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**For Our Good Always**  
*Studies on the Message and Influence of  
Deuteronomy  
in Honor of Daniel I. Block*

*Edited by*

JASON S. DEROUCHIE, JASON GILE, and KENNETH J. TURNER

Winona Lake, Indiana  
EISENBRAUNS  
2013

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Printed in the United States of America

www.eisenbrauns.com

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

For our good always : studies on the message and influence of  
Deuteronomy in honor of Daniel I. Block / edited by Jason S.  
DeRouchie, Jason Gile, and Kenneth J. Turner.

pages cm

Includes bibliographical references and indexes.

ISBN 978-1-57506-285-3 (hardback : alk. paper)

1. Bible. Deuteronomy—Criticism, interpretation, etc. I. Block,  
Daniel Isaac, 1943– honouree. II. DeRouchie, Jason Shane, 1973–  
editor of compilation.

BS1275.52.F67 2013

222'.1506—dc23

2013027379

The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of the  
American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper  
for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1984. <sup>TM</sup>Ⓜ

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DeRouchie et al., eds., *For Our Good Always: Studies on the Message and Influence of Deuteronomy in Honor of Daniel I. Block*  
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## *Making the Ten Count* *Reflections on the* *Lasting Message of the Decalogue*

JASON S. DEROUCHIE

Throughout history, few OT texts have had as much impact on the church as the Ten Words (Exod 20:2–17 // Deut 5:6–21).<sup>1</sup> In an earlier essay in this volume titled “Counting the Ten,” I argued that a modified version of the Catholic-Lutheran numbering of the Decalogue is most faithful to the discourse grammar and finds strong support from the perspective of style, semantic content, and cantillation (Fig. 1, p. 416). However, knowing how to count the Ten means nothing if we fail to make them count.

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*Author’s Note:* Dan Block loves God and his church, and it was because Dan’s solid scholarship was matched by this love that I accepted his invitation to do my doctoral studies under his watchful, fatherly care. While the body of my dissertation approached Deuteronomy in order to better understand discourse grammar, Dan stressed from the very beginning that my work also had to show the exegetical payoff of my discoveries in the interpretation of the biblical text. I forever will remain grateful to God and Dan for my years under this man’s masterful tutelage, which set fresh trajectories for my life and scholarship and grounded my commitment to engage academic ministry for the glory of God and for sake of the church.

1. On this, see most recently J. P. Greenman and T. Larsen, eds., *The Decalogue through the Centuries: From the Hebrew Scriptures to Benedict XVI* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2012). The influence of the Decalogue on the church naturally grows out of its central place in the OT. The Ten Words are the first written material in Scripture specified as authoritatively binding (but note Gen 5:1 and Exod 17:14), and they are the only portion of Scripture that we are told was “written with the finger of God” (Exod 31:18, Deut 9:10; cf. Exod 24:12, 32:15–16; Deut 5:22). They are classified as “the words of the covenant” (Exod 34:27–28), which highlights how they and all the rest of Scripture that develops from them were not the decrees of a distant dictator but the loving instructions of a covenant father to his vassal children, all designed to sustain relationship in the context of freedom. The Ten Words are the only part of the Bible that was placed in the ark of the covenant (Exod 40:20–21; cf. 25:21–22, Deut 10:1–5; Heb 9:4), and they stand in a foundational position at the head of all other instructions in Exodus and Deuteronomy. They are also echoed throughout Scripture as a summary of what it means to love God and neighbor (see Hos 4:2; Jer 7:9; Pss 50:16–23, 81:9; Matt 5:21, 19:18; Mark 10:19; Luke 18:20; Rom 13:9). All these elements display the unique role the Ten Words played among those faithful to Yahweh.

*Fig. 1. A Modified Catholic-Lutheran Numbering of the Ten Words*

1. I am Yahweh. . . . Never other gods (Exod 20:2–6 // Deut 5:6–10)
2. Never bear Yahweh’s name in vain (Exod 20:7 // Deut 5:11)
3. Remember (/Observe) the Sabbath (Exod 20:9–11 // Deut 5:12–15)
4. Honor your parents (Exod 20:12 // Deut 5:16)
5. Never murder (Exod 20:13 // Deut 5:17)
6. (And) Never commit adultery (Exod 20:14 // Deut 5:18)
7. (And) Never steal (Exod 20:15 // Deut 5:19)
8. (And) Never bear false witness (Exod 20:16 // Deut 5:20)
9. (And) Never covet your neighbor’s house (/wife) (Exod 20:17a // Deut 5:21a)
10. (And) Never covet (/desire) your neighbor’s wife, etc. (/house, field, etc.) (Exod 20:17b // Deut 5:21b)

As a step toward this end, the present essay seeks to reflect theologically on the message and lasting significance of the Ten Words, specifically in relation to my enumeration as highlighted in the previous essay. No attempt can be made here at a full analysis, so my comments are designed to set a trajectory for further contemplation and application.<sup>2</sup>

### ***1. The Ten Words and Bearing God’s Image***

Before unpacking some of the theological implications of my numbering of the Decalogue, we will be served by meditating on the revealed significance of the Ten Words for Israel. According to David, “the law, testimony, precepts, commandment, fear, and rules” that are “perfect, sure, right, pure, clean, and true” are all “of Yahweh,” finding their source in him and displaying qualities comparable to his own (Ps 19:7–9). In this vein, Nehemiah characterized the Decalogue and other Sinai instruction as “right rules and true laws, good statutes and commandments” (Neh 9:13). Similarly, Paul portrayed God’s law as “the embodiment of knowledge and truth” (Rom 2:20), and “holy, righteous, and good” (7:12). These texts connote that Yahweh’s *torah* manifests his character. They also suggest that humbly heeding his instruction would result in putting God on display.

Yahweh himself stressed this connection when he charged Israel at Sinai, “If you will indeed heed my voice and keep my covenant . . . then you shall be to me . . . a holy nation” (Exod 19:5–6). By heeding Yah-

2. For two recent and very useful summaries that wrestle more broadly with the message and lasting significance of the Ten Words for the church, see D. K. Stuart, *Exodus* (NAC 2; Nashville: B&H, 2006) 438–73; and D. I. Block, *Deuteronomy* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012) 158–74.

weh's instructions, Israel would fulfill the later charge, "You shall be holy, for I Yahweh your God am holy" (Lev 19:2; cf. 11:44–45; 20:7, 26; 1 Pet 1:16). Moses too emphasized the link between God's commands and the display of God's character when he disclosed the revealed goal of the Ten Words: "Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin" (Exod 20:20). Through the Decalogue, humans are to encounter God in such a way that inspires both worship and the parade of his worth and wisdom through surrendered, satisfied lives.

In this light, it seems significant that the Ten Words were the only Scripture placed in the ark of the covenant within the holy of holies, directly where a sculptured god would have rested in the temples of Israel's neighbors (Exod 40:20–21; cf. 25:21–22, Deut 10:1–5).<sup>3</sup> For Yahweh, his image would not and could not be mediated through idols of wood or stone. Instead, he purposed that his image would be evident in his people's living out of the Decalogue. As Peter Gentry has proposed, "This is why there could be no image at the centre of Israel's worship—God wanted the commands or instructions in the ark to be imaged in one's actions: this was the divine character embodied in human lives!"<sup>4</sup>

God's original blessing-commission of humanity called for God-dependent families to populate and oversee the earth—reflecting, resembling, and representing the Creator as his appointed image bearers (Gen 1:26–28; cf. 5:1–3).<sup>5</sup> This portrayal of royal and priestly sonship under Yahweh is then picked up in the mission of Israel, God's "son" (Exod 4:22–23), who was appointed to serve as the agent through whom the world would be blessed, overcoming the curse of Genesis 3 (Gen 12:3; cf. 3:15, 22:17b–18). In the context of the whole world, Israel was

3. It is also noteworthy that the Levites were to place Moses' collection of sermons in Deuteronomy 1–30 *beside* the ark of the covenant as perpetual witness against Israel (Deut 31:26). That is, because "the Book of the Law" as a whole clarifies the makeup of and means for a God-centered life, it would by nature expose Israel's anticipated rebellion (31:16–21, 27–29).

