

NOTES AND STUDIES

THE TEN WORDS OF EXODUS XXXIV.

THE title 'The Ten Commandments' is at least as old in the West as the time of St Augustine, who speaks of the *decem praecepta legis* in *Quaest. de Exodo* lxxi. In the East it goes back to Aphraates (ed. Wright, page 14)¹. But this title (*pace* the Authorized Version) is not Biblical. In the three places in which it stands in the English Bible, i. e. in Exod. xxxiv 28; Deut. iv 13; x 4, the Revised Version gives in the margin the more correct translation, 'The Ten Words'. The LXX gives τὰ δέκα ῥήματα or τοὺς δέκα λόγους, the Old Latin (ed. U. Robert) *decem uerba*, the Peshitta, *esrā pethgāmin*, in each case 'Words' not 'Commandments'. The Hebrew word used is the common expression for 'word'. The Biblical title is therefore 'The Ten Words'.

This title, *The Ten Commandments* (or *Words*), is usually assigned to the Divine utterances recorded in Exod. xx 2-17. It is, however, noteworthy that in the Bible itself this name is given not to Exod. xx 2-17, but only to the parallel passage, Deut. v 6-21. On the other hand, in Exod. xxxiv 27, 28 this very name, *The Ten Words*, is given to the Divine utterances recorded in verses 6-26 of the same chapter, utterances which differ in so many respects from the Ten Commandments of Exod. xx that they cannot be reckoned (like those of Deut. v) a variant text of the Ten Commandments, but must be pronounced to rest upon a different tradition regarding the substance of the Decalogue.

These facts have been known to scholars since 1773, when Goethe called attention to them in his tractate entitled *Zwei wichtige bisher unerörterte biblische Fragen zum erstenmal gründlich beantwortet* (Werke, Bd. 37, Weimar, 1896). Scholars have not, however, agreed as to the identification of the Ten Words of Exod. xxxiv. The schemes of Goethe himself (*loc. cit.*), of Wellhausen (*Composition des Hexateuchs* pp. 333, 334) and of G. Harford (Carpenter and Harford, *Composition*

¹ Cf. Clem. Alex. (page 809), ἡ μὲν πρώτη τῆς δεκαλόγου ἐντολὴ παρίστησιν . . . δ. δεύτερος δὲ ἐμήνηεν λόγος κτλ. But Clement seeks only to avoid the cacophony of δεκαλόγου λόγος. Irenaeus (*Contra Haereses* ii xxxvi 2, Harvey; page 167, Grabe) has *praecipua* in the Latin text, but the Greek is missing. The Laws of the Second Table are called ἐντολαί in St Mark x 19.

of the *Hexateuch*, 1902, p. 471) although in general agreement, differ from one another in some particulars. Wellhausen indeed writes (p. 333), 'Es lösen sich aus Exod. xxxiv 14-26 zunächst sehr einfach . . . zwölf Worte aus', but he reduces the number to *ten* by the suggestion that two are due to textual corruption.

The scholars who have hitherto discussed this subject have (unconsciously, perhaps) accepted three principles, which seem to me to have hampered them in their investigations. They have assumed (1) that the Words must be Commands, (2) that they must be just ten in number, (3) that they must be concise enough to be expressed in a brief sentence each. Thus, according to Goethe (*loc. cit.*), the ten Words of Exod. xxxiv run as follows :

- I. Thou shalt worship no other god.
- II. The feast of Unleavened Bread thou shalt keep.
- III. All that openeth the womb is mine, even whatsoever shall be male among thy cattle, be it ox or sheep.
- IV. Six days shalt thou labour, on the seventh day thou shalt keep holiday both in ploughing-time and harvest.
- V. The feast of Weeks shalt thou keep with the firstfruits of the wheat harvest, and the feast of Ingathering, when the Year is over.
- VI. Three times in the year shall all males appear before the Lord.
- VII. Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leavened bread.
- VIII. The sacrifice of the Passover shall not remain over night.
- IX. The firstfruits of thy field shalt thou bring into the house of the Lord.
- X. Thou shalt not seethe the kid, if it be still at its mother's milk.

