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"The People of God" In the Old Testament: The View of Eichrodt and Gutierrez as Evaluated by Confessional Lutheran Hermeneutics

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"THE PEOPLE OF GOD" IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: THE VIEW OF

EICHRODT AND GUTIÉRREZ AS EVALUATED BY

CONFESSIONAL LUTHERAN HERMENEUTICS

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by

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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is about the concept of People of God in the Old

Testament in late Academic Theology and in Liberation Theology as evaluated by

Lutheran Hermeneutics. It has developed from the personal experience of its

author with the confrontation with several views of the concept of People of God

in theological movements of his country. By "late Academic Theology" is meant

the movement in which a more biblical accent on theological themes is

emphasized and some aspects of pure liberalism are rejected. Late Academic

Biblical Theology is represented in this study by the analysis of the concept of

People of God in the works of the German theologian Walther Eichrodt.[1] By

"Liberation Theology" is understood the religious movement that has had

significant growth, especially in the last two decades in Latin America, "doing"

theology with different hermeneutical approaches from those of confessional

Lutheran theology. The concept of People of God from the point of view of

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[1]Walther Eichrodt was born on August 1, 1890, in Grensbach, Germany. He was educated at the universities of Greifswald, Heidelberg, and Erlangen, and received an honorary doctorate from the University of Glasgow. He taught first at Erlangen, and then became Professor of History of Religions and Old Testament at the University of Basel in Switzerland.

Liberation Theology will be seen in the works of Gustavo Gutiérrez, considered

one of its most exegetical theologians.[2]

On the basis of the authority of the Holy Scriptures as the revealed and

inspired Word of God, this writer assumes that the Biblical accounts are true and

historically accurate. The presuppositions and methodology of the critical

approach are judged in this dissertation as inappropriate because of their failure to

accept the material on its own terms. Therefore, the reconstruction of Israel's

history as usually assumed by critical views of Scripture is discarded. The Sinai

event is historical reality as the place where the ratification of the covenant

happens. To view the historical narrative about the Exodus and the Sinai event as

merely expression of faith or as idealistic retrojections does not do full justice to

the nature and content of Israel's faith. The Sinaitic covenant as viewed in this

study was an integral part of the Exodus-Sinai event, which took place in space

and time and was decisive for the life, nature, and mission of the People of God in

the Old Testament.

It was on the basis of saving acts and deliverance that the covenant was

made. Covenant is a gracious act of Yahweh whereby He established Himself in

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[2]Gustavo Gutiérrez was born in Lima, Peru, in 1928. For five years he studied Medicine in the National University of Lima. From 1951-1955 he studied Philosophy and Psychology in Louvain; from 1955-1959 he studied Theology in Lyon. In 1959 he was ordained bishop in Lima. Since 1960 he is Professor of Theology in the Catholic University of Lima. In 1985 Gutiérrez received a doctorate in theology from the Catholic Institute of Lyons.

communion with Israel. The People of God could not maintain sufficient purity to preserve this relationship. For this reason Yahweh instituted the cultic system as a means by which Israel's sins might be forgiven and by which the correct relationship was renewed in the presence of God. A mere traditional or magical compliance with the grace of God did not merit forgiveness. The correct and sound relationship with her God was not maintained by Israel's efforts. The forgiveness of God was granted "in, with, and under" His Word and sacraments. Hence the possibility for the People of God in the Old Testament of knowing God is present because He gives Himself to be known either in theophany, as often to the patriarchs, or through events such as the Exodus-Sinai, or through worship experiences that take place in the entire Old Testament period and since then in the Christian Church worldwide.

One of the concerns of this work is an analysis of the concept of People of God in Eichrodt and Gutiérrez. Since the concept in the Old Testament is considered the basis for this theological approach, the insights of both theologians will be made through this basis and in the perspective of the Lutheran Schriftprinzip.

It is the conviction of this writer that the Textus Receptus of the Old Testament is the first and primary authority on the matter of text-critical analysis. Attention to the material at the apparatus criticus will be given when an alternative

is materially relevant. Except for the exegetical pericopes that are analyzed in the first chapter and that are of my own translation, other Biblical verses quoted are from the New International Version.

This is a theological dissertation. Thus, the Word of God establishes the parameters of its development. The first chapter of this dissertation is the platform for the whole project. The Biblical view of the People of God in the Old Testament is seen beginning with the nature of this people through a textual investigation of עַם (people) and גּוֹי (nation) in the Old Testament and their theological implications. Israel is in the midst of the other nations. Is Israel different from them? Chapter two presents the mission of the People of God in the Old Testament with a special focus on the theme of the "holy war" and how this theme is related to God's People. Chapter three consists of a critical analysis of Walther Eichrodt, an important representative theologian of Old Testament Biblical Theology on the concept of People of God. Chapter four deals with the same concept in Liberation Theology, a movement that has gained attention and theological respectability in countries, from France to Germany, from Spain to Italy, from Holland to the United States. The concept of People of God in Liberation Theology will be analyzed especially through the works of Gustavo Gutiérrez. Finally, chapter five contains an evaluation of the two theologians plus a summary and conclusion.

CHAPTER I

THE NATURE OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Introduction

The Hebrew text of the Old Testament has two basic terms to describe the

general concept of "people" and "nation" and the corporate identity of God's

people as well. These two terms are עַם and גּוֹי. The noun עַם[1] occurs more

frequently in the Scriptures than its counterpart גּוֹי.[2] When עַם is employed in

relation to Israel, its frequency in comparison to גּוֹי is still more decisive.

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[1] E. Lipinski, " עַם" in Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Alten Testament, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren and Heinz-Joseph Fabry, vol. 6 (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer GmbH, 1987), 180, says that the term עַם appears in the Old Testament more than 1950 times and is a component element in 15 personal names.

[2] Ronald E. Clements and G. Johannes Botterweck, "גּוֹי " in Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, trans. John T. Willis, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), 427, indicate that the noun גּוֹי occurs only about 550 times in the Old Testament.

However, there are cases when עַם and גּוֹי are used interchangeably in relation to

Israel, both in a positive and in a negative sense.

The purpose of this chapter is to present the relationship between עַם and גּוֹי

in the Old Testament in a general way, followed by its theological implications. A

more specific treatment of both nouns will be given in the exegetical study of

Biblical passages dealing with the people of God in chapter II which concludes

with an analysis of the concept of people of God and its relationship with the

nations in the "holy war".

<div align="center">The Terms עַם and גּוֹי: General Aspects</div>

<div align="center">The Term עַם</div>

In cognate languages to Hebrew the term עַם is a common Semitic term. It

is very frequent in the Amorite, Ammonite, and Arabic languages. In Arabic it

means "paternal uncle" and from there it extends its meaning to designate the

nuclear family, and thence the family deity in personal names, especially in

Amorite.[3] However, the noun עַם is not part of the Ugaritic vocabulary.[4]

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[3]Lipinski, 180-85.

[4]Cf. John Huehnergard, Ugaritic Vocabulary in Syllabic Transcription, (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1987). Cf. Lipinski, 180.

Moreover, until now it has not appeared in the texts of Ebla. In the Hebrew

language the term עַם has a similar meaning as it appears in Arabic.

In Biblical studies, the context plays the major role in determining the

meaning of a word or expression. When studying a modern language, for

example, native speakers may help to describe a word's meaning. Since this

method is not available for studying Biblical Hebrew, examination of the context

seems to be the only reliable guide to word meaning. Besides, Biblical scholars

have often misused etymology by giving it the primary or sole role in determining

word meaning at the expense of the context. James Barr's The Semantics of

Biblical Language[5] used sound linguistic principles to refute the etymological

abuse rampant in some scholarly circles. Barr stressed the priority of the context

over etymology, arguing that etymology was irrelevant for synchronic meaning.[6]

However, etymology can play a more significant role in word meaning than Barr

indicates. Moisés Silva has shown that the meaning of certain types of words can

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[5]James Barr, The Semantics of Biblical Language (London: Oxford
University Press, 1961).

[6]Barr says: "Etymology is not, and does not profess to be, a guide to the
semantic value of words in their current usage, and such value has to be
determined from the current usage and not from the derivation." Ibid., 107.

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be strongly influenced by their etymology.[7] While the general principle of the

priority of synchronic over diachronic evidence for determining meaning must

never be abandoned, "historical considerations may be of synchronic value, but

only if we can demonstrate that the speaker was aware of them."[8]

Certainly one cannot always use etymology as decisive to determine the

actual semantics of a word. However, a balance must be established.

Etymological studies have attempted to demonstrate the relationship of the

significance of the term עַם in Hebrew and Aramaic.[9] It has been suggested that

this term had an original, broader meaning which later narrowed down to

"relative," "brother of the father," and then "member of the clan."[10]

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7 Moisés Silva, Biblical Words and Their Meaning: An Introduction to Lexical Semantics (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 38-51.

[8] Ibid., 48.

[9] Ernest Klein, A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the Hebrew Language for Readers of English (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987), 474 says that the term עַם is related to the Arabic ʿamam which means "father's brother," "paternal uncle." Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, ed. A Hebrew and English Lexicon of The Old Testament (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 766, calls attention to the root עמם "be comprehensive, include," upon which the substantive עַם is based.

[10] Martin Noth, Die Israelitischen Personennamen im Rahmen der Gemeinsemitischen Namengebung (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Vergsbuchhandlung,

From this meaning and from the general use of the term in the Old

Testament the idea that characterizes עַם is that of proximity, relationship, unity

sustained by a group of people independent of its numerical proportions. In this

sense the term can carry also a patronymic or territorial significance. For

example, Israel is עַם (Num. 21:6), the Philistines (Judg. 16:30) and the Amorites

(Deut. 1:28) are called עַם as the tribe of Zebulun is עַם (Judg. 5:18).[11] However, it

is in the area of human life and activity that this aspect of relationship is in

evidence as, for example, in the sphere of the family (Gen 36:6), religion (Gen

17:14), government (Gen 26:11), army (Joshua 3:3), death (Ge 49:29).[12]

The strength of the family and clan affords the individual a powerful

support in adverse circumstances. A typical example of this is the answer of the

Shunammite woman to Elisha. When the prophet offered to use his influence with

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1966), 76-82, quoted in Leonhard Rost, "Die Bezeichnungen für Land und Volk
im Alten Testament," chap. in Das Kleine Credo und andere Studien zum Alten
Testament (Heidelberg: Quelle & Meyer, 1965), 98 n. 191 and 99 n. 199. The
edition quoted in Rost has only the year (1928) and pages (76, 77, 78) of the parts
of publication.

[11]Quantity is not the main factor that distinguishes עַם from גּוֹי. In Numbers
11:21 Israel is a עַם; of six hundred thousand men so a great number that Moab
became terrified (Num. 22:3).

[12]Cf. Gerard van Groningen, " עַם," in Theological Wordbook of the Old
Testament, ed. Laird R. Harris, vol. 2 (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 676.

the king on her behalf, she replied to Elisha: "I have a home among my own

people [עַמִּי]" (2 Kings 4:13). She needed no protection. The fellow-members of

her people are sufficient protection for her. Perhaps the climax of this sense of

affinity with עַם in human relationships is expressed in what Lipinski calls

Begraebnisformel and the Strafformel.[13] The first is euphemistic expression for

"to die," the latter a divine formula by which Yahweh excommunicates an

individual from the midst of His people. These formulas emphasize the aspect of

relationship, unity, and affinity that tends to characterize the term עַם.

The Term גּוֹי

The term גּוֹי, on the other hand, is rare in cognate languages. The

substantive usually taken as connected to the Hebrew is ga'u, a word from the

Mari dialect of Akkadian which means "group, gang (of workmen)."[14] Ronald

Clements and Johannes Botterweck show reluctance in the attempt to determine

the meaning of the term especially when they present race, government, and

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[13]Lipinski, 185-87. In the first formula the verb אָסַף is employed (e.g. Gen. 25:8, 17: 35:29; 49:29, 33; Num. 20:24; 27:13; 31:2; Deut. 32:50); in the second the verb כרת is used (e.g. Gen. 17:14; Ex. 12:15, 19; 30:33, 38; 31:14; Lev. 7:20, 21, 25, 27.

[14]A. Leo Oppenheim, ed., The Assyrian Dictionary, vol. 5 (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1956), 59.

territory as component elements for the definition of גוי. In spite of the importance

of these factors for the establishment of a גוי, both authors acknowledge that the

Old Testament in fact "does not indicate any precise definition of how a

community of peoples could be regarded as constituting a גוי."[15]

In the Old Testament a גוי is brought forth by a process (Is. 66:8). The

formation of a גוי is related to time because it cannot be suddenly. This is the way

Egypt became a גוי (Ex. 9:24), and Yahweh calls it a גוי (Gen. 15:14). Syria is

called a גוי by the prophet (2 Kings 6:18); Cush is a גוי (Is. 18:2) as well as the

Canaanites (Lev. 18:28; 20:23). In the case of Israel the Old Testament refers to a

process when it addresses her as a גוי.[16] This process, however, cannot be

understood only on natural grounds. The growth of the People of God till she

reaches the status of a גוי is a result of Yahweh's intervention and blessings, in a

sub-contrarium way.[17] When Yahweh blesses the patriarchs with the promise that

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[15] Clements, 428-29.

[16] Cf. Rost, 86.

[17] August Pieper, Isaiah II: An Exposition of Isaiah 40-66, trans. Erwin E. Kowalke (Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 1979), 689, is correct when he says: "An entire land, a great people, is to be born . . . ; such a thing is not accomplished in a day, or at one stroke. But in the church, in the kingdom of God, it is so accomplished. The church is not subject to the common course of nature,

they will be a great ‫גוי‬ (Gen. 12:2; 21:18; 35:11), to Jacob He anticipates that

already in Egypt this word will be fulfilled (Gen. 46:3), and this is what really

happens (Ex. 1:7). In his creedal confession each one of the people of God will

testify that Israel in Egypt was already a great and strong ‫גוי‬ (Deut. 26:5, cf. 4:34;

1 Chron. 17:22), and other nations will recognize her status (Deut. 4:6).

Redeemed from the "house of servitude" Israel continues to be a ‫גוי‬ when the new

generation is born in the desert (Joshua 5:8), when she crosses the Jordan (4:1),

when the sun and the moon stand still (10:13); at the time of the Judges (Judg.

2:20), during the prophetic ministry (Jer. 7:28), in exile (Jer 31:36), and after

(Ezek. 37:22).

These Biblical references demonstrate that Israel is a ‫גוי‬ already in the

Mosaic period even without fulfilling Clement's tripartite definitional criteria --

race, government, and territory -- to which also other surrounding nations could

qualify. Segments of critical scholarship, however, deny this evidence, suggesting

their own hypotheses,[18] though some of them have been criticized.[19] Sometimes,

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but is under the special government of God, under "rules" and "regulations"
formulated by the Holy Spirit and hidden from the eyes of the wise and prudent of
this world."

[18] Albrecht Alt, Die Landnahme der Israeliten in Palästina, vol. 1, Kleine Schriften zur Geschichte des Volkes Israels (Munich, 1959), 89-125., formulated a complex hypothesis to account for the origins of Israel. According to him, even though it is true that racially and linguistically the Israelites and the Canaanites

in order to avoid the textual evidence, authors simply consider it to be

anachronistic.[20]

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were very similar, they were distinguished by their social condition. The Israelites were shepherds of cattle while the Canaanites were tillers of the soil. The Canaanites allowed the shepherds and their flocks on the lands during the period when they were not in use, but little by little the shepherds took control. Martin Noth, The History of Israel, 2d ed., (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1960), 53-163, completed this picture with the hypothesis of a league of tribes without a central administration organized around the portable sanctuary of Yahweh, a situation which he called "amphictiony." More recently, John Bright, The Kingdom of God: The Biblical Concept and Its Meaning for the Church, 24th printing (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987), 31, embraces Martin Noth's hypothesis. George Mendenhall, The Tenth Generation: The Origins of the Biblical Tradition (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1973), explains how Israel emerged as a coalition of peasants rising up against the exploitation of the cities and the kings. This view is adopted by some liberation theologians like George Pixley, Reino de Dios (Buenos Aires: Editorial La Aurora, 1977).

[19] In a recent article José Luis Sicre, 'Los Orígines de Israel: Cinco Respuestas a un Enigma Histórico," Estudios Bíblicos 46 (1988): 421-56, presents a critical survey of different theories which have attempted to describe how Israel managed to consolidate its presence in Canaan: by means of a conquest, pacific settlement peasant revolt, symbiosis or simply a result of a progressive evolution. After analysing each of the hypotheses above, Sicre reaches the conclusion that archaeology will provide the most positive results regarding Israel's origin as people. In his words: "Pienso que los resultados más positivos [de los orígines de Israel] debemos esperarlos de la arqueologia. Todo que esta ciencia proporciona será el fundamento más seguro para qualquier modelo explicativo." (455).

[20] Clements, 430-31, takes Deut. 26:5 as anachronistic on the basis that Israel achieves the historical status of גוֹי in the period of the monarchy; before that the people only "freely regarded itself" as being a גוֹי. Cf. also Richard Deutsch, "The Biblical Concept of 'People of God'," The South East Asia Journal of Theology 13 (1972): 5-8, who maintains that the concept of people of God as a whole has its origin in the Davidic period.

Theological Implications

We have seen that the near-synonyms עַם - גּוֹי have different technical

nuances when employed in the realm of human relationships. While עַם is

associated more with a feeling of kinship, גּוֹי, on the other hand, is connected more

with an organized, political structure.

Theological Implications with the Term עַם

Israel is addressed in the Old Testament both as עַם and גּוֹי. The question is:

is the option for either one of the terms meaningful and relevant for Israel's

identity, life, and ethics as people of God? A comparative study of the incidence of

both terms in relation to Israel has been significant in this connection. For

example, Israel is called "People of The God"(עם־האלהים Judg. 20:2; 2 Sam.

14:13), "People of the God of Abraham" (עם־אלהי־אברהם Ps. 47:10), "People of

the LORD" (עם־יהוה Num. 11:29; 17:6; Deut. 27:9; Judg. 5:11, 13; 1 Sam. 2:24; 2

Sam. 1:12; 6:21; 2 Kings 9:6; Ezek. 36:20). These expressions imply the full

formulation "Israel, the people of Yahweh," as the correlative obverse of

"Yahweh, the God of Israel" (Josh. 24:2, 23; Judg. 5:3, 5; 11:23). E. A. Speiser

has pointed out that even though עַם appears frequently in construct chain with

"Yahweh", עם־יהוה , the same literary device of the tetragrammaton with גּוֹי, an

hypothetical גּוֹי־יהוה , never occurs.[21] In addition, when Yahweh is the subject of

the action and Israel is addressed as people of God, the expression employed

hundreds of times is עמּי, עמּך, עמּו. The pronominal suffixes, however, appear

only nine times in the entire Old Testament connected with the noun גּוֹי , of which

two are in relationship with the Name of Yahweh.[22] The aspect of a close

relationship attached to the noun עַם can be attested also in personal names where

this word is used as an integral element.[23] This distinction is never given to its

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[21]E. A. Speiser, "'People' and 'Nation' of Israel," Journal of Biblical Literature 79 (1960): 158.

[22]The passages are taken from Solomon Mandelkern, Veteris Testamenti Concordantiae: Hebraicae atque Chaldeicae (Berlin: F. Margolin, 1925), 256, 258. The nine Biblical references are: Gen. 10:5, 20, 31, 32; Ps. 106:5; Ezek. 36:13, 14, 15 (Ketib); Zeph. 2:9. Speiser considers only seven. In his analysis he omits the passage in Psalms and Zephaniah. In the same way Clements ignores them. However, from this group of Biblical passages, Ps. 106:5 and Zeph. 2:9 are significant because they refer to Israel as גּוֹי in a positive relation to Yahweh. H. C. Leupold, Exposition of Psalms, (Columbus, OH: The Wartburg Press, 1959), 743, dates Psalm 106 as exilic or even post-exilic. The fact that in both passages גּוֹי is in parallel with עַם carrying possessive suffixes indicates that the distinction between the people of God as גּוֹי and the nations (גּוֹיִם or עַמִּים) made by the authors of the Old Testament, even in its final period, is established not by ethnic or sociological differences but by ethical, theological parameters. Socially Israel can be גּוֹי like any other of the גּוֹיִם ; theologically, however, Israel and the nations are in a constant polarity.

[23]Speiser, 159. The list could be longer, but he mentions Amminadab [1 Chron. 6:32], Ammishadai [Num. 1:12; 2:25; 7:66, 71; 10:25], Ammiel [Num. 13:12; 1 Chron. 26:5].

counterpart גוֹי. The idea of unity implicit in עַם can also be stressed by the absence

of the plural construct chain of the noun גוֹי in connection with "Yahweh"[24] as it

occurs, for example, with the expression עַמִּי־הָאָרֶץ.[25] So, even semantically one

may perhaps conclude that Yahweh has only one עַם, one people, una sancta

ecclesia.

This sense of unity encapsulated in the substantive עַם seems to be grasped

by the authors of the Septuagint also. Out of the two thousand instances of the

occurrence of λαός there, the Hebrew correspondent is עַם, except in forty cases.

It is clear in the Greek Version that λαός is a specific term employed to emphasize

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[24]Mandelkern, 892.

[25]The discussion of the meaning of this expression is beyond the scope of
this paper. For such analysis see E. W. Nickolson, "The Meaning of the
Expression `AM-HA'ARES in the Old Testament," Journal of Semitic Studies 10
(1965): 59-66. For a more specific analysis concerning the meaning of עם הארץ in
relation to Israel, see Roland de Vaux, Ancient Israel: Social Institutions, vol.1
(New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1965), 70-72.

Israel's distinction as the people of God[26] in contrast to ἔθνος a "terminological character" which denotes the gentiles.[27]

Unity should be the constituent element in Israel's life, history, and worship after she becomes God's people. Exodus 3:7 is the first time in the Old Testament where Yahweh uses the expression "my people." The suffix pressuposes a covenant relationship of Yahweh with His people Israel. It is the hallmark in Israel's history because for the first time Yahweh intersects in her destiny to break the bonds which she has with the god-king Pharaoh to make a tangible unity with Him. In contrast with the pagan concept of locality of the deities, Yahweh, in His ubiquity, intervenes in Egypt as the only Lord, Creator, and Redeemer. The contrast is perceived in the expressions used in the context of the new situation where a difference in terms of property is clearly established.[28] Israel in Egypt is already God's covenant people.

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[26]H. Strathmann, "λαός," in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967): 32-5.

[27]Georg Bertram and Karl Ludwig Schmidt, "ΕΘΝΟΣ, ΕΘΝΙΚΟΣ," in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, 2: 365-66.

[28]Rudolf Smend, Die Mitte des Alten Testaments, in Gesammelte Studien, vol. 1 (Munich: CHR Kaiser Verlag, 1986), 29, calls attention to this particularity in the Book of Exodus: Yahweh says, "Let my people go" (5:1; 7:16; 8:16; 9:1, 13;

The Covenant

The word "covenant" (בּרִית) is an important term in the Old Testament. It designates a concept borrowed from human relationships to describe Yahweh's dealing with fallen creature. Like all human terms and concepts, it can be applied to God's action only by way of an imperfect analogy. This caution is particularly true on the connotations of the word "covenant" in modern usage. Usually "covenant" is taken in modern times as an agreement which the contracting parties negotiate as free agents and which represents a settlement that is mutually beneficial. In Old Testament times there were such covenants between individuals and between groups of people (1 Sam. 11:1; 1 Sam. 20; 1 Kings 20:34). But Israel also knew that the term "covenant" could be used to denote the arrangement that an overlord made with his vassals. In such instances the overlord stipulated the terms to which his subjects merely agreed.[29] This type of suzerainty covenant may be more adequate to describe God's covenanting with men. The Old Testament is

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10:3); when in direct confrontation with Pharaoh, He says "my people" and "your people" (8:17, 19). Yahweh is in the mouth of Moses "our" (5:3, 8; 8:6, 22, 23; 10:25, 26) and in the mouth of Egypt "your" (10:7) or "your God" (8:21, 24; 10:8, 16, 17), or "God of Israel" (5:1) and "God of the Hebrews" (3:18; 7:16; 9:1, 13; 10:3).

[29]George E. Mendenhall, "Covenant Forms in Israelite Tradition," The Biblical Archaeologist, 17 (September 1954): 50-76.

very careful to say that God made a covenant with man and never that man made

the covenant with God. Covenant was not a bilateral agreement between God and

man; it was only a result of God's grace and mercy. Because of his lapsarian

option after creation, the human being was in no position of bargaining with God

on any terms. In the same way, the potential response of man to the covenant is in

no way the basis for the establishment of the covenant. The covenant is bilateral

only in the sense that the human being will give evidence of his acceptance of the

covenanted gift by an inward and outward life that is motivated by a complete

surrender of self to the God of the covenant.

The people of Israel in Egypt was already God's covenanted people. The

climax of the unity of Yahweh with Israel has its place in the historical crossing of

the sea (Is. 51:10), culminating with the Sinaitic covenant. As Edward Young

correctly points out, "Indeed, a proper understanding of the events of Sinai will

make it clear that the covenant of Sinai was only an administration of a covenant

which was already in existence."[30] As E. A. Martens observes, "The salvation

experience is a vestibule into the main auditorium of God's design."[31] This

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[30]Edward J. Young, The Study of Old Testament Theology Today (London:
James Clark & Co. Ltd., 1958), 64.

[31]E. A. Martens, God's Design: A Focus on Old Testament Theology
(Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1981), 65.

covenant will be made concrete through Yahweh's fulfillment of His promise to

make of Israel His people and He her God. The covenant formula is reiterated by

Yahweh in many different circumstances in Israel's Heilsgeschichte even when she

has demonstrated doubt and lack of faith instead of courage and trust.[32] Covenant

and faithfulness go together. The blessings announced upon Israel can only be

acknowledged by her if she continues to be in a covenant relationship with

Yahweh.

Yahweh's confidence on Israel's natural response to the covenant is

evidenced in the pictographic moment of the writing and giving of the Tablets of

the Law. If Meredith Kline is correct, according to the practice in the Ancient

Near East treaties, the tablets were duplicates of the Ten Words, not two different

parts of them.[33] Since Israel must keep her copy in the ark, Yahweh, as the Great

King, should have kept His copy in the "pavement made of sapphire, clear as the

sky itself" (Ex. 24:10). However, contrary to all human expectation, Yahweh

gives both tablets to Moses to be put in the ark, as an indication that He is there,

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[32]The covenant formula is expressed in the following passages: Ex. 6:7;
Lev. 26:12; Deut. 26:17-18; 29:12; Jer. 7:23; 11:4; 24:7; 30:22; 31:1, 33; 32:38;
Ezek. 11:20; 14:11; 36:28; 37:23, 27; Zech. 8:8.

