the second include required sacrifices, dietary laws, and the ritual for the Day of Atonement. Among such cultic or ceremonial laws are requirements connected with keeping the Sabbath. The fact that this cultic law of the Sabbath occupies an important place in the Decalogue constitutes a special problem that will eventually require our attention.

When Christians have distinguished these three sorts of law from one another, the point has often been to suggest that when St. Paul writes, “Christ is the end of the law” (Rom. 10:4), he refers to the political and cultic laws of the Old Testament but not to the moral law. Hence, on this view, the requirements of the Decalogue—being moral law—would have continuing validity for all people, Christians among them. As I noted above, this is not an obviously mistaken approach, and in fact it may be the best we can do to bring order to St. Paul’s various discussions of the law. We have to grant, however, that it does not work perfectly. Sometimes Paul does not seem to distinguish various kinds of law within Israel’s Torah. Thus, for example, he writes in Galatians 5:3, “I testify again to every man who receives circumcision that he is bound to keep the whole law.” But elsewhere, when he refers to the law—as, for example, in Romans 2:14–16—he quite clearly is thinking of moral law rather than Old Testament legislation as a whole. So I return to what I said earlier: St. Paul sets for us the terms of the problem; to deal with it requires our own constructive thought.

### **Puzzling over Galatians**

What is the relation between faith (*pistis*) and law (*nomos*) in the Christian life? Galatians offers us two different patterns of thought with which to think about this question. The discussion in 2:15–3:12 is dominated by a contrast between two

different ways we might try to live before God. The contrast is not precisely between faith and law; rather, St. Paul contrasts a life of faith with a life based on “works of law.” And the implication seems to be that, although faith cannot coexist with reliance on *works* of law, it is not opposed to the law as such.

We see this in the way Paul uses the story of Abraham in this part of Galatians. He writes that God “preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham” (3:8). That is, already long before the time of Christ two possibilities exist for Abraham. He can rely on works of law (which, clearly, would here not mean Old Testament law specifically), or he can live by faith. The contrast is not between two historical periods, one governed by law and the other by faith. Instead, the contrast is an existential one within the life of a person who in every moment stands before God, summoned to rely on the good news of the gospel rather than on “works of law.” Thus, these verses do not say that the moral law has no place within the life of faith; they say that reliance on works of law is contrary to faith in the good news of God’s grace. So this section of Galatians seems to contrast two different ways of life that are possibilities for anyone, anywhere, at any time—and it does not in any way suggest that the moral law has no place as instruction and guidance for one who lives by faith.

In Galatians 3:13–4:31 the emphasis shifts. Now the law seems to have its place in a time before Christ came. Moreover, the time after Christ came and the time of faith are almost indistinguishable (as in 3:23–26). In this section of Galatians, therefore, *pistis* and *nomos* are not contrasting bases for a person’s life; rather, they mark a break in history between two different ways in which God acts. The time when Old Testament law governed—a time before “faith” came—was limited, and the law was a custodian put in place by God to accomplish certain purposes. But now

that Christ has come (or, to say roughly the same thing, faith has come), believers are no longer confined under that custodian but are adopted children of God free from law, whose lives are governed by the Spirit of Christ.

How shall we hold together these two patterns of thought? Using the second pattern from Galatians, we could take as our starting point the idea that once Christ comes, the time of law is ended and the time of faith begun. Then, one might say, those who live by faith do not in any way govern or guide their lives by the law. Or we could take as our starting point the first pattern of thought—not, that is, a contrast between two historical periods (a time of law and a time of faith) but, instead, a contrast within any person’s life between reliance on works of law and faith that simply trusts the gospel. Then, one might say, to live by faith is not to ignore or be uninstructed by the commands of the law. It simply means that we do not rely on obeying the law to make us right with God.

In short, Galatians leaves us not with an answer but with a puzzle we must sort out. In my judgment the first pattern of thought in Galatians is our best starting point. Believers are not to rely on works of law, nor to place their hope in obedience to the moral law; nevertheless, they are not free to set it aside or to imagine that, once Christ has come, it should no longer shape and direct their conduct. To suppose otherwise would be, as Helmut Thielicke put it, to think of the Christian life as an “abstraction”—a static condition rather than a “pilgrimage” empowered by grace.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, when in Romans 10:4 St. Paul writes that Christ is the “end” of the law, so that righteousness before God is available for anyone who believes, this is best taken to mean that Christ is the “goal” of the law, not

5. Helmut Thielicke, *Theological Ethics*, vol. 1, *Foundations* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), 130. The term “pilgrimage” to describe the Christian life is on p. 132.

its “termination.”<sup>6</sup> In God’s gracious purpose the law points to Israel’s Messiah, whose death and resurrection is the goal of Israel’s life, shaped as it is by God’s law.

