

12. Compare Immanuel Kant, *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals* (New York: Bobbs Merrill, 1949).
13. See, for instance, Stanley Hauerwas, *Character and the Christian Life: A Study in Theological Ethics* (San Antonio, Tex.: Trinity University Press, 1975), and idem, *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethics* (Notre Dame and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981).
14. My understanding of ethics and ethical theories was also somewhat eclectically shaped by Bruce Birch and Larry Rasmussen, *Bible and Ethics in the Christian Life* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1976); Dan O. Via, Jr., *The Ethics of Mark's Gospel in the Middle of Time* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985); Jeffrey Stout, *Ethics after Babel: The Languages of Morals and Their Discontents* (Boston: Beacon, 1988); Wayne C. Booth, *Critical Understanding: The Powers and Limits of Pluralism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979); and idem, *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); Darrell J. Flushing, *The Ethical Challenge of Auschwitz and Hiroshima: Apocalypse or Utopia?* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993); Thomas L. Schubeck, *Liberation Ethics: Sources, Models, and Norms* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993); as well as, in a very different and significant way, by Peter J. Paris, *The Social Teaching of the Black Churches* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985); Sharon D. Welch, *Communities of Resistance and Solidarity: A Feminist Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1985); idem, *A Feminist Ethic of Risk* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990); Cornel West, "Ethics and Actions in Frederic Jameson's Marxist Hermeneutics," in *Postmodernism and Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 123-44; and Gayatri C. Spivak, "Scattered Speculations on the Question of Value," *Diacritics*, 1985, 15:73-93.

15. In this, I follow Marcel, Lévinas, and Ricoeur. See Gabriel Marcel, *The Mystery of Being*, 2 vols. (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1950); and idem, *The Existential Background of Human Dignity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963). Emmanuel Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969); idem, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1981); idem, *Ethics and Infinity* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1985); idem, "De l'éthique à l'exégèse," *Les Nouveaux Cahiers* 82 (Automne 1985); and idem, *Time and the Other* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press). Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

16. This is a point that I argued long ago, following Gabriel Marcel; see Daniel Patte, *L'Athéisme d'un Chrétien ou un Chrétien à l'écoute de Sartre* (Paris: Nouvelles Editions Latines, 1965).

1. Assuming Responsibility for Our Biblical Interpretations

Daniel Patte

My suggestion in the Introduction, that our present exegetical practices as male European-Americans are ethically problematic, may have been, I suspect, surprising for many of my colleagues. For us there has been no serious ethical problem with our current exegetical practices. Thus, for those still holding this view, this book might seem to be a fanciful quest for a solution to a nonexistent problem.

But this problem does exist. It can be perceived, however, only if our conception of "ethics in critical exegesis" is transformed. In this chapter, I explain first how my paradigm shift regarding this issue occurred and how I progressively discovered that my critical work negatively affects people with other perspectives. I had to assume responsibility for this. As the reality of this ethical problem appeared, questions of its nature and sources arose. Finally, I conclude that affirming the legitimacy of a multiplicity of varying interpretations seems to be the only possible solution to this problem.

Ethical Responsibility and Critical Exegesis: Shifting Perceptions

The issue of ethical responsibility in biblical interpretation has traditionally been strictly limited to the way in which one uses or abuses critical methods in the study of the biblical text. Rigorously studying the text as a historical object by following strict critical methods was implementing the "morality of knowledge" demanded by the Academy and the guild of biblical scholars;¹ interpretations based upon textual evidence adduced through the use of these critical methods are trustworthy (rather than deceitful). This was also assuming our ethical responsibility as biblical scholars to our students and all other people who benefited from our work: our rigorous critical exegeses elucidated

the true meaning of the text for our contemporaries and thus made it possible for them to, first, read this text correctly, by rejecting their inadequate uncritical readings, and then to proceed to develop appropriate hermeneutical interpretations. This view was corroborated for us by the positive responses to our work from many quarters, including those who were liberated from the blinders their uncritical readings constituted. In sum, for me, ethical responsibility toward the Academy (morality of knowledge) and toward those affected by our work was identical with rigorous critical study of the biblical text through the application of appropriate methods.

For me, and many other biblical scholars, ethical problems were exclusively methodological problems: ethical irresponsibility was the use of an inappropriate methodology; unethical behavior was the misuse of a methodology (i.e., its artificial use for reading one's own views into the text). These could be serious problems, yet their resolutions merely demanded close attention to methodological issues. Consequently, methodological research was a primary concern—an ethical concern.

This collective methodological research had an unexpected effect. Instead of leading to the establishment of "the" definitive and authoritative methodology (and its morality of knowledge), it led to a methodological explosion. Very diverse critical methods were developed and introduced in biblical studies. For instance, literary, narrative, semiotic, structural, sociological, and anthropological methods found their place in biblical studies beside the historical methods, such as textual, form, redaction, and tradition criticisms. With many others, I was soon convinced that all these methods are "critical" in the strong sense of the term: They follow rigorous criteria defined by a specific methodology. Yet, with the help of Van Harvey,² I also noted that they involve quite different "moralities of knowledge" (ultimately based on different ontologies and epistemologies). What counts as trustworthy evidence varies from one method to another. Furthermore, these methods provoke conflicts of interpretations: they reach quite different conclusions regarding each given text.

Until about 1980, it was possible to resolve the methodological confrontations either by rejecting as irresponsible one of the methodologies and affirming the other as the only legitimate one (as many did) or by envisioning their complementary roles in *the* comprehensive critical interpretation of a given text (as I did at that point).³ But the number of these constantly recurring confrontations, the progressive critical refinement of the newer methods (preventing their outright rejection), and the growing awareness of the incompatibility of the interpretations resulting from different methods (preventing their integration into *the* comprehensive critical interpretation) dashed any hope of maintaining

as a goal for biblical criticism the establishment of a unified overall methodology. One was (is) confronted with a plurality of coexisting authoritative methodologies and thus with a plurality of moralities of knowledge. Nevertheless, the conception of ethical responsibility remained unchanged; the Academy and the guild continued to act as guardians of morality of knowledge, even though there was now a plurality of specific moralities (and methodologies).

