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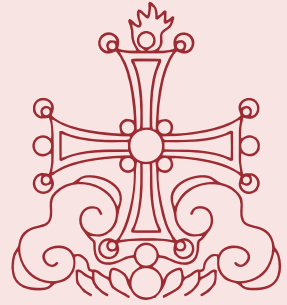
The Ten Commandments : a Chinese catechism of living

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THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

A Chinese Catechism of Living



YOU BIN (游斌)

Chinese Catechism 3

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

A Chinese Catechism of Living

YOU BIN (游斌)

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Preface

Christoph Stückelberger

Catechism? What is that? Many children and adults in the western world may ask this question. Something with tech? Something with car catalysts? Or a religious “-ism” ideology like fundamentalism?

In my childhood, I grew up with religious education in a school where we had to learn by heart the Lord’s Prayer, the Apostle’s Creed, the Ten Commandments, and a good number of Christian hymns. When we asked why we must learn them by heart, our teachers and pastors said: This is your emergency package. When you are in trouble or despair, when you seek orientation, when you can no longer read or hear in old age, or when you just cry of happiness and want to chant, you will have these texts and melodies in your heart and memory for their immediate use. We do not need a mobile phone, laptop, or internet access. We have immediate access to our heart and mind. Now with age, I see the full meaning of such training. I still sing and chant such hymns while washing the dishes, walking, or waiting at the tram station.

When I was in confirmation class at the age of 16, the pastor (who was by chance my father) read with us the Heidelberg Catechism of Luther and the other Reformers—simple questions and answers for an understanding of the Christian faith. But for many decades now, the short Catechism is neither learned by heart nor studied at all in schools for believers. A good number of Christians cannot even not recite the Lord’s Prayer. For specialists and a few select adult lay persons, there are very extensive and interesting

Protestant, Catholic, and Anglican “Catechisms for Adults.” But these average 500+ pages in length!

Catechism is often perceived as the teaching of old-fashioned doctrines of faith or an authoritarian list of what religious leaders force us to believe. But now, in the second decade of the 21st Century, we have a Chinese Catechism in our hands! This catechism is a survival package of food called faith. It is fresh water from the source for the daily path of life and for orientation in decision-making. Wonderful!

These four volumes of *Chinese Catechism* transform the classical core texts of the Christian faith into today’s living: the Creed (Vol. 1), the Lord’s Prayer (Vol. 2), the Ten Commandments (Vol. 3), and the Liturgy as celebration of Life (Vol. 4). In this third volume, the Ten Commandments are interpreted from a Chinese background and wisdom, while being faithful to the Bible and Church tradition.

The Chinese author You Bin is a highly recognized theological scholar, teacher, researcher, and the Director of the Academy of Religions at the Minzu University of China in Beijing. He offers from a Chinese perspective this *Chinese Catechism* as a contribution to intercultural theology. It is a gift to world Christianity and humanity. It is not a Lutheran, Reformed, Catholic, or Anglican Catechism; it is a *post-denominational path for living*.

Christian faith is not a one-way-street (“I know the truth and you have to follow me”). Christian faith is a global sharing, a give-and-take, a mutual inspiration across cultures. Instead of building walls and digging holes, as is commonly done in our turbulent polarized time, Christian faith leads to a global *Community across Borders*. This Chinese Catechism is a substantial and joyful contribution to it! You may not agree with all, but you will certainly be inspired and empowered!

* Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Christoph Stückelberger is Emeritus Professor of Theological Ethics at the University of Basel, and a visiting professor at universities in Africa and Asia, including Minzu University of China in Beijing.

Introduction

Catechism and Intercultural Theology in China

For Christianity in China,¹ the most vital and foundational issue is to develop a contextual, indigenized, and locally rooted Christian theology for Chinese Christians and churches that can be articulated and grounded in Chinese cultural terms.² Christianity can only make solid progress if it is willing to enter into extensive, in-depth dialogue with Chinese culture, a process through which, on the one hand, the various aspects of Christianity such as doctrinal expression, spiritual practice, ethical exhortation, and liturgical celebration will be renewed; and on the other hand, the treasures of Chinese indigenous cultures will be integrated into Christianity as it preserves its own truth claims, thereby building an intercultural theological system rooted in Chinese cultural soil that enables Christianity to become an intrinsic part of Chinese culture.

Initiated by Bishop K. H. Ting (1915–2012) in the 1990s, this intercultural theological construction is today in need of a new impetus and fresh resources. New questions must be raised and new methodologies must be created to further the relationship between Christianity and Chinese culture. We should therefore ask: If Chinese Christian theology is necessarily a theology of intercultural dialogue, how can we advance it in the context of the venerable, varied, and rich cultures of China? With Chinese culture as a comprehensive

1 As used in this paper, “Christianity in China” refers mainly to the Chinese Protestant Church. For this terminology, see Miikka Ruokanen, Liu Ruomin, and Chen Yongtao, “Is ‘Postdenominational’ Christianity Possible? Ecclesiology in the Protestant Church of China,” *The Ecumenical Review* 67.1 (March 2015): 77–95.

2 For more about this as goal, see Hans Küng and Julia Ching, *Christianity and Chinese Religions* (New York: Doubleday, 1989), 232.

dialogue partner, how can we reshape our understanding of theology, perhaps even constructing a “greater theology” of universal and comprehensive extension? With respect to current global and domestic theological tendencies, what kind of a framework might accommodate this “greater theology”? How can a post-denominational catechism for a comprehensive expression and teaching of the Christian faith constitute the first step in constructing a framework for this “greater theology” within the social and cultural contexts of China?

1. Theology in Deep Dialogue with Chinese Cultures

It has long been acknowledged by Chinese Christian leaders and theologians that the core component of the extension of the gospel in China is in-depth dialogue with Chinese culture. But what precisely does it mean to “dialogue with Chinese culture”? Clearly the two key words here are “dialogue” and “Chinese culture.” Only after thoroughly examining both, can we form a clear understanding of the framework and approach for the construction of an intercultural theology in Chinese context.

What is dialogue? Obviously, an ideal and fruitful dialogue is neither a simple, conventional conversation nor the straightforward exchange of views. Rather, when “dialogue” becomes a basic approach in the construction of an intercultural theology, it entails a fundamental attitude towards the self and other in dialogical relationship. Dialogue involves not only self-representation but also deeper discovery and understanding of the self vis-à-vis the other. In facing the dialogue partner, one “discovers a better self.” Moreover, dialogue not only facilitates an understanding of the other but also receives insights from the other. When we combine these two meanings of “dialogue,” we yield improved self-discovery and self-cultivation through the process of deep learning across boundaries.

The theology called for by Chinese Christianity is therefore necessarily a “theology of dialogue.” This theology of dialogue neither

centers on comparisons between Christianity and Chinese cultures nor is reduced to inserting elements of Chinese culture into Christian thought. Rather, a theology of dialogue should be thoroughly “dialogical” and “theological.” Dialogue should be intimately united with all aspects of “doing theology,” constituting a new way of Christian “faith seeking understanding” in a “new” Chinese cultural context.

In short, a Chinese theology of dialogue should encompass three inseparable and mutually enlightening modes of thinking: first, it must be rooted in the faith traditions of Christianity itself, relying on the Church’s universal theology as its intellectual resource; second, it must boldly venture beyond its own boundaries to draw on the beneficial resources of Chinese cultures; third, it must seek to renew the theological insights of the Christian faith while drawing inspiration and resources from its encounter with Chinese cultural traditions. Figuratively speaking, although its point of departure is the Christian faith, it courageously enters Chinese cultural traditions with the purpose of returning to the Christian faith, having renewed and developed its indigenous theological understanding.

Advancing a Christian theology of dialogue in the context of Chinese cultures has always been an activity of “going forward and returning” (*wu wang bu fan*, 无往不复)³— intellectual reflection that aims not only to observe and discover Chinese culture through the lens of Christianity but also to observe and discover Christianity through the lens of Chinese culture. It demands that Chinese theologians return continuously to the deeply rooted traditions of Christianity, examining the origins of their own thinking. This is why the notion of “rediscovery” is emphasized: although some aspects of Christian theological traditions—for example, spiritual cultivation though daily

³ This line comes from the *Yi Jing*, which in explaining the symbolic meaning of the diagram of “Harmony” (*Tai*, 泰), proclaims that harmony lies in communication between different, even opposite, things. The original diagram for “Harmony” indicates that heaven and earth in communication bring all things of creation into harmony. It therefore suggests that no one should go forward without return. See, *The Zhou Book of Chang (Yi Jing)*, trans. Fu Huiheng 傅慧生 (Changsha: Human People’s Press, 2008), 77.

moral practices—were forgotten or concealed during the long course of Christianity’s global history, their value might be rediscovered and reappraised in dialogue with Chinese culture. A Christian theology of dialogue is also constructive in the sense that Chinese culture constitutes not only a conversation partner but also an object of deep learning. Moreover, the goal of this deep learning is a creative renewal of Christian theology. In this sense of dialogue, Chinese theology must be an intercultural theology of boundary crossing and deep learning, while remaining rooted in the traditions of Christianity.

Because Chinese culture possesses a treasure trove of resources so different from those of Christianity’s other socio-cultural dialogical partners, the intercultural dialogue between Chinese culture and Christianity will require the latter to perceive and construct itself in broader and deeper ways. We therefore need to ask: What is Chinese culture? There is no single answer in response to this complicated question. At the very least, however, there is generally a consensus on the following points: chronologically, the origins of Chinese culture can be traced to the earliest civilization of the Yellow River, the *Hua-xia* (华夏) cultures, as well as to the surrounding cultures of the time; it dates back, popularly speaking, to about 5000 years ago;⁴ and in terms of ethnic heritage it refers to the Han ethnicity as well as ethnic minority cultures that interacted with the Han, slowly integrating into a more widespread Chinese culture through various means. This civilization of Chinese cultures encompasses a set of thought systems

4 The historical “creed” of a 5000-year history of Chinese civilization is in step with the construction of the Chinese people as an ethnic group. Liang Qichao (梁启超, 1873-1929) first proposed a 4000-year history, using the term “Chinese people” (*zhong hua min zu*, 中华民族) at the turn of the twentieth century. This was one core in the construction of the Chinese as a united people. Later, Sun Yat-san’s (孙中山, 1866-1925) *Strategies of Building China (jian guo fang lue*, 建国方略) claimed a 5000-year cultural heritage to be the foundation on which Chinese identity is built. This then became a consensus among the archaeologist and cultural historians. In 1986, archaeologist Su Bingqi (苏秉琦) clearly proposed for the first time in contemporary China the term “Chinese civilizational dawn light shining five-thousand years.” Chinese culture and China’s 5000-year history are of the same importance in constructing the Chinese as a people. See Su Bingqi (苏秉琦), “The Origins of Chinese Cultures” (*cong zhong guo wen hua qi yuan dao zhong guo wen ming qi yuan*, 从中国文化起源到中国文明起源), in *Hua People, Descendants of Auspicious Dragon, and Chinese People (Hua ren long de chuan ren Zhong guo ren*, 华人·龙的传人·中国人) (Shenyang: Liaoning Publishing House, 1994), 101.

that comprehensively order life—from the definition and delineation of the life of an individual person, to that of the family, country, and world—as well as all kinds of political, economic, educational, and intellectual systems.

The construction of an intercultural Christian theology in dialogue with Chinese cultures stands not only to make a significant contribution to Christianity's self-awareness but also to exert a deep influence on the nature and identity of Chinese Christian theology. Thus it calls for a “greater theology.”

2. Towards a “Greater Theology”

In the context of contemporary Chinese society and culture, Chinese Christian theology must take on a comprehensive and synthesized form and approach as it faces the long-established, multi-layered, and multifaceted systems and particular characteristics of Chinese culture as its dialogue partner. To use a more general term, it must take on the shape of “greater theology” rather than adhere to the limits of theological systems as defined by confessional, doctrinal, or intellectual distinctions.

First, “greater theology” requires the recognition of Christianity as an established cultural system with a long-standing history. When Chinese Protestants talk about theology, they ordinarily understand it to refer to theology after the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation. Even those people who are conscious of a longer history tend to extend their reflections no further than the Middle Ages, early Church Fathers, or Apostles. But when Christianity begins to dialogue with a roughly 5000-year-old Chinese culture, the question naturally arises: if we take Christianity just as a historical cultural system, should not its history be traced back much further than the 2000 years of the Christian Church?

Here, the mirror of Chinese culture can shed light on the cultural roots of Christianity. In fact, when Jesus and his disciples preached the Good News in the ancient world, the scriptures they consulted

and the verses they recited were the Hebrew Scriptures, which are referred to by Christians as the “Old Testament.” Whether it is belief in one God, the relationship between God and human beings, or the systems of morality, law, and sacrifice—all these Christian concepts are rooted in the older Israelite civilization. The “Hebrew Bible” (or “Old Testament”) constitutes about two-thirds of the Christian Bible. The terminology, ritual system, and religious metaphors invoked by Jesus and the apostles can be traced back to Abraham and the ancient Jewish faith. Broadly speaking, ancient Jewish civilization has its roots in a tradition that dates back to 2000 _{BCE}, while its intellectual system was inherited and developed from Mesopotamian-Mediterranean civilizations that date back another 1000–2000 years. Thus, Christianity has a history of more or less five (or even six) thousand years, a cultural identity that has been largely neglected by the Christian world but might be recovered through a dialogical process with ancient Chinese culture. Doing so would deepen our understanding of the continuity between the Old and New Testaments as well as the link between Christianity as a cultural system and its Jewish and Mediterranean roots. The Bible is not only a text of God revealing Himself to humanity but also a witness to a Judeo-Christian civilization that is over 5000–6000 years old. Given this cultural understanding of the scriptures, a Chinese theological construction can acquire a new appreciation of the theological inspiration of the Old Testament, celebrating the continuity between it and the New Testament.⁵

Second, “greater theology” requires expanding Christian theology into a kind of universal theology that genuinely synthesizes different kinds of traditions. The Chinese word for Protestantism, “*jidu xinjiao*” (new Christianity, 基督新教), like the English term “Protestant,”

5 Similar cultural awareness can be seen in Christianity’s encounter of other long-established cultures. Consider, for example, Justin Martyr, who claimed that “[Plato] took this from our teachers—we mean the words from the prophets—listen to what was said in so many words by Moses, whom we have already shown was the first of the prophets and earlier than the Greek writers” (*Justin, Philosopher and Martyr: Apologies*, ed. and trans. by Denis Minns and Paul Parvis [Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009], ch. 59, para. 1).

denotes a “protesting sect,” bearing the connotations of opposition to, secession from, and protest against the Roman Catholic Church. These characteristics inspired courageous innovation, believer-oriented worship, and adaptability in the face of change among various Protestant denominations. Regrettably, however, due to the special historical environment of the Reformation and its spirit of controversy, reform, and protest, some of the beneficial theological, liturgical, and spiritual traditions within the Catholic tradition were abandoned. Protestant theology today has acknowledged some of these losses, embracing an “open” attitude to the ancient church traditions and a return to the theology of the early Church Fathers.

This “open” theological orientation accords with recent ecumenical reconciliation and recognition within the world of Christianity. Within the expanded outlook of the universal Church and ongoing dialogue between different denominations, acceptance of and learning from one another have become *de rigueur*. For example, in 1999, the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation signed a “Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification,” reaching a consensus of core doctrine and working toward general reconciliation. In 2006, the Methodist Church also signed the declaration. In 2017 and 2018, respectively, the World Communion of Reformed Churches and Anglican Communion also joined the declaration. Another example concerns liturgy. Following Vatican II, the Roman Catholic Church renewed the structure of the liturgical year with a three-year lectionary cycle, which more and more Protestant denominations emulate today. Chinese Christianity’s dialogue with Chinese culture is in line with these recent reconciliations and recognitions, seeking a deeper understanding of the inner direction of Protestant theology and a more comprehensive dialogue with the universal Church. In the process of constructing theology in dialogue with multi-faceted Chinese traditional culture, Chinese Christianity should not cling to its own sectarian bias, otherwise it will encounter difficulties as it tries to establish the structure for rich, comprehensive, and effective dialogue. Rather, Chinese Christianity must keep to the spirit of the Protestant

Reformation, while returning to the foundation of the Bible, absorbing the spiritual resources of the early Church Fathers, and drawing on the historical achievements and contemporary innovations within Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy. This will enable the renewal of a broader, universal theology in dialogue with Chinese culture.⁶

Finally, “greater theology” requires an understanding of Christian theology as a complete and systematic body of thought. The Protestant Reformation was an inborn movement of European culture and society that, since the sixteenth century, has so deeply shaped the social and cultural institutions of modern western society that Protestantism and modern western society have become inextricably linked. This is seen for example in the connection between “justification by faith” and contemporary western individualism, or the priesthood of all believers and contemporary systems of representative democracy. However, upon entering the context of Chinese society, which reactively reformed itself in response to Western impact, and in confronting the rich diversity of Chinese culture, we can clearly see some of the significant shortcomings of a theological construction based solely on post-Reformation Protestant thought, especially in the areas of ecclesiology, spirituality, and liturgical and sacramental theology. Chinese Christianity must therefore try to rediscover and construct “a better self” in the process of its dialogue with Chinese culture by means of a deeper and more extensive examination of universal theology. It does this by drawing on a wide variety of resources to arrive at more holistic systems of thought, spirituality, morality, liturgy, and ecclesiology, among others.

An awareness of “greater theology” is in fact consistent with the spirit of the Reformation, as both point to a kind of “unfinished Protestantism.” In dialoguing with Chinese culture, the “unfinished”

6 We see a similar understanding of and approach to a Chinese Christian theological construction in the five-year plan of the National Committee of Three-Self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant Churches in China and the China Christian Council; see, “The Five-year Plan for Promoting the Sincization of Chinese Christianity, 2018–2022” (*tui jin wo guo ji du jiao zhong guo hua wu nian gong zuo gui hua gang yao*, 推进我国基督教中国化五年工作规划纲要, 2018–2022), <https://www.ccctspm.org/cppccinfo/10283>, accessed 26 September 2022.

or “unresolved” nature of Protestantism yields deeper and wider access to the spiritual and intellectual resources of the universal Church through which the “greater theology” of Chinese Christianity is enriched and refined.

3. A “Crystal-Cube” Intercultural Theology

As discussed above, Chinese Christianity calls for a “greater theology,” which requires a more meaningful integration of a dialogical Chinese theology with the trends of universal theology. With respect to the former, the central theme is dialogue between Christianity and Chinese culture, while the latter focuses on dialogue between Protestant traditions and universal theology. More precisely, Chinese theological construction should be in step with and an integral part of universal theology. With this in mind, we might propose a feasible approach for the construction of a “greater theology” in contemporary China through the integration of present-day domestic and universal theology.

Let us start by reflecting on the concept of “theology” itself. What is theology? When people answer this question, they often base their explanations on an analysis on the etymology of “theology”: a rational discourse about God, or a system of knowledge about God. Another explanation—“theology is the church in the act of thinking”⁷—emphasizes the role of theology as the Church’s self-reflection about its existential problems through the Bible or its theological traditions. A rational reflection and understanding of faith are doubtlessly among the most fundamental characteristics of Christian theology. The Christian faith is not a blind faith but a kind of faith seeking and empowered by understanding. Faith facilitates more precise and accurate knowledge; conversely, knowledge facilitates more extensive and comprehensive faith. However, as a result of

7 K. H. Ting, *Love Never Ends*, trans. Janice Wickeri (Nanjing: Yilin Press, 2000), 5. For a comprehensive introduction to the theological construction initiated by K. H. Ting, see Philip L. Wickeri, *Reconstructing Christianity in China: K. H. Ting and the Chinese Church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2007).

modern rationalization and disciplinary fragmentation, theology has increasingly become an intellectual construction or a theoretical system, making it seem as if accepting a certain kind of system of knowledge or theory were equal to believing the Christian faith.

The common pattern of modern theological classification reflects this tendency to interpret theology as a system of knowledge. For example, theology is commonly divided into four branches: biblical theology, systematic theology, historical theology, and practical theology. With the exception of spirituality, pastoral care, and related areas covered by practical theology, these theological disciplines, taken together, generally present a theoretical or intellectual system.⁸ In many introductory textbooks of theology, Christian theology is explained as comprising various theories: about the Trinity, Christology, anthropology, ecclesiology, eschatology, etc. Contemporary disciplinary distinctions and academic divisions of labor further consign theology to a kind of knowledge production. This, on one hand, leads to the narrowing of theology, as it becomes a specialized discipline that can only be accessed through extensive academic training. On the other hand, insofar as it employs various methods of the humanities and social sciences to analyze and respond to theological issues, theology is increasingly cast out on the high seas of modern academic learning, floating aimlessly as a lonely vessel of intellectual production.

Some of these common features of contemporary theology—intellectualization, fragmentation, and alienation from life-practice—which have been criticized by many seasoned theologians, should and can be avoided when constructing theology with a universal orientation in the context of an ongoing dialogue with Chinese culture.

8 There is usually little to no place for spirituality and liturgy in introductions to Christian theology. Take, for example, the two most popular textbooks of theology that have been translated into Chinese. Millard Erickson's *Introducing Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001; Chinese version by Shanghai People's Publishing House, 2012) does not discuss spirituality at all and provides only a short section on baptism and the Eucharist in its chapter on "Church." Alister McGrath's *Christian Theology: An Introduction* (London: Blackwell, 2001; Chinese version by Beijing: Beijing Lianhe Publishing House, 2017) also does not discuss spirituality, though does contain an independent chapter on the sacraments.

What is needed is a fundamental reconsideration of what “theology” actually is. Therefore, we need to return to the foundational question: what is theology?

As generally understood today, theology is human thinking about God, as if to make God the object of our intellectual endeavors. In the biblical tradition, however, God reveals Himself first, disclosing Himself to humankind throughout history by speaking and acting, through the interrelated manifestations of His words and actions. The life of faith is our response in words and actions to the grace of God. Faith, properly speaking, is an echo of God’s revelation in human words and action. Theology therefore involves the systematic preservation and reflection of this “echo” within the faith community. Theology begins not only as an intellectual endeavor initiated by human reason but also as human action that echoes the grace of God. In short, what theology should chiefly address is reciprocal: the revelation of the triune God to human beings through His words and actions, and the response of human beings to the triune God through their words and actions. It is a mutual in-dwelling or interaction between human and divine words and actions. Thus it could properly be called a “theology of mutual-indwelling” (*hu yu shen xue*, 互寓神学).⁹ Just as Chinese wisdom holds that “true knowing is doing,” so theological learning should involve the practice of “a way of life.” Theology is therefore not only a theoretical construction but also both an intellectual and practical system consisting of believing, praying, living, and celebrating.

Taking this understanding as our starting point, according to the long-established Christian theological tradition, we can “polish” Chinese contextual theology as a “crystal” with four aspects, each represented by a key verb.

The first aspect is *what we believe*. This is the comprehensive

9 For a systematic elaboration of mutual-indwelling theology, see You Bin, “Mutual Indwelling Theology: A Trinitarian Introduction to the Interpretation of the Apostles’ Creed,” in *A Chinese Theological Interpretation of the Apostles’ Creed* (*shi tu xin jing xiang jie*, 使徒信经详解), Nanjing: Jinlin Union Theological Seminary Press, 2021.

and systematic elaboration on the contents of the Christian faith, often by way of detailed annotations of the twelve statements of the “Apostle’s Creed” as well as the more ecumenically recognized Nicene-Constantinople Creed, both of which are based on the central framework of the Holy Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—into which the basic tenets of theological beliefs can be incorporated and elaborated.

The second aspect is *what we pray*. Justified by faith, we gain proper knowledge of Him to whom we pray. To pray is to enter into communion with the Trinitarian God in our heart. Our inner being or spirituality—or in Chinese terminology, our “heart-mind”¹⁰—is formed through our prayerful relationship with God. Praying is a spiritual exercise that cultivates the Christian heart-mind in dialogical encounter of God. The correct content and order of such prayer was given to the disciples by Christ Himself in the seven petitions of the Lord’s Prayer.

The third aspect is *what we live*. The inner heart-mind of Christians must be demonstrated in their outward lifestyle. Having received grace in our faith in the trinitarian God and having cultivated the inner heart-mind in a prayerful relationship with God, we can live a sanctified life by following the Ten Commandments that were given by God to His people on Mt. Sinai and imitate the life of Christ according to His Sermon on the Mount.

The fourth aspect is *what we celebrate*. Celebration is what the Church does in its liturgy. The God of the Christian faith is not only the God who speaks but also the God who acts. God’s gift of salvation, as enacted through the passion, sacrifice, and resurrection of Christ, is not only expressed in history but also continuously transmitted through the liturgy and sacraments of the Church. By means of the holy sacraments, God continuously sanctifies humankind, while humans continually offer Him praise. It is in the liturgy, the collective,

10 For the term “heart-mind,” see Ying-shih Yu, “Between the Heavenly and the Human,” in Tu Weiming and Mary Evelyn Tucker eds. *Confucian Spirituality* (New York: Herder & Herder, 2003), 62–79.

public, open, and regular celebration of God's people, that the blessing of God upon humans and all of creation meets the human praise of God. The two sacraments of baptism and Eucharist, as well as other liturgical acts, are the main objects of Christian liturgical studies.

The “polishing” of Christian theology in these four aspects is clearly and systematically represented in the doctrinal expositions of the Roman Catholic Church, especially its post-Vatican II *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.¹¹ In fact, however, the same general division appears in Luther's “Small Catechism” and “Large Catechism,” though the sequence of these four aspects is different, as are Luther's theological interpretations of them.¹² Taking this four-aspect division of theology as a point of departure, Chinese Christianity can undertake an in-depth dialogue with the universal theological traditions as it moves toward the construction of “a greater theology.”

The above reconstruction of theology in the context of Chinese culture can also be developed to correspond to the traditional Chinese system of learning as follows. First is the rational discourse on faith, which might be called “Christian *jiaolixue*” (教理学, learning of the Christian “Principles”) or Christian theology more narrowly. Second, the focus on prayer, which has traditionally been classified within Christian spirituality, examines how to cultivate the Christian heart-mind through the exercise of prayer and thereby develop a personal and close relationship with the triune God; this can be termed “Christian *xinxingxue*” (心性学, spirituality).¹³ Third, the study of

11 See *Catechism of The Catholic Church* (New York: Doubleday, 1995).

12 See Martin Luther and Melancthon Philipp, *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, eds. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, trans. Charles P. Arand (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2000). I thank Christoph Stuckelberger, for reminding me that this division is also in *The German Protestant Catechism for Adults*; see *Evangelischer Erwachsenekatechismus*, 9th ed. (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2013).

