

# INTERSUBJECTIVITY, INTERTEXTUALITY AND INTERCONNECTIVITY

## On Biblical Hermeneutics and Hegemony

**PHILIP P. CHIA**

Alliance Bible Seminary  
22 Peak Road, Cheung Chau, Hong Kong

So, perhaps the post-modern identity we are seeking is to be found, not in the realm of subjectivity, which we have supposed since the time of Descartes, but in intersubjectivity.

Charles Davis<sup>1</sup>

One of the distinctive features of modernity, in fact, is an increasing interconnection between the two 'extremes' of extensionality and intentionality: globalising influences on the one hand and personal dispositions on the other.

Anthony Giddens<sup>2</sup>

In a post-modern world, there is no centre, no standing-place that has rights to domination, no authority that can manage or control what is to count as scholarship. No one, therefore, need lose any sleep over the existence of methodologies that are unfamiliar, uncongenial or questionable, nor about their incapacity to participate in every new approach.

Exum & Clines<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>*Religion and the Making of Society: Essays in Social Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 169.

<sup>2</sup>*Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 1.

<sup>3</sup>J. Cheryl Exum & David J.A. Clines, "The New Literary Criticism," in *The New Literary Criticism And The Hebrew Bible*, ed. J. Cheryl Exum & David J.A. Clines (Sheffield: Sheffield

Twentieth century biblical interpretation as dominated by literary criticism, has experience a rapid transformation in methodology. The rise of historical criticism at the turn of last century has soon given way to literary criticism, 'new' literary criticism and structuralism, which was later taken over by post-structuralism and deconstructionism, only to be challenged by 'new' historicism or cultural materialism. Recent experience of some interpretative communities may be characterised by three distinctive phenomena: the search for the 'subject', the 'textualisation' of human experience and the 'connectedness' of the reader as global individual within a world community. The search for the subject and the struggle for self-identity, be it personal/textual, social or national/inner-textual or international/inter-textual, has been one of the exciting, yet somewhat unfortunate reality of modern or post-modern human dilemma.<sup>4</sup> A community of relationship that can only be understood through the perception of hegemony makes the world of reality a battlefield for domination. Although identity is fluid and dynamic, the search for meaning of the self with reference to some entities, the "other than self", may sometimes intensified the relational anxiety that even leads to the alienation of peoplehood in a globalised village.<sup>5</sup> No longer the subject is clear and visible due to the fact that the dissolution and dissemination of the subject is already at work in

---

Academic Press, 1993), 11-26 [15].

<sup>4</sup>To cite a few recent studies: Charles Davis, "From the modern subject to the post-modern self," in *Religion and the Making of Society*, 131-72; Dieter Hoffmann-Axthelm, "Identity and Reality: the end of the philosophical immigration officer," tr. James Polk, in *Modernity & Identity*, ed. Scott Lash & Jonathan Friedman (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 196-218; Douglas Kellner, "Popular culture and the construction of postmodern identities," in *Modernity & Identity*, 141-77; Lowell Dittmer & Samuel S. Kim, "In Search of a Theory of National Identity," in *China's Quest for National Identity* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993); Toby Miller, *The Well-Tempered Self: Citizenship, Culture, and the Postmodern Subject* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994); Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, tr. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, tr. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991); Steven Kepnes, *The Text As Thou: Martin Buber's Dialogical Hermeneutics and Narrative Theology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992); K. Anthony Appiah, "Identity, Authenticity, Survival: Multicultural Societies and Social Reproduction," in Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism*, ed. Amy Gutmann (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), 149-64.

<sup>5</sup>Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 3, 16-23. Referring to his book title, he explains that "*Oneself as Another* suggests from the outset that the selfhood of oneself implies otherness to such an intimate degree that one cannot be thought of without the other, that instead one passes into the other, as we might say in Hegelian terms. To 'as' I should like to attach a strong meaning, not only that of a comparison (oneself similar to another) but indeed that of an implication (oneself inasmuch as being other)."

our post-modern world. The pronouncement of 'The death of the subject'<sup>6</sup> by its deconstructor only promises another social upheaval in the interpretative communities. Text without a subject, country without a place, people without a status, face without a name are too phenomenological of our postmodern human experience. A sense of 'crisis-ness' not only has swept across the biblical interpretative communities<sup>7</sup>, also the religious communities at large.<sup>8</sup> This invites a cry for deliverance from liberation. The crisis-ness calls for a humanitarian and heuristic participation within the global interpretative activities of biblical scholarship which may be characterized by the condition of intersubjectivity, intertextuality and interconnectivity.

### *Cultural Hegemony*

Cultural hegemony is not a stigma any intellectual community would like to bear, yet it is a reality present within the interpretative communities. The expansion of Christianity, though coupled with western imperialism, has witnessed a shift in the cultural dimension.<sup>9</sup> It has moved from a relatively united European and Western cultural sphere to becoming a World Christianity that is rooted in a variety of cultures; a move from a "culturally monocentric to polycentric", as pointed out by Metz.<sup>10</sup> Our modern world is indeed a world of multicultural reality whether one is

---

<sup>6</sup>Such as reflected in Michel Foucault's *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), xxiii, 387. The declaration of the death of man thus for Foucault is the starting point of a politics of the self, which would resist the power of our present culture to determine our identity.

<sup>7</sup>Richard John Neuhaus, ed., *Biblical Interpretation in Crisis: The Ratzinger Conference on Bible and Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989); Mark G. Brett, *Biblical Criticism in Crisis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). Also see W.D. Edgerton, *The Passion of Interpretation* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1992), "Interpretation is in crisis. So many questions which once seemed settled, so many foundations which once seemed secure, so many agreements which once seemed firm, have come apart. Issues which go to the bedrock of interpretation have opened deep fissures."

