

Handbook *for* Biblical Interpretation

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Preface to the Second Edition

My original purpose has not changed for the second edition: to make critical approaches for interpreting the Bible accessible not only to scholars but also to students and nonspecialists. Although there are some excellent works similar to this one,¹ I still feel that the combination of critical interpretive methods and their related literary terminology makes this work unique.

However, I have made the following changes to this edition:

1. I have deleted theological terms that lacked clear relevance to literary concerns.
2. I have removed appendixes A and B, since the handbook is designed not to be a com-

mentary on biblical texts but to be a guide to the methods employed in interpreting the biblical text.

3. I have added a handful of entries on some current interpretive approaches along with the appropriate terms associated with them.
4. The author and Scripture indexes and the bibliography have been updated to reflect the changes to this edition.
5. The title of the work has been changed to make its primary purpose clearer to readers and to distinguish it more clearly from my hermeneutics textbook, *Biblical Interpretation: An Integrated Approach*.

1. E.g., David Aune, *The Westminster Dictionary of New Testament and Early Christian Literature and Rhetoric* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003); Stanley E. Porter, ed., *Dictionary of Biblical Criticism and Interpretation* (London: Routledge, 2007); John Hayes, ed., *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation* (2 vols.; Nashville: Abingdon, 1999); Richard N. Soulen and R. Kendall Soulen, *Handbook of Biblical Criticism*, 3rd ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001); Michael D. Coogan, ed., *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Books of the Bible* (2 vols.; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

Preface to the First Edition

This work is patterned after an extremely useful book, *A Handbook to Literature*, published by Prentice-Hall and now in its eighth edition. It is essentially an extended glossary of the terminology currently used in interpreting the Bible. More specifically, it focuses on the vocabularies of the various interpretive methods that biblical scholars use in speaking about the biblical texts. Covered herein are approximately fifty methods, both old and new, ranging from source criticism to social-scientific criticism to deconstruction.

There are two primary reasons for writing a book of this sort. First, there presently is nothing available that is as comprehensive or as accessible as this work. The few handbooks on the market are limited in scope to the New Testament (NT), to the Old Testament (OT), or to other particular areas of interest. It is therefore often the case that if a student, pastor, scholar, or any interested person wants to know something about a particular method, he or she must sift through literally hundreds of pages in a variety of scholarly works. Most of these books are written by scholars with other scholars as the target audience, which means that the language is more often than not inaccessible to the nonspecialist. With this work, I have attempted to do the sifting and then to condense the materials into manageable synopses that employ scholarly but accessible terminology. The book also provides in a single volume an extensive but certainly not exhaustive list of terms associated with biblical studies. Of course, one of the primary problems with a work such as this is determining what to include and what to omit. In the course of compiling this book, questions arose about the distinction

between theological and literary terms, between critical and literary terms, and between critical and technical terms. For the sake of focus, I have included only those terms that relate in some way to interpreting the biblical texts as literary documents. Theological terms are included whenever theological and literary concerns converge.

Second, by presenting the various methods together in one place, this book highlights the role that methods play in the interpretive process. Most people outside the professional fields related to biblical studies are unaware of the constitutive role of interpretive methods. Methods are doors of access to the biblical texts because they actually determine what kinds of questions interpreters put to the texts. Literary source criticism, for example, asks questions about the genesis of a text, while reader-response criticism asks questions about the role that a reader's response plays in determining meaning. Redaction criticism relates meaning to authorial intention, while social-scientific criticism asks questions about the relation between authorial intention and the defining structures of the author's social location. This book should assist readers in recognizing that, while these methods do not ask the same questions or have the same focus, each one can contribute to our understanding of the biblical texts. Furthermore, in order to make the book as relevant as possible, I have attempted to give adequate, albeit abbreviated, illustrations of biblical usage.

The articles range from a few words to several pages. The longer articles cover the major structural aspects of literature (e.g., plot, characterization, setting, point of view) and the critical methods. Despite their length, such articles are

still only synopses rather than exhaustive essays. This truncation is necessary due to the nature of the book. However, I have attempted to give some background, development, key figures, and key ideas of each method, along with an illustration of how it has been, is presently, or may be applied to the reading of the Bible.

The bibliography at the end of the book is not exhaustive. The risk of including such a bibliography is that some works that should be included are not and some that probably should not be in-

cluded are. I have attempted, however, to include a variety of scholarly works that I think represent a range of opinions in six areas: general critical theory, biblical critical theory, hermeneutics, the Bible as literature, general biblical studies: Hebrew Bible, and general biblical studies: New Testament. The reader will find concordances, commentaries, lexicons, and other study aids cited in connection with relevant entries in the handbook itself.

Cross-references to other entries within the handbook are indicated in small capitals.

Acknowledgments

Special appreciation is due to Evangel University for providing three summer research grants and a sabbatical for work on this project. These grants provided both the time and finances that made the work possible. I also want to acknowledge a group of my students who provided valuable research into the critical methods that make up such an important part of this book. These students included both English and biblical studies majors in two demanding courses—a senior seminar for English majors on critical theory and a postmodern philosophy/humanities course for both English majors and biblical studies majors. The following students were instrumental in this work: Ruth Hain (postcolonial criticism), Jesse Gonzalez (cultural materialism), Tyler Nelson

(deconstruction), Timothy Schoonover (Marxist criticism), Bret Badders (cultural criticism), Erin Kuhns (postmodern criticism), Glenn Perkins (social-scientific criticism), Jeremy Hahn (reception theory), Todd Schoenberger (ideological criticism), Joel Lang (queer theory), Derek Chirch (phenomenological criticism), Bobbi Frith (postcolonial feminist criticism), Kara Beary (intertextual criticism and psychoanalytic criticism), and Heather Rooney (*mujerista* criticism).

I am also indebted to Jessica Frank, my student worker for four years, for entering the bibliography. She contributed an enormous amount of her own time checking and double-checking the entries for uniformity.

Abbreviations

GENERAL AND BIBLIOGRAPHIC

ASV	American Standard Version
AV	Authorized Version (= KJV)
b.	born
BCE	before the Common Era
ca.	circa
CE	in the Common Era
cf.	<i>confer</i> , compare
chap/s.	chapter/s
D	Deuteronomistic source
d.	died
E	Elohistic source
e.g.	<i>exempli gratia</i> , for example
esp.	especially
i.e.	<i>id est</i> , that is
J	Jahwist (Yahwist) source
JB	Jerusalem Bible
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JOTS ^{Sup}	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series
KJV	King James Version (= AV)
L	Lukan source
lit.	literally
LXX	Septuagint
M	Matthean source
MT	Masoretic Text
NAB	New American Bible

NASB	New American Standard Bible
NEB	New English Bible
NETS	<i>A New English Translation of the Septuagint</i> (2007)
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
NIV	New International Version
NKJV	New King James Version
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
P	Priestly source
<i>PMLA</i>	<i>Publications of the Modern Language Association of America</i>
Q	Gospel sayings source (perhaps from the German <i>Quelle</i> , “source”)
REB	Revised English Bible
RSV	Revised Standard Version
RV	Revised Version = English Revised Version
s.v.	<i>sub verbo</i> , under the word
TEV	Today’s English Version = Good News Bible
TLB	The Living Bible
TNIV	Today’s New International Version
v/vv.	verse/s
Wis.	Wisdom of Solomon

HEBREW BIBLE / OLD TESTAMENT

Gen.	Genesis	Josh.	Joshua
Exod.	Exodus	Judg.	Judges
Lev.	Leviticus	Ruth	Ruth
Num.	Numbers	1–2 Sam.	1–2 Samuel
Deut.	Deuteronomy	1–2 Kings	1–2 Kings