13 The learning of *xinxingxue* (心性学)—or in English, spirituality—is one of the dominant disciplines in Confucian theory and practice. To develop a *xinxingxue* (spiritual) tradition for each religion—for example, Daoism, Buddhism, and even Islam—in their dialogue with Confucianism has become a prominent facet of Chinese cultural history. See Tu Weiming and Mary Evelyn Tucker, eds., *Confucian Spirituality* (New York: Herder & Herder, 2003), esp. 1–35.

the Christian life and its norms, can be called “Christian *lunlixue*” (伦理学, ethics). Fourth, the study of the liturgies and sacraments of the Christian tradition, which extends to ritual activities pertaining to the ceremonial arrangement of the individual’s life from birth to death and the Christian concepts of family, state, and world, can be termed “Christian *liyixue*” (礼仪学, liturgical studies).

Although this proposed framework for a “greater theology” covers doctrine, spirituality, ethics, and liturgy, these parts are intricately interwoven and can never stand in isolation. For example, when certain days and times are set aside in the liturgical year to celebrate the life of Jesus, this is not only a matter of liturgy—the rites and ceremonies that mark the celebration of faith in certain seasons—but also of theology, the theological interpretation of the life of Jesus; spirituality, the cultivation of the heart-mind according to the liturgical seasons; and ethics, the imitation in action of the example of Jesus of Nazareth.

At a deeper level, these four theological aspects are all rooted in the Christian text of God’s revelation: the Bible. In other words, Christian scriptures can be called yet another branch of theology, namely *shengjingxue* (圣经学, the study of Christian scriptures). In fact, the study of the Bible constitutes the foundation of theology and therefore should be considered the spirit of theology. This is yet another aspect of Chinese theology, one that interacts with the long history of scriptural studies in Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism. Thus, with divine mystery as our foundation, we might move steadily toward the construction of a “crystal cube” Chinese Christian theology by synthesizing these five aspects of theology—*shengjingxue* (Christian scriptures), *jiaolixue* (Christian principles), *xinxingxue* (Christian spirituality), *lunlixue* (Christian ethics), and *liyixue* (Christian liturgy).¹⁴

14 Many thanks to Dr. Naomi Thurston at the Chinese University of Hong Kong for translating the above sections of this Chinese manuscript into English.

4. Catechism as Intercultural Theological Learning

Over the last decade, I have been deeply involved in many different efforts in constructing a Chinese Christian theology. I founded a theological center at Jiangxi Bible College in 2015, a research center at Fujian Theological Seminary in 2017, and other training sessions at Northeastern Theological Seminary and Shandong Theological Seminary in 2018 and the years to follow. These centers have provided theological education at all levels, from church leadership training sessions to grassroots congregational teaching classes. In 2019 I was appointed as a doctoral supervisor at Nanjing Union Theological Seminary, the top school for Chinese Christianity. Given my broader exposure to, and deep engagement with, post-denominational theological education in the Chinese Protestant church, I have come to agree with the insightful observation made by Prof. Miikka Ruokanen after his twenty-plus years of involvement in Chinese theological education: “to meet today’s growing challenge of Christian education, a new, enlarged version of Chinese Protestant catechism is urgently needed.”¹⁵ I have come to believe that writing a catechism is the best way to effect this, creating an experimental “crystal cube” intercultural theology for present-day China.

According to Miikka Ruokanen, this catechism would be “a Chinese post-denominational catechism for a minimal expression and teaching of the common faith.”¹⁶ In my view, negatively speaking, this catechism would be post-denominational or even non-denominational, even though, positively speaking, it would be of a “greater theology,” which is probably what Ruokanen meant by the phrase “the common faith.” Nevertheless, I disagree with Ruokanen that this catechism

15 Miikka Ruokanen, Liu Ruomin, and Chen Yongtao, “Is ‘Postdenominational’ Christianity Possible? Ecclesiology in the Protestant Church of China,” *The Ecumenical Review* 67.1 (March 2015): 94.

16 Miikka Ruokanen, Liu Ruomin, and Chen Yongtao, “Abstract” of “Is ‘Postdenominational’ Christianity Possible? Ecclesiology in the Protestant Church of China,” https://helda.helsinki.fi/bitstream/handle/10138/156310/EREV_Is_postdenominational_Christianity_possible.pdf?sequence=5, accessed 20 October 2022.

would be only “a minimal expression and teaching,” since the Holy Scriptures and Ecumenical Creeds would have already played such a role of the “minimal expression” of faith. Furthermore, if the catechism limits itself to “a minimal expression and teaching of the common faith,” it would weaken the power of Chinese Christian theological reasoning vis-à-vis the long and venerable traditions of other indigenous religions and cultures that have articulated and inculcated themselves in comprehensive, elegant, and subtle ways.

In a rich and diversified Chinese cultural context, the meaning of “catechism” must gain new meanings. *“Catechism” should signify a seeking for divine wisdom as revealed in Jesus Christ by God through the Holy Spirit rather than being limited to denominational boundary-making; otherwise, a “post-denominational” catechism will turn into one more denominational catechism among the many existing ones.* Chinese catechisms should also focus on the “unfinished and embracing” spirit, on the way of divine-wisdom seeking, upon the foundation of the Holy Scriptures and Ecumenical Creeds. Thus the Chinese understanding of *catechism* should reestablish its original meaning—*kata* (thoroughly) and *ekhein* (to sound, ring)—signifying the resounding or echoing of the divine words within a Chinese cultural context. Also, the term *catechumen* should return to its original meaning of “learner” through questioning. In this way, *a renewed understanding of catechism might fit the Chinese belief that knowledge or wisdom is itself a way of learning to ask (xue wen, 学问).*

My aim in writing this set of catechisms is to make catechisms more like general Christian pedagogies of divine-wisdom seeking than fixed dogmatic entitles. These catechisms are designed according to the structure of a “greater theology” that is open to intercultural learning from Chinese indigenous cultures. The four aspects of the “greater theology”—believing, praying, living, and celebrating—will be interculturally and theologically elaborated in the form of questions and answers, each focusing on core Christian texts: *Apostles’ Creed*, *Lord’s Prayer*, *Ten Commandments*, and *Christian liturgy* selected from

or rooted in the Holy Scripture.¹⁷ This set of catechisms embraces the following three core principles.

First, as the Bible is the echo of God's word, these catechisms will try their best to be an echo of the Bible. Two of these catechisms, the Lord's Prayer and Ten Commandments, are directly from the Bible; a third, the Apostle's Creed, is inherent within the Bible; and the fourth, Christian sacramental liturgy, is derived from the Bible and recognized by the Church. In answering questions, these catechisms extensively quote from the Bible, providing the basic biblical principles about them. In forming these questions, I have tried to remain aware that good, accurate, and crucial questions reflect a profound and accurate understanding of faith. I hope that these questions are together like a string of pearls that reveal the entire Christian faith. In this way, people can obtain an overall view of the Christian faith through these catechisms. Then, by reading the Bible with this newly gained theological learning, people can reach a better and deeper understanding of the divine economy in the Bible, especially in the interaction between the Old and New Testaments.

Second, the catechisms are open to the universal theological tradition, rooted in the various traditions of the universal Church, including Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox, and even ancient Asian Oriental churches like *Jingjiao* (Chinese Nestorianism, 景教). For Chinese Christianity, the task of “a greater theology” is not to innovate faith but to continue the tradition of the universal Church so that people can give birth to “new life” on “old roots” (*gu gen xin ming*, 古根新命) that were planted by the prophets and apostles. This set of Chinese catechisms therefore quotes statements from catechisms of different denominations, demonstrating how Chinese Christianity can absorb the strength of others in moving towards union with the

17 The Chinese version of these four catechisms were published between 2018 and 2021: You Bin, *The Apostles' Creed: A Chinese Catechism* (*shi tu xin jing yao li wen da*, 使徒信经要理问答) in 2018; *The Lord's Prayer: A Chinese Catechism* (*zhu dao wen yao li wen da*, 主祷文要理问答) in 2019; *The Ten Commandments: A Chinese Catechism* (*shi jie yao li wen da*, 十诫要理问答) in 2020; and *Christian Liturgy: A Chinese Catechism* (*ji du jiao li yi yao li wen da*, 基督教礼仪要理问答) in 2021. All were published by Religious Cultural Press of Beijing.

universal Church.

Third, the catechisms should constitute theological constructions of deep learning by boundary crossing with Chinese wisdom. Non-Christian cultures, Chinese culture included, bearing the sign of God's love and wisdom as beams of light left by the Word of God in human activity, are absorbed into these catechisms. As a matter of fact, when Christian catechisms are written in the Chinese language, Chinese wisdom is integrated into these Christian teachings since the Chinese language itself is rooted in profound Chinese wisdom. However, this series of catechisms tries to undertake the deep learning of boundary crossing more explicitly and deliberately. Not only is the entire structure of this Christian "greater theology" designed to correspond to the four aspects of Chinese learning; there is also systematic appropriation of Chinese wisdom in the intercultural formation of these Christian catechisms. For example, when interpreting the function of Bible-reading in forming readers' spirituality, I use the Neo-Confucian term "transforming temperament" (*bian hua qi zhi*, 变化气质), and when interpreting the universal dimension of the Church, I employ the traditional Chinese concept of "under the heaven, there is but one world; on the earth, there is but one family" (*tian xia yi ti, si hai yi jia*, 天下一体, 四海一家). I draw from the concept of "life cultivation" (*sheng ming yang cheng*, 生命养成) to interpret Christians' spiritual formation, and I summarize the entire structure of the Lord's Prayer as "three wills and four petitions" (*san yuan si qiu*, 三愿四求). I use Confucius' motto "do not unto others as you would not have them to unto you" (*ji suo bu yu, wu shi yu ren*, 己所不欲, 勿施于人) to interpret the universal principle of the Ten Commandments, and I employ the liturgical principles of Chinese cultures—for example, "liturgy is to celebrate the heavenly principle" (*li zhe li ye*, 礼者理也), and "to celebrate liturgy is to live it" (*li zhe lu ye*, 礼者履也)—to develop a Chinese theology of Christian liturgy.

My four catechisms correspond to the four aspects of the "greater theology" proposed above. I sincerely hope they will be helpful for Chinese Christians not only in studying these Biblical texts but also

in building a concise theological framework to obtain an overall understanding of the Christian faith. Doing so would enable Chinese believers to understand the internal structure of Christian theology like engineers, to familiarize themselves with the score of entire Christian faith as musicians. When faced by other religions or secular values, these readers who have learned these catechisms will easily be able to articulate and elaborate Christian values in a clear, accurate, and wise manner, expressing Christian life-attitudes in contemporary Chinese sociocultural contexts. In short, I sincerely hope these catechisms can help more Chinese people stand on the rock of Jesus Christ, continue the apostolic tradition, and echo the word of God in their lives.

I also hope that the Chinese catechetical interpretation of these Biblical texts and practices in accordance with the structure of a “greater theology” will be a gift to the global Christian world. Opening ourselves to cultural heritages does not contradict our return to the apostolic and universal traditions of the Christian faith. In fact, a deeper interaction with cultural resources calls for a stronger embrace of Biblical and apostolic origins. The project of intercultural theology, as a way of life that seeks the divine wisdom of Jesus Christ, is by definition an act of spiritual formation. As a pilgrimage journey to Bethlehem under the guidance of a bright star, we encounter the incarnated Word Jesus Christ, fully divine and fully human, in our deep learning from local cultures and societies and our honest seeking for the roots of the apostolic and ecumenical faith of the universal Christian Church.

Part I



The Ten Commandments: To Walk in God's Word



Our life in communion with the triune God is revealed in four ways: what we believe, what we desire, how we live, and what we celebrate. The Apostles' Creed brings us the truth of belief. The Lord's Prayer guides and regulates our desires. God grants us with the Ten Commandments to protect and encourage us to live in Him. And we receive the blessings of and praise God's grace in the liturgies and sacraments.

What we believe, desire, live, and celebrate are essentially united as a response to God to lead sanctified lives in communion with Him. God uses His "Ten Words," also called the Ten Commandments, to reveal to us how to have a good life and to lead us to respond to His salvation in life. In Jesus Christ, the "Emmanuel" who unites God and humans, we live what we believe, celebrate, and desire under the guidance of the Ten Words. The Ten Commandments are the words of God, but they in turn accord with and cultivate human

nature. The Ten Commandments are the law of virtue and wisdom, the guarantee of a good society, and the way to freedom as we serve God in cooperation with all creatures.

The Ten Words are the core of the whole system of the Old Testament and the essence of all the commandments of God. Christ, as the Word of God, was born a human. The statutes and commandments based on the Ten Words lead us to Christ, “the king of virtues.” It is in Christ that we can find the real meaning of the Ten Words and become empowered to practice them completely. Christ lives with us so that we can live by the Ten Words. Through the Ten Words, God comes into our lives; in living by them, we enter into God’s life.

1. WHAT ARE THE TEN COMMANDMENTS?

God brought the Israelites out of Egypt and across the Red Sea to free them from slavery. After that, God took them to Sinai, where he gave them laws as preparation for entering the Promised Land. At the beginning of the law is its foundation, which is God’s “Ten Words,” the Ten Commandments.

The Ten Commandments are concise in wording but absolute in meaning. The first half of the Ten Commandments involves how people should treat God, the second half, how they should treat one another. But the two parts interweave, together constituting the basic laws of the human heart, morality, and social life. The Ten Commandments are put forward as “shall nots,” which shows that they are a light in the darkness, illuminating the inner injustice and sin of humans and protecting us from the harm of sin. At the same time, the imperative orders of the Ten Commandments lay the foundation for human life, protecting people’s natural rights of belief, conscience, life, family, property, and speech, etc. Furthermore, the Ten Commandments lead people to an inner life with wisdom and

virtue. These words contain the law of good life, calling and guiding people to fulfill themselves in pursuit of virtue until they realize the dignity and glory beyond human nature in God's Emmanuel.

The Exodus follows Israelite liberation from Egypt to Sinai; theologically, these events are also proximate to each other. Being freed from slavery in Egypt, the Israelites came to Sinai as a free people to serve the Lord and to live according to the law as centered on the Ten Commandments (Ex. 3:12). These Ten Commandments manifest God's continuous providence of the created world. They are God's covenant with His people to endlessly enjoy their freedom in God by living holy lives. The Ten Commandments begin with God's declaration "I am"—"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" (Ex. 20:2; Deut. 5:6)—showing His love and omnipotence through the Exodus. To obey the Ten Commandments is to remember God's love, to live according to God's words, and to show that we belong to God.

The Exodus and the Ten Commandments echo each other. The former tells us who we are as free people belonging to God; the latter tells us how to live to realize the freedom given by God by maintaining His law in our holy lives. Freedom is not only the identity of being God's people but also their continuous moral living. The flower of human freedom should bear the fruit of virtuous lives. The Ten Words manifest God's sacred laws. Like a pillar of cloud in the day and of fire at night, they protect God's people with orderly lives and lead them to cultivate virtues and sanctify themselves by following "the perfect law, the law of liberty" (Jas. 1:25).

The first half of the Ten Commandments requires us to love God, the second half, our neighbors. Therefore, Christ summarized the Ten Commandments as two commandments: you shall love God, and you shall love your neighbor (Mt. 22:40). Together, these two form a whole, the main purpose of which is to inform people how to live and act in love. The Ten Commandments are not, therefore, external commandments, but the expression of internal love and the communion of God with His people.

2. THE TEN COMMANDMENTS AND VIRTUOUS LIFE

God issued the Ten Words in the form of commandments to demonstrate His sovereignty over creation as Lord. The whole system of Old Testament laws, which is based in the Ten Commandments, tells us not only how to worship God and treat others in society but also how to treat all of nature. To obey these ten sentences in freedom is to show our nobility in the universe: each person, a “priest of the whole universe” as the image of God, works by God’s plan to take care of the created world (Gen. 2:15) and to express recognition, gratitude, and respect for God’s sovereignty over all of creation. In this sense, to obey the Ten Commandments is to assist God with the protection of His creation through our own lives. Thus, we are “co-workers for the kingdom of God.”

Literally, the Ten Commandments provide norms for behavior; however, they also constitute a call to people’s hearts. The Ten Commandments begin with God’s declaration of His actions in history with “I am,” requiring people to acknowledge and believe, and they end with the commandment “Do not covet.” Every commandment has an inherent spiritual dimension, which requires people to continually grow as Christians, both physically and spiritually, expressing the moral capacity of faith and leading a sanctified life.

The Ten Commandments are in the form of prohibitions to build a defensive line for life. However, their inner spirit advocates for and calls people to pursue the goodness of life. The first half of the Ten Commandments points out humanity’s duty to God, the second half, humanity’s responsibility to others. Belief, life, marriage, family, property, and speech are all involved, covering every aspect of life. Each commandment implies the virtue that humans should pursue. Although the Ten Commandments therefore succinctly express the

basic principles that people cannot violate, what really makes these basic principles operate in people's life is a virtue system rooted in human nature. In ancient Greek culture, these natural virtues were summarized as wisdom, courage, moderation, and justice, while in Chinese culture there are the "five constant virtues" (五常, *wuchang*) of "benevolence" (仁, *ren*) and its four inherent virtues, righteousness (义, *yi*), propriety (礼, *li*), wisdom (智, *zhi*), and loyalty (信, *xin*).¹ If people want to obey the Ten Commandments in life, they must internally cultivate these corresponding virtues.

The Ten Commandments point out what is right and wrong in the most concise way, encouraging people to cultivate the virtue of wisdom, because wisdom enables people not only to "know" good and evil but also to "do" good and "remove" evil by means of the inner power of reason. True knowledge is to act; this means that knowing but not doing is the same as not knowing. "Knowledge in its genuine and earnest aspect is action, and action in its intelligent and discriminating aspect is knowledge."² If you do not really understand the inner spirit of the commandments, you will not be able truly to obey them. Conversely, only by truly obeying the commandments can we show that we really understand God's statutes and commandments. "That will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people'" (Deut. 4:6). In the unity of knowing and acting, each interacts with the other. On the one hand, the virtue of wisdom guides people to heed God's commands, to grasp the spirit of the Ten Commandments and other statutes, to understand how to realize goodness in a right

1 According to Confucian tradition, these five constant virtues are the foundation of a gentlemen (*junzi*, 君子), the ideal person of Confucianism. They are also the foundation for all the moral laws and the goal of the moral life. Benevolence is the first and root virtue; the other four virtues can be included within benevolence, as is expressed in the neo-Confucian idiom "benevolence governs the other four virtues" (*ren bao si de*, 仁包四德).

2 Wang Yangming (1472–1529), who is claimed to be the greatest neo-Confucian theorist and practitioner in the late-Ming China. See Wang Yangming, *Instructions for Practical Living, and Other Neo-Confucian Writings*, trans. by Wing-tsit Chan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), 93.

way, and to apply Ten Commandments to specific occasions. On the other hand, since “the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,” heeding the Ten Commandments makes people wise. The more you obey the statutes, the more you will understand the goodness that the God commands.

The Ten Commandments ask people to cultivate the virtue of courage. God revealed the Ten Commandments in the form of “shall nots,” warning people to be vigilant against Satan’s temptation and their own sin. Temptation and sin make life a war. To freely obey God’s commandments and bear the fruits of goodness in life, it is necessary to cultivate the virtue of courage in order to resist temptation and sin. Courage suffuses all the other virtues so that people can persevere in loving God and their neighbors, remain loyal to Lord Jesus Christ, and heed the Ten Commandments even in difficult situations. If all the commandments can be reduced to love, it is the virtue of courage that enables love to be patient (1 Cor. 13:4).

Obedying the Ten Commandments requires people to cultivate the virtue of self-control. The Ten Commandments illuminate the sinful state of humans and the sins they commit. The Ten Commandments are directed against people’s disordered desires, such as arrogance, which leads people to usurp the place of God; anger, which makes people ignore the lives of others; lust, which causes people to commit adultery; and greed, which leads people to rob and cheat. To obey the Ten Commandments from the heart is to subdue these disordered desires with the virtue of self-control. Being self-controlled, people will conform to the natural moral law, namely “heavenly principle” (*tian li*, 天理), governing and regulating their instincts with their rational will. Thus, human desires will not exceed reasonable limits, and humans will become just and kind. Self-control trains us to renounce impious and worldly passions and to live sober, upright, and godly lives in this world (Tit. 2:12). Under the guidance of self-control, people will also behave with “propriety,” understanding that what they do is not only from themselves but also in line with the Ten Commandments and the statutes of God.

The overall spirit of the Ten Commandments is to cultivate the virtue of justice. Justice is “to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God” (Mic. 6:8). The first half of the Ten Commandments establishes the just order of humans towards God. As a creation of God, we live and move and have our being in Him. To love, praise, and worship God in an appropriate way is to give God what he deserves. This is the justice of humans before God. The second half of the Ten Commandments develops good relationships among people. Due to justice, people’s relationships with each other and with things will therefore be harmonious, and the public welfare and unity of humankind will be promoted. This is the justice of humans in society and the natural world. In this way, people can live according to God, put everything in the world into just order, and truly become rulers and keepers of the kingdom of God.

The Sermon on the Mount not only quotes the Ten Commandments but also leads to a more real and perfect human nature with the persuasion of “I say to you.” The virtue and power of the Ten Commandments is therefore demonstrated, showing how the Ten Commandments encompass not only prohibitions that reflect the sin and darkness of human nature but also virtues that show us the way to increased sanctification, revealing our life in Christ and the Holy Spirit. If you want to really follow the Ten Commandments, you should reconcile your temperament (*tiao he xing qing*, 调和性情) and bear the fruit of “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (Gal. 5:22-23) under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

3. THE TEN COMMANDMENTS AND SOCIAL LIFE

*P*erichoresis is the inter-dwelling of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in one Godhead. The three persons are revealed as and become one in their love and service to each other. Humans are

created by God in His image, determining their social nature. For Christianity, sociality is not therefore derived or added to humans; rather, it is their nature. Created by God, all human beings are born both free with rationality and conscience and equal in dignity and rights. At the same time, the full potential of human nature in freedom, equality, rationality, and conscience is only fully realized in human fraternity of brotherhood, sisterhood, and mutual support. In communion with the triune God, human nature is connected with “the true origin of all things” (*wan you zhen yuan*, 万有真原),³ the fountain of life, which lays the foundation for the full realization of humanity’s social nature.

Reflecting God’s plan of creating and caring for the world and humans, the Ten Commandments are therefore the very guarantee of the realization of human social nature, containing the principles of a good life as set by God for humans as social beings. The first step in realizing this social nature is to enter into fellowship with God, recognizing Him as Lord, worshiping Him correctly, and participating in His divine life. This is what the first half of the Ten Commandments states. Additionally, since family is the foundation of human social nature, the relationship between parents and children is the starting point of all social relations. The means and guarantee for people to realize their social nature in brotherhood is to show respect for the lives of others, to build harmonious relationships between men and women, to work and share property, and to treat others sincerely in words. This is what the second half of the Ten Commandments states.

The Ten Commandments are therefore not only ancient but also everlasting, revealing the plain truth of human society. The Ten Commandments serve not only to protect everyone but also to fulfill everyone in an integral society of human beings. In the form of commandments, the Ten Words point out the code of conduct

3 This four-character term for God was given by Emperor Kangxi (*r.* 1661–1722) when he visited the Catholic Church in Beijing in 1711.

for communal life in all societies in spite of cultural differences, providing the universal truth of common social life (Ps. 103:17–18). In fact, the social principles that guarantee a good society—human dignity, family priority, fraternity, and common good—operate implicitly in the Ten Commandments. A deep understanding of the relationship between the Ten Commandments and these social principles enables us to know the meaning and significance of the Ten Commandments, helping us practice them in our lives.

In short, human dignity is the capacity to recognize, decide for, and commit oneself to connect with others, to make a covenant with God, and to freely know and love the Creator. Humans are the foundation, subject, and purpose of all social organization. The purpose of the Ten Commandments and other laws is to enable people individually and in society to realize their nature and mission.

Humanity's intimate and unique relationship with the Creator is the greatest source and constitution of the dignity of human nature. The first half of the Ten Commandments affirms that everyone has the natural right to believe in and worship God in a proper way. Everyone is willed and loved by God. Enjoying the same dignity, each person should regard every other person as "another self." Under heaven and on earth, there is but one family. All people are brothers and sisters because everyone is created in the image of God with soul, body, and one nature, facing the last judgment together. At the same time, the gifts that God assigns to everyone are different, so every person is unique. These differences encourage people to complement each other, sharing the joy of love so that each person can help the other. With people uniting together and helping one another, the ethical life that aims at the common good of all people and the whole created world is formed and established.

The second half of the Ten Commandments begins with "honor your father and your mother," revealing that family is the prototype and beginning of humanity's social nature. The Trinity is a loving family of three Divine Persons. With God as "the great parent" (*da fu*

mu, 大父母),⁴ family is the first human “society,” the primary group that passes on and raises life, the source of love and joy. Family itself has its intrinsic value. Participating in God’s work of creation, parents protect and develop human dignity. With various duties, members serve each other in love and become one family. The family itself is a model of unity and assistance. It is the first “school” in which people learn to complement each other in love and pass down what they have learned from generation to generation. The term “parents” implies marriage and family, extending further into nationality and motherland. Larger social groups are often constructed in the form of the family. People from a common ancestor constitute a clan and eventually an ethnicity. The Ten Commandments takes “parents” as the original symbol of authority at all levels of society. On the one hand, authority is established on the basis of human social nature. On the other hand, the true significance of authority lies in its protection of human dignity and the basic interests of every individual and family. Family is the foundation and goal of society, not the other way around. The role of social authority at all levels is to protect and assist rather than to limit the rights of individuals, families, and communities. According to the Ten Commandments, social authorities should follow this principle of “subsidiarity,” otherwise they will deny themselves.

