

## **A Comparative Analysis of John Calvin and Martin Luther Concerning the First and Second Commandments**

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In the Ten Commandments one is able to see a clear expression of God's moral law presented to the human agent. Though its applicability has at times been in question, throughout Christian history the Ten Commandments have been central to the manner in which believers were instructed in how one is to act. Interestingly, both Calvin and Luther wrote at length concerning their view of the Ten Commandments. Though most church historians focus on the manner in which the Lutheran, Reformed, and Roman Catholic traditions differed in the areas of faith and works, or law and gospel, David Steinmetz states, "Some of the fiercest Reformation controversies centered on specific commandments and their meaning for the life of the Christian churches."<sup>1</sup> Examining Luther's and Calvin's perspectives upon this topic should provide some insight into the manner in which the Christian should implement the Ten Commandments into his or her life. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to provide a brief introduction and comparison of Luther and Calvin concerning the Ten Commandments with reference to how these two Reformers differed in their interpretation of the Commandments. To provide the reader with some insight into Luther's and Calvin's thoughts concerning the Commandments, this paper will deal specifically with the First and Second Commandments.<sup>2</sup>

### **Martin Luther**

Luther once said:

I have often said, and I will say it again: Whoever rightly understands the Ten Commandments and especially the First Commandment, I will gladly sit at his feet and let him be my doctor (teacher). I consider myself more learned than the fanatics because they do not understand the Ten Commandments. Thank God, I understand them, but I also know that the Ten Commandments remain my Donatus, my ABC book, yes, my Bible, in which I must ever remain a pupil, although I have read through the Bible over and over.<sup>3</sup>

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Luther primarily provides his exposition of the Ten Commandments within his *Treatise on Good Works*.<sup>4</sup> This treatise grew out of Luther being asked to write a sermon on good works in response to being accused by his enemies that his stress upon justification by faith alone would lead to a total neglect of good works, and therefore, to lawlessness and immorality.<sup>5</sup> Luther has at least three guiding principles in dealing with the Decalogue and the topic of good works. First, he makes it clear that the “first and most precious good work is faith in Christ.”<sup>6</sup> He does a masterful job of blending the doctrine of *sola fides* with a necessary confluence of good works by stating that this highest work is actually faith in Christ. Second, Luther believes that the subject of good works is often grossly misunderstood. He says, “There is no silver, gold, precious stone, or rare treasure that has as many substitutes and flaws as good works.”<sup>7</sup> Throughout this *Treatise* he continually points to ways in which good works and, therefore, the Decalogue are misunderstood because of misinterpretation.

Third, and perhaps most pertinent to the topic of the subject at hand, Luther says, “We have to learn to recognize good works from the commandments of God, and not from the appearance, size, or number of the works themselves, nor from the opinion of men or of human law or custom, as we see has happened and still happens because of our blindness and disregard of the divine commandments.”<sup>8</sup> He draws this interpretation from Matt. 19:16–22 in which Jesus is asked by a young man what he should do to inherit eternal life, and Christ answers, “If you would enter life, keep the commandments.”<sup>9</sup>

Of supreme importance to this topic, Luther and his subsequent followers draw from the Catholic standard of the time in his delineation of the Decalogue. When comparing Calvin’s understanding of the Decalogue to Luther’s, Luther’s delineation results in a combination of the First and Second Commandments into one commandment, and a splitting of the Tenth Commandment into two commandments.<sup>10</sup> To avoid confusion, perhaps it would be helpful to quote what Luther referred to as the First Commandment:

You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments (Ex. 20:3-6).

