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Criticism in Critical Times: Reflections on Vision and Task

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The problematic addressed in this study is the vision and task of biblical criticism today. The introduction describes its context and rationale: a series of key anniversaries in 2014, involving critical times of the twentieth century, that bring to bear historical, geopolitical, and spatial dimensions of meaning upon our own critical times as well as my term as president of the Society of Biblical Literature. The introduction further sets forth its objective: the felt imperative need for a response to our critical times as a critic. The main body of the study develops an initial response in four major steps: first, analysis of presidential addresses given in critical times of yesteryear, with a focus on the years of the Great War (1914–18), as signifier for the perceived function of biblical criticism in society and culture; second, exposition of the spectrum of opinion regarding the pursuit of critical inquiry in a variety of discursive frameworks, with a focus on intellectual studies, in order to situate the rhetorical choice adopted by former presidents and allow for a different, more activist role; third, analysis of the global state of affairs as the context for critical inquiry today, with a focus on global economics, as a prerequisite for an engaged critical stance; and fourth, search for a theoretical framework appropriate for engaging our critical times, involving not only critical theories of world order from the Global North but also alternative theories from the Global South. The conclusion offers an interpretive project for our times in keeping with the various dimensions of the response, arguing for a fusion of the critical and the political, the biblical and the worldly.

Acceptance of the nomination to serve as president of the Society of Biblical Literature in 2014 immediately set off a process of reflection on my part regarding an appropriate topic for the main function of such a charge, the presidential address. With the passage of time, three ideas, all having to do with various social-cultural dimensions of my term, gradually established themselves as primary in my mind. Eventually, they came together, upon much reflection, in the final determination of the topic. I should like to begin by identifying these converging vectors, doing

so by way of chronological emergence and appropriation. They involve, respectively, historical, geopolitical, and spatial dimensions of meaning, although all three such dimensions are present in all three vectors. As such, they involve—individually as well as collectively—a critical reading of the global scene, my own location and stance within it, and my identity and role as a biblical critic. In the end, such reflections led me to the question of critical vision and task as a worthy, indeed imperative, topic for my address, for which I have chosen "Criticism in Critical Times: Reflections on Vision and Task" as the title.

The first insight was historical in character, which led to a juxtaposition of critical times involving relations among global powers in the West. I realized that my term would coincide with major anniversaries of global conflicts during the course of the twentieth century: (1) the Great War (1914–18)—the centenary of the declaration of war in 1914; (2) the Second World War (1939–45)—the seventy-fifth anniversary of the outbreak of war in 1939 and the seventieth of D-Day in 1944, the beginning of the end for Nazi Germany and the Axis; and (3) the Cold War (1947–89/91), a confrontation that would engender multiple regional wars and local clashes—the twenty-fifth anniversary of the beginning of the end in 1989, with the collapse of the communist regimes throughout Eastern Europe, symbolically culminating with the fall of the Berlin Wall in November.[1]

I became aware that it had fallen upon me, as the first president from outside the West, to recall and observe such events. I realized that I could do so only as an outsider-insider. The trajectory for me was clear. The Great War marked the beginning of a relentless descent, through sustained advances in warfare technology, into ever more extreme levels of barbarity, carnage, and destruction. Such a path of destruction would engulf not only the old great powers of Europe and the new power of the United States of America but also the rest of the world in its wake. This path has continued beyond the Cold War into our own days, as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has assumed the role of a global patrol force—the First Gulf War (1990–91), the Second Gulf War (2003–11), and now in 2014 the war with the Islamic State.[2] This path has brought to a climax the civilizational crisis of the West that began with the Great War, with no sense of what is to come and much less how to manage it. In this existential quandary I find that we are all together—insiders, outsiders, and outsiders-insiders alike.

Subsequently, a geopolitical insight emerged, which brought together critical times having to do with the state of affairs of the Two-Thirds World and its differential relations of power with the One-Third World. My term, I realized, would

[1] I say the beginning of the end because what began in 1989 with a wave of revolutions that brought down the communist regimes ended in 1991 with the formal disbanding of the Warsaw Pact on 25 February and the dissolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on 26 December.

[2] On this point, see Immanuel Wallerstein, "NATO: Danger to World Peace" (15 November 2014), http://www.iwallerstein.com/nato-danger-to-world-peace/.

parallel the sixtieth anniversary of a foundational period in the discursive and material emergence of the Third World (1952–55): (1) In 1952, the term appeared for the first time, coined by Alfred Sauvy as "*le tiers monde*," in a piece written for the French socialist weekly *L'Observateur*.[3] (2) In 1954, the French Far East Expeditionary Corps in Indochina suffered a decisive defeat at the hands of the Viet Minh forces of Ho Chi Minh at Dien Bien Phu, bringing to a close the First Indochina War (1946–54) and ushering in, after the Geneva Accord of 1955 and the partition of Vietnam, the Second Indochina War (1955–75).[4] (3) In 1955, the Bandung (Indonesia) Conference took place, bringing together the newly independent countries of Africa and Asia in a first attempt to chart a middle, independent course between the dialectics of capitalist and socialist modernism.[5]

I became conscious of the fact that I was to be the first president from the Global South, or what was popularly known from the 1950s through the 1970s as the Third World.[6] This was the world of my origins and primary culture. It is to its diaspora in the Global North that I belong, as a first-generation immigrant and an inescapably transnational subject. This was, therefore, the first time that the Society had ventured outside the parameters of the Euro-American world of the North Atlantic. I had thus become a marker of the tectonic demographic changes taking place throughout the world since the 1960s, whose impact began to reach the Society in the late 1970s and early 1980s, as the field of studies expanded into Africa and the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean.

The last insight was spatial in nature, which led to the conjunction of critical times involving borders and migrations, nations and the Other. I realized that my term would coincide with the fiftieth anniversary of a similarly foundational period in the country and its relations with Latin America and the Caribbean (1963–65):

[3] Alfred Sauvy, "Trois mondes, une planète," *L'Observateur* 118 (14 August 1952), 14. See also idem, "Note sur l'origine de l'expression 'tiers monde' par Alfred Sauvy," *Le Magazine de l'homme moderne*, http://www.homme-moderne.org/societe/demo/sauvy/3mondes.html.

[4] Southeast Asia was one of many areas of the Third World where the United States and the Soviet Union engaged in geopolitical struggle for control during the late 1940s and the 1950s. See Robert J. McMahon, *The Cold War: A Very Short Introduction*, Very Short Introductions (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 64–74, esp. 70–72.

[5] On the Bandung Conference, see Robert J. C. Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 182–92, esp. 191–92. Young sees the conference, attended by twenty-nine African and Asian countries, as a foundational moment for postcolonialism, given its constitution as a political pressure group reflecting an "independent transcontinental political consciousness in Africa and Asia" (p. 191). Out of it would eventually come the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries in 1961 and the Tricontinental in 1966, which brought together Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

[6] On the concept of the Third World, its origins and variations and trajectory, see M. D. Litonjua, "Third World/Global South: From Modernization, to Dependency/Liberation, to Post-development," *Journal of Third World Studies* 29 (2012): 25–56; Marcin Wojciech Solarz, "'Third World': The 60th Anniversary of a Concept That Changed History," *Third World Quarterly* 33.9 (October 2012): 1561–73.