Abbreviations

1–2 Chron.	1–2 Chronicles	Dan.	Daniel
Ezra	Ezra	Hosea	Hosea
Neh.	Nehemiah	Joel	Joel
Esther	Esther	Amos	Amos
Job	Job	Obad.	Obadiah
Ps./Pss.	Psalms/Psalms	Jon.	Jonah
Prov.	Proverbs	Mic.	Micah
Eccles.	Ecclesiastes	Nah.	Nahum
Song	Song of Songs	Hab.	Habakkuk
Isa.	Isaiah	Zeph.	Zephaniah
Jer.	Jeremiah	Hag.	Haggai
Lam.	Lamentations	Zech.	Zechariah
Ezek.	Ezekiel	Mal.	Malachi

NEW TESTAMENT

Matt.	Matthew	1–2 Thess.	1–2 Thessalonians
Mark	Mark	1–2 Tim.	1–2 Timothy
Luke	Luke	Titus	Titus
John	John	Philem.	Philemon
Acts	Acts	Heb.	Hebrews
Rom.	Romans	James	James
1–2 Cor.	1–2 Corinthians	1–2 Pet.	1–2 Peter
Gal.	Galatians	1–3 John	1–3 John
Eph.	Ephesians	Jude	Jude
Phil.	Philippians	Rev.	Revelation
Col.	Colossians		

ABECEDARIUS

Although the word in English (abecedary) refers to a book containing the alphabet for the purpose of learning it, in literary studies, it is a type of acrostic (also referred to as an alphabetical acrostic) in which the first letters form the alphabet. According to J. A. Cuddon, “in the Old Testament most of the acrostics belong to the alphabetical or abecedarian type” (6). A biblical example is Ps. 119, in which the 176 lines are divided so that there is a group of 8 lines for each of the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

Bibliography. J. A. Cuddon, *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* (4th ed.; London: Penguin, 1998); William Harmon and C. Hugh Holman, *A Handbook to Literature* (8th ed.; Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1999); Ross Murfin and Supryia M. Ray, *The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms* (2nd ed.; Boston: St. Martin's Press, 2003); Leland Ryken, *Words of Delight: A Literary Introduction to the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987).

ABSENCE

A key theme in the writings of Jacques Derrida that refers to his rejection of the notion that MEANING is present in objects (see SUBJECT/OBJECT), especially in written TEXTS. Derrida refers to two absences guaranteed by writing: “absence of signatory” and “absence of the referent” (*Of Grammatology*, 40–41; see REFERENTIAL [QUALITY OF] LANGUAGE). By the former, he suggests that any claims of meaning made about a TEXT are independent of the AUTHOR, who has not determined the meaning of the text. Hence, to speak of meaning in terms of an author's INTENTION is itself meaningless: the author is absent. By the latter, he claims that a text has no external or extra-textual reference. A text is “no longer a finished corpus of writing,

some context enclosed in a book or its margins, but a differential network, a fabric of traces referring endlessly to something other than itself, to other differential traces” (“Living On / Border Lines,” 84). A text has no single recoverable meaning but is a network of differences that may generate an endless chain of meanings, always DEFERRING any finality. Therefore, meaning is not present in the text, as water can be present in a bottle, but is absent. Derrida makes these claims based on a radicalization of key concepts in the work of Ferdinand de Saussure, especially Saussure's insistence on the arbitrary nature of the SIGN and his idea that meaning is a result of the relations of difference between signs. Based on the latter notion, Derrida insists that signs do not point to external referents, but to other signs (see REFERENTIAL [QUALITY OF] LANGUAGE). Consequently, a text becomes a differential network in which signifieds become signifiers in an endless chain of SIGNIFICATION. In addition, most postmodern critics (see POSTMODERN CRITICISM) reject the notion that there exists a one-to-one correspondence between language and external reality, that the structures of language parallel the structures of reality so that language is capable of accurate representation of reality. If signs refer in a differential manner to other signs, then meaning is not always already present in reality, but is always absent. Thus, reality becomes a construct of language, a linguistic entity.

Bibliography. Jacques Derrida, “Living On / Border Lines,” in *Deconstruction and Criticism* (ed. Harold Bloom et al.; New York: Seabury, 1979), 75–176; idem, *Of Grammatology* (trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977).

ACCLAMATION. See LITURGICAL FRAGMENTS

ACCOMMODATION

The belief that divine revelation of the biblical TEXTS is written primarily to ordinary people, and that the texts were written in such a way as to be comprehensible to such readers. According to Anthony Thiselton (531–35), some contemporary biblical CRITICS (e.g., Mark Labberton; Andrew Kirk) and literary critics (e.g., David Bleich) have insisted on making room for the ordinary, nonprofessional reader. They recognize that the MEANINGS proposed by professional interpreters are offered within professional CONTEXTS and are no more legitimate or natural than those INTERPRETATIONS proposed within nonprofessional contexts. In other words, LITERARY theories that focus on the role of the reader in creating meaning should accommodate nonprofessional reading communities.

Bibliography. Anthony Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992).

ACROSTIC

A composition, typically in VERSE, arranged so that when certain letters are selected according to a pattern, they spell words, phrases, or sentences. Where the initial letters form a word, phrase, or sentence, the acrostic is called a true acrostic. When the final letters work in this fashion, the acrostic is a telestich. Acrostics are also formed when the middle letters are so used (a mesostich) and when the first letter of the first line, the second of the second line, the third of the third line, and so forth (a cross acrostic) are used. An acrostic in which the first letters form the alphabet is called an abecedarius (Harmon and Holman, 4). A biblical example of the latter is Ps. 119, in which the 176 lines are divided so that there is a group of 8 lines for each of the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Other acrostics occur in Pss. 9–10; 25; 34; 37; 111; 112; 145; Prov. 31:10–31; and Nah. 1:2–10. However, most acrostics are lost in TRANSLATION (Soulen and Soulen, 1).

Bibliography. William Harmon and C. Hugh Holman, *A Handbook to Literature* (8th ed.; Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2000); Richard N. Soulen and R. Kendall

Soulen, *Handbook of Biblical Criticism* (3rd ed.; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001).

ACTANT

IN SEMIOTICS, the function or role occupied by a character in a NARRATIVE, thus a basic structural unit in all narratives. As originally defined by A. J. Greimas in 1966, the term refers to three basic BINARY OPPOSITIONS in a sentence, each opposition epitomizing a fundamental element in narrative: SUBJECT/OBJECT for desire; sender/receiver for communication, and helper/opponent for assistance and opposition. According to Greimas, since a narrative is essentially an extended sentence, these binary oppositions form the basic STRUCTURE for all narrative. Consequently, the actantial structure or the actants constitute a GENRE. All narratives can be read according to this actantial model: a sender sends an object to a receiver, the object is carried to the receiver by the SUBJECT, and finally the subject may receive assistance from helpers and be frustrated by opponents. The actantial structure is the skeleton for, or basic structure for, any narrative.

Later, Greimas modified the theory by limiting the actants to four along the axes of subject/object and sender/receiver. From these two axes, others may be derived. The actantial model has been effective in analyzing not only literary texts, but philosophical, religious, and scientific ones as well. The model has allowed scholars to retrain their focus away from the psychological makeup of characters to the underlying forces governing actions, thus uncovering the political and polemical structure of narratives. See STRUCTURALISM.

Bibliography. Christian Vandendorpe, "Actant," in *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Literary Theory* (ed. Irena R. Makaryk; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 505–6.

