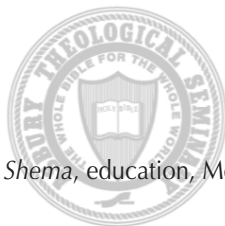


Paavo Tucker

The Shema as Total Meaning of Reality: Tradition, Freedom, and Verification in the Pedagogy of Deuteronomy

Abstract:

This paper will analyze the pedagogy of Deuteronomy in conversation with the educational theory of the Catholic scholar Luigi Giussani. Giussani argues that tradition – as the total meaning of reality, which from a Christian perspective is rooted in the living presence of Christ – should be taught by a process of verification that guides the student, through the exercise of freedom and inquiry, into personal conviction that the tradition coherently accounts for reality. Reading the pedagogy of Deuteronomy through the lens of Giussani’s theory of education will highlight ways in which the instruction of Moses in Deuteronomy initiates the next generation of Israelites into the tradition of Yahwism in a way that allows for the freedom of verification to result in conviction in the veracity of the tradition.



Keywords: Deuteronomy, *Shema*, education, Moses, Luigi Giussani

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On this occasion of celebrating the establishment of the Ph.D. program in Biblical Studies at Asbury Theological Seminary, I would like to offer some reflections on the task of theological education from the Book of Deuteronomy.¹ The content of Deuteronomy, which is identified in Deut 31:24 as “Instruction” (תורה), is primarily concerned with religious education (Olson 2005: 3–5). Of course, much has already been written about education in Deuteronomy. My focus here will be to contribute to the growing understanding of the nature of Deuteronomic instruction through a critical dialogue with the pedagogical theory of the Catholic priest, theologian, and educator Luigi Giussani. The approach of Giussani, centered around the importance of reason, tradition, and verification, views Christian education as an invitation to “risk” that involves guiding the student through a process of attaining conviction in the reasonableness of the tradition. This tradition, which for the Christian is grounded in the living presence of Christ as the total meaning of reality, is transmitted to students as an education into the critical capacity to verify the accordance of the tradition with reality. Only such a foundation can prepare the student to navigate the circumstances and uncertainties of life.

The Risk of Education: The Pedagogy of Luigi Giussani

Fr. Luigi Giussani (1922–2005) served as a religious educator in Italy for almost 60 years, first as a Catholic priest and seminary professor, and then most of his career as a High School teacher. His approach to Christian education is crystallized in his book, *Il rischio educativo* (1977), translated as *The Risk of Education* (2019). As Giussani engaged the landscape of Christian education in an increasingly secularized Italy in the late 20th century, he encountered sentiments among High School students that are often seen in Christian traditions today: religious tradition and education is based on irrational faith and cannot be grounded in reason, and it is not supposed to impact social behavior outside of the contexts of Church liturgy and ritual. Giussani perceived the detrimental impact of these deeply rooted assumptions and articulated a robust model of Christian education and spiritual formation that is based on a pedagogy in the verification of tradition to counter these misconceptions. The Christian faith must be embraced through reason as a way of being that has the capacity to improve, illuminate, and enhance authentic human values, and this reasoned approach to faith can only attain the position of conviction among students through a process of verification in which the

Christian tradition is questioned and seen to account for reality (Giussani, trans. Sullivan 2019: 5). Giussani developed the following components as guidelines for executing such an education:

First of all, education ought to be an initiation into the “Total Meaning of Reality” that is comprehensive in its scope of inquiry, and most fundamentally concerned with the question of meaning as foundational for understanding reality as it addresses the existential needs of humanity (2019: 25–28). For Giussani and the Church, Christ is the all-encompassing totality that moves beyond secular educations in practical nihilism by answering the “why” questions of reality. This total meaning of life is rooted in the mystery of God as a living and active presence as the ground of reason. Knowledge of this reality, which has been passed down in tradition by the Church, can be apprehended and verified as truth that is concomitant to reality.

