THE CENTRALITY TO THE EXODUS OF TORAH AS ETHICAL PROJECTION

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How can those liberated from oppression avoid mimesis of their oppressors? When confronted with the stark realities of oppression, the question seems inappropriate, audacious, and even insensitive. Yet history teaches us that it is prudent to confront the question sooner rather than later. That this is a preoccupation of Torah is indicated by the often repeated phrase, "remember that you were slaves in Egypt."

In what follows, we will enter the world of the Hebrew Bible to examine the relationship of Torah to the theme of oppression. Our points of entry will be the contemporary gates of liberation theology and Hebrew Bible exegesis. I will argue that Torah as teaching is central to the Exodus, that as teaching it combines awareness of a situation, interpretation of an event, and articulation of practical knowledge. Positively stated, the Exodus paradigm of liberation includes both a *freedom from* oppression and a *freedom to* enjoy and develop the resources of the land. This paradigm can be explained, in the vocabulary of Paul Ricoeur, as a transformation of people from sufferers (understood as being acted upon) to actors (being able to take initiative). As such, it addresses the essential question, "How is a liberated people to act?"

Torah answers this question through story and stipulation. Its teaching is both indirect and direct. The Exodus concerns not only the flight from Egypt into the promised land, but also the question of how a people is to live in that land. The central ethical projection to allow for sustained life in the new land is the focus of my investigation. I will examine its meaning in relation to the structure of the text, demonstrate why it affords a view of Torah as an essential gift to guide the life of freedom, and explore its implications for

Girardian scholars and for those currently engaged in the struggle for, and challenges resulting from, liberation from oppression.

Such an investigation, which involves textual questions as well as human action, must take into account specific methodologies and an awareness of ethics. It also presupposes a particular purpose and perspective on the part of the investigator. Since the present world situation provides an urgent background for this study, I begin, in part one, with observations about oppression in the 'current context', followed by a discussion of the relation of my own approach to the various methodologies which attempt to understand that context in the light of the phenomenon of liberation from oppression. In part two, I draw on the work of Paul Ricoeur to define my use of the term "ethical projection" and to propose a category for the role of temporality in a structural analysis. Part three elaborates the concepts of meaning and structure as developed by the disciplines of biblical studies, liberation theology, and ethics. I then focus on the use of the Exodus paradigm by liberation movements to legitimate their struggles for freedom, and suggest possible implications of the present study for our contemporary world situation. Part four explores the centrality of the ethical projection in the Exodus along three lines of inquiry: the structure of the Exodus as narrative, event, and paradigm; the sense of projection into a future; and the interpretation of Torah within the Hebrew Bible. This leads to the establishment of a category for an ethical projection and to the proposal of a particular type of ethical projection which can be derived from a liberation from oppression: the ethic of memory.

In my conclusion, I suggest potential implications of the ethical projection for a Girardian hermeneutic and for those who—through their awareness of mimetic desire and scapegoating, and their interpretation of events based on such awareness—are in a position to generate practical knowledge which could limit the effects of negative mimesis and scapegoating.

1. Current context and methodology

The current context involves an interaction between a world riddled with oppressive situations and our own *Sitz im Leben.* Given the diversity of those situations, most people can find ways in which they are part of both an oppressed group and an oppressor group. Theologian Sharon Welch, for example, sees herself as an oppressed *woman;* as a *white, middle-class American,* she sees herself also as part of an oppressor group. In my own case, insofar as I am a white North American male, I belong generically to the group which is on the oppressor side of many oppressive structures. It is only through my relationships of solidarity with oppressed people that I have come

to learn something of the phenomenon. Nevertheless, the recognition that I have not lived with the deprivation, threats to life, systemic discrimination, and lack of opportunity which many others currently face, makes me hesitant to say anything which might be construed as a paternalistic directive to those whose oppression includes subjugation to relationships of dependence.[1] The problem is so great and the stakes so high that I feel compelled to address the question of the mimesis of oppressors—at least as a matter of principle and potential strategy—in the hope that it might be subject to reality testing among people who face the daily challenge of entrenched oppression.

The stakes in the discussion are high for two reasons: the nature of relationships, and the nature of the conflicts. If there is a tendency for liberated people to mimic their oppressors, there are implications for two sets of relationships. The first question which confronts us is, What becomes of the former oppressors? The second, What is the relationship between the relatively powerful within the new society and those of relative weakness—whether of the same group of people or of other minorities—who remain in the land? These considerations raise further questions: What kind of new institutions might limit future oppression? Who is to play which role in their development? How can a people develop a 'utopia', or imagined future reality, which is not entirely conditioned by their own experience of oppression? How can they be taught in such a way that they will have full ownership of a new utopia informed by an ethical projection reflecting a reality different from that which they have experienced? Who will teach them? Or must they teach themselves?

The nature of conflicts changes with arms proliferation. With the phenomenon of cascading arms, whereby obsolete weapons for the superpowers are sold to those who are less powerful, who, in turn, sell their weapons to those less powerful on down the line, more and more groups are becoming sufficiently armed to kill many people in the acting out of their conflicts. As the oppressed become armed and use violence to achieve, first, freedom, and then, domination of others, the amount of human suffering increases. Throughout this century there has been a pronounced increase in the percentage of noncombatant victims. If all that matters is movement along the oppression-freedom axis without the mediation of an ethical projection, liberation may do nothing more than merely change the identity of those who are suffering (i.e. acted upon).

1For development of the theme of dependence, see Gustavo Gutiérrez, especially 30, 84-8.

The current reflection on the ethical projection as it pertains to the paradigm of liberation is multidisciplinary. It draws on biblical studies, on liberation theology, and on ethics. Since these three disciplines share a preoccupation with hermeneutics, it is appropriate to draw on the concepts of Paul Ricoeur which can forge links among them. In so doing, I pay explicit attention to the interplay of structure and meaning. While I do not deny the importance of the dimension of biblical studies which views structure independent of an ethical enterprise or negate the value given by liberation theologians to the recognition of the Exodus as a discrete paradigm for liberation, my own approach is somewhat different. It is grounded on the more integral view of structure/meaning and concerned specifically with the way structure suggests a space for the ethical: Where in the overall structure of the Exodus does one encounter the space to examine the ethical? What is the nature of the ethical projection and the role of the particular values which mediate the movement towards liberation?

