
**Part I. GRAND MODELS AND STRATEGIES OF INTERPRETATION**

A. CH. 1: “AND THEY BEGAN TO SPEAK IN OTHER TONGUES”: *COMPETING MODES OF DISCOURSE IN CONTEMPORARY BIBLICAL CRITICISM*—Simply put, the guild of biblical studies has experienced a seismic shift since the 1970s, unparalleled to any other movement in the century. S. discerns four motivating factors for undertaking this work. First, his autobiography parallels this shift. Second, the shift is concomitant to the ethos of a *fin de siècle.* Third, the shift has been closely linked with global shifts “in the sociopolitical arena.” Fourth, “this shift is directly responsible as well for my ongoing critical project” (6).

1. Competing Modes of Discourse in Biblical Criticism
   a. “In the plotting of the shift in the discipline that follows, I have recourse to three structural principles: first, I argue that the process has so far involved three distinct paradigms or umbrella models of interpretation, each involving a variety of interpretive approaches; second, I describe such a process in terms of liberation and decolonization, although for different reasons at different times; finally, I argue that, at this point in the process, these three paradigms need not be seen as mutually exclusive but rather as subject to creative interaction” (7).
   b. Overall, S. believes historical criticism as a mode of interpretation is on the decline while literary criticism and cultural criticism continue to ascend.
   c. S.’s narrative perceives a movement of liberation and decolonization along these lines. The hegemonic grip of a single mode has given way to a broad diversity of approaches or methodologies and voices or sociocultural locations.
   d. “Such a process can be appropriately described in terms of liberation and decolonization: first, in the sense of self-determination regarding the choice of interpretive model; second, in the sense of calling into question the myth of objectivity and universality” (10).
   e. Finally, S. reaffirms that these modes are not necessarily mutually exclusive and that we can all gain from their contributions. HC helps distance the text as “other.” LC highlights the formal conventions that shape textuality. CC reveals the contextuality of all readers, whether ancient or modern.

2. Historical Criticism: The Text as Means
   a. S. conceives of HC as an umbrella mode, dominant until the 1970s, which encompasses a variety of “classic” methods. It views “the text as a means to the author who composed it or the world in which it was composed” (8).
   b. Includes literary or source, history-of-religions, tradition, form, redaction, and composition criticisms.
c. HC calls for the text to be contextualized but the reader to eschew her own context.
d. S. argues that the underlying theoretical underpinnings of HC were not explored during its long reign, for the method did not require such reflection but only technical expertise. Skills were passed from generation to generation without much “critical self-consciousness.”
e. Basic Principles
   i. Text is “historical evidence from and for the time of composition” (12). Meaning resides in the world of the past or authorial intent.
   ii. Text generally viewed various conjoined parts, not a rhetorical, literary, or theological whole.
   iii. “Strong positivistic foundation and orientation.” Frequently assumes and evolutionary progress of knowledge.
   iv. Required a “universal and informed critic” as reader.
   v. HC, though, was “profoundly theological in orientation.” Either theology was viewed as entirely divorced from history, or HC was perceived as the crucial, but indirect, means by which to garner the true word of God. Either way, meaning was not contextualized but presumed to be culturally and temporally universal.
   vi. HC pedagogy assumed all readers could become equally detached and objective interpreters through hierarchical and authoritative instruction.
f. “In terms of theory and methodology, the historical paradigm was remarkably inbred and thoroughly hegemonic” (15).

3. Literary Criticism: The Text as Medium
a. S. conceives of LC as the initial salvo against HC’s hegemony which found academic acceptance through the 80s and 90s. It views “the text as a message from author to readers, with an emphasis on the principles governing the formal aspects of this communication” (8).
b. Includes narrative, structuralist, rhetorical, psychological, reader-response, and deconstructionist criticisms.
c. Although LC begins to consider the role of the reader, the reader in only conceived along formal or aesthetic perspectives that still stress universality and objectivity.
d. LC far more theoretically sophisticated than HC.
e. Basic Principles
   i. Text as a message or communication between sender and recipient. Can range from emphasis on text to reader.
   ii. Presumes textual unity.
   iii. Positivism continues to hold sway as meaning is still regarded as “univocal and objective” and thus attainable via methodological sophistication. While some approaches admit
multiple textual meanings, “the principle of a plurality of interpretations was always fairly circumscribed” (19).

iv. Even when the “reader” was in view, such a reader “remained faceless.” Stress still placed on a “universal and informed critic,” a trained specialist as ideal reader.

v. Theological tendencies took two paths. Either LC was devoid of literary import, and scriptural texts were read as literature, or LC provided a means to attain the word of God with greater understanding.

vi. Pedagogy of LC did not shift significantly from HC’s. Skills and technique were still passively transmitted, though the hierarchical and authoritative ethos began to crumble as the multiplicity of textual meanings became evident.

f. An important step for biblical studies, LC has both remained and rebelled against the theoretical strictures of HC.

