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## Review of Fernando F. Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert, Teaching the Bible: The Discourses and Politics of Biblical Pedagogy

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approaches and commitments. Genuine engagement with the viewpoints represented in this collection can help to stimulate vital readings of John's Gospel in the future.

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FERNANDO F. SEGOVIA and MARY ANN TOLBERT (eds.), *Teaching the Bible: The Discourses and Politics of Biblical Pedagogy* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1998). Pp. xi + 372. Paper \$28.

The present offering is divided into four sections and twenty-one essays.

Part 1, "Biblical Interpretation and Theological Education," contains "Theological Education in a New Context: Reflections from the Perspective of Brazilian Theology" by Paulo Fernando Carneiro de Andrade (pp. 31-45); "Constructive Theology and Biblical Worlds" by Peter C. Hodgson (pp. 46-56); "Globalization in Theological Education" by Joseph C. Hough, Jr. (pp. 57-68); "Jesus/the Native: Biblical Studies from a Postcolonial Perspective" by Kwok Pui-lan (pp. 69-85); "Four Faces of Theology: Four Johannine Conversations" by Jean-Pierre Ruiz (pp. 86-104).

Part 2, "Social Location and Biblical Pedagogy in the United States," contains "Crossing the Line: Three Scenes of Divine-Human Engagement in the Hebrew Bible" by Francisco Garcia-Trento (pp. 105-16); "Reading from an Indigenous Place" by Mark Lewis Taylor (pp. 117-36); "Pedagogical Discourse and Practices in Cultural Studies: Toward a Contextual Biblical Pedagogy" by Fernando F. Segovia (pp. 137-67); "A New Teaching with Authority: A Re-evaluation of the Authority of the Bible" by Mary Ann Tolbert (pp. 168-89); "A Meeting of Worlds: African Americans and the Bible" by Vincent L. Wimbush (pp. 190-202).

Part 3, "Social Location and Biblical Pedagogy in Global Perspective," contains "A Reading of the Story of the Tower of Babel from the Perspective of Non-Identity: Gen 11:1-9 in the Context of Its Production" by J. Severino Croatto (pp. 203-23); "Go Therefore and Make Disciples of All Nations (Matt 28:19a): A Postcolonial Perspective on Biblical Criticism and Pedagogy" by Musa W. Dube (pp. 224-46); "Cross-Textual Interpretation and Its Implications for Biblical Studies" by Archie C. Lee (pp. 247-54); "Biblical Exegesis and Its Shortcomings in Theological Education" by Temba L. Mafico (pp. 255-71); "The Hermeneutics of Liberation: Theoretical Grounding for the Communitarian Reading of the Bible" by Pablo Richard (pp. 272-82); "Biblical Studies in India: From Imperialistic Scholarship to Postcolonial Interpretation" by R. S. Sugirtharajah (pp. 283-98).

The final section, 4, "Biblical Interpretation: Pedagogical Practices," features "A Rhetorical Paradigm for Pedagogy" by Rebecca S. Chopp (pp. 299-309); "Reading the Bible in the Global Context: Issues in Methodology and Pedagogy" by Denise Dombkowski Hopkins, Sharon H. Ringe, and Frederick C. Tiffany (pp. 310-21); "Crossing Borders: Biblical Studies in a Trans-Cultural World" by Kathleen M. O'Connor (pp. 322-37); "Weaving a New Web of Creative Remembering" by Elaine M. Wainwright (pp. 338-51); "Lessons for North America from a Third-World Seminary" by Antoinette Clark Wire (pp. 352-62).

In terms of the cultural, political, and especially “postcolonial” implications of reading biblical texts, we have many of the “usual suspects” in this list, and most are not unexpectedly solid contributions, even if they are not always entirely new. Occasionally one wonders whether the rhetorical sophistication in manipulating theory has overruled, or even replaced, a presentation of evidence as a defense of the veracity of the argument presented. Dube’s reflections on imperialism in biblical criticism and in Matt 28:19, for example, feature a forceful argument that biblical criticism itself is to be indicted for its complicity in the Western imperialist program. It is an interesting accusation, and it may be true, but it would be all the more interesting if the rather thin “evidence” were not subordinated to a theoretical tour de force ideologically forcing the reader toward the proposed conclusion. One cannot quickly forget that the historical-critical method itself was hardly a welcome addition to Western European thought.

Contrast this with Croatto’s study of the passage on the Tower of Babel in Genesis. Here are a text, an argument, and some evidence to examine, with a conclusion compelling precisely because it is debatable. If academic rationality itself is a Western conspiracy to maintain privilege and dominance, then we are left with a silence that is embarrassed, not liberating. To take what amounts to a relativist perspective in biblical studies—and to rule out debate as imperialist oppression of the subaltern voice—is hardly a hopeful development.

My friend Fernando Segovia, for example, asserts that he “would eschew any type of formulation that would imply or suggest, no matter how lightly or unintentionally, the presence of a pre-existing, independent, or stable meaning in the text, the mind of the author, or the world of the text—formulations along the lines of meaning back-then, letting the text speak, being true to the past, or achieving a fuller meaning of the text” (p. 140). What, then, is Segovia’s suggested ideal? It is “a deafening din of texts and authors . . . a cacophony of voices . . . as the ancient texts become refracted into endless readings and interpretations within the tradition of the West” (p. 150). I wonder how any liberating readings are to be heard above the din? Are they merely to be drowned out by the sheer number of oppressive, antagonistic, militarist, and misogynist “voices”—each, apparently, with an equal right to be heard? This is not very promising, especially since I consider Segovia’s exegetical “voice” to be more important than merely another shout in the market place.

What I find troubling about this relativistic, theoretical approach to cultural insights in biblical studies is that I do, in fact, believe very much in the revolutionary importance of cultural diversity in biblical studies. I have come to believe this, however, because I have been shown how I have read texts in error, or without certain nuances. To welcome debate, I might add, also presumes that “others” (those outside a particular “place” and “context”) can come to understand something new—a conciliatory possibility virtually ruled out by a relativist’s perspective. Finally, I was also disappointed when I realized that very little of the book is actually about teaching. Essays telling us how these scholars try to teach the Bible with their cultural questions in mind would have made a valuable volume indeed!

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