ENSLAVED TO SLAVERY:
AN APPLICATION OF A SOCIOLOGICAL METHOD
TO THE COMPLAINT MOTIF

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I. INTRODUCTION

The question of which interpretative methods are appropriate for use by evangelicals and which are not has long been a debate of some substance within scholarly societies. Whether the discussion involves approaches usually identified as higher criticism or simply the use of allegory (however defined), the evangelical, perhaps more than most, struggles to maintain a sense of balance between supernaturalism and humanism.[1] Unlike the radical critic, the evangelical cannot simply relegate the Bible to being merely an ancient text that is subject to our perusal and scientific examination of its content. On the other hand, neither can we allow the text to belong solely to the realm of the mystic who claims that understanding is only available to the "initiated"—a path chosen by cults, sects, and to some degree groups that deny the priesthood of believers. Despite the difficulty, if we accept the biblical precepts that Scripture is both inspired by God and a communication to man, this is the road we must walk.

The narrow path between recognizing that the Scriptures are God's word and acknowledging that reason and observation play a role in how a person understands his word is one that has been debated for centuries. Each community of faith, whether it is as small as a local church or as broad as a category such as evangelicals has a lens through which the process of hermeneutics is viewed. Indeed, this issue in particular is what separates one group from another. Because of the breadth of areas that grow out of the topic of biblical interpretation and its dependency on both worldview and reason, evaluation and testing of various methodologies are issues that must continually be revisited if a group is going to maintain both its relevance and its identity. Sometimes this process of evaluation takes place in a formal setting, but more often than not a method is accepted or rejected solely on the basis of one's comfort level with it.

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[1] The term "humanism" itself carries with it a lot of negative baggage, having come to mean an approach devoid of interests in the divine. I guardedly use it, rather, in reference to the acknowledgment that the biblical text was written in such a way that it can communicate to humans, and therefore is subject to the application of human means of interpretation.

1. *Evangelicals and sociological methodologies.*   One of the methods that has not received any formal censure but that has nonetheless been understood to be taboo is the sociological method of interpretation. Excepting the broadest definitions of the method that look at the society of Israel from a historical, almost forensic, viewpoint, this technique has had few proponents in the evangelical world.[2] This stigma exists for several valid reasons. First, with few exceptions, the sociological method has been reflective of an overemphasis on human causation and direction to the detriment of God's role in a biblical event. Some of the most notable instances include Norman Gottwald's use of the method to explain the origins of ancient Israel through a Marxist lens and Philip Davies's assessment of religion merely as the outgrowth of human ingenuity. Davies concludes that the sociological method could be used to explain the biblical material as a human product and would be an instrument by which "scholarship is finally able to liberate itself from the theological house of bondage to which it has been enslaved."[3] Second, the method has consistently been utilized to compare biblical materials to ancient folklore for the purpose of discovering its origins and hence departed from the text as a revelation from God.[4] Third, it is difficult to find a proponent of the sociological method today who does not begin with an *a priori* supposition of a postexilic origin of most of the OT books. Ultimately such a group of representative scholars leads evangelicals to hold this methodological approach at a distance.

2. *Sociological methodology has a place.*   Sociological methodology itself, however, is not inherently wrong. While it must be admitted that the approach is human centered (since as a science it is built upon the observable), if one is of the conviction that God is interested in redeeming humans, it would seem beneficial to examine and draw some conclusions about how humans work and relate to each other and their environment. This is especially true for the evangelical who sees in history a God who is committed to relationship with humanity and who is responsive to many of those human idiosyncrasies as he draws men back to himself. It is to this end that this article is dedicated;

[2] The introduction of the sociological method to biblical studies is generally credited to Max Weber (*Ancient Judaism* [New York: Free Press, 1952]). Within evangelicalism, three notable exceptions of usage of the method would include the acceptance of some of the appraisals of Mary Douglas by certain evangelicals; cf. the work of M. Daniel Carroll R., who has made a career of the method since his dissertation first applied sociological methodologies to the prophetic corpus (M. Daniel Carroll R., "Prophecy in Context: From Old Testament Text to Liberating Faith" [Ph.D. thesis, University of Sheffield, 1990]); see also *Rethinking Contexts, Rereading Texts: Contributions for the Social Sciences to Biblical Interpretation* [ed. M. Daniel Carroll R.; JSOTSup 299; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000]); and Gary V. Smith, who has applied a sociology of knowledge to the prophetic corpus in general and to Amos specifically.

[3] Norman Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1979). Philip R. Davies, "The Society of Biblical Israel," in *Second Temple Studies* (ed. Tamara C. Eskenazi and Kent Richards; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994) 32–33.

[4] This is not to suggest that comparative literary studies are rejected by evangelicals, only that the use of these studies to advocate that the stories are merely the outgrowth of a civilization's folklore is odious to evangelicals who see the text as something far more divine in origin.

not to suggest that the approach outlined below is the only means by which sociological methods might find expression within evangelicalism, but to say that there are avenues of investigation within sociological approaches that reflect not only the activity of man, but the heart of God.[5]

a. *Being respectful to the discipline.* The blending of two disciplines in an examination of a text, a people, or a perspective requires certain foundational principles to be maintained. First, the practitioner must always keep in mind the limits of a discipline. This has implications both for the application of a system and for how dogmatically one holds the results of one's findings. Even in the so-called objective sciences it must be recognized that the motivation for executing a study will in some way shape the results of that particular work. This is not to say that all suppositions are equal, or that one must live life with a nihilistic worldview; rather, it argues that humans are limited and when one forgets one's limitations, one is on the road to delusion. This principle manifests itself in the aforementioned submission to the divinely inspired text, but also with respect to the interaction of one explanation of a behavioral pattern as opposed to another within the social sciences. Second, when one is dealing with observation-based conclusions, it is vital that one achieve as broad a base of sample behavior as possible. This standard grows both out of common sense and out of the variability of humans in their culture, worldview, and influences. Third, and especially important for biblical scholars as they attempt to apply ideas outside of their field of expertise, one must be careful that an issue or phenomenon is appropriately understood and characterized when applied to the data. One serves no good purpose drawing conclusions from a paradigm that not even the practitioners of a system recognize as legitimate.[6]

b. *Being respectful to our identity.* The primary concern for the evangelical seems to be centered on the idea of identifying the realities and recognitions of methods such as sociology without limiting or rejecting the work of a sovereign God. Therefore it also seems necessary to outline a few indispensable cautions in the implementation of this method. First, we must acknowledge and keep in the forefront the reality that Scripture, not our systems, gets priority in identifying causation. That is, when the biblical record identifies causation of a behavior or action, the issue is settled. This presupposition helps keep evangelicals from slipping into the naturalistic explanations of supernatural events which is at the heart of many of the expressions of concern about the sociological method. Second, the proponent must reject the temptation of allowing his premise or position to be understood as removing responsibility for actions from those he is describing. The biblical record is abundantly clear that no matter what influences or temptations may be

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[5] Contributors to the volume edited by M. Daniel Carroll R. mentioned above (*Rethinking Contexts, Rereading Texts*) provide a variety of contexts through which this methodology might find expression within the biblical disciplines.

[6] M. Daniel Carroll R., "Introduction," in *Rethinking Contexts, Rereading Texts* 15–16.

involved in any given sinful act, the responsibility always resides with the one committing the sin. Third, it must be noted that expressions of certain phenomena taking place in the lives of individuals do not, in turn, suggest a limitation or prevention of God's intervention in the lives of those individuals. Indeed, as will be demonstrated below, redemption from the influences of the social reality is often one of the goals of the revelation itself.

c. *One pathway of application.* One manifestation of sociological studies comes into play primarily when idiosyncrasies of a certain culture are exhibited in its expressions and actions. That is, when a culture or society displays a behavior that is unexpected, even contradictory, for the situation being experienced, the sociologist uses comparative analysis to determine the reason behind this distinctiveness. In examining the understandings present concerning the actions and beliefs of ancient Israel several atypical reactions deserve consideration. This investigation involves an attempt to comprehend and make application of difficult-to-understand actions recorded in the biblical narratives. Properly applied, sociology has a unique ability to allow the scholar to step behind the text and to find continuity with the biblical world that other disciplines cannot provide. In short, when one is able to find a commonality between the biblical world and the modern world, that element of agreement permits the interpreter to bridge the gap of exegesis from being descriptive to being normative. Ultimately, therefore, the sociological method can serve to explain or even lend credence to the reality of an account of responses in the biblical record, but it cannot and should not be used in a way that allows for a proscription of the biblical expressions of who God is and how he relates to man.