4. P. J. Gentry and S. J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012) 190 n. 23.

5. For more on this view of the blessing-commission in Genesis, see J. S. DeRouchie, "The Blessing-Commission, the Promised Offspring, and the *Toledot* Structure of Genesis," *JETS* 56 (2013) 219–47; cf. C. M. Kaminski, *From Noah to Israel: Realization of the Primordial Blessing after the Flood* (JSOTSup 413; New York: T. & T. Clark, 2004). For a helpful discussion of the meaning of divine image bearing as royal sonship expressed through kinship, kingship, and cult, see C. L. Beckerleg, *The "Image of God" in Eden: the Creation of Mankind in Genesis 2:5–3:24 in Light of the *mīs pī pīt pī and wpt-r* Rituals of Mesopotamia and Ancient Egypt* (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2009) esp. 161–244, 289–92; cf. M. G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview* (Overland Park, KS: Two Ages, 2000) 45–46; Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 189–209.

commissioned to serve as a “kingdom of priests and a holy nation,” which would be accomplished only as they would “heed my voice, and keep my covenant, and be to me a treasured possession among all the peoples” (Exod 19:5–6; cf. Deut 4:5–8, 26:18–19).<sup>6</sup>

That the Decalogue was to play a central role in Israel’s God-imagining mission is suggested by the link between Yahweh’s invitation for Israel to “heed my voice and keep my covenant” (Exod 19:5) and the statement “God spoke all these words” (20:1) at the head of the Decalogue. The Ten Words, therefore, appear to supply not only the essential content for Israel’s covenant obedience but a key means for Israel to fulfill her royal, priestly mission in the world (19:6).<sup>7</sup> As Israel would freely and dependently pursue covenant obedience, celebrating Yahweh’s nearness and treasuring his just requirements, God’s will and character and rule would be put on display (i.e., imaged), portraying a wisdom that would be attractive to once enemy nations (Deut 4:5–8, 26:18–19) and resulting in God’s blessing reaching those once far off (Gen 12:3, 18:18, 22:17b–18, 26:4, 28:14).<sup>8</sup>

6. As far back as the LXX, interpreters of Exod 19:5–6 have treated the apodosis of the complex conditional sentence to begin with the clause regarding Israel’s being a “treasured possession.” However, an apodosis in a two-element syntactic construction is almost always signaled by a shift in grammar, whether through a change in word order, participant, verb form, or the like. In Exod 19:5–6, no shift is apparent until v. 6, where an unnecessary 2mp pronoun (ואתה) is used for emphasis at the front of the clause: “then you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” In contrast, in v. 5, the initial infinitive absolute + *yiqtol* (שמעו תשמעו) ‘you shall surely hear/heed’) is followed by two *weqatal* forms (ושמרתם ‘and you shall keep’ and והייתם ‘and you shall be’), which simply appear to carry forward the conditional protasis: “And now, if you will indeed heed unto my voice, and keep my covenant, and be to me a treasured possession from all people, for all the earth is mine, then you will be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” For a helpful overview of this text (though with a traditional view of the protasis-apodosis relationship), see J. A. Davies, *A Royal Priesthood: Literary and Intertextual Perspectives on an Image of Israel in Exodus 19:6* (JSOTSup 395; London: T. & T. Clark, 2004); cf. Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 309–27.

7. B. S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus* (OTL; Louisville: Westminster, 1974) 371. For a helpful, balanced, and faithful assessment of the role of the Decalogue in ancient Israel as witnessed to in the OT, see D. I. Block, “Reading the Decalogue Right to Left: The Ten Principles of Covenant Relationship in the Hebrew Bible,” in idem, *How I Love Your Torah, O LORD! Studies in the Book of Deuteronomy* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2011) 21–55. Block argues that, more than the Decalogue, Deuteronomy as a whole played the most foundational role in shaping a Yahwistic worldview and the Scriptures.

8. Davies believes that Israel’s priestly role in Exod 19:6 does not include a missional view toward the nations (*Royal Priesthood*, 89–100). However, while the priestly role is certainly focused on drawing near to Yahweh in worship (see Exod 19:22), the explicit contextual markers “among all peoples” and “for all the earth in mine” in Exod 19:5, along with the metanarrative of God’s kingdom program laid out in the Pentateuch, suggest that Israel’s worship of Yahweh through surrendered lives was to be the key means

The Ten Words together supply a portrait of the ideal old covenant-keeper fulfilling his role as the image of God, which in Deuteronomy finds its closest embodiment in the anticipated king (Deut 17:18–20). Far from replacing Yahweh, Israel's king was to be a man under authority, a man of the Book, who would lead the people as an overflow of his own surrendered life to God.<sup>9</sup> In view of this connection, it is not a stretch to see the Decalogue's multi-orbed call to love God and neighbor as a visual anticipation of the character and behavior of the Pentateuch's expected God-imaging, curse-overcoming, male, royal offspring (Gen 3:15, 22:17b–18, 24:60, 49:8–10; Num 24:7, 17–19).<sup>10</sup> This seed of the woman and of Abraham from the line of Judah is hoped for throughout the rest of the OT (e.g., 2 Sam 7:12–13; Ps 72:4, 9, 17; Jer 23:5–6; Ezek 34:23–24; Isa 9:6–7), and the NT identifies him as Jesus Christ (Luke 1:68–79; Acts 3:25–26; Gal 3:8, 13–14), who is “the image of the invisible God” (Col 1:16; cf. 2 Cor 4:4, Heb 1:3). Scripture portrays Jesus as the last Adam, the true Israel, God's royal-priest Son, whose perfect obedience of faith in his life and death completely fulfilled the law and thus secured eternal blessing for the elect (Rom 5:18–19, Phil 2:8, Heb 5:8). The meeting of the law's legal demands is one way in which Christ Jesus stands as the fulfillment and *telos* of the law of the Decalogue (Matt 5:17, Rom 10:4; cf. Eph 2:15, Col 2:13–15).

Furthermore, just years before Judah fell to Babylon in 586 B.C., Jeremiah began to foretell a new covenant that would grow out of the ashes of divine judgment. The earliest hints come in Jer 3:11–4:4, where the prophet promises that God will forgive the northern and southern kingdom's sins if they will but repent and return to him. In this context, Yahweh declares that, in this eschatological age, “the ark of the covenant of Yahweh . . . shall not come to mind or be remembered

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by which God's kingdom would expand and the global curse would ultimately be reversed (so too Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 321; cf. W. J. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation: A Theology of the Old Testament Covenants* [Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1984] 89–90).

9. See D. I. Block, “The Burden of Leadership: The Mosaic Paradigm of Kingship (Deut 17:14–20),” *BSac* 162 (2005) 259–78; repr. in idem, *How I Love Your Torah*, 118–39.

10. For an argument that the Genesis texts truly anticipate a single, male, royal deliverer and for an overview of how these texts are developed in the rest of Scripture, see J. S. DeRouchie and J. C. Meyer, “Christ or Family as the ‘Seed’ of Promise? An Evaluation of N. T. Wright on Galatians 3:16,” *SBJT* 14.3 (2010) 36–48; see also J. Collins, “A Syntactical Note (Genesis 3:15): Is the Woman's Seed Singular or Plural,” *TynBul* 48.1 (1997) 139–48; T. D. Alexander, “Further Observations on the Term ‘Seed’ in Genesis,” *TynBul* 48.2 (1997) 363–67; C. J. Collins, “Galatians 3:16: What Kind of Exegete Was Paul?” *TynBul* 54.1 (2003) 75–86; J. Hamilton, “The Seed of the Woman and the Blessing of Abraham,” *TynBul* 58.2 (2007) 253–73.

or missed," that Jerusalem, not the ark, "shall be called the throne of Yahweh," and that this city will be the habitation of both the restored remnant of united Israel (3:14) and a remnant from the nations, who "shall no more stubbornly follow their own evil heart" (3:16–17). What is the connection here?

Kevin J. Youngblood helpfully reflects on the significance of the ark's absence: "Since this was the box that housed the copy of the covenant document, the implications of its loss should be catastrophic as it was in DtH (1 Sam 4–6). Instead, YHWH says, no ark will be necessary in the future. Why not? Because Jer 31:31ff indicates that the new covenant document will be stored, not in a piece of cultic furniture but in the very hearts of YHWH's people."<sup>11</sup> In Jeremiah's day, Judah had sin, not the Decalogue, "engraved on the tablet of their heart" (Jer 17:1). However, the prophet envisions a new covenant wherein all members will have God's law, synthesized in the Ten Words, etched on their hearts (Jer 31:33).<sup>12</sup> That is, as pointed to in the fact that Jerusalem will be both Yahweh's throne and the dwelling place of all the redeemed (3:14, 17; cf. 12:16, 30:8–9; Rev 21:2, 9), God's people would become the ark, housing within them the law and enjoying on their lives the manifestation of Yahweh's presence (Ezek 36:27, 37:14, 27). Yahweh would teach every member of the restored remnant (Jer 31:34, Isa 2:3, 54:13; cf. John 6:45–46, 1 Cor 2:13, 1 Thess 4:9, 1 John 2:20–21), ultimately through his Messiah (Isa 42:4, 51:4; cf. Matt 28:20), with the result that every covenant member would faithfully follow the Lord, rightly imaging God's character and worth within the world (Jer 31:34; cf. 22:15–16 with 9:24).