(1) In 1963, the assassination of President John Fitzgerald Kennedy signified what Jon Margulis has called the "last innocent year" before the sixties.[7] (2) In 1964, the Civil Rights Act was enacted, a landmark of the civil rights struggle, and the progressive government of President João Goulart of Brazil was overthrown, the first of many military coups to follow in Latin America, which would ultimately lead to the establishment of a web of repression across much of the continent, known as Operation Condor.[8] (3) In 1965, the Immigration and Nationality Act abolished the restrictive immigration laws of the 1920s, which had favored western and northern Europeans, paving the way for the massive demographic transformation still under way, in which Latin Americans and Caribbeans have played a leading part.[9]

I became aware that the city of San Diego would serve as the venue for the annual meeting of the Society during my term, where only a few miles to the south stands the westernmost end of the long and freighted border between the United States of America and the Estados Unidos Mexicanos. It is a border that serves as the signifier for a deeper discursive-material border with the whole of Latin America and the Caribbean and, ultimately, for a global divide between haves and have-nots. This deeper border I had traversed, across the Florida Straits, in July of 1961, at the height of the Cold War, as an adolescent and a child of political refugees. In so doing, I was following the trek of millions of Latin Americans who had made and would make their way to the north, becoming thereby a member of a minoritized ethnic formation within the nation-state of the United States. I was also joining the path of untold millions of human beings from the South who had searched and would search for refuge in the North.

In pursuing these converging social-cultural dimensions regarding my term, I was struck by how contemporary discussions regarding such vectors of meaning, surrounding major anniversaries of landmark events, approached these critical times of the past as having direct significance and relevance for the present, drawing upon them to shed light on the critical times of today.

Thus, analysis of the Great War and its ramifications reached into the present and future not only of Europe but also of the globe.[10] It turned for counsel and

[7] Jon Margulis, *The Last Innocent Year: America in 1964. The Beginning of the "Sixties"* (New York: Morrow, 1999).

[8] On Operation Condor, see J. Patrice McSherry, *Predatory States: Operation Condor and Covert War in Latin America* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005).

[9] Indeed, a decisive signifier of such ongoing transformation is the new policy on immigration, with Latinos/as foremost in mind, announced by President Barack Obama just prior to the beginning of this annual meeting; see Michael D. Sheer, "Obama, Daring Congress, Acts to Overhaul Immigration," *New York Times*, 21 November 2013, A1, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/21/us/obama-immigration-speech.html.

[10] Such comparisons have continued. See, e.g., Margaret MacMillan, "The Rhyme of History: Lessons of the Great War," The Brookings Essay (14 December 2013), http:/www.brookings.edu/research/essays/2013/rhyme-of-history#; Dominique Moïsi, "The Return of the

direction to the uncertain situation involving the great powers at the beginning of the twentieth century, highly charged and precarious, in dealing with the equally shifting and uncertain situation of the great powers at the beginning of the twenty-first century, no less charged and precarious. Similarly, scrutiny of the Global South turned to the concept of the Third World in the second half of the twentieth century. It looked for enlightenment and guidance to the problematic of the Third World in the dialectical world order of industrial capitalism in coming to terms with the fate of the Global South within the neoliberal world order of global capitalism.[11] Further, analysis of the border with Mexico and the phenomenon of Latino/a immigration, and of borders and migration in general, reached back to the decade of the 1960s. It sought wisdom and insight, from within a context of paranoic fear of the Other and massive projects of national security involving militarization and snooping, in the discourse of civil rights, the liberal attitude toward immigration, and the trajectory of relations with Latin America.[12]

Given such emphasis on significance and relevance for the present, I came to see that this convergence of vectors of meaning and association of events regarding my term deserved, even demanded, a response on my part as a biblical critic. What should I as a critic do in the face of our critical times? How should I conduct my métier? This I saw as a daunting task, but imperative nonetheless. I shall attempt to formulate an initial response to this question.

I. Presidential Preoccupations in Critical Times of Yesteryear

I begin my response by tracing the topics pursued by former SBL presidents in their addresses to the Society during the critical times in question.[13] Such a sense

Sleepwalkers," Project Syndicate (25 June 2014), http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/dominique-moisi-asks-whether-today-s-leaders--unlike-their-counterparts-in-2014--can-avert-a-global-catastrophe.

[11] See, e.g., Arif Dirlik, "Global South: Predicament and Promise," *Global South* 1 (2007): 12–23.

[12] See, e.g., Antonia Darder and Rodolfo D. Torres, "Latinos and Society: Culture, Politics, and Class," in *The Latino Studies Reader: Culture, Economy & Society*, ed. Antonia Darder and Rodolfo D. Torres (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1998), 3–26; and, in the same volume, Edna Acosta-Belén and Carlos E. Santiago, "Merging Borders: The Remapping of America," 29–42, and Rosaura Sánchez, "Mapping the Spanish Language along a Multiethnic and Multilingual Border," 101–25. See also Ramón Grosfoguel, Nelson Maldonado-Torres, and José David Saldívar, eds., *Latinos/as in the World System: Decolonization Struggles in the 21st Century U.S. Empire*, Political Economy of the World-Systems Annual (Boulder, CO: Paradigm, 2006).

[13] The information on presidents and presidential addresses has been gathered from a variety of sources, among which the following are salient: Ernest W. Saunders, *Searching the Scriptures: A History of the Society of Biblical Literature, 1880–1980*, BSNA 8 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982); John H. Hayes, ed., *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation*, 2 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999).

of rhetorical choice will serve as a telling signifier for the wider problematic regarding the function of criticism with respect to social-cultural context. Presidential addresses in general, as Patrick Gray has noted in his study of the genre, have gone in two directions: speaking either to the few or to the many, that is, taking up a specific question within a specialized area of research or turning to a general question touching upon the field of studies as a whole.[14] I shall focus here on the years of the First World War. What were the concerns of choice on the part of former SBL presidents as Europe and the world plunged ever deeper into an abyss of unparalleled violence and utter inhumanity?

In 1914, the president was Nathaniel Schmidt (1862–1939), a native of Sweden who had immigrated to the United States in 1884. He was Professor of Semitic Languages and Literature at Cornell University (1896–1932). His topic was "The Story of the Flood and the Growth of the Pentateuch."[15] Charles Cutler Torrey (1863–1956) became president in 1915, speaking on "The Need of a New Edition of the Hebrew Bible." He served at the time as Professor of Semitic Philosophy and Comparative Grammar at Yale University (1900–1932).[16] Morris Jastrow Jr. (1861–1922) followed in 1916, a native of Poland and son of a prominent rabbi and scholar; Jastrow had immigrated as a young child with his family in 1866. A professor of Semitics at the University of Pennsylvania (1884–1919), he spoke on "Constructive Elements in the Critical Study of the Old Testament."[17] Warren J. Moulton (1865–1947) became president in 1917, speaking on "The Dating of the Synoptic Gospels." For many years he was associated with Bangor Theological Seminary, where he served as Hayes Professor of the New Testament Language and Literature (1905–33) and as president (1921–33).[18] In 1918, the president was James A. Montgomery (1866–1949), Professor of Hebrew and Aramaic at the University of Pennsylvania and the Philadelphia School of Divinity (1909–38). His topic was "Present Tasks of American Biblical Scholarship."[19]

[14] Patrick Gray, "Presidential Addresses," *JBL* 125 (2006): 167–77. This distinction I do not see as a binomial, since addresses dealing with particular areas of research do mention from time to time the ramifications of the positions advanced for the field in general.

[15] The address was not published in *JBL*, and, to the best of my knowledge, it was not published elsewhere. Before coming to Cornell, Schmidt had been Professor of Semitic Languages and Literature at Colgate University (1888–96).

[16] The address was not published in *JBL*, and, again, to the best of my knowledge, it was not published elsewhere. Before his appointment at Yale, Torrey had been Professor of Semitic Languages at Andover Theological Seminary (1892–1900).

[17] Morris Jastrow Jr., "Constructive Elements in the Critical Study of the Old Testament," *JBL* 36 (1917): 1–20.

[18] Warren J. Moulton, "The Dating of the Synoptic Gospels," *JBL* 37 (1918): 1–19. Before Bangor, he taught for a few years in the Semitic and Biblical Department at Yale University (1888–1902). See the *In Memoriam* notices by Charles C. Torrey, Millar Burrows, and William F. Albright, "In Memoriam Warren Joseph Moulton, 1865–1947," *BASOR* 107 (1947): 1, 5–7.