Such an uncertain and self-contradictory equilibrium cannot be maintained indefinitely. The shift of paradigm began to occur in various areas. Deconstructionist⁴ and reader-response critics⁵ emphasized the relativity of any given interpretation, and the role of the readers in the production of meaning (with the text or out of it)—in accord with key aspects of earlier works by specialists in hermeneutics (especially Martin Heidegger,⁶ Hans-Georg Gadamer⁷ and Paul Ricoeur⁸). Simultaneously, semioticians (such as Umberto Eco⁹ and A. J. Greimas)¹⁰ produced semiotic theories that sought to account for the production of meaning through the entire communication process (including enunciator and enunciatee, and even actual author and actual readers) with, as a result, a strong emphasis on the polysemy of any text. More precisely, these semioticians (especially Greimas) underscored the plurality of quite distinct structured dimensions in any given text—each dimension offering to readers the possibility of perceiving a coherent meaning for the text.

Of course, many resist and will continue to resist the introduction into biblical criticism of these deconstructionist, reader-response, and semiotic theories. But a growing number of exegetes are convinced, as I also am, of the necessity of introducing these approaches in biblical criticism, although without knowing where this might lead.

For me, accepting this shift of paradigm (limited at that point to the methodological level) has freed me to study a single dimension of biblical texts in my studies of Paul's letters and of the Gospel according to Matthew.¹¹ Yet, despite my explicit warnings that I was studying a single dimension of the texts, which I called their "systems of convictions," my books were often read as if they were studies of *the* entire meaning of the text. I do not want to blame my readers. In doing this, they were seizing on one dimension of my texts that reflected my own uncertainty about the significance of singling out for study a given dimension of a biblical text. Did I not at least imply that the "system of convictions" of a text is its most fundamental and significant dimension?

The second volume of my work on Matthew was to provide a systematic presentation of Matthew's convictions, as well as an explanation of the relationship of this dimension to other dimensions of Matthew's text. Thus, as I began preparing it, I had to envision a

multidimensional study so as to prevent the confusion that resulted from my preceding works. But, the paradigm shift had not yet fully occurred for me. I still imagined emphasizing the greater significance of one of these: the system of convictions. I had not yet perceived the implications of these methodological moves for the conception of the ethics of interpretation in biblical criticism.

A first step in that direction came for me as a result of being confronted by Peter Haas with the ethical implications of the horrors of the Holocaust.¹² After much resistance and denial, I had to acknowledge, painful as it was, that my studies of Paul and Matthew, despite their explicit rejection of anti-Jewish interpretations, still conveyed anti-Judaistic (latent anti-Semitic) sentiments.¹³

My ethical responsibility as a critical exegete appeared in a new light; exegesis is not merely a matter of the rigorous use of critical methods. Besides my accountability to the Academy and the guild, I am also accountable to Jews who suffer discrimination by Christians, including discrimination at the hands of my readers whom, without realizing it, I encouraged to be anti-Jewish. Although not intentionally, I encouraged to be anti-Jewish. Although not intentionally, and often against our intentional efforts to fight and prevent anti-Jewish interpretations of the New Testament, we Christian exegetes too often end up promoting anti-Judaism in a subtle and thus, unfortunately, most effective way. The nature of the subtle anti-Judaism of many of our exegetical studies (related to the form of our arguments rather than to their content) is discussed in chapter 2. Here it is enough to note that we fail to be accountable to our Jewish brothers and sisters. In the process, I noted that anti-Jewish readings were based on a given dimension of the texts, while other dimensions did not provide a basis for such readings. Yet, I could not do much more than begin to realize that ethical responsibility in biblical criticism might require a multidimensional study.

Almost simultaneously, another confrontation forced me to recognize the much broader scope of our ethical responsibility in our failure to be accountable to those who are directly or indirectly affected by our work and teaching. This confrontation came from African-American students at the Divinity School at Vanderbilt University. Over the years, the admission of African-American students had been encouraged, and we rejoiced at their growing number. African-American professors had been appointed. Several courses included study of the African-American church traditions. Yet the content and form of other courses (e.g., biblical studies) were not affected by the presence of African-American students. Like any other students, they needed to be introduced to the critical study of the Bible, didn't they? But, following one particular incident, they openly expressed how our teaching af-

fected them: It demanded from them the denial of their own experience and identity as members of the African-American community and churches; our teaching was thus fundamentally racist.¹⁴

I took this blunt accusation quite personally; it meant that my teaching in New Testament was fundamentally racist. After initial denials, I realized that they had to be right; I could not deny how African-American students were affected by my teaching. As my practice of critical exegesis (in research and teaching) involuntarily conveyed anti-Judaism, so it involuntarily discriminated against African-Americans, demanding that they abandon their own identity, experience, and concerns.

This acknowledgment led me to the further realization that I had so far avoided being truly confronted by the charge of feminist scholars and students that the practices of male exegetes are fundamentally patriarchal. In response to this charge, I had of course learned to use gender-inclusive language. I had also included in my courses the reading of works by feminist scholars; but these readings were not really integrated into the courses, and thus they challenged the very form of these courses.

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza¹⁵ helped me begin to perceive that all this is a matter of our ethical accountability. Critical exegetes must be accountable to all those who are directly and indirectly affected by their work and teaching, as well as to the Academy and the guild for the critical character of their work. From the perspective of this new understanding of ethical responsibility and accountability in critical exegesis, it is clear that we male European-American exegetes are not accountable to those who are affected by our work. The seriousness of the ethical problem that we have to confront is now fully apparent. Should we not question the integrity of exegetical practices that ultimately demand that Christian feminists, African-Americans, third-world churches, Jews, and many other groups (potentially, anyone who is not a European-American male) renounce their own experiences and their own cultures, forsake their own identities, and deny the validity of their own concerns and interests? Our ethical accountability as male European-American exegetes can no longer be ignored in the present situation.¹⁶ In this situation, third-world churches rapidly develop to the point of encompassing the majority of the Christians in the world, a development due in large part to their proclamation of the Christian faith in terms of their own cultures (and no longer in terms of the Western culture)¹⁷ and in terms of the crying need for justice. In this situation, the African-American churches and their unique characteristics are increasingly acknowledged and respected wherever the fruits of the Civil Rights movement are allowed to mature into a true

reciprocal relationship in which European-American churches and their exegetes slowly (too slowly) are led to recognize that they have much to learn from the African-American churches. In this situation, feminist critics make us aware of the distinctive and central roles and places of women in the development and maintenance of Christian communities that systematically alienated them and continue to alienate them by denying their authority and their identity as women. And finally, in this situation, Jewish scholars, by calling us to join them in remembering the Holocaust, lead us to acknowledge that the anti-Judaism embedded in the New Testament is not a benign and inconsequential feature of these texts, but latent anti-Semitism that easily becomes virulent anti-Semitism.