Hence, the entire Old Testament law—moral, cultic, political—points toward the One who was to come. Some aspects of that law, although they no longer direct Christian conduct, served and serve as witness to the One who was to come. Other aspects of that law—in particular, those we call moral—continue to instruct us about what it means to follow Christ. It is the task of Christian moral reflection to distinguish within the law, all of which has its goal in Christ, what does and what does not continue to direct the life of believers within “the Israel of God” (Gal. 6:16).

Once we realize that St. Paul quite unselfconsciously sets side by side in Galatians these two ways of speaking about law, faith, gospel, and promise, we see that even a Pauline letter such as Galatians—with its ringing emphasis on Christian freedom—should not be understood as teaching that Christians are free to ignore the requirements of the moral law. In fact, St. Paul once described himself (1 Cor. 9:21) as *ennomos Christou*, “subject to the law of Christ”—a phrase characterized by Thielicke as “the most felicitous and precise designation imaginable” for depicting St. Paul’s view that Christians, while not “under” the law, are nonetheless not “without” law toward God.<sup>7</sup> Nor is St. Paul’s a special case. For as he says in Galatians, that great epistle of Christian freedom, when believers bear one another’s burdens, they “fulfil the law of Christ” (6:2). They live in fellowship, as Barth says, with the fathers of Israel.<sup>8</sup>

6. For this reading I follow C. E. B. Cranfield’s discussion in *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1979), 2:515–20. This is probably a better reading of Rom. 10:4 than the reading I noted earlier, which interprets the verse to mean that Christ is the end (i.e., termination) of political and cultic, but not moral, law in the Old Testament.

7. Thielicke, *Theological Ethics*, 137.

8. Barth, *Church Dogmatics* II/2, 204.

## The Decalogue as Christian Instruction

Reading Galatians in this way is advantageous in several respects. It keeps us from supposing that, in order to take St. Paul seriously, we must separate Christ from God's calling of Israel as his holy, elect people. For example, it allows and invites us to take seriously the Psalms as the church's prayer book, to pray them along with Jesus, the faithful Israelite. We can say that the precepts of the LORD rejoice the heart (Ps. 19:8); we can believe that one who delights in and meditates on the law of the LORD day and night will be blessed (1:1–2); we can pray that the LORD would make us know his ways and teach us his paths (25:4); we can give thanks that God's word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path (119:105). And it means that we need not set St. Paul over against New Testament passages such as 1 John 5:3: "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome."

The commandments that have Israel's Messiah as their goal become for Christians instruction in "the law of Christ," and the Decalogue gives direction and shape to their lives. On the one hand, the whole law is fulfilled in the command to love one's neighbor. But, on the other hand, the various commands of the Decalogue are needed to give specificity to the meaning of this neighbor-love. To suppose that we could "just make do with the general commandment to love" would, as C. E. B. Cranfield writes, "be altogether mistaken. For, while we most certainly need the summary to save us from missing the wood for the trees and from understanding the particular commandments in a rigid, literalistic, unimaginative, pedantic, or loveless way, we are equally in need of the particular commandments into which the law breaks down the general obligation of love, to save us from resting content with vague, and often hypocritical, sentiments, which . . . we are all prone to mistake for Christian

love.”<sup>9</sup> Thus, we should not picture the commands of the second table as simply an addition or supplement to those of the first. On the contrary, they specify what it means to have no other God than Israel’s Lord. They offer an “exposition” of the first table “from the standpoint of the plurality of life’s relationships”—depicting “the actualization of the First Commandment in the various relationships of life.”<sup>10</sup>

Thus, it is fitting that the commandments of the Decalogue should become useful for—indeed, central to—the church’s catechetical instruction. In this context the commandments are not an external law imposed upon recalcitrant subjects; rather, they give shape to the life directed by the Spirit of Christ. It is, as Bonhoeffer writes, “grace to know God’s commands. They free us from self-made plans and conflicts. They make our steps certain and our way joyful.”<sup>11</sup>