The Ten Commandments show that human social nature is also reflected in the relationship between humans and objects. The commandments of “thou shall not steal” and “thou shall not covet” require people to take sharing and common good as the ultimate goals of owning property. The earth is a whole, given to humans by God as a gift. In this regard, humanity’s social justice inherently entails ecological justice between human and non-human beings.

4 In the Chinese interpretation of God as Creator in the Late Ming and Early Qing period (16th to 18th century), a common term for God is “the great parent.” One representative Chinese Christian, Wang Zheng (王徵, 1571–1644), claimed that “it is a pity that people know the duty of serving their human parents but do not know that God is the great parent (*da fu mu*, 大父母) to serve”; see Wang Zheng, *The Complete Writings of Wang Zheng* (*wang zheng quan ji*, 王徵全集), ed. Lin Lechang (林乐昌) (Xi’an: Sanqin Press [三秦出版社], 2011), 124.

Ecological justice requires us “not only to treat others as our brothers and sisters but also to treat all things as our companions” (*min wu tong bao wu wu yu ye*, 民吾同胞，物吾与也).⁵ Ecological justice means to recognize that all things originate from the creator God and redeemer God and that all things are members of “us” as brothers and sisters. The Ten Commandments remind us that we should extend the principle of love and justice to all things, to look at the entire created world with a feeling of “oneness of all things between the heaven and the earth” (*tian di wan wu wei yi ti*, 天地万物为一体), and to become keepers, managers, and helpers of everything in the created world.

In short, the first four commandments protect people’s freedom of belief and conscience, ensuring that everyone is treated with dignity, and according to the last six commandments, marriage, family, and social authority should be based on love and equality, and people’s relationships with other people and beings should be based on the principle of common good and sharing. The Ten Commandments propose universal norms of behavior in a self-evident, simple, and pure way, conveying the basic rules for the perfect realization of people’s social nature. The Ten Commandments aim at protecting human dignity, making family a priority, aiming to build solidarity and foster mutual aid, and pursuing human welfare. In this way, practicing the Ten Commandments realizes human virtue in social life, bringing forth the kingdom of God in this world.

4. THE TEN COMMANDMENTS AND CHRIST

God came to meet the Israelites, who had been liberated from Egypt, revealing the way of good life to them by the Ten Words, first using “I am” to declare Himself as a liberator, then preserving their freedom by the Ten Commandments. On the one hand, the

⁵ This idiom comes from Zhang Zai (张载, 1020–1077), an acclaimed early Neo-Confucian philosopher.

Ten Commandments, like mirrors, make people understand their nature and remind them of their internal tendency to do evil, so that they can know and stay away from sin. On the other hand, the Ten Commandments are like a custodian (Gal. 3:24), guiding people to a life of freedom.

According to the will of our good and Almighty God, the Son was born into the world as an audible, visible, palpable man, leading people to a life of freedom and justice. All ten of the Words of God point to Jesus Christ, and the first three are fulfilled in Jesus Christ. In the first commandment—"God spoke all these words, saying ..."—God conveyed all His words through Jesus, who came in human flesh, as the Word of God. In the second commandment—"I am the LORD your God"—Jesus claimed His identity by "I am," and all those who believed in God answered Him with "My Lord and my God" (Jn. 20:28). In the third commandment, Christ's mission to save people from their sins is revealed (Mt. 1:21) in the words "brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage."

The Word became flesh not to abolish the Ten Words (Mt. 5:17–18) but to fulfill them. Jesus was the Word of God and also preached the Words. He did not belittle or abolish the Old Testament laws centered on the Ten Commandments. Instead, He fulfilled the Ten Commandments and the laws by his gospel so that potential for a virtuous life and good society in the Ten Words could be released. Jesus himself was God's love. He attributed the spirit of the Ten Commandments to love and integrated them into a closer unity with the two commandments of loving God and loving neighbors as yourself. He warned us that if people cannot love and worship the creator God, they cannot respect others, and if people do not love their neighbors, they cannot worship their God. Christ redeemed us and dwelt among us; in turn, only in Him can we live a loving life.

With His words and actions, especially His resurrection, Christ reconciled us with God so that we could live in union with God, serve Him with holiness and justice, cultivate ourselves and make others

whole (*xiu ji an ren*, 修己安人)⁶ by the Ten Commandments. Faith in Christ enables us to follow the Ten Commandments from within our hearts. In Christ, we as children pray to God with “our Father who art in heaven” and obey the commandments of our Father with the joy of talking to God.

Christ sent the Holy Spirit into our hearts so that under the guidance of the Spirit we could enter union with the Triune God. The ethical life of Christians is established, promoted, and empowered by the Holy Spirit. His Presence of complete grace came down upon people as faith, hope, and love. These three virtues from heaven are beyond human nature in source and goal, so they are often called “transcendental virtues.” The three virtues purify and improve natural virtues, making them the “real virtues” fundamentally, so that people can dedicate themselves wholeheartedly to God and heed the Ten Commandments freely in their lives. Faith is the beginning, source, and driving power of Christian life, the connection between divinity and humanity. Faith helps us live in union with Christ and gives us the ability and willingness to obey the Ten Words so that we can love God with all our heart, soul, and mind (Mt. 22:37–38). Faith is bound to be transformed into hope and love, so that the three virtues can jointly lead and support the entire virtuous life of Christians. Hope helps us take the kingdom of heaven and eternal life as the ultimate goal and the highest happiness of life. All our ethical behavior in this world take happiness from heaven as the ultimate reward. Because of hope, our observance of the Ten Commandments and our cultivation of natural virtues such as wisdom, courage, self-control, and justice can surpass our expectation that “virtue is always rewarded” in our earthly life, enabling us to persist in following God without hesitation. Our love is the result and echo of Christ’s love to us. Love “binds everything together in perfect harmony” (Col. 3:14),

6 A life principle proposed by Confucius. In response to his disciple’s question of what constituted a superior man, Confucius answered: “He cultivates himself so as to give rest to others”; see Confucius, *Analects*, ch. 45, Book XIV, in James Legge, *Confucian Analects, The Great Learning, The Doctrine of The Mean* (Taipei: SMC Publishing Inc., 1991 [1893]), 292.

which means that love enables us to heed the Ten Commandments with freedom and happiness, helping us to put virtues into practice to achieve a good life. Love also makes us love God with all His creation and accordingly live by the first four commandments. Because of loving God, we can love others as ourselves and live by the last six commandments.

Faith, hope, and love are the virtues that God put into our lives through the Holy Spirit in Christ. They support, unify, and fulfill human virtues such as wisdom, justice, courage, and self-control, or in Chinese cultural expression, the “five constant virtues,” namely, “benevolence” and the other four virtues of righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and loyalty. All three of these “transcendental virtues” are combined, supporting and activating each other and eliminating all kinds of sins in people’s hearts such as fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and the like (Gal. 5:19–21), all of which are contained in the warnings and prohibitions of the Ten Commandments. At the same time, these virtues bear fruit in the lives of Christians, showing the quality of life through love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22–23). Therefore, faith, hope, and love from Christ are the true spirit and eternal power of the Ten Commandments.

When we realize that faith, hope, and love are virtues from God, we can enter a state of inner self-examination of our moral life at any time. This state helps us not to mistake natural virtues such as wisdom, courage, self-control, and justice as personal accomplishments of vanity and pride but rather to see them as gifts of God’s grace. Only by following and praising God’s truth, wisdom, and goodness can people receive the supreme blessing of eternal life. The Ten Commandments end with “you shall not covet,” which at a deeper level breaks our persistent pursuit of ourselves and makes us realize that our virtues are not from our own efforts of self-improvement but from a process of constant pursuit in God’s grace.

Only by returning to the first commandment can we truly fulfill our virtuous life.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ repeatedly quoted the Ten Commandments so that these ancient words would have eternal vitality in the Gospels. He put the Beatitudes at the beginning of the Sermon, demonstrating its foundational significance. He showed us that the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount are internally unified, each the way of sanctification revealed by the triune God. To take the Beatitudes as the general principle of life is to follow Jesus by denying ourselves (Mt. 16:24), which we cannot do without the Ten Commandments. To practice the Ten Commandments is to “crucify the flesh with its passions and desires” (Gal. 5:24), so that people can abstain from these two inner feelings in accordance with the Ten Words. When people continue to live by the Ten Commandments in the Gospels, they can live a life in the Beatitudes, which provides the joy and peace of eternal blessing from the Kingdom of Heaven. Similarly, our desire for the Beatitudes requires us always to focus on the God of creation and salvation, that is, to return to the first and general outline of the Ten Commandments, constantly worshiping the everlasting, unique, and loving God who brought us out of the land of Egypt and house of bondage.

God stated His Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai, and Christ, the Word of God, taught us the Beatitudes on a mountain, guiding us to sanctification. For those who are willing to follow Christ in life, sanctification is not a state of completion, but a process of continuous pilgrimage. Sanctification is also not a luxury available only to a few, but the duty of everyone. The disciples of Christ, driven and guided by the Holy Spirit, with the hope of eternal happiness in the Kingdom of Heaven, live by the Ten Commandments to bear the fruits of a virtuous life. When the new heaven and earth come, these fruits of goodness, borne by God's Word, will be transformed into eternal life in the glory of heaven.

5. THE TEN COMMANDMENTS AND THE EDUCATION OF THE FAITHFUL

The Ten Commandments played a very prominent role in the faith education in ancient Israel. In the Pentateuch, the “Ten Words” is a proper noun (Ex. 34:28; Deut. 4:13, 10:4). In Exodus and Deuteronomy, the Ten Commandments constitute an independent unit with a special genre, which God declared to the Israelites by Himself. In the rite of covenant-making in the book of Exodus, the Ten Commandments are “the words which the Lord has spoken” (Ex. 24:3). In the book of Deuteronomy, these ten words were written by the Lord Himself on a stone tablet and placed in the Ark of the Covenant (Deut. 9:9–11). In fact, the Deuteronomic Code presents the structure of the Ten Commandments, offering a detailed interpretation of it. In the prophetic tradition, the prophets, as “prosecutors” of God’s law, accused the Israelites in accordance with the Ten Commandments, condemning their sins (Hos. 4:1–3). In the Wisdom Literature, God’s commandments are the way of life, and obedience to them is the entire duty of humans (Prov. 6:23; Ecc. 12:13). Since ancient times, the Ten Commandments have been the basis of the faith education for God’s people as well as their basic principle for living.

Jesus quoted the Ten Commandments in his Sermon on the Mount. In stating the way of life for Christians, He emphasized the continuity between His gospel and the Ten Commandments. He said, “for truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Whoever then relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but he who does them and teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (Mt. 5:18–19). The apostles inherited the spirit of Jesus and believed that the Law centered on the Ten

Commandments is indeed holy, just, and good, marking one's identity as a citizen of the heavenly kingdom. For example, Paul said, "so the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good" (Rom. 7:12). The Law guides people into God's Word in life, so that they can have real freedom (Jas. 1:25; 2:12). The Ten Commandments constitute a whole unit, in which every word reflects the whole and relates to the others, "for whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it" (Jas. 2:10).

In early Christianity, the interpretation of the Ten Commandments was one of the central concerns of the Church in cultivating the beliefs of Christians. Many Church Fathers, such as Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Augustine wrote theological works explaining the Ten Commandments. In medieval times, the Ten Commandments spread among the people in the form of rhythmic, simple sentences. Aquinas wrote special works, in which he put forward his basic propositions of ethical theology by explaining the Ten Commandments. During the period of religious reformation, when Luther wrote the Large Catechism and the Small Catechism, he first interpreted the Ten Commandments as a specific way to worship God and love one's neighbors. In *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Calvin systematically expounded the Ten Commandments. He believed that without the Ten, we can never truly and purely worship God, nor even correctly understand Him, because the Ten Commandments not only tell us the norms of behavior but also enable us to have a deeper insight into human sin, realizing that human ignorance and evil are deeply rooted in deviation from and resistance to God. Calvin also argued that the Gospels of Christ do not replace the Ten Commandments of Moses, which are good and therefore should not and cannot be added to or deleted from. Today, the Eastern Orthodox Church, Catholicism, and Protestantism have all forwarded the Church's views about basic beliefs, the ethical life, and social justice through an elaboration of the Ten Commandments.

The Ten Commandments contain the divine principle of God

and the true guidance of human nature. This makes the Ten Commandments widely respected even in modern, rationalistic society. The Ten Commandments regard all people as equal moral subjects, which is of universal significance, as indicated in Kant's first principle of moral philosophy: act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law. This is the truth of the law and prophets as summarized by Jesus: "So whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them" (Mt 7:12). The Ten Commandments not only protect the inherent basic rights of people but also elaborate the basic obligations they must follow. Having a deep insight into human nature, the Ten Commandments mark the bottom line of human life and point out the virtues that people should pursue. It shows us the direction and way to a good life both negatively and positively.

The Ten Commandments have special significance for Christianity in China today. We must realize that the Ten Commandments are not the simple laws of ancient Israel but the overall rules of life for us to know God, to shape human nature, and to build a just society. Aiming to build an intercultural theology with the Chinese resources, this book undertakes a systematic theological and ethical study of the Ten Commandments at all levels of Christian thought, especially in dialogue with the Chinese cultural theories of human nature, virtue, heart-mind cultivation, and even spiritual-moral practices. This book wishes to improve the sensitivity of the Chinese church and society towards the Ten Commandments, realizing its deep spiritual and moral significance.

This book uses 199 questions and answers to explain the Ten Commandments. In relationship to the theology, spiritual cultivation, and moral behavior for the Christian life, these questions and answers explore the profound significance and specific practice of each commandment. We hope these explanations can help us understand the basic and original significance of the Ten Commandments for the Christian life, both as a whole and in their

details, both in the outward and the inward, enabling us to walk on the path of life towards eternal blessing (Deut. 30:16). Indeed, the Ten Commandments are an internal part of the gospel, the voice of moral conscience for people, and the general laws of human society.

Part II



The Christian Life



1. WHAT IS THE CHRISTIAN LIFE?

“You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” This is Jesus Christ’s call to us (Matt. 5:48). God created us with His word so that we can participate in His life and eternal happiness. In Christ, we become new creations, sharing the dignity of God’s children, true righteousness and holiness (Eph. 4:24). We do as Jesus has done for us, imitating Him in mind, words, and acts (John 13:15). In the Church, empowered by Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, we unite with the triune God, others, and all things so that we can live the life given to us by God when He created us. In the light of God’s words, we bear the fruits of what is good and right and true in our life (Eph. 5:8–9), sharing with all humankind and the entire created world. In the eternal new heaven and new earth, the fruits of goodness in life will be refreshed, new, and shining.

2. HOW DOES GOD CALL US TO LIVE?

God created the world with His words which are the source of life, the way of wisdom, and the law of creation. He gathered the Israelites in front of Mount Sinai, called them to obey His voice and to keep His covenant, giving them the law with the Ten Commandments as the core so they could be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Ex. 19:6). God constantly inspires the prophets and shows His people the way of life, that is, to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God (Mic. 6:8). All of the law and the prophets can be summed up as two commandments: “love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might” and “love your neighbor as yourself” (Deut. 6:5; Lev. 19:18; Mt. 22:36–40). We must be perfect, as our heavenly Father is perfect (Matt 5:48).

3. WHAT DOES NEW LIFE IN CHRIST MEAN?

We were washed, we were sanctified, we were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God (1 Cor. 6:11). God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, making us cry “Abba! Father!” Created in the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness, we become new creations (Eph. 4:20–24). Christ, the Word of God, renewed God’s law with His new commandment that he who loves God should love his brother (1 John 4:21). Taking the love of Christ as motivation and source, we obey His words in our love for Him, commune with God in His Church, and serve the world. Through faith and prayer, we let our manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ and look forward to the coming of the kingdom of heaven.

4. WHY IS SANCTIFICATION IN CHRIST THE DUTY OF LIFE?

We are created in the image of God and become a new creation in Christ, the “first-born.” To live like Christ is to live in Christ, with Christ living in us and living His life in us. We keep His words and act according to His will so that we will be loved by Christ and the Holy Father (Jn. 14:21). Sanctification is not a luxury for just a few but the duty of everyone.

5. HOW DOES THE HOLY SPIRIT LEAD US TO LIVE A SANCTIFIED LIFE?

The Holy Spirit is the Lord of life-giving. The Holy Spirit forgives our sins, heals a human nature that has been damaged by sin, and leads us to renew our lives in the joy of repentance. He lives in us, so that we can put off our old nature, which is corrupt due to deceitful lust, and renew the spirit of our minds (Eph. 4:22–23). The Holy Spirit is the source of strength in our new life, which make us act in love, obeying all of God’s commandments and bearing the fruits of “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (Gal. 5:22–23). In order to praise God’s glory from within our lives, we should entreat the Holy Spirit to dwell in us and to help us to love, serve, and praise God through our hearts, thoughts, and acts.

6. HOW CAN PEOPLE TAKE THE PATH OF SANCTIFICATION?

It is because of God's grace that people can take the path of sanctification. Due to His love and power, God has put His seal upon people and given them His Spirit in their hearts as a guarantee (2 Cor. 1:21–22). Grace is God's vitality. It is God who gives Himself to us as a gift. Grace changes people's relationship with God and makes them righteous. It also changes human lives and sanctifies people in constant renewal. Grace unites people with Christ, turning their hearts to God and away from sin. Through the Holy Spirit, God poured faith, hope, and love into people so that they could delight in and keep God's commands (Ps. 119:35). As the inner instructor of people (Rom. 8:26), the Holy Spirit encourages and leads them to cooperate with Him and live a divine life according to God's law.

7. WHY IS THE PATH OF SANCTIFICATION ENDLESS?

We are called by God to the path of sanctification. Jesus said, "You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt. 5:48). Taking Christ as their savior and brother, people are conformed to His image (Rom. 8:29), constantly progressing to a fuller life and a more perfect love. The path of sanctification for Christians is that of continuous renunciation. Through constant conversion and self-giving, Christians become more and more like Christ. Christian perfection is an endless process.

8. HOW DOES GRACE PROMOTE OUR LIVES?

Grace is not an object, but the love relationship in which God gives Himself to people. The gift of God is to give Himself. People who are in grace dwell in God. Grace is God's love, which enables people to enter into communion with the triune God, to live in His love, and to act in love. Love inspires all human virtues (Col. 3:14), helping people to freely and joyfully fulfill the Ten Commandments and to live a good life.

9. HOW DOES THE CHURCH LEAD AND NOURISH OUR LIVES?

In the Church, people know Christ and the Father who sent Him. The sanctity of the Church is the source of sanctification for every son of God. Through the words preached by the Church, people receive God's word, accept God's way of life, and respond to God's call with their lives. In the sacraments celebrated by the Church, God gives the grace of sanctification to comfort, heal, support, and embrace people, leading them to the path of sanctification in Christ. In the visible and invisible Church, people present their bodies as a living sacrifice to God, which is holy and acceptable to Him (Rom. 12:1). Being inspired by the Holy Spirit, the Church recognizes the laws and models of life, teaching and encouraging people to follow and practice them. Revealing the universal principles of life, the Ten Commandments are often considered the guiding program of the Church to discipline and guide lives.

10. WHAT KIND OF LIFE DOES THE GOSPEL ENCOURAGE PEOPLE TO LIVE?

The gospel enables people to maintain an intimate and individual connection with God, enjoying the blessings of the Holy Trinity. People can receive true freedom through the gospel in turning to God, and they can live a life of integrity with the goal of eternal happiness. The gospel helps people respect human dignity by becoming truly aware that humans are created in the image and likeness of God. The gospel helps people listen to the voice of conscience, to obey the instructions of moral laws, and to use their will, emotions, and reason “to pursue good and to eliminate evil” (*wei shan qu e*, 为善去恶),¹ living a virtuous life. Through the gospel, people can know themselves, control their lives, and give themselves to others by establishing relationships. The gospel also urges people to follow the commandments of loving God and their neighbors, living social lives with the public interest of others and the entire world in mind. As the herald of the gospel, the Ten Commandments of God, which contain the basic principles of life, show people the way to the kingdom of heaven.

¹ This is a moral idiom from the Chinese Confucian tradition, especially Neo-Confucianism, the revival of Confucian religious, social, and ethical thought that dominated Chinese official culture from the 11th through the 19th centuries (after having absorbed Buddhist and Daoist spiritual and moral theories and practices).

Part III



The Good Life



11. WHAT DID GOD GIVE HUMANS WHEN THEY WERE CREATED?

God uttered His words, created humans in His own image and likeness, and gave them good lives. “Virtue means obtaining” (*de zhe de ye*, 德者得也).¹ The good life that a human receives from God is called virtue, which is either a nature (*de xing*, 德性) or a power (*de neng*, 德能). God’s wisdom in planning and managing the

1 There is a long tradition in Chinese wisdom of using characters of the same pronunciation to interpret one another. Thus interpreting “virtue” (德, *de*) as “obtain” (得, *de*) is common for both Confucianism and Daoism. Zhu Xi (1130–1200) explicitly claimed that “virtue is what had been obtained in one’s heart-mind from the Dao and one did not lose it anymore” (*de zhe de ye xing qi dao yu xin er bu shi zhi wei ye*, 德者，得也，得其道于心而不失之谓也); see Zhu Xi, “Commentary on chapter ‘shu er’ (述而) in *Analects*,” *Commentary on the Four Books (si shu zhang ju ji zhu*, 四书章句集注) (Beijing: Zhonghua Books, 2010), 91.

universe is the law of good life, the rule of social operation, and the moral law. Living in this way means that humans, created by God, enter into covenant with God. Happy are those who listen to God and keep His ways (Prov. 8:32). People's moral lives, social relations, and harmony with all things can be successfully realized in communion and integration with the triune God.

12. HOW DOES GOD GUIDE PEOPLE TO LIVE A GOOD LIFE?

God created the world and gave people lives with His Word as the law of the world and life. Human sin and depravity destroy the good lives given by God and obscure people's understanding of the moral law. However, God did not abandon people. He began a great plan of salvation, called people to follow Him, revealed the moral law to them, and guided them in following it. In the Old Testament, God spoke to the Israelites and revealed the law with the Ten Commandments as its core. In the New Testament, the incarnated Word reveals and shows the law of love. Christ is the end of the law, so that everyone who has faith may be justified (Rom. 10:4). Christ poured the Holy Spirit into people's hearts to help them live a life of love and justice under the guidance of the moral law in their union with God (Hos. 12:6).

13. WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE OLD TESTAMENT LAW AND PEOPLE'S GOOD LIFE?

The Old Testament law is the law of life that God revealed to the patriarchs and the Israelites in history. He called them to make

the covenant, to live according to the law, to become his people, and to prepare for the coming of the Savior Christ. “The Ten Words” are the core and cream of the Old Testament law. They reveal and condemn sin in the form of “thou shall not-s,” prohibiting all things that violate the law of loving God and neighbors. The inner spirit of the Ten Commandments contains all the things that should be done to love God and neighbors so as to realize the goodness of life. “Holy and just and good” (Rom. 7:12), the Old Testament law is a constant and effective teaching that leads people to Christ so that they can be justified by faith in Him (Gal. 3:24). The Ten Commandments provide specific guidance for people’s lives in the Holy Spirit, and they lead people to the gospel and the kingdom of heaven.

14. WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE NEW TESTAMENT LAW AND PEOPLE’S GOOD LIFE?

Christ is the greatest teacher of life. He clearly teaches the law of love and holiness. Christ is the word of God incarnated, the law of the New Testament, the supreme realization of the way of good life in the world, and the fulfillment of Old Testament law (Mt. 5:17), because “Christ is the end of the law, that every one who has faith may be justified” (Rom. 10:4). Christ is the son of God as well as the Lord. He dwelled with people and was sacrificed for them so they could enter into communion with God through Him, realizing the fullness of life and eternal happiness. Christ is God, and He sent the Holy Spirit to pour God’s love into people’s hearts (Rom. 5:5), so they can practice all the principles of the law and the teaching of the prophets in love in order to be sanctified and saved (2 Thes. 2:13).

15. WHAT KIND OF LAW OF LIFE IS THE NEW TESTAMENT?

The New Testament law is the law of love. Jesus summarized all laws into two commandments: love God and love your neighbor (Mk. 12:29–31). The New Testament law is also the law of grace. God first loved humans and gave Himself to them in faith. In faith, hope, and love from heaven, people unite with the triune God to worship, pray, and act freely, spontaneously, and independently according to His commandments. The New Testament law is also the law of freedom. The Holy Spirit entered people’s hearts and redeemed them to become the free sons of God with the ransom paid by Christ on the cross. People act in accordance with the way of life commanded by God as a child’s love for the loving father rather than out of hope of reward or fear of punishments (1 John 4:18).

16. WHAT IS MORAL LAW?

Moral law is similar to “heavenly principles” (*tian li*, 天理)² in Chinese culture. Derived from the moral law, all laws must be based on it from beginning to end. Inherent with God’s wisdom, the moral law, originating from God’s word, is the light of inner reason given to us by Him when He created us (Rom. 1:19–20). It makes people understand what should be done, what should be avoided, what is good, and what is evil. People’s rational intuition takes these moral laws for granted. They are universal orders for

2 Neo-Confucians integrated the Buddhist idea of “law” or “principle” (*li*, 理) into their moral system, combining it with “heaven” (*tian*, 天) to express the fundamental principles of the universe. Heavenly principles (*tian li*, 天理) were believed to be the ontological foundation and power of moral systems for humans.

everyone. The moral law enables people to recognize human dignity, establishes basic human rights and obligations, and constitutes the real foundation for the common life of family, society, and country. Influenced by different times, regions, and environments, the moral law has different manifestations, but it is nevertheless always the universal principle of humans and society.

17. WHAT IS VIRTUE?

What a human receives from the good God is virtue (Jas. 1:17). Virtue is a desire to do good, a stable internal tendency, and a good positive habit. Virtue is expressed both inside and outside. It is a disposition within the heart, but also acts in deeds. Based on faith and rationality, virtue manages people's emotions and regulates and guides their behavior. Virtue not only helps people do good but also internally shapes their character. With virtue, people can live calmly, freely, and happily in goodness. Only virtuous people can freely obey the Ten Commandments.