<sup>8</sup>As Charles Davis states in *Religion and the Making of Society*, 131, "religious people are going through a crisis of identity today.... What criteria should I use to decide my possible Catholic identity?... Again whom should one recognize as a Christian today?"

<sup>9</sup>The term 'culture' is used here in its broadest sense to include such as race, ethnicity, gender, class, political and religious ideologies.

<sup>10</sup>Johann Baptist Metz, "The 'One World': A Challenge to Western Christianity," in *Radical Pluralism & Truth: David Tracy and the Hermeneutics of Religion*, ed. W.G. Jeanron & J.L. Rike (New York: Crossroad, 1991), 203-14.

ready to accept or not is another matter. Cultural hegemony in various forms takes place within this multicultural reality.

However, just as the classical form of imperialism dissolved into the background, a new form evolves. With the domination of technology and secularism in modern civilization, a re-colonization has silently staged itself as another form of imperial force. Through technologies, economy and media power, non-Western people are again under siege, alienating from their own histories, languages and cultural images. In the course of enculturation, voices from the margins and minorities have sparked off, among social and political theorists, yet another discussion on the recognition of the worth of cultural traditions, such as reflected in Charles Taylor's "The Politics of Recognition," and J. Habermas's "Struggles for Recognition in the Democratic Constitutional State".<sup>11</sup> Joined in the discussion on the relationship between postmodern culture and political economy is the Gramscian notion of hegemony as represented by Fredric Jameson.<sup>12</sup> Similarly in biblical studies, cultural hegemony existed in various forms of discourse, predominated by Western culture. But within all these happenings, we are being reminded that today's majority could well be tomorrow's minority.<sup>13</sup> Society is dynamic and people are mobile. The shift of paradigm to globalization that constituted our postmodern reality, is "producing a completely new level of multiculturalism and cultural diversity, which in turn requires a new cultural reflexivity," as noted by Bryan S. Turner.<sup>14</sup> Thus, globalization raised the possibility that all cultural systems are local cultures.

This leads to a new awareness in biblical studies as demonstrated by Daniel Patte<sup>15</sup> in his recent studies, whereby he courageously and

---

<sup>11</sup> Collected in Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism*, ed. Amy Gutmann (New Jersey: Princeton University Press 1994): 25-74; 107-48.

<sup>12</sup> *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1992).

<sup>13</sup> Jung Young Lee, *Marginality: The Key to Multicultural Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), has pointed out the fact that "Ethnic minorities will occupy one-third of the total American population by the year 2000." (p.1) He goes on to cite Mearle Griffith *A Church for the Twenty-first Century* (Dayton, Ohio: Office of Research, the General Council on Ministries, 1989), p.3, that "by the end of the next century there will be a new majority population in America -- a majority of minorities."

<sup>14</sup> *Orientalism, Postmodernism & Globalism* (London: Routledge, 1994), 184.

<sup>15</sup> *Ethics of Biblical Interpretation* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1995), also joined by Normal Gottwald's comment that "In recent years, we white male critical exegetes of the Bible



honestly states that "When white male European-American scholars interpret the Bible to produce a universally legitimate reading, they silence the Bible itself. Their reading practices exclude feminist, African-American, and other so-called 'minority' readings, as well as the interpretations of conservative and liberal laity." Similarly, in the discussion of "The Possibilities and Priorities of Biblical Interpretation in an International Perspective," Clines noted that "We are beginning to realize that what counts as a valid interpretation in Cambridge does not necessarily do so in Guatemala City or Jakarta or Seoul - and certainly not vice versa. The homogeneity of the 'scholarly world' is proving fissiparous, and many smaller interest groups are taking the place of a totalitarian *Bibelwissenschaft*. More and more scholars are seeking their legitimation from communities that are not purely academic." The presence of cultural tradition in the production of meaning in biblical interpretation has already been well acknowledged by the communities. What remains as a problem, as also raised by Clines,<sup>16</sup> is "What are we exegete then to be doing with ourselves? To whom shall we appeal for our authorization, from where shall we gain approval for our activities, and above all, who will pay us?" I will address this question in the last section under the heading biblical hermeneutics. But what needs to be aware of here, is the presence of the relationship between the self, power, knowledge and truth.

As Foucault puts it in an interview, "in human relations, whatever they are - whether it be a question of communicating verbally...or a question of a love relationship, an institutional or economic relationship - power is always present: I mean the relationship in which one wishes to direct the behavior of another."<sup>17</sup> Charles Davis also rightly noted that "Knowledge is a technique of power, and no power can be exercised without the extraction, appropriation, distribution or retention of knowledge. Power thus implies the elaboration of a field of knowledge. Knowledge on its part requires a system of communication, which is an

---

have been shocked in our practice and shaken in our theory by the challenging 'advocacy' interpretations of feminist, Afro-American, Latin American, and other dissenting voices."

<sup>16</sup>*Biblical Interpretation* 1:1(1993), 67-87, [79]; also in "A World Established on Water (Psalm 24): Reader-Response, Deconstruction and Bespoke Interpretation," in *The New Literary Criticism And The Hebrew Bible*, 87.