Luther’s Small and Large Catechisms offer a striking example of a catechetical use of the Decalogue.<sup>12</sup> It is striking especially because there are aspects of Luther’s theology that might seem to leave little place for this kind of instruction in the Christian life. Indeed, the tensions within Luther’s writings about the moral life are palpable. On the one hand, he finds in the commandments instruction about the sort of life that pleases God. Thus, he writes in the Large Catechism: “Here, then, we have the Ten Commandments, a summary of divine teaching on what we are to do to make our whole life pleasing to God. They are the true fountain from which all good works

9. Cranfield, *Epistle to the Romans*, 2:679.

10. Thielicke, *Theological Ethics*, 138.

11. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, “*Life Together*” and “*Prayerbook of the Bible*,” ed. Geoffrey B. Kelly, trans. James H. Burtness, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works 5* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 164.

12. I will use the texts as translated in Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000).

must spring, the true channel through which all good works must flow.”<sup>13</sup>

On the other hand, in writings other than the catechisms Luther sometimes seems to set aside such moral instruction as irrelevant to the life of faith. He manages this with two quick moves. First, he characterizes the Old Testament legislation—including the Decalogue—as law “given only to the people of Israel” and, hence, “no longer binding on us.”<sup>14</sup> Even the Decalogue governs Christian conduct only insofar as it happens to coincide with the natural law, which, according to St. Paul (in Rom. 2), is written on human hearts. Then a second move seems to dispense even with the natural law as instruction for Christians. For it is abolished “through faith spiritually, which is nothing else than the fulfilling of the law.”<sup>15</sup> Hence, “if every man had faith we would need no more laws. Everyone would of himself do good works all the time, as his faith shows him.”<sup>16</sup>

Clearly, this depiction of the Christian life is not complex enough to account for Luther’s own use of the Decalogue, especially in his catechisms. To say only that love fulfills the law misses the point I quoted from Cranfield earlier—namely, that we need “the particular commandments into which the law breaks

13. Kolb and Wengert, *Book of Concord*, 428.

14. Martin Luther, “How Christians Should Regard Moses,” *Luther’s Works* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1960), 35:164. The evidence for this, according to Luther, is that the Decalogue begins by identifying God as the One who brought Israel out of Egypt. Therefore, he writes, “this text makes it clear that even the Ten Commandments do not pertain to us. For God never led us out of Egypt, but only the Jews” (p. 165). But this hardly does justice to the way the New Testament understands that exodus from Egypt. Matthew (2:15) sees Jesus as the faithful Israelite, called out of Egypt by Israel’s Lord. Indeed, the entire second chapter of Matthew’s Gospel points back to the exodus, and it is impossible to understand the significance of Jesus and the community of his followers if his story is not read in at least some continuity with that of Israel.

15. Martin Luther, “Against the Heavenly Prophets in the Matter of Images and Sacraments,” *Luther’s Works* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1958), 40:97.

16. Martin Luther, “Treatise on Good Works,” *Luther’s Works* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), 44:34–35.

down the general obligation of love, to save us from resting content with vague, and often hypocritical, sentiments, which . . . we are all prone to mistake for Christian love.” One of the great strengths of Luther’s catechisms is the way he ties each of the commandments to the first. When he asks what the first commandment, which forbids having other gods, means, Luther answers simply, “We are to fear, love, and trust God above all things.”<sup>17</sup> Following that, his explanation of each of the other commandments begins by connecting its meaning to the first: “We are to fear and love God, so that . . .”

Powerful and insightful as this is, taken alone it may lead us to miss a distinction between the person and the works the person does. We can see this, for instance, when Luther writes that in the work of faith “all good works exist, and from faith these works receive a borrowed goodness.”<sup>18</sup> This might too easily suggest that the only work God cares about is the work of faith, but if that were the case we would be hard-pressed to explain the attention Luther gives in his catechisms to the variety of ways in which we may help or harm others. Suppose a Christian man who has been grouchy and ill-tempered with his children tries hard to do better and succeeds at least in part. With that changed behavior God is well pleased, whatever we say about the state of the man’s faith. His changed behavior is better—has its own goodness—not just in our eyes but also in God’s.