In such situations as these, how can we ignore our ethical responsibility for exegetes that deny any validity to the experiences, cultural identities, and ethical concerns of these groups? Ignoring this responsibility would make us fail to be accountable not only to all these groups but also to European-American males whom, against the very goal of our teaching, we would condemn to continue to practice injustice and discrimination, to continue to be oppressors, and thus to be alienated from these many brothers and sisters.

Such is the compelling ethical problem in critical exegesis that we can no longer escape: We are not accountable to these groups.

The recognition of this problem raises questions about the ethical responsibility of critical exegetes. What does shifting the conception of ethical responsibility entail? Does the acknowledgment that our exegetes need to be accountable to those who are directly or indirectly affected by our work mean that we should no longer be accountable to the Academy? Schüssler Fiorenza carefully emphasizes the need for both kinds of accountability.¹⁸ But as soon as one seeks to envision how to address the ethical problem identified above, these two kinds of accountability appear to be incompatible.¹⁹

For me not so long ago, the renunciation of my own experience and culture, the forsaking of my identity, and the denial of the validity of my concerns and interests was not a problem (ethical or otherwise). It is what critical exegesis is all about. Critical exegesis should strive to be disinterested, shouldn't it? Is it not true that one has to bracket out one's concerns and interests so as to elucidate as objectively as possible "what the text meant"? Did we not renounce our own concerns and interests so as to practice critical exegesis? So, what could be wrong about asking the same thing from students?

These questions explain why we, male European-American critical exegetes, did not perceive this ethical problem: Our conception of what it is to be "critical" prevented us from seeing. In other words, the

paradigm shift concerning our conception of ethical responsibility entails a shift concerning our conception of "criticism" and "critical exegesis." The necessity of this shift progressively imposed itself upon me as, together with many others, I tried to envision how to be accountable to those affected by our work as male European-American critical exegetes.

The Quest for a Solution

The nature of the ethical problem in (male European-American) exegesis is not easy to elucidate because of the emotional character of the many issues under consideration. Assuming responsibility for the lack of accountability of our exegetical practices involves acknowledging the validity of the cries of those for whom our exegetical practices are racist, sexist, anti-Jewish, or colonialist.²⁰ But this acknowledgment often engenders guilt, which hides rather than reveals the nature of the problem and leads us to devise inappropriate solutions that compound rather than resolve the problem. This was my own experience, which seems to be typical.²¹

My first inclination was to correct the practices for which I felt guilty by striving to make my exegetical work "pro-woman," "pro-African-American," and so forth. In my exegetical work and in my teaching I sought to address their concerns. But it soon appeared that this was not an appropriate solution: Women, African-Americans, Jews, and others remain as much alienated by such an artificial exegetical effort as by our traditional work—as African-American students at Vanderbilt let me know in no uncertain terms.²²

What was wrong? In brief, I conceived of the ethical problem as a failure to address the difficulties experienced by women, African-Americans, and other oppressed groups. (Note that the ethical problem has its roots in "their" difficulties; our sin is a "sin of omission.") Thus, through my corrected and now "righteous" exegetical practices, I "spoke for them" (on their behalf; e.g., by emphasizing the biblical themes that support their causes). I should not have been surprised by the unenthusiastic and often openly negative responses to my well-intentioned efforts by women, African-Americans, and third-world students. It was, after all, a patronizing attitude: It placed them in a subaltern position; I, a European-American male, defined what "their" problem was and provided appropriate solutions for it. Such practices perpetuate the ethical problem: All those outside our group are denied the status of subjects with their own concerns and identities.

When I acknowledged this, it became clear that the ethical problem in our critical exegesis is much more pervasive; it is a structural

this does not mean that we have to act out of guilt. We have much to learn from feminist, African-American, and other advocacy scholars, but we will learn it only by "speaking *with* them" in a dialogue in which each respects the otherness of the others.²⁵ Yet to initiate such a true dialogue is far from easy. Before we can acknowledge and respect the otherness of others, we European-American males must acknowledge and respect our own otherness.²⁶ Thus, though we have ears, we do not hear (cf. Matt. 13:13-15; Rom. 11:7-8) the distinctiveness of the utterances of others; so against our best intentions, we often revert to "speaking for them" (patronizing them) or "listening to them" (coopting them).

"Speaking with them" is possible only after a shift of paradigm on our part, as was the case regarding our perception of the ethical problem itself. The difficulty of this shift of paradigm and its nature becomes even clearer when we consider next what feminist, African-American, and other advocacy scholars tell us regarding the source of our failure in accountability.

The Androcentrism and Eurocentrism of Our Exegetical Practices

What should we learn about our own practices as we dialogue with feminist, African-American, and other advocacy scholars? What are they telling us about our practices? For me, their most important point is that the fundamental problem with our so-called neutral or objective practices of critical exegesis is that they are androcentric (often patriarchal)²⁷ and Eurocentric.²⁸ These terms express the fact that the male and European perspectives, approaches, methods, and interpretations are taken to be normative and universal and therefore posited as the only legitimate ones. We European-American males are thus accused of taking as absolute what is not absolute. We are accused of idolatry.²⁹ Our sin is a twofold idolatry: androcentrism and Eurocentrism.