ACTION

The series of events that constitute the PLOT in a work of FICTION. Action includes what characters do, say, and think. Action in literature is understood as orderly, arranged in such a way as to sug-

gest a SUBJECT and THEME. This type of arranged action is customarily structured with a beginning, middle, and end. The action of a SHORT STORY, PLAY, novel, NOVELLA, or NARRATIVE POEM does not answer the question “What is the story about?” but rather “What happens in the story?” For example, a person who writes a PRÉCIS of a STORY simply recounts what happens in the action rather than offering an EXPOSITION of the story. The plot of such accounts as Jonah, Ruth, Matthew, or Song of Songs is constituted by the action of each and is concerned with what the text says, not what it means, although the latter concern develops out of the former.

ACTUALIZATION

In HERMENEUTICS, the process by which MEANINGS of TEXTS are derived. The articulation of meaning is founded on ASSUMPTIONS about this process and the location of meaning. In contemporary hermeneutics, there are four complementary but distinct processes, each based on a different basic assumption. The first process is author as context and is based on the assumption that a text contains a message that must be discovered or actualized by the reader. In other words, meaning is a quality of the text. In biblical texts, that meaning is the revelation given through the texts, and as such, this meaning can be actualized by successive generations of readers. The second process, history as context, assumes that the meaning of a text is bound to the text’s CONTEXT, that the text’s anchorage to its life setting and history not only shapes its meaning but also limits the interpretive options available to interpreters. Simply put, a text’s meaning is inseparable from the world within which it was given birth, and readers must actualize meaning in conversation with this world (Thiselton, 11–13). The third process is community as context and assumes that reality is always a contextually constructed one and that all objects obtain their SIGNIFICANCE or are understood within that context-relative reality. Consequently, meanings of texts are created (actualized) within communities using certain methods (*see* CRITICAL

METHODOLOGY). Since both the community and method determine the questions put to the text, meaning is contingent on the way various communities define reality and on the methods these communities deem acceptable. Meaning in this SENSE is always a function of the interests, community LITERARY CONVENTIONS, methods employed, and the HORIZON OF EXPECTATION of the readers (Thiselton, 63–66). The fourth process, reader as context, assumes that meaning is not a function of the community and method on the one hand or the text on the other, but is somewhere between the two. The meaning of a text is only virtual or potential and is realized or actualized through a dialogue between the structures of the text and the creative activities of the reader. In this last process, the reader assembles meaning that is only potential in the text in terms of TEXTUAL STRATEGIES that initiate certain interpretive activities by the reader.

Bibliography. Anthony Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992).

ADIAPHORA

From the Greek meaning “indifferent things.” The Stoics (*see* HELLENISTIC PHILOSOPHIES) considered some things as natural and necessary (e.g., food), natural but unnecessary (e.g., sex), and unnatural and unnecessary (e.g., sadism). Beyond these, however, were things indifferent: things neither to be desired nor shunned. So in the NT, adiaphora are matters of faith that are morally neutral. Since they are “neither commanded nor forbidden in SCRIPTURE” (McKim, 4), a person may exercise “liberty of conscience” (cf. Rom. 14:17; 1 Cor. 6:12; 8:8; Gal. 5:6).

Bibliography. Donald K. McKim, *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996).

ADMIRATION STORY

A narrative genre classification that Leland Ryken applies to the GOSPELS. According to Ryken, the controlling agenda of the Gospels is the SELECTION AND ARRANGEMENT of materials in order to exalt the hero of the STORY. They are designed to

provide the basis (both biographical and etiological [*see* ETIOLOGY]) for promoting the hero of the story. Other scholars (Bultmann, Dibelius, Taylor) focus on the role of the Gospels as “self-contained stories” that reflect the needs and interests of the very early church. Hence, if biographical or etiological interests are not primary among the Gospel writers, then the stories should be read within the ideological CONTEXT (*see* IDEOLOGICAL CRITICISM; IDEOLOGY) of the early church.

Bibliography. Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (trans. John Marsh; Oxford: Blackwell, 1963); Martin Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel* (2nd ed.; Cambridge: James Clarke, 1971); Leland Ryken, *Words of Life: A Literary Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987); Vincent Taylor, *The Formation of the Gospel Tradition* (2nd ed.; London: Macmillan, 1935).

ADONAI

From the Hebrew word *’ādōnāy*, “Lord,” used as an oral substitute for the TETRAGRAMMATON (YHWH: YAHWEH, or Jehovah) in the Jewish liturgical reading of the HEBREW BIBLE because the Hebrews considered the name *Yahweh* (the actual name for God) too holy to be uttered.

AEON

From the Greek word meaning “age” or “epoch.” In the NT (e.g., Mark 10:30; Gal. 1:4; Heb. 6:5) the present evil age will give way to the age to come, a period marked by the reign of God.

Bibliography. Donald K. McKim, *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996).

AETIOLOGY. *See* ETIOLOGY

AFFECTIVE CRITICISM. *See* READER-RESPONSE CRITICISM

AFFECTIVE FALLACY

A central concept in NEW CRITICISM introduced by W. K. Wimsatt Jr. and Monroe C. Beardsley in 1949. The fallacy is committed when attention is given to the effect of the TEXT rather than to the text itself, “a confusion between what a text is and

what it does” (Harmon and Holman, 7). To judge a work of art in terms of its results is to commit the affective fallacy. In New Criticism, attention is directed exclusively on the text itself as the source of any effect.

Bibliography. William Harmon and C. Hugh Holman, *A Handbook to Literature* (8th ed.; Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1999).

AFRICAN AMERICAN CRITICISM

A brand of race CRITICISM (*see* RACE, CLASS, AND GENDER CRITICISM) having fundamental ASSUMPTIONS that race is an essential element of LITERARY analysis and that the American LITERARY CANON has been irreversibly informed and shaped by Africans and African Americans.

Background. African American literary criticism has a rather youthful place in the American literary tradition, beginning primarily with the philosophical assertions of W. E. B. Du Bois, and continuing through the 1920s with the Harlem Renaissance, up until the 1960s, when it was gradually integrated into modern American society through channels of black power and the black aesthetic (Bertens, 108). Essentially, African American literary theory has “taken a variety of forms, often grounding itself in other approaches but always revising them according to its own concerns and agendas” (Geollnicht, 8). Specifically, as African Americans have gained strength and power in society, their ideals and values have altered, thus initiating changes in how they perceive their “blackness” as an important attribute of their culture, particularly in regard to literature and aesthetics. African American theorist Barbara Christian argues that contrary to traditional ways of theorizing, African Americans do not portray what they perceive to be theory in a traditional critical form; rather African American theory is “often in narrative forms, in the stories we [African Americans] create, in riddles and proverbs, in the play with language” (quoted in Geollnicht, 6). It is somewhat difficult to pinpoint the exact form and IDEOLOGY of African American critics simply because as social and political issues change within society, so do the perspectives of Af-

rican Americans. Yet, the list of African Americans with significant roles in LITERARY CRITICISM is far-reaching. However, influential African Americans such as W. E. B. Du Bois, Richard Wright, Amiri Baraka, Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin, Langston Hughes, and Zora Neale Hurston are, in addition to being key thinkers in their movement, also influential writers who have been instrumental in bringing credibility to African American literature through integration into the mainstream canon. Likewise, contemporary critics such as Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, and, more important, Houston A. Baker Jr. and Henry Louis Gates Jr. attempt to defend African American ideology under the premise of deconstructive postmodern thought (see DECONSTRUCTION; POSTMODERNISM/POSTMODERNITY). Even if they are writing fiction, African Americans often write with a sociological or ideological purpose in mind; their writing attempts to bring about change and a restructuring of cultural values and norms.

