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Vorwort

Inhaltliche Ausrichtung und redaktionelle Betreuung des vorliegenden Bandes, der dem Andenken des Keilschriftrechtshistorikers Herbert Petschow gewidmet ist, werden von den beiden Unterzeichnern des Vorworts verantwortet.

Bei den Beiträgen von Joachim Oelsner, Johannes Renger, Martin Lang, Guido Pfeifer, Gerhard Ries, Klaas R. Veenhof, Sophie Démare-Lafont und Heinz Barta handelt es sich um die Schriftfassung von Vorträgen, die auf der vom Institut für Altorientalische Philologie und Vorderasiatische Altertumskunde der Westfälischen Wilhelms-Universität Münster vom 10.-12. Februar 2010 veranstalteten Tagung „Neue Forschungen zur Altorientalischen Rechtsgeschichte. Traditionen – Probleme – Perspektiven“ gehalten wurden. Anlass der Tagung war der 100. Geburtstag von Herbert Petschow am 26.12.2009, was sich mit einer Würdigung der Leipziger keilschriftrechtlichen Tradition – der sich die gegenwärtige Altorientalistik in Münster in ihrer Einheit von Rechts-, Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichtsforschung in besonderer Weise verpflichtet fühlt – verband. Die Tagung führte Altorientalisten, Juristen und Alttestamentler aus dem In- und Ausland vor allem mit dem Ziel zusammen, neue Forschungsergebnisse im Bereich der sog. Keilschriftrechte und der damit verbundenen dreitausendjährigen altorientalischen Gesellschaftsgeschichte zu präsentieren und auf interdisziplinärer Basis zu diskutieren.

Die Tagungsbeiträge werden ergänzt durch Aufsätze, die von den jeweiligen Autoren – darunter auch Teilnehmer der Münsteraner Tagung – gleichfalls dem Andenken Herbert Petschows gewidmet wurden. Darüber hinaus fanden entsprechend dem Profil der ZAR noch einige Rezensionenartikel und Rezensionen Aufnahme in den vorliegenden Band.

Münster, Dezember 2012

Hans Neumann / Susanne Paulus



Herbert P. H. Petschow

26. Dezember 1909 – 28. Juni 1991

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The Decalogue in History

A Preliminary Survey of the Fields and Genres of its Reception

Dominik Markl (London)

The Decalogue is probably one of the most intensely used texts in history. This article aims to provide a preliminary survey of the various modes and genres in which the Ten Commandments were received over two and a half millennia (1–10).¹ Starting with the inner-Biblical reception of the Decalogue of Exodus 20 in Deuteronomy 5 (1) and Early Judaism and Christianity (2), the survey proceeds to catechesis, theology, philosophy and literature (3–6), as well as discussing art, music, drama and film (7–9) and finishes with the Decalogue's reception in law and politics (10). Finally, some preliminary conclusions will be drawn and emerging questions mentioned (11).

1. Reception within the Hebrew Bible

The history of the reception of the Decalogue begins within the literary contexts in which it originates – the Pentateuch. Regardless of the question as to what was the original literary setting of the Decalogue² – within the final form of the Pentateuch the Ten Commandments are portrayed as being revealed by God on Mount Sinai (Ex 20:1–17) and retold by Moses in the wilderness of Moab (Deut 5:6–21). The “Ten Words” (Ex 34:28) are found in the enigmatic divine script on the stone tablets that God hands over to Moses on Mount Sinai (Ex 24:12; 31:18; 32:15f), which are destroyed by Moses in his anger over the Golden Calf (Ex 32:19), and which are rewritten and restored as a symbol of reconciliation (Ex 34:1, 4, 28f). Yet, only Moses' accounts in Deut 4:13; 10:4 clarify that these words are in fact to be