<sup>17</sup>From "The ethic care for the self as a practice of freedom: an interview," in *The Final Foucault*, ed. James Bernauer and David Rasmussen (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988), 11-12.

exercise of power."<sup>18</sup> Recently, Kyle A. Pasewark in his title *A Theology of Power: Being Beyond Domination*, attempts to reassess the notion of power, arguing that "Power is a ubiquitous and unavoidable feature of all existence, grounded in divine omnipotence and omnipresence. Therefore, power correctly understood and practiced is productive, a condition of life, rather than repressive, a producer of domination. An effective ethic of power needs to derive from power as the divine ground."<sup>19</sup> As religion, culture and society are products of human agency, and power is always present in human relationship, then it is up to us to learn to live and perish with it.

The presence of cultural hegemony is a reality, whether it is within biblical interpretative communities or in religious sphere. What seems important is what comes after this realization? The de-westernization does not help to prevent colonization and cultural imperialism. In short, "a Christianity that was preexistence to culture and history, or a culturally divested, cultural naked Christianity does not exit," as summed up well by Johann Baptist Metz, "There is no such thing as 'pure' and 'naked' Christianity whose substance at first only consists of itself and then later dressed itself in various cultural robes."<sup>20</sup>

The recognition of a cultural hegemony at play in the production and promotion of knowledge within the arenas of humanities and social science, as well as biblical scholarship, does not necessarily lead to the extreme of separatism or a total alienation of communities within this global village on the one hand, nor should it by any measure promote the "Crash of Civilization" as perceived by Samuel Huntington<sup>21</sup> on the other hand. Instead, I think the current state of confusion and potential confrontation calls for a perspective of intersubjectivity of relational understanding among communities of our global village.

---

<sup>18</sup>*Religion and the Making of Society*, 163.

<sup>19</sup>(Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), who finds in political theories the understanding of power either as domination or as the capacity to dominate inadequate. The question he wants to address is "Is the power of being ultimately and finally destructive of beings, or is it fundamentally supportive of them?" The inadequacy of prevailing theories of power produces disastrous consequences.

<sup>20</sup>"The 'One World'," 205.

<sup>21</sup>*Foreign Affairs* Volume 72, 3, Summer (1993), 22-49.

## *Intersubjectivity*

As reminded by Anthony Giddens,<sup>22</sup> "The self is not a passive entity, determined by external influences; in forging their self-identities, no matter how local their specific contexts of action, individuals contribute to and directly promote social influences that are global in their consequences and implications." In recognizing the self as the interpreter with certain aspect of identity, Clines reflexively noted that "my own set of distinctive beliefs - cultural, ethnic and religious commitments and inheritances - are what make me an individual. Call them my prejudices and presuppositions if you must, though I would rather call them the components from which I construct my identity."<sup>23</sup> On the move to 'internationalization' or 'globalization'<sup>24</sup> in biblical studies, the preservation of oneself's identity is just as important as the promotion of dialogical communicative action; whether such inter-communities dialogical action is just an 'ideal utopia' (J. Habermas) or a possibility in 'real time' (David C. Hoy) or could it be 'pragmatic' (Thomas McCarthy) is another matter to discuss.<sup>25</sup> The notion of intersubjectivity<sup>26</sup> does not mean to "reduce the diversity of human distinctiveness," that which Clines would resist in the move to "internationalization", rather it calls for a perspective of acknowledgment and respectfulness of the right-of-place of the 'others'. Communities co-exist in a global village will need to come to term with the 'other than self', if justice and peace is our noble goal for humanity.

---

<sup>22</sup>*Modernity and Self-Identity*, 2.

<sup>23</sup>*Biblical Interpretation* 1:1(1993), 74.

<sup>24</sup>David Jobling, "Globalization in Biblical Studies / Biblical Studies in Globalization," *Biblical Interpretation* 1:1(1993), 96-110.

<sup>25</sup>David Couzens Hoy and Thomas McCarthy, *Critical Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 266.

<sup>26</sup>"Intersubjectivity used to suggest that subjectivity is not specific to the individual but - because it is formed by common forces - is a collective phenomenon. In recent literary theory often associated with the view that the reader's experience of a text is actively internalized through incorporation in his or her self rather than passively adopted or 'taken over'. As a result, a reader's view of a work becomes, in part, a view of him or her self; the work has been structured into the reader and is no longer a merely objective fact. Such a view gives the reader more of a creative role than he or she is accorded by a number of other theories, in which textual meaning is received rather than received/ constructed," in Jeremy Hawthorn, *A Concise Glossary of Contemporary Literary Theory: Second Edition* (London: Edward Arnold, 1994), 99.



In the process of internationalization, if one is to avoid activities of domination and cultural hegemony, the self / subject each with their own culture and language, needs to be reflexive on the condition of intersubjectivity in the form of dialogical communicative action. This leads to the whole complex issue of the phenomenon of language.<sup>27</sup> Clines remarks that "I would be very unhappy if English were to become the standard medium of scholarly communication in biblical studies.... I think the identity of the researchers is being in some way negated if they are not free to write in their native language." And he goes on to propose that "What I would be most in favour of is of scholars whose language is a 'minority' one publishing both in their own language and in an 'international' one... It would be equally unfortunate if the distinctive ethos of biblical study in any country were to be subjected to some universal standard."<sup>28</sup> This proposal of Clines was challenged by David Jobling, who thinks that Clines "ought already to be very unhappy. The language of modern globalization is English. In the market of *intellectual* capital there is no instant exchange of national currencies; we are on the Gold Standard! English not only becomes increasingly the international language, it also invades other languages.... English is *the* language of Asian biblical scholarship, at least of *visible* scholarship."<sup>29</sup> Obviously, Jobling has a strong sense of nationality and a pragmatic cultural hegemony in his discussion of globalization in biblical studies. But it must be pointed out that even Edward Said has modified his understanding of culture since *Orientalism*, as demonstrated in *Culture & Imperialism*.<sup>30</sup> Between the East and the West, within the global communities, there has been a dynamic flow of cultural elements and interactions as mobility increases in societies, and each has parts of the others. Similarly, the IAL project, as described in Eco's recent title *In Search For The Perfect Language*, has proven

---

<sup>27</sup> By turning to the phenomenon of language in hermeneutics, I do not mean to enter into debate between what Fredric Jameson calls "a prison-house of language" and "the signified and the signifier" of Jacques Derrida, or even that of "signifier to signifier rather than of signifier to signified" of Michael Riffaterre in *Text Production* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).