When writing the Small Catechism, Luther followed the standard medieval catechism text, and thereby reduced the First Commandment to: "You shall have no other gods."<sup>11</sup> Luther says that a god is "that upon which one relies for all good things and in whom one takes refuge in all times of trouble. Thus, to have a god is nothing less than to trust and believe in that one from the whole heart."<sup>12</sup>

In his *Treatise* Luther says that this Commandment means that God is saying, "Since I alone am God, thou shalt place all thy confidence, trust, and faith in me alone and no one else."<sup>13</sup> Timothy Wengert argues that for Luther the Decalogue is actually seen in light of the First Commandment.<sup>14</sup> He quotes Luther when he says, "It (the First Commandment) is to illuminate and impart its splendor to all the others. In order that his may be constantly repeated and never forgotten, you must let these concluding words run through all the commandments, like the clasp or hoop of a wreath that binds the end to the beginning and holds everything together."<sup>15</sup> Luther also expresses belief in the priority of the first commandment in the *Treatise*. He says:

And this faith, this trust, this confidence from the heart's core is the true fulfilling of the First Commandment. Without such faith no work at all can satisfy this command. And because this commandment is the very first of all commandments and the highest and the best, (the one) from which all others proceed, in which they exist and by which they are judged and assessed, so its work (that is, the faith or confidence that God is gracious at all times) is the very highest, and best from which all others must proceed, in which they must exist and abide, and by which they must be judged and assessed. Compared with this work the other good works are like the other commandments would be if they were without the first and if there were no God. Therefore, St. Augustine speaks rightly when he says that the works of the first commandment are faith, hope, and love.<sup>16</sup>

Another fascinating aspect of Luther's interpretation of his First Commandment, as well as the others, is his understanding that each commandment would in fact take a lifetime before the believer came anywhere close to achieving its purpose. Luther sets up an interesting scenario in which faith is the highest "work." At first this sounds antithetical, but he sets up his scenario in such a way that this "work" is completely unachievable apart from Christ, and with Christ it would nonetheless take more than a lifetime to perfect. He states in the *Treatise*, "Does not this single First Commandment give us

more work to do than any one man can do?”<sup>17</sup> Faith and works are integrally tied together in the *Treatise*. In fact, Luther says, “Yes, this confidence and faith must be so high and strong that a man knows that all his life and works are nothing but damnable sins in the judgment of God.”<sup>18</sup>

Because Luther understands the First Commandment to deal primarily with one having other gods, he relegates the pertinent topic of images or icons and does not directly deal with them in the *Treatise*. Luther does so elsewhere such as in a sermon delivered in Wittenberg on March 11, 1522, entitled, “Concerning Images.”<sup>19</sup> Because Luther is adopting the Catholic delineation of the Decalogue, he does not see the subject of idols as the central message of the First Commandment. He therefore says, “Concerning them (images) also it is true that they are unnecessary, and we are free to have them or not, although it would be much better if we did not have them at all. I am not partial to them.”<sup>20</sup> Luther’s senior colleague on the faculty of theology, Carlstadt, believed that the First Commandment required a radical simplification of worship and the elimination of all cultic art.<sup>21</sup> Carlstadt’s radical thinking of the purpose of the First Commandment was a foreshadow of the reconsidering of the First Commandment by the second generation reformers.

In sum, Luther’s understanding of the commandment “You shall have no other gods,” involves putting one’s faith and trust in the one true God, for “without such faith no work at all can satisfy this command.”<sup>22</sup> Therefore the purpose of this commandment is to “require that kind of true faith and confidence of the heart that is directed toward the one true God and clings to him alone.”<sup>23</sup> To put one’s full faith and confidence of the heart in anything other than this one true God is to achieve far less than the work which is called upon by the believer in this commandment.

### **John Calvin**

Much of Calvin’s dealing with the Decalogue is contained in the *Institutes* II. vii-viii. Chapter seven is entitled, “The Law was Given, Not to Restrain the Folk of the Old Covenant Under Itself, but to Foster Hope of Salvation in Christ Until His Coming,” and Chapter Eight is entitled, “Explanation of the Moral Law (The Ten Commandments).”<sup>24</sup> In chapter eight Calvin demonstrates his explanation of the purpose and function of the Decalogue as a whole. The law functions to “lead one to a greater detestation of sin.”<sup>25</sup> Here Calvin also elucidates his understanding of the purpose of the “inward law”<sup>26</sup> or moral law which has been put in the hearts of men.

