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THE DECALOGUE AND MODERN CRITICISM

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The following sources of information are acknowledged in the preparation of this paper:

Religion of Israel	- Kautzch, Hastings, vol.V. 630f.
Decalogue	- W. P. Paterson, Hastings, vol.I, 580f.
Religion of Israel	- Kuenen, Vol. I, 268f.
(Origin and Permanent Value of the O. T.	- Kent
The O.T. in the Jewish Church	- Robertson, Chap. XI.
Problem of the O.T.	- Orr
Deuteronomy	- Harper, Expositor's Bible.
Introduction to O. T. Literature	- Driver

It should also be noted that the above authorities in their discussions quote from nearly all the critics of Europe thus disclosing the positions of the latter.

The Decalogue lies at the foundation of the Jewish and Christian systems. That this is the present conception needs no qualification. In all the Christian centuries this same view has prevailed. From the earliest accounts we learn that it was held in great veneration by the Israelites. Its location in the Holy of Holies attests this fact. The pious Jew had a deep feeling of veneration for the whole tabernacle. This feeling was intensified as he thought of or approached the Holy of Holies. Within this dark enclosure there was no image but there was the Ark of the Covenant. Over this gilded receptacle hovered the Cherubim with half-spread wings. Here darkness ever reigned. Only on the Day of Atonement did any human venture into this chamber, and upon this single occasion it was the priest prepared by most careful ceremonial. On this occasion alone was the ineffable name pronounced. But neither the darkened chamber nor the gilded ark was of supreme importance. This centered in the "ten words" carved upon the tables of stone. "The broken tables, the ark, the mercy-seat sprinkled with blood, the fumes from the incense, the awe-struck priest represented guilty man before a merciful God whose law had not been kept." The center of all this symbol was the "ten words". Both ancient and modern worshippers have equally honored the Decalogue as the most sacred and fundamental law. For centuries it was scarcely questioned that the entire Pentateuch was written by Moses. If per-

chance a critic arose who thought otherwise, he was branded as a heretic. The multitudes were not readers or thinkers so no critical question disturbed them. Those who were in position to have an opinion were usually too much interested in promulgating their system to give any serious consideration to critical questions. The few exceptions were so rare that they possessed little influence. The ages for the most part have been uncritical. Many times doubtless tradition and true history have blended with no discrimination and the whole product received without question. This indicates no attempt to deceive but only shows the prevailing literary standards of the times. The Bible has been recognized as conveying Divine truth and the general sacredness which has grown around the Book has been taken as a warrant of absolute perfection, and it has been felt to be impious to question a single line or vary from the traditional interpretation. A mode of thought once becoming settled is difficult to change and religious thought especially is hard to modify.

The question of the authorship of the Pentateuch is one thing, and the authorship of its parts is quite another, but these two questions have not always been distinguished. It is only slowly that the idea that Moses is not the author of the Pentateuch does not concede a single important interest in religion is finding acceptance among the people at large. Of course when the critical question is once raised all sorts of critics with all sorts of motives and theories are sure to

come into view. This is what happened in the field of Old Testament problems. Some have gone to the extreme of casting doubt upon the very existence of Moses and have placed everything relating to him into the category of myth. Others assert that he is no longer entitled to be regarded as Israel's greatest lawgiver. Such statements demand serious consideration. Because of the loose literary standards it is quite likely that a very large part of the Pentateuch which has been attributed to him is of later date. That this is true is not important because nothing fundamental is disturbed. Recognizing the fundamental character of the Decalogue it is well to look into Bible criticism and if possible determine what effect this criticism is to have upon our conception of this particular part. We want to know whether we may still with confidence believe that the Decalogue is divine and to be accepted and as coming from the age of Moses, or whether it is to be regarded as a comparatively late development. We want to know whether we may believe that "God spake these words and said" or whether they were gathered together by pious priests or prophets during the drag of weary years that preceded our era.