<sup>28</sup> *Biblical Interpretation* 1:1(1993), 73.

<sup>29</sup> David Jobling, "Globalization in Biblical Studies," 108-9; as a Canadian experiencing the agony of the referendum of Québec for independent, citing Québec Bill 101 as an example of the invasion of English into French that "no other language can hope to compete on equal terms [with English]."

<sup>30</sup> Both published by New York: Vintage Books, 1979 and 1994.



the impossibility of creating an universal standard language.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, if the 'Gold Standard' language is to be determined by the quantifier, Chinese would not be too far from becoming the standard. However, with the rapid advancement of telecommunication technology, a new form of universal communicative media/language might just be round the corner as we will discuss the issue later.

As culture, language and community of the self continue to be transformative through internal reflexivity as influences from external forces constantly exerting pressure on it, one wonders whether there is a human ontological reality beyond the individual self? What is the ontological reality of intersubjectivity? as Charles Davis puts it. Whether that be faith (Kantian) or State (Hegelian), the idea of communicative action as advocated by Habermas would certainly be an operative advantage, if it is pragmatic and happens in real time, in the production of knowledge within our international interpretative communities. However, the will to power and domination in the scholarly world is always present, as best expressed by Exum and Clines, "But perhaps that once laudable desire to keep up, to 'master' and 'control' the field, is ripe for suppression, or at least sublimation, now that it can be recognized for what it is, as yet another manifestation of the academic will to power (or, alternatively, of scholarly insecurity)."<sup>32</sup>

In biblical scholarship, we need to nurture a hermeneutical relationship that does not nullify cultural identity and distinctiveness, nor should it in any ways promote syncretism or subjugation; for it takes mutual trust, honesty and respect as well as humility to relate. The presence of multiculturalism and pluralism is a fact of life should no longer be a dispute. Perspective of mutuality in a world of crisisness naturally demands a genuine corporate effort for human advancement.

Since the complexity of the world should remain commensurate with the complexity of the postmodern human existence, the notion of intersubjectivity pleads for a respectfulness on the right of the self, the recognition of the identity of the subject with all the composite elements that define its existence .

---

<sup>31</sup>Umberto Eco, tr. James Fentress (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 317-36, Italian (1993). German, French, Spanish (1994). IAL stands for International Auxiliary Languages.

<sup>32</sup>J. Cheryl Exum & David J.A. Clines, "The New Literary Criticism," in *The New Literary Criticism And The Hebrew Bible*, 15.

### *Intertextuality*<sup>33</sup>

According to Julia Kristeva, who coined the term "intertextuality", "What allows a dynamic dimension to structuralism is Bakhtin's conception of the 'literary word' as an *intersection of textual surfaces* rather than a point (a fixed meaning), as a dialogue among several writings: that of the writer, the addressee (or the character) and the contemporary or earlier cultural context.... Hence horizontal axis (subject-addressee) and vertical axis (text-context) coincide, bringing to light an important fact: each word (text) is an intersection of word (texts) where at least one other word (text) can be read."<sup>34</sup> Similarly, Roland Barthes also argued that "Every text, being itself the intertext of another text, belongs to the intertextual, which must not be confused with a text's origins: to search for the 'sources of' and 'influence upon' a work is to satisfy the myth of filiation. The quotations from which a text is constructed are anonymous, irrecoverable, and yet already read: they are quotations without quotation marks."<sup>35</sup> He further states that "Any text is a new tissue of past citations. Bits of code, formulae, rhythmic models, fragments of social languages, etc. pass into the text and are redistributed within it, for there is always language before and around the text. Intertextuality, the condition of any text whatsoever, cannot, of course, be reduced to a problem of sources or influences; the intertext is a general field of anonymous formulae whose origin can scarcely ever be located; of unconscious or automatic quotations, given without question-marks."<sup>36</sup> The presence of intertextuality in human experience testified the necessity of corporate effort in human pursuit of knowledge.

Julia Kristeva, having pointed out that "any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another," however further contends that "the notion of *intertextuality*

---

<sup>33</sup>Kristeva defines the text as "a permutation of texts, an intertextuality: in the space of a given text, several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another" in *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, ed. Leon S. Roudiez, tr. Gora, Thomas, Jardine, Alice & Leon S. Roudiez (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980), 36.

<sup>34</sup>Julia Kristeva, "Word, Dialogue and Novel," in *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. T. Moi (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), 37, tr. A. Jardine, T. Gora, and L.S. Roudiez from 'Let mot, le dialogue et le roman,' in *Semiotiké* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1969), 143-73 [146].

<sup>35</sup>R. Barthes, "From Work to Text," in *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism*, ed. J.V. Harari (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1979), 77.