1 Previous books on the reception of the Ten Commandments have taken various aspects into consideration: the volume edited by B.-Z. Segal (Hebrew original) and G. Levi (English version) provides an important resource especially for Jewish reception. Most recently a collection of essays was edited by Y. Hoffman and H. G. Reventlow. P. G. Kuntz published a remarkable monograph on the role of the Decalogue in selected authors from Philo to Nietzsche. – A previous version of this paper was presented at the conference of The Old Testament Society of South Africa at the University of the Western Cape, 8 September 2011. I am especially grateful to Eckart Otto and Sue Gillingham for their contributions in the following discussion. At the same time, this article contains the results of the preparations of the conference “The Influence of the Decalogue: Historical, Theological and Cultural Perspectives” that was organized by the author in cooperation with Christine Joynes and held at Trinity College, Oxford, 16–17 April 2012. The papers of the conference will appear in Markl (ed.), *Decalogue*. – I am gratefully indebted to Daniel Côté (Heythrop College, London) and Matthew Monnig SJ (Duke University, Durham, NC) for proofreading different versions of this paper.

2 See for this discussion Hossfeld, *Dekalog*; idem, *Vergleich*; Graupner, *Verhältnis*; idem, *Sinai*; Blum, *Decalogue*, esp. 289–291; Otto, *Deuteronomium*, 687–689.

identified as the ‘Ten Commandments.’ The tablets form the centre of the Sanctuary as they are to be stored within the ark of the covenant (Ex 25:16, 21; 40:20; 1 Kings 8:9), which is the place of further revelation (Ex 25:22). The Decalogue therefore symbolises the hermeneutical source of all divine revelation that is to be mediated through the priests.

In this way, the contexts of the Ten Commandments within the Pentateuch attribute to them the highest authority. It is more surprising that Moses is portrayed as making changes to the very wording of the Ten Commandments as they are told in Ex 20 and supposed to be written in stone. Besides a few other minor differences, Moses significantly changes the wording and especially the reason of the Sabbath commandment (cf. Ex 20:8–11; Deut 5:12–15).³ This is of the highest significance for the legal hermeneutics of the Pentateuch. If even these most special words can be altered and actualised by a religious authority like Moses, actualisation is introduced as a hermeneutical principal at the very core of the divine law.⁴

As the other books of the Hebrew Bible contain hardly any hints of the Decalogue,⁵ it is only the prominence that the Pentateuch attributes to this text that lays the foundation for its vast history of reception: Its perception as the centre of the divine law that inspired the Christian understanding of the Ten Commandments as the basis of Christian ethics (3) and the motif of the tablets that became iconic in the history of art (7).

2. Early Judaism and Christianity

The first extra-Biblical stages of Decalogue interpretation are reflected in the earliest translations.⁶ Philo’s work “De Decalogo” is an example of the high estimation of the Decalogue in Early Judaism.⁷ Moreover, *Tefillin* from Qumran, Papyrus Nash and the Mishnah clearly indicate that the Ten Commandments were recited in Early Judaism in daily prayer. Yet, this attitude came in conflict with the hermeneutics of the Torah in Early Christianity. Within the New Testament, Jesus is shown as taking the validity of the Decalogue for granted (Mk 10:19 // Mt 19:18f // Lk 18:29) and using it for his ethical teaching in the Sermon on the Mount (cf. Mt 5: 21, 27, 28). Against this backdrop, the Decalogue gained a central role in Early Christian interpretation of the divine law.⁸ Rabbinic Judaism, however, emphasised that every commandment of the Torah had the same divine authority. Therefore, an overestimation of the Ten Commandments was to be avoided. The Decalogue was

3 Cf. Klingbeil, Sabbath.

4 See Otto, Deuteronomium, 704; Markl, Words.

5 Allusions to the Decalogue may be seen in Jer 7:9; Hos 4:2; there seems to be a literary connection between Hos 12:10; 13:4; Ps 81:11 and the preamble in Ex 20:2 // Deut 5:6.

6 Himbaza, Décalogue; on the different traditions of counting the commandments see Reicke, Worte.

7 Cf. the study Amir, Decalogue; Pearce, Philo; de Vos, Dekalog; on the Ten Commandments in Early Judaism see Kellermann, Dekalog; Stemberger, Dekalog; Otto, Deuteronomium, 709–713; Jungbauer, Ehre.