One cannot enter the domain of biblical studies without placing oneself *vis-à-vis* the conflicting methodologies within the field. Since Ricoeur is my starting point it is appropriate to begin with the structure of the narrative within which the Exodus and Torah are presented, that is, to proceed along the lines of those doing new literary criticism, or a narrative reading of the text. At the same time, I wish to ground the study in the facticity which comes through attention to historical questions in terms of both the nature of the Exodus as event and the historical development of the traditions of the Exodus.[2] Attention to such questions will function as a hermeneutics of suspicion such that the dialectics involved will resonate with the methodology of liberation theology. Lying behind this attention is the question, What difference does it make to the present thesis if it could be demonstrated that the structure of the Exodus as described were a retrojection back in time rather than something which set in motion a forward projection?

The Exodus as *text* includes the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, and Judges. As *event* it covers the exit from Egypt, life in the wilderness, and establishment in the promised land. A central preoccupation of the text *and* the event is with 'Torah as teaching', understood both as a noun and a verb. The final form of the narrative places the development

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[2] Not only was much of the material in the Torah generated in the period of the monarchy, the entire Primary History—the term David Freedman uses to refer to the Torah and "Former Prophets" taken together—was assembled in the exilic or immediately postexilic period.

of Torah in the middle of the "freedom from" phenomenon as exemplified by escape from Egypt and the "freedom to" phenomenon as experienced in Canaan. The interpretation of the loss of the land and the movement from freedom to oppression in exile revolves, accordingly, around a failure to live up to the ethical projection.

To concentrate exclusively on liberation as the move out of oppression into freedom is, therefore, like eating a sandwich without the filling. It is empty. If the Exodus is to be a paradigm of liberation, it is only instructive if taken in its entirety. This means that the central portion of a theology of liberation ought to be preoccupied with teaching—what to teach the liberated people and how to teach it in a way which will make it unlikely that they, in turn, will become oppressors.

Liberation theology has developed its own methodology which includes a precommitment to the poor, a socio-historical analysis of the roots of oppression, and a hermeneutical moment in which the Bible and theology are read in context in order to discern fresh insights to guide the path of liberation and finally practical action.[3] Insofar as I read the text out of a sense of solidarity with the oppressed, I perform an exercise in liberation theology; that is, my particular approach is linked to the various steps of the liberation methodology. Given that socio-historical analysis is very attentive to the structure of oppression the present study further suggests that in the ethical projection more attention should be directed to an ethical structure which can inform the relationships and institutions that will guide the post-oppression reality, not to mention the process along the way. Included in this ethics should be attention to temporality as well.

The immediate links with hermeneutics are clear. The particular challenge with regard to the text is to look at the Exodus as a whole.[4] The challenge with regard to event, or action, is to envision oneself in the role of the oppressed, to imagine what kinds of institutions might systematically address oppression, and to question how I, as the oppressed, might act if I were to come to a position of power. In other words, how can the dangerous memory of oppression be kept alive and acted upon while it is still fresh.

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[3] For a summary of the methodology of liberation theology, see Leonardo and Clodovis Boff, 22-42.

[4] As Boff and Boff point out, the book of Exodus is one of the "most appreciated" by liberation theologians "because it recounts the pic of the politico-religious liberation of a mass of slaves who, through the power of the covenant with God, became the people of God" (35). This epic continues through the Torah and story of settlement.

For the essential definition of an ethical projection, Placing myself within the field of ethics, I draw on the work of Paul Ricoeur. With him, I accept the primacy of the teleological over the deontological, without denying the significance of the latter. In terms of the Roman Catholic debate on ethics, this places me in the camp of the "revisionists," otherwise known as "-consequentialists." I would nuance my position in that my understanding of teleology as derived from Ricoeur is broad: it suggests a projected development of relationships and institutions rather than a more narrow teleology which emphasizes the consequences of discrete moral or immoral acts.

What makes the development of an ethical projection a daunting challenge is that the horizon of expectation is informed by the space of experience. The projection of oppressed people tends to have imbedded within it the structures of oppression.[5] The challenge facing Moses was to teach the people to relate to one another in new ways and to develop institutions which would make it likely that just relationships could be sustained or, at least, periodically renewed. In effect the challenge was to change the very self-understanding, and hence, identity of the oppressed people. This is the dimension of the Exodus which presents itself today as a fundamental challenge. How can an oppressed, and liberated, people have a new Torah engraved on their hearts so that they will relate to one another in new and different ways?

2. Definition of "ethical projection"

My sense of "ethical projection" derives from a reading of Paul Ricoeur's *Oneself as Another*. The concept of projection is rooted in his definition of the human person which he arrives at indirectly through the notions of *idem* and *ipse*. For Ricoeur, the two facets of self, *idem* and *ipse*, complement one another. The sense of the *idem* is derived from the philosophical idea of the designation of the particular. Using the argument from P. F. Strawson that it is possible to attribute to the same subject both mental and physical predicates and that such predicates can also be predicated on another self, Ricoeur postulates an *idem* self which can be distinguished from other selves on the basis of a unique set of predicates.

In other words, the *idem* constitutes a taxonomy such that each distinguishing feature may be the same as others but taken together they point to a unique self.

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[5] See Gutiérrez's discussion of how psychological liberation from unconscious motivators results in "the continuous creation, never ending, of a new way to be a man [sic]" (30-1).

The *ipse* dimension, in contrast, has both a temporal and relational dimension to it. One gets to know the *ipse* through both historical narrative and a projection into the future. *Idem* is more related to being and *ipse* more akin to action (see table A). It is through the coming together of the two that one gets a relatively complete sense of self. I say 'relatively' because selfhood only comes to fullness through relation to the Other—the other as body, as another self, and as conscience. Ricoeur insists that to concentrate on either the *idem* dimension or the *ipse* dimension will produce a distorted sense of self—something he illustrates through science fiction characterization which produces dilemmas of understanding—dilemmas which he shows to be attributed to a one-sided presentation of self.