The Decalogue is found imbedded at two different points in the Pentateuch. It occurs in the second book and also the fifth. In Exodus we are told about the people tarrying in the vicinity of Sinai and while here Jehovah, amid the thundering and lightning about the brow of the mountain, made

a covenant with these people who had so lately escaped from slavery. The basis of this covenant was the "ten words". These words were uttered in thundrous tones so that the people all heard, and they were graven by the finger of Jehovah upon stone tablets to be deposited in the ark constructed by specific directions given by Jehovah. In Deuteronomy these ten words are reiterated to the people just before crossing over the Jordan into Canaan proper. These two versions and their differences have been the occasion of attack from the critics as we shall see presently.

There are a number of principle objections to theory of Mosaic authorship of the Decalogue which we will now notice. The first of these relates to the use of images in preprophetic times. The second commandment forbids images for worship. But it is declared that images of Jehovah were worshipped as late as the reign of Jeroboam. In proof of this we are directed to the prevalence of calf-worship in the Northern Kingdom in the time of this King's reign. Further reference is made to Gideon in Judges 8:27, to the images in the house of Micah, the Ephraimite, as related in Judges 17 and 18, and to the brazen serpent erected by Moses. Kuenen holds that the ark was a symbol of Jehovah and therefore served a purpose similar to an image. These accounts have led many to think that images were in common use down to the eighth century and some have asserted that no opposition was made until the time of the prophets. If it is true that images were in common use

without rebuke, then certainly Moses could not have promulgated the second commandment and when one is undermined suspicion immediately falls upon the others.

If this objection to Mosaic authorship is to have force, two things should be clearly shown. First, that the worship of images of Jehovah was continuous without rebuke from early times, and second, that it was not a defection. When we search for evidence to confirm such position we find much against it and nothing for it without warping the facts. The J and E sources are certainly older than the prophets whom the critics declare were the first to oppose image worship. In the J and E records which give the history of the patriarchs, we find ample evidence that these ancient worshippers did not use images. If they chanced to come in contact with such worship, it was always to banish it, if possible. A possible exception is thought to be found in the case of the Teraphim in the family of Labam. What these Teraphim were is by no means certain. Perhaps as Kuenan thinks they were "household gods, and consulted as to the future". They cere tainly were not images of Jehovah, and we find that they were put away by Jacob at Shechem as incompatible with Jehovah worship.

When we come to Sinai, we have a clear case of attempted worship of Jehovah under the form of a calf erected by Aaron in the absence of Moses. Certainly here is a case of decided opposition on the part of Moses, for he condemned it

by grinding the image to powder and scattering it upon the water. In view of this emphatic opposition by Moses we should hardly accuse him of attempting image-worship in the case of the brazen serpent. Nor can it be successfully shown that the brazen serpent was erected for the purpose of worship.

In post-Mosaic times we find images used but as in former cases there is the usual opposition to them. Such practice is never recognized by the great spiritual leaders of the times. Gideon's ephod, whatever it was, became a snare to him, which is a condemnatory note to be understood only in the light of the sentiment expressed in the second commandment. The cases of Micah, the Ephraimite, and Jonathan, the son of Gershom, can be quite well accounted for on the ground of declension of the pure worship of Jehovah. The contention of the opposing critics could hardly be supported unless we admit that some pious seventh or eighth century redactor went over these old records with the purpose of covering up the evidences of the common early practices, and succeeded in doing so. Such a supposition is absolutely incredible in view of the early J and E records.

We find then nothing to support the contention that Jeroboam was following an established custom which was not opposed earlier. A still more glaring example of facts overlooked occurs when it is said that neither Elijah, Hosea nor Amos condemn the act of Jeroboam which would be expected had this action been an innovation. Hosea, in terms hardly to be

age and therefore the day sacred to him should be kept sacred by the people. To summarily dismiss the possibility of Mosaic authorship because of this variation is hasty and partial in method.