My own interpretation of Paul's teaching,³⁰ clarifies the validity of this accusation. One of the consequences of idolatry, whatever might be its nature, is the corruption of human relations (e.g., Rom. 1:18-32; Gal. 4:8-9; 5:15, 19-21). Accordingly, the idolatrous character of our critical exegetical practices would explain why they corrupt human relations through racism and patriarchalism, and in other ways. Our failure to be accountable to those affected by our idolatries and our destruction, oppression, and alienation of such groups will continue as long as we are in bondage to these two idols. So we see how serious the problem of our lack of accountability in critical exegesis is; freeing oneself from one's idolatry is not an easy task. Actually, Paul emphasizes

problem that affects all our work. But addressing this problem is not easy, because we often fall into another trap. Once again, my experience seems to be typical.

Because I felt guilty about my previous exegetical practices, I decided that I should totally abandon them to adopt a radically new practice—one that I would attempt to learn from feminist and other advocacy scholars. I felt I should "listen to" them so as to learn both the nature of the ethical problem (still conceived as "their" problem) and the way to address it. Thus, I sought to integrate feminist and African-American insights into my own interpretations; I adopted their inclusive language and even some of their procedures and results.

A willingness to learn from feminist and other advocacy scholars seemed most appropriate to me. Because part of the problem was that the critical exegetical practices of male European-Americans exclude as illegitimate (or uncritical) the biblical interpretations of these other groups, should we not now affirm their validity? In the process, we would affirm the validity of their concerns and interests.³¹ One way to do so would be to renounce the critical criteria of our exegetical methods by which we exclude their interpretations. This would involve redefining our vocation as a "hermeneutical" rather than an "exegetical" one. Is this not what feminist and other advocacy biblical scholars do when they present their works as "hermeneutics"? Is not this redefinition warranted by deconstruction, reader-response criticism, and the theories about the hermeneutical circle? Are not all interpretations hermeneutical in character, that is, interpretations of "what the text means for us"? Thus, should we not abandon critical exegesis and its aspiration to provide an interpretation solidly grounded in the text that excludes uncritical interpretations? Should we not consider our task as a "critical hermeneutics" that would provide a description of the various hermeneutical interpretations of the various groups?

Yet this solution soon appeared to me as problematic as the first one. To begin with, most male European-American exegetes would strongly resist such a proposal because it demands that we abandon our *raison d'être* and our identity as critical exegetes—a signal that this solution is inappropriate. Furthermore, when I claimed that I wanted to "listen to" feminist and other advocacy scholars, I was once again surprised by the negative response from these groups. I finally recognized with their help that through such an approach I was coopting them³² by pretending that I could renounce my own identity and status (including my status as oppressor), and thus I was essentially denying that racism and patriarchalism in critical exegesis are "my" problems as a male European-American.

Of course, we must bear the responsibility for our ethical failure; but

that one cannot free oneself alone; an intervention of the Other is needed.

But are we really trapped in these idolatries? It took me a long time to acknowledge that I was and that I continue to be trapped in them again and again. I was quick to admit guilt for specific androcentric and Eurocentric practices that I struggled to correct by speaking for or listening to those that I had hurt by these practices. It was a matter of refining and purifying specific exegetical practices by making sure that my rigorous use of critical methods would take into account the concerns of feminists and other advocacy scholars. But the more I struggled to eradicate androcentrism, patriarchalism, Eurocentrism, and racism from my critical practices in my research and in the classroom, the more feminist and other advocacy scholars and students accused me of androcentrism and Eurocentrism. Thus, as I reexamined myself, I soon found other specific practices that needed to be corrected . . . and the cycle was beginning again. As Paul said: "I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate" (Rom. 7:15).

The problem was that I was seeking to correct specific androcentric and Eurocentric practices from the perspective of an overall practice that was itself androcentric and Eurocentric. The more we try to overcome androcentric and Eurocentric practices, the more we pretend that our perspective is neutral (nongendered, nonclassist, nonracial, and noncultural), and the more we absolutize our male and European perspective.

From this experience and Paul's description of idolatry, we should at least learn that being freed from our bondage to androcentrism and Eurocentrism does not involve rejecting our male and European perspectives.³¹ According to Paul, as those Jews and Jewish Christians who had made of Torah an idol should not reject Torah, so we should not reject our "maleness" and our "Europeanness." Torah was and continues to be a good gift from God: it is holy, just, and good (Rom. 7:12), insofar as it is not absolutized. Similarly, our maleness and European-ness are good gifts from God, so long as we do not transform them into destructive idols. It is the idolatry alone that needs to be rejected. Thus, according to this interpretation of Paul, we must not only acknowledge but also claim our own "maleness" and "Europeanness," provided that we do so in a "critical" way that prevents their absolutization. This is what I call an "androcritical" attitude. Then, it is hoped, we can be ourselves. We will no longer feel the need to coopt the work of feminist and African-American scholars.

My interpretation of Paul's teaching also convinced me that abandoning my androcentric and Eurocentric idolatries is not something I

can do by myself; it demands the acknowledgment of the role of the Other (and of "others" in their otherness) in my own experience—including in our interpretations. Finally, my interpretation of Paul's teaching makes it clear that overcoming the idolatrous character of my critical exegetical practices is something that I must first do for my own sake, and not only for the sake of those negatively affected by my work. As a result, my patronizing tendencies would be kept in check.

Toward an Ethically Responsible Exegetical Practice: From One-Dimensional to Multidimensional Exegesis

Adopting such an androcritical attitude means that we should reject or abandon *neither* our male European-American perspective *nor* our own critical vocation, which finds expression in our critical exegetical methods. Yet our *practices* of these methods, and thus our conception of what "critical" exegetical practices entail, should be completely reoriented: They must allow us to affirm the legitimacy of a plurality of interpretations—both our own and those of various other groups. If we do so, our interpretations will no longer be androcentric and Eurocentric; we will no longer implicitly or explicitly claim that our own interpretations (whatever they are) are universal—because they strive to establish the single true meaning of the text. But how can we envision such critical exegetical practices?