4. Cultural Criticism: The Text as Means and Medium

a. CC arose along with LC in the 70s and paralleled in some ways its relationship to HC.

b. Includes socioeconomic and ideological analysis along neo-Marxist lines along with sociological and anthropological approaches. It views “the text as a message from author to readers within a given context, with an emphasis on the codes or principles governing the sociocultural aspects of such communication; hence, the text as a means to that world in which it was produced” (9).

c. CC continues HC’s view of the text as a means to the past. It calls for an even more acute contextualization of the text and may call for the reader to contextualize herself but not necessarily.

d. Basic Principles

i. Text is fundamentally a means to the past; the text is a reflection of its milieu. With time, sociology gave way to anthropology in its neo-Marxist concern with economics and ideology.

ii. Both horizontal (holistic texts) and vertical (aporias) readings practiced in CC, but the distinction is ultimately inconsequential, for the aim of CC is the proper analysis of the text’s various codes.

iii. Like HC and LC, the meaning of the text remained “largely univocal and objective and, as such, retrievable” (25).

iv. Relation of reader to text varies by particular method. “In all three variations it remained the function of the reader…to search for the meaning inherent in the text, bring it to the surface, and make it available to untrained and unsophisticated readers” (27).

v. Two stances: (1) Theology and interpretation divorced; CC could be an even more rigorous form of the history of religions. (2) CC could also lay an even firmer foundation for the word of God.
vi. Pedagogical implications similar to HC.

5. Cultural Studies: The Text as Construction
   a. According to S., a fourth umbrella model is on the rise. CS “calls into question the construct of a neutral and disinterested reader…” (30). It posits instead a “flesh-and-blood reader.”
   b. “It is a development that I describe in terms of ‘cultural studies’—a joint critical study of texts and readers, perspectives and ideologies—thereby distinguishing it from cultural criticism and at the same time showing its affinity with similar developments in other disciplines and critical practices” (30).
   c. While striving towards objectivity was “was a praiseworthy goal…[it was] also quite naïve and dangerous” (30).
   d. This new mode is significantly inspired by the irruption of new voices from the margins of the globe.
   e. “Such a reading takes competing modes of discourse for granted, renounces the idea of any master narrative as in itself a construct, and looks for a truly global interaction. Such a reading is both the inevitable result and mode of a postcolonial Christian world and a postcolonial biblical criticism” (33).

B. CH. 2: CULTURAL STUDIES AND CONTEMPORARY BIBLICAL CRITICISM:

IDEOLOGICAL CRITICISM AS MODE OF DISCOURSE

1. Plotting Biblical Criticism
   a. After summarizing the previous chapter, S. notes several qualifications for the narrative he is constructing. While the process of liberation and decolonization includes the notion of progress, “the plot also reveals a more contemporary, ironic mode with respect to content and argumentation” (35).
   b. A new consensus does not emerge for multiplicity reigns. Progress is not unidirectional but variegated.

2. Cultural Studies: The Text as Construction
   a. In CS, real readers lie behind every reading strategy. Thus, a critical analysis of readers is just as important as that of the text.
   b. CS can appeal to a broad range of strategies including those listed in the previous chapter.
   c. CS is primarily ideological, “given its central focus on contextualization and perspective, social location and agenda, and hence on the political character of all composition and texts as well as reading and interpretation” (41).
   d. Location and Meaning – CS “approaches the text as a construct, insofar as meaning is taken to reside not in the author of the text or the world behind the text…or in the text as such…but in the encounter or interchange between text and reader” (42). Both poles are equally important.
   e. Reading Strategy – “In practice, therefore, in its own approach to texts, cultural studies would neither rule out the presence of textual ruptures nor find it necessary to argue for unity and coherence”
Instead, it ask why do some readers see the former, others the latter?

f. **Theoretical Foundations** – Positivism and empiricism no longer. “For cultural studies the text has no meaning and history has no path without a reader or interpreter…” (45). Assumes multiple interpretations as a given and “a point of departure for an analysis of texts and history.” Ultimately, no construction of meaning is unassailable, for “no final recreation of meaning or reconstruction of history is possible beyond all perspective and contextualization” (46).

