

# New Meanings for Ancient Texts

## *Recent Approaches to Biblical Criticisms and Their Applications*

EDITED BY

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**WJK** WESTMINSTER  
JOHN KNOX PRESS  
LOUISVILLE • KENTUCKY

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## Preface

This book has been conceived as a sequel to an earlier volume also published by Westminster John Knox Press: *To Each Its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticisms and Their Application*, edited by Steve McKenzie and our Rhodes College colleague, Stephen R. Haynes. That work, which was published in 1993 and followed by a revision in 1999, was designed as a textbook to serve a need that the editors saw for a single-volume introduction of major methods and approaches to study of the Bible for nonspecialists. Twenty years later it continues to serve this purpose and to be widely used in seminaries, colleges, and universities, largely because there is nothing else quite like it available.

Since the appearance of that first volume, the field of biblical studies has evolved and changed considerably, especially where methodological matters are concerned. “The Current Shape of Biblical Studies” in the introduction of *To Each Its Own Meaning* explains that the essays within the book represent several types of methods: traditional, historically oriented criticisms (historical, source, tradition-historical, form, and redaction); newer, literary-oriented ones (structural, narrative, reader-response, poststructuralist, and ideological); and some others that do not fit under either of those categories (social-scientific, canonical, and rhetorical). Six years later, the second edition added another example of

ideological criticism that focused on socioeconomic reading in addition to the original article illustrating a feminist approach. The two articles testified to a growing movement in the field toward explicitly ideological and reader-oriented perspectives. Taken together, the various approaches treated in the book gave a good sense of the range of methods for study of the Bible that were prevalent at the time it was written.

What a difference twenty years make! While *To Each Its Own Meaning* remains a useful and reliable introduction to the methods it discusses, it does not adequately reflect the diversity of approaches that presently constitute the field of biblical studies. Scholars now regularly employ ways of studying the Bible that were either unheard of or in their infancy in the early 1990s. This becomes apparent if the most recent program book of the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, the largest organization of Bible scholars in the world, is compared to the one from 1993 when *To Each Its Own Meaning* was first published. There are now about twice as many program units—more than 160 now, and about 80 then—and many of them embrace new methods that have been widely accepted by scholars.

As these newer approaches become more established and influential, it is essential that students and other serious readers of the Bible be exposed to them and become familiar with them. That is the main impetus behind the present volume, which is offered as a textbook for those who wish to go further than the approaches covered in *To Each Its Own Meaning* by exploring more recent or experimental ways of reading. Of the approaches discussed here only one—psychology and biblical interpretation—had its own program unit in the 1993 Society of Biblical Literature meeting, and it was only in its third year of existence. Several others, like queer criticism and postcolonial criticism, were employed in individual papers that were read at that meeting, but they did not yet have a permanent “home” with their own program units as they do today. Still others treated in this volume, like those informed by ecological criticism and disability studies, are virtually absent from the 1993 program.

As diverse as the approaches treated here are from one another, we notice certain similarities in comparison with the 1993 collection that hint at further changes in biblical studies. For instance, all of the methods in 1993 were presented as criticisms, most with particular methodologies. However, such is not the case for the present assemblage. While most still sport the title “criticism,” the authors, almost to a person, point out that their topics do not represent methods that can be delineated through a series of steps but are rather approaches or perspectives—ways of looking at the Bible. They are lenses, if you will, or angles for addressing its literature. This may be due in part to an interest on the part of practitioners in 1993 to counter charges of subjectivity and arbitrariness and to present their approaches as academically sophisticated and critical. Perhaps now there is less sense of defensiveness and more candor about the subjectivity of any interpretation, less call to pose as a programmatic *method* for getting at the meaning of the Bible and more recognition that we all read it from different,

albeit sometimes shared, vantage points, be they ideologies, orientations, or, as in the case of psychology, the platform of insights from an adjacent discipline.

The format for this volume and our *modus operandi* as editors are very similar to those adopted for *To Each Its Own Meaning*. We have sought out leading pioneers of the approaches chosen here, and we have asked each of them to define and describe their approach as clearly as possible for nonspecialist readers and to relate it to other ways of reading. We also asked them to illustrate the approach “in action” with reference to a particular text or set of texts in either the Pentateuch or the Gospels. Finally, we asked them to explain and respond to any criticisms that have been leveled at the approach. As a further aid to readers, they have assembled a list of key terms and definitions relating to the approach and a set of bibliographic entries for further reading.

We wish to express our deep gratitude to the contributors for their collaboration in this project—for their enthusiastic willingness to take on the assignment, for the clarity with which they have written and presented their approaches, and for their promptness in sending their essays to us. We also wish to acknowledge our debt to our colleague, Steve Haynes, without whom *To Each Its Own Meaning* would never have come to be, and to our other colleagues in the Department of Religious Studies at Rhodes College, to whom this book is dedicated.

Working on this volume has led us to ponder the future of biblical studies as an academic discipline. What will a book of this nature look like in another twenty years? The vibrancy of the field and the pace of change make it impossible for us to predict, but we find it an exciting topic for speculation, and we hope that this book contributes in some small way to attract and engage future scholars in our discipline who will help to answer such questions.

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## Chapter 1

# Cultural-Historical Criticism of Bible

TIMOTHY BEAL

Cultural-historical criticism of the Bible explores how biblical words, images, things, and even ideas of “the Bible” take particular meaningful forms in particular cultural contexts. It seeks not to interpret biblical texts but to interpret interpretations as productions of cultural meanings of the biblical, with the larger goal of elucidating and historicizing the biblical cultures in which these cultural productions live and move and have their being. Its aim, in other words, is not to understand the Bible but to understand the cultures in which the Bible takes on particular meanings and how those meanings are produced, reproduced, and transformed over time.

### CULTURAL HISTORY

In academic discourse, cultural history refers generally to historical research that explores the ways meaning takes form within culture, often but not exclusively popular culture. Often drawing on anthropological approaches (some cultural historians prefer to be called historical anthropologists), it presumes that meaning is a matter of cultural production; it is produced and reproduced through



our words, our actions, the things we make and use, and the media technologies by which we extend ourselves into our world. These words, actions, things, and media technologies are the ways a society expresses itself, revealing its more or less conscious desires, anxieties, sensations, memories, and so on. The cultural historian therefore treats these data as, to borrow Marjorie Garber's phrase, "symptoms of culture."<sup>1</sup> A symptom is a phenomenon that indicates a condition of some kind, a form of evidence, a sign. The cultural historian examines various cultural phenomena, be they "high" or "low," as symptoms by which she may diagnose cultural meanings, which are not always, indeed not often, explicit.