Second, the tradition that is transmitted as the total meaning of reality serves as an “Explanatory Hypothesis” that is the beginning point of education. This hypothesis is passed on from parents in the earliest formative context of the student as the initial set of assumptions about reality with which the student begins to navigate the complexities of life. Without a given tradition as a firm starting point for education, students will flounder in their ability to engage and evaluate reality as they encounter it. Giussani argues that true education requires a “working hypothesis” as a point of departure that offers a context of meaning to the world that the student encounters (2019: 28). Fragmentary models of education that lack a grounding in a total meaning of reality also refrain from offering a coherent explanatory hypothesis as a starting point for education. The Christian tradition on the other hand, rooted in the total meaning of reality that is Christ, has a solid foundation from which students can begin to encounter, evaluate, and integrate new experiences and ideas into their worldview.

Third, the intellectual, psychological, and spiritual education and development of the student must undergo a process of personal verification that leads to conviction. Giussani writes,

In order to adequately respond to the educational needs of adolescence, it is not enough to propose a meaning of the world in clear terms. Nor is it enough for the person making the proposal to have a certain intensity of real authority. Rather, one must cultivate a personal engagement on the part of the young person with his or her own origins. They must verify what tradition has

offered them, and this may only be done on their own initiative, and no one else's. (2019: 45)

In each generation, the truth of the tradition is re-created in a living manner through verification, where the tradition is found to address the deepest needs of human existence as the student encounters reality. The meaning of the tradition is thus established as a personal conviction of the student through a process in which the tradition can be questioned and challenged in a supportive environment. It is only through critique—taken on by the own initiative of the student—that the student can attain a conviction of the expansive truth of the tradition that can withstand the challenges of alternate views of reality and the pressures of life that the student will face. This verification leads to an encounter with the total meaning of reality and a recognition of the applicability of the tradition to all of life. The main goal of education is to facilitate this process. Giussani writes

...[the] supreme concern of true education, precisely because it resolutely proposes a certain vision of things, is that adolescents be educated to carry out a constant comparison not only between this vision and other people's views, but also and above all between whatever happens to them and the idea that is offered to them (*trādita*, 'passed on'). The need for this personal experimentation is urgent, and this implies that the educator must tirelessly solicit adolescents' personal 'responsibility,' because once the educator proposes the idea and offers cooperation, only conscious engagement on the part of the individual student can concretize the value of the proposal and uncover its existential validity. (2019: 46)

The focus of educators should be on creating an environment in which not only is the content of the tradition taught, but in which the student is also initiated into a process of criticism as a method of questioning and comparing alternative traditions and views. This kind of critical education enables the student to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of each tradition and measure their ability to account for reality. Allowing the student to face challenges in their process of formation is the "risk" of education that actualizes the freedom of students to own their personal convictions without coercion or coddling. Only this kind of critical education can ground the student in the tradition as a means to navigating reality (Giussani 2019: 62).

Fourth, this kind of education is guided by a teacher, living out the tradition critically and with an integrity that yields authority, as the embodiment of the experience of the reality of the tradition. The students' process of verification cannot take place in a vacuum as an abstract intellectual exercise. Rather, it must be modeled by individuals and communities who have undergone the verification themselves, and who understand how to guide the student into experiencing the process for themselves. The role of this authority is not authoritative, but rather is focused on representing an embodiment of the truth of the tradition. This embodiment that models a life that is coherent and consistent with the tradition is an invaluable access point for the student to witness the reality of the tradition. Giussani states,

The educational function of a true authority takes the shape of a 'function of consistency (or coherence).' The authority acts as a constant reminder of ultimate values and call for the mind to engage with them, a permanent criterion for judging all of reality, and a solid protection of the link (which is always new) between the shifting attitude of the young person and the total, ultimate meaning of reality. (2019: 42)

The hypothesis of the total meaning of reality, when it is lived out coherently, results in the formation of a community in which the veracity of the tradition has been tried and found true across generations. It is within the context of this community—as an embodiment of the tradition—that individuals find the ultimate meaning of the hypothesis and its ability to account for the totality of life. For the Christian, this community of education and verification is the Church, within which and through which the life-giving presence of Christ is revealed.