18. WHY IS VIRTUE THE FRUIT OF GRACE?

Virtue is the fruit of God's grace in people: "thus you will know them by their fruits" (Mt. 7:20). On the one hand, virtue, as God's gift, is a power that is inspired and guided by the Holy Spirit in union with Christ. On the other hand, virtue requires people to cooperate with grace in their reason and to will to undertake the mission of "fellow workers for the kingdom of God" (Col. 4:1). Virtue is the human expression of God's loving action in people.

19. WHAT IS THE DIGNITY OF HUMAN LIFE?

In the kingdom of ends everything has a price or dignity. That which has a price can be replaced by something else as its equivalent, whereas that which is above all price and therefore admits of no equivalent has a dignity.³ Everyone is born out of God's thought, will, and love. Created by God, people are regarded and thought of by Him (Ps. 144:3). Everyone's life has a unique dignity.

20. WHY IS GOD THE FOUNDATION OF THE DIGNITY OF HUMAN LIFE?

Human life itself has divine dignity because humans were created in the image of God (Gen 1:27). Everyone maintains a unique covenant with God deep in their heart. There is a longing for God in the inner human. Human hearts naturally recognize heavenly principles. Thus, people can love God with their will and can understand God's laws with their mind. After people commit sins, God redeemed them with the Holy Son and restored their humanity. God sent the Holy Spirit to sanctify people, so that they can follow Christ, obey God's orders, and lead a "good, right, and true" life, after which they can enjoy eternal happiness in the last days (Eph. 5:9). Maintaining a unique, lively, and close relationship with God is the source of everyone's dignity of life. Living a moral life in God's words confirms the dignity of human life.

3 Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. M. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 42.

21. WHY ARE ETERNAL BLESSINGS THE ULTIMATE GOAL OF LIFE?

God created humans in this world so that they can know Him, love Him, serve Him, and share in His eternal life, entering heaven and remaining with Him forever. This is eternal blessing. It is the purpose of human existence and the ultimate goal of all human activities. Eternal blessing is the “polaris” of human life, leading people to make decisive choices. The commandments and laws issued by God form the path of life to eternal blessing (Ps. 16:11). The promise of eternal blessing makes people even more ethically engaged in this world, as it inspires people to love God above all things, drives them to purify their bad desires, motivates them to seek good and abandon evil, and encourages them to use all things according to God’s commandments and laws.

22. WHAT DO THE BEATITUDES MEAN TO PEOPLE?

As the constitution of the kingdom of heaven, the Beatitudes generally depict the reality and state of human life (Mt. 5:3–10). The eight blessings portray the life of Jesus, concentrating on His birth, suffering, resurrection, and ascension. Jesus declared the eight blessings a means of calling people to participate in His suffering and to share the glory of His resurrection. The Beatitudes indicate eternal blessings in a general way. People hope for eternal blessings and live like Jesus in this world. Both the eight blessings and the Ten Commandments are the words of God. The eight blessings echo the Ten Commandments while giving impetus to them. They show that to follow God’s commandments is to seek eternal blessings.

23. WHAT IS THE FREEDOM WITH WHICH GOD ENDOWED PEOPLE?

The freedom endowed by people from God is the power of reason and will, so that people can trust Him, call Him, obey Him, and live in the image and likeness of God. When people trust God and obey him, they can realize themselves freely. God expects people to obey His words; this enables them to be free (Jas. 1:25). For humans, freedom is the power to grow in truth and goodness. The more good people enact, the more free they will be. God is the root of all beauty and goodness. Choosing to be good is choosing to face God.

24. WHY DO SINS DEPRIVE PEOPLE OF FREEDOM?

Sins often entice people with what looks good. But choosing to commit sins only brings a false sense of freedom. In fact, if you choose to commit sins, you will sell your freedom to them and become slaves to them, deviating from the road of life and happiness. The wages of sin are death (Rom. 6:23) and total loss of freedom. Christ redeemed people from slavery to sin through His crucifixion (Rom. 6:6). He guided and accompanied people so they could know and do goodness by obeying laws and discovering true freedom.

25. HOW DO PEOPLE HAVE FREEDOM IN CHRIST?

Adam was originally free, but he sinned and became a slave to sin. People therefore fall into sin, living under the power of sin and death. After human sin, God still protected and rescued human beings through his actions and words (Gen 3:9). Through his suffering and resurrection, Christ released people from sin and set them on the path of life and happiness. The spirit of Christ lives in people, so that they can know Him, seek Him, and obey the commandments of loving the Lord and one's neighbors. In prayer and life, people turn to the triune God and truly become who they really are through Christ and with Christ. In the Church, which transforms the world from within, people can integrate their bodies and minds with the love of Christ, freely carrying out the will of God.

26. WHAT IS EMOTION?

Emotion is a feeling communicated between God and humans, the direct expression of vitality and the desire of the heart. It is a direct feeling or passion that is an intuitive experience of life. As a deer longs for flowing streams, so people long for God (Ps. 42:1). Communicating between our physical and spiritual lives, our emotions integrate them into one. Because of emotions, strong impulses and feelings are produced such that people are instinctively attracted to good things and resistant of evil things. Conscience and reason can control, synthesize, and regulate emotions to make people act or refrain from acting.

27. WHAT ROLE DOES EMOTION PLAY IN MORAL LIFE?

Emotion produces strong feelings in people, which provides the source and power for people's moral lives (Ps. 16:7). Emotion itself is neither good nor evil. When it encourages people to do good, it is good, and vice versa. The morality of emotion lies in whether it accepts the control and guidance of reason and will. The effect of emotions on people can be improved by virtues and corrupted by sins. Emotion drives people to be good instinctively and naturally. The goal of moral life lies not only in people's obedience to the good as driven by the will but also in people's intuitive pursuit of the good as driven by emotion. In the Christian life, the Holy Spirit promotes the whole person, including emotions such as pain, joy, fear, and sadness, so that they can participate in the sufferings and glory of Christ.

28. WHAT IS CONSCIENCE?

When God creates human in His image and likeness, He gives them conscience, which is the secret core of humans. It is the lamp of the LORD, which searches all of humanity's innermost parts (Prov. 20:27). In conscience, everyone listens to God's commandments face-to-face. What the law requires is written on people's hearts, to which conscience bears witness (Rom. 2:15). Through conscience, people can instinctively understand the laws of good and evil and apply them to current circumstances through rational judgement. Conscience also enables people to make moral judgments about those actions that have been done, are being done, and will be done (Acts 4:19). Because of conscience, people can feel

godly “grief,” testify to wrong behavior, and feel shame, thereby asking for “a repentance that leads to salvation and brings no regret,” moving towards hope and mercy in Christ (2 Cor. 7:10). Conscience echoes the voice of God in human hearts, which can be called a mirror to reflect Christ, the firstborn and image of the invisible God (Gal. 1:15).

29. DOES CONSCIENCE NEED TO BE CULTIVATED?

Deep in the heart, conscience, according to God’s law of good and evil, shows people their rights and obligations, their fears and hopes (Acts 23:1). However, due to the injury of original sin, human nature has weakness and fault. Disturbed by greed, laziness, and pride, conscience is often blinded, misled, and distorted. People are alienated from the life of God because of ignorance due to hardness of heart; they have become callous and given themselves up to licentiousness, greed, and every kind of uncleanness (Eph. 4:18–19). Therefore, people must renew their minds and cultivate their conscience in the Word of Christ under the guidance of grace (Eph. 4:21–22), which is a lifelong task.

30. HOW SHOULD WE CULTIVATE CONSCIENCE?

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus (Phil. 2:5). The crucified Jesus is the master of human conscience. In faith, people are united with Christ. Faith in Christ beautifies and purifies conscience. His words and actions illuminate our conscience. Through listening to and obeying His words, people can deeply cultivate their conscience. Through faith and prayer,

people can live in accordance with God's words and strengthen their conscience through the Church's faith education, daily prayer, life teaching, and liturgical celebration. And the virtue of love can be born from "a pure heart and a good conscience and sincere faith" (1 Tim. 1:5). Love is the heart of all virtues.

31. HOW SHOULD WE LISTEN TO AND OBEY CONSCIENCE?

Conscience is often submerged in inner desires and disturbed by external noise. One should keep looking to Christ, the witness of truth, and praying to be illuminated by the Holy Spirit to bear his own conscience (Rom. 9:1). Under the continuous nourishment of God's words, people can truly see the deeper reality of life and the ultimate goal of life through the cultivation of stillness, purification, restraint, and introspection, finally listening to and obeying their conscience.

32. ON WHAT GENERAL PRINCIPLES SHOULD PEOPLE JUDGE ACCORDING TO CONSCIENCE?

The examples of saints in the faith tradition, the universal wisdom and reason of humankind, and the resources of Chinese culture can all help people make wise decisions according to their conscience. Over the history of humankind, different cultural traditions have identified a common, everlasting, and effective law of conscience. First, do not do evil to achieve a certain kind of good. Second, do unto others as you would have them do unto you: "Whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them" (Matt

7:12). Third, the practice of love means always respecting others and their consciences. To despise others' freedom of conscience and to ignore, curb, and force the choice of conscience is to violate human dignity since it is conscience that makes people human. The Ten Commandments inherently contain these eternal laws of conscience.

33. HOW DOES CHRISTIAN FAITH SHAPE A VIRTUOUS LIFE?

God created people in His image, giving them freedom, conscience, reason, and emotion to live according to His words. Christ is the “king of virtue,” who lives a human life with humans and experiences what humans experience. The Holy Spirit was sent to people as the “guarantee” (Eph. 1:14), so they would possess faith, hope, and love—all virtues from heaven. These virtues urge people to realize, purify, and enhance the universal virtues of human nature such as benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and loyalty (*ren yi li zhi xin*, 仁义礼智信, in a Chinese Confucian context), or wisdom, courage, self-control, and justice (in a western Greek context). Through faith, prayer, and celebration, people participate in Christ and the Holy Spirit in the Church, bearing the fruits of “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (Gal. 5:22–23). Jesus commanded His disciples, “You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Mt. 5:48). In union with Christ and obedience of God’s commandments, people grow in virtue and move towards endless perfection.

34. WHAT KIND OF VIRTUE IS WISDOM?

Wisdom is the virtue that makes people do right in action. Wisdom, given by the Holy Spirit (Is. 11:2), guides people to keep and do what God commands (Deut. 4:6, 1 Chr. 22:12). People respect and follow the law of God that is engraved in all things. Because of this, wisdom enables people to distinguish what is good in their lives, carefully discerning and choosing the right way to realize it. Wisdom, which permeates every natural virtue, helps people make particular ethical actions. Wisdom leads people to understand God's law, while following God's law makes people truly wise.

35. WHAT KIND OF VIRTUE IS COURAGE?

Courage, which is a heart of love that readily bears all things for the sake of the beloved, makes one powerful. It is a Chinese character with the component of either "heart" (惇) or "power" (勇). Courage, as the virtue of perseverance for the good, makes people persevere in difficulty, resist temptation, overcome fear, and put God's words above all. Courageous humans with the faith of doing good freely follow God's commandments in life, regarding both good times and bad times as their assistants. With courage, people honor Christ in their bodies, whether by their lives or deaths (Phil. 1:20). Courage helps humans persevere and receive what is promised by God (Heb. 10:35–36). Through courage, virtues like patience and fortitude are born.

36. WHAT KIND OF VIRTUE IS SELF-CONTROL?

Self-control is a virtue of moderation and prudence that enables people to maintain humility properly. Firstly, it orients people's emotions and desires towards goodness, leading them to use all things in the world in a balanced way for good order. Secondly, it ensures that the will maintains control over our instincts, keeping desire within a reasonable and moderate range. Self-control, uprightness, and godliness are mutually interconnected (Tit. 2:12). Self-control helps people to be faithful, powerful, and loving (2 Tim. 1:7), and it makes people watchful, prudent, sensible, and dignified (Tim. 3:2). Each of the Ten Commandments contains the virtue of self-control.

37. WHAT KIND OF VIRTUE IS JUSTICE?

Justice is the propriety of things, according to *Book of Rites* (*li ji*, 礼记). Justice is to give justly, appropriately, continuously, and firmly to others what they deserve. God created everything good in its kind and time, which is the basis and purpose of all justice. Justice is “to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God” (Mic. 6:8). For God, justice means loving and worshiping and praising God sincerely. For people, justice means respecting everyone's freedom, realizing everyone's potential, maintaining fairness in social life, keeping harmony, and promoting human equality and public welfare. Justice extends to the universe to see all of creation as our brother or sister. Worshiping God, loving others, and treating things well are inseparable. God's commandments are humanity's duties and the way to lead a just life.

38. WHAT VIRTUES ARE FROM HEAVEN?

Through His words, God calls humans to be His people, the brothers of Christ, and the temple of the Holy Spirit. The close relationship between people and the triune God enables them to share the virtues from heaven: faith, hope, and love (1 Cor. 13:13). Originating from God, these three virtues help people become partakers of God's divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4) and directly connect with God. As the grace of God, these virtues are also the seal of the presence and action of the Holy Spirit in them (2 Cor. 1:22). As the inner power of Christians, these virtues are the root of all virtues in life. They inspire and shape the ethical behavior of Christians, filling their behaviors with unique vitality. These three virtues, echoed in the Ten Commandments, ensure that people will follow these commandments in their lives.

39. WHAT KIND OF VIRTUE IS FAITH?

As God's gift, faith is the "new creation" of the Holy Spirit in people's hearts and a complete devotion that freely entrusts one's entire existence to God. Faith leads people to believe in the triune God and the truth revealed by Him in the Bible and Church. Through faith, people love and hope for the grace shown on the cross, move towards truth, and live a new life. Hope and love are the other two forms of faith (Gal. 5:5–6). In faith, hope, and love, people unite with Christ and step towards an abundant life of "grace upon grace" in God's words. In life, faith drives people to understand and practice God's commandments. Faith, which connects people with the triune God, is the virtue of all virtues.

40. WHAT KIND OF VIRTUE IS HOPE?

Hope is a power that enables people to believe against hope (Rom. 4:18). Through this virtue, people attend to heaven and hope for eternal life, even while living on earth. Firstly, it strengthens people's longing for happiness, which is placed in the depths of their hearts by God, and it makes people yearn for eternal blessings. Secondly, it purifies and enhances the motivation of people's behavior towards the coming kingdom of heaven. Thirdly, it enables people to understand the truth and inspires people to be brave in adversity, to behave prudently and temperately, and to treat God and others justly. Fourthly, it helps people to believe that God is the almighty Father who "calls into existence the things that do not exist" (Rom. 4:17), to trust in the promise given to us by Christ who resurrected from death, and to trust in the providence and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Hope is the "helmet" that protects people (1 Thes. 5:8) and the "anchor of the soul" (Heb. 6:19).

41. WHAT KIND OF VIRTUE IS LOVE?

Christian love derives from and echoes God's love. God's love makes people free, capable of loving God above all things genuinely and simply. Love is the commandment of Jesus (Jn. 13:34), the effect of the Holy Spirit, and the fulfillment of the law. The aim of God's charge is love (1 Tim. 1:5). In love, people commit themselves to God, unite with him, and love others as themselves. Love, the driving force of cultivating other virtues, is the greatest of all virtues (1 Cor. 13:13), binding everything together in perfect harmony (Col. 3:14). Love drives people to abide by the Word of the Lord so that they have joy, peace, and mercy in their lives. Love makes people merciful,

righteous, and bounteous, inspiring people to care for each other, promoting all good deeds. Love is both the source and the goal, the driving force and the approach, action and rest.

42. WHAT ARE THE VIRTUES CALLED THE “FRUITS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT”?

Under the promotion and guidance of the Holy Spirit, people’s faith, hope, and love become the foundation and force of ethical action, enabling people to live properly with reason, will, and emotion. The Holy Spirit bears the fruits of goodness in human life, such as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22–23). These virtues are the symbols of the divine participation and work of the triune God in human life. God’s commandments and laws aim at leading people to live with these virtues, ensuring that these virtues can be practiced in human life.

43. WHAT IS SIN?

Sin is a transgression against God’s commandments. It can be a thought, word, or deed. Fundamentally, sin is the departure of human hearts from God and the violation of the order arranged by God in His loving plan. Just as with the first sin committed by Adam, humans have not wanted God, have not obeyed God, and have recklessly sought to be like God, regardless of their own interests. Sin is engraved in every moment of human history: “if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1 John 1:8). The Ten Commandments illumine sins, enabling people to recognize and avoid them.

44. WHAT IS A BAD HABIT?

Following Adam, people tend to commit sins. If people continue to lose their reason, weakening their will time and time again, they will fall into bad habits. The formation of these habits shows that sins have the ability to self-reproduce and self-strengthen. To do good is as hard as a snail walking, whereas to do evil is as easy as snowballing. To help people identify and break bad habits, faith traditions cataloged sin into seven capital sins: pride, envy, wrath, sloth, greed, lust, and gluttony (Gal. 5:19–21). God proclaimed His laws to warn people about and guide people away from these bad habits.

45. WHY SHOULD PEOPLE ASK GOD FOR FORGIVENESS AFTER THEY SIN?

All sins conceal, deny, or destroy goodness. God is the root of goodness, and all sins are offenses against God. When humans have sinned, they must turn to God, asking for and receiving forgiveness from Him. This is penance. Penance is the return of the soul to God. “Restore us to thyself, O LORD, that we may be restored! Renew our days as of old!” (Lam. 5:21). People blaming themselves is penance. However, God’s heart is greater than theirs. Thus, He would forgive and cleanse them. Penance is a symbol of hope. Humans shall never despair of the mercy of God. Only by praying to God for forgiveness can people avoid entangling themselves in sin and empower themselves to live “a renewal way of life from day to day” (*ri ri xin you ri xin*, 日日新又日新)⁴ in the Comforter, the Holy Spirit of truth.

4 The Confucian ideal of life is to renew oneself in daily spiritual and moral practices. This is summarized as follows in third chapter of the *Great Learning*, a Confucian classic that has exerted a profound influence on Chinese culture: “if you can one day renovate yourself, do so from day to day. Yea, let there be daily renovation”; see James Legge, *Confucian Analects, The Great Learning, The Doctrine of The Mean* (Taipei: SMC Publishing Inc., 1991 [1893]), 361.

46. HOW DOES GOD TREAT SINNERS?

God is merciful, and He loves humans. The Holy Spirit illumines people, making them ashamed of their sins, helping them blame themselves and resolve to renew. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). These are the double graces from the Holy Spirit. On the one hand, this is the grace of truth. In the depths of human heart, the Spirit of truth points out people’s real tragic situation (1 John 1:8). On the other hand, this is the grace of comfort. The Comforter, the Holy Spirit, convinces people that their sins have been forgiven and they have been reconciled with God, thus establishing penance as the first step in receiving new grace and love. The Spirit of truth is the Comforter (Jn. 14:16–17). He brings people to the good doctor, Christ, to be spared and healed. Thus, they can be fulfilled in a virtuous life.

47. HOW IS THE DIGNITY OF THE “IMAGE OF GOD” SHOWN IN CHRISTIAN LIFE?

Christian life is the manifestation and fulfillment of the life created and redeemed by God. Out of His wisdom and love, God sent His words so people could gain the power of life in His breath and reflect His goodness and glory through imitating Christ, the firstborn and image of the invisible God. In the daily lives of Christians, manifestations of the “image of God” include obeying all the commandments of God, changing one’s temperament through the liturgical celebrations, cultivating the virtues, and establishing brotherhood with others in truth and love.

Part IV



Humans and Society



48. WHY DID GOD CREATE PEOPLE TO BE SOCIAL?

God is the communion in which the three divine persons live and give to each other. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit become one in life, truth, and love. God said, “Let us make humans in our image, after our likeness” (Gen 1:26). As the image of God, humans become themselves in their integrated relationships with God, others, and all things, sharing with others in truth and love. Human sociality is not acquired but innate. Humanity can be fully realized only in dialogue and service between brothers (Ps. 133:1). In groups, people became the people of God from the Old Testament to the New Testament. Jesus combined loving neighbors with loving God and made it the great commandment of love (Mt. 22:35–40). The sociality

of human nature is manifested and maintained in the principles of the dignity of human life, common good, social justice, solidarity, and subsidiarity. These principles, as laws implicit in the Ten Commandments, are part of God's providence for the world and humankind, given through His words and fulfilled in the incarnated person of Jesus Christ (Mt. 5:17–18).

49. HOW CAN THE SOCIALITY OF HUMAN NATURE BE REALIZED?

In order to realize sociality, people must first enter into communion with God, connecting with the real Lord of life and integrating with Him in worship and praise. The first half of the Ten Commandments embodies and confirms the communion between God and human. This relationship is also the root of sociality for all creation, humans included. Sociality was first realized where the first couple of man and woman become the parents of all human beings. From one human God made all the nations (Acts 17:26). Everyone should regard themselves as the “keeper” of others, living together in communion, sharing the common world. Society is a group of people collected together by the principle of unity beyond the individual, so as to ensure the talents received by individuals. Sociality can only be fully realized through respecting the lives of others, regarding men and women as each other’s “other self,” sharing all things in work and property, treating each other sincerely in words, integrating with all things in the world, and entering into brotherhood with others and the created world. The second half of the Ten Commandments is the guarantee of and way to realize this nature.

50. HOW SHOULD PEOPLE VIEW THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INDIVIDUALS AND SOCIETY?

Society is not only a visible group but also a spiritual existence. It inherits the past and prepares for the future. In society, humans are not only heirs who receive a certain identity and ability but also innovators who make new achievements with their personal talents. Society should strengthen people's creativity and their sense of responsibility, protect people's right to organize or participate in social groups, and promote the achievement of goals beyond personal capability. Fundamentally, human sociality is first of all its deep relationship with God the Creator (Ps. 139:1–16), based on which people can realize human nature in society. Humans are the goal, not tools or means, to achieve a certain social purpose. Humans are always the foundation, master, and purpose of all social organizations.

51. WHY SHOULD SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS HELP PEOPLE REALIZE THEIR POTENTIAL?

When God created humans, He gave everyone dignity and freedom to realize their innate potential. The primary purpose of social organization is therefore to promote the potential and realization of individual freedom. Powerful and large organizations should not deprive or forcibly interfere with the rights, responsibilities, and vitality of weaker and smaller ones, but should assist them and coordinate their cooperation with other social forces in order to achieve the greatest common good (Rom. 12:16). Only when individuals or grassroots organizations

need assistance, can larger and more powerful organizations carry out intervention. As a larger society, a country should not replace the initiative and responsibility of individuals, families, or social organizations but rather assist them to achieve their goals.

52. WHY SHOULD PEOPLE OBEY AUTHORITY?

Authority is a characteristic by which people or institutions issue orders and formulate laws for people to obey. The essence of authority is to serve. The establishment of authority is to realize people's sociality and make society orderly, efficient, and cohesive in serving the development of people and interest of the public. People should be subject to the governing authorities, including respecting their dominion, obeying their legitimate orders, and expressing goodwill to them according to their effectiveness (Rom. 13:1; 1 Pet. 2:13–14). The triune God realizes His service to all things with His mighty power and work of creation, redemption, and sanctification. God is the real and ultimate authority.

53. IS OBEDIENCE TO AUTHORITY LIMITED?

The highest goal of authority is the common good. When an authority aims at the common good and rules by justice, it exercises its authority properly (Deut. 1:16). This is true even of the king: "And when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law, from that which is in the charge of the Levitical priests; and it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them" (Deut. 17:18–19). When those in power

enslave others rather than provide service, making unjust laws, issuing unjust orders, and taking actions that violate the natural moral law, they negate their authority and become their own enemies.

54. WHAT IS THE COMMON GOOD?

Common good is not a separate field of social life but the basis and principle of ethical behavior. Common good is the public interest that humans and other beings share with one another, moving as a whole towards the Creator. Common good refers not only to the goodness of all individuals but also to the universality of all humankind. It is the sum of the social living-conditions that enable individuals and organizations to realize themselves. The common good, taking the development of all people as its goal, truth, and foundation, with justice as its criterion, is active because of love. The common good inherently requires these basic principles: first, respect people's basic and non-transferable rights and promote each member to realize their spiritual, material, and social mission; second, ensure not only the development of organizations but also the existence of human lives therein; third, secure a peaceful, stable, and safe public order. Common good is the fundamental value contained in the Ten Commandments. All aspects of the Ten Commandments are proposed for the common good and ensure the common good.

55. HOW DO INDIVIDUALS PARTICIPATE IN THE COMMON GOOD?

Taking responsibility for others is the internal mission of the created human nature, reflecting the dignity of humans as the image of the triune God. When a person refuses to take responsibility, instead saying, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” that person regards himself as Cain (Gen 4:9). Everyone has a responsibility to participate in the common good. At levels of family, social groups, country, and world, people should shoulder their responsibility to others. Work, love of family, and intercession for others mean participating in the common good at the basic level. Joining social groups that promote and support the improvement of human living-conditions means participating in common good at the intermediate level. Countries have the responsibility to safeguard and promote the public interests of citizen groups. As people come from the same origin and are made by God out of one blood, it is for the common good to build or participate in churches or social organizations at the international level.

56. WHAT IS SOCIAL JUSTICE?

Justice is propriety (*yi zhe yi ye*, 义者宜也).¹ Justice is to give what is due to God and humans. Justice covers the proper order

¹ This again uses characters of the same pronunciation to interpret one another. To state that “justice [义, *yi*] is propriety [宜, *yi*]” means justice is to put things in their proper place, according to *Book of Mean* (*zhong yong*, 中庸). Zhu Xi interprets it as follows: “propriety is everything in its place as it ought to be according to the inherent law” (*yi zhe fen bie shi li ge you suo yi ye*, 宜者, 分别事理, 各有所宜也); see Zhu Xi, “Chapter 19 of the *Book of Mean*,” in *Commentary on the Four Books* (*si shu zhang ju ji zhu*, 四书章句集注) (Beijing: Zhonghua Books, 2010), 30.

and relationship between humans and God, between government and society, between different groups of people, and between humans and things. Social justice is the appropriate means and form of realizing the common good in human groups, including the relationship between members and groups with respect to compliance with the law and operation of the government, as well as the fair distribution of work and property. For example, people who provide labor products should be given a fair price. These contents of social justice are embodied in and maintained by the Ten Commandments.