What is essential for our purposes is that the *ipse* dimension of the self is both historical and promissory; i.e., it can project itself into the future. This projection, to use the categories of Michael Polyanyi, can be both tacit or explicit. As a tacit projection it entails an unspoken expectation that the self will act in certain ways. As an explicit projection it is expressed in the giving of one's word. What will become critical in our exploration of Exodus is that through the covenant making and covenant renewal rituals the community "gave its word" that it would follow the stipulation in Torah of how to act in a Covenant relationship.

idem	*ipse*
hierarchy of significations	dialectical: self and otherness
set in time	continues and changes in time
sameness	selfhood/ otherness
ahistorical	historical and promissory
known by comparison	known by narrative
substantive	trace, process, movement, insubstantive
easily takes physical predicates	easily takes mental predicates
character as identifiable traits	character developed through time
sameness of character through time	keeping one's word/ faithfulness in relationships
immutability	self constancy through time

Table A. Comparison of the two aspects of the self as developed by Ricoeur (1990, 16, 18, 56, 85, 96, 116, 118-9, 121, 124, 149, 205, 241, 267, 318, 330-1).

The problem of an "ethical projection" invokes attention to the distinction between ethics and morality as well as to the notion of temporality. For Ricoeur, ethics is teleological and related to self-esteem. Morality is deontological and related to self-respect. The ethical projection must pass through the 'sieve of deontological norms' but in the end it is the ethical projection which takes precedence. The essence of ethics for Ricoeur is *to aim to lead a good life with and for others in just institutions.* The sense of the good life is understood in the context of *ipseite,* meaning self-existing and acting through time; it is in planning and living life that the goodness is manifest. Implicit in the phrase "with and for others" is the matter of relationships. The "institutions" are understood as the structures of meaning within which people organize themselves.

The questions raised by Ricoeur's formulation are, What is the good life? Who are the others? What constitutes a just institution? The Torah gives particular answers to these questions, especially with regard to relationships, which are central to its projection. Using the categories of Ricoeur in relation to the Torah does not imply that Torah be followed in a literal fashion. It suggests that new answers to these questions be sought within the liberation context, answers which draw on Torah for categories to be addressed and which use the direction of the past heuristically in order to help define the ethical projection into the future.

The question of ethics as defined by Ricoeur invokes attention to temporality and to the categories of ideology and utopia. The idea that an ethical projection comprises a temporal aspect means that the structure of action includes time as one of the dimensions. Here again Ricoeur's definitions of particular terms are important. He uses the term "ideology" in a positive sense, meaning an expression of present self-identity in terms of what a self or an identity group has become. It has a conservative polarity in that it seeks continuity with what has happened in the past. "Utopia" is the imagination of what could happen in the future and is not limited to a replication of the past.

Notwithstanding the openness of utopias, following again Ricoeur, the present is where the space of experience meets the horizon of expectation. In reality, that horizon has limitations placed upon it by the space of experience. What we have experienced in some way impinges upon what we can imagine. But given the power of language to communicate among people, our very space of experience can include, through the narratives of others, experiences that go beyond what we ourselves have lived.

In anticipation of my argument to follow, I would point out that within the structure of the entire narrative of the Exodus, it was because Moses had

experienced freedom both in the court and in the wilderness that he was in a position to give definition to a life in which oppression was systematically addressed. That is, he was able to bring to consciousness the fact of oppres sion and provide a projection ahead into a future in which oppression was not defining the way of life. Moving from narrative to historical reconstruction, the genius of the Torah is that it combined a memory of people who had been oppressed (whether in Egypt or Canaan) with a community self-realization that there was a tendency for oppressive relationships to develop among themselves. The Torah is, thus, as an acknowledgement of oppression which also demonstrates ways of systematically moving the community back to the wholeness of liberation.

That liberation theology is itself attuned to the possibility of an ethical projection is attested by Rebecca Chopp. Drawing on the work of Gustavo Gutiérrez, Chopp proposes that one of the tasks of liberation theology is the "projection of future possibilities in the church and in the polis" (141). She also suggests that

> theology uses narrative as a basic form or structure of theology to retrieve the Christian tradition, to narrate the dangerous memories of suffering, and to effect conversion and transformation . . . Narrative speaks of suffering in a way that theory cannot; it matches the structure of human experience and the nature of Christian tradition. (141)

By calling for an *ethical* projection based on Torah, I am suggesting that more rigorous work be done on developing both an ethical vision and the kinds of structures and institutions which might incarnate that vision. The application of the concepts of *idem* and *ipse* to the ethical projection suggests attention not only to temporality but also to a comparison of parts of a structure. Chopp's statements indicate that liberation theology is attuned to this approach as well.

3. Meaning and structure

The interplay between meaning and structure is central to my argument of the centrality of the ethical projection in Torah . There has been a trend within biblical studies to approach meaning both through semantics and structure. Within some streams of biblical criticism structure has appeared to be so all encompassing that meaning was lost; precritical readings of scripture went too quickly to apparent meanings without considering the structure within which meaning was mediated. Within each different type of biblical criticism there

are various structures which are seen to be relevant. Liberation theology has attended to structure at the levels of socio-historical analysis as well as method. In the field of ethics there also has been an increasing awareness of the structure of an action. How do meaning and structure interact within this variety of approaches?

Historical literary criticism (in this I include historical criticism, source criticism, and redaction criticism) looks for internal structures of meaning which correspond to historical realities. Literary structures, including stylistic differences between the J, E, D and P redactions of the Torah, have been matched with the more likely geographical and historical contexts for the development of certain traditions. The question of meaning has been linked also to the dating of a source text and the redaction of a final text combining a number of different traditions. On the level of a pericope, like the first creation story, the structure of the story reinforces the meaning expressed in the text (transformation of chaos to order culminating in rest). That it is attributed to P structurally, shows the preeminence of P in pride of place at the beginning of the Hebrew Bible; it also reinforces the Priestly love of order, not to mention the preoccupation with the Sabbath as a religious distinctive. If the priestly tradition becomes prominent in the redaction process, and if it is expressive of an exilic perspective in which the Temple and cult were not available for setting apart the chosen people, then the relative importance of the Sabbath is enhanced through the internal structure, the meaning of the pericope, and the relationship to the rest of the Hebrew Bible. The basic point is that a combination of literary structures and historical reconstructions assist in the hermeneutic task.