II. THE PROBLEM OF THE COMPLAINT MOTIF IN THE PENTATEUCH

1. *A segment of Israel who longs for Egypt.*   That the Pentateuch contains numerous references categorized as a "complaint motif" has been recognized for some time. Jacob Milgrom wrote that these expressions of complaint and desire to return to Egypt form a constant motif that is interspersed throughout the whole of the Pentateuch.[7] These complaint passages have been handled variously by scholars as polemics, secondary etiologies, or as appropriate responses to the situations which the Israelites had faced in Egypt.[8] Despite these observations, however, little has been done to investigate how these texts reflect the period of enslavement itself. One issue that remains somewhat puzzling given the biblical portrayal of the enslavement

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[7] Jacob Milgrom, *Numbers: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1990) 84.

[8] George W. Coats, *Rebellion in the Wilderness* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1968) 251; Martin Noth, *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions (*trans. Bernhard Anderson; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1981) 122–30; Philip Budd, *Numbers* (Waco, TX: Word, 1984) 129; and John Durham, *Exodus* (Waco: Word, 1987) 191–92.

is the words of some Israelites in the wilderness concerning their former captors. Israelite descriptions of Egypt as the land of milk and honey (Num 16:13–14); remembrances of it as a virtual paradise (Exod 16:3; Numbers 11; 14:2); and passages which portray Moses and God as brutes who forced the people to leave their comfortable living conditions in Egypt (see Exod 14:11–12; 17:3; Num 20:4–5; 21:5) are difficult to reconcile with either the biblical descriptions of the hardships Israel faced in Egypt found in Exodus 1–2 or with nearly universal conceptions of slavery in general.[9]

2. *Where previous explanations fail.* For evangelicals, the difficulty is compounded by the limited directions one can take by the possible explanations. If one takes the polemical or etiological explanations as they have previously been offered, one is consigned to identifying the texts as late insertions into the Pentateuch narrative. If one says that the Israelite perceptions of Egypt are accurate portrayals of their life there, the reliability of Exodus 1–2 is called into question.[10] Some attempts have been made to assign the responses to a hardening of Israel's heart by God in order that they might not see the benefits of their rescue because of their disobedience.[11] The problem here, however, is that some statements occur so early in the exodus events that it is difficult to imagine them as punishment for disobedience that would not occur until later in the wanderings. Whether the statements were legitimate or not, within all of these passages is the troubling opinion that the people wished the exodus had never happened. Such a realization makes it difficult to confront a response that sees something other than history behind these statements. One avenue of response may reside, however, in the utilization of findings from sociologists regarding strikingly similar expressions to those found in the biblical record in other slave situations throughout history.

III. SOCIOLOGISTS AND SLAVERY

1. *A brief history of the matter.* Slave studies in the twentieth century have gone through many changes and reassessments concerning their primary focus. Some scholars have continued the debates of the previous century

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[9] No less a scholar than Brevard S. Childs noted that while one group of complaints is related to actual needs and problems that materialized (i.e. Exod 14:11–12; 15:22–24; 17:1–3; Num 20:1–13); other murmurings arose which were illegitimate and had no apparent reason for their expression (i.e. Exod 16:3; Num 11:1–5; 16:13–14; 17:6–15) (Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus* [Louisville: Westminster, 1974] 258–59).

[10] This is true even if one views the statements as a relative comparison of the harshness of the climates between the Sinai and Egypt (the former being far more extreme than the latter). This assessment seems justified based on the harsh realities described in Exodus 1 (including infanticide) and also because a few of the complaints are made before Israel gets into the harsh environment of the Sinai Peninsula.

[11] Though the paper's focus was on the relationship of Israel and the church and its implications for evangelism, one section in particular argued that Israel's obduracy in the wilderness was the result of God hardening their heart (Jim R. Sibley, " 'Hear O Israel': Spiritual Obduracy and the Jewish People" [paper presented at Evangelical Theological Society; Danvers, MA, 1999]).

regarding the rationale and morality of slavery as an institution.[12] It was only because of temporal and spatial distance from the evils of slavery that new approaches and questions began to be undertaken that were firmly grounded in the field of social sciences. This new scientific assessment of the institution of slavery gave rise to questions about the nature and influence of this reality on human interrelationships. In particular, an assessment of the relationship between the slave and the master became important.

Inspection of the documented evidence of the relationship between a master and a slave revealed a variety of issues that could be investigated and discussed. The matter that intrigued many scholars was the presence of records throughout history that described a reaction by slaves that was complimentary, protective, possessive, and almost amorous toward their masters. Early investigations attributed this reaction solely to the presence of benevolent and kind masters.[13] The realization among scholarship, however, that the natural inclination of a person would be to revolt or escape required answers to be offered that sought to explain this trend in terms of psychological paradigms.

2. *Historical records of faithful slaves.*   Given that one of the standards established for the implementation of the sociological method of interpretation was the achievement of as broad of a sample of test cases as possible, it seems appropriate at this point to give a survey of some of the more pertinent expressions on the issue that have been discovered in documents throughout history. Slavery is nearly as old as civilization, so it should not be surprising to find numerous references to it in writings throughout time. What might be surprising, however, is the availability of written reflections on the reality of a faithful slave experience and its causation that took place as early as the time of Christ. The earliest writers, of course, did not employ an application of scientific observation and chose rather to credit the behavior to the inner quality of humanity, but their evaluation serves well to demonstrate that the faithful slave can be found in a variety of cultures and in a variety of eras.

a. *The faithful slave in antiquity.* Seneca recorded multiple accounts of slaves who voluntarily gave their lives in place of their masters and who committed acts that went well beyond what one would expect a slave to do for his master (Sen (Y) *Ben.* 3.21–27). One story of particular interest was of two slaves who escaped from enslavement during the siege of a city and rendered service to the attacking troops. Once the city had been captured the slaves ran ahead of the troops to the house of their former mistress and

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[12] Among biblical scholars who have continued the discussions, the types of work include hermeneutical inquiries such as that carried out by Katie Cannon ("Slave Ideology and Biblical Interpretation," *Semeia* 47 [1989] 9–23); and biblical ethics discussions such as the work of Margaret Davies ("Work and Slavery in the New Testament: Impoverishments and Traditions," in *The Bible in Ethics: The Second Sheffield Colloquium* [ed. John Rogerson, Margaret Davies, and M. Daniel Carrol R.; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995] 315–47).

[13] Isaac Mendelsohn, *Slavery in the Ancient Near East* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1949) 64–66.

escorted her out of the city telling any who questioned them that she was being taken out to be killed. They protected their mistress, however, and hid her until the pillaging had ceased. They then restored her to her house and voluntarily placed themselves once again under her control. In gratitude for their great service, the mistress freed them from their responsibilities to her (Sen (Y) *Ben.* 3.23).