According to Jeremiah, in Israel's return to the Lord, their God-given mission of serving as an agent of blessing to the nations would be fulfilled, as the nations would declare themselves blessed in Yahweh (Jer 4:1–2; cf. Gen 22:18; 26:4). Those once "evil neighbors" (Jer 12:14) would "learn the ways of my people" and in turn "be built up in the midst of my people" (12:16). Those once "foreigners" who served with Babylon against God's people (31:8) would now "serve Yahweh their God and David their king" (31:9), enjoying all the fruits of the new covenant. Paul draws on all these images in 2 Cor 3:3, when he writes to the predominantly Gentile believers in Corinth, "And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but the Spirit of

11. K. J. Youngblood, "Beyond Deuteronomism: Jeremiah's Unique Theological Contribution" (paper presented at Lipscomb University, 2009) 11. I was first directed to this quote in Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 507.

12. This was experienced in the old covenant, but only among the remnant few (see Prov 3:3, 7:3; Isa 51:7; Pss 37:31, 40:9[8], 119:11).

the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts" (cf. Rom 2:15, 29; Ezek 11:19, 36:26–27). For Paul, Jeremiah's vision of the Decalogue embodied in human lives is seeing its manifestation in the church of Jesus Messiah.

With these elements in mind and toward a goal of grasping what imaging God through the Decalogue meant for Israel and Christ and what it ultimately means for us, we will now direct our attention to the Decalogue itself. Specifically, we will unpack three features of the Decalogue's message that are highlighted by a modified Catholic-Lutheran enumeration.

## 2. *Theological Reflections on the Decalogue's Numbering*

### 2.1. *Word One—An Answer to Israel's*

#### *Most Fundamental Ideological Question*

The majority Jewish position regards the statement "I am Yahweh your God" (Exod 20:2 // Deut 5:6) as the first Word of the Ten, and the Orthodox-Reformed understanding holds that the injunctions "There shall never be to you other gods" (Exod 20:3 // Deut 5:7) and "You shall never make a carved image" (Exod 20:4[–6] // Deut 5:8[–10]) are distinct Words. In contrast to both of these approaches, the modified Catholic-Lutheran numbering treats as the first Word all the first-person address that runs from the initial indicative "I am Yahweh your God" through the phrase "those who love me and keep my commandments."

The initial statement and three prohibitions that make up the first Word together clarify one of Israel's most fundamental ideological questions—how should we perceive and, by implication, approach the God who has saved us? Before any directive is given, the first Word begins with an indicative declaration that the one speaking from the midst of the fire was none other than "Yahweh your God," who rescued Israel from the bonds of slavery in Egypt (Exod 20:2 // Deut 5:6). While most directly connected to the initial injunction that follows,<sup>13</sup> this statement places all the Ten Words in the context of freedom and identifies Yahweh as the great giver. All obedience, therefore, is done in light of the experience of past grace and in the hope of the promise of future grace that could naturally be expected to flow from Yahweh's

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13. This link between the statement "I am Yahweh your God" in Exod 20:2 // Deut 5:6 and the initial injunction "There shall not be to you other gods before me" in Exod 20:3 // Deut 5:7 is established through the 1cs pronominal suffix at the end of the prepositional phrase *על־פני* 'before me' (lit. 'on my face'). For more on this, see DeRouchie, "Counting the Ten," §2.3.1.

benevolence.<sup>14</sup> The ground clause that follows says just as much, for the fruit of Yahweh's jealousy for his people's affection overflows in his "showing steadfast love to thousands of generations of those who love me and keep my commandments" (Exod 20:6 // Deut 5:10). Yahweh, the compassionate and gracious God, has acted on Israel's behalf, and it is this God who declares, "there shall never be to you other gods before me" (Exod 20:3 // Deut 5:7).

In all likelihood, this initial charge relates *not* to Yahweh having highest priority or rank among many (though this is a justified implication of the meaning) but to his status as the only sovereign, the one who acts alone, not as the head of a pantheon of rival deities but as the sole and ultimate power in the universe.<sup>15</sup> This view is suggested by the fact that whenever the preposition על-פני 'before' bears a personal object in the Hebrew Bible, the meaning is always spatial, thus implying that the stress in this text is that Yahweh has no peers in his presence.<sup>16</sup> Yahweh does not share power, authority, or jurisdiction with any other.<sup>17</sup>

Elsewhere it is clear that Yahweh does act within a heavenly assembly: "God has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods he holds judgment" (Ps 82:1; cf. 1 Kgs 22:19–22; Jer 23:18; Isaiah 6; Ps 89:6, 8[5, 7]; 95:3; Job 1:6–12; 2:1–7). Members of the divine court are variously referred to as "messengers/angels" (מלאכים), "gods" (אלהים), "the sons of the gods" (בני-האלהים), and "holy ones" (קדשים), and Job 1–2 make clear that "the satan" (השטן) himself is part of this group. What is also apparent, however, is that none of these angels or "gods" is equal to Yahweh; indeed they are all subordinate and subservient to him, serving him (1 Kgs 22:19), bowing to him (Ps 29:2), obeying him (103:20–21), and praising him (148:2–5).<sup>18</sup> Yahweh is "a great King above all gods"

14. Comparably, in light of the salvific antitype to Israel's temporal deliverance from Egypt, Paul asserts in Rom 8:31–32: "If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?" Past grace grounds the hope of future grace.

15. See J. H. Walton, "Interpreting the Bible as an Ancient Near Eastern Document," in *Israel—Ancient Kingdom or Late Invention? Archaeology, Ancient Civilizations, and the Bible* (ed. D. I. Block; Nashville: B&H Academic, 2008) 305–9. Similarly, C. J. H. Wright asserts, "The fundamental thrust of the verse is not Yahweh's sole deity, but Yahweh's sole sovereignty over Israel" (*Deuteronomy* [NIBC; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996] 68, now published in the *Understanding the Bible Commentary Series* by Baker).

16. Gen 11:28; 23:3; 32:22; 50:1; Exod 33:19; Lev 10:3; Num 3:4; 1 Kgs 9:7; 2 Kgs 13:14; Ezek 32:10; Ps 9:20; Job 4:15; 21:31 (so Walton, "Interpreting the Bible as an Ancient Near Eastern Document," 307).

17. Walton, "Interpreting the Bible as an Ancient Near Eastern Document," 308.

18. See W. R. Garr, *In His Own Image and Likeness: Humanity, Divinity, and Monotheism* (Culture and History of the Ancient Near East 15; Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2003) 69–70; Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 204.

(95:3). Even the satan in the book of Job can only do what God allows.<sup>19</sup> Thus Moses could declare, “Yahweh your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God” (Deut 10:17).<sup>20</sup> The call of the Decalogue’s first Word is for Israel to recognize that Yahweh stands alone and that, while he works through spiritual agents, he is not the first among equals but is rather the sole ultimate mover who alone is worthy of worship. He is both ontologically and functionally transcendent.

This interpretation, then, allows the initial charge to lead naturally into the explanatory statements regarding (1) the crafting of a sculptured image and (2) the worship and service of other gods (Exod 20:4–6 // Deut 5:8–10). What is striking here is that the truth of Yahweh’s preeminence over all is not left as a theological abstraction; rather the implications for Israel’s every day life are made explicit by the two injunctions.

First, Yahweh’s transcendence both in being and function requires that human-made idols hold no place in Israel’s existence. As is still common practice in parts of the world, ancient nations, especially from Mesopotamia and the Levant, regularly associated their gods with manufactured idols. Thus we read in the OT of “gods of silver and gold” (Exod 23:20; cf. 32:23–24), of “molten gods” (Lev 19:4), of “gods put in the shrines” (2 Kgs 17:29), of “gods of wood and stone” (19:18), and of “removing (foreign) gods” (Gen 35:4; Josh 24:14, 23; Judg

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19. Thus Yahweh declares to the satan: “Behold, all that [Job] has is in your hand; only against him do not stretch out your hand” (Job 1:12), and again, “Behold, he is in your hand; only spare his life” (2:6). The satan could only do what God permitted him to do. It is in this context, I believe, that Paul could say that “a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited” (2 Cor 12:7). At one level, the apostle’s suffering was from Satan, but at a higher level it was from one who was concerned about keeping him humble, the one who would intentionally make Paul weak so that the divine power could be perfected as the power of Christ rested upon him (12:9). Comparably, Paul asserted that his having undergone intense persecution even to the point of death “was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead” (1:9). Paul’s was convinced that God was the ultimate mover in his suffering, even though Satan was certainly involved.

20. Paul echoes this passage when he asserts in 1 Cor 8:4–6: “Therefore, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that ‘an idol has no real existence,’ and that ‘there is no God but one.’ For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many ‘gods’ and many ‘lords’—yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.” Later, with an echo of Deut 32:17, he identifies real demonic forces behind every idol (10:19–20): “What do I imply then? That food offered to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons.”