External to the text are the structures of meaning from other Ancient Near Eastern Texts. For example, a primary structure for biblical interpretation has been the Hittite Covenant Form which has helped to unlock the structure of the covenants as expressed in biblical narrative. Norbert Lohfink, in a substantive comparison, has demonstrated that a concern for the poor is clearly evident in the extra-biblical literature of the Ancient Near East. That there are commonalities in emphasis suggests that there ought not to be reluctance on the part of people of a faith in working together with others who might have a similar goal.

Form criticism identifies genres with particular forms which are themselves situated in particular *Sitzen im Leben.* By examining and comparing pericopes which have the same form (call narrative, genealogy, salvation oracle, etc.) the use of the particular form contributes to the understanding of the meaning, and the variations within a form help to show patterns of

emphasis. To this can be added rhetorical criticism which emphasizes the role of logical connectives and parallel structures to give emphasis to ideas.

New literary criticism has been preoccupied with narrative structure. On the one hand, there has been an abstract development of deep-structure looking at what tends to be common to all narratives. On the other hand, through attention to such things as foreshadowing, flashbacks, and characterization new literary criticism has drawn out the interaction of structure and meaning. Of particular significance has been the distinction between transparent characterization, in which the interior of a person is described thus making clear the role of intentionality, and opaque characterization in which only the actions and speeches of a person are described. These distinctions are important for an examination of the structure of an action from the perspective of ethics.

Within this context of meaning and structure, David Freedman's macro structural criticism proposes a structural symmetry of the Hebrew Bible based on the arrangement of the books of the *Tanakh.* The Hebrew Bible can be understood as being divided into a "Primary History" made up of Torah and former prophets (Genesis to Kings) and a second part made up of "Latter Prophets and Writings." Within the primary history, what is central is the Decalogue as a moral obligation of the covenant. Freedman shows that book by book, starting with Exodus, one of the commandments is broken until, by Kings, all initial nine commandments have been broken by the community. The tenth, which is related to intention, applies to the breaking of most of the others. The preoccupation of the primary history is, how did the people going into exile end up losing the land? Freedman's overall analysis suggests the primacy of an ethical projection from the time of the Exodus, an ethical projection which the people did not live up to. Structurally the centrality of the Decalogue is highlighted by its repetition at critical historical moments and by the focus on a single commandment in each of the initial nine books of the *Tanakh.*

Making a transition from biblical studies to liberation theology we can see that Clodovis Boff places significant emphasis on structures of meaning in his model of correspondence of terms (146-50). What is important is the integrity of analogical relationships and their internal relationships, as well as the corresponding relationships. In other words the relationship between a biblical situation and its context should be considered when comparing the biblical situation to a present day situation which has a relationship to a particular context. At this point it is not important to get into the details of the particular relationships but merely to note the significance of structures in the hermeneu-

tical and ethical enterprise. If there is within liberation theology an insistence that the internal relationships among various aspects of a biblio-historical situation should conform to the internal relationships for which the biblical situation becomes a heuristic paradigm, then the observations made about the structure of the Exodus as well as the thematic emphasis should beg the question, What might be a comparable dimension of the contemporary liberation enterprise?

Chopp issues a strong challenge to liberation theology to look more closely at structure not only in its critique of current situations but also in its future projections:

> While the impulse of religious traditions may be to provide alternative vision, to dissociate these from structural conditions of life is both naive and inadequate to the demands of praxis, especially social praxis, as the foundational aim of theology.... The diagnosis is simple: praxis, in liberation theology, has been formulated through ideology critiques that displace the interrelations between human agency and social structures. ... To ignore these interrelations dictates that the critiques will be inadequate and impotent, and that models of transformation will have to be content to envision new forms of consciousness and not new forms of socio political existence. This is not to deny the importance and the necessity of Gutiérrez's and Metz's critiques, but simply to suggest that given their own demands of praxis, a social theory must be developed within the theological method of liberation theology. Having located both anthropology and Christianity in the praxis of polis, liberation theology must now include a social theory adequate to the demands of socio-political existence. There are three equally valid arguments for this claim: first if existence is political, intersubjective, and future-oriented, we must interpret human existence in terms of interrelations of human agency and social structure. Second, if Christian theology mediates liberation and salvation, it must work with the theories and activities of human agents and social structures. Third, ideology critique demands its own transformation, for its therapeutic nature requires actual change as well as new understanding, and only an adequate social theory can allow the projection of possibilities for change in both human agency and social structures. (147)

It is the argument of this paper that by attending to the structure of the whole Exodus event including Torah and covenant, the Exodus paradigm might go beyond its present use in legitimating the passion for liberation and freedom,

and suggest an ethical framework to guide the development of changes in "human agency and social structures." More particularly, a critical and heuristic use of the Torah could help in the development of a social theory which could guide the development of political institutions designed to prevent oppression.

Within the ethical enterprise, finally, there is increasing attention to analysis of the structures of action. Borrowing methodologically from Bernard Lonergan, Ken Melchin has introduced the concept of social recurrence schemes (1990, 389-416; 1991, 495-523). Likewise, those advocates of a multiple effect analysis of action have looked at the structure of action using a variety of categories to separate out logical intention, direct and indirect effects, psychological intention, and proportionality. Doing an ethical analysis of the Exodus as presented in the biblical text underscores the thesis presented here in that there are clear statements of intention coming from the Holy One, statements which underscore the primacy of establishing respect for the Name of God among the nations through liberation as well as through the ethical life of the people in covenant relationship with the Divine (cf. Deut. 4:1-8).

We have established that in the disciplines of biblical studies, liberation theology, and ethics there is a common interest in attending to structure as one dimension of the hermeneutic enterprise. It will be taken as a given that attention to the meaning of words, propositions, and pericopes is likewise an important dimension of interpretation.