[33]Meredith G. Kline, Treaty of the Great King: The Covenant Structure of
Deuteronomy: Studies and Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans
Publishing Company, 1963), 19-20.

dwelling (שָׁכַן) in the midst of His people. The giving of the Tablets of the

Decalogue is an evidence that Yahweh loves them in spite of the fact that the

people had just "exchanged their Glory for an image of a bull, which eats grass"

(Ex. 32:1-10; Ps. 106:20).

The Old Testament affirms that the uniting factor within Israel is the

covenant established by Yahweh where the emphasis is not on the action of men

achieving unity by their obedience to the law but on the salvific action of God.

Critical scholarship has denied the traditional and confessional Lutheran reading

of the Old Testament that the covenant with Yahweh at Mount Sinai took place in

the days of Moses, at the beginning of the history of Israel, with the subsequent

story being one of repeated apostasy, chastising, and repentance at the urging of

the prophets. The work of Julius Wellhausen, <u>Prolegomena to the History of</u>

<u>Ancient Israel</u>, is a classical example of this radical hermeneutical change that has

taken place. In Wellhausen's view, the idea of a covenant is one of the latest to

arise in Israel's history. The covenant, according to him, is not a presupposition of

the prophets' theological discourse, rather a mere growth of their ethical ideas.[34]

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[34]Julius Wellhausen, <u>Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel</u>
(Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1965). Wellhausen's
view of the covenant in Israel seems to be directly indebted to Hegel's philosophy
of history. Though he agrees that Israel's real history begins with Moses, he does
not see the Mosaic religion as monotheistic. Yahweh's relation to his people was
described as a natural bond, just as the early cult knew no priesthood with

Similar arguments of covenant related to religion, in some way, have been

repeated a century later.[35] However, the covenant concept that describes Yahweh's

relationship with Israel must be maintained.[36] In fact, confessional Lutherans

understand that this covenant is part of history because it restates and confirms the

blessings that Yahweh has given to His people in protology.[37]

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elaborate cultic regulations but was natural and developed of the life of the people. The confrontation with the Canaanite polytheism caused the prophets to stress the moral and ethical demands of Yahweh and to establish the notion that only Yahweh was God. The interference of the prophets introducing ethical parameters between Yahweh and Israel led to the development of the legalistic religion of postexilic Judaism. Since the word "covenant" is rare in early prophets, argues Wellhausen, and since the developed idea is not yet present -- Hosea does not understand the technical sense of the term --those few passages where it does stand may be suspected of being later additions. (417-19).

[35]"Every mention of the covenant of Jehovah with Israel in the Bible is later than 621 B.C." Robert Pfeiffer, Religion in the Old Testament : The History of a Spiritual Triumph (New York and London: Harper & Row, 1961), 55. William Rainey Harper, Amos and Hosea: a Critical and Exegetical Commentary, in: The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1979), also, points out that Hosea 6:7 does not refer to the covenant with Israel; and the reference in Hosea 8:1 is "clearly a latter addition" (288, 308).

[36]This does not necessarily indicate that "covenant" must be understood as the central theme of the Old Testament. This aspect will be analyzed in chapter 3 of this dissertation.

[37]Walter R. Roehrs, Survey of Covenant History: A Historical Overview of the Old Testament (St. Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 1989), 42, says: "The God of the universe, a gracious Creator, initiated covenant history to restore fallen humanity.

It is true that in the prophets the word בּרית as such, picturing this reality of

relationship between God and His people, occurs only in Hosea (6:7 and 8:1) and

Isaiah II though not in the other great prophets of the eight century.[38] But this does

not mean that the concept of covenant in <u>lato sensu</u> is not present in the theology

of these and other prophets. Silence does not mean absence. Absence of evidence

is not evidence of absence. In describing the relationship between Yahweh and

Israel, the prophets make use of imagery that suggests love, care, and unity. Israel

is the "sheep" of which God is the "shepherd" (Ezek. 34:8, 12, 31-32); the "wife"

of whom the LORD is the "husband" (Hos. 2:2); "a vineyard" which is watched

(Is. 5:7); the "son" of God (Hos. 11:1); "the apple of his eye" (Zech. 2:8).

Expressions like these seen in the prism of עם־אלהים and עם־יהוה articulate the

wholeness and unity of Israel along with her dependence upon Yahweh. As

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"The covenant is as much a creation of God as the universe. He created the world by His word of command; He created the covenant by His word of promise". (His emphasis).

[38]The word בְּרִית as such does not occur in Isaiah 1-39 but does occur in Isaiah 40-66 (54:10; 55:3; 61:8). Critical scholarship, however, usually does not accept the unity of these two sections of the book as belonging to the eight-century Isaiah, son of Amoz. For a discussion on this subject see Edward J. Young, <u>Who Wrote Isaiah?</u> (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1958). Also R. K. Harrison, <u>Introduction to the Old Testament: With a Comprehensive Review of Old Testament Studies and a Special Supplement on the Apocrypha</u> (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1973), 764-800. Amos 1:9 refers to a covenant of brothers and therefore does not speak of a relationship to God.

Murray Newman points out, "Among the many centrifugal elements in the subsequent centuries of Israel's history, the remembrance of the covenant was the primary centripetal element."[39]

The unity of God's people in the Old Testament is especially manifested in Israel's worship during the holy convocation (מקרא). There, in the tabernacle, the ark, the sacrifices, and in the temple (Ex. 40:34; Lev. 6:7; 2 Sam. 6:2, 15; 1 Kings 8:4-21), Yahweh, in His Glory (כבוד), is visible, audible (Num. 7:89), sacramentally present to grant them forgiveness of sins in order that they may continue to know His Name and identify Him (Is. 52:6). The covenant creates in Israel the sense of unity and at the same time the mutual reciprocity between individual and community that turns the people of God in a corporate personality.[40] In the words of Nils Dahl, "Der Einzelne lebt im Volke, das Volk

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[39] Murray Lee Newman, Jr., The People of the Covenant: A Study of Israel from Moses to the Monarchy (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1962), 36.

[40] Scriptures stress the individuality of the person in the totality of the community of the people of God. Especially Deuteronomy emphasizes this aspect when it addresses the people sometimes in the singular and sometimes in the plural. Critical scholars have difficulty in accepting this suggesting, as R. E. Clements, God's Chosen People: A Theological Interpretation of the Book of Deuteronomy (London: SCM Press LTD, 1968), 31-32, adds "that even when Israel was addressed in the singular it was not normally individual members of the nation who were being singled out, but the nation as a whole." We must say that both the individual and the corporate congregation are represented in the koinonia.

im Einzelnen."[41] The origin and sustenance of this reality is "not by might or power, but by my Spirit" (Zech. 4:6).[42] Or, as emphasized in Deuteronomy, "Das Wort schafft die Einheit."[43]

Simul iustus et peccator

The people of God, however, is not only iustus; it is also peccator. And there are times when the unity is threatened by people's sin and rebellion. Sin breaks the unity in its vertical dimension with the Creator and in its horizontal dimension with the fellow man. Numerous times Israel succumbed to the attractions and the religious eroticism of the Canaanite cult. Episodes involving apostasy like the one in Horeb (Ps. 106:19) or in Baal-Peor (Num. 25:1-18), are

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The presence of the Credo and the Te Deum Laudamus in the Christian liturgy are a sound evidence of this, at least in later Christian usage.

[41] Nils Alstrup Dahl, Das Volk Gottes: eine Untersuchung zum Kirchen-Bewusstsein des Urchristentums (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgeselschaft, 1963), 4.

[42] "It was not natural inner powers, or the coming together of favorable historical circumstances, or ideas and programs, or human purposes and decisions, that called Israel into being; it was the word of God alone." H. J. Kraus, The People of God in the Old Testament (New York: Association Press, 1958), 26.

[43] A. R. Hulst, "Der Name 'Israel' in Deuteronomium," Oudtestamentische Studien 9 (1951): 73.

anticipation of the catastrophe in Israel's spirituality which will have its anti-

climax in God's pronouncement, " לֹא־עַמִּי " (Hos. 2:11; 2:25).

Israel's adoption as people of God does not belong to the sphere of the

order of creation but to the order of redemption. Israel is the people of God only

because Yahweh is gracious. This people is not destroyed only because Yahweh

is faithful and does not change His promises (Mal. 3:6). In the same line,

separation from the evil effects of the pagan cult and renewal of awareness of the

bond which unites the members of the people to Yahweh and to one another can

only be attained by the power of God Himself.

Although Israel doesn't deserve it, Yahweh's חֶסֶד for her is "new every

morning" (Lam. 3:23). In His compassion He looks at Israel and asks in doubt,

"what else can I do because of the sin of my people?" (Jer. 9:6); and, in lament,

"My people, what have I done to you?" (Micah 6:3).[44] Nevertheless, because

Yahweh has "restrained his anger and did not stir up his full wrath" (Ps. 78:38),

He receives His repentant people back, renews His promises with the magnitude

of the Abrahamic blessing (Hos. 2:1) the fulfillment of which will be experienced

by the Church of the New Testament (1 Peter 2:10).

Theological Implications with the Term בֵּן

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[44]Cf. Dahl, 5-7; also Lipinski, 187-88.

The people of God is also referred to in the Old Testament as גּוֹי , as we

have mentioned. The noun can denote simply "nation" and in this sense is "nicht

deutlich verschieden" from עַם.[45] However, in Yahweh's promise to Abraham, the

latter will be the father of many גּוֹיִם (Gen. 17:5) as Sarah will be the mother of

גּוֹיִם (Gen. 17:16). By the same token, Rebekah will give birth to two גּוֹיִם (Gen.

25:23), one of which will be redeemed from Egypt (1Chron. 17:21). Israel's

descendants will cease to be a גּוֹי before Yahweh when God's creation order fails

(Jer. 31:36). In these passages what is in the foreground is not a moral quality or

ethnic behavior but rather a numerical quantity, Israel as a military, political unit.

On the other hand, when גּוֹי is employed in parallel with עַם, it carries a

religious-theological meaning both in a positive as in a negative way. In Numbers

14:11-12 the term used to describe Israel as sinner is עַם, while גּוֹי is employed to

indicate an eventual morally ideal nation. In a similar meaning in Deuteronomy

9:12-14 another גּוֹי may be elected to substitute the עַם which has committed

idolatry. In the Book of Micah while עַם occurs, with one exception, exclusively

in context of doom, גּוֹי occurs only in the hope sections, with reference to Israel in

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[45]Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, ed. <u>Lexicon in Veteris
Testamenti Libros</u>, vol. 1 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1951), 174.

4:7.[46] However, perhaps the main occurrences of גּוֹי describing the people of God in positive sense are the already mentioned Psalm 106:5 and Zephaniah 2:9. The presence of גּוֹי in these two passages may be seen just as synonymous parallelism or as relevant towards Israel's missionary endeavor, as we will see in the exegetical analysis of Exodus 19.

The word גּוֹי is used in reference to Israel and in parallel to עַם also in negative contexts.[47] Studies made in this area have sometimes over stressed this negative aspect.[48] Aelred Cody classifies the incidence of גּוֹי in relation to Israel in seven categories. He bases his conclusion on the fifth category where he lists passages when Yahweh supposedly rejects His people because they act like the גּוֹיִם and, for this reason, are equated with the pagan nations. It is imperative that two passages in his study must be re-evaluated. In Jeremiah 5:9, 29 גּוֹי is used in a

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[46] John T. Willis, "Micah 2:6-8 and the 'People of God' in Micah," <u>Biblische Zeitschrift</u> 14 (1970): 86-87.

[47] Cf. Herbert G. May, "'This People' and 'This Nation' in Haggai," <u>Vetus Testamentum</u> 18 (1968): 190-97.

[48] See, for example, Aelred Cody, "When is the Chosen People Called a Gôy?," <u>Vetus Testamentum</u> 14 (1964): 6. He says that he analyses "all the occurrences of גּוֹי applied to the Chosen People in the Bible" but in his hermeneutics there is no room for passages like: Num. 14:11-12; Deut. 9:12-14; 2 Sam. 7:23; Ps. 33:12; Is. 9:2; 26:2, 15; 58:2; Jer. 9:1, 8; 1 Chron. 17:22.

negative sense but עַם is also employed in this way in verses 14 and 21. In spite of

that, Yahweh calls this גּוֹי, " עַמִּי " on verses 26 and 31 of the same chapter. The

second reference mentioned by him is Jeremiah 33:34[49] which does not correspond

to Cody's category. The text presents the unbelievers among the people of God

who charge Yahweh with the accusation of abandoning His people. Yahweh's

answer, however, "reiterates the immutability of his covenant with the true seed of

Abraham (cp. Rom. 11:1-2a)."[50] The noun גּוֹי here is in a positive parallel with עַמִּי

and is a reference to the remnant that, to the human eyes, is always a small number

or even nonexistent (1 Kings 19:18).

The people of God have always been confronted with the "seven nations"

(Deut. 7:1), identified as גּוֹיִים or עַמִּים.[51] Since Israel's cradle in Egypt, Yahweh

has warned His people that the nations would be a snare for them (Ex. 23:33;

34:12). In the Old Testament, theologically the nations are pagans, not Yahwists

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[49]This is the reference that appears in Cody's article, but the correct Biblical
reference should be Jeremiah 33.24.

[50]Theodore Laetsch, Jeremiah, in Concordia Classic Commentary Series
(Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1952; reprint, Saint Louis: Concordia
Publishing House, 1988), 272 (page reference is to reprint edition).

[51]The noun לְאֹם is mainly used as a poetic synonym of either עַמִּים or גּוֹיִים
in either of their usages. In connection with our subject-matter it appears in
Genesis 25:23 and Isaiah 51:4 but is not relevant to our discussion.

(Ps. 115:2). In this capacity Yahweh uses them in order to test the faithfulness of His people to the covenant (Judg. 2:21, 23) and as an instrument of discipline for Israel's sins (Ps. 106:41). Israel's downfall happens as a consequence of her weakness "exchanging their Glory for worthless idols" (Jer. 2:11; cf. 2 Kings 17:8, 11, 15, 33; 21:2; 2 Chron. 33:2). Clements agrees with these biblical evidences but immediately switches, declaring that "at no point in the Old Testament is the semantic development reached in which גוי in itself means 'heathen nation'."[52] This is an overstatement with which we cannot concur. It is right to state that גוי, as an individual gentile, never occurs in the Old Testament.[53] Moreover, the word גוים does not automatically mean pagan nation because what determines its connotation, if theological or political, is the context in which the terms appear in the Biblical corpus. Balaam in his blessing predicts that Israel will be distinct from other גוים (Num. 23:9). This distinction cannot be ethnic or physical but theological, spiritual. As the Bible underlines, apart from God's grace, Israel is not different from other nations (Amos 9:7).

Emphasis must be put on the fact that to be people of God is not the exclusive possession of the Israelites. Indeed, being born into the right clan is not

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[52]Clements, 432.

[53]Koehler, 174.

only insufficient but apparently unnecessary to give someone a place among

Yahweh's people. A rather mixed company leaves Egypt with the people of God

(Ex. 12: 38; Num. 11:4). Two of the tribes in Israel descended from Joseph's

Egyptian wife Asenath (Gen. 41:50-52). Gershon and Eliezer, Moses' sons, are

sons of a Cushite (Ex. 18:3). Caleb and Othniel, though integrated into Israel,

were Kenizzites (Num. 32:12; Judg. 1:13) and so not from Jacob's descendants.

Yahweh's greatness is acknowledged by a Midianite priest, by a prostitute from

Jericho, and by the frightened inhabitants of Gibeon (Ex. 18:11-12; Joshua 2:1-11;

6:25; 9:9-10). To be incorporated into God's people is not an automatic process,

either for the Israelites or for others. The center of life and worship of God's

people is the faithfulness in Yahweh which is antagonistic to any tendency

towards the do-ut-des effort. Circumcision was the "sacramental" act performed

to integrate both Israelites and aliens as the people of God so that the latter could

also participate in the Passover feast (Ex. 12:48-49). Later on they would

commune also in the worship (Num. 15:14-15; Deut. 16:11). Werner Schmidt

properly says, "In any event, the decisive point is belonging to the religion, not the

people."[54]

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[54]Werner H. Schmidt, "'People of God' in the Old Testament," Theology
Digest 34 (1987): 229. Cf. also Martens, 78.

CHAPTER II

THE MISSION OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Introduction

From among all nations of the earth, God chose Israel as His people not at

the expense of the rest but for the sake of the rest. This vision of universality

precludes the concept of exclusiveness and national pride among God's people.

Theologically this is what Yahweh expected although in practice the people very

often fell into the trap of egocentrism. The Old Testament, on one hand, assures

that Yahweh will set His people "in praise, fame and honor above all the nations

he has made" (Deut. 26:19); on the other hand, it exalts Israel's raison d'etre in

responsibility towards the nations in order that they may know Yahweh's

wonderful acts (Ps. 105:1-2), what He has done (1 Chron. 16:18), and that He

reigns (16:31). In the great eschatological reversal peoples (עַמִּים) and many

nations (גּוֹיִם) will come to Zion (Is. 2:2-3; Micah 4:1-2), will be joined with the

LORD, and He will call them "my people" (Zech. 2:15). The people of the saints

of the Most High are to receive the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness

of the kingdoms under the heaven (Dan. 7:27), the Lord, the messenger of the

covenant, will come to His temple (Mal. 3:1), the house of God will be a house of

prayer for all peoples, and the dispersed of God's people will be gathered together

again (Is. 56:7-8) to receive the fulfillment of His promises. The purpose of

Israel's election is universal mission, spreading the Word of God to her

environment and to the whole world. God's purpose, George Wright says, is "to

use Israel for a universal blessing," for "the re-creation of the fallen world," for

"the saving of the nations."[1]

In summary, who, then, were the people, the members of Israel's

community? The true Israelite was one with whom the LORD made the covenant,

the one who worshipped Yahweh daily, who was circumcised and whose life was

nurtured by the Law of God. But the Old Testament does not declare a total

exclusiveness; there was provision in the Law for the entry of non-Israelites into

the community through circumcision (Ex. 12:48-49). Moreover, once this

sacramental rite had been performed, the "stranger" was to be counted "as a native

of the land" (Ex. 12:48). Israel's unique mission was to be a "kingdom of priests

and a holy nation" (Ex. 19:6; cf. Is. 61:6) so that "nations will come to your light,

and kings to the brightness of your dawn" (Is. 60:3). The Missio Dei naturally

fostered by the people of God envisages a future in which the blessings of God

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[1] G[eorge] Ernest Wright, The Old Testament Against Its Environment, vol. 2, Studies in Biblical Theology (London: SCM Press, 1966), 51, 54.

will embrace other nations within the divinely-given unity: "Shout and be glad, o

Daughter of Zion. For I am coming, and I will live among you, declares the

LORD. Many nations will be joined with the LORD in that day and will become

my people . . ." (Zech. 2:10-12).

We have seen some images by which the people of God are addressed in

the Old Testament. There are numerous segments of this concept in the literature

of the Old Testament. We will deal with two of these segments on an exegetical

basis. The first segment is in the pericope of Exodus 19:4-6.

An Exegetical Analysis of Exodus 19:4-6

4 אַתֶּם רְאִיתֶם אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי לְמִצְרָיִם וָאֶשָּׂא
אֶתְכֶם עַל־כַּנְפֵי נְשָׁרִים וָאָבִא אֶתְכֶם אֵלָי:
5 וְעַתָּה אִם־שָׁמוֹעַ תִּשְׁמְעוּ בְּקֹלִי וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם
אֶת־בְּרִיתִי וִהְיִיתֶם לִי סְגֻלָּה מִכָּל־הָעַמִּים
כִּי־לִי כָּל־הָאָרֶץ:
6 וְאַתֶּם תִּהְיוּ־לִי מַמְלֶכֶת כֹּהֲנִים וְגוֹי קָדוֹשׁ
אֵלֶּה הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר תְּדַבֵּר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

Translation

You have seen what I have done to[2] Egypt, but I lifted you up on wings of
eagles and caused you to come to me. And now if you really hearken to my

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[2]Several manuscripts of Targum have the preposition בְּ instead of לְ.
However, according to the criteria established by text criticism, the preposition
presented by MT must be preferred. Ernst Würthwein, The Text of the Old

voice and keep my covenant, then you will be to me a special treasure from among the peoples, because mine is all the earth. And you will be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words which you will speak to the sons of Israel.

Exegetical Analysis

In verse 4 the pronoun אַתֶּם before the verb is emphatic. The audience

addressed are those who "have seen" (ראה). The people can "see" because

Yahweh "saw" them and their afflictions first (Ex. 2:25; 3:7) and has intervened in

their history. The verb ראה is in contrast to חזק and כבד in Exodus 7-14, used to

describe Pharaoh's attitude. The acts of God can only be "seen," "perceived" by

the eyes of faith. In Egypt Yahweh is on the stage, He is the only One to perform

and for this reason He is the only subject of the verb עשה also. The expression

לְמִצְרַיִם must be translated in the singular but the idea is collective. In a sense it

has a historical, physical, political aspect, but the transcendental, trans-historical

aspect is ultimately implied. If not here, in several places in Scripture "Egypt"

Testament: An Introduction to the Biblia Hebraica, trans. Erroll F. Rhodes (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987), 113-14 confirms, "[In the examination of a text] our main interest centers on MT. In every instance it deserves special attention because it is based on direct transmission in the original language, and it has been handed down with great care . . . . It is clear from the history of the text that vocalization of MT does not have the same significance as the consonantal text . . . . As a rule MT is to be preferred over all other traditions whenever it cannot be faulted either linguistically or for its material content, unless in particular instances there is good reason for favoring another tradition." Besides, the suggestion offered by the critical apparatus would generalize the acts of Yahweh while MT particularizes them.

symbolizes the forces of evil which oppress the people of God.[3] It represents

forces that only Yahweh can defeat, as evidenced by the presence of עשׂה in the

first person singular.

The second part of the verse pictures an opposite reality. The language

now is redemptive and an adversative clause must be used. In Genesis 21:18 the

verb נשׂא is employed in the context of lifting up from death to life. In a similar

way, salvation from death is announced with this verb in 2 Kings 4:36. The

concept presents Yahweh lifting His people up from the situation of suffering,

destruction, and death. Resurrection and new life are implicit in the verb. The

metaphor used in נשׁרים, a noun that is onomatopoeic in origin,[4] is expanded in

the Song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32:11-12. The simile in both texts indicates

that the people saved are totally dependent on Yahweh for survival.[5] According

to the observation of C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch: "The eagle watches over its

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[3] In other places the Scriptures use ex-mythological language and call it Rahab the sea monster (Is. 30:7; 51:9-10; Ps. 87:4).

[4] G. R. Driver, "Birds in the Old Testament," Palestine Exploration Quarterly 86 (1955): 8.

[5] Peter C. Craigie, The Book of Deuteronomy, gen. ed. R. K. Harrison. The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1976), 381.

young in the most careful manner, flying under them when it leads them from the

nest, lest they should fall upon the rocks, and be injured or destroyed."[6] In

Biblical tradition God's wings are protection and hiding place for His people

against their adversaries (Ps. 17:8; 57:2; 91:4).

The verbal form ואבא is Hiphil, which reinforces the fact that Yahweh is

the One who causes the people to come. The whole expression denotes an act

picturing a process, a change for a new Lord, a new reality which is the terminus

ad quem of the Exodus episode.

As in ancient oriental letters, ועתה introduces the body of the message.

Yahweh's message is not only historical; it has an existential dimension. That

Israel is the people of God already in Egypt is attested by their responses in acts of

faith to Yahweh's command (Ex. 12:22, 28). Israel is a believer (Ex. 4:31) as her

ancestor was (Gen. 15:6). The call for a commitment is not a prerequisite that

Israel must meet in order to qualify for God's choice. The conditional clause

אִם־שָׁמוֹעַ תִּשְׁמְעוּ בְּקֹלִי must be understood from the perspective of

sanctification, not justification as shown by the statement that precedes it. Israel is

a redeemed people that, because of the experience with Yahweh's mercy, is able

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[6]C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, The Pentateuch, vol. II, Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament, trans. James Martin (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968), 96.

to freely respond to the terms of the covenant in a bilateral form. There was a time

when to "hear" God's voice was a motive to fear terror and death (Gen. 3:10).

Now life can be bestowed only by the hearing of His voice.

"My covenant" is the "objectified" aspect of Yahweh's relationship with

His people. Covenant involves a sign, a token (Gen. 9:12-13; 17:10-11). The

people of God will receive the sacrifices that are "sacraments" "in, with, and

under" which they will receive forgiveness.[7]

God's people is סגלה, "special treasure."[8] The noun appears only eight

times in the entire Old Testament.[9] But when applied to people, it always refers to

God's people.[10] Qoheleth employs the term to portray the treasure he has gathered

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[7]Ex. 24:7-8; 34:10, 27, 28; 31:16; Lev. 1-4; 24:8; 26:9, 15, 25, 44, 45.

[8]The Septuagint translates λαὸς περιούσιος and in Malachi 3:17 εἰς περιποίησιν. These two phrases are used in the New Testament, λαὸς περιούσιος in Titus 2:14 and λαὸς εἰς περιποίησιν in 1 Peter 2:9.

[9]Gerhard Lisowski, Konkordanz zum Hebräischen Alten Testament (Stuttgart: Privileg. Wuertt. Bibelanstalt, 1958), 988. The passages are the following: Ex. 19:5; Deut. 7:6; 14:2; 26:18; Ps. 135:4; Mal. 3:17; Eccl. 2:8; 2 Chron. 29:3.

[10]E. Lipinski, " סגלה " in Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Joseph Fabry, vol. 5 (Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1986), 749.

in the course of time (2:8). The other reference denoting also a profane usage of

the noun is in 1 Chron. 29:3 where סגלה is presented as the private treasures of

King David. The use of the verb בחר in Deuteronomy 7:6 and 14:2, and Psalm

135:4 in connection with סגלה and the distinction given to the remnant in contrast

to the wicked in the eschatological context of Malachi 3:17, lead to the conclusion

that סגלה implies election and carries a redemptive character. "Das Volk gehoert

nicht sich selbst."[11]

The parenthetical remark כִּי־לִי כָּל־הָאָרֶץ is significant in the context of

סגלה. It recalls the creation. Yahweh is the Creator of Israel as He is the Creator

of all earth. Yahweh's universality and cosmological dominion give Him freedom

to exercise judgment and salvation according to His will.

Verse six has been called "the theme of the entire Pentateuch."[12] Different

interpretations have been given to the expression מַמְלֶכֶת כֹּהֲנִים. Walter Beyerlin

argues that the expression refers to a rule by the priests because, since Israel had

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[11]Nils Alstrup Dahl, Das Volk Gottes: eine Untersuchung zum Kirchen-Bewustsein des Urchristentums (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgeselschaft, 1963, 5.

[12]Ernst H. Wendland, Exodus, in The Peoples Bible, ed. Loren A. Schaller (Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 1978), 126.