Under the old and carelessly formed supposition that Moses wrote the entire Pentateuch this objection may have had considerable weight. But now since it is recognized to be of composite authorship and that ancient documents from various sources are drawn upon this objection loses much of its force. The very most that can be claimed is that the variations show considerable editorial freedom. This freedom does not look very glaring even in our eyes, and it is well to remember that in the time in question, whether it was in the seventh century or earlier, such practice was regarded by no means objectionable. The literary ideals in those days were such that this practice was, within limits, commendable. The ruling motive was not to corrupt any historical motive, but only to make such appeals as the circumstances of the time would warrant.

In studying this question account must be taken of the fact that several of the commands of the Decalogue are very short, and further, the formula used in referring to them is the "ten words". They were arranged originally in pentads as was the whole of the Code of the Covenant (See Kent's "Origin and Permanent Value of the Old Testament and Brigg's "Higher Criticism of the Hexateuch.) This rendered them suitable to be

memorized. All these facts coupled with the disproportionate length of some and the variations in other of the commands, warrant the conclusion that originally each of them was in a brief form. In this form the two pentads would be about equal in length, and would balance more equally. This symmetry would be no small item when it came to copying them, or memorizing. We have no objection, if at one time Sabbath observance was urged from one motive and at another time a different motive was employed. The institution is the same in both cases. We can well see how the Deuteronomist in making a desperate appeal to the people for a centralized worship of Jehovah should point to the crucial epoch in Israel's early history as a motive for keeping sacred the rest-day of their God. There is positively no indication that the institution of the Sabbath was made at any time after the time of Moses. We find evidences of its existence in the time of the Judges, in the time of the united monarchy, as well as in the time of the eighth century prophets. There is no place in which to assign it, later than the time of the great legislator. We are compelled to go back to Moses to find the foundation for this institution.

It would seem, then, that the short precepts given by Moses were enlarged upon by some later hand with a view to making a more forceful appeal. This view not only relieves the difficulties encountered in the fourth command but also removes difficulties in connection with all of the longer pre-

cepts, including the second, third, fourth, fifth and tenth. This enlargement by the addition of motives and details is just what we might expect in view of the history of the Jews and especially in view of the literary ideals of the time.

A third objection to the Mosaic authorship is the very elevated conception of the Deity which is implied in the Decalogue. This conception is plainly monotheistic. Now those critics, who discard revelation as a guiding principle and start with the evolution hypothesis, will naturally take offence at the monotheism suggested by the Decalogue. Such critics assume that the earliest religious conceptions are the poorest and they seek some simple early beginnings and try to show the gradual unfolding of the idea of God, until the highest conception is reached;, which is monotheism. Kuenen says, "At first the religion of Israel was polytheism". Wellhausen declares that monotheism was unknown to ancient Israel. Various beginnings are assumed by the critics, such as the connection of Jehovah with Moloch, to whom human sacrifices were made. Again, Jehovah is conceived as originally the storm-god of Sinai, and borrowed by Moses, who learned of him during his long sojourn among the Kenites. From some such rude beginning, it is asserted, finally emerged the monotheistic conception among the prophets of the eighth century B. C. This places Moses in a period in which such a conception would be absolutely impossible with him and hence it is concluded that the Decalogue must be placed in point of time after

such conception became current.

To substantiate such a claim these critics should show that monotheism is never found in the early religious stages of a people, and further that early Israelitish worship was not monotheistic. Unfortunately for this position, neither of these points can be maintained. An unbiased study of the early religious conceptions of the Chinese, Babylonians, and Egyptians reveals, in each case, a conception of a personal God who rules the world, and guides the destinies of men. This conception is indeed astonishing and compares quite favorably with the most modern conception. In Legge's "Religions of China", we are told that the Chinese in earliest times worshipped Shang-ti, the Supreme God of Heavens. In the Code of Hammurabi, which antedates Moses nearly or quite a thousand years, we find such formulae as "Shall swear in the name of God", or "Shall recount before God", "the language is quite similar to that of Genesis". Prof. Osgood in Bibliotheca Sacra (1888) says, that in Egypt before Abraham's age was dreamed of, we find a conception of God, so full of truth as to his personality, attributes, care of men, his exaltation above all nature gods and moral teaching so elevated as to excite our admiration. When we come to the particular case of Israel no better showing for the evolution hypothesis can be made. Every reference to belief, tradition and history is made in the light of monotheism, expressed or implied. Only a slavish adherence to a theory by those who are blind to facts and the