To have faith—that is, to be a person who is at peace with God and who trusts that for Christ’s sake God is not our enemy—does not efface the distinction between behavior that pleases or displeases God, that conforms to God’s will or does not so conform. On the contrary, to have faith means that, rejoicing “in our hope of sharing the glory of God” (Rom. 5:2), we trust the

17. Kolb and Wengert, *Book of Concord*, 351.

18. Luther, “Treatise on Good Works,” 24.

promise in the Decalogue's commands: You *shall* love the LORD your God with all your heart, soul, and mind. You *shall* love your neighbor as yourself. God will make us people who truly delight in and love his commands. Unless we say something like that, we will hardly know what to make of Luther's catechisms or how it can be that he writes at the close of his discussion of the Ten Commandments in the Large Catechism, "We should prize and value them above all other teachings as the greatest treasure God has given us."<sup>19</sup>

George Lindbeck once observed how essential it is to see Luther not only as "theological controversialist" but also—and even "primarily"—as "pastor and catechist."<sup>20</sup> In the controversies treated in the first sort of writings—of which there are, of course, many—Luther often underscores the theme that the Christian life is marked by freedom from the law, that law and gospel are simply and irrevocably antithetical. Not so, however, in works of the second sort—and, paradigmatically, in the Small and Large Catechisms. "In the Catechisms," Lindbeck notes, "the theological issues of justification by faith alone, of the total corruption of fallen human nature, of double predestination, and of the opposition between law and gospel are never mentioned *expressis verbis*."<sup>21</sup> Nor do the catechisms invite us to suppose that concern for morality is incompatible with Christian faith.

We should not be surprised, then, to find that in the Large Catechism Luther calls the Ten Commandments "a summary of divine teaching on what we are to do to make our whole life pleasing to God."<sup>22</sup> Moreover, on Luther's reading each of the commandments turns out to instruct us not only about behavior

19. Kolb and Wengert, *Book of Concord*, 431.

20. George Lindbeck, "Martin Luther and the Rabbinic Mind," in *Understanding the Rabbinic Mind: Essays on the Hermeneutic of Max Kadushin*, ed. Peter Ochs (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 141.

21. Lindbeck, "Martin Luther and the Rabbinic Mind," 143.

22. Kolb and Wengert, *Book of Concord*, 428.

that is forbidden but also, more positively, about how we are to foster the well-being of others in countless ways. To see this is to see why Luther's suggestion that the Decalogue governs the lives of Christians only insofar as it happens to coincide with the natural law does not actually account for his own explication of the commandments.

Consider, for example, several aspects of his treatment of the seventh commandment (forbidding stealing) in the Large Catechism. To some degree Luther does treat the prohibition as a kind of natural law, for he suggests that human life in society is hardly possible if this commandment is not at least generally observed. "Anyone who robs and takes things by violence and dishonesty must," he writes, "put up with someone else who plays the same game."<sup>23</sup> There is a kind of empirical, commonsense quality to such a statement, for no society can survive if it does not enable people to secure and protect the things they need to live.

It would be hard, however, to understand everything Luther says in his discussion of the seventh commandment as nothing more than an unfolding of the natural law. Beyond the obvious negative requirements that we not wrong others by taking or damaging their possessions, the commandment, on Luther's reading, requires that we "promote and further our neighbors' interests, and when they suffer any want, we are to help, share, and lend to both friends and foes."<sup>24</sup> This goes well beyond what a society needs simply to survive, and it clearly has been shaped by Jesus' own teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. And if we ask why Luther thinks we should treat others this way and why we are able to do so, it is evident that something more than natural law is at work. Grace turns out to have an important place not only in dogmatic theology but also in moral theology. "You have," he writes, "a rich Lord, who is surely sufficient for

23. Kolb and Wengert, *Book of Concord*, 419.

24. Kolb and Wengert, *Book of Concord*, 419–20.

your needs and will let you lack or want for nothing.”<sup>25</sup> But one learns this not from nature but from “the law of Christ,” which instructs us to “bear one another’s burdens” (Gal. 6:2).