10:16; 1 Sam 7:3; 2 Chr 33:15).<sup>21</sup> Graven images were believed to mediate the presence of the gods, and by them humans served the needs of the gods.<sup>22</sup> Yahweh has no needs but indeed supplies everything as he governs heaven and earth (Deut 4:39, 32:39; cf. Acts 17:25). Furthermore, Yahweh encounters his creation through his Spirit-presence and not through idols (Deut 4:15–18).

Second, Yahweh's supremacy over all necessitates that Israel never worship or serve anything other than him (Exod 20:5 // Deut 5:9). The practical import here is vast. Powers and pleasures abound in this world that vie for attention and allegiance. Indeed, they can even be viewed as being controlled by demons (Deut 32:17, 1 Cor 10:19–20)! Yet in this world where God alone holds absolute supremacy, honor and thanksgiving must ultimately be given to him alone (Rom 1:21).

The first Word of the Ten includes three prohibitions, the second and third of which develop the implications of the first. A ground clause then follows, which appears to support all three injunctions, which should be kept *because* Yahweh is jealous (Exod 20:5 // Deut 5:9). Yahweh's jealousy is intimately connected to his character (Exod 34:14),<sup>23</sup> and a survey of the portrayal of God in Scripture suggests that this jealousy is just, necessary, and loving. It is a *just* jealousy because, as we have seen, he alone is preeminent over all things and is therefore worthy of utmost worship (Exod 34:14, Deut 32:39, Rom 11:36, Col 1:16). It

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21. "And you have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone, which do not see or hear or know, but the God in whose hand is your breath, and whose are all your ways, you have not honored" (Dan 5:23). For more on the view and portrayal of gods in the ancient Near East, see D. I. Block, *The Gods of the Nations: Studies in Ancient Near Eastern National Theology* (Evangelical Theological Society Studies; 2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000).

22. See Walton, "Interpreting the Bible as an Ancient Near Eastern Document," 309–13. In contrast to Walton's interpretation of the injunction against idolatry, the idea of God's transcendence seems apparent in the text both in Exodus, where the Words are given in the context of a theophany, and in Deuteronomy, where the commandment against image making echoes the very language of chapter 4 where Israel is charged thus: "Since you saw no form on the day that Yahweh spoke to you at Horeb out of the midst of the fire, beware lest you act corruptly by making a carved image for yourselves in the form of any figure, the likeness of male or female, the likeness of any animal that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the air, the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the water under the earth. . . . Take care, lest you forget the covenant of Yahweh your God, which made with you, and make a carved image, the form of anything that Yahweh your God has forbidden you. For Yahweh your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God" (Deut 4:15–18, 23–24).

23. In light of the fact that Exodus stresses the name of God is Yahweh (Exod 3:14–15), I translate Exod 34:14, "for you shall worship no other god, for Yahweh is jealous with respect to his name; he is a jealous God."

is a *necessary* jealousy because if Yahweh, as sovereign of the universe, allowed his glory to be given to another, declaring something else worthy of highest praise, he would stop being God and all the world would come to an end (Isa 42:8, 48:11; Job 34:14–15; cf. Heb 1:3). Finally, it is a *loving* jealousy because Yahweh alone can save (Isa 43:10–11; 45:21; Hos 13:4) and has saved Israel (Exod 20:2 // Deut 5:6) and because he alone can satisfy with full joy for the longest amount of time (Ps 16:11, Matt 13:44, John 15:10–11). In the words of the prophet Samuel, “Do not turn aside from following Yahweh, but serve Yahweh with all your heart. And do not turn aside after empty things that cannot profit or deliver” (1 Sam 12:20–21).

At the end of the first Word, we are told that God’s zeal for his own renown gives rise to great wrath toward disloyalty (unto the third and fourth generation) and even greater love toward the faithful (unto a thousand generations). What motivation are the promises of God, which Peter declares are given “so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption of the world because of sinful desire” (2 Pet 1:4)! Believing the promises of future curse would discourage Israel’s disobedience, whereas faith in future blessings would motivate love for God seen in obedience.<sup>24</sup>

In the Decalogue’s first Word, Yahweh is portrayed as the only savior, sovereign, and satisfier of Israel who therefore deserves highest praise. God’s singular being and function bore radical implications for Israel’s daily existence, and they continue to bear comparable implications for our own. As Paul declares in 1 Cor 8:4–6: “We know that ‘an idol has no real existence’ [citing Isa 41:24] and that ‘there is no God but one’ [citing Deut 4:35, 36]. For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many ‘gods’ and many ‘lords’ [alluding to Deut 10:17]—yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.”

## 2.2. *Two Groupings: Love for God and Love for Neighbor*

The Decalogue witness two groupings of commands. We have observed that the first four Words each include reference to “Yahweh your God” and thus bear an explicit Godward-focus not apparent in the last six. The stylistic shift seems intentional and likely supports the traditional view that the Decalogue opens with a focus on love for God

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24. For more on this theme, see J. Piper, *Future Grace: The Purifying Power of the Promises of God* (rev. ed.; Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2012).

(Words 1–4) and ends with a focus on love of neighbor (Words 5–10) (cf. Mark 12:30–31, Rom 13:9). Foundational to Israel’s covenant with Yahweh is a radical God-entranced vision that relates to their worldview and worship (Word 1), their daily witness (Word 2), their weekly schedule (Word 3), and their family relationships (Word 4). Indeed, their love for God is to cover “all,” as is later highlighted in the supreme commandment (Deut 6:5). I will comment briefly on these four spheres, clarifying how each Word primarily addresses love for God. More attention is given to the Words related to Sabbath keeping and to honoring one’s parents, for their role in expressing love for *God* may be less clear.

### 2.2.1. *Recognize Yahweh Is One*

In the first Word, Yahweh alone stands as Israel’s redeemer, the decisive ruler over all, who has no needs and who is worthy of sole worship, all in light of his jealousy (Exod 20:2–6 // Deut 5:6–10). To love God is to affirm his sovereignty over all and to recognize the implications of his supremacy in all of life. Because I have already expanded on this Word above, I will move ahead.

### 2.2.2. *Bear Yahweh’s Name Well*

In Word two, Yahweh will hold every covenant member accountable for his or her lifestyle and witness as an emissary of God (Exod 20:7 // Deut 5:11).<sup>25</sup> While in popular circles, “bearing Yahweh’s name in vain” is often understood to denote casual, crass, or disrespectful use of God’s name in speech, there is likely much more at stake. Specifically, those “bearing” the name are those “called by Yahweh’s name” (Deut 28:10, Dan 9:19), who have had his name “placed” on them (Num 6:27), and who claim Yahweh as their own (Isa 44:5). To keep God’s word and to remain in the faith is to “hold fast” to God’s name and not to “deny” it (Rev 2:13, 3:8), whereas to portray a warped view of Yahweh’s power, will, and worth through poor judgment and rebellious behavior is to “profane” his name (Ezek 36:22–23). “Bearing Yahweh’s name” is about the image of God in human lives; it is about one’s witness in the world. Those bearing God’s name are called upon to reflect, resemble, and represent the Lord through covenant obedience, whether in public or

25. What follows is my own theological developments on some initial thoughts first expressed to me by D. I. Block. He has now developed his own thinking in what it means “to bear Yahweh’s name” in two essays: Block, “Bearing the Name of the LORD with Honor,” *BSac* 168 (2011) 20–31 (repr. in idem, *O How I Love Your Torah*, 61–72); and idem, “No Other Gods: Bearing the Name of YHWH in a Polytheistic World,” in idem, *The Gospel according to Moses: Theological and Ethical Reflections on the Book of Deuteronomy* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2012) 237–71.

in private. As Moses asserted in Deut 28:9–10: “Yahweh will establish you as a people holy to himself, as he has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of Yahweh your God and walk in his ways. And all the peoples of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of Yahweh, and they shall be afraid of you.” Image bearers who have surrendered to Yahweh’s claim on their lives must live for the fame of God’s name, and this is done significantly by seeing the principles laid out in the Decalogue embodied in one’s life. This is the point of the second Word.

Intriguingly, the book of Revelation portrays all of humanity as having one of two identifying marks: one group has the Lamb’s “name and his Father’s name” written on their foreheads (Rev 14:1; cf. 3:12; 22:4), and the other has “the mark of [the beast’s] name” written on the hand or forehead (14:11; cf. 13:16–17). G. K. Beale has argued for the likelihood that “the mark of the name” in Revelation is figurative and not physical and relates to spiritual identification with either God and Christ or the Satanic beast. Beale’s discussion on Rev 13:16–17 is worth an extended citation.