findings of historical research, can find any warrant for assigning the rise of monotheism to the time of Amos and Hosea. Prof. Orr wisely says, "Man does not creep up from fetishism, through polytheism to monotheism, but polytheism represents rather the refraction of an original indifferentiated sense, or consciousness, or perception, of the divine", and the religious history of the nations of antiquity give ample testimony to this position.

There is no reason for us to contend that the whole Israelitish people at any one time possessed this exalted conception of God. Coming as they did from a long period of slavery, and surrounded as they were by idolatrous polytheism, we should expect a great number, perhaps the greatest number, to regard Jehovah as merely their national divinity, and one among many. Only a few, who were the leaders, and who thought at all carefully, and who were therefore better qualified to be the bearers of this truth, should we expect to possess it. The noblest conceptions of every age are far above the popular conceptions, and it was no less true in the case of Israel. The religious differences of our own age of intercommunication and travel will serve to illustrate what must have been the conditions three thousand years ago, in that period of ignorance and superstition. That other divinities besides Jehovah were recognized by many is to be expected, but not every time that these divinities are mentioned must we conclude reverence was intended. We may admit all

the facts in the checkered history of Israel but still find plenty of reason for believing that the conception of Moses, and the leaders generally, was that of the Creator and Lord of all, to whom is due the worship and reverence of all men. We conclude that the exalted conception of the deity implied is no valid argument against Mosaic authorship.

A fourth objection urged against the Mosaic authorship of the Decalogue is the existence in Ex.34:12-26, of a section which resembles somewhat the Decalogue found in the Code of the Covenant, and which because of its character is supposed to answer better to the Mosaic times than the latter. The following is a reconstruction of this so-called Jahwistic Decalogue by Wellhausen:

1. Thou shalt not worship any strange gods.
2. Thou shalt not make unto thee molten images.
3. Thou shalt keep the feast of unleavened bread.
4. All the first born are mine.
5. Thou shalt keep the feast of weeks.
6. Thou shalt keep the feast of ingathering in the fall of the year.
7. Thou shalt not mingle leavened bread with the blood of my sacrifice.
8. Thou shalt not retain until morning the fat of my feasts.
9. Thou shalt bring the best of the first-fruits of the field to the house of Jahweh, thy God.

10. Thou shalt not seethe a kid in its mother's milk.

It is evident upon reading Exodus 34:18-26 that the above reconstruction is arbitrarily made. There are really more than ten precepts given, so some of them must be rejected, in order that a decalogue be found. But it appeals to the critical imagination because this supposed decalogue appears to be of great antiquity. It contains ceremonial precepts, whereas in Exodus 20 the precepts are moral. Here appears to be a development from ceremonial to moral, and this is just what fits the evolution presupposition. This seems so important and so plain that the possibility of scoring a point for the theory leads to the arbitrary erection of a decalogue from the material of this section. There is some ambiguity in Ex.34:27-28 of which advantage is taken. We read "and he wrote upon the tables the words of the Covenant, the ten words." Now does this refer to the precept of this section? It certainly is presuming considerably upon the intelligence of the redactor to hold that he wrote down a dozen precepts and applied the term "ten words" to them. This is exactly what is implied on the part of the critics. Such tactical methods will hardly be allowed in support of the theory. It is evident that these ambiguous words are to be connected with the first verse of the chapter and that the reference is to the Decalogue of the Code of the Covenant as given in Exodus 20. The words of Kautzch are to the point: "This Jawistic Decalogue is perhaps nothing more than an

appearance. If the Jahwist~~s~~ had essentially the same Decalogue as the Elohist, the redactor could not possibly, after it had been given in Exodus 20 have introduced it once more in Ex.34, and so he filled up the consequent gap with ceremonial prescriptions which can be recognized at first glance as parallels to the laws of the Book of the Covenant. Hence the question remains whether some form of the Decalogue may not be traced to Moses".

