

Handout: Deuteronomy Lesson 7

The Pentateuch contains three sets of law codes that expand the basic law of the Decalogue:

1. The Book of the Covenant: at Sinai immediately after arriving (Ex 20:20-23:33)
2. The Holiness Code: at Sinai during last 30 days (Lev 17-26)
3. The Deuteronomic Code: on the Plains of Moab (Dt 12-26)

The verses that comprise the Old Covenant profession of faith known as the *Shema* are in effect a summary of a covenant treaty:

1. Deuteronomy 6:4-9: Acknowledges that Israel has one great Lord who she must love, and she must recognize none other. Since Israel's great king is divine, these verses become a statement of covenantal monotheism.
2. Deuteronomy 11:13-21: Is a summary of the covenant stipulations and sanctions that are phrased as blessings and curses.
3. Numbers 15:37-41: Establishes the covenant obligations for successive generations.

The prohibition against consuming blood, either in raw flesh or drinking blood, is repeated nine times in Scripture, beginning as a covenant obligation in God's covenant with Noah (Gen 9:4; Lev 3:17; 7:26; 17:12, 14; 19:26; Dt 12:16, 23, 15:23). Blood was the essence of life and therefore in God's plan of salvation had an expiatory value (Lev 17:11). The blood of the slain victim had a pre-eminent part in sacrificial ritual (Ex 24:8) and must only be performed at the altar of Yahweh's one Sanctuary (Lev 17:3ff). This was a feature unique to Israelite worship and not found in other pagan religions.

Chapter 13 is divided into three units, each of which deals with the temptation of straying away from Yahweh to worship false idols:

1. enticed by false teachers/prophets claiming prophetic authority
2. enticed by family members and friends
3. enticed by fellow citizens

Each section repeats the same terminology:

1. "come let us worship other gods" ... "unknown to you" (verses 3, 7 and 14)
2. "lead you astray" (verses 6, 11 and 14)
3. "hear/listen" (4, 9, 13 and 19)

Apostasy: "falling away" or total rejection by a baptized person of the Christian faith he once professed. Heresy: a doctrinal belief held in opposition to the recognized belief standards of the Church. For a Catholic to be declared a heretic, four elements must be verified:

1. Previous valid baptism (which need not have been in a Catholic Church).
2. External profession of still being a Christian (otherwise the person becomes an apostate).
3. Outright denial or positive doubt voiced regarding a truth that the Catholic Church has actually proposed as revealed by God.
4. The disbelief must be morally culpable, where a nominal Christian refuses to accept what he knows is a doctrinal imperative.