Since the seal or name on the true believers is invisible, so also is the “mark” on the unbeliever. That the two are parallel in being spiritual in nature and are intended to be compared is evident from the immediately following mention of God and Christ’s name “written on the foreheads” of the saints (14:1). Those who have believed in Jesus have been identified with him and are protected by the power of his name against ultimate deception. His name is none other than his very presence with them (as 22:4 makes explicit). Their refusal to identify with the beast will result in suffering and even death, but they will have the ultimate reward of eternal life (so 20:4). Those not trusting in Christ are identified with the beast, are under the devil’s power, and are unable to avoid deception by the beast (. . . 2:17). While identification with the beast given them temporary prosperity in this life, they will ultimately be punished with eternal death (. . . 14:9–11). . . .

That the mark of the name is figurative and not literal is evident from the ‘blasphemous names’ on the head of the beast (13:1), which figuratively connote false claims to earthly divine kingship. Likewise, the point of saying that the beast’s worshipers have his name written on their heads is to underscore the fact that they pay homage to his blasphemous claims to divine kingship. Just as the seal and the divine name on believers connote God’s ownership and spiritual protection of them, so the mark and Satanic name signify those who belong to the devil and will undergo perdition.<sup>26</sup>

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26. G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999) 716.

Beale also notes, “The mark may also connote that the followers of Christ and the beast both are stamped with the image (i.e., character) of their respective leaders.”<sup>27</sup> This latter point would fully align with my own assessment above, but the additional comments drawn out by Beale are also helpful.

Deuteronomy teaches that the charge of the Shema (“Hear, O Israel: *Yahweh* our God, *Yahweh* is one. And you shall love *Yahweh* your God with all . . . ;” Deut 6:4–5) should radically influence one’s heart, behavior, and worldview: “And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. . . . And you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes” (6:6, 8).<sup>28</sup> In short, *Yahweh*-centeredness was to be the identifying feature of one’s life. To bear the name of *Yahweh* necessitated a radically dependent, God-honoring existence.

While the majority of Israel’s history was scathed with rebellion, Zechariah anticipated a day when *Yahweh*’s name would be rightly honored and displayed: “And *Yahweh* will be king over all the earth. On that day *Yahweh* will be one and his name one” (Zech 14:9). Here Zechariah foresees a time when the whole world will celebrate *Yahweh*’s singularity—when the bearers of *Yahweh*’s name will perfectly display *Yahweh*’s character. In this day, “no longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads” (Rev 22:3–4).

### 2.2.3. *Keep the Sabbath to Yahweh*

In what way is the Sabbath commandment principally about love for God? Jesus’ assertion that “the Sabbath was made for man” (Mark 2:27) finds support in the wording of the Decalogue, which calls all household heads to give rest to all persons and beasts under their care. Nevertheless, the text stresses that Sabbath keeping was to be performed “to *Yahweh* your God” (Exod 20:10 // Deut 5:14), which establishes the radical God-centeredness of Israel’s 6 + 1 pattern of existence.<sup>29</sup> *Yah-*

27. Ibid.

28. That “hands” and “eyes” in Deut 6:8 is shorthand for behavior and worldview is suggested by the pairing of these two nouns elsewhere in the OT, where they clearly point to action and perception. For example, in Deut 21:7, the elders of a city speak in response to an unsolved murder: “Our hands did not shed this blood, nor did our eyes see it shed.” Similarly, Beale writes, “The ‘forehead’ represents ideological commitment and the ‘hand’ the practical outworking of that commitment” (*The Book of Revelation*, 717).

29. D. I. Block argues that the Sabbath ordinance is transitional, pointing to love for God in the Exodus version (addressing “the divine right to the Israelite’s time/life”) but

weh designated the Sabbath as the Mosaic Covenant's "sign" (אֹת, Exod 31:13, 17), which most likely meant that it would either prove to Israel something about God or remind Israel in some way about their missional identity. In this latter light, the Sabbath may also have served to represent for Israel a hopeful future reality.<sup>30</sup> As will be seen, all these potential aspects of the Sabbath bear a God-exalting stamp.

Yahweh clarified for Moses that the purpose of the Sabbath sign was that Israel might "know that I am Yahweh, who sanctifies you" (Exod 31:13; cf. Ezek 20:12, 20). In Israel's journey from the exodus to Mount Sinai, it was shown that the Sabbath would test Israel's obedience and nurture their trust in Yahweh as their great provider, the one from whom, ultimately, all daily bread comes (Exod 16:4-5, 23-26; cf. Acts 17:24-25). Keeping the Sabbath, therefore, would in time prove that Yahweh alone is the sanctifier. The Sabbath would magnify Yahweh as the supplier of all things and would nurture trust in this truth within God's people.

Yet the Sabbath's connection to the original creation week (Exod 20:11, 31:17) and the exodus (Deut 5:15) suggests that the function of the Sabbath was also to remind Israel in some way about their identity and purpose as a people in relation to the whole world. For God, the culmination of the original creation week was not a rest of laziness but of sovereignty, wherein the Great King, having established the sacred space of his kingdom, sat enthroned, enjoying peace with all he had made (Gen 2:1-3; cf. Ps 132:7-8, 13-14).<sup>31</sup> While mankind's rebellion at

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to love for neighbor in the Deuteronomic version (addressing the right of all household members "to human treatment from their head") ("You Shall Not Covet Your Neighbor's Wife": A Study in Deuteronomic Domestic Ideology," in idem, *The Gospel according to Moses*, 146 with notes 27 and 29 [orig. printed in *JETS* 53 (2010) 449-74]). While I affirm these aspects, the stylistic use of "Yahweh your God" in Words one through four must still be accounted for structurally, and this is why I have suggested that Words one through four are principally focused on love for God. Nevertheless, none can question that every Word is in some sense an expression of love for God and for neighbor, because the latter should always be a fruit of the former and because neighbors can only truly be loved when we love God.

30. M. V. Fox has observed that "signs" in the Hebrew Bible fulfill at least one of three functions: (1) to prove the truth of something (e.g., Isa 38:7-8); (2) to symbolize or represent a future reality by virtue of resemblance or conventional association (e.g., Ezek 4:1-3); or (3) to rouse knowledge of something, whether by (a) identifying (e.g., Josh 2:12) or (b) reminding (Exod 13:9) ("The Sign of the Covenant: Circumcision in the Light of the Priestly "ōt Etiologies," *RB* 81 [1974] 557-96). I believe the "sign" nature of the Sabbath bears the primary functions of 1 and 3b and the secondary function of 2.

31. Walton identifies six aspects related to the notion of divine rest in the ANE ("Interpreting the Bible as an Ancient Near Eastern Document," 319-22): divine rest (1) was disturbed by rebellion, (2) achieved after conflict, (3) achieved after order-bringing acts

the fall did not remove God's right and authority over all things, it did alter the state of universal peace. As such, within the Pentateuch, the 6 + 1 pattern of creation is used not simply as a portrait of what was but as an image of the ideal for which the world is to long, and this ideal becomes attached directly to Israel's mission as the agent of curse reversal and global blessing (Gen 12:3, 18:18, 22:17b–18, 26:4, 28:14; cf. Exod 19:4–6; Deut 4:5–8, 26:18–19).<sup>32</sup> The Sabbath was to serve as a reminder to Israel of their mission, and it in turn represented a future reality for which Israel and the world were to hope.

More specifically, Israel's Sabbath identity is directly linked with the purpose of humanity at creation—namely, for God-imaging families to expand and rule the earth (Day 6, Gen 1:26–28) in a way that would culminate in the world being reconciled and at rest with its Creator King (Day 7). As a marker of Israel's mission, the Sabbath reminded Israel of her need for sustained devotion (i.e., to image God), for by covenant loyalty alone was God put on display in the midst of the world: "If you heed my voice . . . then you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exod 19:5–6; cf. Deut 4:5–8).<sup>33</sup> Yet the Sabbath itself was a means for proving that Yahweh alone was the source of Israel's holi-

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of creation, establishing order; (4) achieved in the temple; (5) characterized by ongoing control and stability; and (6) achieved by the gods creating people to work in their place and on their behalf. Scripture's portrayal of Sabbath rest is distinct in that humanity's work is never viewed as replacing or benefiting God but is rather understood to be made possible by God himself (Deut 4:39, Acts 17:24–25). A parallel is seen in the fact that the original Sabbath of God and the temple building of the ancient world "represent the same moment in the divine life, one of exaltation and regal repose" (cited by Walton on p. 322 from J. D. Levenson, "The Temple and the World," *JR* 64 [1984] 275–98, quote from 288).

32. In this regard, the words of W. J. Dumbrell regarding Gen 2:1–3 are significant: "By the divine rest on the seventh day the goal of creation is indicated, a goal which will be maintained notwithstanding sustained human attempts to vitiate it. Not only does the seventh day rest note the goal to which creation points, but is the call to man to begin history holding firmly to the view that the 'goal of creation, and at the same time the beginning of all that follows, is the event of God's Sabbath freedom, Sabbath rest and Sabbath joy, in which man, too, has been summoned to participate.' . . . On the sabbath . . . Israel is to reflect upon the question of ultimate purposes for herself as a nation, and for the world over which she is set. For in pointing back to creation, the Sabbath points also to what is yet to be, to the final destiny to which all creation is moving" (*Covenant and Creation*, 34–35; here Dumbrell cites Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 3/1 [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1958] 98).

