Grace Theological Journal 8.2 (1987) 213-25

DEUTERONOMY: AN EXPOSITION OF THE SPIRIT OF THE LAW

JOHN H. WALTON

In contrast to the idea that the book of Deuteronomy is a legalistic refinement of Mosaic regulations, the structure of Deuteronomy suggests that it is designed to elucidate the broader morality behind each of Ten Commandments. The book, then, is an exposition of the spirit of the Commandments. The sweeping implications of the decalogue oblige the individual to a lifestyle of moral conduct that is far broader than the "letter of the law" would suggest. Deuteronomy revolves around four major issues (authority, dignity, commitment, and rights and privileges), each of which is the focus of two or more commandments. Under each of the four issues, one commandment deals with conduct toward God and one or more with conduct toward man. When this structure is studied, it becomes clear that Moses grouped legal cases around common themes to bring a truer understanding of God's concerns and requirements as they are reflected in each command of the decalogue. Thus, there is a moral theme behind each command that creates timeless parameters for ethical conduct.

* * *

INTRODUCTION

ONE of the most frequently encountered questions among Christians of the last nineteen hundred years concerns the significance and applicability of the OT law for the Church. Such questions have not been limited to the laity, as theologians have grappled with the hermeneutical issues involved with cross-testamental exegesis. Careful responses need to be made to such questions in order to lay a foundation for a correct understanding of "Church and Society."

Deuteronomy, as one of the major repositories of Israelite law, has been subjected to much scrutiny in this regard. A breakthrough in the understanding of the book came in 1979 when Kaufman published his suggested correlation of the deuteronomic laws and the

decalogue.[1] This was the first successful attempt at such a correlation and has already gained recognition as a seminal work in the area of Deuteronomy studies.[2]

Kaufman was of the opinion that the arrangement of the deuteronomic laws in accordance with the decalogue was merely a literary device and that it did not necessarily betray the Israelite perception of legal classification.[3] An examination of the correlations of the various sections of Deuteronomy with the decalogue suggests, however, that the arrangement served more than a literary function. Rather, by his choice and classification of the legal material, Moses exemplified the "spirit" behind each of the ten basic laws, the decalogue. The implication of this hypothesis is that it is not left to Christ or even to Jeremiah to recognize that the Ten Commandments are to be understood as broader in scope than the "letter of the law." Rather, the commandments serve as doors into the discussion of a transcendant morality which they are fully understood to require. In other words, the Ten Commandments, even as early as Moses, were understood to oblige the individual to a lifestyle of moral conduct both with regard to God and to man.

It is possible to identify in Deuteronomy four major issues which the decalogue addresses and around which the laws seem to be organized. They are:

MAIN ISSUES	*RE:GOD*	*RE:MAN*
Authority	Commandment 1	Commandment 5
Dignity	Commandment 2	Commandments 6, 7, 8
Commitment	Commandment 3	Commandment 9
Rights and Privileges	Commandment 4	Commandment 10

AUTHORITY

Commandment 1 has as its focus the authority of God, while Commandment 5 is concerned with human authority, mostly in its relationship to divine authority. While Kaufman saw Commandments 1 and 2 combined in Deuteronomy 12, I believe Commandment 1 is

[1]Stephen A. Kaufman, "The Structure of the Deuteronomic Law," *Maarav* 1/2 (1978-79) 105-58.

[2]Note, for instance, its influence in such works as Victor Hamilton, *Handbook On the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982), and Walter Kaiser, *Toward Old Testament Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983).

[3]Cf., e.g., Kaufman, "The Structure of the Deuteronomic Law," 125.

more closely aligned with Deuteronomy 6–11.[4] These chapters convey the idea that God should be our first priority and final authority, and that we owe him preference and obedience.