Cultural history has emerged over the past few decades out of, and sometimes over against, previously dominant Marxist base-superstructure approaches (e.g., the French *Annales* school and British and American social history), which understood a society's economic mode of production as the base, or cause, of all other aspects of social organization and culture.<sup>2</sup> Such social-historical approaches therefore treated cultural meanings as superstructural effects of the base economic system. Cultural history, on the other hand, takes such phenomena more seriously, on their own terms, as means of exploring how human beings, as cultural subjects, are both produced by culture and produce it.

The theoretical and methodological influences on recent cultural history are many and diverse. Several of the most influential anthropological approaches, moreover, are familiar to students of religion, including Mary Douglas's study of purity, pollution, and taboo in Leviticus; Edward Evans-Pritchard's work on magic and witchcraft; and Clifford Geertz's work on religion as a cultural system. Beyond these, two non-religionist scholars are particularly helpful in developing a cultural-historical approach to Bible: Raymond Williams on culture and the structure of feeling and Michel Foucault on discursive practices and the archeology of knowledge.<sup>3</sup>

Rejecting the elitist idea of culture as "high culture," the special possession of "cultivated people," Raymond Williams developed a theory of culture that incorporated two key aspects: on the one hand, the ordinary, that is, the commonly held meanings of a society's "whole way of life;" and on the other hand, the individual, innovative meanings that derive from arts and learning, and that can challenge the common and ordinary aspects of a culture.<sup>4</sup> Whereas the former aspect of culture is what makes it common and familiar, the latter is what explains individual difference and allows for cultural transformation.

Another key concept in Williams's understanding of culture that proves especially provocative vis-à-vis religion and biblical studies is what he calls the "structure of feeling," by which he refers to the specific character and quality of common cultural sense and lived experience. This lived experience involves

... the interaction between "official" culture—laws, religious doctrine, and other formal aspects of culture—and the way that people live in their cultural context. The structure of feeling is what imbues a people with a specific "sense of life" and experience of community. It comprises the set of particular cultural commonalities shared by a culture despite the indi-

vidual differences within it. Cultural analysis of structure of feeling aims at uncovering how these shared feelings and values operate to help people make sense of their lives and the different situations in which the structure of feeling arises.<sup>5</sup>

Of course, all people in a given context do not share such feelings; these are, rather, the common feelings of the dominant culture. This fact points to a central theme in Williams's work: cultural struggle and resistance. How do power and dominance work within culture, and what dynamic relations make change and even revolution possible? Williams identifies three aspects, or dynamics, of any historical period within a culture: (1) *dominant* aspects of a culture, that is, the structures of feeling and common meaning that try to dictate and authorize certain behaviors and thoughts while discouraging or punishing others; (2) *residual* aspects, that is, older values and meanings from previously dominant cultural formations that have survived into new cultural contexts; and (3) *emergent* aspects, that is, new values and meanings that put pressure on dominant aspects of culture and indicate potential cultural shifts and changes. Culture, then, is never a monolithic whole but a system of dynamic relations in which different kinds of individual and collective power and knowledge are forming and re-forming.

The French philosopher and historian Michel Foucault has been especially influential in drawing attention to how such formations and re-formations of knowledge and power take place within a culture. He was especially interested in how our particular, individual thoughts, beliefs, and behaviors—indeed, our very selves and worlds—are constructed, largely unawares, by what he called discourses or discursive practices, that is, systems or “grids” of thought and meaning composed of shared worldviews, beliefs, values, ideas, and morals. This process of *subjection* to discourse is, paradoxically, the way we become thinking, acting *subjects* within society. Put simply, the ways we think and the truths we hold to be self-evident are cultural constructions, produced and perpetuated within discursive practices that are as familiar to us as the air we breathe.

The task of the cultural historian, then, is what Foucault describes as a kind of archeology of knowledge: to uncover these discursive practices, determine the structures and rules embedded within them that make them functional, and, in the process, to bring to light the fact that the various ideas, values, and practices that a culture takes for granted as self-evident and timeless have been produced and concretized through the “long baking process of history.”<sup>6</sup> The things we take for granted as common sense—things we say we know, from medicine and madness to the state and religion—are not historical givens but are, rather, “discursive objects” that take form within the systems or grids of thought and meaning within which we exist. They are “truth-effects” produced within those systems through concrete, everyday human practices.

But how, then, does change happen? Where do new ideas and courses of action come from? What are the mechanisms by which the thinkable within a culture might alter and shift? How are new truth-effects produced? What

particular, individual, concrete practices effectively disrupt currently operative grids of knowledge and power and produce new ways of thinking and acting? To address these questions calls for an approach that biblical scholars might describe as *exegetical*: eschewing generalizations and universal claims, one must attend very closely to the specific details of particular texts, objects, and practices within a cultural archive, treating them as individual discursive practices that produce or reproduce unique forms of knowledge within particular cultural-historical contexts.

## CULTURAL HISTORY OF BIBLE

Recall our initial definition of cultural history in general from the beginning of the last section: it explores the ways meaning takes form within culture. The cultural history of Bible, then, explores the ways the meanings of biblical texts, images, and “the Bible” itself take form within culture. It, too, presumes that such meanings are matters of cultural production; they are produced and reproduced not only through spoken or written words but also through popular media, material objects, and embodied actions. These words, things, actions, and media technologies are the ways a culture expresses its conceptions of the Bible and the biblical. The cultural historian of Bible, therefore, treats these data as meaning-bearing signs, “symptoms” of biblical culture.

The absence of a definite article, “the,” in “cultural history of Bible” is not a typo. The proper focus of cultural-historical criticism in biblical studies is not *the* Bible, but Bible. We omit the definite article because “Bible” is, from the perspective of cultural history, indefinite. It is not a singular thing or a self-evident object of our intellectual analysis; it is not eternal; it has never been fixed or unchangeable; its form, content, and meaning change within different cultural networks of knowledge and power. Particular concepts of “the Bible” are produced through particular cultural practices, including collective and individual ritual, education, publishing, media technology, and so on. Such practices generate a sense of “Bibleness,” a discursive formation of the Bible and the biblical that is both an ideological object and, as Williams might put it, a structure of feeling.