In his *The Civil Wars,* Appian of Alexandria also took time to record many accounts of slaves who performed acts of devotion and service for their masters that went well beyond what one would expect. One slave killed himself after avenging the death of his master, expressing his devotion to his master with his last breath (App *B Civ.* 4.26). Later in the work Appian recorded, "Extraordinary examples were seen of the love of wives for their husbands, of sons for their fathers, and of slaves, unnaturally, for their masters" (App *B Civ.* 4.36). Among these examples was included a slave who followed a master who was hiding from soldiers. Despite the fact that the master had used a branding iron on him, the slave hid, cared for, and killed a man in order to protect the master.[14] Other ancients recorded similar events and recognitions of certain slaves' benevolent attitudes toward their masters.[15]

b. *The faithful slave in the modern experience.* The presence of slaves responding to masters in an unexpected manner is not unique to the ancients. American annals record instances of slaves who defended their masters from Union troops, vied for the right to care for a wounded master, risked their lives to intervene on behalf of their mistresses and masters, and provided funds for former masters who had fallen on hard times with the demise of the Confederacy.[16] Indeed, the names "Sambo" and "Uncle Tom," though usually pejorative in intent, are commonly recognized descriptions in today's society of slaves who responded in less than a rebellious way to the slavery which they faced.[17]

3. *Two schools of thought on the issue.* Since the historical records provide evidence of this fairly common reaction among slaves as they related to their masters, the problem for the sociologist becomes how one explains this reality. In general, two schools of thought have emerged concerning the nature of the faithful slave and the origin of his thoughts and reactions. One associates the reactions with a process known as infantilism; the other simply refers to the process as the loyal slave phenomenon without reference to a particular psychological paradigm.

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[14] App *B Civ.* 4.43. Many other such examples were given in the succeeding paragraphs (4.44–48).

[15] Among these are Velleius Paterculus and Valerius Maximus (Vell Pat *Comp. Roman History* 2.67; Val Max *Beneficium Servi* 6.8).

[16] Eugene Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Pantheon, 1974) 130–33.

[17] Genovese is certainly correct in his word of warning against attributing unmanliness to this group of individuals. It can hardly be said that a person is unmanly who is willing to give his life for one whom he sees as being under his care (ibid. 132).

a. *Infantilism/paternalism.* The first group of sociologists to be discussed is those who associate the reactions of the slave with a psychological process identified as infantilism, though not all of them would utilize this terminology.[18] Briefly defined, infantilism is the process whereby the displacement of the slave from his former surroundings and his need to find some replacement paradigm through which to process the world around him forces him to view his master as his only frame of reference. Because of the proximity to the master and his presence as the one who determines the slave's entire world order, the slave attaches himself to the master's world view.

Stanley Elkins's approach to the slave issue can best be described as comparative. Utilizing the previous suppositions of Frank Tannenbaum that slavery in North America was fundamentally harsher than that found in South America and the Caribbean, Elkins sought to explain the distinctive American character known as the "sambo." Elkins compared the plight of the American slave with that of people in the Nazi concentration camps. He argued that the "sambo" exhibited the same childlike docile characteristics that were found among certain members of the interned. He reasoned that because old systems of evaluation and discernment were no longer available to the individual, he had to look to the overlord for new standards and cues for how to process the world around him. The slave would even go so far as to begin to mimic the behavior of his master and would often associate a greater degree of "love" for his master than for his own people.[19]

There were many negative reactions to Elkins's hypothesis on a variety of levels.[20] Though the presence of infantilism in slave situations was generally accepted as a reality, most rejected the singularity of identification with the American slave system that Elkins seemed to be suggesting.[21] Elkins responded to this critique by admitting that there is ample evidence

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[18] Although it is not overtly stated within the texts, the hesitancy to utilize the term probably stems from the association of infantilism with sexual deviations. The term "infantilism" does not demand such associations, however, and the scholars utilizing the term herein never make such comparisons.

[19] Stanley Elkins, *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life* (3d ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976) 101–2, 111–13.

[20] See Ann Lane, ed., *The Debate over Slavery: Stanley Elkins and His Critics* (Chicago: University of Illinois, 1971). See also Orlando Patterson, "Slavery," in *Annual Review of Sociology* (ed. Alex Inkeles; 3d ed.; Palo Alto: Annual Reviews, 1977) 415.

[21] Eugene Genovese, "Rebelliousness and Docility in the Negro Slave: A Critique of the Elkins Thesis," in *The Debate over Slavery* 43–44. The recognition of the fundamental reality of infantilism within sociological circles is the primary element of importance for the discussion undertaken here. One objection raised against Elkins's hypothesis was the whether slavery ever reached the level of cruelty and dehumanization necessary to create a crystallized personality or infantilism. George Fredrickson and Christopher Lasch, "Resistance to Slavery," in *The Debate over Slavery* 240–41 and Roy Simon Bryce-Laporte, "Slaves as Inmates, Slaves as Men: A Sociological Discussion of Elkins' Thesis," in *The Debate over Slavery* 269–71. However, the suggestions of this group that the slaves were acting in this way without internalizing the behavior are as tenuous as anything Elkins proposed, and subsequent scholars would reveal this through their application, expansion, and modification of his thought.

of "sambo"-like individuals in other slave situations, but that it had to be understood in terms of degrees. That is, the greater the control, coercion, and fear imposed on the slave, the more evident the infantilism would be in his actions. For Elkins, the American slave system was the most severe, so it would logically have the most occurrences of infantilism within its ranks.[22]

Unlike Elkins, Moses Finley's focus and concern was not on American slavery, but on that of antiquity. In discussing the issue of faithful slaves, Finley rejected the search for causation of the phenomenon based on the distance from the events and the reliance on written documentation alone. Despite this concession, Finley's work contained one of the clearest assessments of the situation and the need for further study. He wrote,

> That there were many "faithful slaves" in antiquity is not to be doubted: that is but one manifestation of a continuing human phenomenon, found even in the Nazi concentration camps. Brutally deracinated human beings seeking new ties, new psychological attachments, not infrequently turn to those in whose power they find themselves, in the case of slaves to their masters and his family or to their overseers. . . . Not only are we compelled to deduce psychology from the behaviour, but the latter is filled with ambiguities and contradictions. There is no reason to think that the picture was basically different or less complex in antiquity.[23]

Therefore, whereas many sociologists attempt to associate the issue of infantilism within slavery with the issue of close personal ties, for Finley the notion is simply one of replacement of lost boundaries of perception. The "relationship" of the two parties, then, is one of dependence for the slave in which he seeks the stability offered in the person of the master.

b. *The loyal slave phenomenon.* A second group of sociologists accepted the presence of infantilism among slaves but viewed the relationship as more complex than what is suggested by a single explanation of the behavior. For these scholars, it is more important to understand the matter of how slaves and masters related over an extended period of time than to focus attention on the loss of personal identity and the subsequent search for boundaries that is portrayed in infantilism. More often than not, these sociologists refer to the phenomenon as a faithful or loyal slave phenomenon, and the tone of their work tended to be more optimistic in its expressions.

Joseph Vogt's work on ancient slavery has an overtone of hopefulness concerning humanity in his assessments and arguments. Vogt discussed the issue of the faithful slave in light of his perceptions concerning the nature of humanity in general. His position on the issue of the faithful slave is that through various processes of association and vocation slaves and masters formed personal ties on a psychological level that went beyond the oppression imposed by one on the other. That is, within both groups there was a desire to see more in humanity than the evil nature of slavery allowed one

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[22] Stanley Elkins, "Slavery and Idealogy," in *The Debate over Slavery* 349–50.