Pedagogy in Deuteronomy

Transitioning now to the pedagogy of the book of Deuteronomy, we see that Moses' task of educating Israel bears many similarities with Giussani's context of teaching. Poised on the edge of the Promised Land, with forty years of wilderness wandering behind them and the uncertainties of life in the land ahead of them, Moses is faced with the urgent and risky task of educating the next generation of Israelites. The whole book of Deuteronomy, characterized as *Torah* (תּוֹרָה, Deut 31:24), is instruction to educate Israel for preparedness to enter the Promised Land and live an

obedient, mature, and flourishing life before Yhwh. Several excellent studies of various aspects of the pedagogy of Deuteronomy have already been carried out, including Dennis Olson's study of Deuteronomy as the instruction of Moses passed on at his death for the future generation of Israelites (2005), Karin Finsterbusch's exposition of Deuteronomy as the formation of a nation as a religious community of learning by Moses the master teacher (Finsterbusch 2005: 307–308), and Adrian Hinkle's exploration of pedagogical theory in the Pentateuch and Deuteronomy (Hinkle 2016: esp. 57–80). Specialized studies by A.J. Culp, Steven Weitzman, Ryan O'Dowd, and Dru Johnson consider focused aspects of the pedagogy of Deuteronomy, such as the pedagogical function of ritual and collective memory (Culp 2019), education as a training program of sense perception (Weitzman 2005: 123–139), and the epistemology of Deuteronomy (O'Dowd 2009; Johnson 2018). Numerous other studies could be mentioned, and other themes could be considered. This article—narrowed in on considering the aspects of Deuteronomic pedagogy that are shared in common with the educational theory of Giussani—will highlight what we can learn about Deuteronomic pedagogy as exemplified in the *Shema*, when considered from the perspective of Giussani's theory. We will see that Deuteronomic education bears many resemblances to Giussani's model, with Deuteronomic pedagogy perceived as the passing on of tradition with the goal of initiating the new generation of Israelites, through a process of verification, into personal conviction about the coherence of the tradition. As we shall see, a critical engagement with Giussani's model facilitates perceiving Deuteronomic pedagogy—synthesized in Deuteronomy 6—as an education into the total meaning of reality as life before Yhwh. Deuteronomic education offers this explanatory hypothesis in the context of personal mentoring and communal guidance as a locus for the student to challenge and verify the coherence of the tradition with reality as it is encountered.

Hear O Israel, The Lord is One: The *Shema* (Deut 6) as a Total Explanatory Hypothesis of Reality

Deuteronomy 6:1-9

The pristine expression of Deuteronomic education is the *Shema*, found in Deut 6:4–6. The chapter is also an entry point into Deuteronomic theology and encapsulates the paradigm for Deuteronomic education, and hence will be the focal point of our examination of Deuteronomic

pedagogy. The chapter begins by introducing what follows as “this is the commandment” (6:1), with the entire section of Deut 6–11 encompassing the scope of “this commandment” as an explication of the first of the Ten Commandments propounded in Deut 5:6–7: “I am Yhwh your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt... you shall have no other gods before me” (Olson 2005: 49). The first nine verses of Deut 6 elaborate on the commandment, and describe the *habitus* by which this commandment can be practiced and transmitted to future generations. The second part of the chapter, verses 10–25, describe the giftedness of Israel’s life before Yhwh as the motivation for obedience to the commandment.

Moses begins introducing the commandment (וְזָאת הַמִּצְוָה) as the content that Yhwh has commanded Moses to teach (לְלַמֵּד) to Israel (6:1). This “commandment” is then expanded to the rituals and judgments (הַחֻקִּים וְהַמִּשְׁפָּטִים) as a link that frames the laws of Deuteronomy 12–26 as an exposition of this commandment (Olson 2005: 50; Otto 2012: 790). The aim of this teaching is to enable present and future generations of Israelites who enter the land to fear Yhwh “by keeping all his statutes and his commandments... all the days of your life, that your days may be long” (v. 2). If Israel obeys carefully, “it will go well with them and they will multiply greatly” in accordance with the promises of Yhwh (v.3). In these opening verses of Deut 6, Moses thus sets up the basic premise of Deuteronomic education: a total way of life of obedience to the commandments of Yhwh that is encapsulated in the fear of Yhwh. The ability of this way of life of obedience to the commandments to yield a coherent life and account for reality can be confirmed through experience: obedience leads to life before Yhwh—and as Moses will later explain in more detail—disobedience leads to death away from Yhwh. These criteria of verification are developed throughout the book of Deuteronomy, culminating in the blessings and curses of Deut 27–28. At the end of his speeches of Deuteronomy, Moses is thus able to declare that he has “set before Israel life and good, death and evil,” thus delineating the contours of the life-giving tradition, as a precursor for the coming generation to choose this life with conviction (Deut 30:15–20).