A cultural-historical approach to Bible, therefore, presupposes that Bible is not a thing but an idea that is culturally produced and reproduced. What Foucault said of other subjects of historical research, such as medicine and the state, may also be said of the Bible and the biblical: they are not given or self-evident intellectual objects to be particularized or incarnated in various interpretations through time; they are, rather, formulations of discourse, constantly changing as they are made and remade in different cultural productions of meaning. “The Bible” that predominates American evangelical culture today, for example, is the product of a network of loosely related cultural products and practices, from teaching and preaching in churches, to group Bible studies for adults and youth,

to personal devotionals, to Bibles and biblical curricula produced and marketed by large evangelical publishing houses, to name a few. All these, moreover, are embedded within larger cultural networks of power and knowledge, and all are susceptible to larger processes of cultural transformation. How, for example, will the current media revolution affect “the Bible” as discursive formulation in evangelical Christian culture? To what extent is its general concept of the biblical tied to print culture, especially to the idea of the print book, and how might it change vis-à-vis the rise of digital network media culture?

It follows, then, that a cultural-historical approach in biblical studies does not separate literary content from material form. There is no such thing as a disembodied Bible or biblical text. Bible is always material as well as symbolic, sensual as well as semantic. The cultural history of Bible is about things as much as ideas, forms as much as contents, performances as much as interpretations, media as much as message. One cannot separate contents, words, or message from material form and media technology. The first verse of Genesis in a handwritten Hebrew Torah scroll sung by a cantor in a Shabbat service is not the same as the first verse of Genesis in a contemporary English version “Biblezine” read alone during quiet time at a Baptist Bible camp retreat is not the same as a production of *Jesus Christ Superstar* at the local public high school.

The main precursor to cultural history of Bible is biblical reception history, which explores the history of the reception of biblical texts, images, stories, and characters through the centuries in the form of citation, interpretation, reading, revision, adaptation, and influence.<sup>7</sup> Rooted in literary theorist Hans Robert Jauss’s “aesthetics of reception” and, behind Jauss, the philosophical hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer, biblical reception history finds the meaning of a text neither in the text itself nor in the experience of the reader, but in the relationship between the two.<sup>8</sup> With Jauss, biblical reception history insists that biblical texts do not exist independent of the history of their reception by readers; their meaning is, rather, a dynamic, historically situated *relationship* between production and reception—in Gadamer’s terms, a “fusion of horizons” of the text and reader(s).<sup>9</sup> As such, biblical reception history moves beyond earlier research into the history of biblical interpretation, insofar as it embraces a much broader definition of “interpretation,” including not only academic and theological readings but also biblical appearances in visual art, literature, music, politics, and other cultural works.

Yet, whereas reception history focuses on the impact or influence of biblical texts, the cultural history of Bible focuses more sharply on the cultural meaning of them, as well as of “the biblical” and “the Bible” itself, insofar as those too are cultural constructs whose meaning and value are culturally contextual. Indeed, a cultural-historical approach begins with the fact that there is no singular, fixed, original “the Bible” or “the biblical” to be received across history; rather, there are multiple, often competing, symbolic and material productions of them that are generated and generative in different scriptural cultures. In this light, the cultural history of Bible inverts traditional biblical interpretation,

including reception history: it is less about interpreting the Bible via culture than it is about interpreting culture via Bible.

## CULTURAL HISTORY OF BIBLE IN PRACTICE

The cultural history of Bible is a field, not a method. There is no single prescribed disciplinary procedure, but rather a range of approaches, drawing on different disciplines, all aimed at understanding how meanings of biblical texts, images, and values in particular, as well as meanings of the Bible and the biblical in general, are generated within particular cultural contexts through particular discursive practices. Within this range of cultural-historical biblical research and analysis, we may identify three general approaches. What follows are examples of each.

### 1. Ethnographic Approaches

First, there are anthropological approaches that analyze particular biblical practices, such as group Bible studies, worship services, and individual devotionals. These approaches usually involve extensive ethnographic fieldwork, including close observation of such practices and interviews with participants. An excellent model is anthropologist James S. Bielo's book, *Words upon the Word: An Ethnography of Evangelical Group Bible Study*.<sup>10</sup> Bielo observed 324 Bible study meetings of nineteen groups over more than a year and a half. In the course of his research, he became interested in the ways these groups managed disagreements and tensions among different readings of particular biblical passages and how these differences often related to different understandings of the Bible more generally. He observed that successful group facilitators were able to foster certain "textual practices" *with* the Bible—how to read, cite, and interpret particular passages, for example—and "textual ideologies" *about* the Bible, especially ways of asserting the idea of the Bible as the only absolute, infallible authority for faith and life. Insofar as leaders were able to inculcate these practices and ideologies within the group, they were able to downplay differences among participants. At the same time, that sense of unity among members served to keep out any potential participants who could not conform. While studying Proverbs 11–12, for example, a participant in one group questioned the text's proclamations that the righteous always prosper while the wicked suffer—"when I see faithful people take it on the neck. How do you square that?" Without dismissing or directly challenging the question, the facilitator steered the discussion back to the group's agreed presupposition of biblical authority. "I don't have all the answers. All I'm saying is that this is a book of promises from beginning to end . . . We have life, and a better life, by claiming all the promises in this book as ours."<sup>11</sup> Although the man's experience may appear to contradict scriptural authority in that moment, the leader suggests, continuing to claim it as such will in the long term be a blessing—not only to the individual but to the group

as a whole. That man, Bielo later notes, quietly quit attending the group. Here and in other cases, Bielo reveals how the often subtle governing of “words upon the Word” within Bible study culture works to downplay hermeneutical and theological differences and tensions that could otherwise fragment not only the group but also the very Word that is believed to be its foundation.<sup>12</sup>

Another example of the ethnographic approach to the cultural history of Bible is Dorina Miller Parmenter’s analysis of the public display among American evangelicals of heavily worn Bibles and the phenomenon of “duct-tape Bibles,” including not only Bibles whose worn-out covers and binders were repaired with duct tape, but also brand-new duct tape Bibles sold by large evangelical publishers who understand that there is sacred capital in that well-used look.<sup>13</sup> Parmenter’s interest is in “how status and authority is generated not only through semantic meaning, but also through material and embodied actions.” These seemingly mundane, everyday biblical practices around the proud display of worn-out, taped-up Bibles contributes to the cultural production of the Bible as icon within evangelical Christianity, even as it identifies the carrier of such a Bible as a certain kind of “Bible believer” who lives so thoroughly “in the Word” that she or he literally, lovingly wears its material form out, like a biblical version of *The Velveteen Rabbit*.