There are two direct statements of God's authority in this section. The first is in 6:4 where the well-known *shema* presents YHWH, and YHWH alone, as God. The second direct statement is in 10:17 which speaks of YHWH as the God of Gods, the Lord of Lords, and the great, mighty and awesome God. Besides these direct statements, several explicit warnings against worshiping other gods not only speak of the authority of YHWH, but seem to demonstrate that Commandment I is under discussion (6:13–14; 7:3–5; 9:19–20; 10:20–21; 11:16). Rather than discussing the implications of the First Commandment in legislative terms, these chapters give examples of ways that adherence to the First Commandment can be demonstrated. Included here are the exhortations to love God (6:5; 10:12; 11:1, 13, 22) and to obey his commandments (6:6, 17, 24–25; 7:11–12; 8:1, 6; 10:12–13; 11:1, 8, 13, 18, 22), along with warnings against testing the Lord (6:16; 10:16). Finally, in Deuteronomy 6–11 Moses spends much time reminding the reader of how God has proven or will prove himself worthy of the respect and status that he demands. For example, Moses states that Israel is chosen and loved (7:6–8; 10:14–15), that Israel has been multiplied in keeping with the covenant promises (10:22), and that Israel was delivered out of Egypt (6:21–23; 7:19; 8:2–5, 14–16; 11:2–7). Furthermore, God is able to bring prosperity (6:10–12; 7:13–15; 8:7–13; 11:10–15) and drive out the enemy (6:19; 7:1–2, 16–18, 20–24; 9:1–6; 11:23–25) if the conditions of obedience are met. While these chapters appear at first glance to be somewhat rambling, it seems that the concept of God's authority and priority serves as a common denominator and provides a key to understanding the thoughts that are expressed.

In Commandment 5, human authority is the issue. The deuteronomic treatment of the commandment, however, does not focus on how we are to respond to human authority as much as it addresses how human authority is to conform to divine authority. It speaks of the exercise of divine authority in the human realm. The main role of human authority that is emphasized is *instruction.*

In the commandment proper (Deut 5:16), parents are seen as the basic link for the communication of instruction and for the representation of divine authority. The honor given to parents is put in the

[4]This was initially the suggestion of my colleague William Luck. For this and numerous other insights gleaned from our hours of discussion and reflected throughout this paper I am deeply indebted to him.

context of preservation of the covenant ("that you may live long in the land"), and that preservation is accomplished in the instruction of children by the parents. This commandment attempts to cover a weak link: if parental instruction is not heeded, the covenant's benefits are in jeopardy.

The deuteronomic treatment of Commandment 5 (Deut 16:18–17:13) does not speak of the role of parents, but moves to a discussion of other forms of human authority. It has the appearance of a national application of the Fifth Commandment. Each section speaks of the way in which the various authorities could place the covenant benefits in jeopardy by identifying the weakest link—the ways in which each office can fail in carrying out its responsibility before God.

The first group treated is the judges who are seen as responsible for enforcing the covenant (17:2–7). Each time a sentence is passed there is an opportunity for instruction. The weak link here would occur if the judges were not preserving the integrity of the system. So the text speaks of bribes that distort justice (16:19–20), verdicts that are not enforced (17:10–12), and cases where instruction was not heeded (17:10–12) or the lesson was not learned (17:13). These appear to be the weak links in the authority/instruction chain that could put the covenant's benefits in jeopardy.

The next office to be treated is that of the king (Deut 17:14–20). The king is viewed as God's representative and is held responsible for the people in the sense that he should set up a system that conforms to the requirements of the covenant. He is thereby seen as the administrator of the covenant. The weak links occur when he becomes preoccupied with the accoutrements of office (vv 16–17) or when he fails to observe the law. Either of these situations can cause him to fail in setting up an administration that supports the covenant. Instruction here takes place through modeling. The king models godliness to the people by governing in a way that conforms to the requirements of the covenant.

The priests and Levites had the responsibility of serving, which included teaching the people (17:10–12). Deut 18:1–8 speaks of the support of the priests and Levites by the populace. The weak link here is that if the priests were not supported they could not function and the covenant would be in jeopardy.

The last group is the prophets (18:9–22). They had the responsibility of passing on God's messages, and thus were involved in both the authority of God and in instruction. The weakest links occur if wrong authority is used (e.g., divination, vv 9–14), if the people fail to heed the prophet's words (v 19), or if the prophet speaks his own words rather than God's (v 20).

In dealing with these four groups, the biblical author moves backwards through the line of authority which starts with God communicating his instructions to the people through the prophets. After this, the priests have the responsibility of instructing the people concerning the word of God, and then the kings have the responsibility of setting up and maintaining a system based on the instructions given by God. Finally, the judges have the responsibility of enforcing the system that has been set up.

Deuteronomy may be seen to warn of areas where the covenant could be jeopardized through a break in the chain of authority and instruction. Human authorities need to be honored in that they serve as an important link in communicating God's instructions to his people. On the other hand, it is the responsibility of human authorities not to corrupt their offices by losing sight of their primary function.