With this groundwork established in 6:1–3, Moses explicates the content of this teaching with a positive statement of the first commandment with the *Shema*: “Hear O Israel, Yhwh our God, Yhwh (is) one/Yhwh alone” (שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד). The meaning of the Hebrew text of the *Shema* is ambiguous on a grammatical level.² The two main options for translation

are, “The Lord is our God, the Lord alone”, and “The Lord our God, the Lord is one.” The first translation asserts that the relationship between Israel and God is to be exclusive and unique. The Lord is the only deity for Israel. The second translation articulates a theology of the nature of Yhwh as “one,” as a statement of monotheism in some sense. Following the work of Walter Moberly, the parallels of Deut 6:4 to Song of Songs 6:9 suggest the former reading (Moberly 2013: 7–40). According to Song 6:9, the poet praises his beloved with the following words: “my dove, my perfect one, is the only one (אֶחָדָה); the darling (אֶחָדָה) of her mother” (RSV). The sense of אֶחָדָה here is “one and only” or “unique,” as an individual who is unlike any other. Based on this parallel, Moberly concludes that the meaning of אֶחָדָה in Song 6:9, in a context where the term is related to the logic of devotion, is the key to understanding the meaning of אֶחָדָה in Deut 6:4 as also related to love and devotion. By this reading, Deut 6:4 would be understood as saying that “Yhwh our God” is “the one and only” deity worthy of Israel’s unreserved love. Within this covenantal context of Deuteronomy, the love of Yhwh thus establishes ethics as a matter of personal relationship of love and affection for the deity (Levenson 2016: 60–62), as Yhwh is a divine person who pursues and demands loving and committed relationship from his beloved people, Israel. Knowledge of Yhwh is thus intrinsically connected to the moral, social, and ethical commandments which Yhwh reveals (O’Dowd 2009: 42).

Verse 5 proceeds to call forth and describe a holistic response to the theology that v.4 articulates, urging Israel to love Yhwh with all their heart, soul, and strength. The heart (לֵבָב) is associated with thought and emotion, as the place of internal thought-processes; the soul (נֶפֶשׁ) is the life force, vitality, vigor, energy, self-hood, or inner forcefulness of a person; the combination of these terms with “strength” (קֹחַ) calls for a love of Yhwh with one’s whole life, to mobilize all the capacities of the self and to do so to the highest possible degree (Levenson 2016: 69–72). This kind of love includes actions that express one’s orientation toward another. Deuteronomy’s concern is for a thoroughgoing internalization and appropriation of obedient action toward Yhwh so that action and intention fully cohere, as do practice and thought. This is a love that engages the entire person in decisive, passionate, and intense fidelity and obedience to Yhwh. Thus, the *telos* of Deuteronomic education is shaping the desires of the heart (Culp 2009: 125), rooted in a Hebraic knowledge that is participatory. Theological knowledge is intended to lead to a life lived in

conformity with Yhwh's order of reality (O'Dowd 2009: 3). The commandments to "love" (v. 4) and "fear" (cf. v. 2, 13) Yhwh entail covenantal loyalty that requires obedience to the commandments, but also inculcates emotional commitment to a relationship of affection and reverence for Yhwh that encompasses all of life (Arnold 2011: 561–562). The laws of Deuteronomy 12–26 delineate the all-encompassing nature of Israel's response to the experience of Yhwh, which extends the definition of the will of Yhwh to every area of life that is covered by the array of instructional legislation of these chapters.