Yahweh as the only king, the priests assumed the leadership of the people.[13] More

recently, in a similar way, John Durham suggests that it is a kingdom run by

priests instead of politicians.[14] However, these two positions do not have support

from the Biblical tradition.

The fact is that the kingdom has a King, who is Yahweh, the Redeemer

(Num. 23:21; Deut. 33:5). The kingdom exists only in connection with and

because of the King. The people are priests of the King. The plural establishes

the universality within the kingdom. There is a vertical and horizontal dimension

involved. As a unit the people of God is a mediator between Yahweh and the

nations at the same time that she was expected to teach the Word of God to other

peoples. The teaching of the Word was probably the main function of the priest in

the Old Testament (Deut. 33:10; Hos. 4:6; Mal. 2:6-7). Each individual within

God's community is a mediator and a teacher first to his fellow-priest and then to

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[13]Walter Beyerlin, Herkunft und Geschichte der Ältesten Sinaitraditionen (Tuebingen: J. C. Mohr, 1961), 83-87.

[14]John I. Durham, Exodus, in Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 3 (Waco, TX: Word Books Publisher, 1987), 263.

the whole world. God's particularistic choice of Israel has a wider, and special

"universalistic purpose."[15]

The parallel expression presents גוי for the only time in the Old Testament

in connection with holiness. In all other passages where קדש occurs in relation to

people, עם is employed. Attempt has been made to justify the presence of גוי in

this passage due to the use of ממלכה but that solution is not satisfactory.[16]

Another possibility is to take עם and גוי as used here as a stylistic variety.[17]

For this writer, however, it seems better to view the presence of גוי in this

expression in a theological and in a functional perspective. Theologically, in the

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[15] R. Alan Cole, <u>Exodus: An Introduction and Commentary</u> (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1973), 145.

[16] Aelred Cody, "When is the Chosen People Called a Gôy?" <u>Vetus Testamentum</u> 14 (1964): 1-6, argues that a word that denotes ruling power requires גוי as its complement instead of עם. He refers to 2 Kings 11:17 as the only apparent case where מלך occurs in parallel with עם, describing the people of God. In order to prove his point, he makes use of the critical argument of the inserted gloss for the last part of the verse. He reasons that in this verse עם is related to Yahweh rather than to מלך. However, a Biblical reference like 1 Chronicles 19:7 should also have been considered.

[17] The Septuagint in a philological coherence translates גוי קדוש by ἔθνος ἅγιον but in verse 5 the Greek scholars interpolate λαός before περιούσιος a literary alternative that would strength the use of ἔθνος in verse 6 in order to avoid repetition.

first place, the expression is a fulfillment of the promises to Abraham (Gen. 12:2;

18:18; 21:18; 35:11). Secondly, <u>coram Deo</u> Israel is holy both as עַם as well as גּוֹי.

In the "Isaianic Apocalypse" the gates are opened for the גּוֹי־צַדִּיק , the "righteous

nation" (26:2) that is equated with גּוֹי קָדוֹשׁ. Holiness is not human, but divine.

Holiness does not exist outside God; it is an ontological element in Him. When

He says, "I am Yahweh who makes you holy" (Ex. 31:13; Lev 20:8), a sort of

"<u>analogia entis</u>"[18] is created between Him and His people.

Functionally, holiness is "incarnate" in the people in such a way that it must

be reflected in the nation's entity physically and spiritually. Exodus 28 describes

the garment the high-priest must wear when he comes in the presence of Yahweh.

Engraved on the two onyx stones that are fastened on the shoulder pieces of the

ephod are the names of the tribes of Israel in the order of their birth. This same

procedure is done with the breastpiece in which twelve precious stones are

attached with the names of the sons of Israel engraved in them. Each time the

high-priest enters into the presence of Yahweh he is representing the whole

congregation of the people of God. He is the Israel reduced to one. On his head is

the turban which carries a plate of pure gold with the inscription "קֹדֶשׁ לַיהוה" (Ex.

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[18] Horace D. Hummel, <u>The Word Becoming Flesh: An Introduction to the Origin, Purpose, and Meaning of the Old Testament</u> (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1979), 627.

28:36; 39:30; Zech. 3:5: cf. 14:20). This inscription is a remembrance to Israel

that this is the only way by which they are accepted (רצה)in the presence of God.

At the same time the inscription that represents the whole Israel is a continual

external testimony to what is basic to Israel's internal relationship with her God.

As גוי קדוש Israel is "a display-people, a showcase to the world of how being in

covenant with Yahweh changes a people."[19] The expression envisions a

missiological amplitude in the sense that it is to remind Israel of the reason of her

existence as people of God as instrument of the <u>Missio Dei</u> before other גויים .

Hans LaRondelle properly says that

> Israel's election did not imply the rejection of other peoples, but rather their
> inclusion. Israel was chosen, not just for her own salvation, but to lead the
> whole world to share in her saving knowledge and blessing. In short, Israel
> was chosen to represent the attractive character and saving will of Yahweh to
> the Gentiles.[20]

In summary, the expression גוי קדוש helps Israel to recall that she is in the

world as "a nation, among the nations, for the nations (<u>cf</u>. Ps.. 99:1-4)."[21] The

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[19]Durham, 263.

[20]Hans K. LaRondelle, <u>The Israel of God in Prophecy: Principles of
Prophetic Interpretation</u> (Berrien Springs, Michigan: Andrew University, 1983),
92.

[21]Christopher J. H. Wright, <u>Living as the People of God: The Relevance of
Old Testament Ethics</u> (Leicester, Great Britain: Inter-Varsity Press, 1983), 40-41.

roots of the universal priesthood of all believers are concretely and prophetically established with the people of God in the Old Testament. The fulfillment of this vocatio happens with the people of God of the Church of the New Testament (1Pe 2:9-10).[22]

Another segment of the People of God that we are going to deal with is in Isaiah 6:13.

An Exegetical Analysis of Isaiah 6:13

13 וְעוֹד בָּהּ עֲשִׂרִיָּה וְשָׁבָה
וְהָיְתָה לְבָעֵר כָּאֵלָה וְכָאַלּוֹן
אֲשֶׁר בְּשַׁלֶּכֶת מַצֶּבֶת בָּם זֶרַע
קֹדֶשׁ מַצַּבְתָּהּ׃

Translation

In United States of America it is published under the title, An Eye for an Eye: The Place of Old Testament Ethics Today (Downers Press, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1983).

[22] Paul L. Schrieber, "Priests Among Priests: The office of the Ministry in Light of the Old Testament Priesthood," Concordia Journal 14 (July 1988): 225, explains: "As all Christians are priests (Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:6; 1 Pet. 2:9), it would serve well to consider anew the Christian life in terms of priestly service. Emphasis would include the privilege of all, male and female, in the study of God's Word, prayer, sanctified living, fraternal unity, and offering the entire life as a living sacrifice flamed by the fire of the Spirit, to bring the message of reconciliation to the world."

And though a tenth remains in it, it will be consumed like a terebinth or an oak that,[23] in their falling state, the stump remains in them; the holy seed is its stump.

Exegetical Analysis

The context for this passage is the probable call[24] of the prophet Isaiah in a

vision of splendor and magnitude where the sound of the Trisagion announces the

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[23]S. Irwy, "Masseboth and Bamah in 1Q Isaiah 6," Journal of Biblical Literature 76 (September 1957): 242-58, first takes the relative particle אֲשֶׁר as a noun and translates it as "Asherah." Following 1Q he also takes the word בָּם and construes it מַצֵּבָה , thus obtaining the rendering, "like a terebinth, or an oak, or an Asherah, when flung down from the sacred column of a high place." This requires the omission of the last three words of the verse, but these words are retained in 1Q.

[24]This chapter in Isaiah is one of the most debated texts of the Old Testament. In defense of the chapter as representing the call of Isaiah is, for example, Franz Delitzsch, Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1969). According to Delitzsch, Isaiah is lifted up by Yahweh himself being a protagonist of a typological image. He says: "Isaiah is here carried up into heaven; for although in other instances it was undoubtedly the earthly temple which was presented to a prophet, view, in an ecstatic vision. . . yet here, as the description which follows clearly proves, the 'high and exalted throne' is the heavenly antitype of the earthly throne which was formed by the ark of the covenant; and the 'temple'. . . is the temple in heaven . . ." (189-90, his emphases). In a similar position, Edward J. Young, The Book of Isaiah: the English Text, with Introduction, Exposition and Notes, vol 1 (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), takes verse 5 as the basis for his view that chapter 6 is a description of the inaugural vision of Isaiah. Young says that "Isaiah's intention was not to stress a chronological arrangement of his prophecies. . . but to bring prophetic emphasis to the fore" (232-33 and note 3). There are others who do not agree that chapter 6 is qualified to describe Isaiah's call. John D. W. Watts, Isaiah 1-33, vol. 24, Word Biblical Commentary, gen. ed. David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker (Waco,

presence of the King (cf. John 12:41). Yet the message that is the corollary of this event seems unsuitable to the moment because what happens on earth with the people of God can only incite the wrath of the Holy One in the Temple. The obdurate language of Isaiah 6:6-9 recalls the episode of Exodus in an anti-salvation perspective.

Yahweh has announced the devastation of the people of Judah. Even if the tenth remains, it cannot consider itself safe because another devastation is announced. The terebinth and the oak mentioned in the text are of the strongest trees in the flora of Palestine. While the אלה grows to a great age,[25] both are important as topographic designations (1 Sam. 17:2, 19; Gen. 12:6). However, in chapter 1:30 already אלה fades its leaves in an anticipation of disaster. Now both will be cut down, except the roots.

TX: Word Books, Publisher, 1985), 70 is emphatic, "The chapter [Is. 6] is not a 'call narrative'." (His emphasis). Another example can be seen in the work of John H. Hayes and Stuart A. Irvine, Isaiah the Eight-century Prophet: His Times & His Preaching (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987). Their arguments are based on liberal critical presuppositions mainly that (a) Isaiah is a volunteer to the prophecy, not called to it; (b) chapter 6 was written to justify Isaiah's political view after Uzziah's death; (c) chapter 6 contains scribal glosses, especially verse 12a, and the chapter as a whole is there in order to attest Isaiah's moral authority above those whom a purification status is lacking.

[25]Francis Brown, S. R. Driver and Charles A. Briggs, ed., A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament (Oxford: Clarendon Press), 18.

The Old Testament idea of remnant embodies again the polarity between the Law and the Gospel. As Edmond Jacob observes, "The remnant is a concept with two faces, one catastrophic - only a remnant will survive; the other full of promise - for a remnant will escape."[26] In Genesis 18:22-33 the tenth was an argument for a redemptive action; at this time it embodies a destructive message. Through a gradual process, the whole people will be annihilated, including the tenth, only a small remnant will survive in the stump of the tree.

The usual meaning of מצבה is "pillar." This is the only place in the Old Testament where it carries the meaning "stump."[27] Behind בשׁלכת lies the menace of destruction and death; behind מצבת the hope of preservation and life. Death and life are together but life, that is vital for the remnant, will prevail in the stump. The fact that a remnant will survive becomes a basis for hope. It is God working in a sub-contrarium way. The total annihilation is not in Yahweh's

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[26] Edmond Jacob, Theology of the Old Testament, trans. Arthur W. Heathcote and Philip J. Allcock (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1958), 323.

[27] Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, ed., Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros, vol. 1 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1951), 555, however, does not hesitate to put the noun with this meaning in the first place.

purpose. This judgment "is a catharsis aiming at renewal and resurrection through death to life."[28]

In the first chapter of Isaiah the "seed" is used to describe a negative ethical status. The expression זרע מרעים (v. 4) is used in parallel with גּוֹי, עַם, and בנים to demonstrate the critical spiritual condition of " עמי" (v. 3). The judgment will come (6:11b-13a) but in the "holy seed" life will be preserved.

The unexpectedness of the last three words in verse 13 has raised questions about their authenticity.[29] But ultimately these words are related to the question of the prophet Isaiah in verse 11, "For how long, O Lord?." Does the question refer

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[28]G. A. Danell, "The Idea of God's People in the Bible," in The Root of the Vine: Essays in Biblical Theology, ed. Anton Fridrichsen and others (London: New York Philosophical Library, 1953), 31. (His emphasis).

[29]Otto Kaiser, Isaiah 1-12: A Commentary (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1972), 85, takes them as an interpolation of an anonymous writer who would like to give hope for the people after the exile.

to the time the prophet is expected to be the announcer of this message?[30] Or to

the duration of the judgment upon the people?[31]

Actually the expression, "For how long?" is a short lament common in the

Old Testament, especially in the Psalter (e. g. Ps. 6:3; 35:17; 62:3; 74:10; 119:84;

Hab. 1:2). This lament is motivated by God's silence to answer the supplication of

the sufferer. Change in the mood occurs when God breaks the silence with a

favorable answer.[32]

The suggestion to remove the last line of verse 13 as a later interpolation

has no basis in text-critical grounds.[33] Moreover, theologically Yahweh's answer

to the prophet's question, "For how long, O Lord?" would be meaningless if the

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[30]B. A. Copass, Isaiah: Prince of the Old Testament Prophets (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1944), 25. Cf. also Harry Bultema, Commentary on Isaiah (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1981), 98.

[31]Franz Delitzsch, Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah, trans. James Martin, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1881), 201, suggests both.

[32]Cf. Hans-Joachim Kraus, Theology of the Psalms, trans. Keith Crim (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1986), 141-42.

[33]The line presents such an unexpected message of salvation contrasting with the previous two lines that the editors of Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia even suggest a delenda for the sentence.

prophet was not assuming an end in Yahweh's judgment.[34] The "holy seed" verse

is also significant because in the context it is "einen Lichtblick, einen Trost mitten

in der Finsterniss."[35]

Although the view about the identity of זרע קדש is not uniform[36] this

expression is certainly a reference to the People of God, those who have received

His holiness as gift of the <u>favor Dei</u>.[37] Because of that they are in an ontological

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[34]H. C. Leupold, <u>Exposition of Isaiah</u>, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1968), 141, is correct when he says that, "Nowhere is Isaiah the exponent of utter hopelessness, as he would, if these last three words be removed."

[35]G. Stoeckhardt, <u>Commentar über den Propheten Jesaia</u> (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1902), 73.

[36]John H. Hayes and Stuart A. Irvine, 113, understand this expression as a reference to the "Davidic family (and its supporters)."

[37]John N. Oswalt, <u>The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1-39</u> (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986), 190-91, says, "The nation will be like a forest whose stumps are burned after the trees are cut down. Yet from such blasted stump a shoot can burst forth. So it will be for Judah (cf. 10:33; 11:1). Utter desolation is sure, but that desolation is not the end. There will be offspring holy to the Lord, for the Lord is not finished with Israel. God's promise to Abraham to bless the nations through his offspring is not to be forgotten (cf. 49:19, 32." Edward J. Young, <u>The Book of Isaiah: the English Text, with Introduction, Exposition and Notes</u>, 264, quotes Joseph Addison Alexander approvingly: "However frequently . . . the people may seem to be destroyed, there shall still be a surviving remnant, and however frequently that very remnant may appear to perish, there shall still be a remnant of the remnant left, and this indestructible residuum shall be the holy seed, the true church . . . (Rom. 11:5)."

unity with the Holy One. They will continue to live because they live in right relationship with Yahweh in faith and life. Through faithfulness in the covenantal promises they will be rewarded by the Seed (Gen. 3:15; Gal. 3:16) who comes to bring new life in the midst of destruction and annihilation.

What is significant here is that the remnant is not a product of the reduction of the people to a small number. It is not a matter of number or quantity. Rather the emphasis is that the remnant is God's new creation and that as such it has a representative function for the entire people of Israel. The prophets in general, do not overstress the superior spiritual qualification of the remnant. The point is that God takes the initiative in preserving a remnant for the sake of the whole people and, by extension, the whole creation. While the Old Testament advances in the understanding of what membership in the chosen people implies, it never abandons the basic view that God expects faith in Him and orientation through the covenant from all the members, and that it is through the people as a whole that God is working to achieve His purpose in and to the world.[38]

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[38] Walter Roehrs and Martin Franzmann, Concordia Self-Study Commentary: an Authoritative In-Home Resource for Students of the Bible (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1979), 449, are correct when they say that "Though the threatened devastation will overtake the apostate people as a nation, there will be a nucleus which is holy, i. e., declared worthy to carry out the purpose for which God chose Israel. (4:3 ff; Ex 19:5 f.)." (Their emphasis).

Life and new life are emphases that the People of God of the Old and New Testament are naturally willing to promote. These emphases, however, are not always considered significant by some segments of biblical scholarship. One of the main issues which involves the life, identity, and the mission of the People of God in the Old Testament is related to the issue of the "holy war." Actually, the understanding of war in the Old Testament is directly related to the concept of Israel as the people of God. Misunderstanding of war may lead to an incomprehension of the nature and mission of the People of God in the Old Testament and later. This will be our concern in the next subtitle.

The People of God and the "Holy War"

The issue of war in the Old Testament has been a <u>crux interpretum</u> and a <u>crux praedicantium</u> throughout the life of the Christian Church. In the mind of the general modern reader of the Scriptures the idea of God as Warrior may be understood as a primitive notion. According to this notion, Israel in the Old Testament period is simply identifying her God with war in a similar way as her neighbors did. This, of course, implies a lower view of God in the Old Testament which would improve in the New Testament times in the person of Jesus Christ. This conception of God, however, is characterized as philosophical rather than theological, and its danger is to equate Israel's God with other gods which are portrayed in <u>Religionsgeschichte</u>. Moreover, for the average Christian reader the

narrative of Israel's war in the Old Testament may be, as Patrick Miller points out,

"one of the principal factors in the Marcionite effort at destruction of the unity of

the Bible and rejection of the Old Testament as a Christian Scripture."[39]

<div align="center">Approaches to War in the Old Testament</div>

Much attention has been given to the problem of war in the Old Testament

since the appearance of Gerhard von Rad's basic study, Der Heilige Krieg im

Alten Israel, more than four decades ago.[40] Theological analysis of this issue

among the scholars in a more general sense is rare. In general, the works that deal

with the theology of the Old Testament treat the matter of war in connection with

other themes such as, for example, the problem of evil.[41]

The development of the study on this subject has revealed different

positions which, however, may be classified basically along two lines of

interpretation. The first one argues that the nature of war in the Old Testament is

not derived from any historical event but is rather a product of later theological

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[39] Patrick D. Miller, "God the Warrior," Interpretation 19 (1965): 41 n. 5.

[40] Gerhard von Rad, Der Heilige Krieg im Alten Israel (Zuerich: Zwingli Verlag, 1951).

[41] Cf. Jacob, 54-55. Also Th. C. Vriezen, An Outline of Old Testament Theology, (Newton, MA: Charles T. Brandford, 1960), 188ff.

reinterpretation. The concern about war in the Old Testament started with

Friederich Schwally in 1901, with the work <u>Der Heilige Krieg im Alten Israel</u>.

He held that Israel, like other primitive peoples, believed in the magic value of the

battle-cry. For him Israel's concept of war was due to a theological event, a late

Jewish interpretation of the ancient battles whose purpose was to edify the

community by emphasis on God's assistance to it.[42]

Gerhard von Rad begins his study by presenting the Old Testament material

on this subject as a theory.[43] He works with the presupposition that the sources

have been reworked by tradition and theology. Solomon's "Enlightenment" is

taken by him as the towering mountain that obscures the valley beyond so that the

narrators wrote about holy war of bygone days in terms of their own

understanding of warfare. The result is a mixture of ancient traditions and

"current" ideology.

Gerhard von Rad's task is to separate the ancient historical core from the

subsequent accretions. His effort is to trace the history of holy war on the basis of

texts whose date is at best conjectural. In order to achieve his goal von Rad opts

for the construction of a "model" of holy war from selected texts of probably early

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[42]Cf. Norman K. Gottwald, "'Holy War' in Deuteronomy: Analysis and Critique," <u>Review and Expositor</u>, 61 (1964): 296.

[43]Von Rad, 6-14.

date as the first stage to be followed by testing the accuracy of the hypothetical

construct on the basis of the biblical texts. He asserts, however, that there is no

alternative except to deal with the Hebrew text as it is.

Gerhard von Rad assumes the "holy war" as a cultic event, surrounded by

conventional rites and conceptions.[44] He defines "cultic" not merely as "religious

festivals," but collective experience of the rule of Yahweh in the war.[45] He does

not understand the war as a battle for the faith in Yahweh because he does not see

the gods of the enemies being identified as enemies. He considers war as "holy"

when the men of war have faith in Yahweh. Following Albrecht Alt, he regards

the earliest periods in Israel as peaceful penetrations of the mountains and

farmlands of Canaan by unarmed shepherds who could hardly have made war

against the Canaanite city-states.[46]

In his work he points to the period of the Judges as the classical period of

the "holy war."[47] Even though it was spiritualized as a literary fiction for some

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[44]Ibid., 14.

[45]Ibid., 31.

[46]Ibid., 16-17.

[47]Ibid., 28.

time, the "holy war" was again institutionalized by the literary fiction of

Deuteronomy in the time of Josiah as an answer to the destruction of Judah's army

in 701 B.C. Although he denies that Israel is primitive in the sense Schwally

proposed, the ritual aspects of war continued to be emphasized but now with

theological significance.[48]

The second line of interpretation understands Yahweh's action in war on

the basis of factors other than later theological reflection only. Rudolf Smend

affirms that war was the dynamic element in Israel's history, while periods of

peace between the battles were due to the early event of covenant that was

important when Israel was a confederation of tribes.[49] For him the Exodus from

Egypt marks the beginning of the war theme while the Sinai events establish the

beginning of the covenant concept.[50] Smend also sees war as related to a late

theological reinterpretation, the covenant being the basis of it.

In a more recent study dealing with war in the Old Testament, Fritz Stolz,

in disagreement with Smend, maintains that before Saul's period there was no

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[48]Ibid., 29.

[49]Rudolf Smend, Yahweh War and Tribal Confederation, trans. M. G. Rogers, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1970), 134-137.

[50]Ibid., 109-19.

tribal confederation in Israel and the war tradition begun with individual tribes.[51]

For him the unity of the tribes was based on the conception that Yahweh was

participating in the war. However, he agrees that Israel's idea of divine

participation in her wars ultimately comes from an influence that the people

received from Near Eastern mythology.

In dealing with the analysis of war and its relationship with the people of

God in the Old Testament, Confessional Lutheran theology cannot agree with

these presuppositions, interpretations, and conclusions. The reasons are simply

because the first relies on a purely theological reinterpretation of the war; the

second, besides holding this presupposition, understands it as a mythological

expression of Israel's Near Eastern neighbors. First of all, it is important to

acknowledge the factuality of the war episodes in the Old Testament and, as von

Rad properly points out, it is necessary to take the Biblical text into a serious

account.

Israel's Election

According to the Lutheran interpretation, war in the Old Testament cannot

be correctly understood if it is not integrated with the covenant between Yahweh

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[51] Fritz Stolz, <u>Jahwes und Israels Kriege</u> (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1972), 196-98.

and Israel. It is in the realm of the covenant that Yahweh makes Himself known to

Israel as her Creator and King. In the Book of Amos 3:2 Yahweh says: "You only

have I chosen of all the families of the earth." This election marks the starting-

point of Israel's new history and her making of Yahweh's covenant people.

What is behind the election of Israel from among the nations? The Book of

Deuteronomy gives the answer to this vital question. Israel was called into

existence solely by the gracious initiating act of Yahweh. It is possible to say with

LaRondelle that

> Israel is different from all other nations, not because of any ethnic, moral, or
> political quality, but solely because Israel was chosen by the Lord to receive
> His promises made to the patriarchs (Deuteronomy 7:6-9).[52]

To this Israel contributed nothing, either unique beauty or numerical

advantage, that could draw Yahweh's attention, or special power that could assist

in her deliverance, or "because of your righteousness or your integrity" (Deut.

9:5a). The reason, therefore, behind Israel's election is not in her, but in Yahweh;

not in the creature but in the Creator.

The idea of a god choosing a people was common in the Ancient Near East.

Peoples other than Israel had national gods: Moab had Chemosh. Moab was

described as "people of Chemosh" (Num. 21:29) just as Israel was described as "a

people holy to the LORD your God"(Deut. 14:1). However, there is a big

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[52]LaRondelle, 82.

difference in these relationships. It lay in Israel's belief in God's free act of

redemptive choice. Israel was bound to Yahweh in a different way from that in

which Moab and Chemosh were bound.

In fact, the gods of other nations depended upon the continued well-being

of their nation for their own existence. If Moab ceased to be, Chemosh would die.

With no one to worship him, he would simply pass out of existence. From the

umbilical bond with the people depended the survival of the deity.[53]

Something very different occurs with Yahweh in His relationship with

Israel. Yahweh is self-sufficient. He does not depend on His people or anything

else. He is eternal, not bound to any creature. The opposite is true. Israel's life

and survival depend on Yahweh. Her election is sola gratia. The relationship

between Yahweh and Israel, established by Him, exists "because the LORD

loved" (Deut. 7:8) this people and because, as the Psalter recalls, "he remembered

his holy promise given to his servant Abraham" (Ps. 105:42), because of His

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[53]Walter Eichrodt, The Theology of the Old Testament, trans. J. A. Baker, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1961), 67: "We hear incidentally in the OT of Chemosh, the god of the Moabites, for example, that his worhippers were described as his sons and daughters, Num. 21.29. It is also only natural that among almost all civilized peoples the deity should be thought of under the title of King, with which the symbol of the Shepherd may also be associated. The trouble is, however, in all such cases, that the thought is never far away that the deity on his side is in a certain sense dependent on the worshippers so closely linked to him; for what would a father be without sons? or a king without a people?"

promise to David (2 Sam. 7:21), and for the sake of His Name (Is. 48:9-11; Ezek. 36:22-23).

As we have stressed, in Egypt Israel is already God's people (Ps. 105:25), and from there Yahweh brought out His nation "with rejoicing, his chosen ones with shouts of joy" (Ps. 105:43). As Yahweh's "kingdom of priests" and "holy nation," the people of God is to be open to receive outsiders who would join the congregation (Is. 44:3-5). In this sense Israel was chosen to be a light to the nations (Is. 42:6; 49:6) to bring them the eschatological peace centered in Zion and her King (Is. 2:1-5; 11:6-9).

But at the same time Israel is a nation or state like others in her surroundings. In fact, one can say that "Ancient Israel was a religious state, whose God was king."[54] From the Lutheran point of view, Israel, in her election, was both "a political as well as a spiritual unit,"[55] that is, state and church. The war in

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[54] Peter C. Craigie, The Problem of War in the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1978), 66.