There is much to be said for this enumeration of the Ten Words and for the recent modifications of it offered by Dr Wellhausen and Mr Harford. Still it is open to question whether the title *The Ten Words* really demands such a reconstruction and no other. In the first place it may be doubted whether the 'Words' are to be reckoned in every case as *commands*. The Hebrew *dāvār* 'word', which sometimes connotes 'commandment', connotes at other times 'announcement' or 'promise' or 'answer'. The context alone can decide which of these is to be understood.

Now according to the 'traditional' Hebrew division of the Ten Words of Exod. xx (*Pesiqta R.* p. 106 b; also $\text{G}^{\text{B}}_{\text{mars}}$) the First Word consists of ver. 2 only, 'I am JEHOVAH thy God which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of servants'. This First Word thus reckoned is not a commandment, but a declaration;

moreover this reckoning is ancient, almost certainly pre-Christian. Further, even if other divisions of the 'Words' be followed, ver. 2 does not cease to belong to the 'Words'; it only becomes the first part of the First Word, so that the First Word is not in any case to be reckoned a mere commandment¹.

Since therefore the Hebrew *dāvār* does not necessarily mean a commandment, and since the First Word of Exod. xx 2-17 appears to be (at least in part) a declaration, it seems not unreasonable, in attempting a reconstruction of the Ten Words of Exod. xxxiv, to refuse to limit our choice to Words which have the nature of Commandments.

A second principle on which critics seem to have worked hitherto is that the Ten Words must be brief Words, not longer indeed than a single sentence. But to this it may be objected that the Ten Words of Deut. v 6-21 (= Exod. xx 2-17) are not, as they stand, of such brevity. In dealing with Exod. xxxiv it seems most reasonable to follow the analogy thus suggested, and not to introduce the question of length into a first discussion of the passage. Whether a shorter form of the Ten Words underlies the longer form presented below is a question which need not be discussed in the present paper.

There remains for discussion the third principle, that in the name, *The Ten Words*, the number *ten* must be taken in its rigid sense, *ten*, neither less nor more. *Ten* is however certainly used in Hebrew to denote a round number, as in Gen. xxiv 55, *Let the damsel abide with us ten days*; xxxi. 7, *Your father hath changed my wages ten times*; 2 Kings xiii 7, *He left not to Jehoahas . . . save . . . ten chariots and ten thousand horsemen*. The title under consideration may therefore mean *The few chief Words*; and if, as Dr Wellhausen says, the Words of Exod. xxxiv divide themselves most simply into *twelve*, that fact does not forbid us to give the name, *The Ten Words*, to the passage. I have myself preferred a division into *ten*, but in this scheme (see below) the Fifth Word might be divided into two, one consisting of ver. 18, the other of verses 19, 20; and similarly the Seventh Word might be resolved into two by separating ver. 22 from verses 23, 24. We should thus have a division into *twelve* Words, but since the nearest round number in Hebrew is *ten*, the title *The Ten Words* is still appropriate².

The existence of these two forms of the Ten Words points back, as we said above, to an early variation of tradition.

The historical setting of the two confirms this hypothesis. The

¹ An exception to this statement is found in the enumeration of the Syro-Hexaplar, and also in that of the Church Catechism.

² Similarly the *nēvel 'āsōr*, 'psaltery of ten strings' must not be strictly limited in the number of its strings; from *three* to *twelve* strings were in use; the 'āsōr was therefore an instrument of the larger kind. Cf. also Lev. xxvi 26; 1 Sam. i 8.

account of the delivery of the Ten Words and of the making of the Covenant in Exod. xxxiv is parallel with the account given in chapters xix and xxiv. Apart from the editorial additions to verses 1 and 4 (enclosed in square brackets below) there are no allusions to an earlier delivery of Ten Words or to an earlier granting of a Covenant. But the addition to ver. 1 ('I will write') does not agree with ver. 27 ('Write thou') and is to be reckoned a gloss, while the addition to ver. 4 proves itself to be such by the fact that it does not fit in with the rest of the verse ('And he' should follow, not precede 'And Moses'). If Exod. xxxiv did indeed narrate a renewal of a broken covenant, ver. 27 would almost certainly run, 'I have renewed my covenant' or 'I make a new covenant', not 'I have made a covenant'. It seems clear that we possess in Exod. xix-xxiv on the one hand, and in Exod. xxxiv on the other, two distinct traditions as to the making of the Covenant and as to the substance of the Ten Words according to the terms of which the Covenant was made.