g. **The Role of the Reader** – It is at this point where CS differentiates itself most clearly from the other three models. CS “calls for critical analysis of reading strategies…. [CS] also calls for critical analysis of real readers—of those who lie behind, opt for, construct, and apply such strategies… [CS] calls for critical analysis of all readers and readings, whether located in the academy or not, highly informed or not” (46-7).

h. **Theological Presuppositions** – Though no less theological than other approaches, CS “does call for radical openness in this regard as well” (48). All readers bring theological commitments to the text, even if it is a negative one; all these perspectives have to be brought under critical scrutiny.

i. **Pedagogical Implications** – Also radically different than other approaches. First, students cannot be required to share “a common methodological approach and theological apparatus on the part of all readers…in order to become informed critics” (49). Second, “informed readings” no longer receive hermeneutical privilege. Finally, personal voice is no longer seen as an obstacle to detached interpretation but a crucial component of the process.

3. **Concluding Comments**
   a. CS allows for a diversity of reading strategies, eschews a monolithic option.
   b. CS is also marked by sociocultural along with methodological diversity. Since all readers are located and all meaning is constructed, the scholar must look beyond the narrow confines of the ivory tower.
   c. However, such openness brings with its own problems; “anomie, to be sure, does have it price” (51).

**Part II. Grand Models and Strategies of Pedagogy**

**A. CH. 3: PEDAGOGICAL DISCOURSE AND PRACTICES IN BIBLICAL CRITICISM**

1. Pedagogical Discourse and Practices in Historical, Literary, and Cultural Criticism
   a. Historical Criticism, represented by J.A. Fitzmyer
      i. The pedagogy of HC leaves the student dependent on teachers “for an account of the text and its meaning” (59).
      ii. **Basic Principles**: (1) “[S]tudent/readers need to master the principles of classical philology and the techniques of its later
refinements in order to become critic/teachers” (62). (2) Due to this knowledge, critic/teachers hold the critical interpretive key for deciphering biblical meaning. (3) This pedagogy should rear students that can remain “objective and impartial in their research…”

iii. “What emerges thereby is a pedagogical model that is highly pyramidal, patriarchal, and authoritative…” (62).

b. Literary Criticism, represented by M.A. Powell
   i. Basic Principles: (1) A body of knowledge is still required to function as critic/teacher. (2) Critic/teachers, thus, still retain the critical interpretive key. (3) Social location and ideology are still bracketed notions as focus remains on the informed reader.

c. Cultural Criticism, represented by B.J. Malina
   i. Basic Principles: (1) In addition to the technical knowledge of HC, students must also comprehend the “concepts and model of cultural anthropology…so that they can proceed to raise the fundamental question of meaning: the why question” (72). (2) Critical interpretive key retained in the hands of the critic. (3) Though a path beyond ethnocentrism and anachronism, CC still permits the reader to bracket her own cultural location. “In effect, the humanization of student/readers may be said to serve as a tool for dehumanization…” (73).

ii. In the end, hierarchy and authority remain in all three models as crucial pedagogical components.

2. Recent Calls for Change: Cultural Studies
   a. S. proceeds to discuss the specific pedagogical implications of several authors representing CS.

3. Concluding Comments
   a. The guild is “described as profoundly Eurocentric or Western…” (85).
   b. Such a position has wide implications for those on the margins.
   c. The proposed remedy in each case is for the “other” to be given full voice and recognition.
   d. A fundamental goal of S.’s work is to make the guild less Western and/or Eurocentric.

B. CH. 4: PEDAGOGICAL DISCOURSE AND PRACTICES IN CULTURAL STUDIES: TOWARD A CONTEXTUAL BIBLICAL PEDAGOGY
1. Cultural Studies: Diagnoses and Prescriptions (see previous chapter)
2. Cultural Studies and Pedagogy: A Proposal
   a. S. proposes a two-pronged approach. The first emphasizes diversity in texts, readings, and readers. The second emphasizes that
the specter of empire and colonialism in the ancient and modern worlds be taken seriously. These two concerns interpenetrate one another in S.’s approach.

b. Such an approach has wide implications. (1) Theoretical in orientation, this proposal purposefully requires the creativity of teachers to apply its principles into actual courses. (2) The detachment many have observed between the church and the academy have at least something to do with traditional pedagogies which exclude alternate readings and seeing their own reading practices as contingent, not universal. Furthermore, academicians must confront their privileged position in the upper reaches of the educational system. The confines of the academy being so narrow, academicians must remember the circumscribed scope of their audience. In light of these realities, it is time for the academy to reassess the cutthroat competition which has marked scholarly “dialogue.”