[55] Hummel, 111.

the Old Testament must be seen in the perspective that Israel is the People of God, and, as Wright emphasizes, war is at the "very center of Israel's theology."[56]

Yahweh's Wars

Gerhard von Rad, following Schwally, named Israel's wars as "holy wars,"[57] but actually, when Yahweh is in command they are called "Yahweh's wars" by the Scriptures (cf. Num. 21.14; 1 Sam. 18:17; 25:28). Yahweh's role as a divine warrior appears prominently in every section of the Old Testament. In the Torah He led Israel victoriously in battle against her enemies during the Exodus and the Conquest. In the Former Prophets, His role as a divine warrior King was challenged by the demand for human king. In the Latter Prophets, Yahweh was portrayed as victor over the nations and their gods. In the Writings, the Psalms celebrated Yahweh's victories through songs and asked for vengeance and justice against enemies through laments. In Daniel, Yahweh established His Kingdom

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[56]G. Ernest Wright, The Old Testament and Theology (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1969), 128-29.

[57]Gerhard von Rad, Studies in Deuteronomy (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1953), 45.

through judgment and overthrow of Israel's persecutors. And in Chronicles, the

Davidic kings prayed for Yahweh's miraculous intervention in the battle.[58]

A war could not be initiated by a group or leader of the people of God

without direct consultation with Him (1 Sam. 28:5-6; 30:7-8; 2 Sam. 5:19).[59]

Exodus 15:3 proclaims that the "LORD is a warrior." The deliverance

from Pharaoh is historically and theologically the most significant event of

Yahweh's involvement in Israel's life. After the people go out of Egypt they see

themselves pursued by the enemy that pushed the nation against the Red Sea. At

that crucial moment Moses calls to the people: "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and

you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today. The Egyptians you

see today you will never see again. The LORD will fight for you; you need only

to be still" (Ex. 14:13-14). Moments later the Egyptians found their chariots

mired in the middle of the sea and cry: "Let's get away from the Israelites! The

LORD is fighting for them against Egypt" (Ex. 14:25). This was the first and

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[58]Susan M. Pigott, "The Kingdom of the Warrior God: The Old Testament and the Kingdom of Yahweh," Southwestern Journal of Theology 40 (Spring 1998): 5-20.

[59]Eloquent testimony is to be found also in the so called archaic hymns such as Exodus 15, Judges 5, Deuteronomy 33, Psalm 68, and Habakkuk 3 that describe Yahweh as a divine Warrior marching in conquest. Thus He is pictured also in poetry as "man of war" (איש מלחמה) (cf. 1 Sam. 18:17; 25:28).

decisive military victory by Israel's God over Pharaoh and the other gods of

Egypt.[60] The theological importance of this event is emphasized just after its

happening. The victory is celebrated in the Song of the Sea in Exodus 15.[61] The

song is an exaltation of the victory over Pharaoh and the Egyptians; and Yahweh

is the subject of this victory.[62]

It is often argued that there are Ancient Near Eastern parallels for the form

in which the Old Testament presents the wars. Examples are taken from the

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[60]John James Davis, Moses and the Gods of Egypt: Studies in Exodus, 2nd ed. (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1986). Paul Hanson, "War. Peace & Justice in Early Israel," Bible Review (Fall 1987): 38: "Conflicts between peoples were ultimately conflicts between their respective gods. Victory of one side over the other was traceable to the victory of one people's god over the other people's god. Yahweh, by casting Pharaoh's chariots and his host into the sea, established his superior position in relation to the gods of Egypt. Inasmuch as Egypt was the preeminent power of the ancient world at that time, Yahweh's victory established him as the incomparable one, in the manner of Marduk after his victory over Tiamat in the Mesopotamian epic Enuma elish."

[61]Even though liberal critics consider parts of the Book of Exodus as product of writers of David's time and later, some of them, regard this song as an ancient piece as, for example, Brevard S. Childs, The Book of Exodus (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1979), 240-53.

[62]The song is in three stanzas in which Yahweh's power is successfully described in relation to Pharaoh (15:1-7), the sea (15:8-12), and the nations (15:13-18).

religious literature, especially from Assyria[63] and Moab.[64] What is then the

difference between Yahweh's wars and the wars of these nations? Were the "holy"

wars in the Old Testament magic wars as Schwally suggests? Were they

theological interpretation as von Rad proposes? While some understand the

Biblical concept of war as a "post eventum interpretation and schematization of

past events,"[65] others prefer the argument of Israel's development of religion

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[63]Manfred Weipert, "Heiliger Krieg in Israel und Assyrien: Kritische Anmerkungen zu Gerhard von Rads Konzept des 'Heiligen Krieges im alten Israel'" Zeitschrift für Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 84 (1972): 460-93.

[64]In the Moabite stela, the monument that so far contains the longest inscription ever found in Palestine, King Mesha says that he, under the direction of his god Chemosh, conducts war against Israel. In his view, contrary to the narrative of 2 Kings 3, he achieves victory, puts everything living, including women and children, under a ban, and dedicates the conquered cultic equipment to his god. See James B. Pritchard, Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament, 2d ed. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1955), 320-21. Recently André Lemaire, "'House of David' Restored in Moabite Inscription," Biblical Archaeology Review 20 (May-June 1994): 31, suggests that the Moabite rebellion mentioned in 2 Kings 3 "may not be the same fighting recorded on the Mesha stela."

[65]Gwilym H. Jones, "'Holy War' or 'Yahweh War'?," Vetus Testamentum 25 (1975): 656.

saying that these wars were "vestiges of ancient Semitic religion that remained

chaff amidst the wheat of ancient Israelite faith."[66]

Analyzing these suggestions we conclude that none of these are acceptable

because they do not take into account the theological motif behind the whole

matter of war in the Old Testament. Wright, talking about Yahweh's involvement

in these wars, declares that

> if the conception of the Divine Warrior cannot be used theologically, then the
> core of the Biblical understanding of reality is dissolved with drastic
> consequences for any theology that would maintain connection with what most
> distinguishes and characterizes the Bible in the world of religious literature.[67]

The fact is that Yahweh, the man of war, is present in the war; He is the

leader, achieving victory by violent action on His people Israel's behalf. When He

is behind the battle, He also gives the victory. But the victory is always His

victory. Even though Israel takes part in the process of war, Yahweh is ultimately

the sole actor.[68] Nowhere in the Old Testament are human beings depicted as

heroes of war, a feature common in the Near Eastern literature. The character of

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[66] Gottwald, 308.

[67] G. Ernest Wright, 122.

[68] Patrick D. Miller, The Divine Warrior (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard
University, 1973), 156, describes holy war as a "synergism," where a "fusion of
divine and human activity" takes place, though with the emphasis on the divine.

Yahweh's war was identified by His presence in the ark of the covenant.

"'Incarnate' in the ark Yahweh Himself was the real commander-in-chief of the

'hosts' of Israel."[69] The procession was led by the Levites who carry the ark in

front of the army (Num. 10:35). The ark, rather than being a "palladium of

battle"[70] common in the pagan world, was a symbol of Yahweh's "incarnation"

reminding them that Israel is a "church militant."

The Enemy

As God's elect people, Israel is to be a blessing to all the nations. The

climax of this blessing is the coming of the Messiah who will be born in Canaan,

"the most beautiful of all lands" (Ezek. 20:6). Canaan, as does the whole world (cf

Ex. 19:6; Lev. 25:23; Deut. 10:14), belongs to Yahweh. It is now God's intention

to fulfill His promise to the patriarchs (Gen. 12:7) and to reconquer a portion of

the earth from the powers of this world who claimed it for themselves by the force

of their arms and reliance on their gods. Yahweh's wars are an evidence that now

the Canaanites' measure of iniquity is full (Gen. 15:16; Deut. 9:5). Yahweh's wars

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[69] Hummel, 105.

[70] Frank Moore Cross, "The Divine Warrior in Israel's Early Cult," in
Biblical Motives, ed. Alexander Altmann (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University,
1966), 27. Cf. also Jacob, 55; Roland de Vaux, Ancient Israel: Social Institutions
(New York: McGrow-Hill Book Co., 1965) 2: 299.

represent the history of the Kingdom of God breaking into the world of nations in

a time when national and political entities were viewed as the creation of the gods

and living proofs of their power. Yahweh's intervention in this misrepresented

process envisages testifying to the world that Yahweh, the God of Israel, is the

One true and living God. At the same time it is also a warning to the nations that

the establishment of the Kingdom of God annihilates whoever opposes it.

The issue of the חֵרֶם (devoted) must be understood in the same

perspective. As described in Deuteronomy 20:10-18, all the inhabitants and

valuables of the "Canaanite cities" are to be devoted (חֵרֶם) and destroyed,

whereas 'non-Canaanite peoples' are not to be killed if they surrender. The חֵרֶם

has specific objectives and in that process even ecology is included.[71] Since the

enemy of Israel is Yahweh's enemy, the worshippers of Canaanite cults or the

betrayers of Israel are regarded as the devoted who are to be destroyed. The

admonition to exterminate Canaanite enemies is specifically provided within the

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[71] F. F. Bruce, "The Bible and the Environment," in The Living and Active Word of God: Studies in Honor of Samuel Schultz, ed. Morris Inch and Ronald Youngblood (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1983), 19 calls attention that "Some concern for trees is manifested in the regulations for the holy war in 20:19-20. When Israelite forces besiege an enemy city they must not cut down the fruit trees. "Are the trees in the field men, that they should besieged by you?" If wood is required to make siege engines other trees may be cut down to provide it, but not fruit trees. Some Assyrian kings boast of cutting down the fruit trees and plantations of resistant or rebellious cities . . ."

"Deuteronomic framework" in order that the Canaanite syncretistic religion may not infect Israel's life and worship.[72]

The enemy, then, is not simply anyone who stands in the way of Israel's advance but the one who is designated by Yahweh whose patience has become exhausted in front of the cup of iniquity that now is full. The reason for the חֵרֶם is theological. It is because of the Canaanites' iniquity. These nations are enemies before Yahweh. The idolatry of these people is the real issue behind Yahweh's rage against them. They personify the Evil that works against Yahweh, His Kingdom, and His Church. Only Yahweh can determine who are the enemies. Yahweh's war must be viewed and analyzed in this historical and theological perspective: the nations are under God's judgment because of their seditious idolatry. G. A. Danell is correct when he says that

> The herem is part of Yahweh's fight against the idols. Yahweh's war must be set against the background of the first commandment. The war against the foreign nations is essentially war against their gods, which are no true gods. Yahweh's war is in fact the same as that proclaimed in the beginning between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman.[73]

Yahweh was patient towards these nations. Since the time of the patriarchs the nations have heard Yahweh's Word in Shechem (Gen. 12:7), in Bethel (Gen.

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[72] Cf. N. Gottwald, "'Holy War' in Deuteronomy: Analysis and Critique," 297.

[73] Danell, 29.

12:8), in Hebron (Gen. 13:18), in Bersheba (Gen. 19:33). About six hundred years later they witnessed that they "have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea" (Joshua 2:10), but they refused to repent. Instead, "they came together to make war against God's people" (Joshua 9:2). The nations have provoked the wrath of God and because of that, the "other face"[74] of Yahweh is revealed. As Lutherans teach, His voluntas secunda is created. Horace D. Hummel properly points out, "Unless one, apriori, regards Biblical history and the Israelite conquest, as special, unique history, of a piece with God's eternal warfare against evil, the Israelite conquest is, indeed, only one more example of a sordid "war of liberation."[75]

Israel's Wars

The question must be asked, if Yahweh is the Commander-in-chief in war, what is the role of His people? In his study von Rad has worked out a synopsis of the individual narratives about the "holy war." The basic ideas of holy war in the

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[74] Paul R. Raabe, "The Two 'Faces'of Yahweh: Divine Wrath and Mercy in the Old Testament," in And Every Tongue Confess: Essays in Honor of Norman Nagel on the Occasion of His Sixty-fifth Birthday", ed. Gerald S. Krispin and Jon D. Vieker (Chelsea, MI: BookCrafters, 1990), 283-310.

[75] Hummel, 111 (emphasis his).

Old Testament that were observed by Gerhard von Rad and others can be summarized as follows:

1) Before going out to war a ritual was performed in order to inquire of Yahweh whether the militia should attack the enemy or not. The holy war began with צעקה.

2) The men who were recruited were called "Yahweh's people"; (עם־יהוה) and "God's people" (עם־האלהים).

3) The men, weapons, and the whole camp had to be kept holy (קדש).

4) The certainty of victory was based exclusively on Yahweh's answer to the inquiry.

5) The wars of Israel are Yahweh's wars. It is Yahweh who fights and not Israel. The people need only firm trust in God.

6) Booty is חרם and it must be devoted to Yahweh. The victory must ascribed only to Yahweh.

7) The holy war begins with the invocatory war-cry (תרועה) as the signal for the battle.

8) Victory comes from a terror (חרדה) of God which happens suddenly in the enemies' camp.

9) The holy war ends with the men's return to their tents in Israel's

encampment.[76]

The framework of Israel's battles has the character of a sacral sphere. But

the German theologian was criticized because of this and other aspects.[77]

Although the opinion is not unanimous among scholars,[78] it must be asserted that

Israel's wars are not secular wars, but "cultic" wars. The components of the war's

ritual point to this conclusion. The word תרועה , the shout that invites the people

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[76] von Rad, Heilige Krieg im Alten Israel, 6-14; Idem, Studies, 46-54. von Rad reaches this structure by the reunion of the several war events in Israel's history. It must be said, however, that in no battle all of these aspects described above appear and for this reason it must be questioned if this ritual was entirely performed before every "holy war" in which Israel was involved.

[77] von Rad's theory of "holy war" has been criticized by other scholars. R. Smend, Yahweh War and Tribal Confederation, 13-25, for example, criticizes him for the proposition that "holy war" was an amphictyonic reaction. More recently, N. K. Gottwald, The Tribes of Yahweh, A Sociology of the Religion of Liberated Israel - 1250-1050 B.C.E. (New York, Orbis Books, 1979), 348-75, 376-86, criticizes him for the same reason. In the same way, but for another reason, Manfred Weippert, 492, criticizes von Rad for his argument that the "holy war" was only defensive in character.

[78] T. R. Hobbs, A Time for War: A Study of Warfare in the Old Testament (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1989), 205, understands that "holy war" in Israel "was not a cultic institution, but rather an early form of warfare done in the name of Yahweh. This form of warfare evolved. Some religious ceremonies were attached to it, and often accompanying the army was an important religious person who was used for consultation."

to war, can also refer to a shout of rejoicing in worship, in a liturgical procession

to Yahweh, as it is shown by the canonical <u>corpus</u>.[79] Yahweh is יהוה צבאות He is

the commander-in-chief of "hosts," armies; He is incarnated in the ark. He fights

for His people but at the same time Israel has been part of His army since her

beginning (Ex. 7:4). Moreover, Yahweh's army is also cosmological. He has His

armies both on earth as well as in heaven. As the Warrior and Commander of

Israel's army He exercises His rule not only at the level of the historical plane. As

one scholar suggests, there is also a "cosmic dimension" in these wars. With

Yahweh as leader, the armies of heaven and earth march together against the

enemy.[80] The heavenly hosts fight along with God's people in an illustration of

vertical typology (Judges 5:20).

The victory belongs to Yahweh and He gives it to Israel as a gift. Israel

does not cooperate in the victory because it is a battle that she cannot win. The

Psalmist is eager to stress: "It was not by their sword that they won the land, nor

did their arm bring them victory; it was your right hand, your arm, and the light of

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[79]Brown, 929-30, lists biblical passages as 1 Sam. 4:5-6; 2 Sam. 6:15 (= 1
Chron. 15:28); 2 Chron. 15.14; Ezra 3:11-13. He informs that this term is
employed in the public service in general (Job 33:26) and in services with musical
sounds (Ps. 27:6; 33:3; 47:6; 89:15 (MT 16).

[80]Miller, "God the Warrior," 44-45.

your face, for you loved them" (Ps. 44:3). "The horse is made for the day of

battle, but victory rests with the LORD" (Proverbs 21:31). "The size of the army

or weaponry did not matter. It was the attitude of the warriors that was the all

important element - an attitude of trust and confidence."[81]

It is necessary to emphasize that Israel's wars were not imperialistic wars

which would aim at Canaan and from there the world; they were "not wars of

conquest."[82] On the contrary, at least in the beginning of Israel's wars, they were

defensive wars (Ex. 17:8; Num. 21:13, 33; Deut. 2:32; 3:1). They always secure

the promises guaranteed to the patriarchs and their descendants by Yahweh. In

this connection it is important to say that early Israel's army "did not consist of

professionals."[83] In a study about war in cultures of Ancient Near East, Albert

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[81]Ibid., 46. See also E. A. Martens, God's Design: A Focus on Old Testament Theology (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1981), 61.

[82]Walther Zimmerli, The Old Testament and the World, trans. John J. Scullion (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1976), 58.

[83]Walter Houston, "War and the Old Testament," The Modern Churchman 27 (1985): 17.

Glock concludes that "the arsenal of Early Israel included neither lance nor shield."[84]

Victory in the battle only occurs when Yahweh is in command and His people have demonstrated faith and confidence in Him. Two Biblical accounts confirm this point. When Gideon is called to lead the people of God against the Midianites he collects an army of thirty-two thousand men, of which Yahweh says: "You have too many for me to deliver Midian into their [Israel's] hands" (Judg. 7:2). In order that Israel may not boast against Yahweh that her strength had saved her, the number of the army is reduced to less than one percent. When David, armed merely with a sling, attacks the heavily armed Philistine he says: "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied" (1 Sam. 17:45).[85]

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[84] Albert Ernest Glock, Warfare in Mari and Early Israel (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1968), 198.

[85] At the time when David was king, however, the army was different. Christian E. Hauer, "David's Army," Concordia Journal 4 (1978): 68-72, suggests that the army of this monarch was professional. Even though this does not necessarily mean that David was doubting Yahweh's intervention it might indicate that he almost fell to the temptation of making wars of conquest. The census David took and the subsequent destruction of part of the army by Yahweh is an argument for this (1 Chronicles 21). It is possible that David's wrong intention in

When Israel trusted in her strength and self-confidence she lost the dimension of her role in God's purpose and, thus, was defeated. In Numbers chapters 13 and 14, the people did not follow the faith of Joshua and Caleb and declined to attack the Canaanites. When Moses made it clear that they had rebelled against Yahweh, the people resented the setback and went up "in their presumption" (14:14) but only to suffer defeat because the ark did not leave the camp. Against the Philistines Israel wages war with the presence of the ark, but Israel was denied victory because she believed that Yahweh was present in the ark in an apotropaic, magic way (1 Sammuel 4).

Ancient Israel's wars to conquer the Land of Canaan were Yahweh's wars undertaken at a particular time in the program of the messianic redemption. In this capacity Israel's belligerent acts were done with justice and authority -- but with restriction. God gave His people no orientation, licence or commission to conquer the world with the sword. Rather, these battles were an undertaking unique and temporary, with limited incursion. The conquered land itself would not become Israel's national possession by right of war, but it belonged to Yahweh. This is one more reason the land should be purified of all remnants of paganism. The nations of the land and their wealth were not for Israel to seize as the booty of war

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expanding his kingdom was the reason why he is called "a warrior and have shed blood" (1 Chron. 28:3) and in consequence forbidden to built the temple.

to enrich themselves. In Canaan Israel was to establish a commonwealth faithful to the righteous rule of God and thus be a blessing to the nations.

Theologically, it is not possible to equate Israel's war with the wars of any nation today because there is no nation that can be compared to Israel of the Old Testament.[86] The Biblical Israel is state and church. Israel's wars are not secular but sacred wars. They are holy wars of Yahweh against the idolatry, the Evil, the power of darkness.

Today, Israel's wars of the Old Testament must be applied to the Church and not to a specific nation, people, group, or any movement of social or political order. It is not -- as it has never been -- an egalitarian endeavor. Holy wars still continue in the New Testament. The urgency of war has not changed. The weapons and the enemies are changed. The Messiah has already come. With His death and resurrection He has defeated the Enemy and his hordes. In His capacity Jesus Christ is the Divine Warrior, the Christus Victor.

The Church has the sign-character pointing to the day of the eschatological peace. In the meantime the people of God of the New Covenant still live in a world of warfare. This warfare is a continuation of the holy war of the Old

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[86] Craigie, The Problem of War in the Old Testament, 60 n. 6, for example, seems to be inclined to defend this concept based on a curious argument. He says: "From theological perspective one might suggest that the modern state of Israel would be the only state even vaguely qualified to make such a claim, but there is no such claim in the Constitution of the State of Israel."

Testament. The weapons of this warfare, however, are the Word and Sacraments only, for the warfare is directed against the principalities and powers, a warfare the weapons of which are Spiritual (Eph. 6:12).

Conclusion

Although we have already reached some conclusions during the process of this work, there are some aspects that must be underlined about the concept of people of God in the Old Testament, the way we have approached it.

The comparison of the incidence of the terms עַם and גּוֹי in the Old Testament has revealed that in spite of the fact that Yahweh employs עַם more frequently when He addresses His people--in an indication that He was near to them and dwelling in their midst--the term גּוֹי, though more scarcely, is also used by Him in His dealing with Israel.

The use of both terms עַם and גּוֹי in the Old Testament in relation to Israel indicates that coram mundo politically and militarily Israel is not different from other peoples and nations in her surroundings. The difference between Israel and the nations is established coram Deo, due to her election by Yahweh, before whom Israel is Church.

In this capacity, Israel is a holy people, a holy nation also before the other nations to whom she is expected to announce and show Yahweh's purpose of salvation. Israel's failure in her missiological task does not annul God's promises

towards His people and a remnant is preserved by Him through which the Messiah will come.

Until He comes, the Israel of God in the Old Testament is engaged in holy wars that are neither magic nor a theological reinterpretation of Israel's history, but factual acts performed by Yahweh and His celestial hosts against real enemies who symbolize the enemies of God and His Church. For that reason these wars are an integrated part of the worship and <u>leiturgia</u> of the life of God's people in the Old Testament the external form of which will be changed in the New Testament with the incarnation of the One who is the Winner for the People of God.

CHAPTER III

WALTHER EICHRODT'S VIEW OF PEOPLE OF GOD

Introduction

In the years surrounding World War I the debate about Old Testament

Theology and method in Europe was intense. Basically, the discussion was

polarized in two fronts. On one side were those who insisted that Israel's religion

could be presented only in terms of its historical development. On the other side

were those who argued that this approach could not reach the kernel of Israel's

religious concept. In this historical and controversial milieu Walther Eichrodt

wanted to preserve Old Testament Theology as a historical discipline that treated

the essence of Israel's religion instead of merely its development.

Eichrodt's Methodology

Just prior to another World War, in 1933, Eichrodt published his Theologie

des Alten Testaments[1] where he put his view in practice detouring from the wide

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[1]Walther Eichrodt, Theologie des Alten Testaments, Teil 1, Gott und Volk
(Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs Verlag, 1933); Teil 2, Gott und Welt (Berlin:
Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1935); Teil 3, Gott und Mensch (Berlin:

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"historicism" with its evolutionary assumptions mostly transferred from biology to

history. In fact, Eichrodt had already anticipated this proposition four years

previous.[2] His procedure now was to take a tangent avoiding the usually tripartite

scheme of theology-- anthropology-- soteriology in order to follow the line of the

Old Testament's own dialectic. In order to achieve his own purpose Eichrodt

worked inductively.[3] It was chiefly the first volume of Eichrodt's study of the Old

Testament theology dealing with "God and the People" which was examined for

his view of the concept of People of God. The work as a whole, as we have said,

sets out to remedy the shortcomings of a purely historical-genetical approach by

pressing forward from historical research to a systematization of Israel's religion

as a unified whole. Although this can be credited as a positive endeavor,

Eichrodt, on the other hand, works with the atomistic presuppositions of the

Documentary Hypothesis, assuming it aprioristically, without an academic debate.

Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1939). English translation, Theology of the Old
Testament, trans. J. A. Baker, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1961)
is used in this study.

[2]Idem, "Hat die Alttestamentlich Theologie noch selbständige Bedeutung
innerhalb der Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft?," Zeitschrift für die
Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 47 (1929): 83-91.

[3]Eichrodt divides his major work in three parts; "God and the People,"
"God and the World," and "God and Man," paying tribute to his former Professor
Otto Procksch who has outlined his own work by these major categories.

On one hand Eichrodt sees his task as relating Old Testament religion to the

environment of the Ancient Near East -- a connection which is strongly

emphasized by him. In his analysis he does not even discard the influence of

Babylonian and Egyptian mythology in Israelite religious thought[4] and worship.

Examples can be seen in the case of the Tabernacle,[5] circumcision,[6] the Ark,[7]

Urim and Thummim,[8] and also the blood.[9] On the other hand he shows how the

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[4]Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament, 230-31.

[5]Ibid., 422-23. The Tabernacle as a prototype of the Temple, for example, is for Eichrodt, an extension of the Eastern conception that the earthly sanctuary is a copy of the heavenly and so Moses receives from God instructions similar to those that Gudea of Lagash received from his gods.

[6]Ibid., 138-39. "Circumcision . . . is a puberty rite . . . which may possibly be connected with the abolition of child sacrifice."

[7]Ibid., 108. ". . . the. making of it [the Ark of Yahweh] is more usually assumed to derive from Canaanite models."

[8]Ibid., 393. "Urim and Thummim in method is reminiscent of the Arabian arrow--oracle."

[9]Ibid., 157, n. 2: ". . . the purpose of the sprinkling the people is confirmed by the ancient Arabian practices which accompanied the making of covenants between human parties, in which the partners dipped their hands in a bowl filled with the blood of an animal."

Old Testament requires the New Testament revelation of Christ for its

fulfillment.[10]

Eichrodt works with the canonical books of the Old Testament. The

literature and theology of Judaism are not totally excluded and are considered only

in so far it is relevant to explain Old Testaments aspects or important in the

connection between Old and New Testaments.[11]

The main part of Eichrodt's work in the treatment of this theme, "God and

the People," sets forth the pivotal model of the sovereign suprahistorical Yahweh

who enters into communion with a people. This communion manifests both God's

nature and elicits a particular quality of life from the covenanted people. This

model is contrasted with conceptions of God which are intellectualistic or

pantheistic, and conceptions of the people of God which are nationalistic or

naturalistic.[12] Eichrodt sees the history of Israel's religion as the history of a

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[10]Ibid., 27, he says: "In expounding the realm of the OT thought and belief we must never lose sight of the fact that the OT religion, ineffaceably individual thought it may be, can yet be grasped in this essential uniqueness only when it is seen as completed in Christ."

[11]Ibid., 35.