In Calvin’s understanding there are three uses, or “three parts”<sup>27</sup> of the moral law, which he demonstrates in chapter seven. The first use is the

pedagogical or convictional use in which the law acts like a mirror in which one learns to see himself or herself as God does. Calvin states, "The first part is this: while it (the moral law) shows God's righteousness, that is, the righteousness alone acceptable to God, it warns, informs, convicts, and lastly condemns, every man of his own unrighteousness."<sup>28</sup> Calvin's second use of the law is the political or civil use in which the law acts as a bridle to restrain man from being even worse than he may currently be. He states, "The second function of the law is this: at least by fear of punishment to restrain certain men who are untouched by any care for what is just and right unless compelled by hearing the dire threats of the law."<sup>29</sup> His third use is the didactic or normative use in which the law acts like a lamp which teaches believers to be perfect and pleasing in the sight of God. While the other two uses may be considered negative, this is a positive use which leads to sanctification. Calvin believes this to be the primary use of the moral law. He states, "The third and principle use, which pertains more closely to the proper purpose of the law, finds its place among believers in whose hearts the Spirit of God already lives and reigns."<sup>30</sup> He goes on to state that this use of the law reveals two things: a proper understanding of the Lord's will and by frequent meditation upon the law one will be aroused to obedience and drawn back from sin.<sup>31</sup>

Although the function of the law may not be of primary significance to the subject at hand, the importance of discussing Calvin's uses of the moral law in reference to the Decalogue is that Calvin saw the Ten Commandments as the central revelation of God's moral law. Therefore, when discussing the First and Second Commandments, Calvin is viewing them as a focal point of revelation. This is seen *prima facie* in the title Calvin chooses for the give Chapter 8 of Book II<sup>32</sup> in which he equates the moral law with the Ten Commandments.

Throughout Calvin's exposition he translates from the Vulgate. He identifies the first commandment in Exod. 20:2-3 as, "I am Jehovah, your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before my face." Calvin is thoroughly theocentric in his writing about the commandments. He makes it clear that in God revealing himself as "I am Jehovah," "God first shows himself to be the one who has the right to command and to whom obedience is due."<sup>33</sup> He goes on to say, "The purpose of this commandment is that the Lord wills alone to be pre-eminent among his people, and to exercise complete authority over them."<sup>34</sup>

Compared to Luther, Calvin's exposition of the First Commandment is relatively short in the *Institutes*. He sees this commandment as God stating that he himself is preeminent and, therefore, man should have no strange gods. Calvin also provides his understanding of the Decalogue in at least two of his

other writings: a series of sermons on the commandments which were delivered in 1555, and in his *Commentaries*.<sup>35</sup> He deals with the First Commandment in his second sermon which was delivered on June 12, 1555.<sup>36</sup> In this homily Calvin examines many of the Christological implications of the First Commandment which are not present when he examines it in the *Institutes*. Also, it seems that in this sermon he goes to greater lengths to examine Israel as a particular people which has been called out of Egypt.

Calvin speaks much on the First and Second Commandments in his harmony of the last four books of the Pentateuch.<sup>37</sup> One interesting aspect of his *Commentaries* is that he sees much of the activity of the Exodus as leading up to the Decalogue. In fact, he refers to the institution of the Passover as “The Ceremonial Supplements of the First Commandment.”<sup>38</sup> He does so because he views the activities of the Exodus event and the Law of Moses as centered around the Decalogue. Throughout his exposition he arranges the activities of the Exodus event and giving of the law under each of the Commandments which it is related to. When Calvin does approach the First Commandment he says, “In this commandment God enjoins that He alone should be worshipped, and requires a worship free from all superstition.”<sup>39</sup>