[23] Moses I. Finley, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology* (exp. ed. by Brent Shaw; Princeton: Markus Wiener, 1998) 172.

to recognize. The work of the slave in close proximity to the master in key moments permitted both groups the opportunity to at least subconsciously attach themselves to each other as "equals." Therefore, when difficulties arose for the master, the slave could remain faithful and even aid him as both a confirmation of the inner feelings of the slave and a further way of establishing the humanity of both of them.[24]

Eugene Genovese has been the central figure in the debate concerning the psychology of the slave over the past few decades. Genovese described the relationship between the slave and the master in America as paternalism. This process had a lot of affinity with Elkins's infantilism, but was not as wholesale in its assessment of an expected slave reaction. His methodology attempted to answer the issue of variance in reaction among slaves in the same system. Because of the thoroughgoing reliance of a slave on his master, this paternalism caused the slave to identify with his or her master, rather than his or her own community. This reliance led slaves to identify their masters as their sole provider, and it was difficult for them to recognize influence from others with regard to protection or aid.[25] The dependence involved was further reinforced through racism as it undermined the slave's self-identity and elevated the position of the master.[26] Despite this reality, there was an element of self-determination which the slaves maintained, usually in the form of moral indignation. This portion of their psyche that was preserved from the outward acquiescence permitted them in later periods to break ties with their masters.[27] Residue from the previous paternal relationship maintained a place in the slaves' perspectives, however, as they recognized the familial ties they had with their masters, often turned to their former masters for additional aid, at times offered aid themselves to masters in need, and maintained certain world views which they had obtained from their master.[28]

In works dealing with slavery in a broader context, Genovese argued that there is a reality to the slave personality and that it is evident in realms far beyond the confines of modern slavery. He argued that the perceptions of the slave were a strange mixture of rebellion, submission, and affinity with the master and that the continuation of the slave system forced slaves to internalize these perceptions. This internalization forced the slave to maintain many of the perceptions of commitment, submission, love, and hatred even after having been set free.[29]

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[24] Joseph Vogt, *Ancient Slavery and the Ideal of Man* (trans. Thomas Wiedemann; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975) 120–29.

[25] Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll* 118–19.

[26] Ibid. 6.

[27] Ibid. 125.

[28] Ibid. 127–33.

[29] Genovese, "Rebellion and Docility" 43–74. Genovese's arguments have been generally accepted by scholarship. The only enduring objection that has been raised is that his methodology is based on recollections of slaves after they had been freed and that therefore these recollections did not constitute conclusive evidence of what the slaves were thinking while still in slavery (Thomas Holt, "African-American History," in *The New American History* [ed. Eric Foner; rev. ed.; Philadelphia:

c. *Limitations and modifications to both views.* The basic viewpoints of Elkins and Genovese have to some degree been accepted in sociological circles. With the exception of the objections presented above, only minor modifications and limitations have been proposed by other sociologists. These limitations and modifications have a direct bearing on the premise being proposed in this paper and therefore must be discussed. One objection raised with Elkins's hypothesis was that his object of comparison was an inappropriate model for analyzing the slave phenomenon. George Fredrickson and Christopher Lasch have argued that a prison is a better paradigm for understanding slavery than the concentration camp. This is true, they suggest, because prisons are not designed to dehumanize, though this may be a byproduct. Within the prison system exist various levels of autonomy along with a hierarchy of prisoners. The comparative aspects of motivation and structure are therefore closer to what one would find in slavery.[30]

Elkins responded to Fredrickson and Lasch with some degree of intrigue and interest at their attempts at redefining the object of comparison in his system. While readily admitting to various levels of reaction among slaves, Elkins argued that the presence of those who escaped the infantilism does not require that the hypothesis and application of the thesis be abandoned. He also suggested that the sheer pervasiveness of the reality of slavery throughout the South excluded the comparison with the prison system in that the room for maneuvering permitted in total institutions such as prisons simply did not exist because the entire region was completely committed to the system.[31]

Genovese's paternalistic paradigm has garnered acceptance among sociologists and has been utilized in a variety of contexts. Zvi Yavetz has argued, however, that paternalism is only possible in relatively small groups.[32] Indeed, it is logical to assume that for a familial relationship to develop, the groups must be small enough for consistent and intimate interaction to occur. On the other hand, even in a large system of ownership, smaller cell groups would exist within which certain paternalistic elements could be realized. Furthermore, as Genovese argued it, paternalism was not as dependent on interpersonal interaction as one might expect. The slave could view the master within the framework of paternalism simply on the grounds of trying to understand his place in a system in which a hierarchy was developed and maintained.

4. *There is a slave mentality and a path that gets one there.* It is clear from this overview that many sociologists are convinced that there is a phenomenon

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Temple University Press, 1997] 318). Since it is the residual perceptions of slaves once they have been freed that is of interest for this paper, the critique is not detrimental to the thesis being proposed.

[30] Fredrickson and Lasch, "Resistance" 231.

[31] Elkins, "Slavery and Ideology" 359–61.

[32] Zvi Yavetz, *Slaves and Slavery in Ancient Rome* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1988) 159.

at work that permits or causes slaves to associate with their masters on an unexpected level. It is evident that part of the problem with determining causation is that the extant evidence is all secondary. Even in the most recent occurrences of the event, no one was available who was aware of the phenomenon to observe directly and question the participants. The only information available is the recollections of the slaves themselves. Since, however, the numerous occasions of the experience are so consistent in their expression and outline, there is sufficient evidence to demonstrate the reality of a slave personality or mentality by means of comparative analysis. Furthermore, comparative studies with similar but separate experiences allow for even further narrowing of the identifiable components within such a psychological viewpoint. That is, while the two groups may not concur as to the exact causation of the experience, both readily agree that there is a consistent pattern of behavior in slave situations, allowing the conclusion that when certain realities are in place, this paradigm will repeat itself. What remains to be discussed, therefore, is what those realities of causation are and what are some cross-sectional expressions that can be anticipated among persons or groups who process reality according to this paradigm.

a. *Psychological survival.* There are many identifiable elements that contribute to a person or a group of persons developing a slave mentality. The first constituent of causation which is at the heart of the discussion and which can be agreed to by virtually all participants in the debate is that of psychological survival. Regardless of whether one perceives paternalism or infantilism as being the nature of the phenomenon, the resulting relationship grows out of a need to survive with one's mind still intact. That such accommodation is necessary in a closed institution such as slavery is evident from the multiple demonstrations that sustained resistance within total institutions is next to impossible.[33] This observation, while important, is far too broad, however, to allow for consistent prediction that the outlook will manifest itself.

b. *Projection.* One has to anticipate that it is not only negative realities that give birth to the slave mentality but also the human need to view oneself in the best possible light that warps one's perspective of what one is experiencing. For Vogt, the fact that slaves had certain tasks to perform in crucial moments in their masters' lives suggests that this should be understood as the genesis of the relational paradox. Through performance of tasks important to the master slaves held a certain amount of power over the lives of their masters and in a sense gained worth and freedom without being free. The slave was then psychologically able to overcome the treatment he might have received through rationalizing that the master did in fact love and need him.[34] Furthermore, there was a sense in which the greatness of

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[33] Fredrickson and Lasch, "Resistance" 238.

[34] Vogt, *Ancient Slavery* 103–21. It must be noted that there is a good case to be made that Vogt's supposition of love overanalyzes a situation from which he is too far removed to be considered

the master reflected on the greatness of the slave. The slave could take pride and feel associated with his master when a task that he performed allowed the master's standing to increase in some way. This element went beyond the tasks of caring for the master and his children in crucial moments to include almost any task that was performed which brought honor to the overlord.[35] This last element is logical in that it allows something "other than" for the slave to become attached to when his sense of self-value had been lost. In other words, it would be expected that a slave would find it difficult to connect directly with the person who owned him. If, however, the slave could find a conduit of the relationship, such as the status both he and his master could achieve, an element of his self-worth would be recovered. This would then secure a tie with the master through a more appropriate, indirect channel.

    c. *Shock and detachment*. Elkins's suppositions concerning causation of the slave personality were essentially based on the element of psychological survival. He went beyond this step, however, by outlining the processes by which the individual arrived at his state of reliance upon the overlord and defining the essence of the connection that was created. Concerning the steps which led to the need for reliance, Elkins associated the process with the principle of individuals going through a complete, almost immediate, transformation of all that they knew and understood about the world in which they lived. This shock to the system occurred through the multiple steps in enslavement: capture, transfer, branding, and sale.[36] In short, the rapid accumulation of multiple harsh experiences and realities provided no opportunity for the individual to process the experiences to which he was subjected. This led to the annihilation of past relationships, understandings, and viewpoints. The individual still maintained the knowledge, beliefs, and values instilled in him since birth, but these bits of data had no connection or meaning within the new system that he found himself. The presence, therefore, of the master or overlord provided the first opportunity for developing a matrix through which the data could be filtered and a relationship of docility and commitment to the master was then created.[37] The only important modification to this point made subsequently by scholars was Genovese's argument that there was a greater variance among reactions by respective slaves in accordance with the extent of free choice permitted to them by the system

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fair in its proposals. Finley has successfully argued that the information on which Vogt bases his arguments is too anecdotal to achieve any sense of objective portrayal necessary for making the depth of evaluation that Vogt attempts (Finley, *Ancient Slavery* 175–76).