Here, for me, the work of Mieke Bal was decisive.³² On the basis of semiotic theories, she examines the history of scholarship on Judges 4 and 5, a series of quite different, yet critical, studies of the same text. Taking advantage of the fact that this text includes two parallel stories of Sisera's death (though her proposal applies to any text), she does not seek to show, as is usually done in a critical review of the scholarship, that the very different interpretations of Sisera's death are partially or totally illegitimate (since they result in incompatible interpretations). Rather, she demonstrates that each of these interpretations is as coherent (it accounts for the text as a whole) and critical (legitimate) as the others. For this, she convincingly argues that the differences among these interpretations come from the choice of different "codes" as foci of the critical investigations (the historical, theological, anthropological, or literary code). Each of these codes reflects concerns and interests of certain groups in specific contexts and is studied through the use of a specific critical method. Having established this point, Bal is in a position to acknowledge that each of the "semantic coherences" of the text emphasized by the different critical exegeses is critically legitimate, provided that the exegeses do not make universal claims. Then she can argue for the legitimacy of using other codes (the thematic and gender

codes that represent the concerns and interests of other groups) for interpreting the text.

Bal's work³³ allowed me to understand the significance of Greimas's insistence that any given text is to be conceived of as a plurality of quite distinct structured "meaning-producing dimensions."³⁴ Each of these meaning-producing dimensions offers readers the possibility of perceiving a coherent meaning for the text. Different readers, because of their specific interests, concerns, or backgrounds, perceive different yet coherent meanings in a text (or better, produce these meanings with the text) by selecting one of these dimensions of the text. Thus, a diversity of readings corresponding to the diversity of meaning-producing dimensions of a text can be viewed as potentially legitimate from a semiotic perspective (and also from a historical perspective, as we shall see below).³⁵

One can then envision that the ethical problem in critical exegesis comes from the fact that its "one-dimensional" practices are each conceived as a quest for *the* (single, universally true) semantic coherence of a text. The solution to the ethical problem posed by a one-dimensional critical exegesis appears to be the practice of a "multidimensional critical exegesis."³⁶

This proposal does not demand from us that we abandon our traditional view of our vocation (as chapter 3 discusses); it is still a critical exegesis (rather than a hermeneutics) establishing the legitimacy of interpretations by verifying that they are truly based upon textual evidence and account for a semantic coherence of a given text. But for most of us, the proposed "multidimensional critical exegesis" does not appear to be plausible. Is it not a self-contradiction to say that a "critical exegesis" should be "multidimensional"? The claim by semioticians (Bal and Greimas) that a text is multidimensional³⁷—the basis for this proposal—does not establish the plausibility of such a conception of a text for those who are not semioticians. Does one need to become a semiotician in order to be ethically responsible as a critical exegete? Of course not. What is at stake is a different understanding of the *practice* of critical exegesis, which can be perceived as plausible from the standpoint of any methodology. The only requirement is that we not absolutize our own methodology and thus that we acknowledge the legitimacy of other methodologies. These are the issues that I address in chapter 2.

Yet for another group of male European-American scholars (reader-response and deconstructionist critics), as well as for feminist and other advocacy scholars, this proposal is not plausible, although for opposite reasons: They find suspicious the insistence that a critical study of the Bible should continue to be conceived as an "exegesis" aimed at estab-

lishing legitimate interpretations. Why not define the task of biblical scholarship as a hermeneutical task or as a reader-response criticism? For the reasons mentioned, these suggestions are inappropriate for most male European-American exegetes. The denials of our past exegetical work, and even of our identity, that would be necessary for such a redefinition would lead us to duplicate and perpetuate the ethical problem while pretending to address it. As usual, we would deny the contextual character of our own interpretations—our own perspective as male European-American exegetes. What is needed is a practice of biblical study that accounts for the multiplicity of readings, related to the variety of contexts from which readers read (as the proponents of the various kinds of reader-response criticism emphasize), and also accounts through a "critical exegesis" for the role of the text in the process of reading. A multidimensional critical exegesis, in addition to being based on a plausible view of texts, provides the possibility of accounting for the multiplicity of readings and of recognizing their basic legitimacy.

Are Multidimensional Critical Exegetical Practices Plausible?

This suggestion, and its explanation in chapter 2, will not alleviate all the suspicions that the proponents of biblical scholarship as hermeneutics might have toward a multidimensional conception of critical exegesis. And rightly so. A multidimensional critical exegesis is not in itself a solution to the ethical problem posed by the critical exegetical practices of male European-American exegetes. I underscore in chapter 3 that this "multidimensional exegetical practice" must also be an "androcritical" (contextual) practice, which begins with a critical examination of our own current practices and interpretations as male European-American exegetes. Yet before explaining this latter point, I would need to show the plausibility of conceiving of critical exegesis as multidimensional. The difficulty is that, once again, this plausibility cannot be demonstrated; it will be perceived when the paradigm shift that has transformed our view of ethical responsibility affects other issues.

First, our view of the nature of the "critical interpretation of a text" needs to be transformed so that we might envision the possibility that several different readings are equally legitimate—a perspective without which one cannot conceive of a multidimensional critical exegesis. The question is, What prevents us from recognizing the plausibility of a multidimensional exegesis? Is it an inability to conceive of a text as polysemic, or better, as made up of a multiplicity of meaning-producing

dimensions (a conception which is a necessary presupposition for any multidimensional exegesis)? We can already see that this is certainly not the case, since from the perspective of the traditional paradigm we base our critical exegetical methods on critical methodologies³⁸ that acknowledge the polysemy of many kinds of texts and therefore the potential legitimacy of a plurality of readings. Neither is it an issue concerning the *kind* of critical methodologies and methods we use in our critical exegeses. Rather, it is an issue concerning the role of methodologies and methods in critical exegetical practices. This observation allows us to recognize that envisioning as "critical" a multidimensional exegesis that affirms the equal legitimacy of different readings will occur only insofar as we undergo a *paradigm shift concerning our perception of the roles of different methodologies and our perception of the relationship among the resulting conflicting readings*. This is the issue I address in chapter 2.