Calvin quotes the Second Commandment as being Exod. 20:4–5, “You shall not make yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the waters which are under the earth; you shall not adore or worship them.” In the First Commandment God declares that he alone is God, and here he declares “with what kind of worship he should be honored.”<sup>40</sup> Calvin says that the purpose of this commandment is “that he does not will that his lawful worship be profaned by superstitious rites. To sum up, he wholly calls us back and withdraws us from petty carnal observances, which our stupid minds, crassly conceiving of God, are wont to devise.”<sup>41</sup> This commandment is directed towards believers in the one true God in that it restrains man from creating a representation of God, who is incomprehensible into an image to be perceived by our perceptions, and towards unbelievers in that it “forbids us to worship any images in the name of religion.”<sup>42</sup>

In his *Commentaries* Calvin says that the Second Commandment provides a definition of “legitimate worship” of God.<sup>43</sup> He also makes a case for the separation of the Catholic form of the first commandment by saying that the First Commandment explains who should be worshipped and the second commandment states how He should be worshipped. In this commandment one sees that “the words simply express that it is wrong for men to seek the presence of God in any visible image, because he cannot be represented to our eyes.”<sup>44</sup> This theocentric focus of the commandment is also present in Luther.

Calvin delivered his sermon on the Second Commandment on June 17, 1555.<sup>45</sup> In this sermon Calvin takes a similar stance as to what he does in the *Institutes*. He argues that this commandment forbids man from directing worship towards anything or anyone other than God. He says that the evil of idolatry is a “vice (that) is rooted in the depths of our bones.”<sup>46</sup> In a similar fashion to Luther, Calvin saw both a positive and negative aspect as being present in each of the commandments. Both are present in this sermon by Calvin. The negative aspect is stated in that man is warned against the dangers of idolatry. The positive aspect is stated in the fact that when idolatry is not present all one’s worship and adoration is directed towards God. Therefore, in being commanded not to be idolaters, mankind is commanded to be worshippers of God.

### Comparative Analysis of Calvin and Luther

The most obvious difference in Calvin and Luther’s understanding of the commandments is that Calvin, as a later reformer than Luther, chose to break from the traditional Catholic delineation of their First Commandment by seeing it as two commandments. Calvin initially discussed the First Commandment in the 1536 edition of the *Institutes*, and by this time there was much debate among the Catholics and Reformers over the purpose, functioning, and numbering of the commandments. What began as a disagreement over the meaning of the First Commandment, “prompted dissension over such related issues as the role of art in Christian worship, the nature of the Lord’s Supper, the authority of the Old Testament for the church, and the pace of ecclesiastical reform.”<sup>47</sup>

In particular, Calvin and Luther differ on their interpretation of the focus of the First Commandment. In both his *Large Catechism* and his *Treatise on Good Works* Luther focuses on man’s faith as the primary emphasis of this commandment. In the *Large Catechism* Luther says that to “have a god is nothing else than to trust and believe in him from the heart.”<sup>48</sup> Luther expresses the same sentiment in numerous places in the *Treatise* by understanding faith as the highest work which is the purpose of the First Commandment.<sup>49</sup> Therefore, this interpretation views faith and works as integrally tied together as one requires the other.

Calvin’s emphasis in the First Commandment focuses more upon the third use of the law, in that he says the “first foundation of righteousness is the worship of God.”<sup>50</sup> In God saying “you shall have no other gods,” God is saying, therefore man is to worship the one true God. While Luther’s emphasis focuses more upon man placing his faith in God alone, Calvin focuses upon God’s place as preeminently above creation, and therefore deserving of worship and righteousness on behalf of the creature.