57. HOW CAN SOCIAL JUSTICE BE ACHIEVED?

God is love (1 John 4:8). God loves everyone; this is the foundation of human dignity and the source of social justice. Only when people's value before God is respected can social justice truly be realized. Humans are not the product of nature. They are created in the image of God out of the will and love of God the Creator (Jn. 3:16). From this, inalienable human dignity and natural rights are derived, such as the right to belief and worship, the right to life, the right to freedom, the right to property, social dignity, and the right to pursue happiness. These rights exist before society, which must recognize them and ensure their realization as its ultimate goal. Social justice can only be achieved by taking the common good as a goal and enabling individuals and groups to enjoy the rights they deserve through the implementation of law and authority. The Ten Commandments expound these fundamental rights and ensure their achievement.

58. HOW DO LOVE AND JUSTICE FULFILL EACH OTHER?

Love outweighs justice. A person with love not only gives others what they deserve but also acts wholeheartedly for their interests (1 Cor. 13:4-5). Although justice is the principle of a good society, its spirit is love. There is no law except love that can eliminate fear, prejudice, arrogance, and egoism, establishing a society of brotherhood (1 John 4:17-18). The Christian faith is from and belongs to love: “We love, because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19). Love drives people to respect the freedom and dignity of others so that they act for justice. Love, however, cannot replace justice; rather, the two should fulfill each other. Justice without love is rigid, while love without justice is chaotic. Justice can be required, but love should be called.

59. WHY ARE PEOPLE EQUAL?

Created by God, everyone is willed by Him. Each person receives their spirit from God’s breath and their body from the earth. All were redeemed in Jesus Christ, sharing God’s life and eternal blessings as their ultimate destination (2 John 2:2). As human beings, everyone has the dignity of life and therefore enjoys basic human rights; thus all humans are equal (Ps. 67:4). Contempt and arrogance that is directed at those of a different gender, race, ethnicity, class, language, or religion is usually called discrimination, which is unjust and violates God’s plan.

60. HOW SHOULD PEOPLE TREAT THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PEOPLE?

Talent and virtue are not evenly distributed among people (Mt. 25:14–30). People are different in talent, family background, opportunity, etc. These differences help people understand that they need one another and must fulfill their needs from others. God employs this arrangement to enable people to depend on and practice love with one another and to share with one another and improve their lives. We are not the masters of what we have but rather only the housekeepers: “You received without paying, give without pay” (Mt. 10:8). All things, whether spiritual or material, really belong to people themselves only after being shared with others.

61. WHY DO PEOPLE NEED SOLIDARITY?

Solidarity is also called brotherhood or “sharing weal and woe” (*xiu qi yu gong*, 休戚与共). The ethics of solidarity is rooted in the economy of the triune God and has originated in human nature as all people forming a unity and belonging to one family. Creating, redeeming, and sanctifying humans and all things, God was always with His creation, which is the prototype of solidarity. United with human nature, the incarnated Word is the most remarkable symbol of the coexistence between God and human beings. His crucifixion and resurrection are for the sake of people, and His sacrifice and glory are the decisive realization of love and solidarity; thus He is a role-model for people to follow. “Give to him who begs from you, and do not refuse him who would borrow from you” (Mt. 5:42). A person needs others not only for individual forms of assistance

but also to seek for “another self” with whom to share one’s needs, thoughts, and wishes in fellowship. In this way, human nature can be developed more thoroughly, becoming closer to the triune God who created humans.

62. HOW SHOULD PEOPLE PRACTICE THE ETHICS OF SOLIDARITY?

If people want to practice the value of solidarity, they should awaken a deep consciousness within: In God’s grace, human beings and the rest of creation in heaven and on earth are a unity (*tian di wan wu wei yi ti*, 天地万物为一体). People face the future because they embrace the past, and they rely on what others, including their ancestors, have done. Solidarity requires that people take responsibility for others and act in the interests of others; this includes future generations. All for one, and one for all. Solidarity among people impels them to respect the liberty and dignity of human beings, act for public good, and pursue social justice. It aims to establish the “civilization of love” at the level of social order and eliminate the “structural evil” in society, so as to stop the perpetuation of sin and the proliferation of selfish desire, violence, and injustice with respect to social ecology. The Ten Commandments inherently embody these positive principles and illuminate the danger of evil in their negative form of “shall-not.”

Part V



The Ten Commandments of God



63. WHY ARE THE TEN COMMANDMENTS A DIVINE COVENANT BETWEEN GOD AND HUMANS?

The Ten Words are the command of God, a divine covenant between God and humans based on His wisdom and love. Through the Ten Commandments, God manifests His providence and love, as well as the hidden law of social operation, to humans and other creatures. By obeying the commandments, God's people look to Him, the pioneer and perfecter of their faith, living in wisdom and love (Deut. 4:6). To live by the Ten Commandments is to manifest God's sovereignty with holiness and purity, showing that we belong to Him. People obey his voice, doing what He commands, so they will become His people and He will be their God (Jer. 11:4).

64. WHAT IS THE POSITION OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS IN OLD TESTAMENT LAW?

The Ten Commandments are the core of Old Testament law. In the Torah, “Ten Words” is a term (Ex. 34:28; Deut. 4:13, 10:4) referring to commandments spoken by the Lord to the Israelites and written on two tablets of stone (Ex. 31:18; Deut. 5:22). When the Israelites violated the Ten Commandments, the prophets accused them, condemning their lifestyle (Hos. 4:1–3). The Ten Commandments are the general outline and summation of the Old Testament law, the solemn declaration in which God revealed to His people the way to salvation.

65. WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TEN COMMANDMENTS AND THE EXODUS?

After leading his people out of Egypt, across the Red Sea, and to freedom, God made a covenant with them, promulgating the law with the Ten Commandments as their core, forming a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Ex. 19:6). In God’s words, people received their freedom to serve him on Sinai (Ex. 3:12). The Israelites were brought out of Egypt by God to become a free people, and the Ten Commandments given by God revealed to them the way of a free life. By obeying the commandments and laws, God’s people could continue their freedom and walk on the good path of sanctification.

66. WHY ARE THE TEN COMMANDMENTS A WHOLE?

“I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage” (Ex. 20:2). This, the beginning of the Ten Commandments, announces that God saved the Israelites and made a covenant with them as an act of grace. God gave people the Ten Commandments, calling the Israelites to enter into the covenant and become His people. Human beings respond to His call with worship, prayer, and a holy life of love in which they love God and their neighbors and protect social and ecological justice, manifesting the rules of the created world made by God. Through the Ten Commandments, God establishes an intimate relationship with humans, enabling them to live with dignity and to have a harmonious life with their neighbors. The Ten Commandments let people know that worship is life and life is worship. Life is a whole and so are the Ten Commandments. “For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it” (Jas. 2:10).

67. WHY ARE THE TEN COMMANDMENTS UNIVERSAL?

The Ten Commandments are the enlightenment of God and the real reflection of human nature. Rooted in the moral law, they are the holy things shown by God in the hearts of people (Rom. 1:19). The Ten Commandments show people the basic duties they should perform and proclaim human basic rights. The spirit of the Ten Commandments, inherent in different cultures and times as a core, protect human dignity and establish just societies. These commandments not only regulate external behavior but also cultivate the internal mind-heart. They also gently guide people to live in

accordance with their good nature, and they reveal the law that should be obeyed in a just society. Reflecting the common nature of human beings, the Ten Commandments are the basic rules of moral and social life; thus they are universal to all humans and cultures, expressed colorfully in different cultural and ethnic forms.

68. WHAT DO PEOPLE RELY ON TO KEEP THE TEN COMMANDMENTS?

Jesus is the vine, while people are the branches (Jn. 15:5). Born as a human, He fulfilled the Ten Commandments with His being, action, and words. United with humans, the Holy Son dwelt in their hearts through faith and enabled them to be rooted and grounded in love (Eph. 3:17). The Holy Spirit acts in people to strengthen their inner humanity (Eph. 3:16) and guides people to follow Jesus, to imitate His thoughts and words, and to obey freely the laws centered on the Ten Commandments so as to live a good life.

69. HOW DID JESUS SUMMARIZE AND EXPLAIN THE OLD TESTAMENT LAW?

Someone asked Jesus, “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?” (Mt. 22:36). Jesus answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets (Mt. 22:37–40). These are the double commandments of love. “Love is the fulfilling of the law” (Rom. 13:10), so that every law should be understood under the commandment of love. All laws are concluded by: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Gal 5:14).

70. WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES IN TRADITIONS WHEN SUBDIVIDING THE TEN COMMANDMENTS?

There are subtle differences in various Christian denominations about how to subdivide the Ten Commandments. Some denominations, like Roman Catholics and Lutherans, enumerate three commandments about how to treat God, with the first commandment telling people not to worship idols, and the commandment “You shall not covet ...” divided into two, so that there are seven commandments in all about treating humans. Some others, such as the Jewish tradition, the Eastern Orthodox Church, and most Protestant denominations, list four commandments concerning God, among which “You shall not make for yourself a graven image ...” is listed as the second, while identifying six commandments about treating people, among which the last two are combined into “You shall not covet ...” This book adopts the latter classification method, which is generally accepted by Chinese Protestants.



THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before me.

71. WHAT IS THE FIRST COMMANDMENT?

The first commandment is “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before me” (Ex. 20:2–3, Deut. 5:6–7).

72. WHY DOES THE FIRST COMMANDMENT BEGIN WITH “I AM THE LORD YOUR GOD”?

Through “I am the Lord your God,” God declared His “I am” as the beginning of the Ten Commandments. This name includes the eternal, almighty, and loving nature of God. In Him, people live and move and have their being, and all their virtues come from Him (Acts. 17:25–28). The first commandment, an announcement from the Creator-King of the universe to His creation as well as a statement from a Redeemer to the free people He saved, is to reveal

God's identity as the Lord. That people recognize, worship, and serve the everlasting God is the way to a life of goodness and wisdom (Deut. 4). God's call and action of grace are the spirit of the law and the starting point and foundation for His people to obey it.

73. WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT GOD IS THE "ONE LORD"?

There is only one God: "The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might" (Deut. 6:4–5). There is only one God. "One" does not mean one in quantity but refers to the all-embracing one. There is no other God. He is absolute, self-sufficient, and self-reliant without any dependence and condition; He has perfect existence and completeness; He owns and contains all things; He is the everlasting and absolute "One." God is love. The only God is the unity of the Father, Son, and Spirit, who are respected, honored, and worshiped together. Jesus said, "And this is eternal life, that they know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent" (Jn. 17:3). Recognizing, serving, and worshiping the "one Lord" who transcends all creations constitutes the source, capability, and goodness of the entirety of people's lives, enabling them to have real dignity and freedom.

74. HOW DOES THE NEW TESTAMENT EXPLAIN THE FIRST COMMANDMENT?

Jesus summarized the first commandment as: "You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve." (Mt. 4:10) Thus, He restated the solemn call of God to the Israelites: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God

with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might” (Deut. 6:4–5). The Holy Spirit moved Peter, who said, “And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among humans by which we must be saved” (Acts. 4:12). The first commandment, containing all the other commandments, is the precondition and foundation of them all.

75. HOW SHOULD PEOPLE TREAT GOD IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENT OF THE FIRST COMMANDMENT?

The first commandment calls for people to love God with all their heart, soul, and strength (Deut. 6:5), devoting all of their lives towards the only one Creator and Redeemer. He is the only origin of everything. Only in Him can human vitality, ability, and virtue be truly realized. “Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is nothing upon earth that I desire besides thee” (Ps. 73:25). The first commandment internally contains faith, hope, and love. He is the God of eternity, unchangeability, faithfulness, fairness, and love, and people ought to believe in, accept, and depend on Him. He is omnipotent, benevolent and good, and people ought to look forward to God Emmanuel (“being with His people”). He loves all people, even sending His only son to them; thus people should admire Him deeply. Humans ought to love God more than everything, and to love everything due to and for the sake of God.

76. WHAT DOES THE FIRST COMMANDMENT WARN PEOPLE OF?

The first commandment warns people that if they refuse to acknowledge and follow God, their unfaithful and disrespectful

hearts will make many mistakes. Unbelief is to refuse to acknowledge God and to neglect His revelation in nature and history (Mk. 16:14). Heresy means someone stubbornly denies or doubts the reason of belief. There are two main spiritual attitudes opposed to expectation: one is disappointment, someone who loses faith in God's mercy, justice, and promises, failing to expect redemption and salvation from God anymore; the other is delusion, someone who either builds their hope on people or things, assuming that people can be saved without grace, or misunderstands the almighty power and mercy of God, assuming that people can be forgiven without confession and fulfilled without any action on their part (Jas. 2:26). The spiritual attitudes that are warned of are as follows: apathy, which includes rejecting God's love, disregarding God's providence and wisdom, and refusing to give God's love to others (Jas. 2:15–16); indifference, which is irresponsiveness when feeling love (Lk. 22:67); and slack, which encompasses spiritual laziness, refusal of joy from God, and resistance to the attraction of goodness.

77. WHAT IS THE MEANING OF “WORSHIP”?

As Jesus said: “You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve” (Mt. 4:10). Worship is the action of throwing oneself down at someone's feet in admiration, showing total surrender, and admitting the superiority of the one worshiped. “You shall worship the Lord your God” is a comprehensive action, stemming from the inside but performed externally when people face the almighty, wise, and merciful God, becoming illuminated by Him. It is a communion between humanity and God, the true origin of all (*wan you zhen yuan*, 万有真原). Worship is to sincerely accept the Creator and Redeemer as the Lord of all creation, whose wisdom and kindness are infinite. Worship brings humans back to their true selves, making them acknowledge that they, as creations,

are nothing and depend entirely on God to exist. Worship demands people devote their admiration and honor to God with total respect and surrender (Rev. 7:12). It requires them to respond to God with total love in their lives. God loves humans; in Jesus Christ He gives Himself to them, enabling them to enjoy true freedom (Eph. 1:3–14). People love God, so they worship Him in His Church, give themselves to Him, and take Him as the master of their lives. Worshiping the triune God is the most fundamental identity of Christians.

78. HOW DOES THE TRIUNE GOD GUIDE HUMAN TO WORSHIP?

According to the orders of God and the nature of humans, Christians should pray often, attend church services, and worship God. In the first paradise of Eden, the existence and behavior of humans were the operation of God's words and breath as well as the prayer, admiration, praise, and worship of God. Every behavior of our first parents is seen as good by God (Gen. 1:31). God reveals the law to Moses in Sinai, asking the Israelites to constantly look for the goodness of God in daily life. They are also asked to go to God's house to sacrifice and worship, to commemorate God's salvation in history, and to incorporate daily life into their worship as the unity of God (Deut. 26:2, Lev. 23). The Son, born as a human, entered the holy abode only once, with His blood, for his people, becoming an eternal sin offering (Heb. 9:12). As the consummation of God's salvific acts is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, people confess, meet, and worship to announce the death of the Lord and to praise the resurrection of the Lord, looking forward to His return (1 Cor. 11:26). The Holy Spirit cures human hearts, operates in their inner beings, and endows them with new virtues and abilities, leading them towards the end of goodness. The Holy Spirit integrates people's lives into worship in the Church, realizing the union of God and themselves.

79. WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS FOR HUMANS TO WORSHIP GOD?

“I have no good apart from thee” (Ps. 16:2). Worship is the natural and real relationship of humans to God. Human worship cannot increase or decrease the glory of God. Refusing to acknowledge and follow God is the origin of all spiritual and moral deviation. Worshiping God frees people from the slavery of sins. It makes them realize that they are only creations, and it helps them avoid self-centeredness (Ps. 8:4). It prevents people from regarding other creations or any human as Lord, from becoming attached to other things, and from indulging in all kinds of idol worship (Mt. 19:22–24). In the worship of the one God, people purify their bodies and hearts, making their life whole. Their lives receive eternal rest in the city of the immortal God (Heb. 12:22).

80. WHAT ARE THE APPROPRIATE WAYS OF WORSHIPING GOD?

To worship God is to present everything from God back to Him, entering the communion of life and enjoying all the blessings from God. Derived from the respect and acceptance of the inner heart, reverence, as the basis of all appropriate worship, is to worship God in spirit and in truth. Prayer is a kind of expression of worship. It is to convert our heart to God, to admire and invoke Him properly. People ought to pray constantly without any worries in their hearts at home, church, or any other places. The principal way of worshiping God is that his people gather together to celebrate, such as Baptism and Eucharist. Other proper ways of worshiping God include preaching from, listening to, reading, and studying the Bible (John 5:39); singing the Psalms (Jas. 5:13); and teaching,

talking about, and meditating on the Word of God (2 Tim 4:2; Deut. 6:7). Overcoming melancholic souls and regretful hearts (Ps. 51:17) and becoming healed by the Holy Spirit, we display our trust of and intimacy with God. Declaring our intentions and promises by means of free and judicious decisions, we show our loyalty, respect, and admiration to the God Most High (Num. 30:2). To live a sanctified life is to worship Him with our entire life and to treat His name as holy (Mt. 6:9).

81. WHAT IS THE MEANING OF “SERVING HIM”?

As Jesus commands, “You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve” (Mt. 4:10). Serving is providing the service of our lives to the Lord and obeying his orders. The first step of serving is turning our heart to God, showing our admiration, gratefulness, invocation, and intercession to Him. Serving him is offering our souls as sacrifices to Him, honestly submitting ourselves to Him, and transforming our minds in repentance. “The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise” (Ps. 51:17). Sacrificing our time, energy, and property to Him is to realize serving. Making sacrifices of our entire bodies and hearts to God, we “appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship” (Rom. 12:1). Thus such a service for Him is merited.

82. WHY IS BELIEF IN GOD THE MOST IMPORTANT RIGHT OF HUMAN BEINGS?

Believing in God, the Creator and Redeemer, establishing an intimate relationship with Him, and leading a virtuous life

based on faith, hope, and love, are all in accordance with the law of God and rooted in the nature of human beings. It is the kernel and foundation of maintaining the dignity of human lives (John. 1:12–13). Religious freedom is the primary freedom of human beings, which should be confirmed first. Faith in God propels people’s pursuit for truth, goodness, and beauty, encouraging them to devote a spirit of love to all aspects of ideas, habits, laws, and regulations. The freedom of faith is a right endowed by God rather than by authority. Authority endorses such an innate right (e.g., in Article 36 of the *Constitution of the People’s Republic of China*). Authority at all levels should not inhibit people from implementing the right of freedom of religion, privately or publicly, personally or collectively, within reasonable scope.

83. WHY IS WORSHIP A KIND OF COLLECTIVE RIGHT?

The Ten Commandments are a covenant between God and the Israelites. They are an announcement of “I” (Lord) to “You” (the Israelite) (Ex. 20:2–17) in which the pronouns are singular. This means the Ten Commandments are aimed at every individual as well as God’s people as a whole. The people of God come to the face of God with a collective identity to worship Him. Everyone worships God in group. Freedom of belief is not just the freedom of the inner heart but also the freedom of believers gathering as a group.

84. WHAT DOES “YOU SHALL HAVE NO OTHER GOD” PROHIBIT?

This commandment asks people to worship the only God in an appropriate way. It forbids both disbelief and blind belief.

Disbelief is devoid of a devout heart, while blind belief mistakenly delivers oneself to false gods or takes means such as horoscopes, dreams, and times as omens to predict and control fate. It is also wrong to ascribe the power of grace to the human activities themselves in the worship such as prayer, sacrifice, sacrament, and liturgy (Is. 1:11, Mt. 23:16–23).

85. WHAT IS ATHEISM?

Atheism is a denial of the existence of God, and atheists reject God as the master of their minds and lives. “The fool says in his heart, “There is no God”” (Ps. 14:1). Atheism mistakenly takes humans themselves as their own goal and the sole creator of their history. Atheism confines people’s needs and hopes to the time and space of this world, staking their future in technological progress, economic development, and social liberation. With the denial of the wise and merciful Creator, atheism does not accept the incarnated Jesus as the mediator between God and humans, and atheists do not know truth of life; thus they are not able to have a real life with faith, hope, and love. They were at that time separated from Christ ... having no hope and without God in the world (Eph. 2:12).

86. WHAT ARE THE OTHER MANIFESTATIONS OF VIOLATING “YOU SHALL HAVE NO OTHER GODS”?

Neglecting or not worshiping God also violates “You shall have no other gods.” This is manifested in four aspects: First, when people consider the one God as similar to human beings or other creations in the world (Ps. 50:21). Second, when people are forgetful of God and do not remember His salvation in life (Jer. 2:32). Third,

when people love themselves more than God, trust in arms of flesh more than God, delight in objects of sense more than God, and remove their heart, whether in whole or part, from God (1 John 2:15). Four, when people seriously and deliberately treat the things that honor God in an inappropriate way, thereby profaning God (Amos. 5:21–23). Accordingly, loving, worshiping, and serving God are the foundation and essence of all the commandments and laws.

87. WHY DO SOME ACTIONS LIKE DIVINATION VIOLATE THE FIRST COMMANDMENT?

Christians believe that God is the master of fate and the proper way for humans to face their futures, giving themselves to the providence of God with faith (Gen. 50:19–20) and acting in accordance with the gospel of Christ (Phil. 1:27). People want to master time and history, even to tame or harness a mysterious force, thereby securing some future fate by means like divination, stargazing, fortune-telling, augury, sorcery, charms, physic power, witchcraft, necromancy, interpretation of dreams, soothsaying, and so forth. However, these kinds of actions directly violate the first commandment, because they go against the reverence, respect, and awe that humans should have to the highest God (Deut. 18:10–12).



THE SECOND COMMANDMENT

You shall not make for yourself
a graven image

88. WHAT IS THE SECOND COMMANDMENT?

The second commandment is “You shall not make for yourself a graven 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” (Ex. 20: 4–5; Deut. 5:8–9).

89. WHAT IS IDOLATRY?

Idolatry is to worship things that are not God, such as human creations or imaginations. Idols forbidden in the Ten Commandments include graven or molten images made according to the likeness of anything that is in heaven above, the earth below, or the water under the earth (Ex. 34:17). “They have mouths, but do not speak; eyes, but do not see. They have ears, but do not hear; noses, but do not smell. They have hands, but do not feel; feet, but do not walk; and they do

not make a sound in their throat” (Ps. 115:5–7). The true God is “the living God” (Ps. 42:2). He gives people life, which enables humans to act and speak, and makes everything run according to His order. Therefore, there is no creation comparable with or equal to him (Is. 46:5).

90. WHAT IS HIDDEN IDOLATRY?

In addition to visible images, people need to be vigilant against hidden idols. It is also idolatry to regard things that look powerful and attractive and directly affect people—such as social power, entertainment, sports, beauty, achievements, ancestors, nationalities, countries, and so forth—as idols that can be entrusted with life (Lk. 8:14). In the era of hedonism and consumerism, money is the most common and biggest idol.

91. WHAT IS SOCIAL IDOLATRY?

The “New Jerusalem” can only come down out of heaven from God (Rev. 21:2); thus people cannot realize the Kingdom of Heaven on the earth by themselves. However, before Christ comes again, there will be various forms of “false Christs,” and they will oppose and exalt themselves against every so-called god or object of worship, taking their seat in the temple of God and proclaiming themselves to be God (2 Thes. 2:4). Some ideologies interpret the world with a single lens, making themselves absolute “gods,” thus constituting a form of social idolatry. They are the graven images made for human themselves. Those social movements in the form of groups that claim to realize the Kingdom of God in history and society by means of people’s own strength are often a dangerous and destructive form of idolatry.

92. WHAT HARM WOULD IDOLATRY DO TO PEOPLE?

Deviating from the real source, idolatry puts faith to the wrong objects and looks for life and comfort from self-made illusions. Requiring people to entrust themselves completely, faith is ultimate and absolute for life. Believing in the wrong objects leads people to death and makes them suffer a twisted life through self-made sins, bringing an appropriate penalty upon themselves. Such a life is a tragedy, inflicting great harm upon others, families, society, and nature (Deut. 7:25–26; Phil. 3:19).

93. HOW SHOULD PEOPLE VIEW THE RESPECT OF SOME CHRISTIANS FOR ICONS?

Jesus Christ, who was born as a human, is the icon of God. The Bible narrates Jesus in words, while icons express Jesus by color. Many Christian denominations, such as the Eastern Orthodox Church, Catholicism, and some Protestant denominations like Anglicanism and Lutheranism, consider icons as the “visible gospel,” using them for worship in their liturgies. Firstly, to respect an icon is not to worship it as an object, but to show respect to the characters depicted or pointed to in the icon, such as Christ, Virgin Mary, and the saints. The honor that is given to the icon passes over to the real person.¹ Secondly, in the Old Testament it is forbidden to make any sculpture or portrait of God or to refer to him with visible things. However, the birth of Christ as a human shows that the invisible

1 For the common understanding in the church tradition, see “Council of Nicea II, Ecumenical VII, Action VII, Definition of the Sacred Images and Tradition,” dz. 302, in H. Denzinger, *Enchiridion symbolorum, definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum*. <http://patristica.net/denzinger/#n600>, accessed 6 November 2022.

Word has become a visible body, with God becoming a person with an image, whom people can see and touch (1 John 1:1). Thus, it is appropriate to express reverence for God with icons. Finally, in medieval society not everyone could own and read the Bible. Therefore, the extensive use of icons in churches as a “painted Bible” furthered faith education through art. Visual art has become a part of Christian faith-traditions and plays a unique role in the liturgical life and faith education of the Church.



THE THIRD COMMANDMENT

You shall not take the name of the
Lord your God in vain

94. WHAT IS THE THIRD COMMANDMENT?

The third commandment is “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain” (Ex. 20:7; Deut. 5:11). In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus extended this commandment: “But I say to you, do not swear at all” (Mt. 5:34). The third commandment requires people to call God’s name in an appropriate way. For people to call His name is for them to use their mouth and tongue, which is an expression of their mind and heart. Thus, this commandment leads people to worship the Lord with the unity of body and mind.

95. WHAT IS GOD’S NAME?

God revealed His holy name to humans and intimately gave Himself to them. In this way, He told people who He is and what name they should call Him. His name is a mystery, the

connection between heaven and humans. Through calling his name, people can enter His mystery. In the Old Testament, God revealed His name as “YHWH” to Moses (Ex. 3:14–15). In the New Testament, angels revealed God’s holy name “Jesus” to Mary and Joseph (Mt. 1:20; Lk. 1:31).