It may be helpful, therefore, to follow the suggestion of Christopher Seitz that for Christians the Decalogue is not simply natural law but is also God’s gift to Israel, his elect people. And just as some (but only some) portions of Israel’s law were also binding on “sojourners” living within Israel, so now Christians—incorporated into Christ, the faithful Israelite—also become “sojourners in the midst of Israel.”<sup>26</sup> Something like that seems to be St. Paul’s view when he writes to the mostly Gentile congregation in Corinth that “our fathers” were part of the covenant people who made the wilderness march from Egypt to the promised land (1 Cor. 10:1). And such an assumption must underlie his command that the Corinthians remove from their fellowship a man who is living with his father’s wife (1 Cor. 5:1–2)—behavior that is specifically prohibited in Old Testament law which now, it seems, applies also to Gentiles who have been incorporated into the covenant people.<sup>27</sup> To hold in this way that some parts of Israel’s law now also govern the lives of Gentiles who have become “sojourners in the midst of Israel” is not to say that the commandments of the second table should not also be seen as enunciating a natural law valid for all human beings (as St. Paul seems to think of it in the second chapter of Romans). Neither approach to the Decalogue need exclude the other.

In any case, those portions of Israel’s law that are moral—not only the Decalogue but certainly the Decalogue—continue to specify for Christians the law of Christ, the will of God that

25. Kolb and Wengert, *Book of Concord*, 420.

26. Christopher R. Seitz, “The Ten Commandments: Positive and Natural Law and the Covenants Old and New—Christian Use of the Decalogue and Moral Law,” in *I Am the Lord Your God: Christian Reflections on the Ten Commandments*, ed. Carl E. Braaten and Christopher R. Seitz (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 33.

27. See Lev. 18:8; Deut. 22:30; 27:20.

is to be done here on earth as it is in heaven. From yet another angle, then, we see that there was and is a kind of wisdom in the distinction between moral, cultic, and political legislation that governed the life of ancient Israel.

### The Decalogue as Instructional Prophecy<sup>28</sup>

It is important for us to see, as the following chapters will assume, that living “under the law of Christ” is the way to freedom, to the future in which it will be evident that hidden in the commands is God’s promise to make us holy. Here I offer a homely illustration of what this might mean.

The journalist Christopher Caldwell once wrote a short piece on “the management secrets of Bill Belichick,” head coach of the New England Patriots in the National Football League.<sup>29</sup> Whatever one thinks of Belichick the person, there is no disputing the fact that he is a great—perhaps the greatest ever—professional football coach. Caldwell notes the oddity that some exceptional players seem not to fit into Belichick’s system, while others who are less skilled excel with the Patriots. They develop that ability by drilling day in and day out, practicing how to react in a variety of game situations, so that eventually they can react as if by instinct. But, of course, it isn’t instinct at all. It is the kind of freedom that comes from having entered fully into the structure and disciplines of the system.

Caldwell ends his short essay with just a few sentences that capture the Patriots’ approach: “You follow rules to attain your

28. The idea of instructional prophecy is my appropriation of the concept of “parenetic prophecy” developed in Reinhard Hütter, “The Tongue—Fallen and Restored: Some Reflections on the Three Voices of the Eighth Commandment,” in Braaten and Seitz, *I Am the Lord Your God*, 189–205.

29. Christopher Caldwell, “Pats’ Solutions: The Management Secrets of Bill Belichick,” *The Weekly Standard* 22, February 6, 2017, 16, 18.

freedom. You learn by rote so that you can live with abandonment. This, too, is a truth of wide application.” What other “applications” Caldwell may have had in mind, I do not know; however, learning by rote in order to live with abandonment is not a bad way to understand the place of the Decalogue in the Christian life.

The particular commandments, both as Christian instruction and as natural law, function in three ways. They help us to specify the meaning of the general obligation to love and to bear one another’s burdens. In doing so, of course, the same commandments will often function in a second way—making clear the disorder of our world and its need for healing. But the commandments serve one further purpose, the most important, since by God’s grace we follow rules in order to attain freedom. As instructional prophecy they “announce the future of the life with God that has already become present in the life of faith.”<sup>30</sup> They make clear what the Spirit of Christ is doing—sometimes, though not always, in hidden ways—in the lives of those who, as St. Paul says, rejoice in the hope of “sharing the glory of God” (Rom. 5:2).

30. Hütter, “The Tongue—Fallen and Restored,” 201–2.