## 2. Analysis of Biblical Products

A second approach to cultural history of Bible focuses on close reading and analysis of particular biblical media, that is, particular Bibles and related products, which may be studied either as a whole or with regard to their presentations of particular biblical texts, images, or stories. Understanding that the medium is the message, such an approach attends not only to the translation of the text but also to material form, the media technologies employed, the visual appearance and layout of the text, as well as the value-adding, (and often *values*-adding), supplemental notes and commentary.<sup>14</sup> Consider, by way of brief example, the presentation of Leviticus 18 and 20 and the issue of homosexuality in Zondervan’s *NIV Teen Study Bible*, which has sold over 2.5 million copies and is the best-selling Bible among twelve- to fifteen-year-olds.<sup>15</sup>

Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament do not clearly address contemporary debates among Christians about homosexuality. In fact, Hebrew Scriptures have very little explicitly to offer by way of moral teaching or legislation on matters of sexuality in general, let alone homosexuality. Two passages in the legal corpus of Leviticus (18:22 and 20:13) prohibit a man from lying with another man “as he lies with a woman.” This prohibition appears along with prohibitions against bestiality; adultery; sex with a menstruating woman; and marrying a divorced woman, a former prostitute, or a brother’s widow (a practice that is in fact required elsewhere, in Deut. 25:5; cf. Gen. 38:8). Neither text prohibits homosexuality per se. They do not address lesbianism or even sexual orientation. All they do is prohibit male-male intercourse. In fact, as Danna Nolan Fewell

and David Gunn have argued, a close analysis of the Hebrew text of this prohibition in context makes clear that the chief concern here is not sexual behavior per se but the wasting of male seed by putting it where it cannot bear fruit.<sup>16</sup> Nor is Leviticus typically considered a go-to text for Christian ethics and morality. It also prohibits eating shellfish and pork, wearing mixed-fiber clothing, and planting different plants in the same garden. It also requires ritual sacrifices and condones slavery.

Jesus in the New Testament has nothing to say about homosexuality and very little to say about sexuality in general. Paul's letters do indeed disparage some specific male-male sexual practices common in the larger Greco-Roman society (e.g., pederasty, or sexual "mentoring" of young men by older men, and soliciting young male prostitutes), but they do not explicitly condemn consensual same-sex relations between adults. The simple fact is that Christian Scriptures are not clear on this issue. It is a matter of biblical interpretation and ethical reflection in which faithful Christians can and do disagree.

Yet, like many other Bibles marketed to teens, the *NIV Teen Study Bible* incorporates "supplemental" elements that effectively produce what is commonly called the "biblical view" of homosexuality, "what God says" about it, namely, that it is a sinful abomination. On the same page as Leviticus 18:22 in this Bible, there is a "The Bible Says" feature with the bold heading, "Only One Right Choice." Laid out in orange text in a contemporary, sans-serif font and highlighted with a blue swoosh that makes it jump off the page and leave the traditionally biblical looking (serif font) Levitical text in the background, this bold feature decries the idea that homosexuality could be an "alternative lifestyle." According to it, Leviticus 18 clearly states, "It's wrong to have homosexual sex," and "this isn't the only Bible passage that says homosexual sex is a sin. Read also Romans 1:26–27. If someone tells you homosexuality is an alternative lifestyle—meaning that it's OK—don't let those words fool you. It's an alternative all right. A sinful one."

Four pages later, near Leviticus 20:13, there is a full-page image of a sheet of lined stationery with a handwritten note from "Chris in Crystal Springs" addressed to "Dear Sam," the fictional advice columnist who responds to letters like Chris's about teenage concerns throughout this Bible. The lined page looks like a note that's been torn from a notepad and slipped into Chris's Bible at this particular spot. In the note, Chris writes that he doesn't understand how he can follow Jesus' teaching to love everyone, including homosexuals, without accepting their "alternative lifestyle." A response to "Dear Chris," hand-signed by Sam of "Dear Sam Inc." on what looks like a light orange post-it note stuck on top of Chris's letter, gives the answer: love the sinner but hate the sin; understand that the Bible is very clear that homosexuality is a sin. "You can't approve of something evil that God has forbidden."

These "Dear Sam" additions, which visually jump off the page even as the biblical text recedes into the background, generate a familiar, paternal (father-son or pastor-youth) dialogue between an earnest young questioner and an



authoritative elder who speaks not only for the Bible but also for God. This dialogue places the reader of the *NIV Teen Study Bible* in the subject position of a youth who moves from honest questioning, based on what he's heard in other dialogues apart from the Bible, to an authoritative answer in the Bible, from worldly problem to biblical resolution. In the process, it overwrites the ambiguity that exists in the texts of Leviticus, thereby leaving no room for the reader to consider other interpretations.<sup>17</sup> The sticky note literally covers the question. All the while strongly asserting, visually and rhetorically, that Sam's answer is in fact the Bible's, and God's, unequivocal answer.

Such features in the *NIV Teen Study Bible* and many others like it purport to "supplement" or "amplify" the biblical text, but they do more than that. Visually and rhetorically, they are the center of attention, a necessary supplement that in fact reproduces a certain conservative evangelical, morality-oriented understanding of biblical values and of the Bible as a source for answers to practical questions, especially about sex.<sup>18</sup> Practically speaking, they become part of the Bible, if not its central and unifying voice. It would be perfectly understandable for a thirteen-year-old with an *NIV Teen Study Bible* to say that the Bible clearly prohibits homosexuality and that it's not an alternative lifestyle. The Bible says so. Or was that "Dear Sam?" Either way, it's what the Bible says. That is to say, the *NIV Teen Study Bible* is not the Bible *plus* a lot of supplemental commentary and "Dear Sam" features; for Chris and readers who identify with him, it is *the Bible*. Put another way, from a cultural-historical perspective, it is a cultural production of the Bible, and as such reifies commonly held biblical values that are part of a larger network of meaning.