A second issue concerns the conception of critical exegetical practices that would truly be ethically accountable to *both* the Academy *and* those who are directly or indirectly affected by it. I anticipate that male European-American exegetes will think that such multidimensional practices amount to abdicating our "critical" responsibility to the Academy. This concern is not unfounded; certain inappropriate forms of multidimensional interpretive practice would have just this unwanted effect. Conversely, I anticipate that feminist and other advocacy scholars will be rightfully suspicious of multidimensional practices by male European-American exegetes: Will they simply be another means for male European-Americans to oppress other groups? Certainly some inappropriate forms of multidimensional practices are as ethically problematic as one-dimensional practices. Envisioning a multidimensional critical practice that will be ethically accountable to both the Academy and those affected by it demands a paradigm shift concerning our perception of the critical task of exegetes, so much so that it might be possible to conceive of it as both critical and "interested."

Such issues seem to invite a theoretical discussion. Yet it is better to be more concrete, since a paradigm shift occurs only when one is confronted by concrete problems that the old paradigm cannot address. Consequently, in the following chapters, in order to clarify why multidimensional critical exegetical practices are plausible, I once again adopt a narrative style: I describe concrete issues that convinced me of the plausibility of such exegetical practices.

NOTES

1. See the description of the historical methodology as a "morality of knowledge" in Van Harvey, *The Historian and the Believer: A Confrontation between the Modern Historian's Principles of Judgment and the Christian's Will-to-Believe* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1966), 102 ff. Yet the fact that each methodology provides a distinct "morality of knowledge" will raise questions that challenge this perspective.
2. Harvey emphasizes the relationship between methodology and "morality of knowledge." Consequently, different methodologies posit different "moralities of knowledge." See Harvey, 102ff.
3. See D. Patte, *What Is Structural Exegesis?* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 1-20.
4. For implications of deconstructionism for biblical studies, see Gary A. Phillips, ed., *Poststructural Criticism and the Bible: Text/History/Discourse, Semeia 51* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990); David H. Fisher, "Self in Text, Text in Self," *Poststructural Criticism*, 137-54; and Phillips's essays, "Exegesis as Critical Praxis: Reclaiming History and Text from a Postmodern Perspective," *Poststructural Criticism*, 7-49; and "Sign/Text/Différance: The Contribution of Intertextual Theory to Biblical Criticism," *Intertextuality* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1991), 78-101. See also David Jobling and Stephen D. Moore, eds., *Poststructuralism as Exegesis, Semeia 54* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), esp. Fred Burnett, "The Undecidability of the Proper Name 'Jesus' in Matthew" (123-144).
5. For examples of reader-response criticism, see Robert Detweiler, ed., *Reader-Response Approaches to Biblical and Secular Texts, Semeia 31* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985), including the articles by Robert M. Fowler, "Who Is 'the Reader' in Reader-Response Criticism?" (5-23); Janice Capel Anderson, "Double and Triple Stories, the Implied Reader, and Redundancy in Matthew" (71-89); Fred W. Burnett, "Prolegomenon to Reading Matthew's Eschatological Discourse: Redundancy and the Education of the Reader in Matthew" (91-109); Gary Phillips, "History and Text: The Reader in Context in Matthew's Parables Discourse" (111-38). See also Robert M. Fowler, *Let the Reader Understand: Reader-Response Criticism and the Gospel of Mark* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991).
6. M. Heidegger, *Being and Time* (London: SCM, 1962).
7. H. G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975).
8. Among his many works addressing this issue, see esp.: Paul Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1974).
9. See esp. Umberto Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978); and idem, *The Role of the Reader* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979).
10. See esp. the comprehensive work in which he brings together the several discrete works on specific aspects of the semiotic phenomenon: A. J. Greimas and J. Courtès, *Semiotics and Language: An Analytical Dictionary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982; original French, 1979). For a systematic introduction to Greimas's semiotics, see D. Patte, *Religious Dimensions of Biblical Texts: Greimas's Structural Semiotics and Biblical Exegesis* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990).

11. See D. Patte, *Paul's Faith and the Power of the Gospel: A Structural Introduction to Paul's Letters* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1983), 1-30, 190-231; passim, where I emphasize the distinction between Paul's system of convictions (the dimension that I study) and his theology (another dimension); and idem, *The Gospel according to Matthew: A Structural Commentary on Matthew's Faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 1-13, passim, where I make similar distinctions and underscore (in italics) that I deal with a single dimension of the text.

12. See Peter Haas, *Morality after Auschwitz: The Radical Challenge of the Nazi Ethic* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988). It is not by chance that Haas's work had such an effect on me. The Holocaust is part of the context from which I write, having been in contact with Jewish refugees (whom my parents helped to escape) during World War II in France and being married to a woman who, unlike other members of her family, escaped it.

13. D. Patte, "Anti-Semitism in the New Testament: Confronting the Dark Side of Paul's and Matthew's Teaching," in "The New Testament and Judaism/Judaism," *Chicago Theological Seminary Register*, 78.1 (1988) 31-52.

14. A charge which, for me, was later confirmed and clarified by the following books (see esp. their introductions): Cain Hope Felder, *Troubling Biblical Water: Race, Class, and Family* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1989); and Cain Hope Felder, ed. *Story the Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991).

15. E. Schüssler Fiorenza, "The Ethics of Interpretation."

16. A situation in which, as Larry Rasmussen writes, "Christianity has shifted decisively from the religion of the rich to the faith of the poor, and the vitality of Christian faith has passed from the European and North American world to peoples in Africa, Latin America, and Asia, to the women's movement most everywhere, and to communities in our own midst who are in touch with these" (*Christianity and Crisis*, May 16, 1988).

17. For instance in Africa, the large majority of Christians belong to "independent churches" (such as the Kibanguist churches in the Congo and Zaire, and the Zionist churches in Southern Africa).