DIGNITY

Commandment 2 appears to be reflected in Deut 12:1–32. The key verse is v 4: "You shall not treat the LORD your God that way." This chapter addresses the fact that Israel was not to use the things or places that were part of Canaanite worship. The Israelites were not to worship YHWH in the same way that the Canaanites worshiped their gods. This, of course, is directly related to the ban on the use of images that is the Second Commandment. The treatment in Deuteronomy confirms that the ban on images specifically concerns images of YHWH, and it further clarifies that the prohibition of images is intended to be understood in the context of worship.

It is easy to understand the concern that God has for the Israelites as they enter a land infested with Canaanites. Syncretism is the path of least resistance. So rather than allowing the Canaanite sanctuaries to be converted, only a central sanctuary is sanctioned. This would serve to assure homogeneity of religious practice and set up a priestly control of popular practice. Both of these factors would help guard against syncretism. This is especially evident with regard to the ritual elements where the closest monitoring was needed. Deut 12:30–31 again make this clear: "beware that you are not ensnared to follow after them . . . and that you do not inquire after their gods saying, 'How do these nations serve their gods, that I also may do likewise?' You shall not behave this way."

The main thrust of the deuteronomic treatment, then, concerns how the ritual aspect of worship takes place. The Israelites are instructed not to repeat pagan rituals (of which images are a large part), and a central sanctuary is to be established to monitor the

ritual practice. The concern is that the ritual must reflect the true and unique nature of YHWH rather than accommodating the pagan standards in the world around them. The dignity of YHWH is jeopardized when he is treated as the pagans treat their deities. The point is that ritual is performed for the recognizing of no one else but YHWH. Thus, ritual should never accommodate the world's standards. Rather, all ritual must reflect true worship on the part of the individual. True worship cannot take place if ritual becomes an end in itself. True worship must give God his proper place. It cannot be manipulative or self-serving, for that robs God of the dignity that the worship is intended to recognize.

Corresponding to Commandment 2 and its concern with the preservation of the dignity of God are three commandments (6, 7 and 8) that are concerned with preserving the dignity of man. Commandment 6 appears to be treated in Deut 19:1–21:23. This section, for the most part, seeks to delineate what is really behind the prohibition against murder by discussing some of the instances in which life is being taken, but where murder has not been committed. As a result we find sections on the following:

1. Accidental homicide and the connected discussion of the function of the levitical cities (19:1–13);
2. The requirement of two witnesses in a capital case (since capital punishment involves the taking of a life and the witnesses are implicated in the taking of life; 19:15);
3. The treatment of malicious witnesses (19:16–20) who are put to death if the case is a capital case;
4. The lex talionis as a protection against a judicial taking of life where the crime would not call for that serious a punishment (19:21).

Chap. 20 then proceeds to discuss the rules for warfare, another situation in which life is being taken, but the commandment is not being broken. In chap. 21, miscellaneous issues are treated such as caring for bloodguilt when the murderer is unknown. This demonstrates that the issue of murder must be dealt with not only on the level of punishing the murderer, but also in terms of absolving bloodguilt on the land (21:1–9). Also mentioned are the guidelines for dealing with the rebellious child (21:18–21) and for the treatment of a capital punishment victim (21:22–23). The prohibition of murder is designed to protect the dignity of the individual from a minimalist perspective. That is, everyone deserves the dignity of existence. Deuteronomy appears to be suggesting exceptions to that general rule. A murderer has forfeited his right to that dignity, and war is another matter altogether. In this section there are also portions that do not

fit this commandment easily, though they can be seen to impact the dignity issue (19:14; 21:10–17). These will require more study.

Commandment 7, which would seem to connect with 22:1–23:14, is one of the most difficult to fit together. Chap. 22:1–12 deals with a number of diverse issues, some of which can be tied to dignity, some of which seem more suitable to the issue of integrity, and some which do not seem to fit well at all. This sort of development always causes one to question his own system of organization. However, the apparently smooth operation of the classification system throughout the rest of the material leads to the hope that this is merely a case of the elusive nature of these specific examples. Perhaps others will be able to suggest suitable solutions.

Deut 22:12–30 treats the various types of adultery including inferred adultery (13–21), simple adultery (22), rape (23–29), and incest (30). These all threaten the dignity of the family. Chap. 23:1–14 speaks of the relationship of emasculated, illegitimate, and foreign individuals to the assembly, as well as the matter of cleanness in the camp. These both have to do with preserving the dignity of the camp.