Primary concerns. First, African American literary critics establish their values on the premise that their writing must exploit or at least reveal the traditionally dismal and repressive plight of black persons; through revealing their plight, these authors hope to foster change in both the attitude and behavior of the oppressive majority. Thus the African American's establishment of literature as an art is "no mere idle acceptance of 'art for art's sake,' . . . but rather a deep realization of the fundamental purpose of art and of its function as a taproot of vigorous, flourishing living" (Locke, 50). However, this attempt to portray the passionate living of African Americans in order to foster change is done under the guise of slave NARRATIVES, SERMONS, FOLKLORE, ORAL TRADITION, and language. Thus African American authors use their fictional writings to accurately depict the deeply rooted social problems common to their people. Specifically, "the African-American person, critic, theorist, or writer operates in a context of opposition to oppressive situations" (Blackshire-Belay, 5). W. E. B. Du Bois furthers the notion that African American literature serves as a way to bring change, although

he does so in a more negatively connotative way: "All art is propaganda and ever must be . . . propaganda for gaining the right of black folk to love and enjoy" (42). Clearly, African Americans most often write, either consciously or unconsciously, with a social or political agenda that will celebrate their blackness.

Second, in addition to their desire to bring out change, African American critics focus on works in which black persons and their role in society are primary. According to African writer Asante, "Literature by African or African-American writers must reflect and treat African peoples as subject, not objects; and African ideals, values, culture, history, traditions and worldviews must inform any such creation, analysis, or presentation" (quoted in Abarry, 133). Thus there remains no other subject more important in African American writing than the individual—a notion often referred to as Afrocentric aesthetics. Essentially, this perspective's basic premise asserts that "meaning, ethos, motifs, technique, and form all emanate from the worldview of African peoples and reflect their own sense of beauty, goodness, and . . . truth" (Abarry, 134). Based on this notion, then, African American critics focus on the ways in which writers of color incorporate spirituals, work songs, blues, jazz, tales, and Ebonics—all aesthetic elements unique to the African tradition—into many of their works. All of these criteria, according to Langston Hughes, "intend to express our individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame" (48).

Of the aforementioned aesthetic elements, folklore, jazz, and language are perhaps the most essential elements on which African American literary critics focus. Folklore itself derives from the oral tradition common to African American literature, and critics maintain that it has been a key component in both understanding and interpreting black texts. Though the notion of folklore as a credible form of literature has been questioned, some writers assert that folklore "infuses all levels of society" and that it is "born out of political rhetoric, a testimony to the historical struggle for civil liberties, equality, and dignity" (Prahlad, 565).

In addition to folklore, musical influence from both jazz and blues has influenced the content (see FORM/CONTENT) and STYLE of black texts. The impact of such musical traditions, then, is far-reaching since “the blues lie at the boundary of African culture, where residual African elements pass over into American [culture]: . . . the song becomes a poem which is no longer sung, but written and printed” (Prahlad, 565). Thus, the blues/jazz music TRADITION serves as the pivotal point between the African American oral tradition and the traditional white literary aesthetic (Williams, 179). Clearly, as many African American critics have come to believe, it is difficult to separate the various forms of black aesthetics, both oral and written, as they are so closely interwoven.

Apart from folklore and music, language is a determining factor in what composes the basis for African American literary theory. Here Houston Baker argues that “no analyst can understand the black literary text who is not conscious of the semantic levels of black culture” (197). Basically, language is such an integral part of the African American literary tradition that it cannot be separated from origin and cultural identity. “The linguistic exercise among African-Americans . . . and other ‘colonized’ people can be seen as one modest attempt among many to repossess their histories” (Mazrui, 79). African American writers must use language that reflects the culture lest they cease to be part of the culture’s traditions at all. Seemingly, then, African American critics look at the oral tradition of folklore, musical influence, and black linguistic (see LINGUISTICS) patterns to identify ways in which African American writers have preserved African origin and culture.

However, certain African American critics focus on texts in which the authors try to “shed their race” and thus adopt the mainstream ideologies of the white majority. Specifically, when African American criticism began to fully establish itself in the 1960s, there were many critics who desired to establish their own literary canon separate from the white majority; this notion, however, proved futile as many writers strove for integration of black

and white cultures. Similarly, contemporary critics assert the notion of poststructuralists (see POST-MODERNISM/POSTMODERNITY) that “whatever African-American texts have in common, there is no such thing as an essential, innate ‘Blackness’ in their authors” (Bertens, 109). Essentially, many contemporary critics, such as Henry Gates, note that African Americans are not different from other American writers; rather, they develop their work under different cultural and historical origins.

And third, African American critics recognize and tolerate different schools of thought within their ranks. While African American literary critics differ in some of their basic principles, it is not the critics themselves but the time periods in which these critics live that dictate the primary ideological differences between the various influential critics of African American literature. This idea is what influential contemporary critic Houston A. Baker refers to as “generational shifts” (Goellnicht, 6). Subsequently, Baker’s primary assertion is that African American writings must be understood within African American culture of specific time periods.

Accordingly, beginning in the 1950s, generational shifts, as Baker defines them, can be divided into philosophies based on integrationist ideals of social equality, black power, black arts and aesthetics, and finally integration into mainstream literature. Similar, but differing slightly from the philosophy of Baker, is the division of the black literature movement into five main schools of thought, beginning with the Harlem Renaissance in the 1920s: primitivist school, naturalistic protest school, existentialist school, moral suasion school, and the counterhegemonic black cultural nationalist school (Washington, 2–11). No single generational shift or school, however, can claim one specific critical theorist; rather, numerous voices help to establish the ways in which African American critics interpret texts within a specific time period marked by various social and political aspirations.

Schools of thought. Baker’s “generational shifts” began in the 1950s with the influential voices

of Richard Wright, Arthur Davis, and Sterling Brown. The primary focus of this period of time was to write in a way that would bring about legislation supportive of social equality and black values. During the 1960s, the African American's political agenda shifted from integrationist ideals to the notion of black power. Advocates of black power—such as Stokely Carmichael, Larry Neal, and Amiri Baraka—believed that Negro art should be the primary force by which to foster the African American political agenda. Building on the idea of black power, the black aesthetic endeavored to be a means of “helping black people out of the polluted mainstream of Americanism” (Holmes, 37) as well as a way to encourage the African American artist to “‘purify by fire’ the old symbols, songs, myths, legends, and history that was the lost birthright of African peoples” (38). Larry Neal further asserts the idea of black art in his essay “The Black Arts Movement,” stating that the movement’s goal is not to write protest literature; rather, “it speaks directly to the Black people” (123) and is “radically opposed to any concept of the artist that alienates him from his community” (122). The black arts movement was essential to African American literary criticism as it glorified the tradition of African American literature and therefore assisted in the gradual acceptance of influential works into the mainstream literary canon. Thus, from both the black power movement and the appeal to the black aesthetic, the 1970s gradually allowed for the declaration that African American literature was truly literary, as many works were integrated into mainstream English classes and canonized within anthologies. During this time, blackness in literature was examined as purposeful rather than reactionary. African American authors constructed their own perception of their people, and now African American literature was autonomous and to be evaluated in the same way as its white counterpart.