Part III. Biblical Studies and Postcolonial Studies

A. Ch. 5: Biblical Criticism and Postcolonial Studies: Toward a Postcolonial Optic

1. Options for a Postcolonial Optic
   a. This section includes sharper rehearsals of previously made points.
   b. “Postcolonial studies is a model that takes the reality of empire—of imperialism and colonialism—as an omnipresent, inescapable, and overwhelming reality in the world: the world of antiquity, the world or the Near East or of the Mediterranean Basin; the world of modernity, the world of Western hegemony and expansionism; and the world of today, of postmodernity, the world of postcolonialism on the part of the Two-Thirds World and of neocolonialism on the part of the West” (125).

2. Postcolonial Studies and Biblical Criticism
   a. Postcolonial Studies and Ancient Texts
      i. Under the rubric of postcolonial studies, the ancient world is inescapably under the influence of imperialism.
      ii. S. clarifies that imperial thought functions along a “binomial opposition” of center and margin, which, however, cannot be extrapolated universally to all imperial projects but which can be said to be of universal import to any creative product of the time. In other words, the imperial context of the bible—in all its political dimensions—is undeniable.
   b. Postcolonial Studies and Modern Readings
      i. Analogically, we must also reconsider the readings of scripture which have been so influential in a Western world so touched by empire. Mediated either through Europe or North America, the bible has held an ambivalent position in the project of imperialism both as an enabler and critic of the process.
ii. “Consequently, the shadow of empire in the production of modern readings of the ancient texts should also be underlined” (128).

c. Postcolonial Studies and Readers
   i. Even under the guise of imperial power, the binomial opposition of center/margin is never simply passively accepted. Forms of resistance arise that deserve our critical attention.
   ii. In fact, S. argues that such a movement has prompted the seismic shift in biblical studies evident in the last thirty years or so; interestingly, this shift has occurred at the same time as neocolonial endeavors have taken up the project left behind by the former imperial powers after the various wars for independence that marked the last century.
   iii. The global orientation of our world is also forcing us to engage readers from beyond the Western imperial powers. What new perspectives will they bring into a conversation long dominated by Western interests and agendas?

B. CH. 6: NOTES TOWARD REFINING THE POSTCOLONIAL OPTIC (NB: This chapter was originally written in response to a panel review of *The Postcolonial Bible*)
   1. The Question of Nomenclature
      a. Though he commonly uses the term, “postcolonial” is a perniciously difficult bit of nomenclature.
      b. Especially problematic is that any of the term that are usually utilized along with “postcolonial” orient themselves around the center instead of the margin. That is, the colony or the empire are still the center of discussion instead of alterity or marginality.
   2. Reading the Responses
      a. The series in which *The Postcolonial Bible* was released ask three fundamental queries: “(1) the question of pedagogy—teaching biblical studies in such a way that the postcolonial optic emerges as central rather than tangential to the enterprise; (2) the question of solidarity—doing postcolonial analysis in biblical studies without losing sight of its commonalities and links with other discourses of resistance and emancipation; (3) the question of applicability—deploying the postcolonial optic in biblical studies in a way that is keenly mindful of the differences between and among historical contexts and imperial/cultural formations” (135).
      b. S. spends most of the remaining essay dealing with the latter concern, concluding, “Postcolonial studies and biblical studies may be brought together in dialogue with either scant or abundant reference to historical and cultural boundaries, with neither option to be posited as inherently better than the other but with the latter as favored” (139).

Part IV. VOICES FROM OUTSIDE
   A. CH. 7: MY PERSONAL VOICE: *THE MAKING OF A POSTCOLONIAL CRITIC*
      1. Historical Criticism: Suppression of the Personal Voice
      2. Cultural Studies: Irruption of the Personal Voice
3. Postcolonial Studies: Entrenchment of the Personal Voice

B. CH. 8: RACIAL AND ETHNIC MINORITIES IN BIBLICAL STUDIES
   1. Racial and Ethnic Minorities in Biblical Studies at the Turn of the Century
   2. Life and Role of Ethnic and Racial Minorities in Biblical Studies

NB: This last part is perhaps my favorite, in a sense, and the easiest to comprehend. In these last two chapters, S. shares personal anecdotes that enliven the narrative of biblical studies he constructed throughout the work. The closing chapter deals with the irruption of racial and ethnic minorities in the academic study of the bible and how a changing population is simultaneously changing the face of the discipline. Though easy to read and brief, I found these chapters more difficult to outline; a quick read along with these orienting comments should be sufficient.