The conclusion seems inevitable from every point of view that the Decalogue comes from the hand of Moses, and to this conclusion the radical school of critics must come. Whatever Moses did not give us, we can hardly escape the conviction that the Decalogue as well as the Code of the Covenant in which it is found belong to Israel's law giver. When we reflect upon the peculiar character of the Decalogue our conviction as to the authorship is strengthened. It evidently comes from a single mind and is an extremely successful attempt to bring into narrow compass all the fundamental laws necessary to society and individual life. The wisdom revealed in the selection must appear astonishing, to say the least, to those critics who deny any element of revelation in the selection! We could not well spare one of these simple precepts and to add another independent and of equal weight would be a difficult undertaking. "Where, between the time of Moses and the time when Deuteronomy first laid hold upon the life of the nation, are we to look for a legislator of this preeminence?

So far as we know the history, there is no name that would occur to us.So far as can be seen, Moses alone has been marked out for us in the history of his people as equal to, and likely to undertake such a task. Everything, therefore, concurs to the conclusion that in the Decalogue we have the first, the most sacred, and the fundamental law of Israel. Here Moses spoke for God; and whatever additions to this additional ten words later times may have made, they have not obscured or overlaid what must be ascribed to him. He may not have been the author of much that bears his name, for unquestionably there were developments later than his time which were called Mosaic; but we arejustified in believing that here we have the first law he gave to Israel; and in it we should be able to see the really germinal principles of the religion he taught."

A question of secondary importance relates to the date of the Decalogue. Accepting the Mosaic authorship, we then have to make inquiry as to the date of the Exodus from Egypt. We are told in I Kings 6:1 that work on the temple began 480 years after the Exodus. Assuming that the date assigned to the building of the temple (C.975 B.C.) is correct, we find that the exodus occurred about 1450 B.C. but we are by no means certain that the period of 480 years in the record is accurate. This must be verified by research before we can accept it. Unfortunately this cannot be done in a way entirely satisfactory, yet there are quite a number of evidences that this is approximately the date. This would place the

Exodus in the first years of the reign of Amenophis II and a number of conditions lends color to this view. If this be true, then, Thothmes III. was the Pharaoh of the oppression, his reign being immediately preceding that of Amenophis II. Thothmes III reigned 54 years, was a great conqueror, builder, and ruler. The picture of brick-making found so frequently in pictorial Bibles is taken from his reign. We also find in Hatasn the daughter of Thothmes I, a character entirely suited to the description of "Pharaoh's daughter" of the Bible record. She was associated with her father in the government, and became the wife of her brother, Thothmes II. Her date corresponds with the supposed date of the birth of Moses.

A further interesting record points in the same direction. The Tel el Amarna tablets give us the record of some events transpiring in Palestine about 1400 B. C. or a little later. The King of Jerusalem writes to the King of Egypt, piteously lamenting over the encroachment of a people, whom he calls the "Khabiri" and pleads for assistance to drive them back. These people came up from the South and the time and circumstances are such that there is much reason for identifying these "Khabiri" with the Hebrews. While this is by no means settled, it is certainly remarkable that we find so many circumstances existing which point in the way confirming the figures found in the Bible records. The circumstances are much more favorable for this theory than for the one which makes Rameses II the Pharaoh of the oppression. His reign did not

occur until 200 years after Thothmes III. which would bring the Exodus down to 1200 B. C., or within 200 years of Solomon.

It should be stated that Professor Flinders Petrie, who has spent many years in Egypt in research work, is not committed to the above view, nor is Driver. But the very discoveries of Prof. Petrie have caused many to adopt the earlier date. Prof. Hommel in his "Ancient Hebrew Traditions", held to the later date. But later he changed his opinion, and now places the Exodus in the reign of Amenophis II.