This love for Yhwh is taught through a program of education outlined in vv.6–9. Educating the next generation is to take place in a family setting where the teaching is memorized (v. 6), as parents teach children about their history with Yhwh and how to walk in the ways of Yhwh and love of Yhwh in daily life (Culp 2009: 117–130). The descriptions of speaking the tradition and reciting it while sitting, walking, laying down, and rising, and of placing physical representations of the teaching on gates, doorposts, and foreheads, mark the instruction as permeating chronological, spatial, and social boundaries (vv. 7–9).³ These bodily practices prescribe a pedagogy that enculturates the student into an integrated practice of the faith in every area of life, as the *Shema* advocates all-encompassing devotion to Yhwh (O'Dowd 2009: 46). This pedagogy begins in the home, with the parents as the initial conveyers of the tradition as the embodiment of the present personal authority of the tradition. In the words of Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, Deuteronomy calls Israel into the vocation of a "Nation of Educators," where the teacher is the greatest hero (Sacks 2019: 99). Moses of course is the teacher *par excellence*, but the responsibility of pedagogy begins in the family and extends to the various leadership roles of society such as the priests, Levites, and elders (Deut 31:9–13; Olson 2005: 44–45), as well as to the prophet "like Moses" who will be the medium through which Yhwh will guide Israel into fulfilling its covenant obligations to Yhwh in future contexts (Deut 18:18–22). The continuation of the words of Yhwh through prophecy will provide guidance for applying and showing the continuing relevance of the instructions of Yhwh in future situations (Tigay 2003: 176; O'Dowd 2005: 72). Finally, at the end of Deuteronomy, the wisdom of Moses as the teacher of Israel is transmitted to Joshua through a "spirit of wisdom" that Moses imparts to him (34:9). As a result, the authority of Joshua is recognized by all Israel, who obey him as the authoritative purveyor of the tradition and do according to all the commandments of

Yhwh. Thus, in the absence of Moses, the voice of Yhwh will continue to instruct Israel through prophetic revelation as well as the spirit of wisdom that now rests upon Joshua. Other authoritative guides in the community, such as parents, priests, and elders, will continue to provide the content of the tradition through teaching. Their authoritative modeling of the tradition and wisdom from a lifetime of verification will offer guidelines to the students on the application of the tradition to ensure that Israel enters the promised land and experiences the blessings that Yhwh has promised (6:2–3), thus walking the next generation of Israelites through a process of verification to experience the truth of the tradition that is being passed on.

Deuteronomy 6:10-19

Verses 10–19 proceed to anchor the significance of the bodily pedagogy of the *Shema* in the larger framework of the tradition by locating the practices of transmission within the context of Israel's covenant relationship with Yhwh. These verses imagine the future that awaits this educated Israel by recalling the giftedness of their existence: Israel is reminded of the gift of the land (vv.10–15) and Yhwh's provision for them in the wilderness (vv. 16–19; Olson 2005: 52). Again, this section establishes criteria for verification of the tradition: Israel can know through experience the reality of their covenant with Yhwh by discerning and receiving the life-giving provision of Yhwh (vv. 10–11), while turning away from Yhwh results in destruction. The commandment in v.13 to fear and serve Yhwh, and to swear only by Yhwh—as a verbalized expression of covenant commitment (Otto 2012: 815)—communicate exclusive loyalty to Yhwh, before verse 14 warns of a prominent theme repeated throughout the pedagogy of Deuteronomy: the danger of Israel failing to honor Yhwh by “going after other gods—gods of the peoples who are around you.” The language of “going after/walking after” (הֵלֵךְ אַחֲרָיִךְ) is from the realm of marriage relationships, thus framing the act of religious apostasy as marital infidelity (Otto 2012: 815). Moses presumes—despite commands to annihilate the inhabitants of the promised land Israel is about to enter (cf. Deut 7:1–5)⁴—that Israel will undergo a sustained encounter with Canaanite ideologies upon their entry into the land. This encounter will apply immense pressure to Israel's understanding of her theological traditions and test the convictions of future generations in the veracity and beneficence of those traditions. Thus, Deuteronomic education must prepare Israel to evaluate the merits of competing traditions in light of the theological and ethical

truth she has experienced from her relationship with Yhwh. These encounters with alternative traditions are foreseen with statements about Israel's future engagements in the land, articulated especially with conditional *וְ*-clauses anticipating Israel's entrance into the land and the situations they will face (seen here in Deut 6:7, 10, 20, and elsewhere in the "when you enter the land" statements such as Deut 4:19, 25, 30; 7:1–2; 8:12–13; 11:19, 29, 31; 12:10, 20, 25, 28–29; 25:18; 26:1; 27:3–4, 12; 30:1, 10). These statements set up an expectation for Israel to be able to discern the applicability of the tradition and verify it with conviction in future contexts. Especially Deuteronomy 4, as a sustained meditation on the tradition of Israel's creation theology integrated with her experience of Yhwh at Horeb, establishes parameters for Israel to undermine the intellectual foundations of idolatries she may encounter.⁵ The close connections between the exclusive claims of the *Shema* and the warnings of apostasy in Deut 13 further highlight the way that Deut 6 functions as a hermeneutical key for critiquing and rejecting alternative theological and ethical traditions (Otto 2012: 828).