In the following attempted arrangement of the Ten Words of Exod. xxxiv I have added references intended to point out the chief parallels between these Words and their historical setting on the one side and Exod. xix-xxiv on the other.

1 *And the LORD said unto Moses, Hew thee two tables of stone [like unto the first: and I will write upon the tables the words that were on the first tables, which thou brakest].* 2 *And be ready by the morning, and come up in the morning unto mount Sinai, and present thyself there to me on the top of the mount.* 3 *And no man shall come up with thee, neither let any man be seen throughout all the mount; neither let the flocks nor herds feed before that mount.* Cf. Exod. xix 12, 13. 4 [*And he hewed two tables of stone like unto the first;*] *and Moses rose up early in the morning, and went up unto mount Sinai, as the LORD had commanded him, and took in his hand two tables of stone.* 5 *And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of JEHOVAH.* Cf. *ibid.* 18.

6 *And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed,*

FIRST WORD.

JEHOVAH, JEHOVAH, a God full of compassion and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy and truth; 7 keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin: and that will by no means clear [the guilty]; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation. Cf. xx 2, 5, 6.

8 *And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped.* 9 *And he said, If now I have found grace in thy sight, O Lord, let the Lord, I pray thee, go in the midst of us ; for it is a stiff-necked people ; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for thine inheritance.* Cf. xix 19.

10 *And he said,*

SECOND WORD.

Behold, I make a covenant : before all thy people I will do marvels, such as have not been wrought in all the earth, nor in any nation : and all the people among which thou art shall see the work of the LORD, for it is a terrible thing that I do with thee. Cf. xxiii 27.

THIRD WORD.

11 Observe thou that which I command thee this day : behold, I drive out before thee the Amorite, and the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite. 12 Take heed to thyself, lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither thou goest, lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee : 13 but ye shall break down their altars, and dash in pieces their pillars, and ye shall cut down their Asherim : 14 for thou shalt worship no other god : for JEHOVAH, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God : 15 lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they go a whoring after their gods, and do sacrifice unto their gods, and one call thee and thou eat of his sacrifice ; 16 and thou take of their daughters unto thy sons, and their daughters go a whoring after their gods, and make thy sons go a whoring after their gods. Cf. xxiii 23, 24 and xx 3, 5.

FOURTH WORD.

17 Thou shalt make thee no molten gods. Cf. xx 4.

FIFTH WORD.

18 The feast of unleavened bread shalt thou keep. Seven days thou shalt eat unleavened bread, as I commanded thee, at the time appointed in the month Abib : for in the month Abib thou camest out from Egypt. 19 All that openeth the womb is mine ; and all thy cattle that is male, the firstlings of ox and sheep. 20 And the firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb : and if thou wilt not redeem it, then thou shalt break its neck. All the firstborn of thy sons thou shalt redeem. And none shall appear before me empty. Cf. xxiii 15.

SIXTH WORD.

21 Six days thou shalt work, but on the seventh day thou shalt rest : in plowing time and in harvest thou shalt rest. Cf. xx 9, 10.

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SEVENTH WORD.

22 And thou shalt observe the feast of weeks, even of the firstfruits of wheat harvest, and the feast of ingathering at the year's end. 23 Three times in the year shall all thy males appear before the Lord JEHOVAH, the God of Israel. 24 For I will cast out nations before thee, and enlarge thy borders: neither shall any man desire thy land, when thou goest up to appear before JEHOVAH thy God three times in the year. Cf. xxiii 16, 17.