Calvin was somewhat of an innovator in his view of the Second Commandment. Luther disagreed with Carlstadt and Zwingli who were banning all images from worship to form a further severance from the Catholic faith because of their interpretation of this commandment. Luther stated that he was indifferent towards the matter. Calvin sided with Carlstadt and Zwingli, but with a slightly deviant purpose. Calvin did not rail against iconoclasm in itself, but rather what was at the heart of this issue; namely worship which is misdirected towards someone or something other than God. The medieval church had approved of image worship, and when Luther adopted this form of the commandments, the proscription of images became a parenthetical inclusion under the First Commandment.<sup>51</sup>

Calvin speaks against the Catholics and the Lutherans in this regard when he discusses the division of the commandments into two tables in the *Institutes*. He says:

Those who so divide them (the commandments) as to give three precepts to the First Table and relegate the remaining seven to the Second, erase from the number the commandment concerning images, or at least hide it under the First. There is no doubt that the Lord gave it a distinct place as a commandment, yet they absurdly tear in two the Tenth Commandment about not coveting the possessions of one's neighbor. Besides, their division of the commandments was unknown in a purer age, as we shall soon see.<sup>52</sup>

Calvin's reinstitution of the Second Commandment also provided an emphasis upon "spiritual worship" which is present in his *Commentaries* and in the *Institutes*. He states in the *Commentaries*, "God, therefore, calls for the affections of the heart, that He alone may be spiritually worshipped."<sup>53</sup> In his prohibition of idols in the *Institutes* Calvin explains how believers spiritually worship an invisible God. By this Calvin means that no image could rightly express one's worship of God. Therefore images or idols will detract from the worship of God.<sup>54</sup>

Related to Calvin and Luther's understanding of the First Commandment<sup>55</sup> is the fact that they have similar affinities concerning natural law. Calvin and Luther both have an understanding of part of the identity of natural law being present in the Decalogue. Calvin views the written moral law in fact as being a statement of natural law. He says this is so because what is engraved on the stone tables of the law is also engraved in the hearts of men.<sup>56</sup> Calvin's use of natural law arguments in this case and others was controlled by



his “pessimism about man’s unaided ability to perceive the truth or know God” because of the Fall.<sup>57</sup>

In Calvin’s writings the written law and natural law go hand in hand. He states that “the Lord has provided us with a written law to give us a clearer witness of what was too obscure in the natural law.”<sup>58</sup> Calvin was influenced by Luther in his definition of natural law and places more of an emphasis on the extent to which man’s understanding of natural law was darkened by the Fall.<sup>59</sup> Many scholars have seen a clean break between the Catholic view of natural law based upon Aquinas and the views of the Reformers concerning natural law. Perhaps this is not the case, as both Luther and Calvin invoke natural law as being present in the Decalogue.<sup>60</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Luther and Calvin are clearly agreed that the First and Second Commandments prohibit the worship of any God besides the one true God. Luther argued against Carlstadt (with whom Calvin agreed) that the prohibition of idolatry did not mean the prohibition of all visual art from worship. This issue between these great minds was not whether these commandments were valid but rather in interpretation and application.<sup>61</sup>

There are several ways in which Luther’s and Calvin’s differences concerning the Decalogue and the First and Second Commandments in particular are relevant today. First, both Reformers add a valuable contribution to dialogue upon this subject. One may not agree completely with Luther’s or Calvin’s interpretation of these commandments, but they both contain a wealth of wisdom from which one is able to draw. Secondly, because of the importance which Luther and Calvin both placed upon the First Commandment, their interpretation guides much of their hermeneutic for the rest of the Bible.<sup>62</sup> Luther and Calvin see a theocentricity in these commandments which pervades the message of the Bible as a whole. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, there is a devotional character to the study of Luther and Calvin on the Decalogue. A reexamination of Luther and Calvin on the commandments leads the reader to a deeper understanding of what he or she thinks about the First and Second Commandments in relation to his or her theology. The moral norms which are set forth in the Decalogue are guiding principles for one’s life, and therefore a thorough examination of what those who have gone before us think about this subject should deepen one’s understanding of biblical theology.