Commandment 8, the prohibition against stealing, seems to be treated in Deut 23:15–24:7 with regard to preserving the dignity of individuals. By his treatment of the issue, the author attempts to deal with the question of *why* stealing is wrong. By seeing dignity as the basic element behind the prohibition, he is able to discuss other areas that are impacted by the commandment. Deut 23:15–20 speaks of stealing intangible things. The case of the foreign slave who has escaped to the land is a situation where Israelites are prohibited from stealing his freedom (a dignity issue). Deut 23:17–18, in singling out daughters and sons, implies that these individuals are being forced into prostitution, thus having their self-respect stolen. Deut 23:19–20 forbids the charging of interest within the institution of debt slavery in that that is like stealing the interest from the debtor, as well as robbing him of the ability to recover. Again, in the end, this robs him of his self-respect.

Deut 23:21–23 speaks of stealing from God by not paying one's vows. This seems unusual in the context of preserving human dignity, and, as yet, the reason for its being here has not been identified.

Deut 23:24–25 attempts to draw the line concerning what is stealing and what is not by giving a guideline for picking food on someone else's property. It also serves to preserve the dignity of poor travelers who gain their subsistence in this way.

Deut 24:1–4 covers the well-known case where a man is prohibited from remarrying a woman whom he has divorced and who has been married to someone else in the meantime. Here the legislation does not treat the issue of divorce but rather appears to be

concerned about preserving the woman's self-respect by forbidding that she be treated as a piece of property. The indecency found in her (v 1) cannot be adultery, for the text has affirmed in the previous chapter that adultery is a capital crime. Rather, the indecency ought to be considered a matter of technicality[5] that the husband is using as an excuse to discard the woman. This would again be an issue of stealing her dignity from her.

Deut 24:5–6 speaks of stealing the things that are essential for survival. Military conscription of a newly-married man is depriving the new wife of her conjugal rights and of the privilege of bearing children (for her new husband might be slain in battle). Likewise, the theft of major food-producing implements is more than theft of goods, it is the stealing of an individual's ability to provide for himself and his family. Thus the issue of stealing is expanded far beyond the confines of the simple notion of taking some object that belongs to someone else. Most of this section deals with intangibles and is concerned with the dignity, rights, and self-respect of others which must not be violated. This is emphasized again in the last prohibition of this section.

Deut 24:7 deals with kidnapping. It is interesting to note, however, that it treats only one specific kidnapping situation. That is, it identifies kidnapping as a capital crime when it is either connected with violence or with the sale of the kidnapped individual. Presumably if neither of these related crimes occurred, kidnapping would not be a capital crime. Kidnapping in general was prohibited by the Eighth Commandment without further elaboration. But here the legislation is protecting the dignity of the kidnapped individual even further by placing a stricter punishment on anyone who would abuse the victim.

[5]The ערות דבר referred to in Deut 24:1 could not be adultery, for 22:22 has just condemned the adulterer to death. The term is used elsewhere only in Deut 23:14 where it describes the situation in which excrement is not properly cared for. It is significant also that the woman is not prevented from remarrying, and there is no prohibition against the first husband remarrying the woman if another marriage has not intervened. Likewise, the woman is not "defiled" if she marries anyone but the first husband. The verbal stem used to reflect the defilement in v 4 is the unusual hothpaʿal, which appears to involve passive, causative, and reflexive or durative elements. For this reason, I would interpret the defilement as something that would be brought upon her by her first husband should he attempt to remarry her. This is treated under Commandment 8 which suggests that Deut 24:1 is not dealing with a sexual sin per se, but with a situation in which the woman has been robbed of her dignity. A possibility is that the husband has used a menstrual dysfunction as a legal loophole and excuse to divorce the woman. After this kind of humiliation, he is prevented from acting as if it never happened and "graciously" taking her back again. The second marriage is brought into the case as the indicator that the first husband totally repudiated the woman.

COMMITMENT

Commandments 3 and 9 seem to deal with the issue of commitment. These two commandments have often been identified together because of the similarity of their subject matter, and this schema supports even further that connection.

Commandment 3 seems to be treated in Deut 13:1-14:21 and addresses in various ways the problem of not taking God seriously enough or not taking one's relationship, commitment, or obligations to God seriously enough, which is part of the same problem.