<sup>36</sup>Roland Barthes, "Theory of the Text," in *Untying the Text: A Post-structuralist Reader*, ed. Robert Young, tr. Ian McLeod (London: Routledge, 1981), 31-47 [39].

replaces that of intersubjectivity."<sup>37</sup> I do not see why one should replace the other, even if the notion of intertextuality and intersubjectivity is being seen in the perspective of external and internal forces or behavior, or macro and micro aspect of a text or subject. Intertextuality, as a relationship that might exist between any two texts with a common subject, demands the recognition, acknowledgment and respect in mutuality, as in intersubjectivity, although it does not always happen that way due to the presence of power in any human relationship. As Gunn and Fewell noted in biblical texts, "Intertextuality plays upon the notion of control. Literary traditions are built by texts attempting to outdo each other. Texts endeavour to rewrite other texts, to usurp their power, to displace their authority. In the Hebrew Bible, there are many texts competing for rhetorical power. Two such texts are the Genesis-2Kings and Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah narratives."<sup>38</sup>

"Texts are therefore not structures of presence but traces and tracings of otherness. Texts are made out of cultural and ideological norms; out of the conventions of genre; out of styles and idioms embedded in the language; out of connotations and collective sets; out of clichés, formulae, or proverbs; and out of other texts," as John Frow puts it,<sup>39</sup> "The text has not only an intertextual relationship to previous texts (in the case of the classics this is usually effaced) but also an intertextual relationship to itself as canonized text."<sup>40</sup> Intertextuality has thus to be seen in association with the whole complex issue of the reader's varied expectations as formed by ideological, generic, and other factors.<sup>41</sup>

The recognition of the presence of intertextuality at play is therefore crucial to the interpretative communities, lest one inclines to exert individualism or domination. 'You have part of me' is always the reality

---

<sup>37</sup>Julia Kristeva, "Word, Dialogue and Novel," 146.

<sup>38</sup>David M. Gunn & Danna Nolan Fewell, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible* (The Oxford Bible Series; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 165.

<sup>39</sup>John Frow, "Intertextuality and Ontology," in *Intertextuality: Theories and Practices*, ed. M. Worton and J. Still (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), 45-55.

<sup>40</sup>John Frow, *Marxism and Literary History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), 230-31.

<sup>41</sup>New historicism may be understood to be a metaphor that describes cultural intertextuality and according to Umberto Eco, "postmodernism is defined by its intertextuality and knowingness, and by its relation to the past, whereby postmodernism revisits at any historical moment with irony. *The Name of the Rose* (1980) is an example of the interpenetration of previously separated categories of fiction and non-fiction."



in any interpretative act, especially in a globalized postmodern reality. The notion of intertextuality, therefore, calls for the nurturing of a genuine and respectful relationship in academic pursuing, that shares a mutual concern for the common fate of humanity within our global community.

### *Interconnectivity*<sup>42</sup>

As pointed out by Gunn and Fewell, "Intertextuality, is a relationship that might exist between any two texts. The reader, rather than the text, makes the connections. Connections can, of course, be arbitrary, but most readers do not bother to associate texts which have nothing in common."<sup>43</sup> Connections of the readers is thus crucial to the production of knowledge. In the postmodern reality, the challenge to the intellectual community is best observed by Steven Best and Douglas Kellner, "Decentred in relation to technicians, the postmodern intellectual is an 'interpreter' whose cultural authority is safely confined within the academy. While the subversion of intellectual elitism can be seen as a positive development, postmodern discourse has provided the opportunity for some intellectuals to position themselves as new avant-gardes to garner new sources of cultural capital, or to theorize 'just for the fun of it'."<sup>44</sup>

Today, inter-communities are made possible through the rapid development of communication technology. Communities are being joined together with clusters of networks (computer networks are collections of interconnected systems that have the ability to exchange information between one another). The most important computer network in the world is the Internet, which has been called a "network of networks." Interconnectivity no longer is an luxury but an asset that one could not afford not to be connected in any academic pursue. Surfing in cyberspace, though time consuming, has also greatly enhanced the flow of information and dialogical communicative actions; intersubjectivity and inter-

---

<sup>42</sup>Interconnectivity is a term used in the world of cyberculture where computers are connected with each other forming the world of inter-related networks. The word 'Internet' is a collective noun for a group of interconnected networks, all using a set of protocols endorsed by the internet architecture Board, a working group of the Internet society.

<sup>43</sup>Gunn & Fewell, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible*, 165.

<sup>44</sup>Steven Best & Douglas Kellner, *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1991), 297-98.



textuality occur in real time in cyberspace. The world of video and data communication and conferencing not only has shortened the distance of culturally diverse communities, it has also enhance understanding and corporateness, that we are one in a family; interdependentability challenges individuality.

As more and more systems became interconnected, tools were developed to facilitate working between them. Because interconnectivity is key to the existence of the Internet, it's vitally important that the flow of data traffic is well managed. As pointed out by Edward A. Cavazos & Gavino Morin, in *Cyberspace and The Law*<sup>45</sup>

While purists debate the exact scope and definition of the term, millions of Americans find themselves interacting every day in a world they call by that name [Internet].... Cyberspace now represents a vast array of computer systems accessible from remote physical locations. It also embodies the so-called data highways and networks that connect them.... The larger networks are decentralized in both a technical sense and in their governance. They are decentralized in the technical sense in that on the Internet, Fidonet, and similar networks, there is no central hub through which all messages must be routed. Likewise, there is no central governing body on many large networks, and they are governed through a surprisingly effective yet anarchic autonomy.