EIGHTH WORD.

25 Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leavened bread; neither shall the sacrifice of the feast of the passover be left unto the morning. Cf. xxiii 18.

NINTH WORD.

26 The first of the firstfruits of thy ground thou shalt bring unto the house of JEHOVAH thy God. Cf. xxiii 19 a.

TENTH WORD.

Thou shalt not seethe a kid in its mother's milk¹. Cf. xxiii 19 b.

27 *And the LORD said unto Moses, Write thou these words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel.* 28 *And he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten words.* Cf. xxiv 3-8.

In conclusion it may be pointed out that the inclusion of verses 6, 7, and 10 in the Ten Words gives an aspect of completeness, which is lacking in reconstructions of the Words which exclude these verses. The First Word (verses 6, 7) reveals the Name and the character of Him who is about to grant Israel a covenant; it corresponds very closely with Exod. xx 2-6, which according to the Massorettes form a paragraph (*Sēthūmah*) by itself, and is therefore to be reckoned the First Word of Exod. xx. The Second Word (ver. 10) promises the covenant; it states explicitly that which is implied in Exod. xx 2 in the expression 'thy God'.

The Third Word (verses 11-16) forbids Israel to enter into any rival covenant; it corresponds to Exod. xx 3. The Fourth Word (ver. 17) forbids a practice which might be expected to lead quickly, in a nation surrounded by heathen, to polytheism; it is parallel with Exod. xx 4. Thus the first four Words of Exod. xxxiv correspond to the contents of Exod. xx 2-6, but present what is on the whole a more orderly sequence of thought.

¹ οὐ προσόσεις ἀρνὶ ἐν γάλακτι μητρὸς αὐτοῦ, LXX B.

The last six Words, the Fifth to the Tenth, prescribe definitely the manner in which the covenant-God of Israel is to be worshipped.

The question of the relative date of the two Decalogues is too large a subject to be discussed in this place. Suffice it to say that the general analogy of the history of religion in Israel favours the view held by many scholars that the earlier of the two Decalogues is that given in Exod. xxxiv. The teaching that JEHOVAH is Israel's God preceded the teaching that the Israelite must do no ill to his neighbour. Theology was the foundation, Morality the superstructure.

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ST IRENAEUS ON THE DATES OF THE GOSPELS.

It is commonly supposed that in a well-known passage of the third book against heresies we have received valuable information from St Irenaeus as to the dates at which the Synoptic Gospels were composed. He is understood to say that St Matthew wrote among the Hebrews at the time when Peter and Paul were preaching at Rome, and that St Mark wrote after the death of those Apostles. The following note is intended to shew that the Bishop of Lyons did not purpose to supply his readers with either of these pieces of information.

There are *a priori* reasons in favour of this thesis. In the first place these supposed statements of St Irenaeus have not been echoed by any ancient writer whatever.

In the second place, the synchronism of Matthew's writing with Peter and Paul's preaching is apparently without motive, for there is no connexion between the two facts. Further, the simultaneous preaching of Peter and Paul in Rome is not a very probable supposition, and might well throw doubt on the value of St Irenaeus's sources.

In the third place, the statement about Mark would be in flat contradiction with Clement of Alexandria, Eusebius and Jerome, who all assure us that Mark wrote in the lifetime of Peter. The words of Papias about Mark are most naturally interpreted in the same sense¹, and St Irenaeus certainly will have attributed great importance to them.

These considerations have induced a good many modern writers to attempt rather violent explanations of St Irenaeus's words, in order

¹ The words Πέτρον ἑρμηνευτῆς γενόμενος may mean either 'having become the Hermeneutes of Peter' or 'who was the Hermeneutes of Peter'. In the latter case the possibility is not excluded that Peter was dead when Mark wrote. Harnack (*Chronol.* i p. 652) has strangely followed Link in rendering γενόμενος as if it were γεγενημένος. I am dealing with this more fully in *Revue Bénéd.* July.