With this in mind we will turn to a structural analysis of the Exodus. In an attempt to establish the centrality of the ethical projection in the Exodus I will develop three lines of inquiry: analysis of the structure of the Exodus as narrative, event, and paradigm; examination of the sense of projection into a future reality; and discussion of how Torah is interpreted within the Hebrew Bible. These inquiries are intended to create a category for an ethical projection in the context of liberation.

4. The centrality of the ethical projection in the Exodus

Regardless of the approach one takes in a structural analysis of the Exodus it is obvious that the Torah is given in the context of a narrative which starts with the movement out of Egypt and ends with the occupation of the land. There are two particularly significant *kairos* 'times' in the overall narrative which I refer to here as the first and second Torah. The first is Exod. 19-34, a passage which Norman Gottwald links with J, E, and P sources meaning that some form of Torah material was common to all the non-Deuteronomic sources (182-5). This passage concerns the making of the

covenant: it includes a presentation of the Decalogue and a spelling out of the covenant code. As such the passage can be understood as Torah as noun,' or Torah as teaching through stipulation. What follows in the rest of Exodus and in Leviticus, and Numbers is an account of the wilderness wanderings which we can understand as 'Torah as verb,' that is, as teaching through a process. In the words of Freedman, the block of material in Genesis to Numbers is the P-work dominated by the priestly source. If this is the case, then the climax is the presentation of Torah and these books themselves constitute most of what comprises the actual Torah.

The second Torah begins with Deuteronomy, specifically with the reaffirmation of the covenant with the new generation: "The LORD our God made a covenant with us at Horeb. Not with our ancestors did the LORD make this covenant, but with us, who are all of us here alive today" (Deut. 5:2,3 NRSV). What follows is a reiteration of the Decalogue followed by a presentation of the command to love God and, eventually, the Deuteronomistic Code. This can be seen as the introduction to the whole of the Deuteronomistic history.

What is particularly significant is that in the amalgamation of the P work and the D work, to use Freedman's terms, emphasis is given to the centrality of Torah. The structural placement of Deuteronomy at the center of the nine books of the primary history promotes its projection as the book most self-consciously preoccupied with Torah as teaching theme.

There is. furthermore, a chiasm built into the structure of Exodus whose pattern can be designated in accordance with the following values by the formula AB /B'A':

A = freedom from oppression in Egypt
B = giving of first Torah in the context of covenant (with renewal)
B ' = giving of second Torah in the context of covenant affirmation (with reaffirmation in Joshua)
A' = freedom to enter the land

The focal point of B and B' is of course the Decalogue. The first rendition of the Decalogue, in Exodus 20, takes place in the context of covenant making; it includes the introduction of the covenant code of Exodus and the holiness code of Leviticus. Within that narrative, those who were parties to the covenant died in the wilderness. The second rendition, in Deuteronomy, affirms the validity of the provisions of the covenant for the children born in the wilderness. Here the Deuteronomic code is introduced. The Torah, especially the coded teaching, includes the words חקים, משׁטים, and מצו־ת,

which translate roughly as stipulations, or customs, judgments, and commands (Deut. 4:1-8). The judgments are imbedded in both the casuistic portions (if this then that) and the stories of judgment. Torah as noun is evident in the various codes; Torah as verb is evident in the stories of judgment in the wilderness and the interpretation of the time in the wilderness as a time for teaching (Deut. 8:1-6).

It is notable that even the Deuteronomist interprets these events as being part of a systematic plan of guidance and discipline on the part of God. An essential point to make by way of structural analysis is that a narrative reading of the text as well as a reading of the various theoretical sources support the structure. J, E, D, and P can each be read as maintaining a basic structure of 'liberation from', Torah, and 'liberation to' the promised land.

Throughout there is a link between Torah and covenant, the Torah being guidance concerning the living out of the covenant relationship. The axis of faithfulness-unfaithfulness to the covenant as defined by Torah remains the central axis of interpretation throughout the rest of the primary history and the prophets. A preoccupation with Torah continues in wisdom literature as well.

It is clear, then, that in a narrative reading of the Exodus story there is a central position given to Torah. But what of the Exodus event? It is not possible to definitively reconstruct the historical Exodus but it is possible to gather traces of an event and reconstruct what is most plausible. There is general agreement that a group of oppressed people did leave Egypt and wandered through the wilderness to Canaan. Sociological exegetes would argue that it was an ethnically mixed group which eventually stirred up the oppressed classes of Canaanites to prompt a revolution. Whatever the process, we know that eventually a new group evolved to become Israel. It seems implausible that an oppressed people would have successfully left Egypt and made it to Canaan without a strong leader like Moses, someone who had experienced life in both Egypt and the wilderness. It is also unlikely that they would have been able to retain a separate identity strong enough to take them from being an oppressed people in Egypt to the kingdom of David and Solomon without a core of basic teaching rooted in covenant, teaching which established a value and identity base. What this means is that at least a minimum amount of Torah had its origins within the Exodus event through the leadership of Moses (Gottwald, 203). It evolved and was added to through the monarchy.

Ultimately it is the Exodus as paradigm which informs the praxis of oppressed people. It is here suggested that the Exodus paradigm be changed in structure to acknowledge the centrality of Torah within the narrative.

Another way of perceiving the interaction between event, historical accounts, and final version is that there existed at one time a record of the flight from Egypt through the wilderness and that this account had spliced into it covenant and Torah material. Gottwald puts it this way:

> In short, the great cultic and theological significance attached to covenant making and lawgiving has been *expressed structurally in the final state of the Moses traditions* by sharply separating Sinai geographically from the rest of the wilderness sites, making it a mysteriously remote mountain. (200; emphasis added)

That is, Sinai functions semeiotically to underscore the fact that for those who developed the Exodus paradigm, covenant and Torah were extremely significant. If this is the case, it would give even greater emphasis to the centrality of the ethical projection in the evolution of a paradigm, an interpretive framework for giving meaning to liberation.

Concerning the question of Torah as future projection, we may see that within the narrative of the covenant there are three varied responses to Moses' presentation of the words of the Lord. The first occurs after Moses' explanation of the covenant: "All that the LORD has spoken we will do" (Exod. 19:8). The other two follow the presentation of the Covenant Code and immediately precede the formal ratification of the covenant:

> Moses went and repeated to the people all the commands of the LORD and all the rules; and all the people answered with one voice, saying, "All the things that the LORD has commanded we will do!" Moses then wrote down all the commands of the LORD. … Then he took the record of the covenant and read it aloud to the people. And they said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will faithfully do!" (Exod. 24:3,4,7).