### 3. Analysis of Cultural Interpretations of Bible

A third approach, and the most common in biblical studies, focuses on the critical examination of particular cultural productions in which interpretation or representation of biblical texts, stories, images, or even of the Bible itself figures prominently. Often such an approach focuses on mainstream works of popular culture in which Bible is a prominent dimension. Consider, for example, studies of movies or television shows that tell biblical stories, such as the Gospel narrative of Mel Gibson's 2004 film, *The Passion of the Christ*, or of Pier Paolo Pasolini's 1964 film, *Il vangelo secondo Matteo* (*The Gospel According to Matthew*), or the Joban tale of the *South Park* episode, "Cartmanland," in which Kyle believes he is reliving the biblical story of Job, asking why the wicked prosper and questioning God's justice, when he is smitten with the ultimate hemorrhoid after Cartman inherits \$1 million and opens a lucrative amusement park.<sup>19</sup>

Others, however, focus on marginal or "outsider" cultural productions of the Bible and the biblical. One especially disturbing and fascinating example is the "Phineas Priesthood" phenomenon within radical white supremacist movements, inspired by a story in Numbers 25 about divinely sanctioned violence for the sake of ethnic and religious purity.<sup>20</sup> In the 1990s, the "Phineas Priesthood"



emerged within Christian white supremacist culture as the privileged title for those who rise up to enact militant racist terror in the name of God. Here are a few examples:

After being convicted of murdering an interracial couple at a Greyhound bus station in Spokane, Washington, a skinhead named Chris Alan Lindholm referred newspaper reporter Bill Morlin to the story of Phineas in Numbers 25 as his justification. "I wasn't mad at them or anything. I just knew they should die for what they had done. I think he put his arm around her or something."<sup>21</sup>

Members of the Aryan Republican Army, a militantly anti-Jewish organization that robbed twenty-two banks during 1994 and 1995, identified themselves with the "Phineas Priesthood."<sup>22</sup>

In April of 1996, cars parked at a Unitarian-Universalist fellowship in Idaho Falls were leafleted with anti-gay tracts signed by "The Phineas Priesthood" declaring those who transgress biblical law to be "walking death sentences." They described the 1986 murder and bombing at an adult bookstore in North Carolina as actions of "Phineas Priests" who carried out divine judgment against transgressors of biblical law, and warned, "In cities and towns all over America, names and addresses of law violators are being compiled. Six-man teams are forming across the nation. Soon, the fog that comes from Heaven will be accompanied by a destroying wind of a righteous God."<sup>23</sup>

White supremacist Buford O'Neal Furrow, who went on a shooting spree at a Los Angeles area Jewish community center in August 1999, called himself a "Phineas Priest."

The biblical inspiration for these self-ordained Phineas Priests is the story of Phineas in Numbers 25. In that story, the Israelites are suffering from a deadly plague the narrative presents as the result of their intermixing with Moabites, signifying a transgression of religious-devotional purity and integrity. That is, the significance of Israelites marrying the daughters of Moab is that they are adopting their religious practices (25:2), to the extent that "Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor; and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel" (25:3). In a jealous rage, God tells Moses to hang all the leaders of the people so that his rage may abate. As Moses orders his judges to slay everyone who has been "joined to Baal-peor" (25:4–5), an Israelite man named Zimri and a Midianite woman named Cozbi come into the presence of Moses and the weeping congregation. Seeing this apparently brazen couple, a priest named Phineas (Aaron's grandson) leaves the congregation, follows the couple into their tent, and runs them both through their bellies on the same spear (25:7–8). In immediate response to this zealous double murder, God stays the plague against the Israelites and blesses Phineas, giving him and his

descendants “my covenant of peace . . . even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood; because he was zealous for his God, and made atonement for the children of Israel” (25:11–13).

Phineas is also mentioned in Psalm 106, in a recollection of Israel’s wilderness wanderings. The psalm praises Phineas for taking a stand and executing judgment in response to the religious unfaithfulness of the Israelites, declaring that his zeal was “counted unto him as righteousness,” exactly as Abraham’s faith was “counted unto him as righteousness” in Genesis 15:6.

The relationship between these two biblical representations of Phineas and militant white racist appropriations of the title “Phineas Priest” is not entirely self-evident. Throughout most of the history of biblical interpretation in Judaism and Christianity, readings of the Phineas story in Numbers 25 and Psalm 106 have emphasized the sin of *religious* intermixing rather than familial intermixing as the reason for God’s and Phineas’s righteous indignation. Psalms, after all, mentions no specific sin, and although Numbers 25 does initially mention that the Israelites were joining themselves to the daughters of their enemies (25:1), the narrative emphasizes the religious consequences of these new familial bonds, namely, that the Israelites were joining themselves to other gods. How, then, did this biblical story come to play such a central role in the formation of radical white racist identity?

The missing link is white supremacist theologian and financial advisor Richard Kelly Hoskins’s 1990 book, *Vigilantes of Christendom: The Story of the Phineas Priesthood*, which presents a glorified postbiblical lineage of “Phineas Priests” who have committed acts of violent racial and moral purification out of righteous jealousy for God’s Law, and which summons a new generation of white Christian zealots to similar action: “There are those who obey God’s Law and those who don’t. Those who obey are the Lawful. Those who disobey are outlawed by God. God has specified the outlaw’s punishment. The Phineas Priests administer the judgment, and God rewards them with a covenant of an everlasting priesthood.”<sup>24</sup>

Hoskins’s book presents what he describes, echoing Numbers 25, as the story of an everlasting lineage of Phineas Priests who fought to the death in defense of God’s laws, enforcing racial purity and Christian identity, and biblical prohibitions against usury, among other things. Beginning with the biblical story of Phineas, Hoskins’s lineage includes legends like Saint George and Robin Hood, heroes in the “war of northern aggression” like the Confederate general Nathan Bedford Forrest and Lincoln’s assassin, John Wilkes Booth, and the vigilante executioners responsible for thousands of post-Civil War lynchings, among many others.

Biblical passages are interwoven throughout Hoskins revisionist history. These passages are often inserted into the text, indented in a bold or italic font, without any explanation. In many cases, moreover, Hoskins drastically abbreviates the passages he quotes with ellipses, as in this example from the last pages of the book:

How long can one expect it to be before six men at a time gather at brass altars with drawn weapons?

‘Cause them that have charge . . . to draw near, even every man with his destroying weapon . . . six men came . . . and one man . . . with a writer’s inkhorn at his side: and they went in and stood beside the brazen altar . . . And to the others he said . . . Go ye . . . and smite: . . . and begin at my sanctuary. Then they began at the ancient men (elders) which were before the house’ (Ezek. 9.1–6).

Does one actually expect an impoverished Saxon [equated by Hoskins with Israelite] to pass by and look over the iron fence at Goliath living unpunished in his mansion, one who is known to have committed capital crimes against God, and yet securely lives on Saxon land and feasts on Saxon wealth?<sup>25</sup>

So Hoskins continues, riffing on the David and Goliath story with nary another mention of Ezekiel 9. Of course, this passage provides inspiration, albeit somewhat obliquely detailed inspiration, for the ensuing battle of the righteous against the powers that be. Does it also suggest a role for Hoskins himself as the writer whose destroying weapon is the inkhorn of self-publishing? Hoskins leaves that to the reader to determine. On the one hand, the rhetorical effect of quoting biblical passages in this way, setting them off from the rest of the text with little or no explanation, is that they *appear* to have authority to speak for themselves. They need no interpretation. On the other hand, the multiple ellipses that Hoskins uses to abbreviate and streamline the passages he quotes undermine this implicit assertion of the autonomous authority of Scripture. Thus Hoskins’s method of biblical quotation—inserting highly truncated passages into his text with little or no prose explanation—allows him to interpret the text without appearing to do so. His interpretation is located in the placement and streamlining of the quotations.