8 On the Ten Commandments in the NT and early Christianity see Löhr, Dekalog; Säger, Tora 115–146; in the NT: Flusser, Commandments; in early Christianity Rordorf, Beobachtungen.

removed from phylacteries⁹ and disputes over the elevation with which the Ten Commandments should be used in liturgy continued.¹⁰

3. Homily and Catechesis, Confessionaries and Catechisms

Although the Ten Commandments have continuously been the subject of preaching and teaching in both Judaism and Christianity – with a variety of hermeneutical approaches –, and only a small selection of these oral interpretations have come down to us in written form.¹¹ The Torah's loss of practical importance within Christianity directed more attention to the Decalogue as a centre of ethical teaching in Christian catechesis.¹² During the first Christian millennium, however, the importance of the Ten Commandments in Christian teaching was relatively limited.

Their role became reinforced as private confession developed beginning in the 7th century and yearly auricular confession became obligatory in the 13th century. Hugh of St. Victor (c. 1100–1141) and Peter Lombard (c. 1096–1164) played an important role in attributing the Decalogue a decisive place in moral life.¹³ Beginning with the *Speculum Ecclesiae* of Edmund of Canterbury (1175–1240), explanations of the Ten Commandments were given in confession manuals.¹⁴ The Ten Commandments were integrated in confessionaries¹⁵ and a great number of explanations of the Decalogue were produced for this purpose in the 14th and 15th century,¹⁶ among which Johann Gerson's *Opusculum Tripartitum de Praeceptis Decalogi de Confessione et de Arte Moriendi* (1408) was particularly influential.¹⁷ Such books became (as other educational manuals) more and more accessible to the laity¹⁸ and the Decalogue played an important role in Late Medieval catechesis.¹⁹ During this time and especially through the Reformation, the Seven Capital Sins were replaced by the Ten Commandments as the prevalent moral paradigm.²⁰

9 Oppenheimer, Removing.

10 On the custom of standing during the recitation of the Decalogue in Jewish worship see Urbach, Role; on the history of the use of the Ten Commandments in Jewish liturgy cf. Langer, Decalogue.

11 Examples of Rabbinic commentaries can be found in Kasher, Encyclopedia, 105–205; Brooks, Spirit; Neudecker, Voice; Petuchowski, Stimme; Melammed, Observe. On homilies by Ramon Llull see Lluch-Baixauli, Claves; for examples of Medieval homilies see Vecchio, Decalogo.

12 Surveys were provided by Bourgeault, Décalogue; Rentschka, Dekalogkatechese; Röthlisberger, Kirche; quite brief Delhaye, Décalogue.

13 Bast, Fathers, 35f; on Medieval commentaries on the Crede and the Decalogue see Guyot, Aspects.

14 Röthlisberger, Kirche, 66f; Boyle, Summae, provides an overview over this genre.

15 On this development in German confessionaries see Haberkern, Beichtbüchlein, esp. 23f.

16 Röthlisberger, Kirche, 71–78; Harmening, Katechismusliteratur; idem, Aberglaubenskritik; Baumann, Aberglaube; Störmer-Caysa, Auslegungen.

17 Bast, Fathers, 13–23; Carter, Science 239, points out that Gerson remained very influential even during the 16th century in France. For another example see Marquard von Lindau, Buch.

18 Campbell, Pecoock, esp. 48f discusses this for England.

19 Bast, Fathers, esp. 1–52.

20 On this development and possible reasons for it see Bossy, Arithmetic; Cassagrande / Vecchio, Classificazione.

The catechisms of the Reformers mostly placed the Decalogue before the Creed and the Lord's prayer²¹ and the Ten Commandments were given a prominent role in Reformed liturgy.²² The great influence of the catechisms of Philipp Melanchthon (1523–25), Martin Luther (1529)²³ and John Calvin (1542) and others from the first half of the 16th century provoked the writing of catholic Catechisms such as the influential catechisms of Petrus Canisius (1555)²⁴ and the *Catechismus Romanus* (1566).