    [35] Vogt, *Ancient Slavery* 120. This factor is demonstrated clearly in Vogt's quotation of Publius Syrus: "the slave who serves wisely has a share in his master's power."

    [36] Elkins, *Slavery* 98–101.

    [37] Ibid. 101–2. The degree to which a person became docile or was able to recover his previous systems of understanding was directly related to the severity of treatment and the freedom of expression he found in his new surroundings. Elkins reports that within the concentration camps of Germany the effects were severe enough to cause some Jews to develop a viewpoint of anti-Semitism (ibid. 112–13).

itself and that much of the detachment prevalent in the slaves' reactions arose due to the racism that pervaded southern institutions.[38]

d. *Despair*. John Blassingame also viewed Elkins's hypothesis of causation with some degree of appreciation. Blassingame recognized the presence of internalized docility and submission among slaves, but believed the majority of examples of good relations between slaves and masters could be attributed to good treatment by the latter.[39] He argued that the exceptions to this principle were primarily to be found among masters who were extremely cruel, insensitive, and/or sadistic.[40] This was true because in normal circumstances when a person believes conformity has been achieved, punishment is reduced or removed as it is no longer needed. It is assumed by Blassingame that once a master believed his perspectives had been internalized in the slave, he no longer needed to punish him.[41] When a slave's submission was not rewarded by a diminishing of mistreatment by the master, the internalization would then become more pronounced and exaggerated, resulting in the slave personality. For Blassingame, the key element to creating this docility was not so much the punishments, as it was the knowledge or perspective that no escape was possible. The multiple floggings, separation from family, and excessive mistreatment caused many slaves to believe that there was no tomorrow. The resulting despair led to the slave personality, going so far as to cause some to believe in the rightness of white superiority and others to develop an obsequious demeanor that was internalized and became more than just a reaction.[42] Blassingame subsequently argued that the primary means of projecting or instilling a sense of despair on the part of the participant was the imminent possibility of death. In short, infantilism was more likely to develop if the individuals perceived themselves "to be worth no more than a bullet."[43]

e. *Bringing it all together*. Exact causation of the slave personality is difficult to establish unequivocally. It is tempting to assign the reality of the situation to a mixture of all the suggestions that have been made by sociologists. The reality of the familial tie to which Vogt alludes cannot be ignored. However, the hypothesis is insufficient to deal adequately with the variety of examples which have been identified. Ultimately, Genovese's argument offers the greatest range of possibilities for explaining the variety of reactions

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[38] Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll* 6.

[39] John Blassingame, *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972) 191.

[40] Ibid. 193.

[41] Ibid. 186.

[42] Ibid. 198–200. One slave's autobiography contained the paradoxical assessment that he "thought a great deal" of his master, despite the continuous presence and use of the lash (James Mars, *Life of James Mars, A Slave Born and Sold in Connecticut* [Hartford: Case, Lockwood, and Company, 1864] 21–22).

[43] An element Blassingame argues was largely absent from American slavery (*The Slave Community* 193, 225).

prevalent in slavery. One must be careful, however, not to relegate his pater-
nalism only to house slaves. It is enough concerning causation to look for
those situations in which an overlord or master acted in close proximity to
his slaves in a real or perceived fashion.[44] No doubt the presence of despair
as introduced by Blassingame is also an element that must be present in
causation of a slave personality in that it would be difficult to explain docility
to the degree displayed by slaves and other interned individuals in the
absence of a total despair that forced them to look for new connections.

5. *Manifestations of the slave mentality.* Having outlined the primary
scholarly explanations of the slave mentality or personality and having dis-
cussed the elements that may create such a reaction, it is now necessary
to develop a cross-sectional description of what is meant by slave mentality
before proceeding to discuss the possibility of the same among the Hebrew
people while enslaved in Egypt. In this section, the issues concerning outward
manifestations of the paternalism and infantilism described above will be
perused and defined in order to create a matrix through which Israel's ex-
perience can be evaluated. In other words, if Israel or any group did indeed
develop a slave mentality, what perspectives in their writings and actions
would be present to indicate that such had indeed taken place?[45]

The primary expression of a slave mentality is the adoption of the over-
lord's viewpoints and world views. This has been demonstrated in severe cases
such as the black slave that accepted white superiority or the Jews in the
concentration camp who became anti-Semitic. In less severe cases, certain
elements of the master's belief system often become adopted by the servant.
In discussing the adoption of Christianity by slaves, Genovese revealed that
it is impossible to know whether the slaves converted as simply another means
of appeasing their masters or if the conversion took place from a sincere desire
to share in the faith. Ultimately, however, this is unimportant, since even if
the slave did convert out of acquiescence, sincerity of belief often followed.[46]
The response of the slave is to be expected, since the loss of his former frames
of reference and the resulting reassessment of his status and place in his
new world would require at least some adoption of the viewpoint of the one
to whom he was attaching his new understandings. It must be admitted,
however, that the evidence for adoption of certain viewpoints of the master
is certain, but it does not negate the reality that slaves often maintained
elements of their core systems of belief. Indeed, only in the most severe cases
of infantilism would one expect the individual to lose all perspective and
conception of what it meant to be a part of his former group.

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[44] That is to say, if the slaves perceived the master to be working, observing, and correcting in
close proximity, either through task masters or through psychological ploys, the case for paternalism
as defined by Genovese could be maintained at least from the slave's side of the issue.

[45] It should be pointed out here, as it has been in previous works, that the concept of a slave
personality is not deterministic in its description or application. Instead, the approach undertaken
is a matter of definition and possible identification of the phenomenon.

[46] Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll* 183–84.

Another element displayed in the accounts of the faithful slave or concept of infantilism is the response by the slave to protect his master and his longing to once again be under the master's protection once he had been freed. As reported above, from the Greco-Roman world to the modern Civil War situation, slaves often displayed a commitment to their masters in the periods when escape and freedom were most possible. Likewise, many freed slaves expressed longing for the days when they were protected, fed, and cared for by the master. One slave being interviewed after the Civil War argued that the Northerners had ruined the country and that the better approach to freeing the slaves would have been to allow them to work for themselves but to put a white master over them.[47]

One final overarching element of the slave mentality is the slaves' compassion for others because of the suffering they had experienced.[48] This is demonstrated in their response to those they came across in their post-manumitted state who had fallen on hard times as well as their rejection of slavery as a proper institution. Although some freedmen who settled in Liberia did mimic the harsher realities of their former masters in their treatment of the native Africans, this did not mean they accepted the rationale for slavery or its institutions.[49] Instead, the overwhelming amount of evidence concerning slave reactions is that even if they perceived their masters to have been benevolent and accepted the supposition of the propriety of white supremacy, they rejected the reasons given for slavery as an institution and sought to overthrow its practice when possible.

The paradox of behaviors and attitudes within slaves throughout history reveals a situation of psychological rearrangement as the individuals sought to deal with their predicament and maintain some level of psychological integrity. Though some of these elements may appear to be self-evident, when taken together, one can see a contradiction of behavior and expression that can only be attributed to the phenomenon identified as a slave mentality. The slave developed modes of perceiving his world that allowed him to adopt much of what the master presented and even to have feelings of admiration for the master who had treated him so inhumanely. This inner conflict between a person's understanding of what it means to be valued as a human and the situation in which he finds himself is so antithetical to every definition he can conceive of that he creates a new paradigm of belief and behavior that often goes beyond what would normally be expected in the situation.

In seeking to define and develop a consensus on what constitutes a slave personality, several realizations must be stated before continuing to apply the issues to the Hebrew situation. First, it is legitimate to seek these patterns of behavior and to apply the principles to groups long since passed. As Finley's

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[47] Ibid. 126–27.