33. Similarly, in Genesis 12, the promise that "in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (v. 3) is grammatically contingent on the fulfillment of the imperative "and you shall be a blessing" (v. 2), something completely realized only in Christ, the true Israel (Gal 3:8, 14) (see P. R. Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God's Unfolding Purpose* [NSBT 23; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2007] 78–79; Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 230–34).

ness (the first function of the Sabbath “sign,” Exod 31:13; cf. 33:16). As such, Yahweh would receive all the glory in Israel’s fulfilling their covenantal purposes of blessing transmission to the nations.<sup>34</sup> That is, by participating in Yahweh’s sovereign rest through celebrating the Sabbath, Israel would nurture the type of God-centeredness that would ultimately bring about the exaltation of *God* among the peoples of the world.<sup>35</sup> The Sabbath, by nature, was kept *to Yahweh*.

As the sign of the covenant between Yahweh and Israel, the Sabbath’s placement on the last day of the week signaled that rest in Yahweh’s Sovereignty was the goal of Israel’s missional makeup. Their weekly Sabbath would typify the future rest they would find in the promised land (Exod 33:14, Deut 12:9–10, Josh 1:13, 2 Sam 7:1). Furthermore, this partial and temporary rest would itself point ahead to the ultimate kingdom rest that has been secured for all who are in King Jesus (Ps 95:7–11, Matt 11:28–29, Heb 4:8–11 with 3:14) and that will be fully enjoyed in the age to come (Rev 14:13; chs. 21–22; cf. Isa 56:1–8; 61:2; 66:22–23).

For OT Israel, Sabbath was the climax of each week and symbolized sovereign rest as the goal of life. In contrast, for the believer in Christ Jesus, fulfillment of God’s sovereign rest has been inaugurated, the “shadow” finding its “substance” in Christ (Col 2:16–17), so that we already enjoy peace under the Lordship of God seven days a week (Matt 11:28–29, Heb 4:8–11; cf. Rom 15:5–6). In light of this eschatological shift secured for us in Jesus’ resurrection on a Sunday (Matt 28:1; Mark 16:2, 9; Luke 24:1; John 20:1), corporate worship has shifted to the first day of the week (Acts 20:7, 1 Cor 16:2) in order to picture the inaugurated nature of our rest that we enjoy through the remaining week

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34. This element is further highlighted when, after the golden calf episode, Moses stresses the need for Yahweh’s presence with Israel (Exod 33:15–16): “If your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here. For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people? Is it not in your going with us, so that we are distinct, I and your people, for every other people on the face of the earth?” Yahweh alone made Israel different, keeping them from sin and enabling their mission (19:5–6, 20:20). Comparably, at the original creation, the commission to populate and oversee the earth was placed in the context of and made dependent on God’s “blessing” (Gen 1:28) (see DeRouchie, “The Blessing-Commission, the Promised Offspring, and the *Toledot* Structure of Genesis”). For more on Yahweh as the sanctifier, see Lev 20:8; 21:8, 15, 23; 22:9, 16, 32.

35. Walton helpfully notes (“Interpreting the Bible as an Ancient Near Eastern Document,” 322): “When commanded to share the rest of God on the Sabbath, it is not to participate in it per se, but to recognize His work of bringing and maintaining order. God’s rest symbolizes His control over the cosmos, which His people recognize whenever they yield to Him the day they could have used to provide for themselves.”

and to heighten hope for full consummation of that rest when Christ returns, overcoming all evil and removing all pain and death (Rev 21:4, 22:3). Our present enjoyment of Sabbath rest every day magnifies the curse-overcoming work of Christ, even as we continue to pray, “Your kingdom come . . . on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt 6:10).

#### 2.2.4. *Honor Your Parents*

Finally, in Word four, Yahweh commands the honor of one’s parents (Exod 20:12 // Deut 5:16), a statement that Paul himself quotes in Eph 6:1–3 and to which he likely alludes in 1 Tim 5:3. The deuteronomic version stresses that Yahweh himself gave this instruction, and both Exodus and Deuteronomy include the gift of the land from “Yahweh your God” as a motivator for obedience. Recognizably, this commandment is the only one of the first grouping that relegates the phrase “Yahweh your God” solely to a subordinate clause—a fact that may suggest that the commandment itself is transitional, bridging the focus between the call to love God and the call to love neighbor.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, the explicit use of the phrase and the extended length of the commandment place it principally within the first grouping that bears a Godward focus.

To speak of honoring one’s parents as an expression of love for God rather than neighbor may seem strange. However, because parents are consistently portrayed in the OT as the principal agents of discipleship, hearing and heeding them is fundamental to preserving the mark of Yahweh in the community.<sup>37</sup> The command to honor one’s parents is principally about honoring God!

Elsewhere, Scripture stresses that parents are the ones who should model God-centeredness and set the tenure of the home, affirming Yahweh’s singularity and his call to life-encompassing love (Deut 6:6–9;

36. Support for treating the commandment for honoring one’s parents as transitional is perhaps seen in Jesus’ including it in a list with other commandments from the second section of the Decalogue: “If you would enter life, keep the commandments. . . . You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt 19:17–19).

37. Two millennia ago, Philo (*Decal.* 12.51) commented on the Decalogue’s initial grouping: “the beginning is the God and Father and Creation of the universe; and the end are one’s parents, who imitate his nature, and so generate the particular individuals” (*The Works of Philo* [updated ed.; trans. C. D. Young; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993] 522). Similarly, D. N. Freedman asserts that the ordinance to honor one’s parents is likely part of the first unit because the home is the principle means through which God will be exalted (*The Nine Commandments: Uncovering the Hidden Pattern of Crime and Punishment in the Hebrew Bible* [New York: Doubleday, 2000]). Cf. M. Greenberg, “The Decalogue Tradition Critically Examined,” in *The Ten Commandments in History and Interpretation* (trans. M. Shorashim; ed. B.-Z. Segal and G. Levi; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1985) 112.

cf. 11:19). Parents should clarify the role of obedience and its relationship to past and future grace (6:20–25), and out of a passion to preserve the fame of God's name into the future generations, parents must teach their children the commands and thus help them to "set their hope in God and not forget the works of God" (Ps 78:7; cf. Judg 2:10). The NT charges fathers in particular to raise their children "in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Eph 6:4).

In contrast to these texts, the Decalogue directs its instruction about family life to the inferior not the superior, to the progeny not the parent (cf. Lev 19:2). At least two elements related to loving God are probably highlighted by this shift. First, good teaching and modeling must still be met with a proper response, and this is a mark of love for God. Like the book of Proverbs, which calls children to pursue the ways of God as taught by their parents ("Hear my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching," Prov 1:8), so too the Decalogue stresses how love for Yahweh will characterize the community only when children recognize their part in joyful surrender to their God-placed parental authority. It is from this perspective that Paul charged Timothy as an adult son: "Continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim 3:14–15). By treasuring and applying the scriptural truths that were taught him as a young boy, Timothy would honor God by continuing to honor his mother and grandmother, from whom he received his instruction (1:5; cf. Eph 6:1–3).

A second way honoring one's parents is shown to be about loving God is evident in how respect and care for one's relatives is considered central to the works of faith that display one indeed knows God (see Titus 1:16). Along with the Decalogue's call to honor one's father and mother, the Pentateuch asserts that striking or cursing one's parents should result in death (Exod 21:15, 17; cf. Lev 20:9) and that anyone who dishonors father or mother is cursed (Deut 27:16). Jesus drew on these texts with the Decalogue commandment in order to highlight that when adult children fail to care for their parents, they are "rejecting the commandment of God" (Mark 7:9–13). That is, dishonor of father and mother is rebellion against the Lord!

Even more directly, with apparently some of the same OT texts in mind,<sup>38</sup> Paul stresses that biological family members bear the first

38. The link with the fourth Word is made in 1 Tim 5:3, where Paul urges Timothy to "honor widows who are truly widows." While the call to honor one's parents has most

responsibility to care for elderly relatives, and that failing to do so is to turn away from God.<sup>39</sup> When adult children “make some return to their parents” by meeting practical concerns in their times of need, God is “pleased” and “godliness” is shown (1 Tim 5:4). However, “if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever” (5:8; cf. Jas 1:27).