The first texts that Christian missionaries in America and Asia translated into indigenous languages in the 16th c. were mostly catechisms.²⁵ In this way, the Decalogue and the Lord's prayer were the first biblical texts to be translated into many languages which had not been affected by Christian culture up to the 16th century. Through their distribution within catechisms, the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer and the Creed probably became the first 'global texts,' which have been translated and disseminated in all parts and in most languages of the world. In the last decades of the 20th century, as the popularity of catechisms declined, explanations of the Ten Commandments have been published as "Christian ethics."

4. Theological Reflection, Moral Theology, Exegesis

Besides its practical use in homiletics and catechesis, the Decalogue has been treated within 'academic' theological works since antiquity. Among the Church Fathers, Clement of Alexandria, Origen and Augustine,²⁶ commented on the Ten Commandments; as well as prominent early medieval commentators Isidore of Seville and the Venerable Bede.²⁷

The Decalogue was systematically reflected in medieval tractates, e.g. by Robert Grosseteste and Thomas Aquinas.²⁸ Moreover, as a consequence of the role the Ten Commandments played in catechisms, they also became the structuring principle for works of emerging moral theology, beginning with the huge work on *Theologia Moralis* by Alfons Maria de Liguori (originally Naples 1748).²⁹ The Ten Commandments have been commented upon within exegetical commentaries on the books of Exodus and Deuteronomy

21 For a comprehensive and brief introduction to the history of catechisms see Fraas et al., *Katechismus*; on catechisms in England see Green, *ABC* (on the teaching of the Commandments esp. 422–478); on Catholic catechisms in France see Carter, *Science* (esp. 256–260); on Catholic catechisms originating in Vienna Mann, *Katechismen*; on the Decalogue in catechisms Dhotel, *Origines* 401–411.

22 Cf. Dorn, *Usus*; Carl, *Decalogue*; Kunz, *Dekalog*.

23 See Peters, *Kommentar*.

24 For the Latin text, a German translation and commentary see Canisius, *Katechismus*.

25 E.g. the catechism of Francisco Xavier was translated to Tamil in 1543 and in 1545 to Malayan; the Decalogue was the first text to be translated to Chinese by the group of Jesuits around Matteo Ricci in 1584; and Alexandro Valignano published his Japanese catechism in 1586; cf. the Franciscan explanation of the Decalogue in Tagalog edited by A.-M. Rosales; on early American and pictographic catechisms see the publications of Resines.

26 Cf. Ledegang, *Interpretation*; Lluch-Baixaui, *Orígenes*; idem, *Augustín*.

27 Lluch-Baixaui, *Siglo*.

28 Lluch-Baixaui, *Formación*; Grosseteste, *Decem*.

29 On the role of the Ten Commandments within moral theology see Hofmann, *Bedeutung*.

since antiquity; numerous historical critical exegetical studies on the Decalogue have been written especially since the 19th century.³⁰

5. Philosophy and Psychology

The Decalogue transcended the boundaries of theology and was discussed philosophically regarding its relationship with natural law since Anselm of Laon († 1117) and especially prominently by Thomas Aquinas.³¹ The Decalogue was commented upon by political philosophers such as Thomas Hobbes in his *Leviathan* and also by John Locke.³² Sigmund Freud drew on the Ten Commandments in *The Interpretation of Dreams*;³³ and in Freud's tradition, Jacques Lacan reflected on the Decalogue systematically in *Seminar VII*.³⁴

6. Literary Transformations

The Ten Commandments have been reworked and transformed into a great variety of literary genres. Jewish liturgical poems (*piyyutim*) retell the theophany on Mount Sinai and the revelation of the Ten Commandments.³⁵ Christian poems portray the Ten Commandments from the Middle Ages³⁶ at least up to the 19th century.³⁷ There are also several lengthy texts from the 15th and 16th century which use the Decalogue as their structuring principle, e. g. the long Middle English dialogue "*Dives et pauper*" (about 1405–1410) or several collections of *exempla*.³⁸ Edifying tales on the Ten Commandments were told and written between the 18th and early 20th century.³⁹ Finally, the Decalogue theme also appears in profane literature,⁴⁰ especially in the context of the Second World war and most prominent in

30 For an extensive list of literature see Markl, *Dekalog* 2007; Otto, *Deuteronomium*, 685–689, and Clines, *Commandments*, provide critical evaluations of exegetical scholarship.