[48] Ibid. 133.

[49] Ibid. 126–27. In discussing the resettlement of American slaves in Liberia, it is clear that some of these former slaves reacted to the native population there with cruelty similar to that which they had received. This was a minority reaction, however, and it has already been admitted that the variety of individuals in a dynamic demands a variety of responses from those individuals.

quote suggested above, we are compelled to deduce a psychology from the behaviors we detect as part of our function as observers of interpersonal relationships.[50] Both Finley and Vogt sought to apply the paradigm to ancient situations which are evidenced only through literary mediums.[51] Second, although there are certain elements which are present within whatever slave situation one is examining, it must not be forgotten that each pairing of groups creates its own dynamic.[52] In the American situation, scholars readily recognize the function of Christianity and the equality of persons which it teaches in shaping the slaves' self-perception. One would expect that the core beliefs which a group brought with it would mix with the perspective of the overlords to create its own dynamic in each situation.

IV. THE SLAVE MENTALITY AND ISRAEL

1. *The Israelite enslavement and the elements of causation.* In order to understand the nature of the enslavement which Israel underwent in Egypt, it is not only necessary to discuss the policies concerning slaves in the New Kingdom but also to outline certain elemental aspects of Egyptian world views and practices. As noted above, the matter of a slave mentality is not only an issue of the relationship of the slave and his master, but also the slave's integration or rejection of the outlook and perspective of that master. Therefore, along with Egypt's system of slavery, the pervasive thought patterns of her culture must also be examined and outlined.

a. *Egypt's central ideologies.* Numerous Egyptologists have outlined perspectives and ideologies which were fundamental to Egyptian thought. These factors vary from historical period to historical period and from scholar to scholar. At the same time, there are certain ideologies regarding the nature of Egyptian thought throughout her history on which scholars have achieved some degree of consensus. The New Kingdom also shared many of these elements, though they took on a slightly different form of expression with the advent of Empire status.

A central concept of Egypt's world view is the importance of the land to her identity. Egyptians uniquely viewed the land in two important ways. First, Egyptians gained their identity from the land. When differentiating themselves from their neighbors, one of the common methods was by the land on which they lived. The Egyptians called themselves the people of the black (fertile) land, and the foreigners the people of the red (desert) land. Second, because the inundation of the Nile was regular and there was little concern about rain and fertility, Egypt's perception of the land was more one of gift than the fertility-laden viewpoints and practices of Mesopotamia and Canaan.

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[50] Finley, *Ancient Slavery* 172.

[51] Furthermore, K. R. Bradley went so far as to suggest that this phenomenon has a place in explaining the lack of rebellions in Roman slave history (*Slaves and Masters in the Roman Empire* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1987] 140–41).

[52] Ann Lane, Introduction to *The Debate over Slavery* 18.

Closely related to Egypt's view of her land was her view of herself. David O'Connor has observed that by the New Kingdom period Egypt had developed a view of herself as superior to her neighbors. This viewpoint was maintained even during and after periods of social, military, and economic decline.[53] More importantly, this viewpoint was not reserved for the ruling classes alone, but pervaded all of Egyptian society.[54] This reality was reinforced during the New Kingdom period through the threefold reality of portraying Pharaoh as a military paragon, construction of mammoth images throughout the country, and its introduction into the very theology of Egypt itself.[55]

Egypt's view of herself and her neighbors also found expression in her treatment of foreign slaves and how they were addressed in various correspondences. Asiatic slaves remained distinct from Egyptians, and intermingling was discouraged.[56] In the official propaganda there are numerous attacks and expressions of disdain for anything that was from Asia. References to people of this origin were often harsh and degrading. That this was more than just stylistic ravings by the king is suggested by similar references in correspondences that were never meant for the eyes of anyone but the official receiving the message along with common caricatures of Syrians and others.[57]

b. *Egypt's slave policies*. The institution of slavery in Egypt is commonly thought to have been a part of every period in her history. On the contrary, it was not until the eighteenth dynasty that slavery of the sort represented in Greece, Rome, and other contemporary civilizations occurred. Before this time, a type of serfdom existed in which people were attached to the land. The people themselves could not be bought and sold.[58] With the New Kingdom period and the numerous captures of foreign troops, a shift in perspective occurred allowing slaves to be bought, sold, and disposed of as property.[59]

c. *To whom do we compare Israel?* Slavery in Egypt is partly understood through the unearthing of slave communities by archaeologists. These com-

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[53] David O'Connor, "New Kingdom and the Third Intermediate Period, 1552–664 B.C.," in *Ancient Egypt: A Social History* (ed. B. G. Trigger, D. O'Connor, B. J. Kemp, and A. B. Lloyd; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983) 194.

[54] Ibid. 195–96.

[55] Barry Kemp, *Ancient Egypt: Anatomy of a Civilization* (New York: Routledge, 1989) 187–90, 229 and O'Connor, "New Kingdom" 196.

[56] Donald Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel in Ancient Times* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992) 229. There are occasions where intermarriage took place, but these seem to be the exception to the rule.

[57] Ibid. 230 and Adolf Erman, *Life in Ancient Egypt* (trans. H. M. Tirand; New York: Dover Publications, 1971) 518.

[58] W. M. Flinders Petrie, *Social Life in Ancient Egypt* (London: Constable and Company, 1923) 23; Abd El-Mohsen Bakir, *Slavery in Pharaonic Egypt* (Supplement aux Annales Du Service de Antiquites de L'Egypte 18; Paris: L'Organisation Egyptieane Generale du Livre, 1952; repr. 1978) 4, 7, and 124.

[59] Bakir, *Slavery in Egypt* 81. See also Alan Gardiner, "A Lawsuit Arising from the Purchase of Two Slaves," *JEA* 21 (1935) 140–46.

munities vary as to their general living conditions. The site which one chooses to compare with the Israelite existence can lead to widely varying conclusions as to the nature of their time in Egypt. If one looks at Kahun, one will find a site that demonstrates poor living conditions, whereas if one examines Deir el-Medina, the outlook is far more positive.[60] While one might argue that the Hebrews' experience prior to enslavement in Egypt was similar to that found at Deir el-Medina (i.e. a self-contained community within Egypt whose inhabitants were allowed to have their own religious practices and mode of life as long as they remained faithful to their tasks), one can hardly compare its realities to those of Israel once the Pharaoh "who did not know Joseph" (Exod 1:8) took the throne. At this point, Israel most likely would have been perceived as captured prisoners of war. Little is known about the life of such slaves except that in most cases they were allowed to marry and maintain family relationships, were allotted a small living space, and were granted religious holidays. Exceptions to these principles were sometimes exercised in relation to state-owned captives whose rights were somewhat more limited.[61] In practices similar to those found in American slavery, slaves were often branded and could expect to be beaten for disobedience.[62] Furthermore, there was the possibility of rising to power as an overseer and even among state-owned slaves there was a difference in the way individuals were treated according to who was their overseer.[63]

As stated above, Israel was most likely perceived as a captured foe and might have expected to have been dispersed throughout Egypt as was customary of conquered enemies. On the other hand, a policy of dispersion of the people through an infusion of new ethnic groups and outsiders into the community may have seemed more viable and less likely to cause a revolt.[64] In other words, Pharaoh may have allowed all Israel to remain in one location for pragmatic purposes but still saw the need to create at least some level of disunity in the group by sending in foreigners. This may explain the biblical statement concerning the exodus in Exod 12:38 that it was a "mixed multitude" who came out of Egypt.

d. *Elements of causation are present.* The nature of the Israelite slavery with regard to cruelty and imposition of physical and psychological oppression was severe enough to have created a slave mentality. This is especially true if one factors in the expressions of cruelty related in the biblical narrative

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[60] Comparisons to Deir el-Medina are far more common. See Leonard Lesko, ed., *Pharaoh's Workers: The Villagers of Deir el-Medina* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994) and Leonard and Barbara Lesko, "Pharaoh's Workers: How the Israelites Lived in Egypt," *BAR* 25 (Jan./Feb. 1999) 36–45.