[12]Ibid., 39. He says: "Only if we recognize that the simple laws of ancient Israel, infused with a deep feeling for righteousness, which are to be found in the Decalogue and the 'Book of Covenant', . . . can we get beyond the realm of mere possibilities and attractive suppositions, and see in it the establishment of a moral and social order by one all-ruling divine will the basis not only of the strongly

people's struggle to maintain and to develop that relationship in a manner faithful

to the revelation and in a manner relevant to changing historical circumstances. It

is a history of struggle and challenge, of departure from Yahweh's revelation and

of renewed revelation and commitment. According to Eichrodt, Israel's religion

however has historically entered in a process of exchange with its contemporary

religions so that "it has not only firmly consolidated its own unique contribution,

but also, by a process of absorption and rejection, has forged links with the most

varied forms of paganism."[13] In his view it's possible to say, "The man who

knows the religion of the OT knows many."[14]

To dramatize the historical character of the revelation and the response,

Eichrodt offers an extended account of "the history of the covenant concept" in

which he shows the unity of belief about the covenant running through Israelite

history and the manifold variations and accents of view that followed one another

or existed concurrently.[15] His stress is upon the ultimate unity that permeates the

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unified character of the Israelite view of the world, but also of its robust
affirmation of life, two marks that distinguish it clearly from the fissile and
pessimistic tendencies of paganism."

[13]Ibid., 25.

[14]Ibid.

[15]Ibid., 45-69.

admittedly rich but often contradictory course of thought about Yahweh and His

people.

In a sense, Eichrodt keeps a firmer hand upon the details of his theology

than does, for example, Gerhard von Rad[16] who chooses to let the literary

traditions stand by themselves and speak in their singularity. Eichrodt's work

reveals a main line of argumentation that stands out with general clarity. Eichrodt

works with cross-references throughout his study. Sometimes he groups the

material in historical sequence.[17] Other times he groups the material into topical

units.[18] In both cases he sometimes merely lays out the data serially and other

times synthesizes. The constant reference back and forth among the main

sections, as well as within them, serves to focus attention on Eichrodt's central

affirmation that Israel's theology is unified by its manner of conceiving God's

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[16]Gerhard von Rad, Old Testament Theology, vol. 1, The Theology of Israel's Traditions , trans. D. M. G. Stalker (New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1962). Old Testament Theology, vol. 2, The Theology of Israel's Prophetic Traditions, trans. D. M. G. Stalker (New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1965).

[17] Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament, 289-456, where he presents topics like "Instruments of the Covenant," "Charismatic Leaders," and the "Official Leaders."

[18]Ibid., 74-288, when he talks about the "Secular Law," "The Cultus," "The Name of the Covenant God," and "The Nature of the Covenant God."

relation to His creation.[19] The general stance of Eichrodt on historical

reconstruction is moderately critical, not of course in the sense the he is only

halfway critical, but in the sense that he sees the Old Testament materials as

possessing a large measure of historical value for the task of viewing the life of the

ancient People of God. This is evident, for example, in the mediating position he

occupies between those who begin the history of Israel's religion with the

patriarchs[20] and those who begin it with the occupation of Canaan.[21] Eichrodt

assumes that behind the traditions of the Pentateuch, which he takes for granted,

an actual historical figure can be discerned in the person of Moses as the founder

of Yahwism.[22] This judgment separates him again from von Rad and others who

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[19]Ibid., 45-69.

[20]John Bright, A History of Israel, 2d ed., (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1972), 95, says, "The Bible . . . begins both Israel's history and faith with Abraham. Indeed, that history of redemption, which is the Bible's central theme in both Testaments, is begun with him . . . . Abraham stands as the ultimate ancestor of Israel's faith."

[21]Winfried Thiel, A Sociedade de Israel na Época Pré-Estatal, trans. Ilson Kayser (São Leopoldo: Sinodal/Paulinas, 1993), 36-37.

[22]Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament, 187: "The new understanding [in comparison with the general Semitic designations of god] of the divine nature which came with Moses is inextricably bound up with a new name of God, Yahweh. E (Ex 3.14) and P (Ex. 6.3) make such a point of this, that in them the crucial divine revelation to Moses culminates in the communication of the new

have considered it to be impossible to treat Moses as anything more than a

legendary character without any connection with the covenant events at Sinai.[23]

The Covenant As the Organizing Center

For Eichrodt the organizing center of Israel's life and theology is the

covenant, which supposedly epitomizes Eichrodt's arrangement of the material.

By way of decoding the covenant symbol he sees it as expressing "the explicit or

implicit assumption that a free act of God, consummated in history, has raised

Israel to the rank of the People of God, in whom the nature and will of God are to

be revealed."[24] Although criticized for the central place he gives to this concept,

Eichrodt, in the preface to the fifth revised edition, explains that "the covenant has

been retained as the central concept by which to illuminate the structural unity and

the unchanging basic tendency of the message of the OT."[25] In grouping the

materials around this central concept, the author indicates his historical sense by

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divine name. . . . An understanding of the meaning of the name was granted only
to the founder of the religion . . ."

[23]von Rad, I, 289-96. Martin Noth, The History of Israel 2d ed. (London:
Adam & Charles Black, 1960), 136, opines "that Moses had no historical
connection with the event which took place on Sinai. Historically, it is therefore
hardly justifiable to describe him as the organiser and law-giver of Israel."

[24]Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament, 14.

[25]Ibid., 13.

tracing the inner history of the sequence of ideas, based on Old Testament

traditions.

Even though Eichrodt's work "has been hailed the best Old Testament

theology by many,"[26] it did not pass unhurt by criticism. Critics of Eichrodt's

method have addressed themselves to the orientation of seeking to organize a

historical process around a single, basic concept. One of his contemporaries argues

that one runs the danger of doing violence to the diversity of the Old Testament by

endeavoring to comprehend all of it in one compact picture.[27] Perhaps against this

criticism it must be stressed that Eichrodt is not interested in adding to the number

of Old Testament religious histories, but wants rather to present the unity of Old

Testament religion and its uniqueness over against others.

The Covenant Concept

A criticism which moves the debate closer to Eichrodt's understanding of

the People of God is the question as to whether the covenant is really the Mitte,

the chief unifying element in the Old Testament. Robert C. Dentan says that "the

idea of the covenant seems much less dominant in Old Testament literature than

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[26]Carl Losen, review of Theology of the Old Testament, by Walther
Eichrodt, In Dialog 1 (1962): 77.

[27]Johannes Hempel, review of Theologie des Alten Testaments, by Walther
Eichrodt, In Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 10 (1933): 300.

Eichrodt would have us to suppose."[28] G. Ernest Wright, who once concurred with

Eichrodt's central concept arguing in favor of "election,"[29]now is incisive in saying

that "It must be admitted that no single theme is sufficiently comprehensive to

include within it all variety of viewpoint [in Old Testament theology]."[30]

It appears that Eichrodt's critics have a point. He could have been more

consistent had he not used a term to organize his theology which, on his own

admission, is not used throughout the Old Testament. In defense of Eichrodt,

however, it is hard to determine what other term might have been used as a symbol

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[28]Robert C[laude] Dentan, The Knowledge of God in Ancient Israel (New York: The Seabury Press, 1968), VIII.

[29]G. Ernest Wright, God Who Acts: Biblical Theology as Recital, Studies in Biblical Theology (London: SCM Press, 1962), 36, n. 1.

[30]Idem, "The Theological Study of the Bible," Interpreter's One Volume Commentary to the Bible (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1970), 983; quoted in Gerhard F. Hasel, Old Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982; repr., 1987), 134. The attempt to qualify a theme that could be the center of Old Testament Theology has been made by several scholars. A survey of this initiative can be seen in Gerhard Hasel, "The Problem of the Center in the Old Testament Theology Debate," Zeitschrift für the Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 86 (1974): 65-82. Hasel, Ibid., 79, who once emphasized that "Any center which is to serve as an organizing principle for the entire OT word of revelation and experience will always turn out to be a tour de force," said, in New Trends in Old Testament Theology, Convocation at Concordia Seminary, Saint Louis, March 8, 1989, that the Triune God was in his opinion the unifying theme of the Old Testament.

--"the all-embracing symbol"[31] -- that would have been sufficiently brief and clear.

Perhaps the real concern of critics who have questioned Eichrodt's use of covenant

is the issue of whether the religion of Israel can be regarded as a unity and as

somehow normative for contemporary religion. The objections ought more clearly

to have been directed against Eichrodt's presuppositions about the unity and

normativeness of Israel's religion rather than against the above charged term.

Though there are numerous divinely originated covenants in the Old

Testament, Eichrodt holds up primarily the Sinaitic covenant as the lens through

which to review the Old Testament. Israel, in responding, was bonded to God as

His people.

Eichrodt wrote prior to the explosion of essays generated by the

observations of George E. Mendenhall[32] that Biblical covenants had a form similar

to that Ancient Near East suzerain--vassal treaties.[33] Perhaps after Mendenhall the

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[31]Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament, 55.

[32]George E. Mendenhall, "Law and Covenant in Israel and the Near East," The Biblical Archaeologist 17 (1954): 26-46. Cf. also his "Covenant," in The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, ed. George Arthur Buttrick, vol. 1 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), 714-23.

[33]However, in the sixth edition of his work Eichrodt mentions J. [sic both in the original as in the translation] E. Mendenhall in a footnote just to reinforce his argument of bilateral relationship of the covenant. He says that, among others, Mendenhall's work "leave[s] no doubt of the reciprocity of the Israelite covenant relationship." Theology of the Old Testament, 37, n. 3.

historical reviews within Biblical covenants made better sense and the place of law

within covenant could be better understood. Covenant, as other institutions in the

Old Testament, was ancient. Though ancient, Eichrodt insisted that it was not to be

understood as a static idea but as a "typical description of a living process."[34]

More descriptively, Eichrodt's device is that the Israelite thought is dominated by

the conception of a God who is free, transcendent, ordering will, and whose

explicit aim is the creation of a freely responsive and ordered community of men.

According to Eichrodt, the making of the covenant came as "the goal and

crown of the powerful deliverance from Egypt."[35] Israel had experienced

Yahweh's power on her behalf and that was now to be permanent in the form of

covenant agreement. Apparently Eichrodt regards the deliverance from Egypt as a

prelude to the covenant. However, as it was shown above,[36] the people of Israel in

Egypt was already God's covenanted people (Ex. 3:7, 10; 4:22, 23; 5:1).[37] If

technically the historical beginnings of Israel as a people are obscure, as Eichrodt

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[34]Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament, 18. Emphasis his.

[35]Ibid., 37-38.

[36]See chapter 1.

[37]It would have been appropriate if Eichrodt had considered the argument implied by the Apostle Paul in Galatians that it was a redeemed people with whom God concluded His covenant (Gal. 3.17).

understands,[38] the history of the covenant shows that covenant and election go back into edenic times (Gen. 2:16, 17). The Biblical writers found a theological significance in keeping separate the great event of Israel's redemption in Egypt and the covenant at Sinai. The former had its intrinsic significance as Yahweh's mirabilia of rescuing the people from bondage; the latter depended for its meaning on the fact that it was a redeemed people who, because of Yahweh's intervention, were capable of responding in faith to the terms of the covenant. It is not without reason that the Decalogue is prefaced by the solemn reminder: "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery" (Ex. 20:2).

It is necessary to insist that the distinction between election and covenant be preserved. Lutherans have understood the covenant as a working extension and implementation of election, the formal and continual application of what is implicit in election. Eichrodt is at fault in permitting the covenant idea to spread so widely that it threatens to absorb the theological motif of election. It is not enough to say that the covenant was the goal and crown of the liberation from Egypt, as Echrodt maintains; one must also inquire as to the goal of the covenant relationship. The covenant relationship does not exist for its own sake but is meant to train a people in godliness with the execution of a given historical mission always on the horizon.

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[38]Ibid., 49-50.

The People of God

The Nature of the People of God

As one evaluates Eichrodt's central argument that the covenant is the decisive expression of the relation of the People of God in the thought of the Israelites, the fundamental reliability of his position must be maintained, particularly as one compares his interpretation with that of some other scholars. Johannes Pedersen, for example, writes that "The most apt expression of the relation between Yahweh and Israel is the covenant, berith."[39] Apparently, Eichrodt could have adopted the same view. However, a further reading of Pedersen indicates that, unlike Eichrodt, he suggests covenant as a natural affinity between God and the people of Israel. He says:

> This denotes the psychic communion and the common purpose which united
> the people and its God. It is also expressed by saying that the peace of
> Yahweh reigns in Israel (shalom, Jer. 16:5), therefore the relation between
> them is characterized by love, the feeling of fellowship among kinsmen.[40]

With this view of the closeness between God and man which the earliest records are said to show, Pedersen can stress the covenant as something that expresses an already existing close relationship. Similarly, when Pedersen speaks

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[39]Johs. Pedersen, Israel: Its Life and Culture, vol. 3-4 (Copenhagen, Denmark: Branner Og Korch, 1953), 612.

[40]Ibid.

of covenants between men, he maintains that even though בְּרִית is used most

frequently of community entered upon by unrelated persons, that is only because

there is more reason to speak of such relations. But since the word is used "to

designate all duties and privileges, it must necessarily, nay, first and foremost,

include relationship."[41] Pedersen's idea of close relationship leads to the false

concept of quality which is endorsed by segments of the Rabbinical Judaism,[42]

reflections of which may perhaps be seen even in fairly recent political segregation

in other parts of the world.[43]

Eichrodt, on the other hand, correctly emphasizes that the covenant

excluded the idea that there existed any kind of natural bond between God and

people. According to him, covenant makes the religion of Israel one based on

election, not on blood relationship between God and people or any connection

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[41]Ibid., 1-2: 285.

[42]The Jews were chosen "in part because of the merit of the first fathers, whose righteousness was so great as to win this high calling for their descendants." Milton Steinberg, "Questions Christians Ask," in: Face to Face: A Primer in Dialog, ed. Lily Edelman (Washington, DC: B'nai B'rith, 1967), 22, quoted in Donald R. Bloesh, "All Israel Will be Saved: Supersessionism and the Biblical Witness," Interpretation 43 (April 1989): 132, n. 6.

[43]A few decades ago the prime minister of the Union of South Africa, for example, supporting his country's apartheid and the subjection of black population stated that the white man was "the Chosen People ordained by God to create a

between the deity and a particular portion of the land. He emphasizes this by

saying:

> The covenant agreement excluded the idea, which prevailed widely and was
> disseminated among Israel's neighbors as well, that between the national God
> and his worshippers there existed a bond inherent in the order of Nature,
> whether this were a kind of blood relationship, or a link between the God and
> the country which created an indissoluble association between himself and the
> inhabitants.[44]

In the same line, the covenant also prevented the conception that God was

simply the reflection of the higher side of the natural self-consciousness, or the

mystery of a single land.[45]God's relatedness to the people of Israel is therefore not

to be ascribed to any natural condition but rather to "the inconceivable magnitude

and power of his love."[46] The consciousness of this personal covenant with

Yahweh created a bond also within the inner relationships of the people becoming

a guiding star for centripetal as well as centrifugal tendencies of the people.[47]

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white civilization in the African wilderness." F. Welford Hobbie, "The People of
God," Interpretation 21 (January 1957): 48.

[44]Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament, 42-43.

[45]Ibid..

[46]Ibid., 256.

[47]Ibid., 39, he summarizes: "That which unites the tribes to one another and
makes them a unified people with a strong sense of solidarity is the will of God. It
is in the name of Yahweh and in the covenant sanctioned by him that the tribes

Even though Eichrodt stresses divine initiative and love in the covenant

relationship, one must nevertheless not shrink from identifying a weakness which

turns up when the place of the covenant in the forming of the People of God is

assessed. From the Lutheran point of view this weakness comes to light as one

considers the implications of Eichrodt's position concerning the unity of the

People of God.

Obedience to the Law

When one asks the question, What unites the people? Eichrodt's answer is:

the people's obedience (Gehorsam) to the terms of the law. His assertion that the

relationship of God to man is based on love is endangered when he concludes that

the realization of this love "requires only the positive act of obedience to the law;

and by this means it is possible to establish within the framework of this world, a

holy people of God, separated from the nations."[48] But if it is the people's

obedience to the covenant which separates them from the world and holds them

together in a unity, then clearly human effort maintains the people of God, and the

theocentric nature of the community's life and existence is menaced by an

anthropocentric and legalistic notion of people. In other words, the covenant

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find the unifying bond, which proves a match even for the centrifugal tendencies
of the tribal egoism and creates from highly diversified elements a whole with a
common law, a common cultus and a common historical consciousness."

[48]Ibid.

relationship is seen in terms of man's dutiful obedience instead of in terms of Yahweh's grace. This aspect can be illustrated when Eichrodt traces the history of the covenant idea. In doing this, he describes two divergent lines along which the concept of the covenant developed. The first line runs from "covenant" through "covenant relationship," "covenant concept" and "legal system" to "religion," "cultus" and "covenant people." By way of contrast, Eichrodt presents the other line which runs from "covenant" through God's act of "establishment," "the relationship of grace," and "revelation" to the "order of redemption," the "decree of salvation," and the "consummation of all things."[49] It is clear that for him the people of God are to be placed on the "demand" side of the covenant concept.

Eichrodt understands that the prophetic view recognized the inadequacy of describing Yahweh solely as covenant maker. Metaphorical language such as the father-son relationship, marriage, and kinsman was employed to express Israel's experience of the gracious God.[50] But the God of the covenant remains pre-eminently the ruler-God, the sovereign deity according to Eichrodt. Thus the people of God are primarily those who obey the covenant statutes. It is conformity to God's commands which unites them. One scarcely need add that Eichrodt, who

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[49]Ibid., 66.

[50]Ibid., 67-68.

himself affirms the gracious character of the covenant,[51]would not identify such a legalistic concept of the people of God with his own intention. He asserts:

> If the ultimate purpose of the covenant is submission to God's sovereignty, then the continuance of the covenant is clearly determined by man's readiness for such submission. Where this readiness is lacking, the inevitable consequence is the abrogation of the doctrine of election in judgment.[52]

Although Eichrodt talks about judgment for failure to keep the law, he does not extend it to some eschatological judgment. Judgment is taken by him more on the existential level by the decrease of the earthly blessings upon the people. In this sense the wrath of God can also be reduced to a "footnote to the will of fellowship of the covenant God."[53]

Another point at which Eichrodt must be criticized from the Lutheran perspective springs directly from the legalizing tendency observed above. If the people is formed by the fact that the law of God finds obedient response among them, then the history of the covenant people must be written off as a failure, a meaningless series of drawbacks. In fact, is there a people of God at all when disobedience and rebellion came to mark the life of Israel? The remarkable fact is

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[51]Ibid., 94.

[52]Ibid., 373. "There can be no doubt that in the setting up of the covenant the idea of sovereignty is dominant throughout." (44).

[53]Ibid., 262.

that a disobedient people is still the people of God, as the Scriptures clearly attest

(Jer. 2:13; 3:22; 7:12; Hos. 14:1) for the reason that Yahweh's purpose moves

forward despite man's sin. Therefore the history of Israel has a profound

significance. With Eichrodt, however, there is such a stress on the requirement

imposed by God that it becomes easy to lose sight of the reality that there is a

positive value in Israel's history, marred as it is by sin, because it is through the

history and life of his people that God Himself fulfills His covenant, culminating

in the person and work of Jesus, the Messiah.

<div align="center">The Mission of the People of God</div>

Unity in the "Holy War"

Eichrodt finds the oneness of the people being manifested historically in all

phases of their common life. Israel could demonstrate her unity also in the "holy

war." Eichrodt, however, sees these events in Israel's life in the perspective of

Religionsgeschichte, and "embellished with details drawn from the myth of the

struggle with Chaos."[54] Any ritual act like "the sprinkling of the blood's sacrifice

in the beginning of a war was an occasion to symbolize fellowship with the

deity."[55] He agrees that Israel's enemy is the enemy of Yahweh. But he adds that

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[54]Ibid., 229.

[55]Ibid., 156.

The annihilation of the enemy. . . is part of the discipline on the warrior, by which he renounces something in thanksgiving to the deity present in the camp. This means that the enemy is regarded as holy or dedicated, and so no longer available for human possession; the renunciation is irrevocable.[56]

Eichrodt does not deny that "War is service to the holy God, and as such brings men into immediate contact with his destroying power." Yahweh's intervention in the "holy war' however was not founded on the theological prerequisite of elimination of idolatry and the recalcitrant Canaanites. God's help in the "holy war" was established by Yahweh's iustitia salutifera by which, says Eichrodt, he "does justice" to Israel according to "her position as the covenant people." Yahweh's protection of Israel in the 'holy war" is based on people's "justice."[57] In a line similar to Friedrich Schwally, Eichrodt understands the חרם as belonging to the primitive Israel as it was with other nations. Although he rehearses an attempt to relate חרם, to the cultic or religious sphere,[58] he points out that this act changed its meaning leading Israel to minimize her cruelty, becoming

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[56]Ibid., 139.

[57]Ibid., 273, 241-42. "Yahweh watches over the 'justice' of his people in that he safeguards their existence by his victories over their foes, and Israel's triumphs in war are therefore proofs of the righteousness of God, sdkot yhwh." (242).

[58]Ibid., 273, n. 4: "hrm is probably a primitive Hebrew root equivalent in meaning to the Canaanite root qds."

more tolerant towards the Canaanites. A gradual and clearer understanding of

חרם, by Israel culminated, according to Eichrodt, in the end of the "holy war."[59]

Unity in Worship

The regular worship occasions and the great religious festivals gave

expression to the unity of the people of God, as did the functions of representative

leaders such as the priests and kings. But in the daily relations of life between

neighbors there was also a unity brought about by the common sense of belonging

to the people which had committed itself to follow the prescriptions of the divine

law and worship. The cultic system was a special occasion also for reminding

Israel that the nature and mission of God's People were under the direction of

Yahweh's hand. He explains that

> . . . the content of the cultic law is controlled by the dominating conception that in the sphere of Israel everything belongs to Yahweh alone, space and time, property and life. The sacrifices and festivals, the purifying rites and cultic ceremonies, all minister to the recognition of this unlimited divine authority. In everything the Israelite is reminded that his whole life is dedicated to God, and he is brought to realize that the life must show outwardly the character proper of the people of Yahweh's own possession.[60]

According to Eichrodt, the totality of the Israelites could be members of the

people. But because the concept of the people was primarily religious rather than

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[59]Ibid., 140-41.

[60]Ibid., 412.

national or political, those who belonged to the holy assembly, who stood under direct command of Yahweh, were members in a fuller sense than those who had merely the ties of race and nationality.[61] This aspect is more clearly indicated by the vicissitudes created with the exile. Eichrodt takes, for example, Ezekiel 11:18-21, 36:24-33, and 37:22-26 to emphasize that Yahweh's main concern with Israel is her restoration not as a political unit, a secular state, but as a spiritually cleansed and worshipping people. As he correctly stresses, Ezekiel's focus in Yahweh's restoration promises is not primarily on Israel's return to her homeland, but on her return to Yahweh. Ezekiel states that Yahweh shall purge the exiled Israel in "the desert of the nations" from her defiling idolatry and spirit of secularization so that only a repentant Israel would return to the land of Israel.[62]

Eichrodt aims to bring out the religious character of the קהל which, as he says, took precedence over the unity brought about when a number of tribes came together in a national entity.[63] Here again is the suggestion that those were most truly members of Israel who most closely submitted themselves to the divine rule;

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[61] Idem, Theologie des Alten Testaments, vol. 2-3 (Stuttgart: Ehrenfried Klotz Verlag, 1961), 164-65.

[62] Idem, Ezekiel: A Commentary (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970), 280.

[63] Idem, Theology of the Old Testament, 39-40.

and the synergistic idea of a unity achieved by the moral and legal efforts of men to live according to the divine decrees does not lie far away on the horizon.

Perhaps it is Eichrodt's underlying concern to bring out the religious meaning of the covenant which accounts for the tendency to stress the obligation resting upon God's people. He is aware that Israel's recurrent failures stemmed largely from the assurance that come what may, the favored people's standing could never be overthrown. Against this onesided abuse of the covenant idea, Eichrodt emphasizes religious responsibility. But the meaning of this responsibility came to Israel after a long historical process. In spite of her slowness to respond, Israel was the bearer of the covenant promise through which God's saving will was operative. It was because of the promise, moreover, that Israel possessed the possibility of offering obedience to the divine statutes. Eichrodt sees in early Israel the kind of comprehension of the covenant demand and promise which would be more appropriate for a later period when the people had learned by experience that Yahweh expected more from them than a routine worship.

Conclusion

The treatment that Eichrodt gives to the concept of People of God is largely based on a systematic approach. Exegesis is accomodated in the framework of the covenant, Eichrodt's organizing center. The Pentateuch is not taken as a unit.

Even tough he admits "the possibility of a written codification of the law in the time of Moses, and either the Decalogue of Ex. 20 alone or the Decalogue and the Book of the Covenant (Ex. 20-23) together have been derived from Moses himself,"[64] the sources promoted by Documentary Hypothesis dominate the textual scenery.[65] Etiology[66] and legend[67] are terms employed to characterize important aspects of God's People life and faith.

Eichrodt agrees that the covenant concept is found in the earlier narratives of the Pentateuch. However, the concept is there because it is only a "remarkable retrojection" of the Yahwist and Elohist strata in order to establish "Israel's consciousness of election . . . on the divine choice of the Fathers."[68] Exodus 19.5-6 has for Eichrodt an uncertain date and authorship. If it is Deuteronomic, "then this would represent an attempt to rescue the concept of the God-King from its

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[64]Ibid., 71-72.

[65]Ibid., 40 n. 2, 49, 51, 56, 161, 181 n. 1, 187, 286 n. 1, 382, passim.

[66]For Eichrodt Ex. 4:24 "is solely concerned with the origins of the practice of infant-circumcision." Ibid., 261, n. 3.

[67]"Jacob's wrestling with God is a local tradition from Peniel." Ibid., 261, n. 4.

[68]Ibid., 49.

association with the earthly monarchy, and to give it a purely theocratic significance."[69] In summary, according to Eichrodt, "It was the Priestly law that most vigorously developed the ideal of the holy people, that is to say, one set apart from all others (cf. Lev. 17-26, and Ezek. 40-48)."[70]

However, one might say that Eichrodt modernizes and moralizes the concept of the covenant people. He shows an idealized picture of the early stages of Israel's life, but that from that early point everything degenerated.[71] Thus, as was observed, the concrete history of Israel loses its significance as the context through and in which Yahweh was working toward the fulfillment of the covenant.

The value of Eichrodt's work must be affirmed, nevertheless, for it remains true that the decisive relationship between God and people was expressed in the covenant and that a consideration of the covenant relationship brings out the uniqueness of Israel's faith in a personal, sovereign God - a characteristic that passes over the entire Old Testament.[72] Eichrodt understands that this

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[69]Ibid., 197 n. 3.

[70]Ibid., 408.

[71]Hempel, 300.

[72]Ibid., 211-14. "An unprejudiced evaluation of the Old Testament's humanizing of the deity leads us to see, however, that in fact it is not the spiritual nature of God which is the foundation of Old Testament faith. It is his personhood

anthropomorphic view of God by the people adduced by an anthropopathic

emphasis by the prophets has led Israel to have an inadequate conscience of the

spirituality of God which, in his opinion, emerges only in the period of the New

Testament.[73]

When one would expect that a study of the covenant would produce a

profound theocentric explanation of the People of God, it was found that Eichrodt,

in his eagerness to stress the personal nature of covenant religion and the

obligation it laid upon the people, seemed to suggest that the obedient actions of

men brought about the people of God.