The wealth of information available makes cyberspace an educational tool more powerful than any tool that has come before it. As the power and scope of cyberspace become more and more obvious, its commercial potential grows and the consumer market has not ignored it. The Internet has somewhere between 10 and 15 million users using the 1,313,000 host systems (computers that connect directly to the network via the Internet Protocol or "IP"). Approximately 10,000 smaller networks are linked by the Internet in roughly 50 countries and they are growing explosively.<sup>46</sup> The growth of the Internet is further boosted by The High Performance Computing Act, which was passed in 1991, designed to bolster the development of a digital "information infrastructure" in USA. It calls for a government and industry coalition working to research the hardware and software needs for the digital equivalent of the federal

---

<sup>45</sup>(Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1994), 2.

<sup>46</sup>An indication of this trend is the Internet's growth since its beginnings in 1981. At that time, the number of host systems was 213 machines. According to Cavazos & Morin, the dramatic rate of growth becomes evident when the numbers of hosts in 1992, 727,000 is compared to the 1.3 million figure of 1993.

highway system with computer connections linking millions of Americans. According to one of the recent report, (*Newsweek*, Nov.13, 1995) There are 37 million people over 16 and older with access to the Internet; and 18 million people who have used the WorldWideWeb in the past three months and the average time a user spends on the Internet per week is 5.5 hours, of whom 35% are female and 14% of those users have purchased products or services over the WWW. Asia has not been too slow in response, countries in Asia has met in Japan recently to form a consortium, joining effort in developing Asia's information superhighway.

This brief sketch of inter-communities through Internet in our postmodern reality leads to some observations:

1. Cyberculture and cyberlanguage will soon becoming a universal culture and language or system of signs that dominates our thought world. What sort of effect will it has, within the perspectives of intersubjectivity and intertextuality, on the discussion of 'internationalization' and 'globalization' of biblical studies? How would the power and authority be mapped out within the biblical interpretative communities, as regards to the production of knowledge and the legitimation / illegitimation of interpretations. There will certainly be a shift of paradigm in the structure of authority and power. Cultural issues may find a new channel for discussion and minorities or under represented communities will have a greater platform for discussion and lobbying. The dynamic of social forces will take on a new wave of strength. The difference between reality and cyber-reality will grow thin, to a point that demands a total rewrite of human existence. Whoever controls the information superhighways, controls the capacity to formulate truth and knowledge, be it the technicians, elitists or cyberists.

2. Although the development of the Internet communities open up a tremendous space for corporate intertextual effort in academic achievements, it also risk the danger of cultural hegemony if one is presumptuous and intentional. The issue of standard language will continue to be a struggle between the cyber-communities and the traditionalists.

3. This would lead to the discussion on the ethics of biblical hermeneutics.

The notion of interconnectivity appeals to the global intellectual communities for a corporate effort in mutuality in the production of knowledge for the advancement of human living. As noted by George Lindbeck, the Gentile of the early church "developed a Christian analogue of the Jewish sense of being a single people. Their widely separated communities were bound together by ties of mutual helpfulness, responsibility, and openness to each other's correction. A far-flung, flexible, and yet tenacious network of mutual aid societies came to span the Mediterranean world."<sup>47</sup>

### ***Biblical Hermeneutics***

Two important issues arise in our discussion, the problem of legitimation or authority and the question of cultural sensitive interpretation in the course of producing meaning in biblical studies.

With regards to legitimation and authority, Clines has the following comments:<sup>48</sup>

If we ask who it is that authorizes or legitimates an interpretation, who it is that says something may count as an interpretation and not be ruled out of court, the answer can only be: some group, some community.... Some interpretations are authorized by the SBL, some by the ecclesiastical community, but most by little sub-groups within these communities -- the Intertextuality in Christian Apocrypha Seminar and the like....

What we call legitimacy in interpretation is really a matter of whether an interpretation can win approval by some community or other. There is no objective standard by which we can know whether one view or other is right; we can only tell whether it has been accepted. What the academic community today decides counts as a reasonable interpretation of Psalm 24 is a reasonable interpretation, and until my community decides that my interpretation is acceptable, it isn't acceptable....

Of course, what one community finds acceptable, another will find fanciful or impossible.... There are no determinate meanings and there are no universally agreed upon legitimate interpretation....

The simplest answer for academic has long been that we will seek the approval of no one other than our fellow academics. If our papers get accepted...they are valid, and if they don't they're not.

---

<sup>47</sup>"Scripture, Consensus, and Community," in *Biblical Interpretation in Crisis*, 74-101, 78.

<sup>48</sup>David J.A. Clines, "A World Established on Water (Psalm 24)," 86, 79-80.

The consumer driven environment of postmodern reality in globalization, has led Clines to argue further that "If there are no 'right' interpretations, and no validity in interpretation beyond the assent of various interest groups, biblical interpreters have to give up the goal of determinate and universally acceptable interpretations, and devote themselves to producing interpretations they can sell -- in whatever mode is called for by the communities they choose to serve. This is what I call 'customized' interpretation." If the church is the largest user of the Bible and the greatest consumer of biblical interpretations, Clines who admits that "the church has more power than the academy," would certainly eager to 'sell' and 'serve' the interests of the communities of faith. Eventually, a 'consumer-driven' interpretation is a 'church-oriented' interpretation, granted that the 'church' knows what it wants and needs.

With regards to culturally sensitive interpretation, while Clines argues for a 'consumer' oriented ethics of interpretation, Daniel Patte would argue for what he calls "an androcritical multidimensional exegetical" practice, which requires the recognition that all exegesis is the bringing to critical understanding of ordinary readings, especially faith interpretations. If text constitute human activity, and meaning came as a result of interpretive acts of that human action, hermeneutics finds its role in reality, interpreters enjoys the game of power, and so does the activity of the communities of faith. Without going into the debate between communitarianism and individualism, it is suffice to say that power is still the crux of any human relations.