Deut 13:1-5 concern the false prophet. The false prophet's activity is identified in v 3 as a test from God, "to find out if you love the Lord your God with all your heart." If an individual is serious about God, the described behavior will be offensive and intolerable. The end of v 5 makes it clear that the concern is to "purge evil from among you." Commandment 3 speaks of how God treats those who do not take him seriously ("God will not hold him guiltless"). This chapter follows up on that by suggesting that if one is not offended by those who do not take God or their commitment to God seriously, then he is guilty along with them. He should not hold them guiltless or he becomes an accomplice. If he tolerates wicked behavior and fails to purge it out, he is not taking God seriously. The enticement to worship other gods is used here as an example—any wicked behavior would qualify.

In vv 6-11, wickedness even in one's relatives or friends should not be tolerated. It is suggested in vv 12-18 that even if a whole town is involved, there should be no mercy. So whether the offender is a highly respected religious authority, a good friend, or a large group of people, wicked behavior cannot be tolerated.

Chap. 13 uses the hypothetical case of the most blatant and basic offense—enticement to serve other gods. In that case, being serious about a relationship with God requires immediate and total purging. In contrast, chap. 4 uses a hypothetical case of something that is tangential and subtle.

Chap. 14 is, of course, the section concerning the dietary laws. Wenham, following the research of Douglas, an anthropologist, has suggested that "holiness requires that individuals shall conform to the class to which they belong."[6] The unclean animals are those that in one way or another fail to conform to the expectations of the animal group to which they belong. Concerning the restriction on the Israelites to eat only clean animals, Wenham explains,

[6]Gordon Wenham, "The Theology of Unclean Food," *The Evangelical Quarterly* 53 (1981) 11. My thanks to my colleague, Dennis Magary, for bringing this article to my attention.

> Their diet was limited to certain meats in imitation of their God, who had restricted his choice among the nations to Israel. It served, too, to bring to mind Israel's responsibilities to be a holy nation. As they distinguished between clean and unclean foods, they were reminded that holiness was more than a matter of meat and drink but a way of life characterized by purity and integrity.[7]

The connection here would be that while seriousness about God requires severe action in blatant cases (chap 13), it requires a response that is *above reproach* in the subtle cases ("gray areas"). In many cases there would have been nothing innately wrong with eating the listed animals, but the truly committed person would demonstrate his commitment to God even in his diet. This is holiness through symbol and analogy (not unlike baptism). In chap. 13 the preaching of an individual was leading the people astray, and the person who was preaching needed to be put to death if God was to be taken seriously. In chap. 14 the practice of an individual is an indicator of that individual's commitment to God and holiness in his life. This is an important step for the person who is taking his relationship to God seriously.

Commandment 3 is paralleled by Commandment 9 which treats three areas:

1. Taking your commitments to your fellow man seriously;
2. Assuming that he is going to take his commitment to you seriously;
3. Not making false accusations.

The common denominator between these areas and the decalogue's injunction against bearing false witness is the matter of *trust*—trusting one another to do what has been agreed upon. This is the important issue in the case of false witness. It was frequently impossible to determine by objective means whether an individual was telling the truth in court cases. The entire justice system, and therefore the whole fabric of society, was dependent on being able to trust the word of a witness. For trust to exist in a society, individuals must have the confidence that commitments are being taken seriously.

The section in Deuteronomy that deals with this commandment is Deut 24:8–16, though others would extend the section as far as Deut 25:4. The verses in question, 24:17–25:4 could fit with either commandment and may serve as a transition section, but it seems to fit better into the Commandment 10 discussion.

Deut 24:8–9 introduces the section by referring to the example of Miriam. Here, a case of false accusation against Moses is adduced to

[7]Ibid., 12.

remind the reader of the strict punishment that may accompany a violation of this commandment.

Deut 24:10–13 deals with the handling of a situation where an individual is the holder of his poor neighbor's pledge. The reader is admonished not to act in such a way that he would betray a lack of trust in his neighbor. He is not to think so poorly of his neighbor as to protect himself against the neighbor's not fulfilling his pledge. This is the same kind of statement that in Commandment 3 admonished the reader not to imagine that God would not defend things that were said in his name.

Deut 24:14–15 instructs the Israelites concerning pledges and agreements. Everyone has the obligation to establish his own trustworthiness by carrying out the agreements he has made, and even further, by being sensitive to the needs of those who are depending on him to meet their needs.

Deut 24:16 prohibits punishing someone for a crime that he did not commit. To punish an innocent person is like bearing false witness against him.

RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES

Commandments 4 and 10 speak of rights and privileges. Commandment 4 speaks of God's rights, and Commandment 10 addresses the issue of human rights.