In conclusion, Luther downplayed the importance of a prohibition against idolatry because he saw this as parenthetical compendium to the First Commandment. Calvin took a theocentric view of the First and Second

Commandments which resulted in his understanding of the commandments to invoke worship and display the righteousness of God. The similarity and differences of these two thinkers concerning the Decalogue continues to guide the church's perception of the purpose and function of the law to this day.

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#### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> David C. Steinmetz, "The Reformation and the Ten Commandments," *Interpretation* 43 no 2 (July, 1989), 256.

<sup>2</sup> My purpose in dealing with two commandments rather than one is threefold. First, in the Lutheran tradition the Protestant categories of the 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> commandments are combined into one commandment creating Luther's first commandment, and the 10<sup>th</sup> commandment is split into two creating Luther's 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> commandments. Luther adopted this categorization from the Catholic Church. Calvin on the other hand, adopts the category which commonly classified under the Protestant tradition. Secondly, examining two commandments will provide the reader with a fuller examination of Luther and Calvin's thoughts on the commandments by representing the fluidity of their thought concerning the commandments. Third, Luther and Calvin both viewed the first commandment as the highest principle which guided their interpretation of the other commandments.

<sup>3</sup> Quotation taken from Lowell C. Green, "'What Does this Mean' Luther's Exposition of the Decalogue in Relation to Law and Gospel, with Special Reference to Johann Michael Reu," *Logia* 7 no 2 (Eastertide, 1998), 3.

<sup>4</sup> Martin Luther *Luther's Works*, ed. James Atkinson, vol. 44: The Christian in Society (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966). Luther does examine the first commandment elsewhere such as in his large catechism and in a sermon dealing with images.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>9</sup> Matt. 19:17

<sup>10</sup> For the purpose of clarification, whenever the Second Commandment is referred to in this article it will be the Reformed delineation of the Decalogue, not the Lutheran, unless otherwise noted.

<sup>11</sup> Green, "What Does This Mean," 4.

<sup>12</sup> Philip D. W. Krey and Peter D. S. Krey, trans. and eds., *Luther's Spirituality*, (New York: Paulist Press, 2007), 193.

<sup>13</sup> Luther, *Luther's Works*, 30.

<sup>14</sup> Timothy J. Wengert, "Martin Luther and the Ten Commandments in the Large Catechism," *Currents in Theological Mission*, 31, no. 2 (April, 2004): 104.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* Quotation taken from Martin Luther, "The Large Catechism, Ten Commandments," par. 326, in *The Book of Concord*, trans. James Schaaf, in ed. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2000), 423.

<sup>16</sup> Luther, *Luther's Works*, 30. In Luther's view it would be an incomplete statement to say that this commandment alone is the heart of the message of the Ten Commandments. Rather, it is a proper interpretation of this commandment understood in the light of faith in Christ. In each of Luther's discussions concerning the commandments in the *Treatise* he never misses an opportunity to express how a particular commandment is understood in the light of faith. Faith allows one to call upon God, listen to His Word, and therefore obey God's norms.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>19</sup> Ronald S. Sider, ed., *Karlstadt's Battle with Luther* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), 25–27.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 25. Much of what Luther had to say about images was in response to the less famous Wittenberg reformer, Andreas Bodenstein von Carlstadt who was in favor of the removal of all images from the churches.

<sup>21</sup> Steinmetz, "The Reformation and the Ten Commandments," 257.

<sup>22</sup> Luther, *Luther's Works*, 30.

<sup>23</sup> Martin Luther, *The Large Catechism*, ed. F. Samuel Janzow (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1988), 13.

<sup>24</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, The Library of Christian Classics, ed. John T. McNeill and trans. Ford Lewis Battles, vol. XX (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960).

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., *Institutes*. II. viii. 376.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., *Institutes*. II. viii. 367.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., *Institutes*, II. vii. 6, 354.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., II. vii. 6, 358.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., II. vii. 6, 360.