31 Hödl, *Dekalog*, 649; on Aquinas see Kuntz, *Commandments*, 62–77; on the further development of the question Frey, *Law*.

32 Kuntz, *Commandments*, 134–144.

33 Freud, *Interpretation*, 151: "In my opinion the sanctity with which we have endorsed the injunctions of the Decalogue dulls our perception of the reality. Perhaps we hardly dare permit ourselves to perceive that the greater part of humanity neglects to obey the fifth commandment."

34 See Reinhard / Lupton, *Subject*.

35 Cf. the contributions of A. Mirsky, J. Blau and Y. Ratzaby in Segal / Levi (eds.), *Commandments*, 343–381; the earliest predecessor of such poems may be a poem from a Fragment Targum: *Himbaza*, *Poème*.

36 Cawley, *Versions*; Buske, *Katechismusfrömmigkeit*; Németh, *Teaching*; Rieckenberg, *Tafel*.

37 Numerous examples are held in the British Library.

38 Barnum, *Dives*; Wachinger, *Dekalog*.

39 The British Library holds at least about 15 examples of such "tales", "stories" or "sketches from life, the earliest published in London 1771 by an anonymous author ("Every youth his own moralist: or, ten original moral tales, exemplifying the Ten Commandments"), the latest dates from 1927 ("Stories on the Ten Commandments for the Children of the Holy Catholic Church" by R. F. J. Smith). Some examples in German can be found in the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek; e. g. anonymous, *Erzählungen über die zehh Gebote Gottes*, Sulzbach 1839; J. Schöpf, *Die Rosen vom Berge Sinai. Erzählungen über die zehh Gebote Gottes für die reifere Jugend*, Regensburg 1875.

40 On the Decalogue in English literature see Craigie / Jeffrey, *Commandments*.

Thomas Mann's "Das Gesetz" from 1944.⁴¹ Mann's novel was among others edited in 1945 entitled "The Ten Commandments: Ten Short Novels of Hitler's War Against the Moral Code."⁴²

7. Art

Since antiquity, the giving of the law to Moses on Mount Sinai has been rendered in various ways within Jewish and Christian art.⁴³ The tablets became a symbol used in isolation from this scene, only from the Middle Ages onwards.⁴⁴ Cycles on the Decalogue flourished in the Late Middle Ages and Early Modern times – painted catechisms in churches, pamphlets and illustrations in catechisms.⁴⁵ The tablets were rendered in many altar screens (especially in Anglican and Reformed) churches as well as in Torah shrines of synagogues.⁴⁶ The text of the Ten Commandments was displayed through wall paintings and domestic text paintings at least since the 15th century.⁴⁷ Moreover, the Commandments were rendered on other devotional objects such as medals and coins.⁴⁸ During the French Revolution, the Ten Commandments were used as a symbol for the cult of the law in art.⁴⁹

8. Music

Besides liturgical cantillation of the Decalogue in Jewish and Christian liturgy,⁵⁰ its musical reception begins with the singing of metrical versions of the Ten Commandments as hymns since the Middle Ages.⁵¹ Most prominently, Martin Luther wrote two hymns on the Ten Commandments, which were used by Johann Sebastian Bach and other composers for or-

41 Cf. Dithmar, Mose; Hamburger, Werk, 185–270; Kuschel, Gott; Lubich, Fascism.

42 Robinson, Commandments.

43 Mellinkoff, Moses; Schlosser, Moses; for an example of Jewish book painting see Narkiss, Illustrations; on Byzantine Art see Aliprantis, Moses.

44 Mellinkoff, Tablets.

45 Thum, Gebote; Christin, Yeux; Lechner, Gebote; on Old Testament stories used as exempla of the Ten Commandments in illustrations Veldman, Testament.

46 Sarfatti, Tablets.

47 An early predecessor of such text displays is the rhyme version of the Decalogue included in the catechism panel of Nikolaus von Kues in the Lamberti-Church in Hildesheim: Rieckenberg, Tafel; Bookmann, Schrifttafeln. For examples of text paintings on walls of Dutch reformed churches see Mochizuki, Bible, esp. 344f; idem, Home, esp. 290f, shows that Ten Commandments paintings were the earliest and by far the most frequent text paintings that appeared in homes of Amsterdam, particularly during the first quarter of the 17th century.