To enter the land and fully actualize Israel's potential freedom thus entails risk, and it is only in the responsible exercise of this freedom that each generation of Israelites realizes their individual freedom and reaches maturity as the people whom Yhwh has liberated from Egypt. Diligently observing the laws—thus doing what is right and good in the sight of Yhwh—results in life and prosperity for Israel (vv. 17–18). The imagery establishes a vision of the good of the tradition, from which perspective competing traditions can be evaluated. As this theological overview of the tradition asserts, Yhwh, who dwells "in the midst of Israel," is an impassioned deity (v. 15).⁶ Contrary to common views on the theology of transcendence in Deuteronomy according to which Yhwh is only present in a "spiritual sense" in the sanctuary through his "name" (Tigay 2003: xiii), Deuteronomical theology that describes Yhwh dwelling "in the midst" of Israel (cf. Deut 7:21; 23:14), or Israel living "before Yhwh" (לְפָנֵי יְהוָה cf. v.25) is immensely personal. This personal presence of Yhwh is impending upon Israel at every turn in the book. As J. Gary Millar argues, "The presence of Yahweh at the sanctuary is real and actual... The primary motive for going to the [chosen] place is not simply conformity in worship, but to meet with Yahweh himself. It is this reality that lies at the heart of the covenantal relationship. 'Rejoicing before Yahweh' is much more than enjoying the produce of the land—it is revelling in the relationship with the Giver of the land."⁷

Deuteronomy 6:20-25

As the outline for pedagogy continues, v. 20 anticipates that future generations will inquire about the meaning of the tradition of instruction or doctrines,⁸ rituals, and judgments (וְהַמִּשְׁפָּטִים הַעֲדֹת וְהַחֻקִּים) passed down. The response that the authority gives yields a liturgical commemoration of the key events of the tradition (Culp 2005: 126–129): deliverance from Egypt that the parents had seen with their eyes (vv. 21–22), the giving of the land of promise to confirm Yhwh’s oath to Israel’s ancestors (v. 23), and the interpretation of the meaning of the covenant and laws as intended “for our good always, that he (Yhwh) might preserve us alive,” with obedience motivated by the “fear of Yhwh our God” (v. 24). The parents thus recount the way that they were initiated into the tradition: their experiences with Yhwh were followed by instruction and interpretation of the significance of these experiences, which resulted in a life of commitment to Yhwh as defined by covenant (Hinkle 2016: 70). This pattern of how Yhwh instructed the first generation of Israelites is to be replicated as the model education: the parents are to model the covenant faithfulness of Yhwh, which faithfulness the children are to experience in and through the community. The parents are then to offer instruction on the religious and ethical significance of the tradition and discernment regarding the continuing experience of Yhwh for the children to critique and verify.

This initial question by the children about the meaning of the tradition is addressed to the parents in the second person: “what is the meaning of the things that Yhwh commanded you?” (v. 20). The response of the parents links the children with the ancestral traditions and promises of Yhwh as part of the community, including them in the community by using the common plural pronoun “our ancestors” (v. 23). This move integrates the children into the communal identity as part of the “us” whom Yhwh has saved, and to whom Yhwh has given commandments and promises (v. 24). The description of the events of the tradition, which integrates the theology of the oneness/uniqueness of Yhwh that is espoused in the *Shema* with concrete historical experiences from Israel’s relationship with Yhwh, affects a response of gratitude, motivates obedience, and teaches Israel to own and identify with the foundational events of the tradition and their significance. The chapter concludes in v. 25 with a reminder: the obedience of Israel—characterized as righteousness (צְדָקָה)—results in a coherent life to be lived out before the commanding presence of “Yhwh our God” (לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ). Thus, the chapter concludes by setting up the possibility of verification. If

Israel receives and obeys the tradition that Moses is passing on from Yhwh, they will encounter life before Yhwh as a back-and-forth relationship with Yhwh by which Israel can have, what Eckart Otto calls, a “dynamic experience”⁹ of this relationship (Otto 2012: 825–826).