The anthropocentricity in the configuration of the concept of People of God

observed in the work of Eichrodt has its extension, although in different nuances,

in subsequent ideologies and theologians. This is an aspect that may be noticed

also in the several tendencies of liberation movements which have appeared in the

last decades. Our concern in the next chapter is to present the concept of the

People of God in Liberation Theology, especially in the work of Gustavo

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- a personhood which is fully alive, and a life which is fully personal, and which is involuntarily thought of in terms of the human personality." (211).

[73]Ibid., 211-12. He says: "A doctrine of God as spirit in the philosophical sense will be sought in vain in the pages of the Old Testament. Not until John 4.24 it is possible to declare: 'God is a spirit.'" (212).

Gutiérrez -- perhaps the most exegetical of the liberation theologians in Latin America.

CHAPTER IV

THE CONCEPT OF PEOPLE OF GOD IN GUSTAVO GUTIÉRREZ

Introduction

In the vicissitudes of the history of Western thinking two great shifts took

place: one from the world to God and the other from God to man. The first

happened when Christianity supplanted the Greek view of the cosmos. While the

latter put the cosmos as the basis of everything, with Christianity God takes the

place of the cosmos. The second shift took place during the modern period as a

consequence of secularization and imanentism.[1] The first shift is a theocentric

shift; the second an anthropological one.

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[1]Johannes B. Metz, "The Christian and the World," in The Sacred and the Secular, Michael J. Taylor, ed. (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1968), 81 points out: "In our considerations . . . we have discovered a three-fold worldliness: (1) that which has not yet been mediated through the historical encounter with Christianity and is in this sense an "innocent" worldliness – somewhat as in ancient paganism; (2) worldliness as it was set free by the efficacy of Christianity in history; and (3) the worldliness which misunderstands this process of liberation as an autonomous and secularistic process and protests against its Christian origin and emancipates itself from it."

The beginnings of the anthropological shift may be traced to the period of the Renaissance.[2] The process that started with philosophy has influenced other sciences spreading its ramifications in the field of theology. Variegated political, economic, and sociological circumstances and different ways of political action delineated two main models of political theology: critical political theology and liberation theology. The first model has been developed mainly in Europe and the latter has been manifested especially in Latin America.

Since its official germination at the Second General Episcopal Conference of Roman Catholic Bishops, in particular during the Latin American Episcopal Council (CELAM)[3] at Medellín, Colombia, in 1968, Liberation Theology has run a meteoric trajectory.[4] According to their theologians, four different moments can

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[2]Patrick A. Heelan, "God, the Universe , and the Secular City," in The Sacred and the Secular, Michael J. Taylor, ed. (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1968), 139, says that "The Renaissance rediscovery of mathematics as the key to the science of nature was accompanied by a new attitude toward God and religion."

[3]CELAM was created to study issues of interest to the Church in Latin America, to coordinate pastoral activities, and to plan future conferences of Latin American bishops called by the Vatican. CELAM was born on the occasion of the first general Conference of the Latin American Bishops which was called by Pious XII and held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from July 25 to August 4, 1955.

[4]The history and development of Liberation Theology is beyond the scope of this study. For these aspects seen from "within" cf. Enrique Dussel, Historia de la Iglesia en América Latina (Barcelona: Nova Tierra, 1972. In English, A History

be identified since its beginning: gestation (1962-1968), genesis (1969-1971),

growth (1972-1979), and consolidation (1979-1987).[5] Even today, at least in Latin

America, liberationism, in its social consciousness and defense of the

underpriviledged, has continued to have a broad influence on society[6] and on

academy.[7] Although the impact of the Liberation Theology movement may have

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of the Church in Latin America: Colonialism to Liberation (1492-1979), trans.
Alan Neeley (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1981) and Leonardo Boff and
Clodovis Boff, Como Fazer Teologia da Libertação, 5th ed. (Petrópolis, Rio de
Janeiro: Vozes, 1991), 93-107. In English, Introducing Liberation Theology, trans.
Paul Burns (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis books, 1987), 66-77. História da
Teologia na América Latina (São Paulo: Paulinas, 1981) is a series worked by
numerous scholars and scheduled for 50 volumes. For a more analytical approach
see Harvie M. Conn, "Theologies of Liberation: An Overview," in Tensions in
Contemporary Theology, Stanley N. Gundry and Alan F. Johnson, ed. 2d ed.
(Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1986), 327-392.

[5]João Batista Libânio and Alberto Antoniazze, Vinte Anos de Teologia na
América Latina e no Brasil (Petrópolis: Vozes, 1994), 12-19.

[6]Antônio Flávio Pierucci and Reinaldo Prandi, A Realidade Social das
Religiões no Brasil: Religião, Sociedade e Política (São Paulo: Editora
Hucitec/USP, 1996), 23-105.

[7]"In Roman Catholic universities and seminaries, because most were raised
on liberation thought, priests, professors and pastoral workers continue to stress
the priority of the poor. If militant liberationism per se has died, still there are
rearticulations of the movement through women's liberation, black liberation, the
homeless movement (Sem Terra), ecology and humanitarianism – all needed and
helpful contributions to Brazilian society." J. Scott Horrell with Ziel Machado,
"Overview of Brazilian Theology," Vox Scripturae: Revista Teológica Latino-
Americana 7 (Junho de 1997): 93.

diminished, the process has gained new articulations.[8] During these three decades

tendencies in Liberation Theology have gone from a radical view of a "class

struggle" where the oppressed "have the right to stand up and fight for their

freedom with every means at their disposal"[9] as a liberation point of departure to a

more lenient position of a "barefooted"[10] initiative, and then to a metaphysical

"strong movement of spirituality."[11]

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[8]"In the 1980s, the number of Comunidades Eclesiais de Base [Base Church Communities] (CEBs) in Brazil reached an estimated 80,000 yet, in the most recent surveys of the mid-1990s, the number of CEBs remains at a remarkable 70,000." Ibid., 92.

[9]Canaan Banana, "The Biblical Basis for Liberation Struggle," International Review of Mission 68 (1979): 418.

[10]Examples of this segment can be seen in J[osé] Comblin, org. Teologia da Enxada: uma Experiência da Igreja no Nordeste (Petrópolis: Vozes, 1977). This work was elaborated from popular religion done in the countryside especially oriented towards the educational preparation of the future rural ministers. Also Clodovis Boff, Teologia Pé-no-chão (Petrópolis: Vozes, 1984), presents a theology which is done by theologians who work together with the people in their popular language using mimeographed texts to reflect on their daily problems and struggles.

[11]An example of this change is the position taken by Hugo Assmann, a former Brazilian priest, and one of the protagonists of the theology of revolution. His participation in liberation struggles led him to exile from his home to Uruguay, to Bolivia, and to Chile. After 12 years, he returned to Brazil in 1981. In a symposium held during the "Encontro dos Teólogos da Libertação" (Liberation Theologian's Encounter) in Embu-Guaçu, São Paulo, in 1989, Assmann was asked about his change from "radical" to someone today "concerned with the

In political terms, the events which profoundly touched Liberation

Theology were perhaps the defeat of Sandinism in the election in Nicaragua[12] and

the fall of the Socialism in Eastern Europe.[13] Although political actions from

within Latin America as well as from abroad may have affected Liberation

Theology's trajectory, its permanence as a movement will certainly be manifested

in different tendencies and movements.

Gutiérrez's Methodology and Concepts

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spirituality." His answer was, "My first books have a tone of intensity, of a urgency that reflects that context [Latin America in the decade of 1970] . . . Today I see that, if that battle is most entirely won, several of the crucial questions of that time are already practically overcome. Today I consider mediocre a Marxist - especially if he is Latin American - who repeats anti-clerical and anti-religious slogans that were in a large use at that time." And again "The true Liberation Theology is a powerful and vigorous chain, a strong movement of spirituality. Because that is the way it was born: from the poor's experience of faith." Faustino Luiz Couto Teixeira, Teologia da Libertação: Novos Desafios (São Paulo: Edições Paulinas, 1991), 56-58. My own translation.

[12]Before the presidential elections of February 25, 1990, in Nicaragua, the victory of the Sandinist Front was foreseen. After the unexpected defeat of the Sandinists, J. Hernández Pico made a self-evaluation in the line of acknowledgment of the deficiency of proximity with the poor and the non-perception of hunger due to the situation's deterioration and the insufficient valorization of war reality and of the obligation to the military service. These facts, according to Pico, did carry weight against a Sandinist victory. J. Hernández Pico, "El pueblo nicaragüense educó a los educadores. Autocriticando mi análisis de las elecciones 'ante factum'," Amanecer 66 (March-April 1990): 28-33.

[13]Leonardo Boff, "Implosão do Socialismo Autoritário e a Teologia da Libertação," Revista Eclesiástica Brasileira 50 (1990): 76-92.

While there is no monolithic system of thought and hermeneutics under the heading of Liberation Theology, perhaps two main considerations should be mentioned.[14] As already stated, it is generally accepted that Liberation Theology must be seen as part of a broader theological perspective known as political theology which has emerged during the last third of the twentieth century.[15] As a reaction to the consequences of the Enlightenment and secularization, political theology aimed at overcoming the relegation of faith to the individualistic sphere by proposing a new relationship between theory and action.[16]

The second consideration is that Liberation Theology has distinctive characteristics. There are three basic methodological principles common to those who share this perspective and that are relevant for our analysis of Gutiérrez's own

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[14]Jacob A. O. Preus III, "The Hermeneutics of Liberation Theology: A Lutheran Confessional Response to the Theological Methodology of Leonardo Boff" (Th. D. diss., Concordia Seminary, Saint Louis, 1986), 8-25, presents a good summary and analysis of the fundamental concepts of liberation theology. He mentions the following seven themes which are shared by the majority of liberation theologians: 1)Praxis is the starting point of theology; 2)History is the locus of theology; 3)A holistic view of the world; 4)The systemic nature of sin; 5)God is on the side of the oppressed; 6)The transformability of the present order; 7)The priority of the praxis over theory.

[15]Alfredo Fierro, The Militant Gospel (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1977), 129-360.

[16]Ibid., 3-47.

methodology. These three principles are the praxis of liberation, the preferential option for the poor, and a new hermeneutic as the historical subject of this perspective.

The praxis of Liberation

In an ecumenical meeting held in Peru, the Protestant theologian José Míguez Bonino delivered a speech dealing with the basic characteristics of theological reflection in Latin America. In that paper he pointed to the emergence in Latin America of a new consciousness of the role of the concrete historical process in theological reflection. Bonino suggested a new analytical tool for the historical socio-political dependence of Latin America. Given the structural character of this dependence, the way to change this reality was that of structural transformation.[17] Years later, in his book Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation, Bonino states that this new theological reflection was developed "integral with concrete social and political action."[18] He qualifies this theological reflection as a "synthetic act," where the content of faith undergoes a critical

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[17]José Míguez Bonino, "Nuevas Perspectivas Teológicas," in Pueblo Oprimido, Señor de la Historia (Montevidéo: Tierra Nueva, 1972),197-202.

[18]Idem, Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), xxvii.

assessment in their process of transformation.[19] Bonino's "new way of doing

theology" has given one of the basic melodies for the entire Liberation Theology's

orchestra.

Gustavo Gutiérrez in his main book <u>Teología de la Liberación</u>,[20] which

according to Liberation Theology sympathizers has helped him to become one of

its "best exponents,"[21] agrees with Bonino and adds another emphasis. Gutiérrez

conceives that what properly constitutes the perspective of Liberation Theology is

its critical function with respect to the activity of human beings in history. An

implication of this proposition is that the relationship of the process of

theologizing and the practice of the believer is understood in a different way from

that which has traditionally characterized Christian theology, which he

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[19]Ibid., 61.

[20]Gustavo Gutiérrez, <u>Teología de la Liberación: Perspectivas</u> (Lima: Centro de Estudios y Publicaciones, 1971). English translation, <u>A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation</u>, 13th. ed., trans. and ed. Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (Maryknoll: Orbis books, 1973), is used in this study. The first draft of this work was published as an essay entitled <u>Apuntes para Una Teología de la Liberación</u> (Lima: Centro de Estudios y Publicaciones, 1969).

[21]Robert McAfee Brown, <u>Makers of Contemporary Theology: Gustavo Gutiérrez</u> (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1980), 9. Brown's book is an exaltation of Gutiérrez's personality and work.

characterizes as an <u>ancilla ecclesiae</u>.[22] For Gutiérrez, in the Latin American

environment, the pastoral action of the church is not deduced from theological

premises. The practice of the ecclesial community becomes a privileged locus for

reflecting theologically. Theology is seen as the effort of seeking a critical

understanding for a faith immersed in history. Practice comes as the first step,

theology as the second. In Gutiérrez's opinion,

> Theology is a reflection, a critical attitude. Theology <u>follows</u>; it is the second
> step. What Hegel used to say about philosophy can likewise be applied to
> theology: it rises only at sundown. The pastoral activity of the church does not
> flow as a conclusion from theological premises. Theology does not produce
> pastoral activity; rather it reflects upon it. Theology must be able to find in
> pastoral activity the presence of the Spirit inspiring the action of the Christian
> community. A privileged <u>locus theologicus</u> for understanding the faith will be
> the life, preaching and historical commitment of the Church.[23]

Gutiérrez understands this reflection not as a denial but as a complement to

the emphasis of traditional theology. However, it is clear that his method is not

merely complementary but dominant. His lack of indulgence towards the

traditional teaching of the church is evident when he says that

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[22]Gutiérrez, 34-36.

[23]Gutiérrez, 11-12 (his emphasis). "The first step for liberation theology is
pre-theological." Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, 22.

> A theology which has its points of reference only 'truths' which have been established once and for all - and not the Truth which is also the Way - can be only static and, in the long run, sterile.[24]

In order to confront this stagnation, Gutiérrez suggests a reality of action.

Polemic in the context of Liberation Theology and in Gutiérrez is the use of the word "praxis" because of its possible connection with Marxist ideology. The confrontation between Christianity and Marxism has been multiple. First, there are those who maintain that communism is not an ideology that confronts Christianity because it is a project that has its source in the Bible.[25] Then, there are others who assert that Marxism "alters some of the criteria traditionally used for judging theological statements."[26] Thirdly, there are those - among them Lutherans-who agree that Marxism has similarities with Christianity but in its structure it is only a caricature of the latter.[27]

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[24]Ibid., 13.

[25]José Porfirio Miranda, Communism and the Bible, trans. Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1982).

[26]Marc Kolden, "Marxism and Latin American Liberation Theology," in Christians and the Many Faces of Marxism, ed. Wayne Stumme (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1984), 129.

[27]Martin H. Scharlemann, "Theology of Communism," Concordia Theological Monthly 39 (April 1968): 239-45. "Marxist theory is a caricature of Christian doctrine, rationalized and secularized by men who grew up within the

In fact Gutiérrez talks in a very general way of the relationship between theology and Marxism showing, however, evident sympathy for this ideology[28] and admitting that there is a Marxist influence on his concept of praxis.[29] In his earlier texts, Gutiérrez seems to think Marxism as a scientific theory on one hand and as a type of political praxis on the other. At least this is what one can infer when, in the same text, he observes that "Marxism is fundamentally a science,"[30] and some pages later he stresses that "Marxism is a compromise in history, a political compromise."[31] "However," says Gutiérrez, "one does not have the

church and who at times insisted they were speaking for the church. We can discuss the theology communism contains under the following headings: its doctrine of God; its view of sin; its belief in salvation; its teaching of man; and its concept of last things." (240).

[28]He quotes Sartre approvingly: "Marxism, as the formal framework of all philosophical thought, cannot be superseded." And concludes, "Be that as it may, contemporary theology does in fact find itself in direct and fruitful confrontation with Marxism, and it is to a large extent due to Marxism's influence that theological thought, searching for its own sources, has begun to reflect on the meaning of the transformation of this world and the action of man in history." Gutiérrez, 9.

[29]Ibid., 31-32.

[30]Idem, "Marxismo y Cristianismo," in Cristianos Latinoamericanos y Socialismo (Bogotá: CEDIAL, 1972), 23.

[31]Ibid., 27.

impression, in concrete, that Marxism is only a science."[32] According to him,

"people who are involved with Marxism and live it, do this as something much

more complete, more full . . . . It seems to me that a too scientific vision of

Marxism castrates it, and takes away from it the revolutionary engine."[33]

Perhaps the major influence of Marxism on Gutiérrez came through José

Carlos Mariátegui. In his book originally published in 1971, Gutiérrez presents

something as being a definition of Marxism for Mariátegui with which he seems to

completely agree:

> According to Mariátegui, Marxism is not "a body of principles which can be
> rigidly applied the same way in all historical climates and all social latitudes . .
> . . For Mariátegui as for many today in Latin America, historical materialism is
> above all "a method for the historical interpretation of society . . . . He was
> loyal to his sources, that is, to the central institutions of Marx . . ."[34]

In an article published in 1984, Gutiérrez is aware that in the interior of the

historical process of Marxism is what he calls "atheistic ideology" and "totalitarian

vision of history."[35] An important point that Gutiérrez makes is that theology is

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[32]Ibid., 22.

[33]Ibid.

[34]Idem, A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation, 90.

[35]Idem, "Teologia e Ciências Sociais," Revista Eclesiástica Brasileira 44
(1984): 801. The same article is reprinted as chapter two in Gutiérrez's recent

related to the Marxist analysis not directly but only as long as the latter is part of the social sciences as a whole. "This means," Gutiérrez says, "that if there is a meeting, it is between theology and the social sciences, and not between theology and Marxist analysis, except to the extent that elements of the latter are to be found in the contemporary social sciences . . ."[36]

It seems then that Marxism as it is incorporated in the works of Gutiérrez is not to "be interpreted in a literalistic fashion."[37] Liberation theologians in general -- and the same can be said of Gutiérrez -- see Marxism primarily as an instrument of social analysis more than a plan of social action. Gutiérrez uses a Marxist focus on the economic system to define the key factor in oppression and a Marxist understanding of class analysis as the central element for grasping the social situation. The structural character of the problem demands structural answers.

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book, The Truth Shall Make You Free: Confrontations, trans. Mattew J. O'Connell (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1991).

[36]Idem, The Truth Shall Make You Free: Confrontations, 802.

[37]Richard Neuhaus, "Liberation Theology and the Captivities of Jesus," in Mission Trends N° 3, ed. Gerald H. Anderson and Thomas Stransky (New York: Paulist; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 54.

Gutiérrez indicates that "a critical reflection on praxis" is also a "theory of a definite practice".[38] The Hegelian process of thesis, antithesis, synthesis is latent in this proposition. The starting point in doing theology has to be a personal commitment to the liberation of those who are exploited by an unjust society. Theology, then, is not the cause but the effect of praxis. Praxis is followed -- not preceded -- by theory which is the theology, and the circle is established.[39] In an article published thirteen years after his main book, Gutiérrez seems to soften this praxis binding it with the mystic practice of the Roman Catholic Church on one side and the necessity of the proclamation on the other. "The mystery [of Christian existence]," he says, "is revealed in the contemplation and in the

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[38]Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation, 11.

[39] His definition of theology as critical reflection is comprised of three concentric circles. First, it has to do with man's critical reflection on himself, on his basic principles. Second, it has to take a clear critical attitude toward economic and socio cultural issues in the life and reflection of the Christian community. Finally, it also has to be critic of society and the church. The third level is taken by Gutiérrez as the most important. The Christian community has to profess "a faith which works through charity," and this has to be real charity -- action and commitment to the service of men.

solidarity with the poor people, and it is this that we call <u>first act</u>, the Christian life; only later this life can inspire the reasoning, and is the <u>second act</u>."[40]

The centrality of praxis and the radicalization of historical and political language to address the political situation in Latin America have persuaded theologians to focus their work on the struggle which the exploited classes have undertaken to abolish the condition of oppression and to construct a new society free from every form of exploitation. The corollary of this insistence leads to another distinctive methodological principle of Liberation Theology's perspective, namely, the preferential option for the poor. Gutiérrez strongly argues for this emphasis when he asserts that what determines the production of an authentic liberation theology is the self--redemption of its protagonists.[41]

The Preferential Option for the Poor

Gutiérrez perceives the emphasis on the preferential option for the poor as one of the major distinctions between the perspectives of European and North

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[40]Idem, "Falar sobre Deus," <u>Concilium</u> 191 (1984): 44. His emphases. My own translation.

[41] "But in the last instance we will have an authentic theology of liberation only when the oppressed themselves can freely raise their voice and express themselves directly and creatively in society and in the heart of the People of God, when they themselves 'account for the hope,' which they bear, when they are the

American theology, and that of Liberation Theology in Latin America. His main

contention is that while the historical subjects of the Northern hemisphere

theology are those who represent the ideology of the Modern World, in Liberation

Theology faith is lived and reflected from the perspective of the poor. "It is a

theocentric option," he says, "based on the practice of solidarity and the practice

of prayer among us."[42]

Gutiérrez does not hesitate to point out that "Latin American countries are

being kept in a condition of neo-colonialism."[43] Implicit in this affirmation are two

accusations. One is directed to recent circumstances and of political character

against foreign interference in Latin American countries.[44] The other is directed

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protagonists of their own liberation." Idem, A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation, 307. Cf. Idem, "Falar sobre Deus," 47.

[42]Idem, "From Exclusion to Discipleship," Concilium 4 (1994): 88.

[43] Idem, A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation, 109.

[44]Harvie M. Conn, 332, illustrates: "In the 1950s and 1960s the full impact of Latin America's poverty and oppression came to be felt. With great expectations, the people of Southern Hemisphere had heard the United Nations proclaim in 1950 the first 'decade for development' and watched John F. Kennedy launch the Alliance for Progress in 1961. . . . Cumulative frustration over the development programs began to grow. People began to make puns on the 'para' in 'Alianza para el Progreso.' As a preposition, para means 'for.' As a verb, it means 'impede.' Thus the Alliance for Progress became to many the Alliance that

towards the historical horizon in the past and against the religious oppression of

the Roman Catholic Church in the Latin American continent.[45] Although the

former accusation has continued to take place in Gutiérrez's writings, the latter has

been his target of strong observations. In his very recent work, <u>En Busca de los</u>

Impedes Progress. There was more than humor in the joke, 'The rich get richer
and the poor get kids.'"

[45]Riolando Azzi, <u>A Cristandade Colonial: Mito e Ideologia</u> (Petrópolis:
Vozes, 1987), traces the steps of how the Roman Catholic Church implanted
herself in Brazil in the first three centuries in the context of the colonization
project of Portugal and Spain in Latin America. The history of the church in
Brazil, motivated by the Protestant Reform in Europe, is an illustration of what
happened in Latin America with small changes. It is possible to say that the
predominant theology in the official ecclesiastical environment (which began with
the discovery of Brazil in 1500 and continued until the expulsion of the Jesuits
from the country in 1759) followed the traditional principle that "outside the
church there is no salvation"-- a principle that was understood as "outside the
Portuguese-Brazilian 'Christendom' there is no salvation." In fact, Portugal's
kingdom was interpreted by the Catholic thinkers of that period as a revival of
Israel's kingdom. Analogous to the Hebrew people, predestined by God as the
carrier of the salvation, the Lusitanians considered themselves as God's elected
people -- His new salvific presence in the world. Similarly to the history of Israel,
the political and commercial vicissitudes of the Lusitanians are seen as
manifestations of God's will and presence. For this reason, the conquests and
usurpations of the lands by the Portuguese crown were legitimated as an
expression of God's design on behalf of the expansion of "Christendom."
"Christendom" meant the realization of Christ's kingdom on earth. Since the
Lusitanian realm was the <u>locus</u> of salvation, the missionary task was conceived as
an efficacious instrument to bring the Indians to Portuguese culture. To be a
Christian, for the Indians as for the Africans brought to the colony, meant the
abandonment of their cultural integrity for an integration in the values, uses, and
customs of the Lusitanian civilization. Besides, the Indians' subjection was
established as a necessary prerequisite for evangelisation. Faith was not an option,
but an imposition required by the ecclesiastic model itself.

Pobres de Jesucristo[46] Gutiérrez makes a significant analysis of the life and work

of Bartolemé de Las Casas, a Spanish missionary who came to South America ten

years after Columbus. In this historical research Gutiérrez presents a well

documented report of how Las Casas understood the vision the Conquers had from

the Indians. The depreciation the Indians had from the European Christendom was

evident. As individuals, the Indians were considered people of a lower class. In

the opinion of some of the Spanish clergy the Indians "lack intelligence and

understanding" and "according to everybody, they are like speaking animals."[47]

According to Gutiérrez, these views gave the Conquers the reasons for justifying

slavery theologically.[48] Gutiérrez's efforts are against this imagery.

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[46]Gutiérrez, En Busca de los Pobres de Jesucristo, (Lima: Instituto
Bartolomé de Las Casas, Centro de Estudios y Publicaciones, 1992). Portuguese
translation, Em Busca dos Pobres de Jesus Cristo: O Pensamento de Bartolomeu
de Las Casas, trans. Sérgio José Schirato (São Paulo: Paulus, 1995), is used in this
study.

[47]Ibid., 335.

[48]"Church Fathers and the great Scholastics -- Thomas Aquinas is among
them -- consider that slavery is, before anything, a punishment. It is a sin's
consequence. But they accept the validity of the reasons about the origin of
slavery and because of that, they take slavery as legal." Ibid., 387.

Inspired by Dietrich Bonhoeffer's expression "from below,"[49] Gutiérrez

terms his theology "underside of history,"[50] the place where the poor are, since in

his view they are "the last in history."[51] Gutiérrez's definition of "poor" however

is much more sociological than theological. He says:

> Poor people are ones who have been shunted to the sidelines of our socio-
> cultural world. Poor people are those who are oppressed and exploited, who
> are deprived of the fruits of their labor and stripped of their life and reality as
> human beings. Poor people are members of the proletarian class. That is why
> the poverty of the poor is not a summons to alleviate their plight with acts of
> generosity but rather a compelling obligation to fashion an entirely different
> social order.[52]

This perspective requires a reinterpretation of the salvific message of the

Gospel and of the faith. That is what Gutiérrez and other liberation theologians

call the "epistemological rupture" which determines the "locus" of Liberation

Theology: the popular masses that struggle for their historical, political, cultural,

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[49]Gutiérrez, "Os limites da Teologia Moderna: Um Texto de Bonhoeffer," Concilium, 45 (1979): 555.

[50]Idem, The Power of the Poor in History, trans. Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1983), 169-221.

[51]Idem, Compartilhar a Palavra no Decorrer do Ano Litúrgico, trans. Rodrigo Contrera (São Paulo, Paulinas, 1996), 297.