In the reality of multiculturalism and pluralism, the focus in biblical hermeneutics does not seem to fall on the notion of searching for an universal, objective and legitimate interpretation; rather, the ethics of biblical interpretation becomes the crucial and legitimate issue. I will briefly discuss three notions on the ethics of biblical interpretation.

1. The ethics of biblical interpretation as argued by Daniel Patte<sup>49</sup> is that of a notion of responsibility/accountability. He hopes "to devise a new methodology or a new procedure for ethically responsible critical biblical studies." Accordingly, critical exegesis must come before responsibility, and accountability must precede other issues. However, in his own words, "the questions of responsibility are dangerous; they put us in a position of hierarchical superiority over all other readers and

---

<sup>49</sup>*Ethics of Biblical Interpretation*, 114-25, 128.



thus have the potential of making us oppressors." That says it all, he is aware of the danger of his notion of responsibility operating within the paradigm of western hegemony, legitimating the idea of "international policing" as demonstrated by the military might of any superpower, even if it is intruding into territories of the "others". Responsibility is a two-edge word that cuts into both sides. To whom who is responsible of what? The Credo, doctrinal statements or doctrine of faith of the believers communities which often hold authority to biblical interpretation should perhaps be a better alternative than mere talks of responsibility or accountability. The ethics of biblical interpretation must deal with its own ontological reality. On whose ethics does the activity of interpretation operates? Is it not the interpretative communities that decide the matter? Or is it the 'authority' and the 'truth' as proclaimed in the Bible? What about the role and function of the Holy Spirit?

2. The idea of interpretative "interest" of Steve Fowl "proposed that we in Biblical studies give up discussions of meaning and adopt Stout's position of dissolving disputes about meaning by explicating these disputes in terms of interpretative interests." He goes on to acknowledge that "Once we forego the use of a term like meaning to characterize our particular interpretative interests we should not assume that all talk of interpretative interest will be equally coherent."<sup>50</sup> This idea of "interpretative interest" appears to serve a descriptive and diplomatic, or even political discourse on the phenomena and practice of biblical interpretative communities which committed to pluralism. "To the best interest of X," has been the standard diplomatic political jargon that legitimized all authoritative endeavors. 'Consensus' in modern seems to be the privilege of the few elites rather than relaying on the Gallup polls. But even the Gallup polls, are mere statistics which meant to serve the interest of the interpreter.

However, Fowl goes on to propose "the communal or collective position," which "suggest that the reasons for adopting one interpretative interest over another lie in particular historical communities. These communities would be based on shared convictions about the goods and ends they are to pursue and on 'shared dispositions educated in

---

<sup>50</sup>Stephen Fowl, "The Ethics of Interpretation or What's Left Over after the Elimination of Meaning," in *The Bible in Three Dimensions*, ed. David J.A. Clines, Stephen E. Fowl, Stanley E. Porter (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 379-98.

accordance with those beliefs'." This view of "communal or collective position" is rather close to the view of this essay. Although the possibility of a 'supercommunity' is not exactly possible, the development of a super-cyber-community is in the making.

3. The "hermeneutics of acknowledgment" as put forth by Johann B. Metz<sup>51</sup> is also promising because not only that it grants the "right-of-place" to the "others", also that individual does not exist in isolation to the point of separatism. Metz argues that " If Western Christianity is to mature into a culturally polycentric World Christianity, then it must remember and realize its biblical heritage as the ferment of what can be called a *hermeneutical culture*, that is, a culture of the acknowledgment of others in their otherness, a culture of togetherness, of the earthly *oikoumenē* which in its heart is *freed*, as Nietzsche says, *from 'the will to power'.*" But Metz's idea of acknowledgment may still operate from a westerncentric point of view as he contends, "The biblically rooted culture of the acknowledgment of the others in their otherness does not aim at a romantic elevation of the alien others. But it makes possible that the tendency toward universality interiorized in the Western spirit itself be joined with the wisdom and the memories of suffering of other cultures in a promising way."

However, Metz has a higher goal in his proposition as he puts it strongly, "this suggested hermeneutical culture seems to me to be the indispensable precondition for the continuously threatened peace in the world. Could a Western Christianity which matures into cultural polycentrism even become a productive model for the shaping of world peace? This question is directed to all of us, to us who are part of Western Christianity." The emphasis on the mutuality of "a hermeneutical culture of acknowledgment" and "a culture of togetherness," for world peace is noble and I salute to its nobility so long as it is not presumptuous of a western superiority. Indeed, peace and justice are noble goals for the biblical interpretative communities, too noble a goal to be dispensable of and not to achieve. Not to discourage the idea, but the current status-quo of the United Nation after 50 years may just be a case in point. Could religion be the unifying force? Many would doubt it can. What follows from this "acknowledgment" is certainly uncertain; it could follow with an intention to dominate, to subjugate or to disregard, although Metz

---

<sup>51</sup>Johann Baptist Metz, "The 'One World'," 214, 209, 212-3.

has criticized the church's "mission was not guided by a hermeneutics of acknowledgment, but by a hermeneutics of assimilation, even of subjugation". This might lead to a situation whereby unhealthy competitions and hostile confrontations become a survival norm in postmodern reality.