In contrast, Washington’s schools of thought begin in the 1920s—a time in which “Negroes” were trying to define more clearly their voice and purpose. Understandably, the primitivist school is perhaps the earliest attempt to define protest

literature through cautious optimism and through the black voices of the Harlem Renaissance. Essentially, three main forces helped to shape African American criticism during the 1920s: The black middle class, who sought status and equality with whites; the Garvey movement, which tried to increase racial pride; and the primitivist literary school, which fostered social change through aesthetics and creativity (Washington, 47). In contrast to the naïveté of the primitivist school, the naturalistic protest school was influenced by the African’s plight during the Great Depression and therefore sought a more realistic portrayal of the African American within literature. Consequently, many African American critics, particularly Richard Wright, interpreted African American literature from a Marxist perspective (Washington, 119). Furthermore, many critics were quick to dramatize the social issues of racial injustice and poverty, thus bringing disillusionment to the black movement, which became more evident after World War II in the existentialist school. Specifically, Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man* depicted black America from the perspective of a “disillusioned, deracinated, and rootless individualism” (Washington, 191). Hence, black thought focused on the virtues of ALIENATION and disassociation from black ethnic culture (204). Contrasting sharply with the agenda of the existentialist school, the moral suasion school’s focus rested on political reengagement through the protest for civil rights. Led by James Baldwin, the moral suasion school fought hard to bring about political change and integration into the literary mainstream. However, opponents of the moral suasion school feared that Baldwin sacrificed black culture for the sake of integration (273). From this idea, then, emerged the black cultural nationalist school. Black nationalist Amiri Baraka clearly defines the role of African Americans:

The Black artist’s role in America is to aid in the destruction of America as he knows it. His role is to report and reflect so precisely the nature of the society . . . that other men will be moved . . . if they are black men, [and] grow strong through this moving . . . ; and if they are white men, tremble, curse,

and go mad, because they will be drenched with the filth of their evil. (Washington, 281)

Thus, the black nationalist school upheld the idea of blackness within the African American people in stark contrast to the oppressive nature of the white majority. It was from this school that African American literature slowly incorporated itself into the mainstream canon. Clearly, African American literary criticism is a moldable, living criticism in that its agenda changes along with society's treatment of the minority.

Current criticism. Currently, one of the most influential theorists in regard to African American literary criticism is Henry Louis Gates Jr. In his critical works, Gates explores the relationship between African culture and Western culture and the role such cultures play in assessing literature. In contrast to Houston Baker, Gates asserts that both black and white literature are socially constructed rather than products of a cause-and-effect relationship. Moreover, Gates mainly tries to make note of the patterns of repetition and revision among texts by black authors. He writes: "Many black authors read and revise one another, address similar themes, and repeat the cultural and linguistic codes of a common symbolic geographic. For these reasons, we can think of them as forming literary traditions" (quoted in Bertens, 109). Specifically, in his most influential work, *The Signifying Monkey*, Gates refers to the trickster figure common to African American folktales in order to show how vernacular informs and becomes the foundation for formal black literature. Signifying, he maintains, is the process of "intertextual relations, . . . the troped revision, of repetitions and difference" (2). According to Gates, all black literature is intertextual (see INTERTEXTUAL CRITICISM; INTERTEXTUALITY) and related because most African Americans have encountered similar experiences that shape the ways in which they write. His view, then, reflects the influence of DECONSTRUCTION and poststructuralism in regard to applying literary theory to the reading of black texts. He is therefore a key figure in showing how African American lit-

erary criticism has branched out to include other types of CRITICISM.

Apart from the poststructuralist assertions of many contemporary critics, some question whether race is still a defining factor in determining the credibility of African American texts. Yet in spite of this debate, most African American theorists, writers, and critics assert, mainly from their own experiences, that it is "morally wrong to deny the authority of race" (Norrell, 289). Rather, contemporary critics more aptly believe that the study of race in regard to literature strengthens society and therefore is necessary for the preservation of not only African culture but American culture as well. Ralph Ellison writes, "Any viable theory of Negro American culture obligates us to fashion a more adequate theory of American culture as a whole" (quoted in Guerin, 256). Clearly, race does matter within the context of literary criticism.

African American criticism and the Bible. The issue of race has dominated the perspectives of the African American literary tradition. Additionally, not only does the issue dominate the secular interpretation of texts, but it also has provided and still provides African American critics with an interesting and extremely relevant way by which to interpret biblical texts. Basing one's INTERPRETATION on the idea that African Americans are an oppressed people group and under constant domination from the white majority, one can easily conclude that the BIBLE, through the words and actions of Jesus Christ, glorifies people groups of similar circumstances, such as the poor, widows, prostitutes, tax collectors, lepers, Samaritans, and others ostracized from the general community. Essentially, African Americans find it very easy to identify with those people who, like themselves, have had to fight for recognition from their oppressors; thus, the interpretation of biblical texts from an African American perspective is natural, expected, and necessary. James Cone, the father of BLACK THEOLOGY, defines the demand for this type of biblical interpretation as "a desperate need . . . [for] a theology whose sole purpose is to apply the freeing power of the gospel to black people

under white oppression" (Cone, 31). Therefore, the African American literary critic has a duty to both race and faith to understand biblical texts from the perspective of the oppressed.

Many African American theologians have therefore applied their experience and perspectives on race to interpret biblical texts. Interpreting texts under the label of "black theology," theologians such as Howard Thurman, Emilie Townes, and most important, James Cone have insisted that African Americans, in order to fully understand the history and oppressive nature of the black experience, must interpret texts through ideas based on the suffering and redemption of Christ. As an expression of LIBERATION THEOLOGY, black theology's prominence can be attributed primarily to James Cone, who defines black theology as "a rational study of the being of God in the world in light of the existential situation of an oppressed community, relating the forces of liberation to the essence of the gospel, which is Jesus Christ" (19). Cone asserts that the black theology movement in the United States symbolizes Jesus as the black Messiah, the strong deliverer and liberator who "took upon himself the suffering of all oppressed people and transformed oppression to triumph through his resurrection" (Simmons, 3). Additionally, black theology affirms that God reveals himself in his blackness by liberating black humanity from the powers of white racism and oppression in America; it is therefore essential that African Americans see Jesus as black. Only then, states Cone, can the African American truly relate to a normally oppressive, predominantly white version of Christianity (Rhodes, 7). This being said, many African American critics have questioned whether there is indeed legitimate truth to be found in the Christian Bible since it was under the guise of Christianity that Africans were forced into slavery. Cone maintains that there is such a truth. Thus, Cone glorifies the black experience while condemning the oppression by the white majority. Specifically, Cone's ideals are immersed in the black experience of liberation, since "Jesus' work is essentially one of liberation" (Cone, 35); protest,

also known as the "political HERMENEUTICS of the gospel," by which Christianity becomes a religion of "protest against the suffering and affliction of man" (37); and slavery, as the black church was "born in slavery" and symbolizes a people "who were completely stripped of their African heritage as they were enslaved by the 'Christian' white man" (91).

Contrasting somewhat with Cone's ideas of black power and SCRIPTURE are the ideas of theologian DeOtis Roberts, who seeks liberation through reconciliation that "takes place between equals" (quoted in Rhodes, 13) rather than through the doctrine of black power. He maintains "it [liberation] cannot exist with a situation of White over Blacks" (13). Echoing the desire for this unity is the more contemporary perspective from black theologian Dwight N. Hopkins, who believes that if the black theological movement is to evolve, it must always be linked with the liberation of the poor and oppressed as well as with the black church, WOMANIST THEOLOGY, and a dialogue that will connect multiple VERSIONS of liberation theology. To foster social change through biblical interpretation, the African American literary critic applies methods like those used by African Americans in interpreting texts of a secular nature to advance their race ideologically, socially, and politically.