96. HOW DID ISRAELITES CALL GOD’S NAME IN THE OLD TESTAMENT?

The name consists of four consonant letters YHWH. Its original meaning is “I am” or “to be,” which means “I am who I am” (Ex. 3:14–15) and that God is the Creator of all things and the providential Redeemer of His people. These consonants are subtly pronounced letters that indicate the mystery of God’s name. According to the ancient Israelite tradition, only when the high priest entered the Holy of Holies on the tenth day of the seventh month of the Jewish calendar, could he pray using this name in front of the mercy seat (Lev. 16). The Israelites believed that the human mouth was not qualified to say these four letters. When encountered in the Bible, they read them as “Adonai” (the Lord). Later, when they saw “the Lord,” they replaced it with “the Name,” avoiding pronouncing it directly.

97. IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, HOW DO PEOPLE CALL GOD’S NAME?

In the New Testament, God’s Word became flesh in the image and form of humans, bearing the name “Jesus.” Jesus is the complete outpouring of God’s words, and His name contains everything between humans and God, leading all of God’s work of creation and salvation as the source of salvation. After ascending to heaven,

Jesus sent the Counselor from the Father (Jn. 15:26) to lead people to know Jesus and enter the truth. Thus, the Church calls the Lord in the three names of Jesus Christ, God, and Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 13:14), attributing glory to him: “Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen” (*Gloria Patri*).

98. HOW DOES THE CHURCH CALL GOD’S NAME?

In baptism, Christians are baptized “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,” becoming a new people in the righteousness and holiness of truth (Eph. 4:24). In worship, God’s people usually begin by crying out the name of the triune God: “Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us,” after which they listen to His words and partake of His body and blood, becoming one heart and one body. In prayer, people give their prayers to the Father in the name of Jesus Christ (Jn. 14:13–14). In life, according to the spiritual tradition of the Church, Christians often start their day by making the sign of cross while saying “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” Thus they pray to the triune God for cleansing of their mind, words, and actions. By calling the name of the triune God, the whole life of Christians enters into the joy of communion and union with the triune God.

99. WHY SHOULD PEOPLE CALL GOD’S NAME?

God reveals His name to His people and gives Himself to them. Calling the name of the Lord as the breath of life, people draw water from the wells of salvation with joy (Is. 12:3–4). The incarnation enables people to call God with the name “Jesus” because it is in Jesus that God’s creation and salvation reach their summit.

Calling the name “Jesus” opens people to the infinite and mysterious God, demonstrating their limitation, humility, weakness, sin, woe, hope, gratitude, and thanksgiving, thereby welcoming His presence and inviting Him to live within them. When people call on His good and spiritual name, God makes the liturgy effective, enabling them to share Jesus’ blood and body, uniting with Him as one Church, cleansing their sins, sanctifying their spirit and body, fulfilling them with the joy and peace of salvation, and giving them the moral ability “worthy of the gospel of Christ” (Phil. 1:27).

100. WHAT KIND OF MIND SHOULD PEOPLE HAVE TO CALL GOD’S NAME?

Calling, the action of the mouth and tongue, uses the subtlest part of a person’s body to express their mind. By calling the name of Lord, people prepare themselves to face God and converse with Him. Believing and feeling the presence of God through His name enable people to love and revere His name. Awe of God’s name shows a person’s esteem of the mysterious God and every divine thing under the guidance of His name (Ps. 96:2), knowing that God is always greater than a name can express and we can never possess God. Thus, the reverence and awe of God’s name should permeate the prayers and liturgies and extend to the faith-centered life.

101. HOW SHOULD PEOPLE CALL GOD’S NAME PROPERLY?

People should open their mouth to exclaim and praise God’s name with cleansing hearts (Ps 133:2–3), through which they can be filled with the divine, who is the Creator and Redeemer.

When preaching or listening to things relating to God's name, people should immerse themselves in emotions of respect and praise. When reading or preaching God's words, they should receive his wisdom and mercy with awe and comply with his orders willingly. The creation is God's book without words (Ps 19:4). The way people revere God's name with all of creation is to meditate on His almighty power, wisdom, and greatness in all things, to see and rejoice in His merciful plan of providence, and to bear the hardships of life patiently. The faith tradition has developed a simple, pure prayer to cry to Jesus with strong emotion: "Jesus Christ, Son of David, have mercy on me, a sinner," or "God, have mercy on me" (Mk. 10:46–52; Lk. 18:13). People can repeat this prayer continually and practice it in throughout their lives. Calling on the name of Jesus is to cry for His presence and to welcome Him into us.

102. WHAT IS TAKING THE LORD'S NAME IN VAIN?

God's name is holy, revealed only to His people who believe and respect Him. People shall not take the Lord's name in vain, because every word from them shows confirmation of or contempt for His presence in all of creation. This commandment, as an all-round requirement for people from inside to out, from idea to speech to behavior, concerns treating God's name and everything that reveals God. It forbids following wrong thoughts and behaviors: neglect, irreverence, contempt, disgust, and hatred when God comes into mind; casual and frivolous talk about the name of God, Jesus Christ, and the saints; deliberately failing to fulfill a promise made in God's name; directly cursing or abusing God, Jesus Christ, the Church, and the saints; cursing oneself or others in the name of God, using God's name to commit criminal activities, or employing God's name in curses as a magical tool (Acts 19:13).

103. HOW SHOULD THE ACTION OF SWEARING BE TREATED?

Swearing is people's call to God to testify to their words. The Old Testament law requires people to revere and serve God and swear in His name (Deut. 6:13). It is to call on the faithfulness of God to vouch for a human. Whether a person's words are faithful or not shows whether that person's relationship with God is faithful or not. Perjury is when people cry to God to testify for lies, which blasphemes the God of truth and takes His name in vain. The Lord Jesus commanded, "Do not swear at all ... Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'" (Mt. 5:34-37), because all words relate to God. If true, words affirm the presence of God; if false, they show contempt for Him.

104. WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF NAME FOR PEOPLE?

A name refers to a person's overall personality and their unique being before God; thus everyone's name should be respected. God calls people in each of their names to show that they belong to Him (Is. 43:1). Jesus calls everyone's name to lead them out (Jn. 10:3). People's names remain from now until the judgment at the end of the ages. "He who conquers shall be clad thus in white garments, and I will not blot his name out of the book of life; I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels" (Rev. 3:5). Those who follow Christ faithfully will stand on Mount Zion with Christ and have Jesus' name and his Father's name written on their foreheads (Rev. 14:1).



THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

Remember the Sabbath day,
to keep it holy

105. WHAT IS THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT?

The fourth commandment is: “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work; but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, or your manservant, or your maidservant, or your ox, or your ass, or any of your cattle, or the sojourner who is within your gates, that your manservant and your maidservant may rest as well as you” (Deut. 5:12–14; Ex. 20:8–10).

106. WHY DO ISRAELITES OBSERVE THE SABBATH DAY TO KEEP IT HOLY?

All things are created to rest, which means to settle down in God and share His life and happiness. “A Sabbath rest” is the

apex and goal of God's economy (Heb. 4:9). People receive God's sanctification in time with all other beings and worship him. To observe the Sabbath day is to remember God as the Lord of creation. In six days, the Lord made the heaven and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it (Ex. 20:11). Observing the Sabbath day is to remember God as the Lord of liberation and salvation. "You shall remember that you were a servant in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out thence with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm" (Deut. 5:15). Sabbath day is the sign of the everlasting covenant between God and His people, as well as the essence and core of all seasons. The people of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant (Ex. 31:16) so as to move towards the eternal rest.

107. WHY HAS THE LORD'S DAY RENEWED THE SABBATH DAY?

Christ fully realized God's plan for redeeming the world through His passion and resurrection. Having accomplished the salvation for humankind and fulfilled the peace of the universe, the Son of God rested in the tomb on the Sabbath day (Lk. 23:54–56) and entered into the Sabbath of the seventh day. He rose from the dead on the first day of the week. As the firstfruits, the resurrected Christ revealed to all of creation its ultimate destination and glory. The day of the Lord's resurrection renewed the meaning of the Sabbath. Christians now observe the Lord's Day rather than the Sabbath day. The Lord's Day is the first day, the day for people to remember God's first creation; the Lord's Day is the eighth day, the day for people to celebrate the new creation in the resurrected Christ and look forward to the eternal blessings and rest in the last days (Heb. 4:9). For Christians, the Lord's Day has become the first of all days and the first of all feasts.

108. WHAT ARE THE BASIC PRINCIPLES FOR OBSERVING THE LORD'S DAY?

The day that God blessed and hallowed is a “sanctuary” in time for God’s people. In distinction from visible churches, this sanctuary cannot be destroyed. People are to observe and keep the Lord’s Day as holy, both with joy and resting, and with worship and the exercise of holiness on that day. The Lord’s Day leads people into the happy life of taking delight in the Lord (Is. 58:14). It invites people to praise God for His divine economy of creation and salvation and to give Him open, visible, public, and regular worship. Charity work such as caring for others also consecrates the Lord’s Day to God. Spiritual cultivation, self-reflection, and meditation extend the spirit of the Lord’s Day to all aspects of life and culture.

109. WHAT IS THE MEANING OF “TAKING DELIGHT IN THE LORD”?

The triune God is the creator and redeemer to whom people are oriented with their whole physical and mental life. Connecting with Him means connecting with the ruler of heaven and earth and the fountain of life. By entering into the divine realm of encountering the Lord, people can enjoy blessings and joy beyond all extrinsic experiences (Is. 58:14). In this life full of joy, people trust in the Lord and commit their ways to Him. Enjoying peace in the Lord, they trust in the Lord and do good. Forsaking wrath, they are still before the Lord and wait patiently for him. This kind of joy makes people become meek and helps them enter into abundant prosperity (Ps. 37:3–11). People rejoice in God through, in, and with the Lord Jesus Christ, through whom they have now received their reconciliation (Rom. 5:11). Their souls magnify the Lord; they

commit themselves to God's salvation and pray that God will comfort their bodies and souls as His dwelling place. Such communion between God and humans is the great happiness of Christians (Lk. 1:46–47).

110. HOW DO PEOPLE “TAKE DELIGHT IN THE LORD” ON THE LORD’S DAY?

The significance of people's life lies in facing holy moments instead of possessing and controlling the world. The Lord's Day is the day for people to commemorate, celebrate, and look forward to the work of the triune God. It should be welcomed with refreshment and joy. On the Lord's Day, people shall not go their own ways, or seek their own pleasure, or talk idly. Instead, they shall honor and glorify God wholeheartedly and sincerely with respect (Is. 58:13). The Lord is people's and people are the Lord's. Humans should focus on the Word preached and receive the illumination of the words of God, taking the example of Lydia (Acts. 16:13–14). Renewing our minds every day in God's words with humility and contrition also means rejoicing in the Lord on the Lord's Day (Is. 66:2). People should also celebrate the Lord's Day with genuine love and commit to practical acts of charity (Rom. 12:9–11).

111. HOW SHOULD WE MEET CHRIST ON THE LORD’S DAY?

The Lord's Day is made by God, and we rejoice and are glad in it (Ps. 118:24). We should praise the Lord's Day because it is on this day that God began his creation, redeemed the world through Christ's resurrection, and will renew all humankind and the world. On this day, the heaven and the earth rejoice together; with the

gate open, all people can enter into the paradise without fear. As the apex and beginning of the week, the Lord's Day enables other days to be transformed, raised up, and fulfilled. It is the day that the Lord has made; on this day the resurrected Christ meets the whole faith community in the Word and the Eucharist, nourishing their lives through His words, flesh, and blood.

112. WHAT KIND OF SPIRITUAL LIFE IS SHAPED IN OUR WORSHIP OF GOD ON THE LORD'S DAY?

Praying, worshipping, and doing good constitute the entirety of a godly life. The Lord's Day gives everyone an opportunity to seek union with God and humans, as well as to reflect on themselves fearlessly before the triune God so as to absorb the power of gospel to penetrate into all aspects of life. A Sabbath rest on the Lord's Day reveals Christ's mystery that people should unite in love. Serving others is resting in love (Mt. 12:12). The Holy Spirit teaches us to do good and remember on the Lord's Day the brothers and sisters who have equal rights but cannot rest, especially those who are sick, weak, or in trouble. Nowadays, people should especially commemorate the whole of God's creation on the Lord's Day, cultivating a feeling of unity with all of creation in heaven and on earth, becoming God's assistant in protecting His creation. This is because all creatures, no matter how small, are our brothers and sisters.

113. WHAT'S THE RELATION BETWEEN THE SABBATH AND WORK?

Work is the duty entrusted by God to people to govern all things, as well as the activity through which people realize

their gifts and perfect the visible created world. However, because of their sins, work has become a heavy burden, even an idol to be served by human as slaves. On the Lord's Day, people shall rest and be renewed (Ex. 20:10; 23:12). Sabbath is a protest against the servitude of work and the worship of money. Sabbath is to focus only on the imperishable seed in the soul on the day of Christ's resurrection (1 Pet. 1:23), releasing our desire to dominate the world and inviting the eternal God to dominate us. Only in such rest can spiritual, family, social, and cultural life truly be cultivated. According to God's commandments, the Lord's Day calls people to guarantee the rights to rest and worship, especially for sojourners, manservants and maidservants, cattle, and all natural things (Ex. 20:10; Lev. 25:4–5). Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath, instructed that actions undertaken for survival, for curing or saving lives, on the Sabbath are justified (Mark 2:23–28, Lk. 14:2–4, John 5:8–10).



THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT

Honor your father and mother

114. WHAT IS THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT?

The fifth commandment is: “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God gives you” (Ex. 20:12; Deut. 5:16). Jesus reminded people to observe this commandment earnestly (Mk. 7:8–13), and the apostle Paul expounded on it as follows: “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honor your father and mother, that it may be well with you and that you may live long on the earth.’ This is the first commandment with a promise” (Eph. 6:1–3).

115. WHAT AREAS OF LIFE ARE COVERED IN THIS COMMANDMENT?

As the first commandment of the second part of the Ten Commandments, the fifth commandment is the beginning of

the realization of humanity's social nature in human community. It is about family—the first social order for humans and the foundation of all other social relationships (Gen. 2:18). Siblings are the children of the same parents; a clan is constituted by people who are the children of the same ancestor; an ethnic group is constituted by people who are the children of the same descent; a nation, which is often likened to an assemblage of brotherly ethnic groups, is a big multiethnic family. All members of the Church are God's sons who are born anew in the Holy Spirit. All people under heaven are from Adam, created by God in His image, so there is but one family. As the basis of Christian society, this commandment involves kinship among family members, such as the relationship between children and parents, and extends to people's filial piety and gratitude to ancestors, their identification with a nation, their responsibilities to humankind, and the duties between students and teachers, employees and employers, subordinates and superiors, citizens and states, and believers and priests (Rom. 13:1; Eph. 6:5–9; 1 Pet. 2:17). This commandment also extends to people's lives throughout the whole social community through the worship of God. It calls people to unite with and serve each other, despite their differences, improving human dignity, freedom, and justice in society.

116. WHAT IS FAMILY?

Family is the sign and image of the communion of the triune God in love. The triune God is a family, of which the Holy Father and the Holy Son unite into one in the loving Holy Spirit. Becoming Christians is to become sons of God in Christ and to enter into a loving communion with the triune God. A man and a woman joyfully unite in love, become one flesh, and have children (Gen. 2:24). In a family, each member has equal dignity and communes in love and mutual giving. Parenthood includes the two fundamental

relationships of life: husband and wife (love-giving) and parent and child (life-giving). The basic ethical relationships in a family are the relationships between husband and wife and between the parents and children. The basic tasks of a family are to share love and to serve life.

117. WHAT IS THE IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY?

Family plays an important role in the pilgrimage of fulfilling human nature. It is the starting point of people's common life together and of the cultivation and development of interpersonal relationships. God makes spouses for people so that they can live out their human nature together (Gen. 2:18, 23). In family, humans work with God to create and protect the world and to realize the blessings and mission endowed by God in His creation (Gen. 1:28). Family is the primitive core of social life as well as the most basic and important natural community. According to the *Book of Change (Yi Jing, 易经)*, "There are heaven and earth first, and then all things of creation come into existence. There are all things of creation first and then there are men and women. There are men and women first and then there are husbands and wives. There are husbands and wives first and then there are fathers and sons. There are fathers and sons first and then there are kings and subjects. There are kings and subjects first and then there are distinctions between superiors and subordinates. There are distinctions between superiors and subordinates first and then proprieties and righteousness can be described and effectively implemented."² Family is the first social order, the center of social life, and the basis of other social organizations. Values and norms formed in family life are the source for humans to practice human dignity, solidarity, and mutual assistance at the social and national levels.

2 "The Sequence of Hexagrams," in *The Zhou Book of Chang (Yi Jing)*, trans. by Fu Huisheng (Changsha: Human People's Press, 2008), 483–5.

118. HOW SHOULD WE VIEW THE RELATION BETWEEN FAMILY AND THE HEAVENLY KINGDOM?

People are always in familial relationships as parents or children. However, children do not “belong to” parents, and parents do not “belong to” children. Only God is the absolute, the one and eternally final destination of human life. Everyone belongs directly to God as people of the heavenly kingdom. Jesus said, “He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me” (Mt. 10:37). The fundamental mission of Christians is to obey Jesus’ call and to follow Him. It is in the intimate union with the triune God and the common pilgrimage to the heavenly kingdom that not only parents and children but also all interpersonal relationships and social communities can become strong and stable in communion with the eternal dimension.

119. WHAT KIND OF “SELF-FAMILY-NATION- WORLD” (*TIAN XIA*, 天下³) FEELING DOES THE CHRISTIAN FAITH PROMOTE?

First, people find themselves and their dignity as human beings in their relationship with God, then they realize human dignity in their relationships with others. Family is the first step for humans to realize their own social nature (Gen. 2:18). The fecundity and rearing of a family reflect God’s creation of and providence for the world.

³ *Tian xia*, literally “all under the heaven,” is the highest moral and social sphere in Confucian moral teaching. *Tian xia* is the inhabited world of human beings where peace and harmony are kept by the sage. In the orderly life-path of a Confucian, the first step is to realize oneself, then the family, then the nation, then the world [*tian xia*]. Thus the value order is of “self-family-nation-world.”

Family members pray for, serve, and sacrifice for each other in love, sharing Christ's prayer and sacrifice to the Father in the Holy Spirit. In Christ, family becomes a communion living in faith, hope, and love. Families, ethnicities, and nations are the continuous extension of human social nature. The well-being of a nation depends on the vitality and development of its smallest unit: family. A nation is responsible for assisting families and meeting their common needs for security and material welfare. All people who believe in Christ are born of the Holy Spirit in baptism and jointly pray to "their Father who art in heaven." Whoever does the will of the Father in heaven is Jesus' brother, sister, and mother (Mt. 12:50). As a "big family" of humankind in God, the Church is really the one family of "all under the heaven (*tian xia*)" where the Christians realize their highest moral achievement (Gal. 3:28).

120. WHAT ARE THE DUTIES OF CHILDREN TO THEIR PARENTS?

The Creator God is the almighty Father and people's "Great Parent" (Deut. 32:18). He is the creator, protector, and fulfiller of people's lives. Parents assist God to create and protect lives through their love and marriage. Filial piety to parents reflects the heartfelt love of creation for its Father, the Creator. Firstly, children should be conscious of parental kindness and respect their parents in word and deed (I Kgs. 2:19). Secondly, children should receive parental discipline and blame with humility and patience, correcting their mistakes with sincerity (Heb. 12:9), inclining their ears to parental instruction with a teachable attitude (Prov. 5:1). Thirdly, after growing up, children should serve their parents, support them materially, and comfort them spiritually (Mk. 7:10–12), just as the *Classic of Filial Piety* (*xiao jing*, 孝经) says, "To serve parents, in daily life, children should do their utmost to respect parents; in the service of food and drink, they should do it with a happy mood; when parents are ill, children should take care of them

with anxiety; after parents' death, they should arrange the funeral with grief."⁴ After their parents pass away, children should commemorate their parents' kindness and instruction through intercession and should raise their own children with their parents' love and kindness. For those who provide the help and support of faith, people should remember and imitate them with a special kinship (Heb. 13:7).

121. WHAT ARE THE DUTIES OF PARENTS TO THEIR CHILDREN?

Children are gifts from God. Although they are the children of parents, more importantly they are the children of God. Entrusted by God, parents should imitate the Father's kindness and wisdom, raising children in love and joy. The vitality of conjugal love lies in bearing children and cultivating their spirituality, morality, and personality. The rights and obligations of parents to educate their children are fundamental and nontransferable. First of all, parents should build a home for their children. Home is the primary place for parents to cultivate the spirituality, morality, and character of children (Ps. 101:2–3). To imitate Jesus, they should take kindness, gentleness, forgiveness, loyalty, and unselfishness as family rules, sacrifice themselves in love, and fulfill each other. Secondly, as the first teacher to enlighten children's spirituality, parents should teach them to pray, preach the word of faith to them, and worship with them, so that children can be acquainted with the Bible (2 Tim. 3:15) and become witnesses to the gospel in life (Eph. 6:4). Thirdly, parents should assist their children's moral growth, cultivate their personalities, and establish behavioral norms for them. Parents should encourage children with kind hearts and words (1 Chr. 28:20), correcting them in a timely fashion with love for evil

4 For the English translation, see James Legge, *The Hsiào King [xiao jing]*, in *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. III (Oxford University Press, 1879), 480.

doings (Prov. 19:18). Parents should have the courage to admit their mistakes in front of their children and grow together with them. Lastly, parents should help and care for children in their material and spiritual lives in accordance with their different endowments, so that children can try their best to become good. After children grow up, parents should provide them with advice about their choice of a career, marriage, and lifestyle in accordance with their abilities and interests.

122. WHAT IS MARRIAGE?

Marriage is the beginning and foundation of family. All kinds of relationships within a family should be centered on the love of a husband and wife: “Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh” (Gen. 2:24). Marriage means the mutual giving and fulfillment between a man and a woman so that their entire life can be united into one and oriented to God together. Giving to each other as a gift, a husband and wife commune in love, which includes their physical needs, emotional strength, and spiritual desires. With the union of flesh as its starting point, marriage is oriented to one heart and one mind. Although marriage is based on the attraction between a man and a woman, this attraction has been purified, strengthened, and improved in marriage. The exclusiveness, uniqueness, and fidelity of marriage are signs of the steadfast love of God for the Israelites and of Christ for the Church (Hos. 2:16–20; Eph. 5:25).

123. WHAT ARE THE DUTIES OF HUSBANDS TO THEIR WIVES?

Christ loves the Church and gives Himself up for her; this love is the prototype of a husband’s love for his wife (Eph. 5:25). In

sexual relations, husbands should hold marriage in honor (Heb. 13:4) and protect their wives from injuries. Husbands should “live with their wives,” support and help them, and bestow honor on them (1 Pet. 3:7). Husbands should nourish and cherish their wives as their bodies (Eph. 5:28–29), find and fulfill their wives’ goodness, and enjoy the joy of love. Since husbands and their wives are “joint heirs of the grace of life” and the most intimate of soul mates, they should pray together to God and journey together as pilgrims.

124. WHAT ARE THE DUTIES OF WIVES TO THEIR HUSBANDS?

After creating Adam, God said, “I will make him a helper fit for him” (Gen. 2:18); this means wives should be the helper and fulfiller of their husbands. Wives and their husbands are united in love, just as the Church is united with Christ. Wives should be subject to and respect their husbands based on the love of the Church for Christ (Eph. 5:22–33). Wives should be faithful to their husbands and keep the betrothal (Hos. 3:3). A good wife is the pillar of her husband and the whole family (Prov. 31:10–31). As examples of family evangelization, wives can win over to God husbands who do not obey the word with reverent and chaste behavior (1 Pet. 3:1–2), extending the benefits of the gospel to their descendants.

125. WHAT ARE THE DUTIES OF SIBLINGS TO EACH OTHER?

Born of the same parents and raised in the same love, siblings should care for their parents and share together the responsibilities of the family. They should love one another with brotherly affection (Rom. 12:10). Since people are from a common

origin and oriented to a common end, the Church seeks to realize God's plan that there is but one family under heaven and on earth for all humankind (Eph. 3:6). According to the will of the Heavenly Father, all people in Christ are brothers and sisters in God's family (Mt. 12:49–50). "Let therefore juniors by position honor those placed above them; let those placed above love their juniors."⁵ Brothers and sisters in the Church should be in unity with sympathy, loving their brethren with a tender heart and humble mind. As good heavenly soldiers, they should share weal and woe with the Church and unite all things in Christ, both things in heaven and things on earth (1 Pet. 3:8; Eph. 1:10).

126. WHAT KIND OF INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIP IS FRIENDSHIP?

Friendship is the extension of brotherhood and sisterhood in society, the vitality that sustains various social groups, and the basic form of Christian communion. Abraham was called the friend of God because he believed God (Jas. 2:23). Called friends by Jesus, people share His salvation and enter into His life in friendship when they fully commit themselves (Jn. 15:12–16). Everyone who loves God as the "great parent" loves all the creation as God's child (1 John 5:1). According to Matteo Ricci, "Although my friends and I have separate bodies, within our separate bodies our hearts are one."⁶ Despite differences in sex, personality, talent, property, and virtue, friends preserve and fulfill each other in communion with God. This is the important mission of the Church on the earth: only if ethnic

5 Saint Benedict, *The Rule of Saint Benedict*, trans. W.K. Lowther Clarke (London: S.P.C.K., 1931), ch. 63.

6 This is my own translation of Matteo Ricci's saying "you zhi yu wo sui you er shen er shen zhi nei qi xin yi er yi, 友之于我，虽有二身，二身之内，其心一而已" in his book *On Friendship* (交友论, *Jiao You Lun*). For the English translation of this book, see *On Friendship: One Hundred Maxims for a Chinese Prince*, trans. Timothy Billings (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).

groups, nations, and various social groups act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood can the social nature of humans be truly realized (*Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, Article 1).