18. E. Schüssler Fiorenza, "The Ethics of Interpretation."

19. This question is not raised in Christopher Rowland and Mark Corner, *Liberating Exegesis: The Challenge of Liberation Theology to Biblical Studies* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox, 1989). This work bypasses the question of the status of critical exegesis and many of the other questions that arise out of my deliberate attempt to raise them from my perspective as a male European-American exegete. Rowland and Corner's distinctive contribution is to elucidate the questions that are raised by the uses of the Bible in liberation theology, which they carefully analyze.

20. I became aware of the colonialist character of our exegeses when students from Africa (where I lived for two years) led me to read post-colonialist studies as well as works on African religious traditions. See Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon, 1978); idem, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983); and idem, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Alfred Knopf 1994); Kwame Anthony Appiah, *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); Laura E.

Donaldson, *Decolonizing Feminisms: Race, Gender, and Empire-Building* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1992); Immeleng J. Mosala, *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology in South Africa* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1989); André Karamaga, *L'Evangile en Afrique: Rapports et continuité* (Yves/Morges: Cabédita, 1990). See also the broader work by R. S. Sugirtharajah, ed., *Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1991).

21. My experience corresponds to the analytical categories, "speaking for others," "listening to them," and "speaking to them" (or, better, "speaking with them") proposed by Gayatri C. Spivak to describe typical attitudes of people toward those they consider as subalterns. Spivak proposed these categories in her study of the "representations" (either political "speaking for" [*vertretung*] or artistic or philosophical re-presentation [*darstellung*] following a "listening to") of women as subaltern subjects in colonial India by British authorities or artists and philosophers (as undeconstructed subjects). "Speaking with" does not exclude representation but takes place when the process of subject-construction (both that of the speaker and that of the one who is spoken to) and the "interests" involved are made explicit. From my perspective, "speaking with the other" happens when one simultaneously recognizes the otherness of the other and affirms it by recognizing, thanks to it, one's own otherness, i.e., one's own different identity. See Gayatri C. Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. G. Nelson and L. Grossberg (London: Macmillan Co., 1988), 277-313 (esp. 295). See also Spivak, *In Other Worlds* (New York: Methuen, 1987), esp. "French Feminism in an International Frame," 134-53. Spivak's categories are used by Western biblical scholars in South Africa, especially Jill Arnett, "Feminism, Post-Structuralism and the Third World: An Assessment of Some Aspects of the Work of Gayatri Spivak," (unpublished paper, Critical Studies Group, University of Natal at Pietermaritzburg); and Gerald West, *Contextual Bible Study* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 1993), esp. 14-17, yet the rest of the book is an implementation of "speaking with (ordinary readers)." See also Gerald O. West, *Biblical Hermeneutics of Liberation: Modes of Reading the Bible in the South African Context* (Pietermaritzburg, South Africa: Cluster Publications, 1991). Furthermore, this was also the experience of the male European-American scholars who participated in the conference on "ethical responsibilities and practices in biblical criticism" sponsored by the Lilly Endowment and held at Vanderbilt University in March 1991. Once again, let me underscore that the insights in this section have been thought through with Gary Phillips and are as much his as mine.

22. It should be clear that these comments do not deny that male European-American exegetes have the responsibility for elucidating in the Bible the themes and issues of justice for the oppressed. This is what Norman Gottwald has done in an exemplary way in all his work, including *The Tribes of Yahweh: A Sociology of the Religion of Liberated Israel, 1250-1050 B.C.E.* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1979); and what is acknowledged by the publication of David Jobling, Peggy L. Day, Gerald T. Sheppard, eds., *The Bible and the Politics of Exegesis: Essays in Honor of Norman K. Gottwald on His Sixty-fifth Birthday* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1991). The problem has to do with the way in which we perform these studies (our practice). It is

one thing for us to study the themes and issues of justice, because it is "their" problem as poor and oppressed, but it is quite another thing to study it as "our" problem. This better practice is exemplified by multivoiced publications, such as Norman Gottwald and Richard Horsley, eds., *The Bible and Liberation: Political and Social Hermeneutics* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1993); and Willy Schottroff and Wolfgang Stegemann, eds., *God of the Lowly: Socio-Historical Interpretations of the Bible* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1984). The condition is, of course, that they do not fall into the next trap: being content to "listen to" others.

23. This is the overall approach of Rowland and Corner (*Liberating Exegesis*), which, at one point, I thought was the appropriate response. What follows explains why I abandoned it. As David Rensberger expresses it in a review, their work is "beyond exegesis and hermeneutics." For me (unlike Rensberger), this is a part of the problem. Yet, once again, the work of Rowland and Corner remains very helpful.

24. As feminist, womanist, mujerista, African-American, and Hispanic-American scholars emphasized at the above-mentioned Vanderbilt conference in March 1991.

25. Cf. the discussion of the different types of relation to the "other" in Enrique Dussel, *Philosophy of Liberation* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books) ch. 2, "From Phenomenology to Liberation," 16-66, where the author challenges the "centeredness" and the structure of "sameness" of North Atlantic ontology. See also the works by Marcel, Levinas, and Ricoeur cited in n. 14 of the introduction, above.

26. See Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 113-68, *passim*.

27. As feminists have long stressed. See Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*.

28. Cf. Felder, *Story the Road We Trod*, 6-7.

29. An accusation which is explicitly made, for instance, in *The Road to Damascus: Kairós and Conversion*, a document signed by Third-World Christians from El Salvador, Guatemala, Korea, Namibia, Nicaragua, Philippines, South Africa (London: CIIR, Washington: Center of Concern, London: Christian Aid, 1989).

30. See, Patte *Paul's Faith*, 257-77 (on Rom. 1:18-22 and 7:7-25).

31. This is what Gary Phillips and I expressed in "A Fundamental Condition for Ethical Accountability in the Teaching of the Bible by White Male Exegetes: Recovering and Claiming the Specificity of Our Perspective," *Scriptura: Journal of Bible and Theology in Southern Africa*, Special Issue S9 (1992), 7-28.