Bibliography. Abu Shardow Abarry, "Afrocentric Aesthetic in Selected Harlem Renaissance Poetry," in *Language and Literature in the African American Imagination* (ed. Carol Aisha Blackshire-Belay; Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1992), 133–46; Houston A. Baker Jr., "Toward a Critical Prospect for the Future," in *The Journey Back: Issues in Black Literature and Criticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 115–64 (excerpt repr. in *African American Literary Criticism, 1773 to 2000* [ed. Hazel Arnett Ervin; New York: Twayne, 1999], 192–97); Hans Bertens, *Literary Theory: The Basics* (London: Routledge, 2001); Carol Aisha Blackshire-Belay, "Afrocentricity and Literary Theory: The Maturing Imagination," in *Language and Literature in the African American Imagination* (ed. Carol Aisha Blackshire-Belay; Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1992), 3–7; James H. Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power* (New York: Seabury Press, 1969); W. E. B. Du Bois, "Criteria of Negro Art," in *African American Literary Criticism, 1773 to 2000* (ed. Hazel Arnett Ervin;

New York: Twayne, 1999), 39–43; Henry Louis Gates Jr., *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); Donald C. Goellnicht, “Black Criticism,” in *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Literary Theory* (ed. Irena R. Makaryk; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 5–10; Wilfred Guerin et al., *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature* (4th ed.; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 256–60; Carolyn L. Holmes, “Reassessing African American Literature through an Afrocentric Paradigm,” in *Language and Literature in the African American Imagination* (ed. Carol Aisha Blackshire-Belay; Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1992), 37–51; Langston Hughes, “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain,” in *African American Literary Criticism, 1773 to 2000* (ed. Hazel Arnett Ervin; New York: Twayne, 1999), 44–48; Alain Locke, “Art or Propaganda?,” in *African American Literary Criticism, 1773 to 2000* (ed. Hazel Arnett Ervin; New York: Twayne, 1999), 49–50; Alamin Mazrui, “African Languages in the African American Experience,” in *Language and Literature in the African American Imagination* (ed. Carol Aisha Blackshire-Belay; Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1992), 75–90; Larry Neal, “The Black Arts Movement,” in *African American Literary Criticism, 1773 to 2000* (ed. Hazel Arnett Ervin; New York: Twayne, 1999), 122–28; F. Burton Nelson, “Black Theology Revisited,” *Christianity Today* 48, no. 3 (March 1, 2004), <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2004/march/37.77.html>; Robert J. Norrell, “Race Does Matter,” *Virginia Quarterly Review* 77, no. 2 (2001): 289; Anand Prahlad, “Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner? Folklore, Folkloristics, and African American Literary Criticism,” *African American Review* 33, no. 4 (1999): 565; Ron Rhodes, “Black Theology, Black Power, and the Black Experience,” *Christian Research Journal* (1991), <http://home.earthlink.net/~ronrhodes/BlackTheology.html>; Anthony Simmons, “African Theology and Black Theology,” *Black and Christian*, 2 parts (February–March/April 2004), <http://blackandchristian.com/articles/2004.shtml>; Robert E. Washington, *The Ideologies of African American Literature: From the Harlem Renaissance to the Black Nationalist Revolt* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001); Sherley A. Williams, “The Blues Root of Contemporary Afro-American Poetry,” in *African American Literary Criticism, 1773 to 2000* (ed. Hazel Arnett Ervin; New York: Twayne, 1999), 179–91.

AFRICAN LIBERATION THEOLOGY

Theological movements among African peoples guided by the central belief that it is God’s will that people be free of all forms of oppression. See LIBERATION THEOLOGY.

AFRICENTRIC (AFROCENTRIC) THEOLOGY

A THEOLOGY (esp. among African American theologians) formulated by reference to African rather than Western resources and cultural CONTEXTS.

AGENDA

A word widely used by LITERARY and cultural CRITICS to describe a body of unconscious and often conscious theological, political, and historical opinions, preunderstandings, and (esp.) purposes that guide interpreters of literary, historical, and cultural objects (see SUBJECT/OBJECT). The claim is that one’s agenda makes it impossible for one to approach an interpretable object with a disinterested objectivity. Every interpreter’s work is always already conditioned or colored by his or her SOCIAL LOCATION and the expectations and rules set by that location. In BIBLICAL STUDIES, the INTERPRETATION of any biblical text will always be preceded by and conditioned by the interpreter’s social location and the reason(s) for interpreting.

AGENT

A term introduced by Adele Berlin to describe a character type in biblical NARRATIVE. The agent is a functionary that the AUTHOR uses to fill out the narrative and serves the purpose of providing the necessary characters to populate a STORY. See CHARACTERIZATION.

Bibliography. Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Sheffield: Almond, 1983).

AGRAPHIA

A Greek term meaning “unwritten” and used in BIBLICAL STUDIES to refer to “sayings attributed to Jesus but not found in the CANONICAL GOSPELS” (Soulen and Soulen, 2). *Agrapha* is also applied to the lost SAYINGS OF JESUS that circulated as part of the ORAL TRADITION in the early church. Since the evangelists (see GOSPEL) would have used only the sayings of Jesus that related directly to their theological purposes, many of Jesus’s sayings were forgotten except where they were preserved in other sources. Possible *agrapha* can be found

in the NT (Acts 20:35 and 1 Thess. 4:16–17), ancient manuscripts of the NT (e.g., Luke 10:16 in Codex Koridethi), the church fathers, the *Gospel of Thomas*, the Talmud (*‘Abodah Zarah* 16b–17a; *Šabbat* 116a–b), and Islamic writings.

Bibliography. Richard N. Soulen and R. Kendall Soulen, *Handbook of Biblical Criticism* (3rd ed.; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001).

ALEATORY INTERTEXTUALITY

A term used in Michael Riffaterre’s definition of INTERTEXTUALITY. According to Riffaterre, intertextuality is the relationship between readers and their recognition of a text’s relationship to TEXTS that precede or follow it. *Aleatory intertextuality* refers to the way readers relate a text to other texts with which they are familiar, assuming features not present in the text under study. For example, a reader’s understanding of Genesis will be heavily influenced by the reader’s familiarity with other biblical texts as well as by extrabiblical texts. Aleatory intertextuality operates on the ASSUMPTION that all literature (any text, for that matter) is written and read on the shoulders of other texts.

Bibliography. Michael Riffaterre, “Compulsory Reader-Response: The Intertextual Drive,” in *Intertextuality: Theories and Practices* (ed. Michael Worton and Judith Still; Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1990), 56–78; idem, *Text Production* (trans. Terese Lyons; New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).

ALEXANDRIAN TEXT

Within TEXTUAL CRITICISM, a group of NT manuscripts similar in textual properties and ideas, possibly originating from a common source in Alexandria, Egypt. As the biblical writings began to spread throughout the Mediterranean world, certain cities such as Rome, Alexandria, and Constantinople became what critics call “homes” of certain VERSIONS or families of texts and textual traditions. The Alexandrian text (also called the Egyptian text and the Neutral Text) may have originated in Alexandria because Alexandria was the center for CRITICISM of the Greek classics, and it is quite possible that the NT texts were examined through LITERARY and critical lenses. Consequently, the

manuscripts in this family are characterized by stylistic VARIANT READINGS intended to correct perceived literary and grammatical imperfections of the NT writings. In text-critical terms, then, the Alexandrian text is an unreliable textual witness where the variants involve technicalities of grammar or where more sophisticated literary forms are substituted for more colloquial ones.

Bibliography. J. Harold Greenlee, *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964; rev. ed., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995).