127. HOW DO BELIEVERS ESTEEM THEIR MINISTERS?

Ministers are chosen by the Holy Spirit, succeeding the right of the twelve Apostles, preaching the gospel on the earth, celebrating the sacraments, and serving the Church, the believers, and the world. “As the apostles preached throughout the countryside and in the cities, they appointed the first fruits of their ministries as bishops and deacons of those who were about to believe, testing them by the Spirit.”⁷ Deacons, presbyters, and the bishop are “over you in the Lord and admonish you”; thus believers should “esteem them very highly in love” (1 Thes. 5:12–13). Believers should meekly and patiently subject themselves to their ministers’ preaching of salvation and “receive with meekness the implanted word” (Jas. 1:21). They should obey the Lord and submit to their ministers (Heb. 13:17), because those who hear their ministers hear Christ (Lk. 10:16). In pastoral works, believers and ministers should strive together and entrust each other in prayer (Rom. 15:30). Believers should provide what their ministers need on earth: “Let him who is taught the word share all good things with him who teaches” (Gal. 6:6).

⁷ Clement of Rome, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, in *The Apostolic Fathers: The Loeb Classical Library 24*, ed. and trans. Bart D. Ehrman (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2003), ch. 42.

128. WHAT ARE THE DUTIES OF MINISTERS TO BELIEVERS?

Since the Church is the mother of believers, as representatives of the Church, ministers should imitate Christ's self-giving to bring dear and tender love to and nurture believers' souls (1 Thes. 2:7–8). Ministers should preach Christ's gospel patiently, completely, sincerely, frequently, and faithfully; they should be unfailing both in patience and in teaching to convince, rebuke, and exhort people, so as to establish the Church of God (2 Tim. 4:2). When preaching the Word of God, ministers should follow the gospel entrusted by God (1 Thes. 2:4). To be good shepherds, ministers should be watchful over believers and tend them with willingness and cheerfulness (1 Pet. 5:2). Ministers should remember believers in prayer, and praise accordingly the grace of God that is shown on them (Eph. 1:15–16). As shepherds chosen by Christ and consecrated by the Holy Spirit, ministers should be an example of believers in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity (1 Tim. 4:12).

129. WHAT ARE THE DUTIES OF CITIZENS TO PUBLIC POWERS?

Public powers such as kingdoms and governments are approved by God. Without public powers to maintain order, society would fall into greater evil (Judg. 21:25). Christians should “be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do right” (1 Pet. 2:13–14). It is the duty of Christians as citizens of the world to honor the emperor or other representatives of public powers out of fear of God (1 Pet. 2:17). Out of respect for common good and public

orders, as well as in obedience to authority, Christians, as citizens, are obliged to pay taxes and defend their country, and to serve the country willingly by participating in political affairs (Rom. 13:7). As the citizens of the heavenly kingdom, Christians should obey the laws of the heavenly kingdom and look forward to its coming, also thereby deriving love and duty for their earthly countries. In prayer, Christians should pray for and express thanksgiving to public powers and their representatives. As Paul exhorts, “First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all humans; for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way” (1 Tim. 2:1–2).

130. WHAT ARE THE DUTIES OF PUBLIC POWERS TO CITIZENS?

The existence of humans and their social groups is prior to that of kingdoms, governments, and other public powers. Governments originate from the concession of God (1 Sam. 8:7–9) and should keep their boundaries: “Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s” (Lk. 20:25). Governments exist to safeguard and realize human dignity, to promote the public interests of people and society, and especially to protect the basic right of freedom of religious belief. The essence of power is not to govern but to serve. Governments should make good laws for the interest of the public, to govern people with prudence, justice, and kindness, and to appoint honest and capable officials who will fulfill their duties according to the law, praising the good, punishing the wrong, and carrying out their duties with dedication (Ex. 18:19–23). Governments should especially protect those who are weak, poor, or in trouble. The respect and protection for basic rights is the touchstone of a just, law-based, and loving society (Deut. 14:29).

131. HOW SHOULD WE UNDERSTAND THE POLITICAL IDENTITY OF THE CHURCH?

Jesus said, “Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s” (Mt. 22:21). The Church is the seed and beginning of the heavenly kingdom on the earth, the preacher of God’s gospel of salvation, and the interpreter and defender of all human communion and legitimate public order. As the soul of the world, she should be more than a political group. The Church should also build relationships with other political groups based on “mutual respect of belief, and solidarity and cooperation in political affairs” instead of putting herself outside the world. As for public events, the Church should make ethical judgments on the basis of her spiritual and moral mission. It is her duty to the world to clarify and defend human dignity and the basic rights of humans based on the spirit of the gospel and the principle of common good.



THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT

You shall not kill

132. WHAT IS THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT?

The sixth commandment is “You shall not kill” (Ex. 20:13; Deut. 5:17).

133. WHY SHOULD PEOPLE RESPECT THEIR OWN AND OTHERS’ LIFE?

Human life comes from the divine Creator with whom people remain always in unique and mysterious relationship. God alone is the Lord of human life: no one can under any circumstances claim for himself the right directly to destroy an innocent human being. Destroying others’ lives not only offends human dignity but also despises God’s divinity. “Whoever sheds the blood of a human, by a human shall his blood be shed; for God made humans in his own image” (Gen. 9:6). People should try their best to protect their own and others’ lives.

134. HOW DOES JESUS INTERPRET THIS COMMANDMENT?

Born as a human, the Word of God grants people eternal life. He expands the commandment that you shall not kill into all levels of life. He recalls this commandment and extends it to the depths of life by adding to it the proscription of anger, hatred, and vengeance (Mt. 5:21–22). He also calls His disciples to love their enemies. When Jesus was arrested, his disciples stretched out their hands and drew their swords to protect Him. Then Jesus said, “Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword” (Mt. 26:52). Jesus collects all weapons instead of retaliating violence with violence.

135. HOW SHOULD PEOPLE VIEW HUMAN BODY?

The human body is created by God (Gen. 2:7). Humans are created by God as “a living soul,” which means a unity of soul and body. The Holy Son incarnates in a human form and takes the human body (1 John 1:1), which is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19). People will resurrect on the last days to gain glorious bodies (1 Cor. 15:44). Taking appropriate care of one’s own and others’ bodies corresponds to human goodness and public welfare, requiring the assistance of the entire society. It is a basic human right to enjoy basic living conditions such as safety, food, clothing, shelter, health care, basic education, employment, and social insurance. However, physical health is not the entire meaning of human life. Instead of the absence of disease, health is the ability to withstand disease, as well as the acceptance, affirmation, and love of fragile and mortal lives.

136. HOW SHOULD PEOPLE RESPECT BODILY INTEGRITY?

The human body, in which human life is realized, shares the dignity of human beings who are created in the image and likeness of God. The commandment that you shall not kill primarily means that people should not hurt their own and others' bodies. Physical violence against human beings, such as kidnapping, torture, amputation, mutilation, and forced sterilization is badly wrong.

137. HOW SHOULD PEOPLE RESPECT THEIR SPIRITUAL LIVES?

An integrated life is composed of both the vitality of the body and the desire of the soul. Not to kill means to respect people's soul and therefore not to suppress, control, damage, or trample people's spiritual lives. To seduce, incite, and instigate others to do wrong, as well as to set a bad example—these are not only injuries to virtue and justice but also invisible murders that lead to the spiritual death of others. About this Jesus warns, "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened round his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe to the world for temptations to sin! For it is necessary that temptations come, but woe to the man by whom the temptation comes!" (Mt. 18:6–7). Those who undertake the work of spiritual guidance or education should be alert. In particular, those who enact laws, regulations, or institutions, and those who control, guide, and participate in public opinion should be accountable for the evil they cause when they incite others and set bad examples.

138. HOW SHOULD PEOPLE TREAT THE DEAD?

Through death, one takes leave of the labors of time and enters eternity. It is respect for life itself to help the dying live their last moments of this life in dignity and peace with solemnity. The dead should be buried according to appropriate proprieties and with respect, love, and hope. Burying the dead in accordance with propriety is to commemorate their labor and kindness in this life, to respect their body as the temple of the Holy Spirit, and to hope for the glorious resurrection of their body in the age to come. The service of burying the dead is one of the traditional seven good works of the Church.

139. WHY SHOULD THE FETUS BE PROTECTED?

Since the fetus is known by God the Creator from conception, it is an integral being with inalienable dignity of life (Jer. 1:5; Ps. 139:15). The fundamental rights of lives do not come from the approval or concession of society. Instead, they are from God's loving creation and are inherent in human existence itself. The fetus is the most vulnerable in society; without the protection of the fetus, there would be no justice and equality in society. A prenatal diagnosis that seeks to produce human beings selected according to gender is the equivalent of a death sentence. Producing human embryos for exploitation as disposable biological or medical material violates the commandment that you shall not kill. Certain attempts to influence chromosomic or genetic inheritance in order to gain some so-called "good qualities" despise the uniqueness of life and kill life.

140. HOW SHOULD PEOPLE VIEW EUTHANASIA?

Both death and life are mysteries. In the face of the ultimate pain, the limitations and vulnerability of human beings become more obvious. People should accompany and care for those whose lives are diminished or weakened in love and hope. Although an act of choosing euthanasia to eliminate suffering is conducted in good faith and with the consent of those whose lives will be ended, its essence remains that of a murderous act. Putting life in the hands of humans instead of God violates the commandment of not killing. Although euthanasia is intended to end suffering, it kills the person who is suffering.

141. WHAT IS STOPPING OVERTREATMENT?

Stopping overtreatment means accepting the fact that people cannot prevent death, thus stopping expensive, dangerous, and abnormal treatments that are not proportional to the desired effects. In the decision of stopping overtreatment, the patient's own reasonable will and legitimate interests should be respected. To stop overtreatment is neither to take death as the goal nor to take death as the way to end pain. Instead, it means to accept the inevitable fragility and death of life. Therefore, stopping overtreatment is different from euthanasia in essence. It is a natural expression of selfless love to provide special palliative care for the sick at the end of their lives. The Church of Christ and his disciples should especially be involved in this care.

142. HOW SHOULD PEOPLE VIEW SUICIDE?

God is the sovereign Master of life. Life is a gift from God and is maintained in relationship with Him. People are the just stewards rather than the owners of life. No one can end his life directly. Suicide oversteps God's dominion over life, violates the natural law that life loves itself, breaks the ties of solidarity with family and neighbors, and brings harm to neighbors. Suicide violates the commandment of not killing. However, instead of judging people who commit suicide, people should pray with sympathy for the salvation of their souls.

143. DOES LEGITIMATE DEFENSE VIOLATE THE COMMANDMENT THAT YOU SHALL NOT KILL?

Legitimate defense is an act to defend one's own and others' right to life. The act of self-defense can have a double effect: the preservation of one's own life, and the killing of the aggressor. The one is intended; the other is not. A just legal judgement, a righteous war, and necessary self-defense all preserve one's own and others' lives, and the harm brought by these behaviors is not a deliberate violation of this commandment (Num. 35:30; Ex. 22:2). Legitimate defense can be not only a right but also a grave duty for someone responsible for others' lives. However, self-defense should not be undertaken with more violence than is actually necessary.

144. DO RIGHTEOUS PENAL SANCTIONS VIOLATE THE COMMANDMENT OF NOT KILLING?

In this limited life, the purpose of penal sanctions is to prevent crime, preserve life safety and social order, correct the disorders caused by crime, and guide people to pursue justice and happiness. Therefore, public authorities have the right and obligation to punish offenders according to laws. Righteous penal sanctions contribute to the correction of offenders. Moreover, if offenders can accept penal sanctions consciously, their guilt can be healed, and their lives can be renewed (Is. 13:11).

145. HOW SHOULD PEOPLE VIEW WAR?

Because of human sin, jealousy, distrust, and arrogance, as well as economic and social injustice, peace is always threatened with the shadow of war. Any war will lead to the destruction of life; therefore, in order to fulfill the commandment of not killing, every person and government should strive to avoid war. In reality, when all efforts to maintain peace have been exhausted without the elimination of war, the government has the right to resort to military force for self-defense, which is traditionally called a “just war.” A just war should be subject to the following conditions: firstly, the damage inflicted by the aggressor on the nation or community of nations must be lasting, grave, and certain; secondly, all other means of putting an end to the conflict must have been shown to be impractical or ineffective; thirdly, there must be serious prospects of success; fourthly, the use of arms must not produce evils and disorders graver than the evil to be eliminated. War, however, always constitutes a failure of humanity. Acts of war such as the

production and the sale of arms, the accumulation of arms, and overarmament, all of which are ethically wrong, often bring greater risks. The disciples of Christ should commit to uniting in love so as to overcome sin and eliminate war.

146. WHY DOES THIS COMMANDMENT PROSCRIBE ANGER AND HATRED?

As a reaction to injustice, anger often negates others, killing others in one's heart (Mt. 5:22). Hatred, contrary to the principles of justice and love, is the desire to avenge and even destroy others. This is one of the "deadly impulses." Jesus calls disciples to "love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you," which means He calls people to put an end to hatred and love their enemies. People should obey His command, heal the anger and hatred in their hearts with love and prayer, and lead the world to the true peace so that they may be sons of their Father who is in heaven (Mt. 5:44–45).

147. WHAT OTHER ASPECTS ARE CONTAINED IN THE COMMANDMENT THAT YOU SHALL NOT KILL?

This commandment directly proscribes suicide (Acts 16:28) as well as unjustly depriving others of life. In a more profound sense, this commandment also proscribes the tendencies or desires in one's heart to harm one's own or others' lives. These tendencies or desires include all kinds of bad spiritual tendencies and habits that make the human heart tired and injured, such as "dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life" (Lk. 21:34), "passion [that] makes the bones rot" (Prov. 14:30), and "a downcast spirit [that] dries up the bones" (Prov. 17:22). This commandment also includes the proscription of hurting

others with wicked words, for example, “if you bite and devour one another, take heed that you are not consumed by one another” (Gal. 5:15), as well as using rash words like sword thrusts, treating one’s father and mother with contempt, extorting sojourners in one’s midst, wronging the fatherless and widows, and slandering others, which is like shedding blood (Ezek. 22:7–9).

148. WHY DID CHRIST TRULY REALIZE THIS COMMANDMENT?

As the prince of peace (Is. 9:5), Christ brings hostility to an end through his sacrifice on the cross (Eph. 2:16), thereby reconciling people to God. He sent the Holy Spirit to establish the Church as the path and place for the reconciliation between God and humans and for the unity of humanity. Christ calls His disciples to renounce violence and to defend their own rights through peaceful self-defense without harming the rights of others or groups. Protecting people’s property, ensuring free communication among people, respecting the dignity of individuals and groups, practicing brotherhood among people, and cultivating a sense of unity between humanity and nature—all are essential ways to establish peace on earth. Peace does not just mean the absence of war or checks and balances based on equal power. Instead, peace results from fairness and justice, the harmony of order, and more importantly the fruit of love. To imitate Christ’s love and self-emptying and to commit to building and maintaining peace are to obey the commandment of not killing in a deeper sense.

149. HOW DOES CHRIST REALIZE PEACE THROUGH LOVE AND SELF-EMPTYING?

Human history is interwoven by two basic threads. On the one hand, God continually gives people life; on the other hand, humans continually deprive others of life through violence. In the first human family, Cain killed his brother Abel (Gen. 4:8–10). Since then, bloodshed has existed throughout human history (Hos. 4:2). Jesus bled on the cross for people. Blood is life, and Jesus' blood on the cross accuses people of the ferocity of their sinful nature and their devastation of peace, realizing God's plan for salvation. Through complete self-giving, Jesus brings life, happiness, and peace to people (Rom. 3:25). Sacrifice, self-emptying, and forgiveness are the way of peace that is revealed to us by Christ.



THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT

You shall not commit adultery

150. WHAT IS THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT?

The seventh commandment is “You shall not commit adultery” (Ex. 20:14; Deut. 5:17). Jesus preached this commandment to people’s hearts in a deeper sense: “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” (Mt. 5:27–28) This commandment covers sexuality, love, marriage, and other intimate relationships of human life.

151. WHAT IS SEXUALITY?

Sexuality is the basic form of human existence. Receiving God’s blessings as different sexes, male and female are called “human.” “When God created humans, he made them in the likeness of God. Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named

them Man when they were created” (Gen. 5:1–2). A human is a unity of body and soul, both of which are addressed in sexuality. Sexuality not only separates male from female but also brings them the desire to interact with one another. Sexuality is deeply involved in one’s love, marriage, and family, thus affecting all the social communities established by people. The sexes of humans and their meanings as endowed by God should be fully understood under the providence and fulfillment of God for humans and all other beings.

152. WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN?

Firstly, God created humans as male and female in his own image (Gen. 1:27). Men and women have equal dignity as human beings. Secondly, the categorization of male and female means there are differences between the sexes. Physical, psychological, and spiritual differences make the two sexes attract, complement, and need each other; thus they are oriented towards union in love, marriage, and family. “Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh” (Gen. 2:24). Lastly, men and women are “fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it” (Gen. 1:28) in the union of sexuality and love, which symbolizes God’s creativity and mercy for people. The difference, communication, and communion between male and female are the reflection of the triune God in love and communion, the way of completing the nature of men and women, and the starting point and foundation of the harmony of groups and society. Christ came to the world and reaffirmed God’s commandment of not committing adultery to restore the original purity of love and communion between men and women.

153. WHAT IS CHASTITY?

Chastity is to integrate one's body and spirit with respect to sexuality and therefore to realize the inner unity of one's bodily and spiritual being. Chastity means to love freely instead of being enslaved by desires and emotions. Chastity integrates sexual activities within marriage. That is to say, men and women give themselves as gifts of love to their relationship with each other, so that sexuality can be oriented towards the fullness of human nature and fulfill human dignity. Firstly, chastity means people can control sexual desire at will instead of being dominated by it. Secondly, chastity means sexuality is united with love and thus sexual desire is purified and improved. Lastly, chastity can improve human spirituality, enable people to train in self-mastery and self-giving, and promote their spiritual faithfulness and love. Chastity in sexuality is to train for chastity to Christ and the Church (Eph. 5:31–32).

154. HOW DOES CHASTITY SHAPE PEOPLE'S LIVES OF VIRTUE?

Chastity represents temperance and freedom. It enables us to overcome blind impulses and to enjoy the pleasures brought by the free pursuit of perfect goodness in permeating, leading, and controlling desires. Chastity makes us the master of desire rather than slaves to it. Temperance is freedom and self-giving in freedom. Just like all other virtues, chastity is the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 4:22–23), the imitation of Christ's loyalty and purity, and the grace given by God in people's constant prayer. Chastity witnesses God's faithfulness and mercy in front of neighbors.

155. HOW CAN CHASTITY BE TRAINED IN LIFE?

Chastity is an important foundation for a life of virtue. Gaining power from God's truth, chastity is realized in daily life. People remain faithful to the covenant with the triune God and draw strength in keeping chaste through unceasing prayer. We imitate Christ to crucify the flesh with its passions and desires (Gal. 5:24). In every moment of life, we keep our heart with all vigilance (Prov. 4:23). We work hard to keep our body and spirit from sinful desires and actions so as to be free from lust (Prov. 4:23). We keep temperate in diet, since gluttony, alcohol abuse, and lechery often co-exist (Jer. 5:8).

156. HOW SHOULD SEXUALITY BE ORDERED TO CONJUGAL LOVE?

The differences between men and women make them attract and desire each other. A man and a woman get married to one another, and their sexual union is brought into their marriage, fecundity, and family, so as to assist in God's work of creation and to reflect the triune God's inner mystery through the love of mutual giving. Sex between a husband and wife is not only a physical matter but also the most intimate giving of body and spirit. It expresses and fosters the self-giving between men and women, bringing them joy and pleasure. As each other's "bone of bones" and "flesh of flesh," husband and wife become one flesh (Gen. 2:23–24). Through the union of spouses, marriage becomes God's blessing towards creation. It helps man and woman realize happiness in serving each other, enabling lives to be transmitted and the earth to be ruled (Gen. 2:18; 1:28).

157. WHAT IS CHASTITY IN MARRIAGE?

Marriage means a man and a woman give themselves as gifts to each other definitely and totally. They are no longer two persons but unite with each other and become one flesh (Gen. 2:24). The conjugal covenant requires spouses to keep fidelity to each other, so as to maintain the exclusiveness, uniqueness, and indissolubility of marriage. Chastity in marriage integrates sexual desire into conjugal love, centered on mutual giving, and realizes a longing for each other through the temperance and management of sexual desire. Chastity between a husband and wife completes their sexual life, motivates sexuality with love, and expresses loves through sexuality. Through chastity, the sexual relationship in marriage encompasses sexual pleasure, intimate love and the vitality of fecundity.

158. WHAT DOES FECUNDITY MEAN FOR MARRIAGE?

Conjugal sexuality and love have the power of giving birth to new lives. Conjugal love is ordered to “be fruitful and multiply.” The bearing and raising of children are not something added onto conjugal love but the fruit and fulfillment of that love of mutual giving and the sharing of God’s parental nature (Acts 17:26). Children are gifts given by God to human marriage (Ps. 127:3). Married couples are the interpreters and cooperators of God’s love when fulfilling the mission of bearing and educating children.

159. WHAT KIND OF THINGS VIOLATE THE DIGNITY OF MARRIAGE?

A man and a woman adore each other, decisively and completely give themselves to each other in marriage, and unite in communion with God. As people's first fruits of love and communion, marriage and family are challenged and destroyed continually by sin. It is a violation of the dignity of marriage to refuse to take marriage as the only noble form of uniting body and spirit, for example in concubinage, trial marriage, and adultery. Concubinage means that a man and a woman are sexually intimate but refuse to acknowledge it publicly in the legal form of marriage. Concubinage is a fragile union in which the partners lack trust in each other, in themselves, and in the future. It weakens the sense of fidelity, violates the dignity of marriage, and destroys the idea of family. Taking marriage as an experiment, trial marriage violates the nature of marriage in essence, which is a wholehearted and decisive love of mutual giving. Trial marriage means the two cannot be honest and faithful, and it is unacceptable in real love. Adultery means that two partners, of whom at least one is married to another person, have sexual relationship with each other. The adulterer violates his promise to marriage and harms the personality and rights of his spouse. Adultery also threatens the happiness of children and puts the whole family at risk. Believers should imitate Christ's spirit of generosity and sacrifice and bravely seek the life path of fullness in marriage.

160. WHAT THINGS ARE UNCHASTE?

Broken and twisted, unchaste life is dominated by lust and is usually revealed in three aspects: thoughts, words, and actions.

Firstly, lust is unchastity in thoughts. Jesus said, “everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Mt. 5:28). Secondly, from the perspective of words, all lascivious and filthy words and speech that seduce, tempt, or incite someone to be dissolute have no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God (Eph. 5:3–5). Lastly, all kinds of actions stimulated by unbridled desires for the purpose of sexual pleasure are unchaste, such as masturbation, homosexual acts, and fornication. Unchaste actions that involve sexual relationships of buying, deceiving, and coercing others—for example, adultery, prostitution, whoring, and rape—violate the dignity of persons. In particular, producing, disseminating, and using pornography make sexuality an industrialized commodity, offending human dignity seriously and thereby demonstrating lust in a real sense.



THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT

You shall not steal

161. WHAT IS THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT?

The eighth commandment is “you shall not steal” (Ex. 20:15; Deut. 5:19). Jesus also confirmed this commandment (Mt. 19:18).

162. WHAT DOES THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT MEAN?

This commandment defines the relation between people and property. It acknowledges the private ownership of goods and requires people to manage their goods with love and justice as principles. Firstly, it commands the respect for property rights and forbids unjustly taking, keeping, or damaging others’ goods (Gen. 23). Secondly, it requires people to manage earthly goods, to respect the fruits of human labor, and to trade with others honestly with fairness and justice as principles (Deut. 25:13–14), so that cultivators will get their own land and laborers will obtain their own property. This commandment commands not only respect for goods and,

more importantly, people and their labor (Lev. 19:13) but also for the integrity of creation. Lastly, this commandment points out that the fundamental value of goods is to share; thus it asks people to respect the common use of goods, so that private goods can serve the common good of humankind (Gen. 1:26–29). This commandment demands that people’s use of goods should be oriented in love towards God and neighbors.

163. HOW DOES GOD ENTRUST GOODS TO MEN?

God created all beings in heaven and on earth, so that people could settle down in the world (Ps. 65: 9–13). He let all of humankind have dominion over all the earth (Gen. 1:26). People should “till and keep” the earth (Gen. 2:15), govern and manage all beings by labor, and enjoy their fruits. All growing things and laboring humans unite with each other in God’s grace to bring goods to humans. People devote their goods to God in return for His love, which realizes the essence that goods belong to God. God helped humans possess goods after falling into sin to keep them from the threats of poverty and violence, to protect human freedom and dignity, and to realize the value of human labor. However, all of creation is originally owned by all people; in essence, possessing goods should serve the common use of goods.

164. WHAT ARE PROPERTY RIGHTS?

Property rights include the rights to occupy, use, profit from, and dispose of goods in a proper manner. Property right enables people to gain necessities in life from the earth, to realize human freedom and dignity, and to fulfill the duty granted by God to be the

tiller and keeper of all beings (Gen. 2:15). People show the virtues of generosity and love through goods, promoting peace among people (Eph. 4:28). People who possess goods are managers favored by God instead of exclusive holders. The private attribute of property should be oriented towards a natural and original brotherhood among people.

165. WHY SHOULD HUMANS RESPECT THE CREATED WORLD?

The universe that is created by God is integrated. All beings are created through the words of God. Humanity's social nature as creation is manifested as the internal connection between humans and God and between humans and other beings. On the one hand, everything that has value and significance maintains a unique relationship with its Creator; on the other hand, it exists as a part of an integrity that proclaims the power and glory of God. Light and darkness, sky and sea, wind and fire, water and soil, plants and animals—all are created prior to humans. All beings praise God through their existence (Ps. 148:7–13). Only by being kind to all of creation and uniting with them in Christ can humans realize their fullness. Humanity's dominion over nature, plants, and animals, as granted by God (Gen. 1:19–20; 9:3), is not unlimited and absolute. Such a dominion should follow the common good of past, present, and future humanity. People should respect the created world with temperance, fear, and love.