This rhetorical strategy is very clear in Hoskins’s presentation of the biblical story of Phineas. Although it is the foundation for his entire revisionist history, his presentation of this story occupies less than a page of text, including quotations. It begins with a highly abbreviated quotation of Numbers 25:6–13, indented and in italics:

One of the children of Israel came and brought . . . a Midianitish woman . . . and when Phineas . . . saw it, he rose up from among the congregation and took a javelin in his hand; . . . and thrust both of them through . . . and the Lord spoke . . . saying Phineas . . . hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel, . . . that I consumed not the children of Israel . . . Behold I give unto him my covenant of peace: . . . and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood: because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel (Num. 25.6–13).<sup>26</sup>

This abbreviated rendition of the story in Numbers 25 zeros in on Phineas’s action and God’s reward. Note, moreover, that Hoskins elides those details in the

biblical text that emphasize concern about *religious* intermixing, thereby implying that the transgression was that of ethnic (for Hoskins, racial) intermixing.

After this quotation from Numbers 25, and without further interpretive commentary on that text, he moves immediately to Psalm 106:29–31, which thereby serves as a means of explaining the lesson of the longer story in Numbers, namely, that “plague results from violating God’s instructions.” The effect of laying the two texts out together, with one immediately following the other, is that Numbers 25 tells the story and Psalm 106 gives its lesson. Remember, moreover, that Hoskins’s abbreviated version of the Numbers story makes it into a story about racial rather than religious intermixing. Thus the logic of Hoskins’s interpretation goes as follows: (a) God brought a plague on Israel because they were practicing racial intermarriage, which is against God’s law; (b) by killing a racial intermixer, Zimri, Phineas executed judgment against Israel on behalf of God’s law; (c) in response to this action on behalf of the law of racial purity, God lifted the plague and blessed Phineas on account of his zealous action, which was reckoned to him as righteousness. Thus Hoskins renders the biblical story of Phineas as a story that ordains racial violence as a primary defense of divine law, reckoning as righteous those who zealously carry out such violence. Yet the rhetorical effect of his presentation gives the impression that he is not imposing a racist interpretation on these texts, but rather is simply presenting the Bible as it stands and letting it speak for itself.

Indeed, Hoskins’s interpretation represents a dramatic shift in focus, concerned as it is with a certain modern idea of *racial* purity as much as it is with religious purity. This shift involves highlighting some aspects of the story that traditionally have been overlooked, especially the scandal of ethnic or tribal intermixing. Whereas Christian and Jewish traditions have focused on religious intermixing in the story, Hoskins focuses on the ethnic intermixing intermarriage of Israelites with non-Israelites. Hoskins pushes this reading further, moreover, by importing a modern idea of race, however foreign to ancient Near Eastern cultures, and thereby suggesting that the unlawful intermarrying in the story is interracial rather than simply inter-ethnic or inter-familial. Indeed, like many other white supremacists steeped in the theology of Christian Identity, Hoskins sees the Israelites, God’s holy people, as “white” and the Midianites as ungodly “blacks,” and history as the racial holy war of the “Christian separatist God” and his people against the diabolical threat of miscegenation.<sup>27</sup> For Hoskins, religious identity is racial identity.

For Hoskins, then, the crime of Zimri and his fellow Israelites was miscegenation of holy whites with unholy blacks. Phineas’s zealous act of murder rose from the desire to maintain the holy purity of the image of God within Israel, which is the central aim of all biblical law. This is why the four self-proclaimed Phineas Priests affiliated with white supremacist religious organizations mentioned above bombed both Planned Parenthood (for murder) and local banks (for usury).<sup>28</sup> This is also why Aryan Nations and other organizations call people who are homosexual “walking death sentences” (for sexual transgressions of the

biblical law). These activities are taken as transgressions of God's Law, and as such they threaten to brown the whiteness of the law-abiding "Adamic Man," who for Hoskins is the very image of God.

Hoskins's idea of the Phineas Priesthood is, of course, an easy target for criticism, rife as it is with deep ironies. From an academic perspective, for example, it is certainly ironic that the biblical law to which Hoskins vows devotion, and which Phineas and his modern-day, anti-Jewish white heirs struggle to defend, is probably rooted in postexilic Judean "Priestly" traditions. Not to mention the irony within the biblical narrative itself that Moses, like Zimri, married a Midianite. But the sense of irony has never been strong among the religiously racist right.

Ironies notwithstanding, the fact is that the idea of the Phineas Priesthood, set within its larger racist biblical interpretive framework, works to produce a certain concept of the Bible and biblical values, as well as certain biblical practices. It does so by ordaining further militant racist action—"Phineas acts"—as divine commission, reckoned as righteousness, and placing the modern-day Phineas Priests who carry out those acts within a larger biblical narrative of racial holy war, a great cloud of witnesses stretching back to the biblical Phineas and forward to ultimate divine victory. In short, they become part of the Bible's grand narrative. In the process, moreover, the Phineas ideal provides a biblically based set of unifying terms for an otherwise extremely disparate and centerless movement, thereby lending a sense of collective religious identity and social coherence out of a smattering of isolated, more or less underground, organizations and individuals—from neo-Nazis to Christian Identity parishioners to phantom cell militias. Indeed, although seldom recognized as such, radical white supremacist culture in the United States is in many respects a *biblical* culture. Historically rooted in the Christian Identity movement, a key means of growth and development continues to be biblical preaching in the context of worship, informal Bible study, and prison ministry. Its primary text is the Christian Bible, accompanied by a vast apocrypha of sermon transcripts and recordings, biblical commentaries, Bible study aids, and hagiographies, all of which are widely circulated in churches, at conventions and rallies, at Bible studies, in prisons, on the Internet, and through small publishing houses. Cultural works like Hoskins's *Vigilantes of Christendom* help produce and reproduce the discursive network of meaning that generates a specific understanding of Bible and biblical values and motivates radical militant social identity and action.