This powerful threefold promissory affirmation to act on the teachings indicates within the narrative a significant forward projection. Within the story we have a strong sense of intentionality as part of the structure of action. God provided liberation from Egypt for the sake of establishing a covenant with the people; liberation to the promised land was accomplished with the explicit affirmation of the people that they intended to live out the ethical vision called for by the covenant.

The sense that the Torah was projected into the future is given even greater emphasis in the book of Deuteronomy:

> And this is the Instruction—the laws and the rules—that the LORD your God has commanded [me] to impart to you, *to be observed in the land that you are about to cross into and occupy, so that you, your children, and your children's children may revere the LORD your God and follow, as long as you live,* all His laws and commandments that I enjoin upon you, to the end that you may long endure. Obey, O Israel, willingly and faithfully, that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly [in] a land flowing with milk and honey, as the LORD, the God of your fathers (ancestors), spoke to you. (6:1-4; emphasis added here and below).

> For you are about to cross the Jordan to enter and possess the land that the LORD your God is assigning to you. *When you have occupied it and are settled in it, take care to observe all the laws and rules that I have set before you this day.* (11:31,32)

> Moses and the elders of Israel charged the people saying: Observe all the Instruction that I enjoin upon you this day. *As soon as you have crossed the Jordan into the land that the LORD your God is giving you, you shall set up large stones. Coat them with plaster and inscribe upon them all the words of this Teaching.* When you cross over to enter the land that the LORD your God is giving you, a land flowing with milk and honey, as the LORD, the God of your fathers (ancestors) promised you. (27:1-4)

That the teaching provides an ethical vision for life in the land is explicitly stated not only in these passages but in other texts of Deuteronomy as well (9:1; 17:14; 30:18; 31:2,11). Since the setting is the East Bank of the Jordan just before entering Canaan, it is to be expected that the Deuteronomist might include such projections. What is more surprising is the decided emphasis given to the projection of Torah into the land within Leviticus (14:34; 19:23; 23:10; 25:2) and Numbers (10:9; 15:2).

Besides these explicit projections into the land there is evidence that many of the stipulations pertain to a settled condition, which raises the question of just how much of this material was part of the original teaching. It should be acknowledged that, given the Primary History was assembled in its final form in the context of the Exile the projection can be seen as a retrojection back as well as a projection forward. Two points need to be clarified in this regard. First, the understanding of the Exodus as liberation is based on the same tradition as that which establishes the centrality of the Torah. If the Exodus paradigm is to be used at all it makes sense to see it within the total structure

in which it is presented. Second, given the continuous narrative structure and the sense of the narrative resting with a particular community it must be acknowledged that they had an historical consciousness of their ancestors having committed themselves to a covenant which had in it a forward ethical projection. In fact, it is the failure to live up to what was projected which is the primary focus of the interpretation of the exile.

These point must be made to counter any objection that the ethical projection was merely an historical retrojection backward and that the Exodus can be taken as a paradigm without it. Certainly much of the material was generated after the possession of the land, but the structure of the narrative places the ethical projection in the middle of the Exodus with such emphasis that there must have been an essential amount of Torah and covenant which was part of the historical reality of the wilderness experience. In fact, it is hard to explain how a group of slaves would have found the power to act without a retooling of their minds. However, a more satisfactory answer to the question of retrojection may be possible after examining what was said about the Torah within the Hebrew Bible and inquiring into a particular aspect of Torah which I designate an "ethic of remembrance."

Torah is seen as an ethical projection in what is said about it. First, living the Torah, or walking in the way, is seen as the key to the good life in the land (Deut. 5:30, 8:6, *et al).* Second, the Torah is seen as having a teleological dimension in that the living of the Torah is to demonstrate to the nations the wisdom of God (Deut. 4:1-8). Third, the Torah is to be taught to the children so that it might be lived through the generations. Most telling in this regard is the text concerning the questioning of the children:

> When in time to come, your children ask you, "What mean the decrees, laws and rules that the LORD our God has enjoined upon you?" you shall say to your children, "We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt and the *LORD freed us from Egypt* with a mighty hand. The LORD wrought before our eyes marvelous and destructive signs and portents in Egypt, against Pharaoh and all his household; and us He freed from there, that He might take us and *give us the land* that He had promised on oath to our fathers (ancestors). *Then the LORD commanded us to observe these laws,* to revere the LORD our God, for our lasting good and for our survival, as is now the case. It will be therefore to our merit before the LORD our God to *observe faithfully this whole Instruction,* as He has commanded us." (Deut. 6:20-25)

Within this answer to the children we find that the various components of the Exodus are presented but the Torah dimensions, the ethical projection, is given significantly more emphasis than the liberation dimensions.

Within the prophetic corpus of material, particular attention is given to Torah. There is above all a clear trend in the literature interpreting the exile that it came about because of a failure to live the Torah life, that it was the result of failure to follow through on ethical projection. Indictments based on Torah either explicit or implicit occur throughout the prophets. In the postmortem on the fall of Israel, discussion of what was the Northern Kingdom highlights actions which were contrary to Torah (2 Kings 17; see especially verses 13-16). The foreigners deported to the Northern Kingdom had to be taught the Torah so as to not be alienated from the land (2 Kings 17:24-29). The great reforms of Jehoshaphat and Josiah were based on a rediscovery of, and public education on the Torah (2 Chron. 17:7-9; 14-31; 2 Kings 22, 23).

Paralleling the Exodus, Torah is an important part of the postexilic reestablishment in the land (Ezra 7:25). Within the writings it is frequently referred to as a light or a guide to future action (see especially Ps. 119) and repeatedly invoked at a moment of liberation or new beginning. All of what is said about Torah points to the fact that action was expected and continues to be expected to line up with the ethical vision contained therein. The question that remains to be shown is how was the ethical projection conceived as being generated by the memory of oppression.