Conclusion

We have seen in the pedagogy of Deut 6 that the pressing reality of the oneness of Yhwh for Israel becomes the totalizing explanatory hypothesis within the context of which Israel is to live out its life and vocation in the promised land. In the words of Bill Arnold, the paraenetic preaching of Deuteronomy, as seen for example in Deut 6, is the “first place [in the Hebrew Bible] we find an effort to articulate a theoretical and comprehensive understanding of what it means for humans to live in relationship with God” (Arnold 2011: 567). Passing on this theoretical and comprehensive understanding of relationship with Yhwh to future generations in a manner that leads to experience and conviction is at the core of Deuteronomy’s program of instruction. Reading Deuteronomy in light of the pedagogical theory of Luigi Giussani, we can thus see in Deuteronomy the interplay between the features of education into tradition as a hypothesis about the total meaning of reality, while the authoritative guide and community lead the student through a process of verification that results in the student attaining conviction in the ability of the tradition to account for reality. In each section of Deut 6, the character of Yhwh as the total hypothesis of reality that demands ultimate obedience is articulated. Yhwh, who is the one and only deity worthy of Israel’s love and respect as the *Shema* articulates (v. 4–5), lives in the midst of Israel as a personal presence that demands ultimate alliance (v. 15). Israel must in turn obey the commandments to live out a life of flourishing in the promised land before Yhwh (v. 25). Concomitant to this ultimate reality, Israel is to live in accordance with “what is right in the eyes of Yhwh” (v.18), not out of coercion, but as a reasoned and loving response to the nature of Yhwh who invites Israel into a covenant relationship in which obedience is for their good (v. 24).

In this process of education, Moses is at pains to set up guidelines for the potential confirmation of the veracity of this tradition—the character of Yhwh, the promises and faithfulness of Yhwh, and the goodness of the instruction of Yhwh—as knowledge that can be verified. The chapter is

interspersed with indications that establish the possibility of the verification of the tradition as an education into the meaning of reality. The pedagogy of the *Shema* invites the student to critique, inquire about, and examine the value and applicability of the tradition to every realm of life, while forming the student in a way of life grounded in the tradition, within a community in which the reality of Yhwh is regularly encountered. Giussani's model of education thus has highlighted how Christian educators today may look to Deuteronomy as offering a proven methodology of religious pedagogy in anchoring students in the reality of the tradition and in facilitating experience in the tradition as a total way of life lived before the presence of God as the total meaning of reality.

End Notes

¹ I would like to thank my teachers, mentors, and peers at Asbury Seminary for providing a context of Christian education as an initiation into the total meaning of reality that is grounded in the living presence of Christ. Especially I would like to thank Bill Arnold for his guidance and friendship and for modeling passionate engagement with the book of Deuteronomy that has influenced much of my own theological thinking and scholarship, and the Rev. Peg Hutchins, whose pedagogy in the Asbury Seminary Healing Academy time and time again brought me into an experience of the living presence of Christ as the total meaning of reality.

² Robson 2016: 214–215, for grammatical discussion of the various interpretive options. The key question is the relationship between the two clauses: יהוה אלהינו can be taken in apposition to יהוה אחד, or the two phrases can be taken as nominal clauses, or יהוה אלהינו as a *casus pendens*; cf. Otto, *Deuteronomium 4:44–11:32*: 794, for further discussion.

³ Culp 2009: 124. On the inclusion also of women in this pedagogical program, see Otto 2012: 806.

⁴ See Moberly 2013: 41–74 for the implications of the language of *herem* in Deut 7:1–5 as a metaphor for total obedience that assumes the continuing presence of Canaanites in the land whose ideologies Israel must reject.

⁵ See especially O'Dowd 2005: 39–42 for a discussion of the significance of Deuteronomy 4 for pedagogy in Israelite monotheism.

⁶ For this translation of קָוָה, see Tigay 2003: 65, 81.

⁷ Millar 2000: 103. See Deut 1:45; 4:10; 6:25; 9:18, 25; 10:8; 12:7, 12, 18; 14:23, 26; 15:20; 16:11; 18:7; 19:17; 24:4, 13; 26:5, 10, 13; 27:7; 29:9, 14 for the phrase יהוה לפני.

⁸ On עֲדָת as doctrines, see Culp 2005: 127.

⁹ Otto, *Deuteronomium* 4:44–11:32: 825–826.

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