### 2.3. *The Decalogue’s Call for Servant Leadership, Not Male Domination*

A third area of theological significance related to my modified Catholic-Lutheran numbering of the Decalogue is associated with the commands related to coveting. Changes made to the deuteronomic Decalogue suggest that after forty years in the wilderness Moses is intentionally shaping a polemic against headship abuses in the community. One of the major alterations made to the deuteronomic version of the Decalogue was the removal of the wife from the list of household members in the final injunction against evil desire (Deut 5:21b; cf. Exod 20:17b). Moses does not explicitly state the purpose behind his change. However, in light of the stress throughout Deuteronomy on the rights of the vulnerable, especially women, Daniel Block is likely correct to see in the deuteronomic version of the Decalogue “a deliberate effort to ensure the elevated status of the wife in a family unit and to foreclose any temptation to use the Exodus version of the command to justify men’s treatment of their wives as if they were mere property, along with the rest of the household possessions.”<sup>40</sup> The Decalogue affirms

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immediate applicability to biological relatives (as is clear from Paul’s argument that follows), he has no hesitation calling the household of God to abide by comparable principles. Thus Timothy should encourage older men “as you would a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity” (5:1–2). Instructions directly related to the human household find broader applicability within the household of faith (see Gal 6:10; cf. P. H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus* [NICNT; Accordance electronic ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006] 338).

39. Most certainly Paul is also drawing on the numerous OT texts that highlight the need to care for the widow (e.g., Exod 22:22; Deut 24:17, 19–21; 26:12; Isa 1:17), all in order to be like God (Deut 10:18–19).

40. Block, “‘You Shall Not Covet Your Neighbor’s Wife,’” 156. Block notes Deuteronomy evinces a high concern for widows (Deut 10:17–18 et passim), invites women to participate in worship (12:12 et passim), requires the manumission of female slaves (15:12), exempts new husbands from military service (20:7), guards the rights of captive brides and second-ranked wives (21:10–14, 15–17), stresses the authority of the mother over a rebellious child (21:18–21), protects a wife who is falsely accused of lying about her virginity (22:13–21), assumes the innocence of rape victims (22:23–29), shields divorced

the patricentric nature of Israelite society; it is not addressed to priests or rulers but to male heads of households that enjoy wives, children, household servants, and property.<sup>41</sup> With this, the Ten Words emphasize that household heads are under God and that they lead principally by loving God and by serving, honoring, and looking out for their family members and neighbors. That is, biblical leaders are characterized by preserving *others'* rights and not their own. Love of others and not love of self is what drives the Decalogue.

In Scripture, human "rights" (or a neighbor's desert of our love) are a natural and necessary fruit of being made in God's image. In a way distinct from any other creature, humans bear a capacity to reflect, resemble, and represent God, and this alone establishes human worth and clarifies why the murder of the innocent demands the death of the perpetrator, "for God made man in his own image" (Gen 9:6).<sup>42</sup> In Section 1, I highlighted how the instructions of the Decalogue display the character of God that is to be embodied in the life of the faithful. The language of other people's "rights" now draws attention to the fact that every one of the Ten Words is shaped with the deepest conviction that Yahweh and his image are of highest value in the universe. The Decalogue is about God not only in the way the laws themselves portray his character but also in the way they display his worth by calling humans to respect his divine rights and the rights of all those bearing his image.

Following the Catholic-Lutheran numbering, Block depicts as follows what he terms the "Deuteronomic Bill of *Others' Rights*":<sup>43</sup>

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women from abuses from their previous husband (24:1–4), and secures the integrity of families and estates through levirate marriage (25:5–10) (*ibid.*, 160–67). Cf. M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972; repr. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1992) 282–92; *idem*, *Deuteronomy 1–11* [AB 5; New York: Doubleday, 1991] 318.

41. I use patricentric as opposed to patriarchal because the latter term is often used pejoratively. On the biblical vision of Israel's society being centered on the father as servant leader as opposed to dominated by a father as self-exalting dictator, see D. I. Block, "Marriage and Family in Ancient Israel," in *Marriage and Family in the Biblical World* (ed. K. M. Campbell; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003) 33–102.

42. My student Matthew Rowley has established the following syllogism that clarifies why the concept of human rights is nonsensical apart from beliefs in God and in humans being made in the divine image: If we give up the biblical God, then we give up the *imago dei*. If we give up the *imago dei*, then we give up inherent or conferred human worth. If we give up human worth, then we give up human worth violations (since a worthless thing can't be violated). If we give up human worth violations, then there is no real enforceable wrong done by a human to another human.

43. On this feature of the Ten Words, see Block, "You Shall Not Covet Your Neighbor's Wife," 145–46.

1. Yahweh's right to the Israelites' exclusive allegiance.
2. Yahweh's right to proper representation (Israel bears his name).
3. Household members' rights to humane treatment from the head.
4. Parents' right to respect from progeny.
5. The next person's right to life.
6. The next person's right to sexual purity.
7. The next person's right to property.
8. The next person's right to honest and truthful testimony.
9. The next person's right to a secure marriage.
10. The next person's right to enjoy property without fear that a neighbor may want it for himself.

The Israelite community was a collection of families, and at the center of each was the father. The layout of the Decalogue defines his role as leader principally as love for God and neighbor—not self-exalting but other-serving. By focusing on the rights of others, the Ten Words as a whole and the deuteronomic version in particular confront present or potential pride, self-elevating power, and abuses by a household head toward God, wives, other household members, and property.<sup>44</sup> And if the head could love Yahweh and neighbor rightly, the rest of the community would follow in line.

### 3. Conclusion

Yahweh gave Israel ten Words, which were to be embodied in the lives of God's people as part of the display of God's worth and character in the context of the world. In this framework, the Decalogue naturally finds its place within the numerous biblical calls to intentional family and community discipleship from generation to generation, that all might "set their hope in God and not forget the works of God but

44. W. L. Moran has observed some significant parallels in Akkadian literature to the coveting commandments and on this basis has argued that there is no theological significance to the "wife" being separated from the list of other household members ("The Conclusion of the Decalogue [Ex 20,17 = Dt 5,21]," *CBQ* 29 [1967] 548–52). He does not, however, give any clarity as to why the wife stands in a completely different position in Deuteronomy. In contrast, Block's argument that Deuteronomy's domestic ideology drives the shift is not bound by the same higher-critical presuppositions, takes more account of the Deuteronomic context, and, I believe, effectively proves that the separation of the "wife" from the rest of the household list in Deut 5:21 is indeed part of Moses' emphatic attempt to awaken a higher respect for the place of the wife within Israel's faith community. For a detailed analysis of all relevant texts in Deuteronomy related to the role and restrictions of the head of household, see R. Josberger, *Between Rule and Responsibility: The Role of the 'āb as Agent of Righteousness in Deuteronomy's Domestic Ideology* (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2007); see also idem, "For Your Good Always: Restraining the Rights of the Victor for the Well-being of the Vulnerable (Deut 21:10–14)," in this volume.

keep his commandments" (Ps 78:7; cf. Exod 13:14–16; Deut 6:7, 20–25; 11:19).<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, the covenantal Ten Words also become central to Israel's mission of drawing the nations to Yahweh (Gen 12:3; Exod 19:5–6 with 33:16; Deut 4:5–8; 26:17–19).

Significantly, Moses himself believed that the Decalogue and all the rest of his instruction in Deuteronomy would have lasting significance in the eschatological era now associated with the new covenant.<sup>46</sup> Moses made this clear in chapter 30, when he declared that, in the eschatological age of heart-transformation and divine-enablement, Yahweh's restored people would "return and heed God's voice and keep all his commandments *that I command you today*" (Deut 30:8; cf. 30:2 with 4:30–31; Jer 12:16; 31:33; Ezek 36:27). While it is beyond the scope of this paper to clarify fully how this is rightly accomplished, the Decalogue clearly matters for the church.

Nevertheless, because the Ten Words originally supplied a written witness to the *old* covenant, which has now been superseded by the new, they apply to Christians *not directly* but only through Christ and in light of his eschatological new covenant work. My treatment of the Sabbath command above provides a case in point. The sovereign rest of God bound up in the Sabbath law finds its ultimate fulfillment *in Christ*, and believers heed the Sabbath command in so far as they are daily satisfied and resting in all God is for them in Jesus.<sup>47</sup>

45. As one considers why Yahweh gave *ten* Words and not nine or eleven, at least two reasons are immediately suggested. First, as P. J. Gentry has observed, the association of ten precepts with the term "words" at the head of the Decalogue (Exod 20:1; cf. Exod 34:28; Deut 4:13; 10:4) is likely an echo of the original creation account, wherein the verb ויאמר 'and he said' occurs exactly ten times (see Gen 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26, 28, 29) (Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 327–28). Just as God's original relationship with his creation was established through ten consecutive words (cf. Heb 1:3), so too would his covenantal relationship with Israel be fully dependent on Ten Words. As Gentry states, "It is . . . Ten Words that brings about the birth of the nation. Like the creation, Israel as a nation hangs upon the Ten Words for her very being" (328). Second, it seems probable that Yahweh intentionally spoke them in a way that could easily be passed on to others, even using one's ten fingers (or toes).