## CONCLUSION

As these three methods indicate, there is a diverse range of disciplines and approaches within the emerging field of biblical cultural history. Yet all share certain interests and priorities that distinguish them from other approaches in biblical studies.

First and foremost, they all assume that the Bible and the biblical are not self-evident things, handed down through religious history in the same essential form with the same essential contents; rather, they are cultural concepts. What Foucault said about medicine and the state are equally true about the Bible. It is a discursive object that is produced, reproduced, and deconstructed within particular cultural contexts.

The second commonality follows logically from the first. If the Bible and the biblical are not changeless things that are received and interpreted within different cultural contexts but are discursive objects that are produced in different biblical cultures, then the aim of the cultural historian of Bible is understanding those particular biblical cultures, past and present, as systems of meaning that produce particular, historically contingent conceptions of the Bible, biblical values, and biblical practices. The cultural historian of Bible therefore must pay close, almost exegetical, attention to the ways particular biblical practices and things (a Bible study, duct tape Bible lore, a teen study Bible, a white supremacist interpretation of Numbers) produce, reproduce, or undermine those meanings. In any case, the goal is not to evaluate the validity or truth-value of a particular biblical culture as a right or wrong, good or bad interpretation, but rather to understand how the meaning it produces works, how it makes sense, for those who are part of that culture.

Third, these different approaches to the cultural history of Bible are all centrally concerned with the intimate relationship between knowledge and power, how power produces knowledge and knowledge produces power. When we talk about one, we are talking about the other—power/knowledge. One becomes a thinking, speaking, acting subject within a cultural system in the process of becoming subjected to it. Subjectivity and subjection go hand in hand, and therefore so do knowledge and power. That is the paradox of subjection: one gains power as a subject in the process of being subjected to the system in which one's power is realized. Power cannot be completely consolidated or controlled by any one position within culture. Within any network of power/knowledge, there are forces of discipline and oppression as well as forces of resistance and change. Power does not simply come down from on high; it circulates through the entire social body.

Clearly, cultural-historical approaches to Bible do not replace other, more familiar approaches and methods in biblical studies, especially those that focus on close textual analysis of biblical texts, including textual criticism, form and source criticism, redaction criticism, rhetorical criticism, structural and post-structural approaches, and other literary-critical approaches. Such approaches, which are staples of traditional theological studies curricula, are centrally concerned with either the historical reconstruction of the early literary and religious history of the text or with the structures, meanings, and dynamics within the texts themselves. The central concern of biblical cultural history, by contrast, is to understand the cultures that produce the meanings of those biblical stories and texts, as well as of the Bible itself. As such this approach is perhaps less at

home in the field of biblical theology within a seminary or divinity school and more at home in the field of academic religious studies in a college or university. Indeed, although cultural histories of Bible “won’t preach” in most cases, we may recognize in them new and exciting potential contributions that biblical scholars can offer in academic religious studies and in the academic humanities and social sciences more generally.<sup>29</sup>

## KEY TERMS

**archaeology of knowledge.** A phrase coined by Michel Foucault to describe historical analysis that seeks to discover the systems or networks of thought that operate within culture and how these systems come to be known within a culture as natural and self-evident—in other words, how knowledge comes to be taken as knowledge, even as other ways of knowing are excluded.

**cultural history.** Sometimes described in shorthand simply as “the history of meaning,” cultural history explores how meaning takes form within culture, often but not exclusively popular culture. Its methods are diverse, including ethnography, literary criticism, film and television history, music history, and discourse analysis. (*see also* culture)

**culture.** Drawing from the field of anthropology (especially structuralist or semiotic approaches), cultural history sees culture as a network or web of meaning that both produces us and is produced by us. As Clifford Geertz put it, “Believing, with Max Weber, man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretative one in search of meaning.”<sup>30</sup> The cultural historian, then, like the anthropologist, attempts to understand culture through “thick description” and interpretation of different cultural products and practices within it. As Williams, Foucault, and others make clear, moreover, a culture is never monolithic, never a perfectly integrated whole in which all the strands are woven seamlessly together.

**discourse/discursive practice.** Terms used for collective ways of talking, writing, acting, and thinking that give expression to larger systems of thought within a culture. Foucault and others argue collective discourses, rather than individual writers, are the proper subject of historical research, whose aim is the archaeology of cultural knowledge.

**medium (pl. media).** Often misunderstood as simply the conveyer of a particular message or communication, medium is in fact inseparable from message, as Marshall McLuhan famously declared in 1964. He defined *medium* provocatively as any extension of oneself into the world. The *message*, then, is not only the meaning of something (e.g., content communicated through printed words in a book or spoken words in a speech) but

its total social and personal effect. “The medium,” he wrote, “is *socially* the message.”<sup>31</sup> In this light, the cultural historian of Bible would never isolate a particular Bible’s message from its medium; they are inseparable. There is no Bible in general, only particular Bibles, each of which is both medium and message. The scholar’s aim is to understand not only a Bible’s literary meaning but also its larger personal and social effect.

**reception history.** A field of biblical studies that moves beyond traditional scholarship on the history of interpretation to explore the broader history of the reception of biblical texts, images, stories, and characters through the centuries in the form of citation, interpretation, reading, revision, adaptation, and influence.

**structure of feeling.** Raymond Williams’s term for the specific character and quality of common cultural sense and lived experience, which involves an interaction between “official” culture and the ways people live their everyday lives in their cultural context.

## NOTES

1. Marjorie Garber, *Symptoms of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1998). Garber writes, “I do not propose to diagnose culture as if it were an illness of which it could be cured, but to read culture as if it were structured like a dream, a *network of representations that encodes wishes and fears, projections and identifications, all of whose elements are overdetermined and contingent*” (9; italics added).
2. For accounts of the shift from social history to cultural history in all its diversity over the past several decades, see the lead essay by Lynn Hunt in her edited *The New Cultural History* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989); William H. Sewell, “The Concept(s) of Culture,” in Victoria E. Bonnell and Lynn Hunt, eds., *Beyond the Cultural Turn* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); and chapters 2 and 3 of Geoff Eley, *A Crooked Line: From Cultural History to the History of Society* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005).
3. These figures are introduced in William E. Deal and Timothy Beal, *Theory for Religious Studies* (New York: Routledge, 2004), from which my briefer discussions here, vis-à-vis cultural history, draw extensively; also Peter Burke, *What Is Cultural History?* 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 2008), esp. 55–59.
4. Raymond Williams, “Culture Is Ordinary,” in John Higgins, ed., *The Raymond Williams Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001) 10–13. This essay was first published in 1958.
5. Deal and Beal, 161.
6. Michel Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” in Donald F. Bourchard, ed., *Language, Counter-memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), 144.
7. John F. A. Sawyer, who has been a leading influence on the development of biblical reception history over the past two decades, defines it simply as “the history of how a text has influenced communities and cultures down the centuries,” in *Sacred Language and Sacred Texts* (London: Routledge, 1999), 2.
8. See esp. Hans Robert Jauss, “Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory,” *New Literary History* 1 (1970) 7–37, which is a translation of chapters 5–12 of *Literaturgeschichte als Provokation der Literaturwissenschaft* (Konstanz,