48 On medals from the 16th century see de la Fuye, Iconographie; recently, coins on the Decalogue were released e. g. by the Vatican (2003) and by the states of Israel (2005, 2007) and Samoa (2009/10).

49 Cf. the impressive work of Ribner, Tablets; a prominent example are the bronze relief doors of La Madeleine in Paris by Henri de Triqueti (1803–1874).

50 On Jewish tradition of Decalogue cantillation see Breuer, Dividing; Shiloah, Comments.

51 See Brednich, Liedpublizistik I, 72.

gan works.⁵² The reformation of Anglican liturgy introduced the recitation of the Ten Commandments, replacing the Kyrie in the Book of Common Prayer in 1552; this initiated the genre of the Responses to the Ten Commandments.⁵³ Since the 18th century, the Sinai theophany and the Ten Commandments were set to music in oratorios, cantatas and sacred dramas;⁵⁴ the most monumental probably being Sigismund von Neukomm's *Mount Sinai, or The Ten Commandments* (published in 1832).⁵⁵ The transition from the 17th to the 18th century, therefore, marks the transition from a purely liturgical and catechetical use of musical renderings of the Decalogue to their presentation on the stage even in non-liturgical settings.

9. Drama and Film

The Decalogue was – as far as we know – first staged in medieval mystery plays.⁵⁶ The N-Town play cycle contains a piece on Moses with an explanation of the Ten Commandments.⁵⁷ A more extensive example is preserved in Chester's "The Ten Commandments, Balaam, Balak and the Prophets."⁵⁸ Dramatic elements were used in dialogue sermons as they could be reflected in *Dives et pauper* (cf. above, 6).⁵⁹ Moreover, the Sinai theophany was enacted in musical sacred dramas (cf. above, 8).

The Decalogue entered film at an early stage of silent cinema in films on Moses.⁶⁰ The most monumental productions made by Hollywood were the two productions of Cecil DeMille's "*The Ten Commandments*." The black-and-white version from 1923 was one of the most successful cinema films of the 1920s, and even more bombastic was the remake from 1956.⁶¹ The Polish director Krzysztof Kieslowski (1941–1996) created ten psychologically sublime short films based on the Commandments,⁶² marking a shift towards a more free and creative reflection on the ethical issues flagged up by the Commandments compared to their plain catechetical or propagandistic transmission.

52 Cf. Kuntz, Luther; e.g. the chorale preludes on "Dies sind die heil'gen Zehn Gebot" by Johann Michael Bach (1648–1694) and by Johann Sebastian Bach (BWV 678).

53 The text of the responses usually prays for God's mercy "to keep this law" and is sung after each commandment; an early example are the Responses of Thomas Tallis (1505–1585).

54 A first comprehensive overview on the musical reception history of the Decalogue is to be expected in an article by L. Beduschi in Markl (ed.), *Decalogue*.

55 Von Neukomm's teacher Joseph Haydn had composed complex canons on the Ten Commandments (completed in 1792 and appeared in 1810).

56 See already Owst, *Literature*, 486; cf. Corbett, *Laity*, 101–130; Cawley, *Versions*, 134–140.

57 Spector, *N-Town*, 58–65.

58 Cf. its edition in Bevington, *Drama*.

59 Owst, *Literature*, 544f.

60 Cf. Shepherd, *Prolonging*.

61 Cf. Wright, *Moses*, and Graf, *Vermächtnis*, 58–60.

62 Baugh, *Decalogue*; Lesch / Loretan, *Gewicht*.

10. Law and Politics

The Decalogue plays a modest role in the history of law. The *Collatio legum Mosaicarum et Romanarum* from late antiquity is ordered according to the Ten Commandments and the Laws of Alfred the Great from the 9th century are introduced by a paraphrase of the Decalogue.⁶³

Comparable to the symbolic use of the Mosaic law during the French Revolution (see above, 7), the Ten Commandments have gained a prominent role in legal and political discussions in the United States in recent decades.⁶⁴ The Tablets of the Commandments have been used as a symbol in public spaces and buildings; the debate is still going on as to whether the Ten Commandments should have some kind of constitutional value as ethical foundations for the US, as proponents of the public display of the tablets hold, or whether the tablets as a predominantly religious symbol should be banned from public ground according to the separation of religion and state, as opponents claim.