[19] James A. Montgomery, "Present Tasks of American Biblical Scholarship," *JBL* 38 (1919):

These were all learned scholars. Their topics entertained major disputed questions of their time. With one exception, however, none made reference to the war and the global state of affairs in their presentations. The one voice to do so was that of Montgomery. Shortly after the signing of the Armistice (11 November), he invoked the Great War in crafting a vision for American scholarship, analyzing its present moorings[20] and envisioning its future paths[21] (26 December). His reflections are worth examining, given their incisive and unusual, yet ultimately contradictory, character.

For Montgomery, the global framework functions as the context for rather than object of discourse. The crisis provides the grounds for a twofold call. On the one hand, in a biting critique of his fellow scholars, whom he chides for having had nothing to say about or contribute to the war effort, he calls for a committed study of the Bible as a document that is quintessentially religious in character, that has much to say regarding the human condition, and that stands for the values of Western civilization at its best and hence of the victorious Allies in particular. On the other hand, in a sharp challenge to his assembled colleagues, whom he upbraids for their constricted focus on philology and science, he calls for a most expansive agenda of historical research (philological, historiographical, archaeological) alongside a finely tuned program of public dissemination. In the end, the two parts of the vision fail to come together. The first call, grounded in a mixture of unabashed liberal humanism and outright religious (Protestant) sentiment, remains totally

1–14. See also Penn Biographies, James Alan Montgomery (1866–1949), http://www.archives.upenn.edu/people/1800s/montgomery_james_a.html.

[20] The context is sharply drawn: (a) a rejection of all things German, including German scholarship; (b) a denunciation of biblical scholarship for its failure to play any role in the war; (c) a critique of American scholarship for the narrowness of its focus; and (d) an exposition of the weaknesses of such scholarship.

[21] The vision is, in principle, expansive. (A) Montgomery calls for a turn to French and British scholarship, whose countries are described as "racially, politically and intellectually our nearest neighbors, bound to us now by a brotherhood knit in blood." One finds throughout, it should be noted, a strong essentialist strain of racial-ethnic discourse, including a reference to "uncivilized races," apparently meaning those outside the fold of Europe ("Present Tasks," 8, 4). (B) He asks scholars to see themselves "first as citizens of the human polity" and to take up the call of the world upon all "to pool their interests and capitals," such as "the science of the Bible," in the pursuit of causes that have "worth-value, spiritual or material" (pp. 1, 2). (C) He outlines such a cause for scholarship by returning to the reason for the study of the Bible: "its assumed value to humanity" (p. 2). Thus, technical expertise must be at the service of the "philosophy of the Bible," which stands "for just those things for which we and our Allies have fought and triumphed"—challenging all human idolatry, "every human thing which would set itself in the seat of God," and providing ideals for the kingdom of God, "right and peace," "natural humanity and sane democracy," "idealism" in contrast to "realities" (pp. 4–5). (D) Montgomery calls for American scholarship to intensify the historical study of the Bible along any number of lines and to sharpen the communication of the results of such study outside academic circles. In the end, the vision is, in practice, limited: it is by far this last point that prevails.

undeveloped, while the second, grounded in a vigorous sense of American leadership, is amply outlined. As a result, what is meant as an imperative corrective to the previous, overriding focus on science in the field loses its impact, vanishing anew under a renewed emphasis on research without any theoretical integration of the religious, human, and civilizational values upheld. Historicism emerges thereby as the key to the future.

This set of addresses is no different from those delivered during the critical times to follow: the Second World War and the Cold War, whether at the beginning, during the rise of the Third World (1952–55), or at its height, the eruption of the sixties (1963–65). They all reveal a sharp disconnect, in sustained and systematic fashion, between what was going on in the academic-scholarly world of the Society and what was taking place in the social-cultural world of national/international affairs. Most were devoted to specialized questions, with no consideration whatever of the wider context of criticism, local or global. Those that opted for a broader optic of the field did not have their respective critical times in mind at all or did so only in passing and by way of material background. Only Montgomery reflected seriously on the global state of affairs and its discursive ramifications for the field. Even here, however, there was no proper theorization or incorporation of the urgent recommendations proposed. In sum, in critical times presidents have kept the world of criticism and the world of politics quite apart from each other.

II. The Function of Criticism as Problematic

In this second part of the response, I turn to the problematic regarding critical vision and task as such, approaching it from a variety of discursive frameworks other than biblical criticism: intellectual, historical, and literary studies. My aim is to situate the rhetorical choice followed by presidential addresses within a comprehensive spectrum of opinion regarding the pursuit of critical inquiry. In effect, former presidents have unreflectively assumed a position within a spectrum of opinion regarding the task of criticism—its nature and role in society and culture. It is imperative, therefore, to examine the design and parameters of any such spectrum—its structural principles and defining boundaries. Here I foreground the category of the intellectual.

The task of the intellectual in the analysis of society and culture is neither self-evident nor determinate. Although it was advanced more than twenty years ago now, I find no better point of entry into this question than Edward W. Said's BBC Reith Lectures of 1993, "Representations of the Intellectual."[22] This was a

[22] Edward W. Said, *Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996; orig. ed., New York: Pantheon, 1994). Said (1935–2003), University Professor at Columbia University at the time, was a foremost cultural critic, at home in any number of

reflection on the intelligentsia and thus on criticism writ most large in the modern world. Toward the end of the twentieth century, Said undertook a genealogy of the intellectual beginning with the early part of the century. In so doing, he engaged in dialogue with a wide number of figures, positions, and writings through the century, not only in Europe and the West but also in the Third World.

The genealogy yields a spectrum of opinion ranging from the numerous-collaborationist to the selective-oppositional, with a key theory as representative of each pole—Antonio Gramsci and Julien Benda, respectively.[23] At the populist pole, Gramsci allowed for a wide variety of intellectuals, with a distinction between traditional and organic. The former, encompassing functionaries associated with traditional institutions (teachers, priests, administrators), stayed at a distance from society, carrying out their task in routinarian fashion through the years. The latter, involving functionaries in modern institutions (technicians, experts, organizers), were actively involved in society, seeking ever greater influence and power. At the restricted pole, Benda portrayed intellectuals as members of a small, heroic circle, pursuing truth and justice rather than their gain, advancement, or favor with power. Such pursuit entailed not retreat from the world but rather resolute engagement with it, in opposition to corruption, oppression, authoritarianism throughout.

This genealogy Said updates to his own times, the modern world of the late twentieth century. The world of intellectuals, he argues, has turned out largely along the lines predicted by Gramsci. With the growth of the knowledge industry and the proliferation of new professions, there are engaged intellectuals to be found in the production and distribution of knowledge throughout a host of institutions. They work as professionals who, assigned a specific function within such institutions, work for the benefit of the institutions. In such a world the contrarian, moral ideal of Benda has by and large vanished. Indeed, rather than speaking to the world at large in terms of what is true and just, intellectuals today speak to one another within their respective institutions by way of an abstruse and exclusionary language.

Within this general mapping and contemporary scenario, Said opts for Benda's ideal, although in revised fashion. The intellectual, he argues, must be "an

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discursive frameworks. In the introduction (pp. ix–xix) he provides a sharp analysis of the Lectures as a cultural phenomenon.