[61] Bakir, *Slavery in Egypt* 89–90, 115–16; Erman, *Life in Egypt* 126; and James Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt: The Evidence for the Authenticity of the Exodus Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997) 115.

[62] Erman, *Life in Egypt* 128.

[63] Ibid. 517.

[64] It must be pointed out that there is nothing in the biblical text that precludes the notion that some of the families and neighbors could have been relocated and not heard from again.

involving the killing of the male babies. Such acts would have instilled the feeling of despair which Blassingame identified as necessary for developing the mentality. The treatment of the Israelite slaves in relation to their position as prisoners of war is in some ways more reminiscent of the internment hypothesis than that of paternalism. The switch from a favored status to a people now viewed as the enemy would carry with it the shock and detachment prevalent in Elkins's model. The process would have been furthered through the pervasive Egyptian view of their own superiority and the imposing architectural features with which the Israelites must have come in contact. The overseers, as well as the image of the Pharaoh as all-seeing, would have been enough to create the sense of constant observation necessary to further the disassociation and loss of control necessary for the slave mentality to begin. What remains therefore is to discuss the nature of the mentality which Israel developed and the prospects for its influence on their theology and subsequent history.

2. *The wandering narratives and the slave mentality.*   As presented above, the slave mentality includes the key elements of acceptance of an overlord's world view, maintenance of certain core issues of the slave, investment in the need to protect and be protected, and rejection of the slave rationale of the master. It now seems appropriate to attempt to show to what degree this mentality became a part of the Israelite psyche, as well as dealing with distinctive elements of the manifestation of the phenomenon in Israelite culture and practice.

a. *Egypt is the Promised Land.* Within the wilderness narratives, there are two issues that manifest the slave personality. The first matter is associated with the murmuring dialogues recorded in the biblical texts. Although these apparently underwent some level of shaping in order to address the problem of reliance upon Egypt, they faithfully report the actions and attitudes of the people.[65] The most striking statement in Scripture is in Num 16:13–14 where the people reported that it was in fact Egypt that was the land of milk and honey. This passage is supported not only by assessments that the people were forced to leave Egypt against their will (Exod 14:11–12; 17:3; Num 20:4–5; 21:5), but by further statements that identify Egypt as a good place, full of food and a future (Exod 16:3; Numbers 11; 14:2). Each of these statements has striking similarities to those enunciated above by freed slaves in America and in antiquity. Interestingly, the Song of Moses (Exodus 15) records expressions in which Israel exults in the defeat of Egypt in an almost imprecatory manner. The people articulate joy in seeing the bodies of Pharaoh's army floating in the water and knowing that they have been driven into the depths. These somewhat conflicted expressions about the previous captors being both the former slaves' hope and the recipient of their deep hatred are exactly the kinds of feelings and expressions one would expect from a people reflecting the effects of the slave mentality.

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[65] By shaping, I am suggesting nothing more than that the author (in my opinion Moses) included and excluded material with certain outcomes in mind.

b. *Yahweh versus Egypt.* Beyond these overt statements there are also possible allusions to the slave mentality in the accounts of Israel's actions in the wilderness and God's responses to those actions. The nature of these texts is one of response to a group of people who were caught up in a reliance and commitment to Egypt, instead of Yahweh. Even in those sections where the need was valid and tangible, their response was a desire to return to Egypt rather than turning to Yahweh, this despite all the inhumanity that Egypt had done to them and the redemption that Yahweh had brought them.

One murmuring account that takes on special implications owing to Moses' response is the story of the bronze serpent (Numbers 21). The issue of Moses making a bronze serpent and asking the Israelites to look at it to be healed has puzzled modern exegetes because of its overtones of idolatry. Some have looked to Mesopotamian and even Greek practices and perspectives to attempt an explanation of the event. John Currid utilized practices evident in the New Kingdom period in Egypt to suggest that everything about the story points to an ancient Egyptian provenance for the event. Through comparative studies he argued that the serpent on the staff was not an idol *per se*, but served as a standard/flag/staff of Yahweh within which Yahweh had invested his power to serve as an agent of both blessing and cursing in the center of the Israelite camp. In utilizing this element prevalent in the faith of Egypt, Moses was acting in polemic against the foolishness of relying on Egypt. That is, although Israel had called for a return to Egypt, in this one event Moses revealed that it was not Egypt that was to be relied on but Yahweh.[66]

The story of the golden calf incident has been relegated by some scholars to the realm of a created event in response to the actions of Jeroboam I as he set up his calves at Bethel and Dan (1 Kgs 12:28).[67] While thematic links are clearly present, the entirety of Exodus 32–34 is dependent on the presence of the calf incident, and it is therefore unlikely that it is of late origin.[68] Furthermore, it is unlikely that a later writer would have formulated a story indicting only Jeroboam by using the entire nation of Israel as a predecessor.[69] Therefore the event is best understood as original to the wandering period.

The more important issue for this work is the nature of the calf itself. The primary question is whether the calf image grew out of Egyptian or Canaanite influence. The majority of scholarship argues for the provenance of the calf's worship in the religious expressions of Canaan and Mesopotamia.[70] These conclusions, however, seem to be primarily based on a conception of the story as a late construct which was addressing syncretism with Canaanite worship and the multiple examples of calf/bull symbols in the archaeological

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[66] John Currid, *Ancient Egypt and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997) 142–55.

[67] Noth, *Pentateuchal Traditions* 142–45.

[68] Durham, *Exodus* 420.

[69] Childs, *Exodus* 560.

[70] That this is the case is demonstrated by the complete lack of discussion of the possibility of it representing something Egyptian from John Spencer, *ABD*, s.v. "Golden Calf."

remains of Palestinian cities. On the other hand, there are many examples of bull worship within Egypt, especially in the North, which might suggest an Egyptian origin for the calf.[71] Indeed, such would be expected if the origin of the story is in the historical setting presented by the text of Exodus. If this is true, then the mixture of an Egyptian image with a conception that it facilitates at least the presence of Yahweh in their midst (Exod 32:5–6) could be understood as another example of the appropriation and modification of Egyptian practice with the religious mores of Israel.

Another piece of evidence demonstrating a theological reaction to the commitment of Israel to Egypt may be the treatment of Pharaoh and Egypt in the narrative of Exodus 1. The satirical nature of the first chapter of Exodus has long been recognized by scholars. Elements such as Pharaoh's plan being thwarted by so many strange elements reveal an almost ridiculing spirit on the part of the writer toward Egypt and her leader.[72] This reaction betrays a person cognizant of the mixed feelings his readers had regarding Egypt as a people who were both revered and despised. By addressing the situation through satire instead of direct attack, the writer allows his readers to draw their own conclusions regarding the foolishness of relying on the power of a Pharaoh who may appear wise and crafty but who is really a fool. Naturally, the depth of the influence of the slave personality under which the person lived would determine how ready he or she was to respond to the writer's effort. Regardless of this fact, the molding of the story in relation to the conceptions of Israel in her view of Egypt's greatness was ingenious.

c. *Israel and the land.* One final element of the slave personality to be discussed is Israel's elevated view of the land. While other cultures in the ancient near East had views of the land that were in keeping with their fertility religion, Israel's perception seems to arise more from an Egyptian perspective. That is, other cultures regarded the land in an almost utilitarian perspective, while Egypt and Israel's identity itself was tied up with the land. Egypt's identification of itself as the "people of the black lands" indicates this importance for her. In Israel a similar perception was held, though it was couched in terms of a covenant relationship. It has even been proposed by some that the land was the central theme and aspect of the theology of Israel.[73] This factor is even more striking in light of the promises to Abram in Genesis 12. Of the three promises of a great name, many descendants, and a land of his own, it was the last aspect of Yahweh's promise that quickly rose to a prominent position among the expressions in Scripture.