ALIENATION

Theologically, the separation of humans from God, other humans, and the self as a result of sin. Philosophically, Karl Marx used the term to refer to a historical condition in which humans suffer estrangement from nature, others, and the products of their labor. This condition is created by the advanced stage of interaction between the division of labor, private property, and the state in a capitalist society. At this stage, individuals experience the world as an alien force pitted against them. Such alienation can be overcome only by the abolition of economies based on the private ownership of property.

Alienation is also an important concept in existentialist philosophy, where it is considered to be the central condition of human existence. It is manifested in an individual’s sense of helplessness and disenchantment in an impersonal world in which there is no inherent MEANING.

Bibliography. Susan R. Skand, “Alienation,” in *A Dictionary of Cultural and Critical Theory* (ed. Michael Payne; Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996), 22–23.

ALLEGORICAL SENSE OF SCRIPTURE

One of the four medieval “senses of Scripture” in which the biblical TEXTS are interpreted as having hidden, spiritual meanings outside the literal ones. See FOURFOLD SENSE OF SCRIPTURE.

ALLEGORY

An extended METAPHOR in which ACTIONS, objects (see SUBJECT/OBJECT), and/or persons in a

NARRATIVE correspond to or suggest MEANINGS outside the narrative (Harmon and Holman, 12). Allegory works through double SIGNIFICATION, in which the actions, persons, and objects represent ideas. Consequently, allegory takes an interest not only in the events, objects, persons, SETTINGS, and so forth but also in the ideas they are intended to suggest. Although the events, settings, persons, objects, and actions may be historical or fictitious, in true allegory they must suggest meanings independent of the STORY. For example, the story of Hosea's marriage in Hosea 2 is an allegory of God's relationship to Israel as a nation. Hosea is commanded by Yahweh to take a wife, who is then unfaithful. This becomes an allegory of the family. Yahweh as the husband speaks to Hosea as the son, accusing Israel as the wife of infidelity because she has left Yahweh and bestowed her favors on the pagan gods, her lovers. Other examples may be Isa. 5:1–6; Prov. 5:15–23; Eccles. 12:1–6; 1 Cor. 5:6–8; 9:8–10; Gal. 4:21–31; Mark 4:12–20; Matt. 13:36–43; 22:1–14. According to Soulen (Soulen and Soulen, 5), there are instances in the NT where allegorical elements are employed in PARABLES in order to adjust them to such things as the delay of the parousia or historical events (e.g., Matt. 22:11–13; 24:43–44; Mark 2:19b–20; 13:33–37).

Bibliography. William Harmon and C. Hugh Holman, *A Handbook to Literature* (8th ed.; Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1999); Richard N. Soulen and R. Kendall Soulen, *Handbook of Biblical Criticism* (3rd ed.; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001).

ALLITERATION

The REPETITION of initial consonant or vowel sounds in either consecutive or closely related syllables. Proverbs 13:24 in Hebrew provides an example of alliteration: *hōsēk šibtō sōnē' bēnō / wē'ōhābō šihārō mūsār*, which is commonly translated (cf. KJV) as "Spare the rod and spoil the child" (Alter, 166). While the alliteration in the Hebrew TEXT is obvious and frequent, it is usually lost in TRANSLATION.

Bibliography. Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: Basic Books, 1985).

ALLUSION

An essential element in INTERTEXTUAL CRITICISM, allusion is a LITERARY DEVICE that makes reference to or attempts to conjure up in the memory of the reader a historical or LITERARY event, object (see SUBJECT/OBJECT), or character. A genuine allusion is indirect. It is effective to the extent that the AUTHOR is able to tap the knowledge and memory of the reader. In other words, literary allusion is successful only if the author and reader share a common body of knowledge. For example, when Herod in Mark's GOSPEL offers to give up to half his kingdom to Herodias's daughter if she will dance for him (Mark 6:23), the reader should recall Ahasuerus's similar offers to Esther (5:1–8). The response of the disciples when Jesus asks them to feed the crowds of 5,000 and 4,000 (Mark 6:37; 8:4) recalls the response of Elisha's servant in a similar situation, the feeding of a crowd of 400 (2 Kings 4:43). When such literary allusions occur, the reader is expected to interpret the passage in conversation with the referenced object, event, or person. In other words, recognition of allusions is often an essential factor in understanding the work.

ALREADY / NOT YET

The view held by some NT scholars that in the GOSPELS, Pauline epistles (see EPISTOLARY LITERATURE), and to some extent in the Johannine writings, Jesus and the authors taught that the kingdom or reign of God was "already" manifested in Jesus's life and ministry, but that it is "not yet" fully present and will not be until the parousia.

Bibliography. George E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974).

ALTERITY

A term used by contemporary CRITICS to refer to the alternative or contending INTERPRETATIONS generated by TEXTS, thus creating impassés or APORIAS.

AMANUENSIS

A person who writes for another from dictation; a secretary or scribe. For many of his letters, the

apostle Paul employed an amanuensis (e.g., Rom. 16:22; 1 Cor. 16:21; Gal. 6:11). Some scholars argue that the differences in **STYLE**, vocabulary, and **THEOLOGY** in the Pauline Letters of disputed authorship are due to differences in the writing styles and theological orientations of the amanuenses. See **EPISTOLARY LITERATURE**.

AMARNA TABLETS

A cache of 337 cuneiform tablets unearthed from 1887 to 1937 at Tell el-Amarna in Egypt, consisting mostly of diplomatic correspondence written in Akkadian, Hittite, and Hurrian during the early fourteenth century BCE. The tablets were written by Palestinian, Phoenician, and Syrian vassal kings and governors to Amenhotep III and Amenhotep IV when Amarna was Amenhotep's capital. The tablets are important generally in that they give scholars glimpses into the Mesopotamian culture of the period and particularly because of their mention of the 'Apiru ('Abiru), whom some scholars identify as the biblical Hebrews. Some of the **TEXTS** are available in English **TRANSLATION** in Pritchard's *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*. Another helpful resource is Moran's *Amarna Letters*.

Bibliography. W. L. Moran, *The Amarna Letters* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992); M. J. Mulder, "Israel to the Time of the Babylonian Captivity," in *The World of the Old Testament* (ed. A. S. van der Woude; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 2–76; J. B. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts* (3rd ed.; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969).

AMBIGUITY

In the strictest sense, the condition of a statement having more than one possible **MEANING** and the resultant uncertainty between the possibilities. Ambiguity may be caused by grammatical and/or syntactical flaws and thus be unintentional. In **LITERARY** studies, however, *ambiguity* usually refers to the capacity of language to operate on levels beyond **DENOTATION** (Harmon and Holman, 16). Literary artists have long recognized that words and word groups may be used to suggest equally meaningful senses in the same **CONTEXT**, thus creating literary complexity. In *Seven Types of*

Ambiguity, William Empson expands the concept to the point that it becomes almost synonymous with complexity. The seven types are (1) particulars of language that are effective in a number of ways at the same time; (2) alternative interpretations, which the reader eventually resolves into the author's intended meaning; (3) two apparently independent meanings invested in one word; (4) optional meanings that combine to elucidate a complex condition in the author's mind; (5) a **SIMILE** imperfectly referring to two disparate objects (see **SUBJECT/OBJECT**), a confusion revealing the author's discovery of ideas during the actual process of composition; (6) a statement so paradoxical or extraneous that readers must create their own interpretations; and (7) a statement so deeply contradictory that it actually reveals a basic rift in the author's psyche.

Although in **NEW CRITICISM** ambiguity became the fundamental characteristic of literary texts, in recent postmodern theories (see **POSTMODERN CRITICISM**) the **SIGNIFICANCE** of ambiguity has been extended to refer to the inherent multiplicity of all language rather than to the limited literary uses identified by Empson. All linguistic expressions (written or oral; literary or nonliterary) are ambiguous and thus defy any definitive **INTERPRETATIONS**. For readers of the biblical texts, such an **ASSUMPTION** precludes the finality of any doctrinal systems based on authoritative interpretations.