[23] For Gramsci (1891–1937), Said relies on his *Quaderni del carcere* or *Prison Notebooks*, written from 1929 to 1935, while in prison under the Fascist regime in Italy. They were not published until the 1950s in the original and the 1970s in English translation: *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (New York: International, 1971). For Benda (1867–1956), he relies on *La trahison des clercs*, originally published in 1927 and updated in 1946. It was first translated into English in 1928: *The Treason of the Intellectuals*, trans. Richard Aldington (New York: Morrow, 1928); it was published in 1955 as *The Betrayal of the Intellectuals*, trans. Richard Aldington, introduction by Herbert Read (Boston: Beacon, 1955).

individual with a specific public role in society that cannot be reduced simply to being a faceless professional, a competent member of a class just going about her/his business."[24] The intellectual task, therefore, is defined as representing a message to and for a public. Such representation has a sharp, double edge to it: first, to question, expose, challenge any type of settled doctrine or attitude on the part of the status quo, local or global; second, to do so on behalf of what is excluded or marginalized, whether issues or persons. Such representation further entails a distinctive, twofold way of acting: first, it must be contextual and personal in mode, bringing together the private and public spheres at all times; second, it must be cosmopolitan and moral in scope, appealing to universal principles regarding humanity as espoused by the global community.[25]

It is in the matter of praxis that Benda is reconceptualized and reformulated. On the one hand, Benda remained resolutely, unconsciously European in his position—Europe as the center of and for the world. After mid-century, such an assumption was no longer possible: with the rise of the Third World, such factors as ethnicity, nationality, and continent had to be taken into account in representation. On the other hand, Benda never expanded on the concepts of justice and truth, their origins or meaning—such principles remained abstract. After mid-century, such a vision was no longer tenable: with the emergence of the United Nations, a series of accords and treaties giving flesh to such principles had to be assumed in representation, such as the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights of 1948.

In the end, for Said, the world is political to the core, full of beckoning representations, and it proves impossible for the intellectual to escape from politics, whether it be "into the realms of pure art and thought or, for that matter, into the realms of disinterested objectivity or transcendental theory."[26] Intellectuals inevitably adopt a position in representation, no matter where they stand in the spectrum. This position can oscillate between the professional-accommodationist, entrenched within the apparatus and horizon of an organization, and the amateur-protesting, opening up to a world in conflict and siding with truth and justice at all times.

[24] Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, 11.

[25] Said summarizes such principles: "that all human beings are entitled to expect decent standards of behavior concerning freedom and justice from worldly powers or nations, and that deliberate or inadvertent violations of these standards need to be testified and fought against courageously" (*Representations of the Intellectual*, 11–12). It is a position that he sees as reasserting a "grand narrative of emancipation and enlightenment" in the face of postmodernism and its emphasis on "local situations and language games": "For in fact governments still manifestly oppress people, grave miscarriages of justice still occur, the co-optation and inclusion of intellectuals by power can still effectively quieten their voices, and the deviation of intellectuals from their vocation is still very often the case" (p. 18).

[26] Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, 21.

This spectrum of the intellectual life is very similar, mutatis mutandis, to those offered in historiography by Gabrielle Spiegel in her 2009 presidential address to the American Historical Association, "The Task of the Historian,"[27] and in literary criticism by both Terry Eagleton in his 1996 overview of literary theory, "Political Criticism," and Vincent Leitch in his recently published essay on "The Tasks of Critical Reading."[28] What are the consequences of such a spectrum across a variety of discursive frameworks for my response? In largely pursuing pressing questions of the discipline while bypassing pressing questions of the world, as they overwhelmingly did in critical times, presidential addresses assumed a political stance of abstraction from the realm of global affairs into the realm of scholarship. In so doing, they ensconced themselves in the dynamics and mechanics of a discipline devoted to the construction of biblical antiquity and deploying historiographical principles of objectivity and impartiality. The point to keep in mind is that any spectrum of opinion allows for a gamut of other positions and that any position must be acknowledged and theorized. In other words, things need not have been, and need not be, this way, as, alas, James Montgomery grasped all too well in 1918.

III. Critical Analysis of the Global State of Affairs

The third part of my response calls for critical analysis of our own times. If critics are to adopt an activist position within the spectrum on critical task, to address their social-cultural context, and to marshal the resources of their field in this endeavor, then it is indispensable to secure a firm grasp on the global state of affairs today. That our times are perceived as critical, and universally so, should go without saying. Wherever one looks, such is the verdict. Such is certainly the case with respect to any area of society and culture. It is also the case in terms of their overall conjunction as a world system. Indeed, it is not at all unusual to portray our

[27] Gabrielle M. Spiegel, "The Task of the Historian," *AHR* 114 (2009): 1–15. At the time, Spiegel was the Krieger-Eisenhower University Professor of History at the Johns Hopkins University. A medievalist by training, Spiegel has multiple interests, among which lies a concern with theory and practice in historiography; on this, see her edited volume, *Practicing History: New Directions in Historical Writing after the Linguistic Turn*, Rewriting Histories (New York: Routledge, 2005), esp. her "Introduction" (pp. 1–31). See also Spiegel, *The Past as Text: The Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography*, Parallax (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), esp. part 1, "Theory."

[28] Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 169–89. See also his historical trajectory of criticism, *The Function of Criticism: From the Spectator to Post-Structuralism* (London: Verso, 1984), and his exposition of Marxist literary criticism, *Marxism and Literary Criticism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), esp. 37–58 (ch. 3, "The Writer and Commitment"). Vincent Leitch, *Literary Criticism in the 21st Century: Theory Renaissance* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 33–49 (ch. 3, "The Tasks of Critical Reading").

times as uniquely critical, beyond all critical times of the twentieth century, severe as these were.

What are "our times"? Where does the contemporary global state of affairs begin? If the Cold War marked the course of an era, extending over the second half of the century, its end signifies the beginning of a new epoch. The dialectical struggle unto death between East and West, the two superpowers and their corresponding blocs of nations, came to an end with the collapse of the East in 1989/91. We find ourselves, therefore, in a state of affairs best described for now in postist terms —the era of the post–Cold War.

Here a twofold development should be kept in mind. There ensued at first a period of vibrant optimism, bordering on the utopian, if not the millennial. The work of Francis Fukuyama stands as a perfect signifier of this moment. Writing in 1989, he argues that the march of liberal democracy, politically and economically, has proved triumphant, signaling perhaps the "End of History."[29] Peace and progress would now prevail for all, given no competing vision in sight. This initial effervescence would not last long. In time, a period of grave pessimism began to emerge, ultimately entrenching itself in global consciousness. The work of Fukuyama again serves as an ideal indicator of the times. Writing twenty-five years later, and with the anniversary in mind, he offers a chastened assessment of the End of History, still optimistic but only in the long range and with the right corrective measures.[30] Other voices, writing on the anniversary, prove far more dismissive of such claims and far more somber regarding future prospects.[31] The reason for such a shift within the post–Cold War era is not hard to ascertain.

During this past quarter of a century, crisis has followed upon crisis, fueling an ever-widening and ever-deepening sense of dis-order. Such dis-ease has involved any number of interlinked developments across society and culture, local and global alike: geopolitical multipolarity and multijousting; political paralysis or breakdown at the level of the nation-state; global economic meltdown and inequality;

[29] Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History," *National Interest* (Summer 1989). At the time, Fukuyama, a former analyst at the RAND Corporation, was deputy director of the State Department's policy planning staff. This theory was expanded in a later volume, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992).

[30] Francis Fukuyama, "At the 'End of History' Still Stands Democracy," *Wall Street Journal*, 7–8 June 2014, C1–2, http://online.wsj.com/articles/at-the-end-of-history-still-stands-democracy-1402080661. At present, Fukuyama is a senior fellow at the Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies at Stanford University. See further his *Political Order and Political Decay: From the Industrial Revolution to the Globalization of Democracy* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2014).

[31] See, e.g., Timothy Stanley and Alexander Leesep, "It's Still Not the End of History," *The Atlantic,* 1 September 2014, http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2014/09/its-still-not-the-end-of-history-francis-fukuyama/379394/?single_page=true; and Mario Vargas Llosa, "Las guerras del fin del mundo," *El País,* 7 September 2014, http://elpais.com/elpais/2014/09/04/opinion/1409856348_817996.html.

radical ecological transformation; seismic population trends and reactions; explosion of violence at all levels. One could go on. The result has been a pervasive sense of disorientation, powerlessness, uncertainty. Such has been the consensus across the ideological spectrum, in terms of both critique and construction: on the left, much reinvigorated, pressing for substantial structural changes; on the right, thoroughly dismayed, advocating the strong assertion of structural power; and in the center, straddling the fence, pressing for corrective structural reforms.