In the decalogue, the focus in Commandment 4 is on the Sabbath. God has a right to be honored through the dedication of a special day to him in gratitude for his deliverance of Israel from Egypt (Deuteronomy 5) and in remembrance of his creative work (Exodus 20). Deuteronomy seems to pick up from that point by discussing other things one might dedicate to God in gratitude or commemoration to honor him. Deut 14:22–16:17 suggests showing gratitude to God as the source of one's goods (tying into Creation) and as the source of one's freedom (tying into the Exodus) by dedicating some of one's goods to him and by becoming a source of goods and freedom to others in his name.

In this connection Deut 14:22–29 begins by discussing the tithe. This is giving a portion of one's goods back to God in gratitude. Every third year this tithe is to go to the support of the community. Other elements of this section include the following:

1. During the seventh year no payment is to be expected toward long term debts of fellow Israelites (15:1–3). This is an act of compassion because observance of the fallow year would mean that there was no guaranteed income that year.
2. Willingly lending to the poor among Israel (15:4–11)

3. A six year limit to debt slavery of a fellow Hebrew is set (15:12–18)
4. Firstling sacrifice (15:19–23)
5. Passover (16:1–8)
6. Feast of weeks and first fruits (16:9–12)
7. Feast of Booths (16:13–15)

All of these involve the setting apart of time or goods to give honor to God in gratitude. This is the right of God and our privilege: he demands of us goods and acts of compassion, just as he provides goods and acts of compassion.

Commandment 10 in the decalogue admonishes against coveting. Coveting something is desiring something that does not belong to one. It oversteps the bounds of what one has a right to possess. Deuteronomy appears to expand this thinking into the whole area of violating the rights and privileges of others. The rights of others are to be preserved just as the rights of God needed to be preserved in the Fourth Commandment.

Deut 24:17–18 speaks of the right to justice—the basic right of all, even those who are most vulnerable. In connection to this, the Israelites are reminded of the time when they lost all their rights (in Egypt). The reminder occurs elsewhere in the Deuteronomic code only in the parallel section elaborating Commandment 4 (5:15; 15:15; 16:12).

Deut 24:19–22 deals with the right of the poor to the leftovers of the harvest. Deut 25:1–3 speaks of the right of the innocent that punishment be made in full and the right of the guilty that a limit be set for being beaten. Deut 25:4 speaks of the right of the ox. Deut 25:5–10 deals with the institution of levirate marriage—a protection of the rights of the dead brother's family. Deut 25:11–12 addresses the violation of the rights of the individual who is being attacked. His right to bear children is being threatened without due process. Deut 25:13–16 speaks of the right to fair treatment in the marketplace. Deut 25:17–19 uses the example of the Amalekites' taking unfair advantage of the vulnerable ones in the wilderness.

Finally, 26:1–15 addresses the issue of first fruits as a way of remembering the rights and privileges that the Israelites were enjoying that their forefathers did not enjoy. There is also a stress on the third year tithe, which should be considered a right of the poor.

The commandment itself, then, has focused on coveting as a violation of the rights that others have to their own property. The Deuteronomic treatment moves beyond this to the basic issues of human rights, justice and fair treatment.

CONCLUSION

Based on this preliminary study, it is suggested that a working hypothesis may be established that views the deuteronomic law (chaps. 6–26) as an expansion of the decalogue with the intent of addressing the spirit of the law. That is, the decalogue has implications concerning conduct that far transcend the limited number of issues that it addresses directly. The author is accomplishing this task by choosing exemplary cases that are intended to highlight the attitudes implied by the initial commandment. In other words, the author is presenting implications of the decalogue by developing a legislative portfolio for each of the commands—all with the express purpose of moving beyond legalism to a truer understanding of God's concerns and requirements. This then is much the same as what Christ does in the Sermon on the Mount. When the Lord extrapolates from the commandment against murder to the idea that hateful anger falls into the category of murder (Matt 5:21–22), he is continuing the deuteronomic treatment of the decalogue that has been suggested herein. Morality is more than a list of rules. The spirit of those rules must be discerned and heeded. Both Moses in Deuteronomy and Christ in the Sermon on the Mount show that the prohibition against murder is a prohibition against things murderous, whether attitudes or actions.

While much more work is needed, if this working hypothesis is true, it implies that the Deuteronomic code is relevant to the church because it elucidates not the letter but the spirit of the law. While the law in some ways has passed away, the validity of the spirit behind the law can never pass away, for it is a reflection of an absolute morality.