The concept of an ethic of remembrance introduces a threefold sense of temporality to the ethical. First it points back to past experience. Second it is a present imperative. Third it is a projection into the future. There are two different structures of remembrance. One is positive: remember that God has liberated you, therefore honor God through love and walking the way of the Torah. The other is negative: remember how awful it was that you were oppressed slaves; in the light of that remembrance, structure your life together in such a way that you will avoid becoming oppressors yourselves. It is the latter which we will examine in greater detail. We will begin with consideration of the use of זכר 'remembering' as it relates to oppression, examine the institutions designed to avoid becoming oppressors, look back to reinforcement in the past and ahead to the exile to see how these institutions were given particular emphasis.

Interestingly enough, the ethic of remembrance has a built-in rhythm based on seven units of time. The link to past slavery was evident in the comparison between the Deuteronomic Code on the one hand, and the Covenant and

Holiness Codes on the other. Now let us consider the themes of the Sabbath day and then the Sabbath year and jubilee.

The Deuteronomic version of the "commandment" dealing with the Sabbath day is as follows:

> Observe the Sabbath day and keep it holy, as the LORD your God has commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of the LORD your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your ox or your ass, or any of your cattle, or the stranger in your settlements so that your male and female slave may rest as you do. *Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt and the LORD your God freed you from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.* (5:12-15; emphasis added)

Whereas the Exodus version rooted the Sabbath in creation, the Deuteronomic version based the weekly observance of the Sabbath on the memory of slavery and oppression. The keeping of Sabbath both reminded people of the oppression experience and functioned as an act of liberation for children and slaves. They were released from the obligation to work for one day of the week. It is striking that given the power of the seven-day creation story this particular basis would be given for keeping the Sabbath.

A similar dynamic occurred with the Sabbath years. The Holiness Code introduced the idea of a Sabbath rest for the land only; jubilee was reserved for the year of the release of slaves and return of land to the original families (Lev. 25:1-19). The Deuteronomic Code also stipulates a Sabbath year, but the central points were the remission of debt and the release of slaves. Not only were they to be released but they were to be also supplied ample provisions. Within the teaching was the stipulation that people were to open their hands to the needy, lending them whatever they needed, with the realization that on the seventh year the debts will be forgiven. Near the end of the teaching we find the following: "Bear in mind that you were slaves in the land of Egypt and the LORD your God redeemed you; therefore I enjoin this commandment upon you today" (Deut. 15:15). What is significant is that Deuteronomy grounded the Sabbath year in remembrance of slavery and, moreover, that it built into the calendar the systematic liberation from oppressive situations.

The rationale for the Sabbath year and jubilee is similar in the Holiness Code but with a slightly different angle. The reason for the emphasis on the

return land was that the land belonged to the LORD and should "not be sold beyond reclaim, for the land is Mine; you are but strangers resident with Me. Throughout the land that you hold, you must provide for the redemption of the land" (Lev. 25:23-24). The teaching against usury was rooted in liberation from Egypt (Lev. 25:38), and the provision for redemption of slaves was grounded in the fact that the Israelites were the servants of the LORD "whom I freed from the land of Egypt" (Lev. 25:55). The Holiness Code is a theocentric version of a similar ethical teaching which harks back to the memory of liberation but does not carry with it the memory of slavery. Thus, the two versions of the Sabbath day and the Sabbath year were aimed at a similar ethical practice with a twofold rationale for each.

What underlines the significance of the Sabbath year is the provision in Leviticus that the time of desolation would be one year for every Sabbath year not observed (Lev. 26:34). At the end of the *Tanakh* it is observed that the exile lasted 70 years until the land paid back its Sabbaths (2 Chron. 36:20-21). The implication was that the Sabbath year was never really observed and that the exile was a result. It was cataclysmic to have all of the justice which was to have been done regularly over (presumably) 490 years done in one act. Further emphasis was given to the Sabbath day and week in the postexilic covenant renewal: "We will forgo the produce of the seventh year, and every outstanding debt" (Neh. 10:32).

We have shown that the Torah generally was presented as an ethical projection into the pos-toppression situation. Within the Torah the Sabbath teaching was linked in a special way to an ethic of remembrance; it built into the temporal structure the means to prevent those who were oppressed from becoming oppressors by periodically liberating the people from debt and servitude. Failure to observe the Sabbath year teaching was linked explicitly with the exile.

One could argue that the ethical projection coming out of the center of the Exodus event was in fact a retrojection back given with the benefit of hindsight. I do not deny that some aspect of ethical projection originating in the wilderness was both plausible and necessary. I would now suggest that those teachings retrojected back in time in order to lend the authority of Moses to them were important insights: insofar as they were tied to an ethic of remembrance their structural ties to the Exodus paradigm remain intact. If they were based on hindsight, their cogency is even greater. In effect, they would be saying the key to continued survival would have been living up to the Torah generally, keeping the Sabbath year particularly, and never forgetting that "we were once slaves."

We are left with three levels of understanding in which an ethical projection was central to the Exodus. First, it was central to the Exodus event as it is reconstructed by scholars even if the extent of the new ethical teaching may be minimal by comparison with what later emerged in the dominant codes of the Torah. Second, it was central in terms of the Exodus paradigm insofar as what was projected back in time was still associated through remembrance and hence legitimated by the slavery-liberation experience. At a third level, within the narrative which was put to text in the form we have received it and within the form which continues to inspire liberation theology, there is an unequivocal centrality to the ethical projection. As further argued, what might have been retrojection reinforces the ethical teachings and vision woven into the narrative of liberation.

This leads to my concluding remarks on the implications of the centrality of Torah for Girard's hypothesis concerning the foundations of violence and, as well, for those grappling with the initial question, *How can those liberated from oppression avoid mimesis of their oppressors?*

5. Implications for Girardian Scholars

Our inquiry began with the realization that the story of the Exodus is paradigmatic for oppressed people yearning to be free. We observed that this freedom has a positive and negative dimension including freedom from oppression and freedom to enter the promised land. The argument advanced has been that the Exodus paradigm as it finds expression within the Hebrew Bible emphasizes the centrality of the Torah as teaching, as a mediating guide to human action as one proceeds from oppression to liberation. It has been shown that the pattern in Torah of 'freedom from' oppression to 'freedom to' enjoy the land is the same whether one looks at the Hebrew Bible from the perspective of historical event, literary structure, or a retrojection back of insights gained through subsequent history.