This sense of fragility and threat I have sought to capture by way of three particular discourses and critiques: global economics, climatological projections, and worldwide migration. I highlight global economics here. For this I turn to a highly incisive and programmatic piece by Alfred J. López, "The (Post) Global South."[32] It advances, on the one hand, a critical account of globalization as a process involving three stages: construction, deconstruction, alternatives (possibilities for a different future, both already at work and yet to come).[33] What emerges as a result is a vision of the Global South as a postglobal reality and signifier of subalternity across boundaries, material and discursive alike. The piece calls, on the other hand, for a broadly based analysis of this reality: the development of a postglobal discourse that draws upon the full spectrum of fields of studies in the academy.

Globalization, López argues, emerged in the 1980s and accelerated through the 1990s as the global master narrative. It is thus, in effect, the hegemonic discourse of the post–Cold War era. The narrative presents the process of globalization, as generated and sustained by the economic policies of neoliberalism, as yielding such growth as to lift the entire world in its wake, from the very rich to the very poor. Such growth requires the development of an integrated world economy, based on free trade and free markets and governed by the laws of exchange. Such growth not only would benefit those individuals directly engaged in the process but also would solve all social ills and thus resolve social contradictions.[34]

The reality behind this narrative, López continues, proved quite different, leading to a counter-narrative that exposes the downside of the project. This

[32] Alfred J. López, "The (Post) Global South," *Global South* 1 (2007): 1–11. López is professor of English at Purdue University and a scholar with interests in postcolonial, Caribbean, and globalization studies. See also his *Posts and Pasts: A Theory of Postcolonialism,* Explorations in Postcolonial Studies (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001); and his edited volume, *Postcolonial Whiteness: A Critical Reader on Race and Empire* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005).

[33] These stages are at once sequential and simultaneous, given the speed that marks the project of globalization.

[34] Among its proponents stand prominent voices, such as Anthony Giddens (*Runaway World: How Globalization Is Reshaping Our Lives* [London: Profile Books, 1999]) and Joseph Stieglitz (*Globalization and Its Discontents* [New York: Norton, 2003]; and idem, *Making Globalization Work* [New York: Norton, 2006]). Both believe that globalization can be rescued and made to work for all.

narrative points to a series of financial crises that have called into question any dream of an integrated world economy ruled solely in terms of the market and capital.[35] Here one should keep in mind that López is writing prior to the Great Recession of 2008. The narrative also foregrounds the differential consequences of neoliberal policies, which have only served to heighten social ills and accentuate social contradictions. Thus, while the interests of the elite have been protected and furthered, a series of setbacks for the working and middle classes has resulted: lower wages and fewer benefits, an increase in unemployment alongside a decrease in job security, a reduction of social services for the working poor.[36] Indeed, as many economists now argue, it has been the poor, the disadvantaged, and the marginalized who have paid the price of the project, among whom minorities and immigrants are the greatest number by far.[37]

For López, therefore, the Global South of yesteryear, the South of colonial discourse and postcolonial studies, has become the Post–Global South of today, the South of subalterns throughout the world, who are keenly aware that the project of globalization has failed utterly and that they embody the margins of "the brave new liberal world of globalization." This Post–Global South thus moves beyond the North–South divide of yore, insofar as such subalterns are to be found, as immigrants and minorities, throughout the global cities of the geographical North as well. They have been dis-placed from the geographical South and find themselves dis-jointed in the geographical North, at once put to use and set at a distance, despite a host discourse of "multiculturalism, rights, and tolerance of social difference." Immigrants—broadly understood as including descendants—become thereby both "avatar and pariah—simultaneously a product of globalization and a scapegoat for its many failures."[38]

From an academic-scholarly point of view, therefore, the task is to explore the subjectivity and agency of subalterns—those who live in the débris of global capitalism, without access to its benefits—through the development of a postglobal

[35] The list is worth reproducing: "These setbacks include the Asian, Russian, and Brazilian economic crises of 1997–8; the end of the U.S. market boom in 2000; the attack on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001; the exposed multibillion-dollar scams of Enron and other major corporations, culminating in their collapse; the Argentine fiscal crisis; and the current crises and infrastructural meltdowns in Iraq and New Orleans" (López, "[Post] Global South," 4).

[36] Here López has recourse to the work of David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

[37] Among the poor, the disadvantaged, and the marginalized, López points out, lie also the white working poor and shrinking middle class, who see globalization as a threat to the nation—politically, economically, and culturally. What emerges out of such anxiety is often an extreme form of nationalism that leads to racism, signified by discrimination and violence against immigrants and minorities. "As they so often do in our literal wars," he remarks, "the immigrant and the working-class white native thus become the unacknowledged and largely unwitting foot soldiers of globalization" ("[Post] Global South, 3).

[38] López, "(Post) Global South," 3–4.

discourse. For López, globalization calls forth—as rapidly as it unfolds—opposition. The reason is clear. On the one hand, its wreckage is unquestionable: "widespread poverty, displacement and diaspora, environmental degradation, human and civil rights abuses, war, hunger, disease"—present in a Post–Global South that includes not only the geographical South but also the metaphorical South present in the geographical North. On the other hand, the struggle for survival is equally undeniable: the emergence of subaltern cultures and economies by way of ethnic, religious, or national identity construction—a spectrum of transnational groups working out of the same logic of opposition. Postglobal discourse is to take up, therefore, in inter- and multidisciplinary fashion, the "condition" of such groups: the who—the question of identity, local or global; the why—the logic of globalization; and the how—the cultures of opposition. Its aim in so doing is to search for a "glimpse" of the future—the potential for "a postglobal politics and economics of inclusion and enfranchisement."[39]

Very similar accounts of our sense of fragility and menace in the post–Cold War era emerge in the discourses and critiques regarding climatological projections and international migration, as drawn, respectively, by Dipesh Chakrabarty in "The Climate of History: Four Theses"[40] and Khalid Koser in his volume entitled *International Migration*.[41] The result is an analytic description of the times in postist fashion. What López characterizes as the postglobal, from the perspective of economics, Chakrabarty describes as the posthuman, from the perspective of climate change, and Khoser as the postnational, from the perspective of world migration. These studies expose but three of the major problematics affecting the global state of affairs. There are many others, as previously mentioned, all accompanied by similar analytical accounts of peril and tenuousness. Further, as all such studies variously indicate, these problematics are closely interdependent and mutually

[39] Ibid., 7.

[40] Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Climate of History: Four Theses," *Critical Inquiry* 35 (2009): 197–222. Chakrabarty is the Lawrence A. Kimpton Distinguished Service Professor of History, South Asian Languages and Civilizations and the College at the University of Chicago. He is a scholar of wide-ranging interests, with a particular concern for matters of method and theory in the areas of modern South Asia studies, subaltern studies, and postcolonial studies.

[41] Khalid Koser, *International Migration: A Very Short Introduction*, Very Short Introductions (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). Koser, deputy director and academic dean at the Geneva Centre for Security Policy, is an expert in the subject of migration with a long trajectory of publications and an extensive record of administrative positions. Among such positions, the following should be noted: chair of the UK Advisory Panel on Country Information, editor of the *Journal of Refugee Studies,* and vice-chair of the World Economic Forum Global Council on Migration. In 2014 he was named Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) in recognition of his work with refugees and asylum seekers in the United Kingdom. Khalid also holds a professorship in Conflict, Peace and Security at the United Nations University–Maastricht Economic and Social Research Institute on Innovation and Technology and its School of Governance (UNU-MERIT) in the Netherlands.

reinforcing. The result is precisely that prevailing sense of the times as uniquely critical, best described perhaps as a crisis of the world system.