Bibliography. William Empson, *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (2nd ed.; London: Chatto & Windus, 1947); William Harmon and C. Hugh Holman, *A Handbook to Literature* (8th ed.; Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1999).

AMERICAN STANDARD VERSION (ASV)

A 1901 revision of the King James Version of the Bible (frequently called the Authorized Version, AV) by an interdenominational group of American scholars who intended the revision (to American Standard English) to be an American alternative to the **REVISED VERSION**. The most notable feature of the ASV is its faithfulness to the original languages, especially in **SYNTAX** and verb tenses. Although it was popular during the first half of the

twentieth century, by midcentury, perhaps because of its rather outdated language, it fell into disuse. For more on the history of the ASV, see Freedman.

Bibliography. D. N. Freedman et al., eds., *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 6:835 (s.v. "Versions").

A MINORE AD MAJUS

A Latin phrase usually translated "from the lesser to the greater." According to Soulen and Soulen, "it is the Latin equivalent to *Qal wāhōmer* (Heb.), the first of HILLEL's seven principal rules of interpretation: also translated 'from the easy to the difficult'" (6). When used in a statement with a PROTASIS and APODOSIS, it reads as "If such be true, . . . then how much more must it be true that . . ." (6). An example is Matt. 7:11: "If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!" See also Matt. 10:25; Rom. 11:12; and Heb. 9:13–14.

Bibliography. Richard N. Soulen and R. Kendall Soulen, *Handbook of Biblical Criticism* (3rd ed.; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001).

AMPLIFICATION

A figure of speech in which brief statements, apt to be overlooked or misinterpreted or undervalued, are emphasized by restating them with supplementary detail, by REPETITION, or by restating the SUBJECT or idea in completely different terms. Amplification may be seen in some BIBLICAL POETRY (e.g., Prov. 20:5) as well as in the apostle Paul's letters (e.g., Rom. 14:13–21; see EPISTOLARY LITERATURE) and the Gospel of John (e.g., 3:3–8).

ANACHRONISM

Assignment of something to a time when it did not exist or explanation of a biblical word or passage in terms of MEANINGS that developed after the original usage. While AUTHORS may use anachronism as a LITERARY DEVICE, especially for humorous effect, quite often TRANSLATIONS of TEXTS may contain anachronisms for theological reasons. Cotterell and Turner suggest that anachronism occurs

more often in more popular and devotional commentaries. For example, the modern sense of the Greek word *arrabōn* (engagement ring) is used to explain its meaning in 2 Cor. 1:22, where it should be translated either "pledge" or "first installment" (Cotterell and Turner, 133). In biblical EXEGESIS, explaining a word within a biblical passage in terms of the word's later senses is avoided.

Bibliography. Peter Cotterell and Max Turner, *Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1989).

ANACOLUTHON

A failure to complete a sentence as the initial linguistic structure requires. Anacoluthon may be deliberate, in which case, as a LITERARY DEVICE, it may work to create a profound SENSE of cognitive dissonance or incoherence. It may also be accidental, such as when AUTHORS simply loses their chain of thought (e.g., Gal. 2:4–6).

ANAGOGE (ANAGOGY)

The mystical or spiritual MEANING derived from interpreting beyond the literal. The highest of the four senses of SCRIPTURE (see FOURFOLD SENSE OF SCRIPTURE), the others being the literal, allegorical, and moral. Not only is Jerusalem a literal city, but through anagogy, it is also God's heavenly city (Gal. 4:26), as Melchizedek is the prototype of Jesus's heavenly priesthood (Heb. 9:7). The differences between the four senses can be seen in the following comparison: Jerusalem as the literal city, morally as the believer, allegorically as the church, and anagogically as the city of God. Consequently, anagogy is a special form of allegorical interpretation in that allegory deals with a metaphor on the physical and earthly plane, while anagogy deals with a metaphor that is limited to the spiritual plane.

ANAGOGICAL SENSE OF SCRIPTURE. See ANAGOGE

ANALOGUE

Something similar to another thing. In LITERARY theory, an analogue has a dual SIGNIFICANCE. First,

two versions of the same STORY may be analogues (e.g., the two creation accounts in Genesis or the flood accounts in Genesis and the Gilgamesh Epic). And second, an analogue is one of the two objects (*see* SUBJECT/OBJECT) compared in ANALOGY (e.g., both speaking in tongues and the musical instruments in 1 Cor. 14:6–9 are analogues).

ANALOGY

A comparison of two things similar in certain respects, but dissimilar enough that the more unfamiliar thing is clarified or explained in terms of the more familiar. Both SIMILE and METAPHOR as well as PARABLE and ALLEGORY are forms of analogy. Paul uses analogy extensively, as in 1 Cor. 15:18, where he employs the more familiar idea of sleep to describe death. *See* also 1 Cor. 14:6–8; Gal. 3:23–4:7.

ANALOGY OF FAITH

Based on an INTERPRETATION of Rom. 12:6—the teaching that the prophet should speak in accordance with what has previously been revealed in SCRIPTURE—the analogy of faith is a hermeneutical principle claiming that (1) doctrines should be formulated within the CONTEXT of the whole Bible, (2) difficult or vague passages of Scripture should be explicated in light of the clearer passages, and (3) the HEBREW BIBLE should be understood in light of the NT.

Bibliography. Walter C. Kaiser Jr. and Moisés Silva, *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994).

ANALOGY OF SCRIPTURE

The ASSUMPTION that because SCRIPTURE is a unified whole and inspired by God, a fuller understanding of any passage of Scripture is obtained by studying it in conjunction with other passages. More specifically, Bright (143) proposes that biblical passages embody some point of theological SIGNIFICANCE that connects them to the entire fabric of the BIBLE. Most often this connection is to be found in a biblical AUTHOR'S making REFERENCE to antecedent passages of Scripture in one or more of three ways: (1) employing key terms that

carry special theological MEANING (e.g., servant, circumcision, seed); (2) quoting directly from previous biblical authors; or (3) using ALLUSIONS to prior persons, events, objects (*see* SUBJECT/OBJECT), or places (e.g., the EXODUS, Sinai, crossing the Red Sea, or particularly, the OLD TESTAMENT COVENANTS). By referencing Scripture in such a manner, an author expects readers to allow the referenced material to inform their understanding of a passage (Kaiser and Silva, 195–96).

Bibliography. John Bright, *The Authority of the Old Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1967); Walter C. Kaiser Jr. and Moisés Silva, *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994).

ANALYSIS

In LITERARY studies, a method that separates a TEXT into its parts or textual segments (e.g., paragraph, literary units such as parables, and larger units), which are then subjected to a meticulous and logical examination. The result should be a consistent, coherent, and complete account of the parts and their organization into a unified whole.

ANALYSIS, CONTENT. *See* CONTENT ANALYSIS

ANALYSIS, DISCOURSE. *See* DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

ANALYSIS, EXTRINSIC. *See* EXTRINSIC ANALYSIS

ANALYSIS, INTRINSIC. *See* INTRINSIC ANALYSIS

ANALYSIS, RHETORICAL. *See* RHETORICAL ANALYSIS

ANALYTICAL CRITICISM

A type of CRITICISM that assumes that the constituent parts of a literary work form an autonomous, unified whole and that the MEANING of the work is to be found in a rigorous, close ANALYSIS of the relationships among the various parts and between the parts and the whole. *See* NEW CRITICISM.