<sup>31</sup> Luther was similar to Calvin in that he viewed both the civil and the spiritual uses of the law as active. For Luther the spiritual use as causing conviction was the primary use of the law. Luther does not articulate Calvin's third use of the law in his writings, but it would seem pretentious to assume would not view sanctification as a possible use of the law.

<sup>32</sup> This chapter is entitled, "Explanation of the Moral Law (The Ten Commandments)."

<sup>33</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, II. viii. 14, 380.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., II. viii. 382.

<sup>35</sup> There are some differences in the manner in which he approaches the text in this sermon series and in his *Commentaries*. In the sermons, Calvin is preaching from Deut. 4:44–6:1–4, whereas in the *Institutes* he takes his text from Deuteronomy 20. The sermons have been compiled and edited in *John Calvin's Sermons on the Ten Commandments*, ed. and trans. Benjamin W. Farley (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1980). In the *Commentaries*, Calvin provides a harmony in which he examines various texts side by side as they may coincide chronologically.

<sup>36</sup> John Calvin, *John Calvin's Sermons on the Ten Commandments*, ed. and trans. Benjamin W. Farley (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 51–64.

<sup>37</sup> John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Four Last Books of Moses arranged in the Form of a Harmony*, trans. Charles William Bingham, vol. 1–2, reprint 1999, *Calvin's Commentaries*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999).

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., vol. I, 454.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 418. In Calvin's interpretation of the warning following the Second Commandment he draws from Old Testament passages to compare the jealousy of God to

that of a husband. Israel has defiled itself by casting away shame and following after adulteries (Jeremiah 3; Hos 2:4ff; Isa 62:4–5. Because God is a holy God, he is therefore even more wrathful than a human husband when his bride has inclined her heart to a rival (Hos 2:19–20). Therefore, the setting up of idols or images detracts the worship of God for something of far less value.

<sup>40</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, II. viii. 17, 383.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, II. viii. 384.

<sup>43</sup> Calvin, *Commentaries*, vol. 2, 106.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

<sup>45</sup> John Calvin, *John Calvin's Sermons on the Ten Commandments*.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>47</sup> Steinmetz, "The Reformation and the Ten Commandments," 258.

<sup>48</sup> Luther, *Large Catechism*, 13.

<sup>49</sup> Luther, *Treatise on Good Works*, 23.

<sup>50</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, II. viii. 11, 377.

<sup>51</sup> Georgia Harkness, *John Calvin: The Man and His Ethics* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1931), 91.

<sup>52</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, II. viii. 12, 378.

<sup>53</sup> Calvin, *Commentaries*, vol. 1, 419.

<sup>54</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*. II. viii. 17. 383.

<sup>55</sup> A similarity between Luther and Calvin is their understanding of the priority of the First Commandment. Both Reformers see the Decalogue as normative for faith and practice, and the First Commandment as the guiding principle for all of the others. Calvin says this commandment show that "the Lord will alone to be pre-eminent among his people (*Institutes*, II. viii. 382)." Without a right understanding of who God is and his relation to creation, one will be unable rightly to implement the other commandments.

<sup>56</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, II. viii. 368.

<sup>57</sup> R. S. Clark, "Calvin on the *Lex Naturalis*," *Stulos* 6 no. 1-2 (May-Nov. 1998), 9

<sup>58</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*. II. viii. 16. 368.

<sup>59</sup> John T. McNeill, "Natural Law in the Thought of Luther," *Church History* 10, no. 3 (Sept., 1941): 221.

<sup>60</sup> J. Daryl Charles, "Protestants and Natural Law," *First Things* 168 (Dec., 2006), 33.

<sup>61</sup> Steinmetz, "The Reformation and the Ten Commandments" 265-266.

<sup>62</sup> This is seen, for example, in Calvin's *Harmony of the Books of Moses* when he interprets all of the Mosaic Law and the Exodus events in light of the Decalogue.