

Review of: "Deuteronomistic Redaction and the Evolution of the Decalogues in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5"

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The article examines the development and evolution of the Decalogue (Ten Commandments) based on a comparison of the Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5 versions of the Decalogue. One model hypothesises a great antiquity for an original form of the Decalogue, extending its origins back to the Mosaic era and suggesting its evolution through various stages of growth.

The other model suggests a later origin for the Decalogue, proposing that the prophets of the eighth or seventh century BC inspired its origin, and that whatever development occurred did so under the Deuteronomistic or priestly tradition.

The study supports Blum's theory of an early Deuteronomistic edition of the Tetrarchic texts but acknowledges that later development occurred before the final forms of Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5. The article illustrates the complex historical-traditional process in the formation of the biblical texts. The author presents Erhard Blum's model as the most successful for understanding the development of the Pentateuch. He goes on to explain that the German theologian speaks of two successive editions of the Tetrarchic texts from Genesis to Numbers, a Deuteronomistic edition (KD) and a priestly edition (KP). The KD, Blum believes, brought together essentially fragmentary materials from the ancient epics (Yahwist and Elohist) to produce a composition that might best be described as the literary creation of the KD. Blum sees a large number of Deuteronomistic texts in the Tetrarchic texts. On the other hand, he says, KP then redacted this literary work by making specific additions. The German theologian considers these additions to be somewhat less extensive than what other scholars usually attribute to priestly activity. The strength of this model is to postulate the presence of a coherent Deuteronomistic redaction in the first four books of the Bible. While the earlier paradigm of Wellhausen et al., which reigned from 1880 to 1980, avoided the attribution of a Deuteronomistic edition to the first four books (or Tetrarchic texts), nevertheless, in their analysis of individual passages, scholars too often felt compelled to postulate the presence of some "D" material in the redactional history of that text, especially when they focused their concentrated attention on particular passages. Blum's model addresses this anomaly by boldly suggesting a Deuteronomistic editing of the Tetrarchic books prior to their reception by the final priestly editor(s).

Thus, the presence of elements of a Deuteronomistic edition in Deuteronomy 5 and both elements of a Deuteronomistic edition and a priestly edition in Exodus 20 is explicable by Blum's theory, whereas the old Documentary Hypothesis did not. But the question posed by the author of the article is whether Blum's model satisfactorily explains the appearance of the two texts in their present form.

To this end, I wish to undertake a hypothetical reconstruction of the appearance of the two decalogues to see whether the

differences between Deuteronomy 5 and Exodus 20 can be explained by a more extensive priestly redaction of the latter passage than Blum admits.

The author argues that the texts of both Decalogues seem to imply a significant evolutionary development that the individual commandments would not undergo in isolation. He sets out the basis of his methodology. He starts from a text in its final form and attempts to recreate its development from there. He bases his study on the critical method and historical analysis of tradition.

He goes on in detail to offer a list of authors, providing data on their theories. All of these scholars acknowledge the possible evolutionary process that may have occurred with the appearance of the Decalogue. All suspect that the original form was probably shorter than the present text. All have to deal with the existence of additional imperatives, which must be regarded as commandments or later extensions of the Decalogue.

Among the contributions of scholars who allude to the evolution of the Ten Commandments, I cite Hans Schmidt, who clearly divides the Decalogue into five religious commandments and five social commandments, thus equally dividing the two tables of the law. He also alludes to Karlheinz Rabast, who reconstructed a Decalogue of twelve commandments on the assumption that the commandments were originally articulated in a rhythmically poetic form. His metrical theory led him to a particular wording for each of the commandments, but in general, he had a short version of each, but more recently, other scholars have been inclined to declare that it is impossible to recover the earliest form of the Decalogue.

The author concludes that it is impossible to reconstruct the earliest form of the Decalogue, and both Decalogues have been placed secondarily in their literary contexts. More seriously, perhaps it would be better to consider that both versions of the Decalogue came into the hands of priestly and prophetic redactors. While it is true that the list of supposedly Deuteronomistic phrases in Exodus 20 is not supported by a reference to a general study of Deuteronomistic phraseology, such as Moshe Weinfeld's *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* (1972), it does subject his own claims to scrutiny.

The article is inclined to point out that Exodus 20 is the version of the Decalogue that has the oldest elements or appears to be the oldest in its present form, based on aspects of lexis and its historical and political interpretation. Deuteronomy 5 here reflects some later developments in the interpretation of the Decalogue for everyday life.

Once the portions of the text that are distinct in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5 are removed, it follows, as a hypothesis, that there was an earlier edition inherited by both the priestly redactors of Exodus 20 and the prophetic redactors of Deuteronomy 5. However, it does need to be suggested that the deuteronomistic material in Deuteronomy 5 received further editorial modifications after the KD text of Exodus 20 was established. There is deuteronomistic material common to both texts and deuteronomistic material that is distinctive and unique to the text in Deuteronomy 5. It is difficult to imagine how and under what circumstances. However, the transmission of the biblical text is probably infinitely more complex than we will ever be able to reconstruct. Thus, although he believes that Blum's paradigm is best suited to explain the overall development of the text, minor modifications must be suggested to fully account for all the idiosyncrasies of the text; the author argues that there must have been a more extensive priestly redaction of Exodus 20 than Blum admits.

In short, the author is coherent with his proposal; he goes from the general to the particular and is able to bring the reader

closer to such a complex subject, while at the same time instructing and enlightening him in a critical spirit.