[52]Idem, "Liberating Praxis and Christian Faith," in Frontiers of Theology in Latin America, ed. Rosino Gibellini, trans. John Drury (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1974), 8.

and spiritual freedom.[53] They trace this epistemological break in Latin America from the time of the Spanish colonization to the present. Although according to them there is little data of the consciousness of the epistemological rupture in history books,[54] there are evidences that indicate the recovery of the memory of the praxis of liberation in the present. Gutiérrez states that this recollection lives in the memory of the poor being made explicit in numerous cultural expositions but especially in popular religion.[55]

The New Hermeneutics

Another methodological principle that determines Gutiérrez's view of the concept of People of God is his hermeneutical approach to the Scriptures. In general, in order to elaborate a biblical theology, what liberation theologians postulate is not an analysis of society in the light of Scriptures. Rather than a

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[53]Idem, The Power of the Poor in History, 194.

[54]Leonardo Boff, for example, says that the history of humankind has been written with a white hand. Boff uses this expression in relation to the history of Brazil. The reference is to the assumption that the world history has been written by the victors and not by the victims. Leonardo Boff, Teologia do Cativeiro da Libertação (Lisboa: Multinova, 1976), 34-56. Gutiérrez refers to this expression in his "Os pobres da Igreja," Concilium 124 (1977): 466.

[55]Gutiérrez, The Power of the Poor in History, 201-6.

movement from theology to society, Liberation Theology is a movement from society to theology.

In fact, the starting point in terms of hermeneutical endeavor is more the interpreter's reality than the Biblical text's horizon. Leonardo Boff, for example, puts the human reality at least on the same level with Scriptures in respect to authority when he says that "the will of God is not to be found solely in the classic texts of Scripture. Life itself is the place where God's salvific will for human beings is made manifest."[56] For Raul Vidales the Scriptures are authoritative on a dialectical dimension. For him, the Bible must be re-read "from the context of the other 'Bible' known as human history. It is one dialectical activity, not two separate, parallel texts."[57] For Hugo Assmann the authoritative text is very clear when he says that "the 'text' is our situation, and our situation is our primary and basic reference point. The others -- the Bible, tradition, the magisterium or teaching authority of the Church, history or dogma, and so on -- even though they need to be worked out in contemporary practice, do not constitute a primary

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[56]Leonardo Boff, "Christ's Liberation via Opposition: An Attempt at Theological Construction from the Standpoint of Latin America," in Frontiers of Theology in Latin America, 118.

[57]Raul Vidales, "Methodological Issues in Liberation Theology," in Frontiers of Theology in Latin America, 40.

source of "truth in itself" unconnected with the historical 'now' of truth-in-action."[58]

Assuming a more radical position the Liberation Theology historian Enrique Dussel underlines that "we must come to realize that day-to-day history is the one and only place where God reveals himself to us.... God reveals himself before our eyes -- in our neighbor and in history. That is the privileged place of divine revelation."[59] This means that exegesis is determined by the individual's subjectivism. That is what Rubem Alves says when he points out that "from a different perspective the same biblical material could probably be read in a different way. Exegesis is always done from one's relative position in history."[60] In this line of thinking Severino Croatto suggests that the "application" of the message to a global situation of oppression is not possible because this would be

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[58]Hugo Assmann, A Theology for a Nomad Church, trans. Paul Burns (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1976), 104.

[59]Enrique Dussel, History and Theology of Liberation: A Latin American Perspective, trans. John Drury (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1976), 139. His emphasis.

[60]Rubem Azevedo Alves, A Theology of Human Hope (Saint Meinrad, IN: Abbey Press, 1975), xiv.

"anti--hermeneutical." Each "hermeneutical moment" is expected to say its "own

words" and confront the Word from its own situation.[61]

If the point of departure is the social context, and this context determines

the meaning of the Biblical text, then this meaning is subject to the changes of the

social context. Such is basically "the hermeneutical circle" proposed by Juan Luis

Segundo, defined as an endless process in which Scripture and the lives of the

basic Christian communities continually intersect and challenge each other.[62] It is

a consensus among scholars that Segundo's method systematizes the hermeneutics

of Liberation Theology on a general basis. Unlike the academic theology of the

past, which characterized itself as impartial and, in consequence, was unaware of

its unconscious partiality, Segundo's "hermeneutical circle" demands such

partiality from its participant -- a compromise to change the reality and as a result

to change theology. Based on four steps that are essential for that circle,[63] the

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[61]J. Severino Croatto, Exodus: A Hermeneutics of Freedom (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1981), 11.

[62]Juan Luis Segundo, The Liberation of Theology, trans. John Drury (Maryknoll, New York; Orbis Books, 1976).

[63]Ibid., 9. "Firstly, there is our way of experiencing reality, which leads us to ideological suspicion. Secondly, there is the application of our ideological suspicion to the whole ideological superstructure in general and to theology in particular. Thirdly there comes a new way of experiencing theological reality that

method demands a "continuous change in our interpretation of the Bible which is

dictated by the continuing changes in the present-day reality."[64]

In concert with Liberation Theology's hermeneutics, Gutiérrez states that

his theology is an attempt at reflection which takes as its points of departure "the

Gospel and the experiences of men and women committed to the process of

liberation . . ."[65] The critical reflection on praxis has to be carried out, according to

him, in the light of faith taking into account "the sources of revelation."[66] Even

though he works with expressions like "revelation," and "the Word of God," or

even "the Scriptures," and "the Gospel" his emphasis is on the revolutionary praxis

to change social structures. In his opinion "God's word comes to us in proportion

to our participation in the coming historical future."[67] Orthodoxy is replaced by

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leads us to exegetical suspicion, that is, to the suspicion that the prevailing
interpretation of the Bible has not taken important pieces of data into account.
Fourthly we have our new hermeneutic, that is, our new way of interpreting the
fountainhead of our faith (i. e., Scripture) with the new elements at our disposal."
Emphases his.

[64]Ibid., 8.

[65]Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation, ix.

[66]Ibid., 12.

[67]Idem, "Praxis de Libertação. Teologia e Anúncio," Concilium 96 (1974):
743.

"orthopraxis" and works almost take the place of the Word. "The exegesis of the Word . . . happens in the events."[68] The Sola Scriptura principle is relativized in Gutiérrez's hermeneutical approach and in this sense he is consonant with the theology of his own church.

The Nature of the People of God

As it was shown above, the emphasis of Liberation Theology is on praxis, not on abstract ecclesiological definitions. This aspect is relevant in Gutiérrez's concept of People of God. For him the Church's activity is more significant than the Church's identity. Several decisions made by the Second Vatican Council are related to the Liberation Theology. Significant for this study are the conciliar pronouncements concerning the nature and the mission of the Church. The formal concept of People of God for the Roman Catholic Church has been established by the council's central document Lumen Gentium. In contrast to the opinions of some theologians,[69] Christopher Butler asserts that "No previous ecumenical

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[68]Ibid., 747.

[69] Some analysts see difficulties in the formulation process of the definition of the People of God by the council: Enrique Dussel, "'Populus Dei' in Populo Pauperum: From Vatican II to Medellín and Puebla," in The People of God Amidst the Poor, ed. Leonardo Boff and Virgil Elizondo (Edinburgh, Scotland: T & T Clark LTD, n. d). Also Einar Sigurbjörnsson, The Ministry within the People of God: The Development of the doctrines of the Church and on the Ministry in

council had succeeded in presenting to the world anything like a comprehensive

ecclesiology."[70] The <u>Dogmatic Constitution on the Church</u> affirmed that "the

Church, in Christ, is in the nature of sacrament -- a sign and instrument, that is, of

communion with God and of unity among all men." The Church is also "the

universal sacrament of salvation."[71] The council does not define the word

<u>sacramentum</u>. But in the traditional ecclesiastical terminology of the Council of

Trent (1545-1563) sacrament carries the meaning of "the symbol of a sacred thing

and a visible form of the invisible grace."[72] Commenting on the ecclesiology of

Vatican II Boaventura Kloppenburg, member of the Council's Commission on

Theology, explains the sacramental character of the church on the basis of the

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the Second Vatican Council's <u>De Ecclesia</u>, vol. 34 <u>Studia Theologica Lundensia</u> (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1974). Sigurbjörnsson affirms, "We do not meet definitions and clear-cut descriptions of the community as it actually is. Instead we meet considerations of the nature and mission of the community of faith which has been chosen by God to become the People of God who knows Him in truth and serves Him in holiness." (85).

[70]Christopher Butler, <u>The Theology of Vatican II</u>, rev. and enl. ed. (London: Danton, Longman & Todd, 1981), 52.

[71]Austin Flannery, gen. ed. <u>Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents</u>, rev. ed. (North Porth, New York: Costello Publishing Company, 1988), 350, 407.

[72]Boaventura Kloppenburg, <u>A Eclesiologia do Vaticano II</u> (Petrópolis, Rio de Janeiro: Vozes, 1971), 28. My own translation.

Biblical word mysterium. Interpreting the "mind of the council" he asserts that the church as a mystery means that "the Church is a divine reality transcendent and salvific visibly present among men."[73]

Gutiérrez feels that the council established the guidelines for a "new ecclesiological perspective" when it spoke of the church as a sacrament. Even though Vatican II was not able to free itself totally from "the burden of a heavy heritage,"[74] it made it possible to reject the traditional medieval doctrine established by the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) that extra ecclesiam nulla salus.[75] In fact, Vatican II opens the door for a concept of People of God which

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[73]Ibid.. Emphasis his.

[74]Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation, 258-59.

[75]G. C. Berkouwer, The Second Vatican Council and the New Catholicism, trans. Lewis B. Smedes (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965), 178-220, calls attention that this expression goes back to Cyprian's observation that he who separates from the Church excludes himself from the promises of the Church and that who does not have the Church as mother does not have God as Father. Cyprian's illustration that no more than it was possible to survive outside the ark is it possible to be saved outside the Church was very often used in warnings about leaving the Church. In 1441, the council of Florence established that anyone not in the Church -- pagan, Jew, schismatic or heretic -- could not become participant in eternal life. At Vatican I the Roman Church reaffirmed this declaration, but at Vatican II this exclusivity seems to be more fluid. Berkouwer concludes that "A clear explanation of the shift in the Church's use of the extra ecclesiam dictum is hard to achieve." (192).

encompasses more than the groups that profess to be Christian. In the Lumen

Gentium the relationships of the one People of God are described by means of

concentric circles that start with the (a) Catholic faithful, (b) extends to the

"baptized . . . who do not profess the Catholic faith," and (c) includes those who

have not received the Gospel and "those who without any fault of theirs have not

arrived at an explicit knowledge of God, and who, not without grace, strive to lead

a good life."[76] Reckoned in this third wave of the circle are the Moslems and the

Jews.[77]

The pendulum seemed to swing too far. But, for Gutiérrez this is the time.

On the basis of the Council's teaching Gutiérrez holds that the church is a

sacrament of universal salvation. Coherent with the Council's openness towards

universalism he stresses that every human being, Christian or not, is saved if he

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[76]Flannery, 365-68.

[77]Walter M. Abott, gen. ed., The Documents of Vatican II: All Sixteen
Official Texts Promulgated by the Ecumenical Council 1963-1965, trans. from the
Latin (New York: The America Press, 1966), 34 note 56, explains: "Extending the
range of its view beyond the Christian fold, the Council now touches on the
relationship of non-Christian communities to the Church, thus preparing the way
for the Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions.
Special mention is here made of the Jews and Mohammedans because of the
biblical basis of their respective faiths."

opens himself to God and other people consciously or not.[78] In the same vein,

divine grace, whether accepted or not, is present in all men.[79] The emphasis does

not fall on the condemnation of some, but on the salvation of all. This is possible

because, according to the Peruvian priest, no dichotomy exists between a "profane

world" and a "sacred world." The theology of the "two planes" lost its influence.

"The 'pro-fane,' that which is located outside the temple, no longer exists."[80]

Every man is a temple of God, not only the Christian.[81] Thus, everyone is part of

the People of God for Gutiérrez, even the Moslems and Jews, be they Christians or

not. On the basis of 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 and 6:19, in a context where the

apostle is addressing himself only to the Christians at Corinth, Gutiérrez expands

the indwelling of the Spirit to all human creatures without distinction.[82] In this

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[78]Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation, 150.

[79]Ibid..

[80]Ibid., 194. Juan Luis Segundo will follow Gutiérrez in this conception of world -- church -- history. He says that there is no distinction between sacred and secular, for the sacred is "in the entire edifice, in the big temple we are to construct in history, and not just in the cement that is the little temple." The Community Called Church (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1973), 75.

[81]Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation, 193.

[82]Ibid., 192-93.

sense his theology concerning human salvation is not determined by individual

faith through the merits of Jesus Christ but by the idea of universalistic and

inclusive theology. Salvation does not have a special locus; it is everywhere.

Since "God's temple is human history," Gutiérrez concludes "all salvation is an

intrahistorical reality."

With the undifferentiated universalization of the presence of God, the

corollary is also that "we meet God in our encounter with men," that is,

"especially with the poor," -- more precisely -- "those whose human features have

been desfigured by oppression."[83] In a recent book Gutiérrez maintains that "the

other is our way for reading God."[84] He adds that "it is a fact that our neighbors,

and especially the poor, are mediators of the encounter with Christ."[85]

Furthermore, the neighbor is also a locus of salvation. If the traditional theology

of the Roman Church denies that outside of the church there is no salvation, extra

ecclesiam nulla salus, Gutiérrez paraphrased this thinking by asserting that

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[83]Ibid., 152, 194, 201, 202.

[84]Idem, We Drink from Our Own Well: The Spiritual Journey of a People, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1984), 112.

[85]Idem, The Truth Shall Make You Free: Confrontations, 36.

"outside the neighbor there is no salvation."[86] Gutiérrez, along with other

liberation theologians, takes the eschatological reference of Matthew 25:31-45 in

order to proclaim that Christ is present in the poor as a sacrament of salvation for

the non-poor people. Salvation for him is not so much a matter of the heart, but of

the contextual reality.

Gutiérrez attempts to avoid all forms of dualism in his theological insights.

For him we can no longer distinguish between sacred history and secular history.

The history of salvation means the salvation of history. Theological models that

locate the purpose of history on a pedestal above the historical reality are relics of

abstract rhetoric. Gutiérrez summarizes, saying that "there is only one history -- a

'Christo--finalized' history."[87]

The relationship of the Church with the world is also made by Gutiérrez in

dynamic terms. He defends an interaction between the two. The focus on the

church as a sacrament and a place of liberation implies a dialectical relationship

between the church and the world. Gutiérrez stresses that the church has to be

"evangelized by the world." The amalgam goes in such a way that "a theology of

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[86]Rudolph Blank, Seis Tesis Concernientes a la Liberdad en Cristo y la Liberación, (Saint Louis, Concordia Publishing House, n. d.), 12.

[87]Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation, 153.

the Church in the world should be complemented by 'a theology of the world in the Church.'"[88]

The People of God and World Unity

In addition to the emphasis that the church is a universale salutis sacramentum, the Second Vatican Council also stressed that the church is likewise the sign of unity among men. In Gutiérrez's opinion, the unity of the church will not be achieved apart from the unity of the world. "Unity is a gift of God and a historical conquest of man. Unity is not something already given. It is a process, the result of overcoming all that divides men."[89] Gutiérrez understands that what divides man from man is social injustice. Class struggle is a reality that cannot be denied and is faced also by the church. Following Louis Althusser, Gutiérrez points out that the "myth of the Christian community" must disappear and the church must be "'reconverted' to the service of the workers in the class struggle."[90] In Gutiérrez's view this perspective places ecumenism in a "more realistic focus"

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[88]Ibid., 260-61.

[89]Ibid., 277-78.

[90]Ibid., 277.

because it would describe not only the efforts towards Christian unity but the

unification of the whole world alike "through unecclesiastical places."[91]

Hamartiology and the Kingdom of God

According to Gutiérrez, the people of God has to be involved in efforts

towards world unity because the kingdom of God is already present. The kingdom

is a gift of God and the work of man. The progress of the βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ on

earth is related to the participation of human action. This participation fosters the

expectation of a new era oriented towards the future, the eschatological reality of

the "anthropophany."[92] Gutiérrez's definition of kingdom is heavily based on

Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed, where the idea of man's self-

redemption is latent.[93] In order to understand man's glorious epiphany, it is

necessary to relate it also to Gutiérrez's conception of hamartiology.

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[91]Ibid., 278.

[92]Ibid., 213.

[93]Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Herder & Herder, 1970). Freire, a Brazilian educator, published this provocative treatise on literacy and empowerment in 1970 during the "genesis" of Liberation Theology. By showing that traditional formal education only contributed to a silent student culture, by insisting that education must lead to progress, and by building upon indigenous languages, Freire provided both inspiration and an instructional methodology for peoples seeking liberation from systems of exploitation.

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Gutiérrez distinguishes three levels of liberation: 1) liberation of a social, political, cultural, and economic kind; 2) human liberation with its various aspects; 3) freedom from sin. It is a process that has several aspects that cannot be mingled. He calls it the "Chalcedonian principle."[94] Gutiérrez does not deny the reality of sin; on the contrary, he affirms it emphatically.[95] However, his unitary view of History and his assertion that a person cannot be saved apart from his or her worldly context, makes of sin more a collective dimension than an individual concern.[96] Sin is localized, visible, identifiable "in oppressive structures, in the exploitation of man by man, in the domination and slavery of peoples, races, and social classes."[97] In this sense, for Gutiérrez, as for the majority of liberation theologians, the Exodus event is paradigmatic because "it is in this event that dislocation introduced by sin is resolved and justice and injustice, oppression and liberation are determined. Yahweh liberates the Jewish people politically in order

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[94] Gutiérrez, The Truth Shall Make You Free: Confrontations, 14, 122.

[95]"In my own approach to theology, sin occupies a central place." Ibid., 138.

[96]Idem, A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation, 152.

[97]Ibid., 175.

to make them a holy nation."[98] Sin is viewed by Gutiérrez as systemic and the

"holy nation" the goal of an egalitarian conjunction. In his own words, "The

liberation of Israel is a political action. It is the breaking away from a situation of

despoliation and misery and the beginning of the construction of a just and

fraternal society. It is the suppression of disorder and the creation of a new

order."[99]

In fact, Gutiérrez views two kinds of sins; one of the poor, the other of the

rich people. The poor people are sinners in a different sense. Their sin is not as

serious as the sin of the wealthy people. The primary sin of the poor is

characterized by the Jobian nature of despair and fatalism that came from the

outside.[100] The poor are justified when they abandon their despair and fatalism

and believe in the message of the kingdom which is described as an egalitarian

society in which there is justice and in which the social classes have been

eliminated. This perception is based on Paulo Freire's concept of

"conscientização." According to Freire, the human being's oppressive situation

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[98]Ibid., 157; 281, n. 25.

[99]Ibid., 155.

[100]Idem, On Job: God -Talk and Suffering of the Innocent (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1987), 97.

could only be changed by "conscientizing" and "problem-posing." This process

touches a person's own psyche and motivates him towards liberation.[101] Gutiérrez

insists that when poor people experience "conscientization," they begin to

understand that their poverty, misery, and suffering are not the result of original

sin, predestination, fate, destiny, the will of God or inferior race.[102] Rather, the

poor suffers because of the sin of the rich and the unjust structures which have

been imposed on them. A reaction against this inadequacy is imperative.[103] Once

the poor are converted to the message of the kingdom they begin to be agents of

their own liberation and start to contribute to the transformation of their own and

of the world's destiny. That is the reason why Gutiérrez takes the Exodus as

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[101]Freire, 36, 39.

[102]Gutiérrez, We Drink from Our Own Wells: The Spiritual Journey of a People, 73.

[103]At this point Gutiérrez breaks again with the traditional view of sin that reigns in Latin America since the colonial period. According to the teachings of the Church, the unjust situations in the world were simply consequences of original sin. Each one, then, should peacefully accept the luck ascribed to him without trying to change the situation since it was declared as determined by the will of God. Rebellion on the part of the slaves against their owners was considered as mortal sin. Jorge Benci, Economia Cristã dos Senhores no Governo dos Escravos (São Paulo: Grijalbo, 1977), 77, a Jesuit, affirms that the slavery and the captivity must be taken and passively accepted as a mere consequence of original sin.

paradigmatic of salvation. The Exodus is linked to creation in the same sense that

creation is linked to salvation. For Gutiérrez, the Holy Spirit is given to all people

at birth before any activity of the Word or Sacraments. Love is latent, the Spirit is

dormant within the individual and must be awakened by the announcement of the

kingdom or <u>conscientización</u>.[104] On the other hand, by the constant involvement in

the process of liberation of the poor from oppression the non-poor becomes part of

the kingdom. It is through identification with the poor and in the struggle for their

liberation that the non-poor are converted. In other words, the poor are considered

the sacrament of salvation for the non-poor.

Gutiérrez is correct in broadening the concept of sin in order to include its

social dimension but his view nevertheless remains too narrow. Sin, for him, is

not perversity as Lutherans view it. It is the Lutheran affirmation that after the

lapsarian predicament sin is intrinsic in human nature and provokes the wrath of

God which is real and annihilating; it is a slavery to Satan; it is a state of spiritual

death and eternal condemnation; it is a disease located in the center of the person's

nature. Sin is a state of corruption so profound that the elimination of all poverty

and oppression does not alter in the least the sinful human condition before God.

Gutiérrez's monism reduces the character of God's grace and salvation. It is true

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[104]Gutiérrez, <u>A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation,</u>

that Gutiérrez does not deny God's grace. But it is evident that the sola fide of the

Reformation is again confronted with the gratia infusa of the Roman Catholic

Theology.

Gutiérrez refers to repentance. Repentance, however, apparently is not

connected to the individual's consciousness of personal sin. Instead of being

viewed in a theological and vertical dimension, repentance for him is turned to the

historical horizon.[105] More important than repentance is the necessity of

conversion. Conversion is for him the "nodal point of spirituality." But far from

being the inner transformation of the individual in relationship to God, "the

center" of this spirituality is "on a conversion to the neighbor."[106] Conversion,

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159-60.

[105]In an article about America's 500th Centennial he refers to the necessity of "penitential celebrations" because everyone has a responsibility for the way the poor lived and live and the Christian way to assume this responsibility is "asking a humble forgiveness to God and to the history's victims because of our complicity." Idem, "O Quinto Centenário," Concilium 232 (1990): 741. The same article was published as the excursus "Hacia el Quinto Centenario" in his book Dios o el Oro en Las Indias: Siglo XVI, 3d ed. (Lima: Instituto Bartolomé de Las Casas, Centro de Estudios y Publicaciones, 1990), 179-191. Originally, it appeared with the same title in Páginas 99 (October 1989): 7-15.

[106] Idem, "Liberation, Theology and Proclamation," in The Mystical and Political Dimension of the Christian Faith, ed. Claude Geffré and Gustavo Guttiérez [sic] (New York: Herder and Herder, 1974), 66. Idem, A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation, 204. Italics his.

then, seems to be based on the dialectical relationship of the individual's love to

his neighbor rather than in the relationship to God as the primary source. God, in

this case, would be the synthesis of the process.[107]Only when the center of gravity

is established outside the individual, can the polarity of the "old" and "new man"

be portrayed. He explains:

> Rediscovering the other means entering his own world. It also means a break
> with ours. The world of inward-looking absorption with self, the world of the
> "old man," is not only interior but is socio-culturally conditioned. To enter the
> world of the other, the poor man, with the actual demands involved, is to begin
> to be a "new man." It is a process of conversion.[108]

However, it is clear that with Gutiérrez conversion has, above all, a political

dimension because "it is always an exit from oneself and an openness to the Lord

in the midst of a political activity . . ."[109]

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[107]Idem, <u>A Theology of Liberation; History, Politics and Salvation</u>, 206-07.
He says: "Only in this perspective will we be able to understand that the 'union
with the Lord,' which all spirituality proclaims, is not a separation from man; to
attain this union, I must go through man, and the union, in turn, enables me to
encounter man more fully."

[108]Idem, "Liberation, Theology and Proclamation," 59.

[109]Idem, "Movimentos de Libertação e Teologia," <u>Concilium</u> 93 (1974):
409. "Our conversion process is affected by the socio-economic, political,
cultural, and human environment in which it occurs. Without a change in these
structures, there is no authentic conversion". Idem, <u>A Theology of Liberation:
History, Politics and Salvation</u>, 205.

As a conclusion of this general analysis of Gutiérrez's view of the people of God it must be said that his major emphasis is not on the nature of the people of God but on its mission and function. Since Gutiérrez does not make any effort to expound the nature of the people of God on the basis of Scriptures, his emphasis is more sociological than theological. This can be better demonstrated in the next section.

The Purpose of the People of God

A crucial and compromising affirmation of Gutiérrez concerning the purpose of the People of God is that it "is not to save in the sense of 'guaranteeing heaven.' The work of salvation is a reality which occurs in history."[110] The traditional and Biblical view that the Gospel is the power of God for the salvation of those who believe is taken by Gutiérrez as a conservative view which in reality only attempts to "ideologize the Gospel."[111] Since salvation is never ahistorical, it cannot be simply spiritual. In a sense Gutiérrez is right when he asseverates that "The mission of the Church cannot be defined in the abstract." However, he

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[110] Idem, A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation, 255.

[111] Idem, "Liberation, Theology and Proclamation," 73-74.

assumes a radical position when he proclaims that "Any claim to noninvolvement in politics, is nothing but a subterfuge to keep things as they are."[112]

In his book La Fuerza Histórica de los Pobres[113] Gutiérrez makes an analysis of the documents published by the Third Episcopal Conference held in Puebla, Mexico, in 1979 and concludes that the bishops were right in declaring that the preference for the poor does not exclude other people such as the rich from the Gospel. The emphasis is in the term "preference," not in "exclusion." In support of his position Gutiérrez points out that in the Old Testament Yahweh has a preference for the poor, defending them against oppressors.[114] He also analyses the IV Assembly of the Latin American Episcopade held in Saint Domingo, in 1992. In its Document the Assembly presents the title "preferential options." "Among them," says Gutiérrez, "besides the option for the poor, is the option for

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[112]Idem, A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation, 266.

[113]Idem, La Fuerza Histórica de los Pobres: Seleción de Trabajos (Lima: Centro de Estudios y Publicaciones, 1979), 242-48.

[114]Ibid., 242-48. "Universality and predilection seal the announcement of the Kingdom. God directs his message of life to all human beings, without exception, but at the same time he manifests his preferential love for the poor and oppressed." Idem, El Dios de la Vida (Lima: Centro de Estudios y Publicaciones, 1989). Portuguese translation O Deus da Vida (São Paulo: Edições Loyola, 1992), 155, is used in this study.

the young people, the family, the lay people, the evangelization of the modern culture, and others."[115] "However," adds Gutiérrez, the adjective "preferential is only given to the poor; all the others are qualified simply as options."[116] In Gutiérrez's theological system the poor receive such a central place before God that their problem becomes a problem of God and that is really "teo-logia."[117] The involvement of the People of God in this divine problem is necessary because what is sought beyond the struggle against misery, injustice, and exploitation is the creation of a "new man." That objective coincides, in a sense, with the teaching of the Bible. Gutiérrez, however, seems to be thinking also about Marxism as indicated by the footnote where he cites the words of Marx who uses the example of the men who are to live in the new world as the successors of Moses and the

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[115]Idem, "Documento: Um Corte Transversal," in Santo Domingo: Ensaios Teológico-Pastorais, ed. Clodovis Boff and others, (Petrópolis: Vozes, 1993), 57.