46. P. S. Ross recently published an extensive argument for the classic threefold division of the law, with only the moral law having lasting relevance in the new covenant age (*From the Finger of God: The Biblical and Theological Basis for the Threefold Division of the Law* [Fearn, Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2010]). For a recent review article that identifies both strengths and weaknesses with Ross's case and helpfully posits an alternative view that supports the central thesis of the present study, see D. A. Carson, "The Tripartite Division of the Law: A Review of Philip Ross, *The Finger of God*," in *From Creation to New Creation: Biblical Theology and Exegesis—Essays in Honor of G. K. Beale* (ed. D. M. Gurtner and B. L. Gladd [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2013], 223–36).

47. For more on this, see this paper's appendix: "A Note on the Christian's Relationship to Old Testament Law."

Together the Ten Words supply expressions of God's eternal wisdom and righteousness and of the heights and depths of love for God and neighbor. They embody timeless ethical principles that every believer needs to grasp and heed and that can only be rightly grasped and heeded today in relation to the fulfillment in Jesus. The Decalogue anticipates the very image of God now seen in the face of Christ (John 12:45; 14:9; Col 1:15; Heb 1:3). God is a consuming fire (Heb 12:29), blazing in jealousy for the fame of his name. We must, therefore, stand in reverence and awe of the vision of God in the face of Christ, passionately and progressively pursuing his ways, even as we await the day of glory when the righteous will be made perfect (Heb 12:23, 28; cf. 2 Cor 4:6).

In an attempt to help my own children display more purely the image of God seen in the face of Christ, my wife and I put the Ten Words to song. I conclude with it here as a challenge to the reader to begin counting the Ten and making the Ten count.<sup>48</sup>

I am Yahweh your God, / who saved you all from slavery.  
 I have Ten Words to guide your way / so you can follow me.

The first four focus on loving me; / the others on your neighbor.  
 Some point in both ways, / and all protect from danger.

First, worship only me; / no other gods allowed.  
 Second, represent me well / in private or in crowd.

Third, observe the Sabbath day, / allowing all to rest.  
 Fourth, honor Dad and Mom; / believe I want your best.

Fifth, respect human life. / Sixth, respect marriage.  
 Seventh, respect others' stuff. / Eighth, respect the truth.

The Ninth and Tenth call to covet not / wife or household.  
 We've counted to Ten; we've come to the end. / God is Lord of all.

#### **4. Appendix: A Note on the Christian's Relationship to Old Testament Law**

Highly debated are questions about the relationship of the old and new covenants in general and of the Christian's relationship to OT law in particular.<sup>49</sup> The following significant convictions govern my own approach as a Christian to OT law:

48. We used the familiar melody of "Row, Row, Row Your Boat" for easy memorization.

49. See W. G. Strickland, ed., *The Law, the Gospel, and the Modern Christian* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991); reprinted as *Five Views on Law and Gospel* (1996). Three recent volumes in biblical theology that generally reflect the sentiments of the present author are T. Wells and F. Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense* (Frederick,

1. Christians are no longer under the old covenant as a written legal code (Acts 15:10, 19; Gal 5:1–12; Eph 2:14–16), which brought forth an age of death to the majority of Israel who retained hard hearts and which has now been transcended through the eschatological, new covenant work of Christ (Gal 3:25; cf. 2 Cor 3:6–8, 11; Heb 7:12; 8:13; 10:9), who provides freedom from the law’s condemning power and supplies all the righteousness that the law requires (Rom 3:21–26; Phil 3:8–9; Col 2:13–14).
2. The entire OT finds its fulfillment in Christ, and therefore “every detail” of the Mosaic law is to be done and taught by Christians only in keeping with its fulfillment in Jesus (Matt 5:17–20; cf. Luke 16:17; Rom 3:21, 31; 10:4).<sup>50</sup> While Christians are not bound to the old covenant, we do not abandon the OT law. However, we appropriate it only through Christ and in light of the teaching of his apostles, which together alone ground and sustain the church (Acts 2:42; Eph 2:20; cf. Matt 7:24–27; 17:5; 28:20; John 16:12–14; 17:8, 18, 20; 2 Thess 2:15; Heb 1:1–2).
3. The OT laws encapsulate a temporal expression of love for God and neighbor that, when read in light of and through the completed work of Christ, should now serve as wise guides for believers across all cultures and times (Deut 30:6; Matt 7:12; Rom 13:8–10; Gal 5:14; 6:2; cf. Lev 19:18, 34; Deut 6:5; 10:12–19; Matt 22:37–40). While Christians are not obligated to keep the Mosaic law itself, they must benefit from old covenant instruction in the way that it finds fulfillment in and informs “the law of Christ,” “perfect law,” “law of liberty,” or “royal law” (1 Cor 9:20–21; Gal 6:2; Jas 1:25; 2:8, 12; cf. Matt 5:17–20; 28:19). In this way, the OT law becomes useful “for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness” (2 Tim 3:16; cf. Rom 4:23; 13:9; 15:4; 1 Cor 9:9; 10:11; Eph 6:1–3; 1 Tim 5:18; 1 Pet 1:15–16; 1 John 5:21).<sup>51</sup>

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MD: New Covenant Media, 2002); J. C. Meyer, *The End of the Law: Mosaic Covenant and Pauline Theology* (NAC Studies in Bible and Theology; Nashville: B&H Academic, 2009); and Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*; see also D. Moo, “The Law of Christ as the Fulfillment of the Law of Moses,” in *The Law, the Gospel, and the Modern Christian* [ed. W. G. Strickland; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991], 319–82; T. R. Schreiner, *40 Questions about Christians and Biblical Law* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2010).

50. For this view, see F. Zaspel’s discussion in Wells and Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology*, 77–160, esp. 126–27, 157–60.

51. For examples of a principlizing approach to OT law, see W. C. Kaiser Jr., *Toward Old Testament Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983); idem, “A Principlizing Model,” in *Four*

4. The familial, social, economic, and political structures of Yahwistic Israel as revealed in the OT bore a missional purpose and were intended to provide a contextual paradigm of the values God desires for all peoples and in all times (Gen 26:5; Exod 19:4–6; Deut 4:5–8; 26:16–18; 30:6, 8; Jer 12:16; Ezek 36:23, 27; Isa 2:3; 42:4; 51:4; Rom 2:13–14, 26; 3:31; 7:12; 8:4; 13:8; 1 Cor 9:21; Gal 6:2; Jas 1:25; 2:12).<sup>52</sup>
5. The church and the new creation stand in a divinely orchestrated typological relationship with earlier events, peoples, and structures that allows for ethical teaching from the OT to be done through a redemptive-historical, textually grounded, Christological lens (Rom 5:14; 1 Cor 10:6, 11; Col 2:16–17; Heb 8:5; 9:24; 1 Pet 3:21).<sup>53</sup>

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*Views on Moving Beyond the Bible to Theology* (ed. G. T. Meadors; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009) 19–50; J. D. Hays, “Applying the Old Testament Law Today,” *BSac* 158.1 (2001) 21–35.

52. For more on this point, which may be called a principlizing-paradigmatic approach, see C. J. H. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2011) 62–74, 182–211, 314–25; cf. W. Janzen, *Old Testament Ethics: A Paradigmatic Approach* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994); E. A. Martens, “How Is the Christian to Construe Old Testament Law?” *BBR* 12.2 (2002) 199–216; D. I. Block, “Preaching Old Testament Law to New Testament Christians,” in *The Gospel according to Moses*, 104–46, esp. 133–36; orig. published in *Hiphil (Scandinavian Evangelical E-Journal)* 3 (2006) 1–24, and subsequently published in three parts in *Ministry* 78.5 (2006) 5–11; 78.7 (2006) 12–16; 78.9 (2006) 15–18.

53. For more on this, see Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 94–95, 101–8, 606–8; cf. R. Davidson, *Typology in Scripture: A Study of Hermeneutical TUPOS Structures* (Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series 2; Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, 1981); D. Moo, “The Problem of *Sensus Plenior*,” in *Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon* (ed. D. A. Carson and J. D. Woodbridge; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986) 175–212; G. K. Beale, “Did Jesus and His Followers Preach the Right Doctrine from the Wrong Text?” *Themelios* 14 (1989) 89–96; reprinted in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Text? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New* (ed. G. K. Beale; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994) 387–404; R. Lintz, *The Fabric of Theology: A Prolegomenon to Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993) 304–10; G. P. Hugenberger, “Introductory Notes on Typology,” in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Text?* 331–41; D. A. Carson, “Mystery and Fulfillment: Toward a More Comprehensive Paradigm of Paul’s Understanding of the Old and the New,” in *Justification and Variegated Nomism: Volume 2—The Paradoxes of Paul* (ed. D. A. Carson et al.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004) 393–436, esp. 404.