What ramifications do such assessments of individual crises and overall assertion of an interlocking global crisis bear for my response? These accounts point, without exception, to the impact of such problematics, both singly and jointly, on the academic-scholarly realm, not only with respect to individual fields of study but also with regard to the full gamut of fields of study—the duty to integrate and respond in some way. That such a verdict applies to religious studies in general and biblical studies in particular should go without question.[42] If critics are to pursue the pressing questions of the world and assume a political stance of engagement in the world, pointed knowledge of the global state of affairs is of the essence. To begin with, there is need for thorough acquaintance with the crises at hand, as conceptualized and formulated, discussed and debated, in their respective discursive and critical trajectories. Beyond that, there is need for a theoretical framework capable of dealing with the intersecting nature of a crisis of the world system. Such impact, I should point out, James Montgomery grasped, within the terms of his own modernist context, perfectly well in 1918.

IV. A Theoretical Framework for Engaging Our Times

In the fourth part of my response, I turn to the demand for a proper theoretical framework for engaging our times. Given the global state of affairs in the post–Cold War era, a critical framework is needed that can properly embrace and address—beyond focalized problematics and responses—the conjunction of so many crises and challenges, so many corresponding discourses and critiques, in intersectional fashion, in order to keep the system as such in mind at all times. A crisis of the world system demands the adoption of a world theory and hence a dialogue with global studies. Only then can a critic successfully construct an activist position within the field, pointedly engage the social and cultural context, and profitably bring to bear the resources of the field on such an undertaking.

There are two lines of thought that I find crucial in this regard. One has to do with developments in social theory in the Global North that theorize the global nature of the contemporary world scene. Here I draw upon Steven Seidman's

[42] Here the 2012 presidential address of Otto Maduro to the American Academy of Religion is very much to the point, "Migrants' Religions under Imperial Duress: Reflections on Epistemology, Ethics & Politics in the Study of the Religious 'Stranger,'" *JAAR* 82 (2014): 35–46. Maduro addresses the ramifications of the migration crisis, through the lens of migration from Latin America to the United States, for the social study of religion as an academic-scholarly field, since such study lies itself embedded in this context of global crisis. Such ramifications, Maduro argues, scholars can ignore altogether or address directly.

ongoing overview of social theory.[43] Three "revisions and revolts" vis-à-vis the classical tradition are outlined, the third and most recent of which is assigned the title of "Theories of World Order."[44] The other involves a strand of social theory in the Global South, with representation in the Global North as well, that approaches the global nature of the world today through the optic of the South. Here I foreground the work on "epistemologies of the South" by Boaventura de Sousa Santos."[45]

In the classical tradition, from Auguste Comte to Max Weber, Seidman argues, the nation-state—a state with a common identity based on common descent and culture—was viewed as the basic unit of modern social life and analysis, and change in nation-states was explained in terms of internal factors. In recent times, a number of theorists have pointed to a relative decline in the primacy of the nation-state and a corresponding change in the global order. The reason adduced for such a change of fortune is external: the growth of a transnational order with dynamics and mechanics that go beyond the boundaries of nationalism. Globalization emerges thereby as the primary element of present-day social life and analysis. How this new global order is evaluated differs considerably. There is, to be sure, the highly positive view of neoliberalism, centered on economics. At the same time, Seidman points to three analytical traditions highly critical of this hegemonic approach.

The first tradition, associated with the London School of Economics, is represented by David Held and Mary Kaldor.[46] Globalization is seen as a mixture of

[43] Steven Seidman, *Contested Knowledge: Social Theory Today*, 5th ed. (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013). Seidman, professor of sociology at the State University of New York at Albany, is a distinguished social theorist, with expertise in a number of areas. This overview of social theory has been going on for two decades, the first edition of the volume having been published in 1994.

[44] Seidman, *Contested Knowledge*, 267–301 (part 6, "Revisions and Revolts: Theories of World Order"). The other two movements include "The Postmodern Turn" and "Identity Politics and Theory" (parts 4 and 5, respectively).

[45] Boaventura de Sousa Santos, "Introducción: Las epistemologías del Sur," in *Formas-Otras: Saber, nombrar, narrar, hacer*, ed. Alvise Vianello and Bet Mañe, Colección Monografías (Barcelona: CIDOB, 2011), 9–22. De Sousa Santos is professor emeritus of sociology at the University of Coimbra, where he is also the director of the Center for Social Studies. A renowned social theorist, his research encompasses a broad variety of fields of study. See also his *Epistemologies of the South: Justice against Epistemicide* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm, 2014); and *Una epistemología del sur: La reinvención del conocimiento y la emancipación social*, Siglo XXI Editores (Buenos Aires: CLACSO, 2009).

[46] David Held is presently master of University College and professor of politics and international relations at Durham University in the United Kingdom. Previously, he had been the Graham Wallas Professor of Political Science at the London School of Economics. His publications on globalization are extensive. The following are among the most recent: *Gridlock: Why Global Cooperation Is Failing* (London: Polity, 2013); and *Cosmopolitanism: Ideals and Realities* (London: Polity, 2010).

economic, social, and political dimensions. It is potentially positive, provided that the social and political dimensions are activated. The vision is one of a global civil society and democratic order—with chaos as the alternative. Immanuel Wallerstein and Manuel Castells stand as the voices of the second tradition, linked to the theory of world systems. [47] Globalization emerges as a junction of politics and economics, the present stage of the world economy of capitalism, within the world system of modernity. It is altogether negative, with inequality at the core, and in profound crisis since the 1960s. The vision is one of utter transformation—in the face of collapse or dystopia. The third tradition, associated with empire and imperialism, brings together Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, Michael Mann, and David Harvey.[48] Globalization is regarded as a mixture of economics and geopolitics,

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Mary Kaldor is professor of global governance in the Department of International Development and director of the Civil Society and Human Security Research Unit at the London School of Economics and Political Science. Among her many works on globalization are *Global Civil Society: An Answer to War* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2003; and *New and Old Wars: Organised Violence in a Global Era*, 3rd rev. and updated ed. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012).

[47] At present, Immanuel Wallerstein is senior research scholar at Yale University. After appointments at Columbia University (1958–71) and McGill University (1971–76), Wallerstein joined Binghampton University, State University of New York, as Distinguished Professor of Sociology and director of the Fernand Braudel Center for the Study of Economies, Historical Systems, and Civilizations. His theory of world systems, which has now seen four volumes and remains unfinished, is summarized in *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction* (A John Hope Franklin Center Book; Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).

After appointments at the University of Paris (1967–79) and the University of California, Berkeley (1979–2003), Manuel Castells joined the University of Southern California as University Professor and the Wallis Annenberg Chair Professor of Communication Technology and Society at the Annenberg School of Communication. He is also professor of sociology and director of the Internet Interdisciplinary Institute at the Open University of Catalonia (UOC) in Barcelona. His major work is *The Information Age: Economy, Society, and Culture,* 3 vols. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996–98).

[48] Michael Hardt, a literary critic and political philosopher, is professor of literature and Italian at Duke University and professor of philosophy and politics at the European Graduate School (Saas-Fee, Canton Wallis, Switzerland). Antonio Negri, a political activist and philosopher, taught first at the University of Padua and then, while in exile in France, at the Université de Paris VIII and the Collège Internationale de Philosophie (1983–97). Together, Hardt and Negri have written a series on empire today: *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001); *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004); and *Commonwealth* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009).

Michael Mann is professor of sociology at the University of California at Los Angeles, where he has taught since 1987, after appointments at the University of Essex (1971–77) and the London School of Economics and Political Science (1977–87). He is well known for the multivolume work *The Sources of Social Power,* 4 vols. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986, 1993, 2012, 2013). This theoretical framework on power he brings to bear on the United States in *Incoherent Empire* (London: Verso, 2003).

David Harvey, an expert in geography and critical social theory, became Distinguished

involving either an international, transnational Empire (Hardt and Negri) or a national, statist empire anchored by the United States (Mann; Helder). It is potentially positive, though decidedly more visionary than realistic, along the lines of a Counter-Empire of Resistance (Hardt and Negri) or the utter transformation of the United States (Mann; Helder)—with dystopia as the alternative.