Along the thoughts of Metz and Fowl, I would further propose a hermeneutics that is characterized by the condition of intersubjectivity, intertextuality and interconnectivity. It appeals not to any external authority or body of power that could be used to dominate or impose on any activities of the interpretative communities. It promotes a stronger flow of communicative actions and a closer relationship of inter-communities. It encourages and enhances the intertextual effort in the production of knowledge and meaning, recognizing the intersubjectivity of inter-communities who are interconnected through a global network of reality. Justice and peace, by whatever standard, will evolve as a common conviction in due process to becoming the goal of interest for mutual survival.

In short, I plead for a biblical hermeneutics of inter-relationships and a culture of "acknowledgment", to borrow Metz's idea, rather than propagating a "hermeneutics of domination," or even "subjugation". Naturally, we ourselves should not confuse the universality of biblical interpretative activities with the universality of the biblical truth, which may thereby neglect and ignore the difference and distinctiveness between the individuality of the subject.

In a postmodern reality, the self as the subject being fluid and dynamic, is constantly presented and re-presented, dissolved and deconstructed. The centered and decentered of the subject within indeterminate boundaries is largely a resultant effect of the increasing awareness of the legitimation and limitation of the self, particularly true in the Third world. It is also due to the result of growth in economic strength and political independability of the Third world on the one hand, and the recognition and reorientation of perceptions of the West towards the rest of the world on the other hand, that the subject is being colonized, de-colonized and re-colonized. The shift from colonialism to neocolonialism and post-colonialism that dominated the production of knowledge has yield a highly transparent consciousness of hegemonic behavior in real life, be it academic, political or socio-economic environment. The rise of cultural materialism in Britain and new



historicism in America as a challenge to post-structuralism and deconstructionism, testified not only the power of market and consumer oriented economy on the academic production of knowledge, but also a creation of a neo-cultural imperialism in the play of human knowledge. The legitimation of the presence of multiculturalism and multiracialism has promised to threaten the dominant culture and power on the one hand and erupt societal stability on the other. This would pose as the greatest challenge to the biblical interpretative communities in a postmodern era of globalism.

This issue, with the theme of Chinese Hermeneutics: Biblical, Theological, and Cultural Studies, is an attempt of Asian Hermeneutics. The probe into the relation between the new historicism and Asia hermeneutics, as in Chin Ken-pa's article, attempts to stimulate a new endeavor in Asian biblical hermeneutics. The intertextual effort of Christopher Heard, the cross-cultural readings of Yeo Khiok-khng with their responses, the contextual reading of the parable of Jesus of Peter Liu, and the comparative theological inquiry of knowledge between the East and the West of Jason Yeung, are just some of the efforts that required for transformation in a East-West integrative production of knowledge. The reading and re-reading of an historical Text - The Three Self - of Richard X. Zhang and "*Hua Sha* and Christian Thought" of Wang Lie-yao contributed yet as another form of cultural intertextuality and interconnectivity. The cultural analysis of Leung Ka-lun on Studies of Christianity and Confucianism, not only constituted as a cultural reading of historical texts, also contributed as a modern re-presentation of a cultural context. In a volume such as this, one can be certain that the writing of the 'text' has only just begun without having the last word in sight. With the continuing interest in the Orient, particularly China, I would like to conclude with a quotation from a recent forum on China-talk,<sup>52</sup>

What's exciting is that China's "second intellectual liberation" happened at the same time as the western intellectual community is going through a period of

---

<sup>52</sup>崔之元 Cui Zhi-yuan, "Again on Institutional Innovation and 'A Second Liberation of Thoughts' - A Further Reply to Critics," in *Twenty-First Century Bimonthly* 27 (1995), 134. 「令人興奮的是，中國的『第二次思想解放』恰逢西方思想界對自身全面批判反省之時。可以預料今後十年內，中西思想和實踐的交流、碰撞以及各自的重組，將進入1840年以來空前未有的新階段。中國知識份子將不再只是『向西方尋求救國救民的真理』、而是通過對中國二十世紀『革命建國』和『改革開放』的理論總結，對冷戰後世界性的『思想復興』做出自己創造性的貢獻。」



total self-reflection and reevaluation. It can be expected that within the next decade, the East and the West's meeting of the mind and praxes, interacting and knocking each other as well as restructuring, will enter a new era that have never seen since 1840. Eastern intellectuals will not look to the West for national salvific solutions, but rather, through the revolutionary rebuilding of the nations, creatively making independent contribution to a world of post-cold war, post-colonialism and post-modern intellectual renaissance.

### ABSTRACT

Based on the notions of intersubjectivity, intertextuality and interconnectivity, this essay appeals to the biblical interpretative communities to reaffirm the need for mutual responsibility and respectivity of the self in the pursue of knowledge; recognizing the contribution of cultural intertextuality in the production of knowledge on the one hand, and the necessity to establish a global community through interconnectivity that encourage a corporate effort in the advancement of knowledge for humanity within our global village on the other hand. The awareness of the possibility to indulge into a tendency of hegemonic behavior in biblical hermeneutics calls for a sincere, honest and respectful academic communicative interaction that is ethically sensitive within a culture of hermeneutical relationship and acknowledgment.

### 撮 要

本文以相互主體性，文本互涉性及相互連結性的觀點為基礎，訴諸於聖經詮釋的群體，再次肯定學者在追求學術時互相負責及尊重的需要。本文一方面確認文化的文本互涉性在學術生產方面的貢獻，另一方面則承認必須透過相互連結性建立普世群體，以鼓勵在世界村內促進人類知識的合作精神。人們對聖經詮釋學趨向霸權主義的醒覺，使人要求真摯、誠實及彼此尊重的學術交流，亦即是在詮釋關係及確認的文化中具備道德的敏感性。