- 1967). It is included, along with other related essays, in *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. Timothy Bahti, vol. 2 of the Theory and History of Literature series (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982).
9. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 1989); first published in German as *Wahrheit und Methode* (Tübingen, 1960); the principle of *Wirkungsgeschichte* and the concept of the fusion of horizons is summarized in Deal and Beal, *Theory for Religious Studies*, 77–78, and, most helpfully, in Ulrich Luz, “The Contribution of Reception History to a Theology of the New Testament,” in Christopher Rowland, Christopher Mark Tuckett, Robert Morgan, eds., *The Nature of New Testament Theology: Essays in Honour of Robert Morgan* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 124–25.
  10. James S. Bielo, *Words upon the Word: An Ethnography of Evangelical Group Bible Study* (New York: New York University Press, 2009).
  11. *Ibid.*, 57.
  12. Another outstanding example of this approach is Brian Malley, *How the Bible Works: An Anthropological Study of Evangelical Biblicalism* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2004). Malley argues that, among many evangelicals, calling oneself a “literalist” is less about making a specific argument about the biblical text than it is about identifying with conservative evangelical Christianity over against “liberal” or “mainstream” forms. What “literalist” means has less to do with any doctrine of biblical inerrancy or infallibility and more to do with religious social identity as conservative.
  13. Dorina Miller Parmenter, “Iconic Books from Below: The Christian Bible and the Discourse of Duct Tape,” *Postscripts* 6.1/2/3 (2010): 185–200.
  14. The finest book-length study that takes this approach is David Dault, *The Accessorized Bible* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, forthcoming), which delves deeply into the theological interests and diversions of many popular evangelical Bibles on the market today.
  15. *The NIV Teen Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004). What follows is an abbreviated version of my analysis of this Bible and others like it in the chapter on “Biblical Values” in Timothy Beal, *The Rise and Fall of the Bible: The Unexpected History of an Accidental Book* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011), 52–59.
  16. Danna Nolan Fewell and David M. Gunn, *Gender, Power, and Promise: The Subject of the Bible’s First Story* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), 106–8.
  17. Still other translations go so far as to remove that ambiguity from the biblical text as well. The New Living Translation, for example, which is used in the best-selling *Life Application Study Bible* and many other Bibles published by Tyndale House, renders Lev. 18:22 as, “Do not practice homosexuality; it is a detestable sin.”
  18. Nearly all Americans are familiar with the idea of the Bible as God’s book of answers and morality textbook. Indeed, most endorse it. According to the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 78 percent of all Americans say that the Bible is the “word of God,” and almost half of those believe that, as such, “it is to be taken literally, word for word” (Pew Forum 2006). Polling data from the Barna Group indicate that nearly half of all Americans agree that “the Bible is totally accurate in all of its teachings” (88 percent of all “born-again” Christians believe the same), and the Gallup Poll finds that 65 percent of all Americans believe that the Bible “answers all or most of the basic questions of life” (Gallup and Simmons 2000). See Beal, *Rise and Fall*, 4–5, 201–2.
  19. On *The Passion of the Christ*, see, e.g., Timothy K. Beal and Tod Linafelt, eds., *Mel Gibson’s Bible: Religion, Popular Culture, and The Passion of the Christ* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

20. The following brief discussion is based on my fuller analysis in Timothy K. Beal, "The Phineas Priesthood and the White Supremacist Bible," in Jonneke Bekkenkamp and Yvonne Sherwood, eds., *Sanctified Aggression: Legacies of Biblical and Post-Biblical Vocabularies of Violence* (Sheffield: Continuum, 2004). Biblical quotations are from the King James Version because that is the version most commonly quoted by Hoskins (see below) and other white supremacist and Christian identity adherents.
21. Morlin's interview with Lindholm is described in David A. Niewert, *In God's Country: The Patriot Movement and the Pacific Northwest* (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1999), 126.
22. *Ibid.*, 124–25.
23. Gene Fadness, "Phineas Priests May Be Responsible for Racist Leaflets," *Idaho Falls Post Register* (18 April 1996), A1.
24. Richard Kelly Hoskins, *Vigilantes of Christendom: The History of the Phineas Priesthood* (Lynchburg: Virginia Publishing Company, 1990), 213.
25. *Ibid.*, 417. Earlier, in a discussion of the tragic downfall of Robert Matthews's militant group The Order, Hoskins quotes the same passage as the biblical basis for keeping membership in Phineas groups to six (the seventh member being God).
26. *Ibid.*, 25.
27. For more on the religious dimensions of racial identity and Anglo-Israelism in Hoskins's ideology, see Beal, "The Phineas Priesthood," 125–28.
28. Likewise, months before the pastor Paul Hill murdered Dr. David Gunn as he was at an abortion clinic in Pensacola, Florida, on 10 March 1993, he wrote "Should We Defend Born and Unborn Children with Force?" <http://theroadtoemmaus.org/RdLb/21PbAr/LifHlth/Abrt/PaulHl.htm>, which used Numbers 25 as the primary biblical justification for violence against abortion workers.
29. See, e.g., Qur'anic scholar Wilfred Cantwell Smith, "The Study of Religion and the Study of the Bible," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 39 (1971): 131–40, who foresaw such approaches to biblical studies emerging in religion departments in nonreligious colleges of the humanities and social sciences since the 1960s. In his 1971 presidential address to the American Academy of Religion, Smith suggested that these new academic contexts require a shift from teaching religion to studying it as a human phenomenon. In that context, he called for a course of study focused on "the Bible as scripture," with Scripture as a "generic phenomenon," allowing comparison of the concepts and roles of "scripture as a religious form" in different traditions and communities throughout history (132–33). For more discussion of this address and its aftermath, see Timothy Beal, "Reception History and Beyond: Toward a Cultural History of Scriptures," *Biblical Interpretation* 19 (2011): 357–72.
30. Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic, 1977), 5.
31. Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994), 10; first published in 1964.

## FOR FURTHER READING

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