For de Sousa Santos, the theories of the North, be they hegemonic or critical, prove woefully inadequate. It is to the epistemologies of the South, in their struggle for a better world, that one must look. These have as point of departure a form of injustice that grounds and contaminates all others, at work since the inception of modern capitalism—cognitive injustice. This revolves around the belief that there is but one valid form of knowing, modern science, which is advanced as perfect knowledge and is largely the product of the Global North. In the face of such epistemic exclusivism, the epistemologies of the South clamor for new modes of production, new valorization of valid knowledges, and new relations among different forms of knowing. This they do from the perspective of social groups and classes that have suffered systematic destruction, oppression, and discrimination at the hands of capitalism, colonialism, and resultant unequal formations of power.[49]

The premises of the epistemologies of the South are radically different. First of all, they view the understanding of the world as much broader, by far, than that of the West. As such, the social transformation of the world can take place in ways, modes, and methods beyond the imagination of the West. Second, they affirm that the diversity of the world is boundless, along any number of lines.[50] In the face of hegemonic knowledge, such diversity remains invisible. Lastly, they take such diversity as defying any sort of general theory. Rather, its activation and transformation, theoretical as well as empirical, demand a plurality of knowledges and, ultimately, a general theory that accounts for the impossibility of a general theory. Only through such a plurality of knowledges, grounded in their own historical trajectories and not the universal history of the West, can a vision of utopia arise for the future of the world.

What are the consequences of such a panoply of world theories for my response? These accounts bring out, against a common specter of impending chaos,

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Professor of Anthropology at the City University of New York in 2001 (2001–), after appointments at various institutions, including John Hopkins University (1969–87, 1993–2001) and Oxford University (1987–93). For his work on imperialism, in relation to postmodernity and globalization, see *The New Imperialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); and *Brief History of Neoliberalism*.

[49] These are worth citing: market exchange, individual property, the sacrifice of the land, racism, sexism, individualism, the placement of the material over the spiritual, and all other *monocultivos* ("monocultures") of mind and society that seek to block a liberating imagination and sacrifice the alternatives. See de Sousa Santos, "Las epistemologías del Sur," 16.

[50] These include different ways of thinking, feeling, and acting; different types of relations among human beings and between human beings and nature; different conceptions of time, of viewing the past, present, and future; and different forms of collective life as well as of the distribution of goods and resources.

the broad diversity of approaches to the world system and the crisis at hand. If critics are to deal with the intersecting nature of the crisis in the world system, they have no option but to examine and address such a crisis from a variety of perspectives, theorizing in the process their own locations in and perception of the world. They must engage the angles of vision of the Global North, its hegemonic as well as critical discourses. They must eschew cognitive injustice and embrace diversity in understanding and transforming the world. They must, therefore, engage the angles of vision of the Global South, its array of epistemologies and histories. Throughout, they must develop a utopian vision of the future that has a better world for all in mind, especially those who have been and continue to be the most deprived and the most excluded. Ultimately, they must imagine new projects of interpretation that embody such ideals. The need for such a type of project James Montgomery sensed ever so well in 1918, again within the modernist and eurocentric boundaries of his context; yet he failed to find or develop a proper theoretical framework for its execution.

V. Imagining an Interpretive Project for Our Times

I should like to conclude by imagining one such project of interpretation that would be in keeping with the various elements of my response to the question of critical vision and task. Such a project requires the disposition of a new grand model of interpretation. For some time now, I have approached the critical trajectory and repertoire of the field in terms of a set of six paradigms—historical, literary, sociocultural, ideological, cultural, and religious-theological.[51] I have described them as closely related to other fields of study in the academy and thus, to one degree or another, as interdisciplinary in character.[52] The proposed paradigm is no exception. A proper designation for it I do not find easy to capture, but I would

[51] Such umbrella models I have described as follows. First, as paradigms, these movements encompass a variety of approaches within their angles of vision: the approaches possess a number of discursive features in common, although each has its own method and theory as well. Second, they emerge in the field in largely, although not entirely, sequential fashion: the process of development reveals a theoretical logic at work as well as impinging material factors. Third, these movements, while distinctive and competing, are not necessarily mutually exclusive: the discursive boundaries are often porous and interactive.

[52] With the passage of time, the interdisciplinary character of criticism has multiplied and intensified. To begin with, critical dialogue with corresponding fields and discourses outside biblical criticism has become ever more explicit, extensive, and sophisticated. At the same time, to be sure, all such fields and discourses have become quite diverse in their own right. In addition, critical dialogue across grand models of interpretation in biblical criticism has become more common and pronounced as well. Lastly, the problematic of critical dialogue with a range or even the totality of fields of study or grand models of interpretation has become more pressing, in an effort to move away from atomization and toward intersectionality.

offer, as a working suggestion, that of global-systemic.[53] Its objective, scope, and lens could be described as follows.

The objective is ambitious: to bring the field to bear upon the major crises of our post–Cold War times, in both individual and converging fashion. Such conjunction would entail two analytical dimensions. First, it would require interaction with by now well-established discourses regarding each crisis. Second, it would demand interchange with discourses addressing the convergence of crises, the global state of affairs, by way of world theories from the North and alternative theories from the South. The scope is expansive: the world of production (composition, dissemination, interchange) as well as the world of consumption (reception, circulation, discussion). It would thus encompass the following foci of attention: (1) the texts and contexts of antiquity; (2) the interpretation of these texts and contexts, and the contexts of such interpretations, in the various traditions of reading the Bible, with a focus on modernity and postmodernity; and (3) the interpreters behind such interpretations, and their corresponding contexts.[54] The lens is wide-angled: interaction with the other grand models of interpretation as imperative, determined at any one time by the specific focus of the inquiry in question, since all such angles of inquiry are applicable—in one way or another, to one degree or another—to the analysis of the individual crises as well as the global crisis. In effect, just as historical, literary, sociocultural, ideological, cultural, and religious dimensions crisscross the global-systemic, so does the global-systemic impact upon and intersect with all such dimensions.

Needless to say, this is a tall order. The proposed undertaking demands a critical movement: a joint effort on the part of critics who regard such preoccupations as very much a part of the critical task and stand ready to integrate them into their academic and professional lives and work. Such a movement, moreover, needs to be as diverse as possible, so that the effort proves equal to the problematic and task. I would highlight two kinds of diversity. On the one hand, religious-theological diversity: the view of the Bible and its corresponding mode of reading. No one stance need serve as the driving force behind this undertaking; rather, the entire of spectrum of opinion on this matter can take part. On the other hand, geographical-spatial dimension: the global parameters and perspectives of the field of studies today. No one area of the world should set the pace and tone of the undertaking by itself.

For such a critical movement to prosper, a number of measures would prove helpful. Some would be material in nature. Perhaps a network of digital communication and publishing ventures on the part of interested critics could be established.

[53] As the first part of the hyphenated designation, "global" names the terrain or sphere of action—the material context; the second part, "systemic," points to the mode or angle of pursuit—the discursive context.

[54] Epistemically, these foci may be approached not as independent but as interdependent realms: the representations of the texts and contexts of antiquity as re-presentations of antiquity in modernity and postmodernity on the part of situated and interested interpreters.

Perhaps a major academic-scholarly center in each area of the world would be willing to serve as a nerve center in this regard. Perhaps the Society itself could serve as an overall coordinating center, given its extensive network of connections and publications. Others would be discursive. Perhaps such an undertaking could begin with a focus on one crisis in particular. Perhaps it could devise a model for carrying out the proposed conjunction with global studies.

Perhaps I am just dreaming. However, I find that various efforts and ventures along these lines are already under way, showing that concern and interest do exist and establishing a discursive trajectory in the process. Dreaming or not, I find that I have no choice but to follow in this path—as an outsider-insider in the West, as a child of the Global South, and as an international migrant. I should like to conclude by recalling two further anniversaries taking place this year, which I find very much to the point in this regard.