166. WHAT VIRTUES SHOULD PEOPLE SHOW IN THE MATTER OF GOODS?

It is reasonable for people to possess goods. Property serves as the basic guarantee of human freedom and dignity as well as the positive connection between people and other beings. Private ownership of property keeps people from usurping others' property rights, encouraging them to cultivate temperance, righteousness, and generosity with respect to goods (Gal. 5:22–23). Temperance means to exercise prudence with goods and to control attachment to worldly things. Temperance brings people freedom in the matter of goods, so that they can avoid being enslaved by goods and money (2 Cor. 5:22–23). Righteousness includes not only respect for the property and labor rights of others but also the virtues of honesty, fairness, and loyalty in transactions. Generosity with respect to goods means that one shows brotherly love to others and hospitality to strangers. It also practices Christ's commands of loving one's neighbor as oneself (Heb. 13:1–2).

167. WHAT ACTIONS VIOLATE THIS COMMANDMENT?

This commandment forbids any actions that usurp the property of others against their reasonable will. Those actions cover a wide range, such as unjustly taking or keeping others' goods, speculation by taking advantage of the ignorance or hardship of another, excessive expenses and waste, fraud, tax evasion, blackmail, usury, corruption, appropriating common goods for private purposes, work poorly done, forgery or default in contracts, willfully damaging private or public property, paying unjust wages, belittling people as "talking tools" to enslave them, and trading laborers as commodities.

168. WHAT IS THE FAR-REACHING
SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS COMMANDMENT
FOR ECONOMIC LIFE?

This commandment points out that economic life should have an ethical dimension and motivates people to form correct judgments about property and other socio-economic issues. It also brings people the profound awareness that goods given by God to all humankind should be distributed to everyone practically under the principles of justice, common good, and love. On this basis, people can have a proper understanding of the ownership of property, the human right to work, the principles of economic, social, and political life, social charitable activities, and so forth.

169. HOW DO ECCLESIASTICAL TRADITIONS
VIEW THE ETHICAL PRINCIPLES OF
ECONOMIC LIFE?

The Christian Church herself is neither an economic nor political entity. However, based on God's eternal plan for human beings, taking the spirit of the gospel, human dignity, social justice, and world peace as principles, the churches usually hold that social and economic affairs should free people from insufficiency, promote their free development, and lead them to perfect goodness and to redeem souls. From the principle of the Christian gospel, taking economic activities as the ultimate goal and taking profit as the only rule will corrupt society and disorganize social order. Taking economic factors as the only factor in defining people's social relations is inconsistent with human nature. Belittling people as tools for profit is the worship of money and a modern form of slavery. Managing the economy with a centralized plan will breed corruption and undermine social

relations, whereas leaving economic life to market rules will destroy social fairness and justice.

170. HOW DO CHRISTIANS PARTICIPATE IN SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC LIFE?

Nowadays, the increasing unfairness of wealth distribution in the world underscores the special significance of the commandment that one shall not steal. The Church's mission lies in neither participating in economic activities directly nor getting involved in political agendas. However, economic activity is both the field and school of humanity. Believers have the responsibility to participate in political, social, and economic life. With zeal for imitating Christ and fulfilling God's commandments, we should understand the true meaning of the commandment of not stealing. With love, peace, justice, and the common good as destinations, Christians should practice what they preach, cooperating with others, suppressing evils, and witnessing the vitality of the gospel in worldly affairs.

171. WHAT IS WORK?

In God's creation, humans accept the mission to work so they can govern the earth and other beings, glorify God, and assist His creation with their gifts and creativity as bestowed by God (Gen. 1:26–28). After falling into sin, people break the harmony with God, other people, and the world, after which work becomes toilsome and painful (Gen. 3:17–19). Born as a human, Christ quietly engaged in worldly work in Nazareth, and He was the elder brother of workers. Through suffering on the cross, He realized God's salvation, so that all of creation could restore harmony with the Creator through Him. In earthly toil and in faithful and creative service, humans unite

themselves with Jesus, bear the cross with Him, and participate in His work of redeeming and recreating the world. Through people's work in this world, the Holy Spirit constantly renews and sanctifies the world, inspiring and vitalizing the world (1 Cor. 12:7–11). Through work, humans glorify God, fulfill their gifts and potential, meet personal and family needs, and benefit society. The commandment of not stealing protects the human right to work and ensures that one can be treated justly in work.

172. WHAT'S THE RELATION BETWEEN WORK AND HUMAN DIGNITY?

In work, humans constantly use, discover, and improve the potential in them, uniting with all beings. Through work and its achievements, people collaborate with other beings and lead them to worship and praise God. Humans fulfill God's commandments in work and become who they are (Gen. 2:15). Humans are both the creator and the beneficiary of work. The primary value of work is humans themselves. People work for themselves but not for work's sake. In work, people unite with others and jointly realize their dominion over the earth. Through work, humans gain property, free themselves, their families, and other people from insufficiency, obtain resources to support personal and family life, and guarantee human freedom and dignity. Access to employment should be available to qualified persons on an equal basis regardless of gender, health, or ethnicity. The formulation of economic and social policies should take employment protection as one of the basic orientations.

173. WHAT IS A JUST WAGE?

As the legitimate fruit of work, a just wage recognizes the social nature of workers and respects human nature and family dignity. Unjust wages, arrears of wages, and unpaid wages all violate the commandment of not stealing. The Bible also gives a stern warning about this: “the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts” (Jas. 5:4). A just wage should meet the physical, social, cultural, and spiritual needs of workers and their families, taking into consideration personal skills and work efficiency, industrial benefits, and common good.

174. WHAT ROLE SHOULD PUBLIC POWERS PLAY IN PROTECTING PROPERTY RIGHTS AND THE RIGHT TO WORK?

Modern economic activities centered on property and work must be carried out under institutional, judicial, and political protection, which belongs to the responsibilities of public powers. In order to put the commandment of not stealing into practice, public powers should practically protect personal freedom and private property, ensure a stable economic environment, and provide efficient public services. Public powers shall not usurp others' private property or interfere with normal economic activities. Instead, public powers shall make sure that workers and producers can enjoy the fruits befitting their labor. Public powers ensure that economic activities follow the commandment of not stealing and encourage people to work honestly and efficiently, to increase wealth, and to inject more human energy into the created world.

175. HOW SHOULD WE TREAT THE POOR ACCORDING TO THE COMMANDMENT OF NOT STEALING?

Those who have nothing are poor. Poverty, being extended to many human aspects, is the systematic result of sin. But God's transformation of the world is often realized through the poor and the marginalized (Is. 61:1). Jesus humbled himself as a poor man to take the consequences of sin, so that humans could share the abundance in God (Mt. 8:20). The Spirit anointed Jesus and required Him to preach good news to the poor (Lk. 4:18), who were "the least of" Jesus' brethren (Mt. 25:40). The commandment of not stealing requires the disciples of Christ to pay attention to the poor, to support them, and to give them the things needed for the body (Jas. 2:15–16). Sharing property with the poor is to realize the nature of property of serving the common good of humanity.

176. HOW DOES THE BIBLE EXPLAIN THE LOVE FOR THE POOR?

In the life of God's people, caring for the poor and the marginalized has been an important part of the law, with this care constituting a vivid exposition on the commandment of not stealing. For instance, one shall not lend the poor money at interest (Lev. 25:37). The wages of a hired worker shall be paid in time (Lev. 19:13). One shall arrange institutional aid for the poor. "At the end of every three years, one shall bring forth all the tithe of his produce in the same year, and lay it up within his towns; and the people who have no portion or inheritance with you, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, who are within your towns, shall come and eat and be filled" (Deut. 14: 28–29). One shall not only love the poor, but also take care of

their dignity (Lev. 19: 9–10). Jesus requires his disciples to give to “one of the least of his brethren” food, drink, housing, clothing, medical care, and visitation (Mt. 25:34–46). Loving God and having mercy on brothers in need cannot be separated from each other (1 John 3:17). One shall work hard so that one may be able to give to those in need (Eph. 4:28).

177. CENTERING AROUND THIS COMMANDMENT, WHAT CHARITABLE TRADITIONS DOES THE CHURCH SHAPE?

As the triune God’s work of love, the Church shares goods and spiritual grace from God through social works of mercy so as to practice justice and witness fraternal charity. Following Jesus’ commandments, according to biblical traditions, the Church has a long history of charity, including charity in the material life called “corporal works of mercy” and charity in the mental life called “spiritual works of mercy.” The corporal works of mercy consist in feeding the hungry, providing drink for the thirsty, clothing the naked, sheltering the homeless, visiting the sick and imprisoned, and burying the dead (Mt. 25:34–40). Spiritual works of mercy include instructing, advising, consoling, comforting, forgiving, bearing wrongs patiently, and praying for others. These works of mercy show that Jesus bears human pain, serving as an intrinsic part for the Church to comfort, protect, and redeem human beings.

178. HOW DOES THE COMMANDMENT OF NOT STEALING REQUIRE ECOLOGICAL JUSTICE?

The commandment of not stealing requires respect for the integrity of creation. Property and work enable people to unite themselves with the created world. Greed for work and property, endless demands from nature, wanton exploitation of resources, and cruelty to animals—all of them not only violate the dignity of people as guardians and keepers but also take other lives in the ecological chain, including our forefathers and descendants. All animals, plants, and inanimate beings in the ecosystem should be oriented to the common good of past, present, and future humanity.



THE NINTH COMMANDMENT

You shall not bear false witness against
your neighbor

179. WHAT IS THE NINTH COMMANDMENT?

The ninth commandment is: “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor” (Ex. 20:16; Deut. 5:20). Jesus said, “Again you have heard that it was said to the men of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.’ But I say to you, do not swear at all.... Let what you say be simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’” (Mt. 5:33–37).

180. WHAT DOES THIS COMMANDMENT MEAN?

God, as the Truth of all creation, calls humans to witness Him with words and deeds. This commandment forbids people to misrepresent the truth. Any words or deeds against honesty are fundamental infidelities to God, undermine the covenant between God and humans, and contradict God’s purpose of creating humanity. People’s basic rights to speak and proclaim the truth and to witness

the truth with life are granted by God. This commandment confirms human freedom of speech and religion. The Ten Commandments are not ordered according to importance, for each commandment is equally important.

181. HOW CAN PEOPLE LIVE IN THE TRUTH?

God's words are the truth in which and for which humans are called to live. Jesus is the Word incarnated, and He is the way, the truth, and the life (Jn. 14:6). The whole of God's truth is manifested in Jesus Himself, as well as in all His words and actions. Humans bear witness to the truth, that is, to know Jesus, to commune with His words through lives, and to be sanctified by his truth (Jn. 17:17). The Father sent "the Spirit of truth" into humans to discipline and comfort them, so that they would obey Jesus' commands and bear witness to Him in words and deeds (Jn. 4:15–17).

182. HOW CAN PEOPLE BEAR WITNESS TO THE TRUTH?

To bear witness to the truth is to live truthfully and worship devoutly. It consists in showing oneself to be true both in words and in deeds. In words, "everyone speaks the truth with his neighbor" (Eph. 4:25), which means one should tell others what they ought to know. In deeds, to live truthfully is to take the Lord Jesus as an example and to witness Christ emptying Himself with a simple and modest life. Bearing witness to the truth is an act of justice that affirms the truth, makes it known, and brings people into it. Life itself becomes a witness in passing the faith in Christ's gospel from generation to generation through true words and deeds. People gathering together in the Church, preaching the gospel truthfully,

celebrating sacraments devoutly, combining life with worship—all bear witness to the truth before God.

183. WHAT ARE THE COMMON FORMS OF FALSE WITNESS?

False witness means both false words and actions that offend the truth. Firstly, perjury and falsehood are exemplified in the deliverance of a speech in public that is contrary to the truth, which is false witness. Perjury and falsehood not only cause injustice to innocent persons but also undermine people's trust in social public life. Secondly, rash judgement, detraction, and calumny, all of which belong to false witness, harm and destroy someone's reputation. Thirdly, flattery, adulation, and complaisance belong to false witness, for they encourage wrong and even evil acts. People should put away all malice and guile and insincerity and envy and slander (1 Pet. 2:1). Lies offend the truth directly, injure people's trust in the truth and in God's words, hurt the innocent who are involved in the lies, and undermine trust among people. Lies are the work of devil (Jn. 8:44).

184. WHAT DOES KEEPING THE TRUTH MEAN?

Respect for the truth does not mean that the right to tell the truth is unconditional. Respect for the truth requires people be cautious in order to maintain fraternal love and to be silent or use discreet language about the truth when it is unsuitable to be made public. No one should disclose truths such as professional secrets and personal privacy to someone who has no right to know (Prov. 25:9–10). Divulging someone's privacy violates the commandment of not bearing false witness.

185. HOW SHOULD WE BE CAUTIOUS ABOUT OTHERS' WORDS, DEEDS, AND WITNESSES?

Christians should treat others' words, deeds, and witnesses as kindly and seriously as possible. Every good Christian ought to be eager to interpret the statement of a neighbor positively rather than condemning it. And if one cannot interpret it favorably, one should ask how the other means it. If the meaning is wrong, one should correct the person with love; if this is not enough, one should search out every appropriate means through which, by understanding the statement in a good way, it may be saved.⁸

186. WHAT IS THE ETHICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS COMMANDMENT FOR INFORMATION DISSEMINATION?

The ancient commandment of not bearing false witness should be the core value of the modern media. This commandment requires that the content disseminated by the media should be true and complete, instead of being deliberately concealed or adulterated; and the way of dissemination should be honest and appropriate, instead of being exaggerated, distorted, or covered up. The purpose of dissemination is to tell the truth and serve the common good, rather than to manipulate public opinion or gain economic benefits (Eph. 4:25). Whether in obtaining or disseminating information, people should protect human dignity and rights, following the guidance of conscience and morality. Fake news is out of human sin to manipulate and dominate others, thus against this commandment.

⁸ Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius: A Translation and Commentary*, trans. George E. Ganss (Chicago:Loyola University Press, 1992), no. 22.

Amid highly developed and even explosive modern information, this commandment also reminds people, as users of the media and receivers of information, that they should deal with different kinds of information with caution and should discipline themselves with a clear and upright conscience to resist the negative effects of information (Jas. 1:26).

187. HOW DOES THIS COMMANDMENT
REMINDE PEOPLE TO BE VIGILANT ABOUT
PUBLIC OPINION MANIPULATION?

Public opinion manipulation is when some people or social organizations systematically distort and fabricate facts, dominate the public voice through the media, bribe or coerce witnesses to make false testimony, and suppress or ruin evidence unfavorable for them, so that public opinion can serve their own interests. The manipulation of public opinion, which serves as the domination of evil over people's words, deeds, and lives, hurts individual's integrity and honesty and destroys social morality. The manipulation of public opinion seriously offends the commandment of not bearing false witness.

188. ACCORDING TO THIS COMMANDMENT,
HOW SHOULD PEOPLE REMEMBER THE PAST?

God's salvation is done in history. Born as a human, Christ participates in human history. Only by truly remembering the past and truly looking forward to the future can people truly live in the present. The Israelites, at an important moment of history, renewed their covenant with God by retelling their past (Jn. 24; Neh. 9). The words and sacraments of the Church are always centered on

the passion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. To remember the past truthfully is what people should do to obey the commandment of not bearing false witness, showing their respect for the truth. Reflecting on the past with justice will enable people to move on the path of justice and truth. Focusing on Jesus' sufferings on the cross and His resurrection requires people to purify their memory with love and forgiveness, so that they can be reconciled with God in Christ's peace and resurrection.

189. HOW DOES ART WITNESS THE TRUTH?

Full of the spiritual beauty, truth itself always possesses a mystery beyond description. Art is a kind of "language" that conveys things that are difficult to express with words, such as the beauty of God, the vitality and order of nature, and the depth and transcendence of the soul (Ps. 27:4). Through art, people witness God's truth and goodness. Art is the unique gift of the human heart given by God as well as a wisdom of creativity and handworks. Art combines knowledge with technique and brings the ineffable truth into the human heart in a way that is inaccessible to our sensory organs. Genuine art leads people to praise and admire the triune God, who creates, redeems, and sanctifies all beings.



THE TENTH COMMANDMENT

You shall not covet

190. WHAT IS THE TENTH COMMANDMENT?

This is a comprehensive commandment: “Neither shall you covet your neighbor’s wife; and you shall not desire your neighbor’s house, his field, or his manservant, or his maidservant, his ox, or his ass, or anything that is your neighbor’s” (Deut. 5:21; Ex. 20:17).

191. WHAT DOES THIS COMMANDMENT MEAN?

The tenth commandment forbids greed, applying to the cultivation of the whole heart. Aiming at the intentions of the heart, this commandment shows that all commandments are oriented to the human heart. Although it is the last commandment, it runs through all ten of the commandments. “You shall not covet your

neighbor's wife" echoes the seventh commandment of "you shall not commit adultery." Both "you shall not desire your neighbor's property" and "anything that is your neighbor's" echo "you shall not steal" (the eighth commandment), "you shall not kill" (the sixth commandment), and "you shall not bear false witness" (the ninth commandment). All greed originates in the idolatry of the possession of goods and a control and dominion over others or all of creation like a "god," violating the second commandment. Greed in essence means that people do not worship the Lord, who is Creator and Redeemer, the One God, thereby offending against the first commandment. Thus the last commandment responds to the first commandment and summarizes all ten commandments.

192. WHAT DOES THIS COMMANDMENT FORBID?

The tenth commandment forbids greed. Greed means that the desires in one's heart exceed the limits of reason in order to dominate others, causing one to commit crimes with practical deeds. Moreover, greed against the Spirit violates God's laws in all respects (Gal. 5:16–21). According to the Bible, there are three kinds of greed: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 John 2:16). Church traditions usually divide greed into seven kinds: gluttony, lechery, avarice, laziness, anger, envy, and pride. The tenth commandment forbids greed, reminding people that they should pursue the purification of the heart in the Spirit.

193. WHAT IS ENVY?

The tenth commandment of not coveting demands that envy be banished from inside the human heart. Envy involves a grudge at the sight of others' good things, for example, a spouse, house,

manservant or maidservant, ox and ass, talent and reputation, as well as an immoderate desire to acquire these things for oneself, even unjustly (Ezek. 35:11). Envy originates in the conceit of people who believe they are superior to others. For the sake of envy, one hopes that others suffer misfortune and looks at this misfortune with indifference. Envy represents discontent with what God has given and refusal of Jesus' command that "you shall love your neighbor as yourself." Envy makes the bones rot (Prov. 14:30), often causing detraction, calumny, schadenfreude, and other evil deeds. People should banish envy with goodness and humility, feel content with what they have, and hold good intentions towards their neighbors.

194. WHAT IS PRIDE?

Pride is another sin closely connected with greed. Pride is a feeling of superiority and smugness over others because of what one has. It means that one regards oneself as "the best human," expecting others to pay attention to and admire oneself, thus inflating ego. Arrogant self-love often turns into contempt, envy, and hate over others, leading to crafty acquisition, plunder, and murder in deeds (Ps. 140:5). People should imitate Jesus' self-emptying, being humble and unworldly in spirit, willing to be poor with humility in order to banish pride (Lk. 6:20).

195. HOW CAN PEOPLE KEEP COMMANDMENTS WITH THE SENSE OF SHAME?

The tenth commandment forbids people to be greedy, encouraging them to purify their hearts. Out of conscience, people feel

ashamed of and have hatred for sin, building their basic moral sense. This sense of shame (*xiu wu zhi xin*, 羞惡之心)⁹ makes the boundary between God and humans clear, so that people fear and revere God humbly (from the first commandment to the fourth), respect others' lives and property (the sixth and the eighth), firmly resist external temptation, become restrained and moderate in sexual passion, and live a chaste life (the seventh). In an era of explosive information, due to the sense of shame, people feel ashamed of lies and perjury, protect their own privacy, and respect others' privacy (the ninth). The sense of shame is the grace of the Spirit working in human heart.

196. WHY DO THE TEN COMMANDMENTS NECESSARILY COMMAND THE PURITY OF HEART?

Greed lies in the human heart, in which there are evil thoughts, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, and slander (Mt. 15:19). Commandments are therefore always extended by Jesus to the bottom of the human heart, calling people to purify their hearts and cultivate their virtues. The Ten Commandments are the basic principles to live a life of integrity, as well as the guarantee and motivation for purifying the heart. Christians' spiritual formation needs to establish the inner connection among the human body, heart, and spirit. Therefore, humans obey the commandments because of faith, live uprightly because of obedience, keep a pure heart because of the upright and true life, and better understand their faith because of a pure heart. It is a fullness of life in faith.

⁹ According to Mencius, the sense of shame is a foundational human feeling to grow the virtue of righteousness. He said, "The feeling of commiseration implies the principle of benevolence; that of shame and dislike, the principle of righteousness; that of reverence and respect, the principle of propriety; and that of approving and disapproving, the principle of knowledge"; see James Legge, *The Works of Mencius*, in *Chinese Classics*, vol. 2 (Taipei: SMC Publishing, 1991 [1895]), 402.

197. HOW CAN PEOPLE PURIFY THEIR HEARTS?

To purify the heart one needs to imitate Jesus' simplicity, chastity, and self-emptying under the support of the Spirit and to engage in a protracted fight against disordered and manic desires with one's will and wisdom. People should pursue holiness in everything and invite Christ to live out His life in them. Through prayer, people hand over their anxiety to Christ's care in faith and invite the Spirit to enter into and sigh with them (Rom. 8:26). People should seek out and follow God's will, exercising decency and sincerity in all things. They should train their feelings and imagination with their will and refuse all unchaste thoughts that keep them away from God's commandments. People should also learn from the experience of their predecessors about spiritual formation and absorb the excellent traditions of internal cultivation in Chinese culture, which are conducive to purifying the human heart.

198. HOW CAN THE BEATITUDES FULFILL THE COMMANDMENT OF NOT COVETING?

The Ten Commandments of God end with "you shall not covet," indicating that the Ten Commandments are not only the norm of external conduct but also the renewal of the intentions of the heart-mind in the Holy Spirit. The commandment of not coveting leads people to refocus their eyes from the Ten Commandments, which were given to the Israelites by God, to Jesus himself, who is born of God's words. Jesus "went up on the mountain, and when he sat down his disciples came to him. And he opened his mouth and taught them" (Mt. 5:1-2). Jesus directly points out the way of eternal blessing, which begins in the human heart, then enters into

the eight life-states in Him: people who are humble, people who mourn, the meek, people who hunger and thirst for righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, and people who are persecuted for righteousness' sake (Mt. 5:3–10). The Beatitudes heal and liberate the heart, bringing humans bodily and spiritually into God's words. The Beatitudes are consistent with and fulfill the Ten Commandments.

199. HOW CAN THE FAITH LIFE OF CHRISTIANS CONSTITUTE A WHOLE?

In communion with the triune God, the lives of Christians step towards the eternal holistic life through new life reborn in Christ. Through the salvation of Christ, people convert to God in faith and become new created persons. They are then aware of their dignity as God's children and share His freedom in reason and will. The Spirit calls and leads people to live out goodness embodied in commandments and ordinances, to live out a life of mercy and justice, and to act for the common good in accordance with Christ's gospel (Phil. 1:27). Through faith, prayer, and liturgical celebration, people receive Christ's grace and the Holy Spirit, becoming able to live such a life.

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Epilogue

It is by God's word that He created the world, saved His people by liberating them from Egypt, and told them how to serve Him on Mount Sinai. The liberation of lives points to the law of life, with the latter drawing an endless source from the former. Through His "Ten Words" (Ten Commandments), God made a covenant with His people to continuously realize His providence and salvation in the created world. The Ten Commandments enable the Word of God to manifest as the order of people's daily life. The Ten Commandments, involving every aspect of daily life and "the way of heaven" (*tian li*, 天理), addresses human nature and leads people to pursuit of the virtuous life and good society in a concise and perfect way. Through obeying the Ten Commandments, God's people walk on the way to sanctification, serving God and their neighbor in love to realize the freedom of humanity.

When the time was fulfilled, God's Word was born as a human, Jesus the Nazarene. Through Jesus, people enter the fellowship of the triune God to share His divine life. The Ten Commandments are the words of the Holy Father who utters them in the Holy Son. Therefore, the Ten Commandments naturally lead people to Christ. In the gospel of Christ, the Ten Commandments and the Old Testament law are purified, and the potential of virtuous life and good society contained in them are continuously emitted. Because of His infinite grace, God and Christ sent the Holy Spirit into people to inspire and stabilize their virtual life with faith, hope, and love so that they could become free by observing the Ten Commandments. Through the entirety of people's lives, the Holy Spirit leads them by the Ten Commandments along the path of sanctification in Christ.

On the mountain, Jesus gave the Beatitudes and the Sermon to

His disciples, through which the Ten Commandments went deeper into the hearts of people. He reiterated the Ten Commandments to remind people that sanctification was not a luxury for a few people but the duty of everyone. He kept saying “but I say to you” to remind people to learn and practice the Ten Commandments of the spirit by continuously emptying themselves according to the pattern of the Beatitudes. In daily life, imitating Jesus’ “emptying Himself” and following His way of the cross, people are led to practice their love for God and their neighbors with their whole lives. By participating in the death and resurrection of Christ, people can enter God’s divine life with the Ten Words, because Jesus’ death purifies people’s sins. As they participate in His resurrection, Christ lives in humans, enabling them to live the life that He lived.

The Ten Commandments are not only the living rules of Christians but also the universal axiom for world civilizations. All kinds of ethical norms and laws in the world are annotations to the Ten Commandments. It was neither intended nor possible for this short catechism to interpret the Ten Commandments completely. We hope that through the analysis of the principles of Christian life, the essence of the virtuous life, and the laws of social life, readers could grasp the basic structure of the virtuous life for Christians contained in the Ten Commandments and combine it with the specific laws of the Ten Commandments, so as to establish an overall understanding of the Christian life. This book draws lessons from the theological achievements of various traditional Christian denominations and absorbs the intellectual inspirations from Chinese traditional culture, so that the interpretation of the Ten Commandments in this book can fit the actual life of Chinese Christians.

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You Bin
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Author: Prof. Dr You Bin 游斌 is Professor of Christian Studies and Director of its Academy of Religions at Minzu University of China. He founded several centers in seminaries in China for theological research and training. He has a PhD in New Testament and is involved in comparative scripture and intercultural theology in a variety of ways.