[116]Ibid., 67, n. 5.

[117]Idem, "Pobres y Opción Fundamental," in: I. Ellacuria and J. Sobrino, org. Mysterium Liberationis: Conceptos Fundamentales de la Teología de la Liberación I (Madrid: Trotta, 1990), 303-21.

people of Israel who had conquered the Land but had to perish to make room for the new generation.[118]

<div align="center">Prophetic Denunciation</div>

A proper way for the church to get involved in solidarity with the poor is through prophetic denunciation, which is considered by him as "the prevailing theme in the texts of the Latin American Church."[119] There are three characteristics by which Gutiérrez describes prophetic denunciation. First, prophetic denunciation is universal because it includes "every sacralization of oppressive structures to which the Church itself might have contributed." Secondly, prophetic denunciation is "a radical critique of the present order" that scrutinizes "the very causes of the situation" not only "pointing out and attending to certain of its consequences." Finally, prophetic denunciation is praxiological because it cannot remain on the level of discourse since it "is not only a 'word' or a 'text'; it is an action, a stand." According to Gutiérrez, this prophetic

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[118]Idem, A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation, 146, n. 3.

[119]Ibid., 115.

denunciation must be effective and ultimately "can cause the old underpinnings of the established order to fall."[120]

As a result of his Roman Catholic theology, Gutiérrez does not make any distinction between Church and state. He does, indeed, talk about the "need for the separation of Church and state." His argument, however, is far from that historically established by Article XXVIII of the Confessio Augustana. This separation which he refers to would free "the Church from temporal ties and from the image projected by its bonds with the powerful."[121] As usual among liberation theologians, and Gutiérrez himself, prophets like Hosea and Amos are mentioned as models of the prophetic denunciation. Just as they testified with a divine word of judgment to kings, so the People of God is called up to testify to the political structures of their day with a word from God. As it happens in the case of the Exodus, so with the prophets: the Bible is used illustratively and not normatively. In this connection, Childs appropriately points out that this approach to Scriptures and the prophets demythologizes both.[122]

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[120]Ibid., 267-68.

[121]Ibid., 115.

[122]Brevard S. Childs, Biblical Theology in Crisis (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1970), 101: "First of all, the modern appropriation of the term

The Lutheran view understands that in the Scriptures the prophetic

ministry's denunciation of social evil demands repentance, a call back to God and

His Word and Sacraments. It is a matter of the individual as a Christian, not an

integral mission of the Church. It also understands that it is the Word of God, not

a political ideology that is the criterion by which to judge and the basis on which

to denounce the sins of the individual and of society.

Proclamation of the Kingdom for the Poor

A second stage in Gutiérrez's view of the mission of the People of God is

the announcement of the Kingdom. For him there cannot be compatibility

between the announcement of the kingdom and a situation of injustice. He stresses

the necessity that the People of God has to "politicize by evangelizing."[123] The

challenge of the People of God according to him, at least in Latin America, is

again not soteriological but anthropological. The ultimate goal of the People of

God, according to Gutiérrez, is not to deal with the "no-Christian" but with the

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'prophet' only functions on the assumption of a radical demythologization of the
Bible. . . . The effect is that the analogy of a "prophetic ministry" is maintained by
reducing the prophets in size. Rather than the Biblical tradition serving as a norm,
the reverse is true. Modern human experience becomes the norm for what is of
value in the tradition."

[123]Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation, 269.

"no-man,"-that is, with the individual in society that is not struggling with religious questions but with the matter of his own survival.[124]

Apart from any action and commitment in the political arena Gutiérrez says that the function of the church runs the risk of remaining on a purely verbal and external level. Gutiérrez, however, is cautious concerning how to determine the "praxis" of this announcement of the kingdom and how it should bring about measures to change the status of the People of God. In this respect, his theory is unclear. However, it is possible to see evidences of his intention. Gutiérrez does not talk directly about a "holy war" in order to change the "sinful situation." He probably does not use the expression "holy war" because of a historical consciousness. He certainly knows the history of his own Church in Latin America in the period of the conquest when the principle of the "holy war" was fully alive. Gutiérrez makes a reference to the conception that the conquest was a war against the unfaithful, with divine approval. He quotes the rhetoric question asked by the Spanish historian Gonçalo Fernández de Oviedo: "Who can doubt

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[124]Idem, "Práxis da Libertação: Teologia e Anúncio," 745-46. Cf. "Liberation, Theology and Proclamation," 69; Idem, Em Busca dos Pobres de Jesus Cristo: O Pensamento de Bartolomeu de Las Casas, 552; Idem, The Truth Shall Make You Free: Confrontations, 7.

that the gunpowder used against the unfaithful is incense for the Lord?"[125]

Riolando Azzi calls attention to the fact that the wars against the Indians for the Conquest of the territory are seen as a Crusade or holy war much as the succeeding wars for the expulsion of French and Dutch navigators. In this context, the Indians were considered Moors or gentiles, enemies of the faith; and the French and Dutch invaders as Lutherans or Calvinistic heretics. To beat and expel them was for the Portuguese conquerors a political and religious mission at the same time.[126] Some as Cardinal Henrique de Susa named these wars against the unfaithful as "Roman wars" since these wars "are waged in the name of the Christian faith and Rome is the head of faith."[127] Eduardo Hoornaert calls the methods of living the faith of that period as a "Warrior Catholicism."[128]

But Gutiérrez talks of a "holy nation" totally indebted to and vitally dependent on the social obligation. The denunciation of oppression and the

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[125]Idem, Em Busca dos Pobres de Jesus Cristo: O Pensamento de Bartolomeu de Las Casas, 132.

[126]Azzi, 123-29.

[127]Gutiérrez, Em Busca dos Pobres de Jesus Cristo: O Pensamento de Bartolomeu de Las Casas, 134-35.

[128]Eduardo Hoornaert, Formação do Catolicismo Brasileiro: 1550-1800 (Petrópolis: Vozes, 1974), 31-58.

announcement of the kingdom may not eliminate the alternative which results in social upheaval. The "new man" who in his opinion inquires for the "emancipation in history," must be the "active subject of history." In order to be the "artisan of his own history," he looks for inspiration in revolutionaries like Ernesto "Che" Guevara and revolutions like the French and the Russian,[129] searching for "utopia," "the forecast of a different order of things, a new society."[130] In order to eliminate social injustice and to create the new man, the People of God has to identify itself "radically and militantly with those -- the people and the social class -- who bear the brunt of oppression."[131] The class struggle is a reality for Gutiérrez and he agrees that it "poses problems to the universality of Christian love and the unity of the Church."[132] But the People of God is required a priori to admit it since "to deny the fact of class struggle is really

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[129]Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation, 91; 46.

[130]Ibid., 233.

[131]Ibid., 146

[132]Ibid., 273.

to put oneself on the side of the dominant sectors."[133] In the attempt to solve this

dilemma, Gutiérrez explains:

> One loves the oppressors by liberating them from their inhuman condition as oppressors, by liberating them from themselves. But this cannot be achieved except by resolutely opting for the oppressed, that is, by combating the oppressive class. It must be a real and effective combat, not hate. This is the challenge, as new as the Gospel: to love our enemies.[134]

Emilio A. Núñez , a conservative evangelical theologian born and raised in

the Republic of El Salvador, ironically concludes: "If one adopts the conviction of

Gutiérrez, he will not hate the enemy but will combat the enemy loving him. Love

will then be an antithesis of hatred, but not of the violence he will cause the enemy

to suffer."[135]

Gutiérrez is cautious in determining the time when the denunciation and the

announcement take place. So a provisional character is present in the horizon of

the Church's action in order that the People of God do not sacralize any ideology

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[133]Ibid., 274-75.

[134]Ibid., 276.

[135]Emilio A[ntonio] Núñez C., Liberation Theology, trans. Paul E. Sywulka (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), 270.

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or political accomplishment. In this sense it is understandable that for Gutiérrez "Some chapters of theology can be written only afterwards."[136]

Conclusion

Liberation Theology arose with the shift in modern times brought about by the anthropological view of the cosmos which is rooted in philosophy and from there in ramifications of theology. For this reason its hermeneutics tends to differ from traditional Christian and specifically Lutheran hermeneutics. For Gutiérrez, as for other liberation theologians, Scriptures are not the only source in the theological task as it is expressed in the Lutheran Confessions. The criterion to determine the value of theological reflection is for Gutiérrez not the Biblical text, but the social context. It is possible to say that besides Scriptures and tradition historically taken by the Roman Catholic Church as sources for her theology, Father Gutiérrez adds another and dominant element: the reality of the underprivileged. Theological reflection begins with reality and ends with reality in a continuous hermeneutical circle. For Gutiérrez, Scriptures are not normative for the faith and life of the People of God.

The sacramental view of the Church put forward by the Vatican II council -- which opened the door to universalism -- was greeted by Gutiérrez as an

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[136]Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation, 272.

important step toward the unitarian view of the sacred and profane, Church and history, faith and reality. For Gutiérrez the People of God does not exist insulated from their involvement with the structurally deprived. His emphasis on and attention to the poor may lead to a canonization of a social class. Christ cannot be found outside the neighbor because the latter is the main sacrament of salvation. Repentance and conversion of God's People depend on their relationship with the neighbor. Denunciation of the systemic "sinful situation" is primary for the announcement of the realized eschatology of the kingdom of God for the "no-man." Strategies for the "conscientizing" and "politicizing" of the neighbor may lead to violence.

In a general conclusion one can anticipate also positive aspects in the Liberation Theology of Gutiérrez. The rejection of the traditional principle of the Roman Catholic Church that outside the institutional Church there is no salvation reiterates the necessity for a critical analysis within that Church regarding its theology on one side and a new assessment of attitudes concerning proper ecumenism, on the other. The strong emphasis on the separation of Church and state, though for the reasons other than Lutherans propose, helps the Catholic Church to search for a historical rebirth and comes closer to an understanding of the church's People of God, rather than merely the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

CHAPTER V

EVALUATIONS AND CONCLUSION

<u>Introduction</u>

The purpose of this final chapter is to provide an evaluation of Walther

Eichrodt's and Gustavo Gutiérrez's concept of People of God. This evaluation is

done in the light of the Old Testament and the Lutheran hermeneutics outlined as

<u>Schriftprinzip</u> in the first chapter. Some evaluation has been given already in the

process of this dissertation and for this reason efforts will be made to avoid

redundancy.

The first part of the current chapter will evaluate Eichrodt's concept of

People of God. The evaluation of Gutiérrez's view of the concept will form the

second part. The last part of this chapter will deal with the eventual contributions

of both these theologians to the work of theology today in relationship to the

concept of People of God.

<u>An Evaluation of Eichrodt's Concept of People of God</u>

Every work in Biblical studies demands from the theologian a minimum of

presuppositions. The theologian does not work in isolation. He can hardly

approach Biblical texts and issues in a presuppositionless way. Erhard S.

Gerstenberger is right when he says that "every exegete is a child of his or her own

environment, bringing along her or his own world view and experiences when

approaching the biblical texts."[1] This statement must also be applied to the

theology of both Eichrodt and Gutiérrez, who work with presuppositions.

Eichrodt works from within the background of the Historical-Critical

Method and source criticism is present in his view of People of God. The result of

this approach is the atomization of the text of the Biblical corpus in different

traditions, each one with its view of the covenant. The point here is not that this

method is objectionable. It certainly is, but that is not the concern of this

dissertation. What is of concern is that he employs the Historical-Critical Method

that is controversial and even among liberal critical theologians is polemic. Thirty

years after the publication of his major work, a criticism was leveled against

Eichrodt by Brevard Childs because in the development of the concept of covenant

each section attempts to present the historical dimension but most of the time,

complains Childs, this is done by dealing with the occurrences on the literary

level. To exemplify, Childs contends that

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[1]Erhard S. Gerstenberger, "Canon Criticism and the Meaning of Sitz im Leben," in Canon, Theology, and Old Testament Interpretation: Essays in Honor of Brevard S. Childs, ed. Gene M. Tucker, David L. Petersen, and Robert R. Wilson (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 28.

... in the discussion of the Covenant we are told [by Eichrodt] that J₁ presents the story of the divine election as a series of blessings (Gen. 9:25ff.; 12:1ff., etc.). J₂ indicates this same position of Abraham, but in a narrative which works up from the sacrifice of Noah to Sinai (Gen. 8:20ff.; 15:7ff.; 27:29a, etc), and E presents a series of divine testings (Gen. 15:1ff; 22:16-18; 26:2-5; 27:27, 29f., etc.). But is there not a danger in drawing conclusions from this level when the problem of tradition has not yet been discussed?[2]

A positive aspect is that although he favors the fragmentation of the Biblical text he however does not emphasize in the several traditions different theologies but he attempts to trace in them a unity consummated in the "idea" of the covenant that goes back to Mosaic times and, in his opinion, according to putative P, to the time of Noah. This idea at least sharply contrasted Julius Wellhausen and others regarding the history of the covenant in the History of Israel.[3]

Another aspect that Eichrodt presents in his conception of People of God in his analysis of the Old Testament is the distinctive emphasis given to Israel in comparison to heathen nations concerning the covenant with Yahweh as such. Eichrodt asserts that the relationship of the People of God with her God is not determined by a natural, racial or conscious reflection. This is positive, because it

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[2]Brevard S. Childs, review of Theology of the Old Testament, vol. 1, by Walther Eichrodt, In Interpretation 16 (1962): 312.

[3]Cf. chap.1 note 33. R. Kraetzschmar, Die Bundesvorstellung im Alten Testament, (n. p., 1896), argued that the idea of the covenant first appeared as a

points to God's love in this "living process." Any emphasis on the human side would be necessary to endorse a quality in the people as, in general, does Liberation Theology when it claims that God has a preference for the "poor."

However, two elements in the theology of Eichrodt that, according to the Lutheran perspective, jeopardize his view of People of God must be brought out. The first is the fact that in the relationship of God with His people Eichrodt overstresses the sovereignty of God within the covenant relationship. Lutherans, of course, also stress the sovereignty of God. However, in the relationship with His people God is seen primarily as a personal God. He reveals Himself to His People by His name "Yahweh" - the tetragrammaton that is reserved to the One true, personal, and loving God.

The second element in Eichrodt's conception of People of God that must seriously be criticized from the Lutheran point of view is related to the above. A sovereign God is a demanding God who requires holiness and perfection in the life and performance of His people. This is the main emphasis made by Eichrodt in his dealing with the issue of God and His people. The identity and unity of the people is concretely illustrated by those who live in conformity with God's commandments. The relationship of the People with God, based on the grace and love of God, is threatened when Eichrodt asserts that the realization of this love

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result of the work of the Major Prophets. Such a conclusion was the natural consequence of his contention that early religion of Israel was a nature religion.

demands the obedience to the law. The theocentric initiative in the election of the people is replaced by the anthropological nature of their deeds and ethics. Ultimately the conception of People of God conceived by Eichrodt is very much the result of a legalistic notion and its implications. Lutheran interpretation accentuates that in the relationship of the people with her God the curses will come upon a disobedient people because of their disobedience; the blessings, on the other hand, will come on the faithful remnant, not because of their faithfulness but because of God's faithfulness to His own promise.

An Evaluation of Gutiérrez's Concept of People of God

An evaluation of Gutiérrez's theology must also be a tentative effort because, as was shown in chapter four, the Theology of Liberation is for its theologians an unfinished task. Gustavo Gutiérrez's theology has been a focus of polemic debate on several fronts both inside and outside his church. Two opposite opinions concerning his theology illustrate this fact. One observation work comes from the candid manifestation given by his American friend and Protestant theologian Robert McAfee Brown that the sentiment of "The quasi-paranoia about 'Marxist influence' is only the surface manifestation of a deeper fear," and asserts that a "radical change will result if Gustavo's theology is taken seriously."[4] On the

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[4]Robert McAfee Brown, Makers of Contemporary Theology: Gustavo Gutierrez (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1980), 66. Emphases his.

other side, within his own church, is the harsh accusation of the namesake Father

Juan Gutiérrez. In his book Teología de la Liberación: Evaporación de la Teología

Juan Gutiérrez analyses Gustavo's methodology. He reasons that "the work of

Gustavo Gutiérrez can only make us wonder again at the superficiality,

contradictions, and sophisms that he tries to force upon us."[5] Juan Gutiérrez

conclusion is that "he cannot accept . . . the change in the so-called theology that

[Gustavo] Gutiérrez offers -- because what he offers is not theology."[6] In a way

similar to what happened to the Brazilian liberation theologian Leonardo Boff,

Gustavo Gutiérrez was summoned by the Holy See in order to explain the radical

positions of his theology. Rome delegated the Peruvian Episcopal Conference to

interview Gutiérrez. After the interview, held behind locked doors, the conference

published an explanatory note about the episode in April 27, 1984.[7]

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[5]Juan Gutiérrez, Teología de la Liberación: Evaporación de la Teología (Mexico City: Ediciones Jus, 1975). English translation Juan Gutierrez [sic], The New Libertarian Gospel: Pitfalls of the Theology of Liberation, trans. Paul Burns (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1977), 85. Quotation is taken from the English translation.

[6]Ibid., 97.

[7]J. B. Libânio, "Teologia e Símbolo: A Propósito dos Casos Gutiérrez e Boff," Perspectivas Teológicas 16 (1984): 346-47: "At the close of the meeting of the Plenary Episcopal Assembly, we want to make known that our work in these days included prayer, reflection, and study in order to clarify concepts and elucidate doctrinal and pastoral themes regarding Liberation Theology. The study

The main purpose of this evaluation is the concept of People of God developed by Gutiérrez in his theology. However, before we deal with this theme, it is necessary to evaluate Gutiérrez's interpretation of Scriptures and its use in the formation of his concept. First, as was already mentioned, Gutiérrez has a low view of Scriptures. Scripture is far from being the only source and authority in the theology of Gutiérrez. In order to organize his theology Gutiérrez employs tools. Along with Scriptures Gutiérrez adds the Roman Catholic element of tradition and also his personal heuristic-element of his "historical praxis" of which "One looks in vain for a precise definition."[8] The praxis is for Gutiérrez the starting point of his theology, a point that moves in a hermeneutical circle ending again in the praxis. Lutheran theology also teaches that theology has a circle. This circle, however, starts with the Scriptures, evaluates the life of the People of God in Law and Gospel, and returns to Scripture again. "Theology's starting point is not a matter of indifference, for a theology which begins with "praxis" manifestly does not reach the revelation of God. Theology has to begin "from above," that is, with

and reflection will continue towards the end of good pastoral supervision, as well as carrying out our responsibility as teachers." My own translation.

[8]Juan Gutiérrez, 37.

the revelation of God in the Holy Scriptures and with the gift of faith."[9] In the

Biblical interpretation of praxis the hermeneutical principle cannot substitute for

the revealed element. Rather, it must serve revelation as expressed in the classical

principle "philosophia ancilla theologiae." The hermeneutical principle must favor

the epiphany of God's revelation, not obscure it or eventually suppress it.

Gutiérrez reverses this Biblical truth and takes Scriptures as the ancillary tools of

the social sciences.

A consequence of Gutiérrez's approach to Scripture is that the Word of

God is not the only normative source of faith and life of the People of God.

Another consequence is that Gutiérrez searches Scripture looking for specific and

selected references that are framed according to his intentions. When Scriptures

are emptied, Christology is threatened. Although Christology is not the concern of

this study, it is evident in Gutiérrez's view of the People of God that it tends to

follow a kenotic line of interpretation. While Christ is presented in Scripture as

the vicarious Suffering Servant, victorious King, and the sacrament of salvation,

for the Peruvian Father he is only a paradigmatic figure and example for the

liberation praxis of God's people. The Scriptures teach that the true mission of the

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[9]Martim C. Warth, "The Future of Possibilities of Theology in Brazil in View of the Present Predicament," in A Lively Legacy: Essays in Honor of Robert Preus, co-ed. Kurt Marquart, John R. Stephenson, and Bjarne W. Teigen, (Lake Mills, IA: Graphic Publishing Co., Inc., 1985), 174.

People of God is to proclaim Christ first as a gift of God and then live their lives reflecting Christ as example.

Christ's love must precede the Christian's love for the neighbor. When love is demanded, love becomes law. Furthermore, a love which is demanded, is not the love of Christ. Christ is related to faith and both are essential for the very existence of the People of God. Lutherans understand that any action or praxis of the People of God is the result of faith in Jesus Christ. Gutiérrez gives the impression that the praxis of liberation does not have its legitimization in faith and cannot be extracted from it as a natural consequence. The praxis has, instead, its own internal logic, with its own laws, scientifically investigated so that it confers with it an immediate justification without the faith. Gutiérrez neglects the heavenly dimension of Christianity, and faith is thus seen as too existential and its transcendental nature is de-emphasized.

The lack of transcendence in Gutiérrez's theology has its reflection also in the moral and spiritual reality of the People of God. When he overestimates the human power over evil Gutiérrez is underestimating evil's power suggesting that human efforts and initiative can overcome it. Likewise, sin is minimized and though considering God's grace in the spiritual area, Gutiérrez admits the latent power in the sinner to rise above his or her own despair. As Augustine said, "Gratia, nisi gratis sit, non est gratia." Wholehearted conversion of the People of

God is not absolutely necessary since it can happen externally, in the dialectical

interaction with the poor, among them, as Brown says, "the ecclesiastically

disenfrenchised."[10]

Gutiérrez is correct when he claims that Scripture does not only speak

about a spiritual liberation but about a global one which embraces a liberation of

external evil, individual and social alike. Hence, he is correct also when he insists

that the individual Christian, in order to be faithful interpreter of the Word of God,

must strive in the political and social sphere not only with philanthropical gestures

as well as with acts of contest, transformation and improvement before evil

structures. The question that needs asking is whether the People of God as a

corporate unit is obliged to be involved in a program of social justice. The justice

which God's people proclaims is the vicarious justice that they have in the

covenant with their God, namely the Gospel by which alone God's people escape

damnation, no matter how noble a cause they embrace. The contribution of the

People of God is basic for the aspect of greater value which is the moral, interior,

Spiritual. Hence it is in this direction that the Church intensifies its action and

[10]Brown, 73.

mission. Transforming the human being internally, society will also be

transformed because "transformation is a prerequisite for reformation."[11]

Gutiérrez, however, is more interested in reformation, rather than

transformation. And this reveals what is important in his theology to identify and

qualify the People of God. Both are based in the use of social sciences more than

on the "queen of the sciences," theology, as Luther used to say. What happens in

the theology of Eichrodt happens in a larger scale in the theology of Gutiérrez: the

concept of People of God is more anthropological than soteriological.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is important to emphasize that both theologians have

contributions to make to Lutheran confessional theology. The Protestant Eichrodt

shows how the People of God maintain the unity amidst the pluralistic view and

conceptions of God by their attachment to worship, to the Word of God, sacrifices,

and prayer. The History of Israel teaches how to struggle in the faith in order to

develop the relationship in a manner faithful to revelation before the vicissitudes

of the circumstances. The blessings that Yahweh bestows upon His people

deserve recognition, appreciation, and thankfulness before the Giver not because

they are merited, but because of God's grace. Gutiérrez's work on the People of

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[11]Won Yong Ji, "To Be Lutheran: Lutheran Identity and Task in the Light
of the Doctrine of Justification and the Responsibility for the World," Concordia

God challenges the Protestant Church in Latin America to reevaluate her thinking

and to resuscitate some Biblical elements that were de-emphasized by virtue of her

history or cultural milieu. Gutiérrez opens the eyes of the People of God today to

a holistic view of poverty. Today, the People of God cannot act as did

"Christendom" in the period of neo-colonialism in Latin America attributing

poverty and injustice to original sin and the will of God. The People of God today

are challenged to exercise their gift of sanctification in compassionate observation,

deeds, and prayer on behalf of them.

At the same time indirectly Gutiérrez allows the opportunity for the Church

in Latin America to preach with clarity and conviction that God, in different ways,

is present also in times of affliction of His People[12] and the Church is expected to

act with the Law and the Gospel, under the blessing of its only LORD, to comfort

this People of God.

Journal 18 (October 1992): 327.

[12]Paul R. Raabe, "God, Bad Things, and Good People: Three Biblical Models," Concordia Journal 21 (July 1995): 261-63, presents three "models" for interpreting human suffering in the view of Scriptures based on two Biblical presuppositions: the "bad" things are intrusions into the created order, and, second, God is behind these things. The three models are: 1)The "'confession-absolution' approach: God does bad things to bad people, not good people." 2)The "'hope-in-God-against-God' approach: God does bad things to good people, but the good people refuse to accept the bad things as God's final action." 3)The "'suffering-as-blessing-in-disguise approach: God does bad things to good people, but they ultimately become good things, not bad things."

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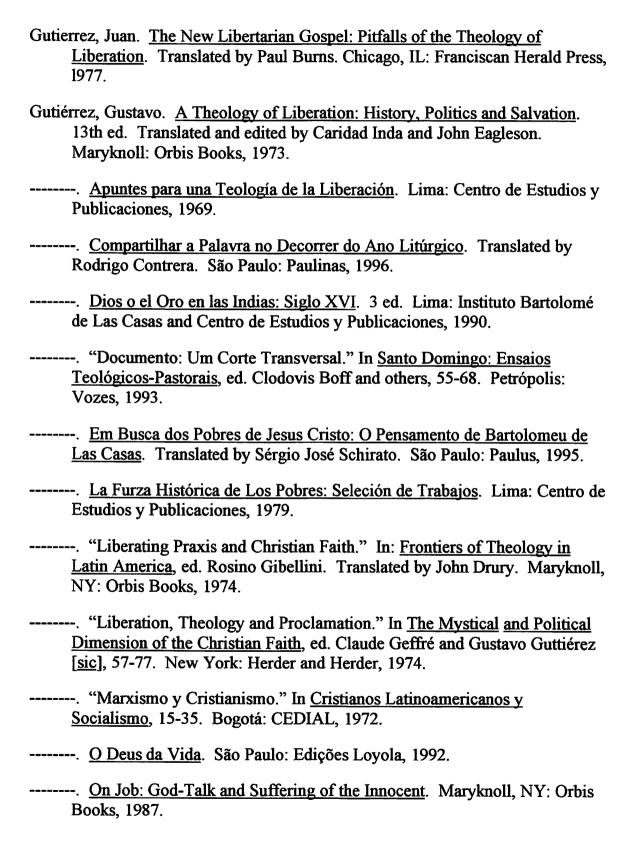
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