There is evidence that Israel's view of the land may have been altered by her experience in captivity. In his work discussing a theology of the land,

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[71] Eberhard Otto, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Stierkulte in Ägypten* (Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1938) and J. M. Oswalt, "The Golden Calves and the Egyptian Concept of Deity," *EvQ* 45 (1973) 13–20.

[72] Childs, *Exodus* 11–17 and Terence Fretheim, *Exodus* (Intepretation; Louisville: John Knox, 1991) 26–36.

[73] Walter Brueggemann, *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith* (Overtures to Biblical Theology; ed. Walter Brueggemann and John Donahue; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977) 3.

Walter Brueggemann presented a paradoxical perspective of Israel concerning her love for the land and yet her wariness towards possessing it. He proposed that the desire for the land was tempered by another desire to maintain the dignity of the individual. He suggested that it would have been the perception of the semi-nomadic people who became Israel that land ownership itself led to oppression of others. They understood, therefore, that while settlement and land were something to be desired, caution must be used in acceptance of this gift.[74]

Brueggemann's position is well argued and supported. It can be said, however, that the conclusions to which he came could be achieved by ascribing the perceptions to a slave outlook as easily as it could to a semi-nomadic perspective. Because Israel had been slaves and had been in close association with Egypt's perception of the land for many centuries, it is expected that this element of relationship with the land would have been absorbed. In addition, because that conception of the land would have been the recognized perception of their harsh overlords in the decades of enslavement, it would have carried notes of caution with it. Indeed, if one compares the expressions Brueggemann made concerning Israel's perceptions of the land with those that Genovese registered concerning slaves in America, one notices remarkable similarities.

d. *Other possible connections.* There are other passages that can be demonstrated to be an outgrowth or response to the slave personality. First, the priority of the slave laws in the covenant code suggests an emphasis on the issue of slavery absent from other cultures. Second, the laws concerning how one treats an outsider that are based on the enslavement (i.e. Exod 22:21; 23:9; Lev 19:33–34; Deut 10:19; 15:12–15; 24:17–18, 21–22) demonstrate a perceived connection between personal relationships and the institution of slavery dependent upon an association not often made in the ancient near East. Third, there are places where Egypt is given special status (Deut 23:7–8) that might belie some level of acquiescence to Israel's viewpoint for the purpose of moving them beyond revenge and mimicry of cruelty. Yahweh's response early in the theological constructions of Israel reveals his concern over their dependence on Egypt and his desire to see it modified and corrected in their thought.[75] Furthermore, that Israel would have been able to understand and react to these lessons demonstrates both the maintenance of certain core beliefs and, in the case of the serpent episode, the acceptance with modification of Egyptian practices.

[74] Ibid. 3–10. It is interesting to note that he nowhere associates the slavery in Egypt with these perspectives except to say the narratives further illustrate a warning against land ownership.

[75] Even if one rejects the Mosaic origin of these texts, they are firmly planted in the earliest forms of Israelite thought (Childs, *Exodus* 259–60). This would include the early prophets, such as Amos and Hosea. It is interesting to note the circular reasoning to which opponents of an exodus must revert at this point. For instance, Lemche dismisses references in Hosea and Amos to an exodus because the exodus is a late construct and therefore cannot be referred to by the early prophets themselves. However, one knows that the exodus is of late origin only because it does not appear in any early references within the biblical accounts. Niels Peter Lemche, *Early Israel: Anthropological and Historical Studies on the Israelite Society Before the Monarchy* (ed. J. A. Emerton *et al.*; VTSup; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1985) 308–14.

V. CONCLUDING ASSESSMENT

The demonstration of the slave personality in the thought and actions of the Israelite people brings with it certain conclusions which can be made beyond the realm of the sociological framework that has been proposed. One outcome of the work is an endorsement of the reality of an enslavement of Israel in Egypt. Without succumbing to the circular reasoning that because enslavement occurred one can expect the mentality, and because the mentality exists there must have been enslavement, there is good reason to suggest that the perspectives from Israel outlined above do suggest the presence of enslavement in Egypt somewhere in her history. That is, although the slave personality itself cannot be used as support, one is hard pressed to explain the multiple enigmatic responses of Israel toward Egypt in the wilderness apart from the reality of some relationship beyond merely being neighbors. While some might choose to view the origin of these feelings as arising late from the forced servitude of Egypt upon the Canaanite city states or from an elite emulation, the depth and persistence of the feelings seem better suited to the supposition of an actual presence by Israel within Egypt as portrayed in the biblical materials.[76]

Another conclusion is that the text accurately portrays feelings and actions that would be expected from a people who had come out of slavery. In other words, while certain scholars want to move the theological and historical recollections of an enslavement to a much later period than when they would have occurred, the portrayal of the sometime conflicting emotions and expressions by the recently released slaves reveals a text which reports information that is accurate in relation to the anticipated expressions of a people recently recovered from bondage. That is, if the text were of a much later composition or reworking, it is expected that the numerous levels of feeling and reaction portrayed would have been lost. Instead, it is the materials which are traditionally accepted as early which most completely portray the slave personality at work among the Israelites.

In dealing with the theological perspective of Israel, this essay has sought to isolate places where the biblical text was either shaped by this slave perspective or responded to it. Returning to the issues raised in the introduction of this paper, it is expected that some may question where God is in the working out of this concept. Let me suggest three pertinent responses.

(1) This paper is not suggesting that the slave personality should be understood as normative for the people of God. The issue arose out of a specific set of circumstances, and it is not suggested that these elements need to be duplicated in any way.

(2) Since God is in relation to his people, one would expect that he would respond to their needs both through implementation of their viewpoints and through response to it. In other words, God's primary concern is revelation of himself to humanity, and in order to do this he must express himself in

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[76] Carolyn Higginbotham argues for a provenance within the concept of elite emulation in her dissertation ("The Egyptianization of Ramesside Palestine" [Ph.D. diss., The Johns Hopkins University, 1994]).

relation to humanity's thoughts and perspectives. Sometimes he does so through utilization of those perspectives and sometimes through responding to those viewpoints.

(3) That the writers of the sacred text often used material from realms outside the pietistic tradition in order to relate godly ideals is a practice well represented in the Scriptures.[77] This being true, one would expect God to shape, expand, and redefine the positions of his people in order that he might more completely reveal himself to them. The recognition of the slave personality is therefore not an affront to Yahweh's authority, but is meant to further our understanding of his relationship and reaction to the attitudes and perceptions of his people.

The theological implications of the position presented in this work include the supposition concerning Yahweh's involvement in the life of his people, but go beyond this as well. The fact that God found it necessary to respond to Israel's mentality and the detrimental results to which it led reveal further the necessity taught in Yahweh's responses that reliance for all things must be found in him alone. Furthermore, though a person is shaped and affected by the circumstances in which he finds himself, it is neither acceptable nor excusable for him to remain in that place when it leads him away from his relationship with Yahweh.

The exodus was of clear importance to the Israelites.[78] The enslavement that they had experienced in Egypt and the subsequent rescue by God became the centerpiece of their self-understanding and their understanding of God. In many respects, all of Israel's history is viewed through the lens of the exodus. Much of the OT and NT theological expressions are inseparably connected to the theology of the exodus—from creation to the exile to the crucifixion itself. We do ourselves a great service when we take the time to evaluate elements directly associated with this central event. It is hoped that this article has demonstrated the responsible utilization of a sociological method, the sensitive expression of evangelical suppositions, and the cogent informing of the relationship of the complaint motif to how God relates to his people in the midst of their times of confusion and sin.

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[77] The writer of wisdom materials utilized whole blocks of material from other nations in order to make his case. Likewise, Paul quoted from pagan philosophers at times in order to make his points (Acts 17:28; Titus 1:12).

[78] Even those who reject an exodus admit to its centrality to Israel's existence. Niels Peter Lemche made the observation that without the exodus, "Israel's nationhood would have been a historical footnote, and its faith in Yahweh as the God of Israel would have remained insignificant." Niels Peter Lemche, *Prelude to Israel's Past: Background and Beginnings of Israelite History and Identity* (trans. E. F. Maniscalco; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998) 46.