11. Preliminary Conclusions and Emerging Questions

This preliminary overview of genres of the reception history of the Decalogue intends to provide but a working tool for further studies. Many issues involved require deeper analysis. A few preliminary conclusions and possible directions for further investigation shall be mentioned here.

- a. The Decalogue has been continuously and intensely received for two and a half millennia. It is one of the first texts to spread globally in early modern times. The modes of reception include various oral and literary genres including poetry, artistic renderings, music, film, law and politics. What are the historical conditions and reasons for the development of new genres and modes of reception and dissemination? How did the different genres of reception influence each other? Why did the Ten Commandments have such a remarkable impact in Late Medieval and Early Modern times? Was their reception re-intensified during times of crisis?⁶⁵ What role does the Decalogue play in its negative, antinomist reception?
- b. The Decalogue provides a test case regarding the ambiguous historical relationship between Judaism and Christianity. On the one hand, the Ten Commandments became a central point of divergence regarding the hermeneutical approach towards the divine Torah of the Pentateuch. Whereas Christian growing neglect of most laws of the Old Testament was increasingly supplemented by a growing emphasis on the Decalogue as

63 The most extensive study on the Decalogue in Medieval law was provided by Mielke, *Dekalog*; on Alfred's prologue and its possible sources see also Carella, *Evidence*; for a reflection on the role of the Decalogue for the development of law see Tonelli, *Decalogo*, 135–160.

64 Wilf, *Cases*; Garet, *Commandments*. – An interesting early example of the political use of the Ten Commandments in the US is Elizabeth Candy Stanton's pamphlet "The Slave's Appeal" from 1860 that directs an explanation of the Decalogue against slavery; cf. Stevenson-Moessner, *Elizabeth*, esp. 678–681 and 692–696.

65 Cf. Bast, *Fathers*, 32–45: "The Ten Commandments and the 'Crisis Dynamic.'"

the centre of divine will, this development led to a reaction of emerging Rabbinic Judaism to reduce the importance of the Decalogue in order to emphasise the validity of all divine commandments according to Biblical and oral tradition. On the other hand, the tablets of the commandments re-gained symbolical value within Judaism since the Middle Ages. In both religions, the tablets of the Decalogue have become a multilayered symbol. They gesture toward the revelation at Mount Sinai and the revelation of God's will in general. It might be a rewarding enterprise to study the historical conditions of Jewish-Christian relations which may have influenced either side to increase or lessen their display of the Ten Commandments. If the Ten Commandments can be seen as a summary of religious and ethical values of both Judaism and Christianity, can they serve as a point of reference in inter-religious dialogue?

- c. The reception history of the Ten Commandments had enormous practical consequences. The prohibition of idolatry led to iconoclasm, witch trials and the prosecution and even extinction of religions and cultures of indigenous peoples since the 16th century; the Sabbath commandment became the foundation of the Christian Sunday rest; the commandment to honour parents was highly influential for the development of patriarchal and even absolutistic ideology in early modern Europe;⁶⁶ the interpretation of the Sixth Commandment strongly influenced moral attitudes towards sexuality. At the same time it is obvious that some of the commandments' practical consequences especially in their Christian history of reception were highly problematic. The Decalogue was frequently isolated from its Biblical contexts of Israel's rescue from slavery in Egypt and thus its main intention to preserve freedom was overseen.

Following these historical reflections one may ask the question as to how the role of the Ten Commandments is to be seen within the context of present day societies. While the Decalogue is not likely to disappear from teaching and reflection within Jewish and Christian communities, does it have any cultural role beyond the borders of religious communities?⁶⁷

66 Bast, *Fathers*; idem, *Dimension*.

67 Cf. Otto, *Deuteronomium*, 684f.

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