32. Esp. Mieke Bal, *Murder and Difference: Gender, Genre, and Scholarship on Sisera's Death* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988). See also Mieke Bal, *Lethal Love: Feminist Literary Readings of Biblical Love Stories* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987); and idem, *Death and Dissymmetry: The Politics of Coherence in the Book of Judges* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

33. Bal's above-mentioned works, and also Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1985).

34. A phrase that I use to express what Greimas underscores in his semiotic theory (a metatheory that is best designated as a semio-literary theory, since it provides an overall model accounting for a great diversity of literary theories) by speaking of "meaning" as a "meaning-effect" produced ("generated") by readers with a multidimensional text, or by speaking of the phenomenon of "textualization" (how a "meaningful text" is produced by readers on the basis of one or another of the

dimensions). See Greimas and Courtès, *Semiotics and Language*, 133-34, 187-88, 287-93, 341, *passim*; and Patte, *Religious Dimensions of Biblical Texts* (the entire book is focused on this issue). Although, following Greimas, I emphasize therein four broad meaning-producing dimensions, it should be clear that these are actually categories of dimensions, each including quite a number of more specific structured dimensions, as the concluding and more technical part of the book explains.

35. Bal's point in *Murder and Difference*, regarding the diverse scholarly interpretations of Judges 4 and 5, can be illustrated by considering the diversity of recent interpretations of any biblical text. For instance, about the different scholarly interpretations of the Gospel according to Luke, one could say, of course, that one of these different interpretations is right and that all the others are wrong. This is what is usually done in review articles or in the introductory chapter of a new scholarly work. Yet one can recognize, following Bal, that through the use of different methodologies, the different studies elucidate different "codes"—or what I prefer to call different "meaning-producing dimensions." But we can go even one step further. Below, I pair studies using the same methodologies that reach quite different conclusions regarding the significance of the text. Does this mean that one is right and the other wrong? Actually, it could be shown that they focus on different features of the text, on different subcodes, that I would still consider to be different "meaning-producing dimensions."

Thus, Jean-Noël Aletti (*L'art de raconter Jésus Christ: L'écriture narrative de l'évangile de Luc* [Paris: Seuil, 1989]), Robert C. Tannehill (*The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation, Volume 1: The Gospel according to Luke* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986]), and John Darr (*On Character Building: The Reader and the Rhetoric of Characterization in Luke-Acts* [Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox, 1992]) use a narrative/rhetorical methodology; but because they define it in different ways, they elucidate different dimensions of the Gospel and reach different conclusions regarding its significance. Similarly, Jean Delorme (*Au risque de la parole: Lire les évangiles* [Paris: Seuil, 1991]), 93-124; and Daniel Patte (*Structural Exegesis for New Testament Critics* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990] 99-118), propose two "semantic" analyses, which are different, because they are focused on distinct semantic features (figuralization and thematization, respectively). Agnès Gueuret, *L'engendrement d'un récit: L'évangile de l'enfance selon saint Luc* (Paris: Cerf, 1983), and Louis Panier, *La naissance du fils de Dieu: Sémiotique et théologie discursive. Lecture de Luc 1-2* (Paris: Cerf, 1991) analyze the discursivization of the text, but from two different perspectives, and thus focus on distinct codes. Finally, Jane Schaberg, "Luke," in *The Women's Bible Commentary*, Carol Newsom and Sharon Ringe, eds. (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox; London: SPCK, 1992) 275-97; idem, *The Illegitimacy of Jesus* (New York: Crossroad, 1990); and Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in Matthew and Luke* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1977), both of whom use literary-historical approaches, obviously consider different meaning-producing dimensions! Otherwise, they could not support with evidence contradictory conclusions.

36. For short examples of "multidimensional exegeses" that affirm the legitimacy of several different (and even contradictory) readings, see Timothy B.

Cargal, "His Blood Be Upon Us and Upon Our Children: A Matthean Double Entendre?" *NTS* 37 (1991) 101-12; and Daniel Patte, "Bringing Out of the Gospel-Treasure What Is New and What Is Old: Two Parables in Matthew 18-23," *Quarterly Review* 10/3 (1990) 79-108.

37. This is also the claim of postmodern critics, such as Michel de Certeau, *Heterologies: Discourse on the Other* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986); and Jay Clayton, *The Pleasures of Babel: Contemporary American Literature and Theory* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

38. I presuppose a clear distinction between "methodology" and "method." As I use it in this book, a methodology is the theoretical basis (including an epistemology) of a set of critical methods. I limit my discussion to two methodologies: the historiographical methodology (that encompasses the traditional historical-critical methods) and the semio-literary methodology (that encompasses most recent literary and semio-structural methods). Despite their great diversity, they share the same kind of epistemology. Other methodologies (such as the sociological-anthropological one) are no less important. They are not discussed here simply because their status is not clear for me. Although at times they are presented as independent methodologies, they are often conceived as subcategories of the historiographical (in the case of sociological methodologies) or semio-structural methodologies (in the case of anthropological ones).

2. A Quest for Accountability: Multidimensional Exegetical Practices

Chapter 1 has shown the ethical urgency of envisioning a different kind of critical exegetical practice. This appears to us, male European-American exegetes, when we become aware through a paradigm shift that ethical responsibility includes accountability not merely to the Academy, but also to those affected by our work. Since our primary failure concerns our accountability to those who have interpretations different from ours, I proposed that the way of correcting this ethical failure might be exegetical practices that would affirm the legitimacy of different interpretations—multidimensional practices. Yet the plausibility of this proposal is far from obvious: It will make sense only insofar as we undergo a paradigm shift concerning our perception of the roles of different methodologies and our perception of the relationship among the resulting conflicting readings.

This paradigm shift happened to me as I strove to determine how to study and teach "discipleship" according to the Gospel of Matthew while preparing a book on this topic¹ and searching for a way of teaching that would be accountable to the very diverse students in my classes. Thus, once again, I tell the story of how my perception of the practice of critical exegesis was progressively transformed, so much so that I could accept the plausibility of "multidimensional" and "interested" critical exegetical practices. This is also how I envisioned the *possibility* that multidimensional critical practices would be ethically accountable provided that their "interested" character be clearly acknowledged.

"Go and Teach" but "You Shall Not Be Called Masters": The Multidimensionality of a Text

My study of discipleship began with the deliberate identification and investigation of tensions among components of the teaching about