The first is partly fictive and partly real. I am referring to a key dystopic novel of the twentieth century—George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, published in 1949. This year represents the sixty-fifth anniversary of its publication and the thirtieth of its narrative setting. Its elements of Big Brother, doublethink, and newspeak—among many others—have been more than surpassed in our days. In fact, their counterparts today constitute yet another of our crises, the total loss of privacy through total multioptical surveillance.

In the year 1946, between the conclusion of the Second World War and the appearance of the novel, Orwell wrote a piece entitled "Why I Write."[55] There are various reasons why authors write, he states, and they are all to one degree or another present in their work.[56] For him, it was political purpose that predominated after 1936–37—the Spanish Civil War (1936–39).[57] From that point on, he declares, "Every line of serious work that I have written … has been written, directly or indirectly, *against* totalitarianism and *for* democratic socialism, as I understand it."[58] In so doing, he adds, he has sought to make "political writing into an art"—a fusion of the political and the esthetic.[59] His last novel, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, emerges as a climax of such resolve.

[55] George Orwell, "Why I Write," in *Collected Essays* (London: Mercury Books, 1961), 435–42. The essay was originally published in the last issue of a short-lived English literary magazine, *Gangrel* 4 (Summer 1946).

[56] These are sheer egoism, aesthetic enthusiasm, historical impulse, and political purpose. These, he states, "exist in different degrees in every writer, and in any one writer the proportions will vary from time to time, according to the atmosphere in which he is living" (Orwell, "Why I Write," 437).

[57] The political purpose is described as follows: "Desire to push the world in a certain direction, to alter other people's idea of the kind of society that they should strive after" (Orwell, "Why I Write," 438.)

[58] Orwell, "Why I Write," 440.

[59] Ibid. The conclusion to the essay is pointed: "And looking back through my work, I see that it is invariably where I lacked a *political* purpose that I wrote lifeless books and was betrayed into purple passages, sentences without meaning, decorative adjectives and humbug generally."

The second is altogether real. I have in mind a landmark volume of poetry by the Chilean poet Pablo Neruda—*Canción de gesta* (*Epic Song*), which, though published in 1960, took a different turn in composition during 1959 as a result of the triumph of the Cuban Revolution.[60] This year is the fifty-fifth anniversary of both the Revolution and Neruda's paean to Cuba as the future for all of Latin America. Neruda had written politically engaged poetry before and would do so afterwards as well,[61] but *Canción de gesta* marks an important shift in his life and work.[62] Its emphasis on solidarity calls to mind yet another crisis of our days, the loss of human values and pathos through untrammeled self-interest and competition.[63]

Following upon the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956, in which Nikita Khrushchev (1894–1971) denounced the policies of Josef Stalin (1878–1953), Neruda underwent a personal and political crisis. It was with the hope of the Cuban Revolution that he began to forge a new political cosmovision of marxist humanism, away from real socialism and toward democratic socialism. In this work he takes on the role of epic troubadour, as described in the preface: "For my part I here assume yet again, and with pride, my duties as a poet of public service, that is, a pure poet."[64] This poetic voice involving historical

[60] The first edition of the volume—minus its final poem—was published in Cuba: Pablo Neruda, *Canción de gesta* (Havana: Imprenta Nacional de Cuba, 1960). As the preface to the first edition indicates, and as outlined by Ferro González ("Isla en el canto de un poeta," *A contra corriente: Una revista de historia social y literatura de América Latina* 8.1 [Fall 2010]: 321–31), the volume, consisting of forty-two poems, was written in three stages: (a) its initial focus was on the status and struggle of Puerto Rico (1958)—written in Chile, at Neruda's home in Isla Negra; (b) then it turns to Cuba and the Caribbean in general (1959)—undertaken while Neruda was residing in Venezuela and during the first year of the Cuban Revolution; and (c) finally, the volume was completed in 1960 (April 12) aboard the mail steamer *Louis Lumière* en route to Europe. The volume is dedicated as follows: to the liberators of Cuba, Fidel Castro and his companions, and the people of Cuba; to all those in Puerto Rico and the Caribbean who struggle for freedom and truth under constant threat from the "United States of America of the North."

[61] Prior to *Canción de gesta* one finds, for example: *España en el corazón: Himno a las glorias del pueblo en la guerra* (1937) and *Tercera residencia, 1935–1945* (1947). Following upon it, for example, is *Incitación al Nixoncidio y alabanza a la Revolución Chilena* (1972) and, posthumously, *Elegía* (1974).

[62] On context, literary as well as political, see the study by Greg Dawes, "*Canción de gesta* y la 'Paz Furiosa' de Neruda," *Gramma* 21.47 (2010): 128–62.

[63] See Paul Verhaeghe, *What about Me? The Struggle for Identity in a Market-based Society* (Melbourne: Scribe, 2014). See also George Mombiot, "Sick of This Market-Driven World? You Should Be," *Guardian,* 5 August 2014, http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/aug/05/neoliberalism-mental-health-rich-poverty-economy.

[64] "Por mi parte aquí asumo una vez más, y con orgullo, mis deberes de poeta de utilidad pública, es decir de puro poeta." The volume, he writes, represents "a direct and directed weapon, a fundamental and fraternal aid that I give to our brother peoples for each day of their struggles" ("Este libro no es un lamento de solitario ni una emanación de la oscuridad, sino un arma directa y dirigida, una ayuda elemental y fraternal que entrego a los pueblos hermanos para cada día de

witness and political engagement is explained in the poems: a "pure poet" is one who brings poetry and politics together, form and content, beauty and commitment.[65] This fusion he describes in the poem "Ask Me Not" as follows: "I have a pact of love with beauty / I have a pact of blood with my people." Its task he sets forth as follows: "we must do something on this earth / because in this planet we were birthed / and one must see to the affairs of human beings / because we are neither birds nor dogs."[66]

In the light of contemporary events, both writers, one in the Global North and the other in the Global South, found that they had to pursue their craft as they did, that they could not do otherwise. I see no reason why, in the face of our own contemporary times, we biblical critics should not aim for a similar conjunction of the scholarly and the political. The goal is not a displacement of the other paradigms of interpretation: Who would want to lose such wisdom and knowledge? Who would want to abandon such important problematics and discussions? The goal, rather, is the construction of a new paradigm in conversation with all others. One that would bring closely together biblical criticism and the global scene. One that would foreground sustained theorization of critical vision and task as well as the global state of affairs. A paradigm, in sum, from and for the unique, indeed unprecedented, critical times in which we find ourselves.

As a field of studies and as a learned organization, we owe global society and culture no less. In 1918 James Montgomery, a voice from the Global North, argued precisely the same point: critics should see themselves first as "citizens of the human polity" and answer the call of the world. Today, ninety-five years after its publication in 1919, I, a voice from the Global South, would reiterate that call. I find no better way to do so than by invoking Neruda. If I may be allowed to paraphrase the great Neruda: We have all made a pact of love with criticism; let us now make a pact of blood with the world.

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sus luchas"). The edition I use is the following: *Canción de gesta: Las piedras de Chile,* ed. Hernán Loyola, De Bolsillo, Biblioteca – Contemporánea (Barcelona: Random House Mondadori, 2010). All translations are mine; for an English translation, see *Song of Protest,* trans. and introduction by Miguel Algarín (New York: Morrow, 1976). Algarín, it should be noted, is one of the poets comprising the Nuyorican Poets.

[65] See esp. Poem 15, "Vengo del Sur" (I Come from the South); Poem 22, "Así es mi vida" (Thus Is My Life); Poem 29, "No me lo pidan" (Ask Me Not); and Poem 43, "Meditación sobre la Sierra Maestra" (Meditation on the Sierra Maestra).

[66] The title of the poem, "Ask Me Not," has in mind critics who would want him to write poetry of a different nature, without reference to the politics of the day. The lines cited form part of his response and rejection: "debemos hacer algo en esta tierra / porque en este planeta nos parieron / y hay que arreglar las cosas de los hombres / porque no somos pájaros ni perros." He ends by saying "tengo un pacto de amor con la hermosura: / tengo un pacto de sangre con mi pueblo."