It has been further argued that this pattern involves an ethical projection expressed through "Torah-teaching" understood as both noun and verb. In Ricoeur's terms, there is an articulation of what it means to aim to live a good life with and for others in just institutions. We have shown that woven into this projection is an ethic of remembrance of oppression which calls for institutions (i.e. structures of relationships) aimed at limiting or avoiding oppression. A significant dimension of these institutions is that they express the temporal dimension of human existence; i.e., built into the calendar is a systematic reallocation of land, freedom, and resources.

What becomes clear is that the Torah as ethical projection stimulates the imagination of people who have been oppressed to envision new ways of relating to one another in order to avoid, or at least limit, structures of oppression. That the people find new ways of acting in relation to one another is a condition of peace-filled life in the land.

A refraining of the argument in terms of Girard's hypothesis concerning the origins of violence hinges on what he defines as the initial form of violence, the violence of indifferentiation. As Girard explains it, indifferentiation, or the leveling of social and cultural distinctions, results from mimetic desire which is an imitation by the Self of the desires of an Other. This can give rise initially to rivalry over an object of desire and eventually to a mimetic doubling whereby the identity of each is lost in the identity of the Other—hence violence of indifferentiation. Within a community widespread rivalries can result in a crisis. The crisis is resolved through scapegoating which constitutes a violence of differentiation. The scapegoat is perceived as totally Other and is the recipient of all of the violence within the community. The sense of reconciliation after scapegoating is awesome enough to associate the scapegoat with the Sacred. A key feature of the hypothesis is that scapegoating only works if it is hidden, that is, people who scapegoat others are never conscious that that is what they are doing. From their perspective the violence is legitimated—usually by some wrongdoing on the part of the scapegoat.

Slavery as oppression can be thought of as institutionalized violence of differentiation—the initial form of violence as defined in Girard's hypothesis. Slaves are not thought of as complete people, they are differentiated categorically. They are frequently subject to violence and the threat of their uprising or liberation justifies repressive actions on the part of their oppressors. The oppressors are united as a group through both the threat of the oppressed and the regular expression of collective violence. As this structure becomes internalized there is every possibility that oppressed and oppressors become mimetic doubles of one another. The oppressed can find ways to oppress one another and the oppressors feel dependent and hence, in some ways captive of their slaves.

Within the Exodus story, a period of forty years is needed for people to receive and internalize the Torah as a new way of being. Not only was the Torah given as stipulation, there were numerous "teachable moments" whereby its principles became alive. The teachings are meant to counteract

both mimetic desire and scapegoating.[6] The particular teachings singled out in the analysis above involve the periodic granting of relief from work, indebtedness, loss of land, and slavery as well as the Sabbath days and years and specifically the year of Jubilee. These had the effect of placing limits on both mimetic rivalry (there was a limit on the amassing of land and hence wealth and power) and a violence of differentiation. In fact, the instances of stoning as well may be construed as scapegoat events meant to limit mimetic rivalry. The humanity of slaves was affirmed. Even the need for rest on the part of animals acknowledged a kind of solidarity with them. The constant call to remember what it was like to be a slave meant that there was a continual projection into the life situation of those who could be oppressed, thus mitigating the natural tendency toward a violence of differentiation.

Within the community of Girardian scholars there is a general acknowledgment that all of humanity, all of us, are caught up in mimetic rivalries and scapegoating. The ubiquity of this phenomenon suggests that, in terms of the Exodus paradigm, we are all caught up in structures of oppression—either as perpetrators or as victims. We are also subject to both petty and substantial rivalries where we work, within our families, and within the social and religious institutions which give meaning to our lives.

Nevertheless, there is a yearning on the part of all people to be free of forces which they find oppressive. Often those forces are not identified nor are they understood. It is hard for people to imagine ways of being which involve new structures of human interaction. It is often the case that structures of action with the accompanying belief and value systems are internalized. They are appropriated along with culture through mimesis.

The genius of Moses was precisely that he was able to identify and name the oppressive structures. More importantly, he was open to receive the Torah which constituted a new imagination and a new constellation of structures for human action. Girard, and those who are concerned with testing his hypothesis, have discovered new ways of naming and identifying oppressive, violent structures of human action. Within the Exodus pattern as identified above, this is but the first step in a potential liberating action. The subsequent challenge is to use the insights of the Girardian hypothesis to begin to imagine another way of being and to build on this imagination through the generation of teachings which can define institutions which will periodically make societal

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[6] An examination of the specifics goes beyond the scope of this argument. For an analysis of how the Torah generally and the Decalogue specifically set limits on the violence of indifferentiation see James Williams (105-27).

adjustments taking into account our predisposition toward mimetic desire and scapegoating. The challenge is to develop a nonsacrificial way of being. One description, by Girard, of what that entails is the following:

> The whole of humanity is already confronted with an ineluctable dilemma: human beings must become reconciled without the aid of sacrificial intermediaries or resign themselves to the imminent extinction of humanity. The progressively more precise knowledge we possess concerning cultural systems and the mechanism that generate them is not gratuitous; it is not without its counterpart. There can no longer be any question of giving polite lip-service to a vague 'ideal of non-violence'. There can be no question of producing more pious vows and hypocritical formulae. Rather, we will more and more often find ourselves faced with an implacable necessity. The definitive renunciation of violence, without any second thoughts, will become for us the condition *sine qua non* for the survival of humanity itself and for each one of us. (136-7)

A second challenge derived from the notion of teaching is that understandings need to be communicated and taught to the people. Moses had forty years with a 'captive audience'. A further challenge is to find the tools, venue, and methods to stimulate personal growth within the many communities making up the human family.

The answer to the question posed at the beginning, namely, *How can those liberated from oppression avoid mimesis of their oppressors?* is answered by the Exodus paradigm as follows: there must be a teaching process and content that builds on an awareness of what it is like to be oppressed. This answer suggests to any who have unique insights of the nature of such oppression to translate those insights into life-giving, life-affirming teaching.

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