

tual contexts of knowledge and the contributions made by interpreters to the meaning of what they interpret. In other ways, however, the postcritical rules appear *premodern*: they describe themselves as rules of *reasoning* that serve the theological and moral purposes of particular traditions of scriptural interpretation. The postcritical rules belong, in other words, neither to postmodernity nor to premodernity, but rather to a dialogue that is now unfolding between a contemporary family of scholars and their scriptural traditions.

Saving my comments about these scholars for Chapter 1 and for the introductions to each section of the book, I will take the time here only to acknowledge the contributions they have all made to the general development of this project, however much they may be innocent of claims I have made about them. My thanks go the Research Council of Drew University and to the Spencer Foundation for supportive grants; to the Reverend Lawrence Boadt, C.S.P., my editor at Paulist Press, for gentle guidance; to Paula Massa of Drew University for word processing; and to my wife, Vanessa L. Ochs, for editing my editings.

I lovingly dedicate this volume to my parents, whose marriage commingled the energies of reason and of faith in a paradigmatically postcritical way.

Chapter One

AN INTRODUCTION TO POSTCRITICAL SCRIPTURAL INTERPRETATION

PETER OCHS

AN OVERVIEW OF THE POSTCRITICAL APPROACH

"Postcritical scriptural interpretation" refers to an emergent tendency among Jewish and Christian text scholars and theologians to give rabbinic and ecclesial traditions of interpretation both the benefit of the doubt and the benefit of doubt: the former, by assuming that there are dimensions of scriptural meaning which are disclosed only by way of the hermeneutical practices of believing communities and believing traditions of Jews or Christians; the latter, by assuming, in the spirit of post-Spinozistic criticism, that these dimensions may be clarified through the disciplined practice of philological, historical and textual/rhetorical criticism. Among Christian scholars, this tendency emerges, illustratively but not exclusively, in what Hans Frei terms the attempt to recover the scriptures' *sensus literalis* or in what George Lindbeck has called a "cultural-linguistic" approach to interpreting church doctrine. Among Jewish scholars, the tendency emerges, for example, in Moshe Greenberg's "holistic" method of interpreting scriptural texts, David Weiss Halivni's examination of the rabbinic principles of legal (*halakic*) exegesis or also in Michael Fishbane's study of "intra-scriptural midrash."¹

The Christian scholars whose work is represented in this volume tend to identify in the scriptural narrative a dimension of unre-

duced meaning that stands the tests of both critical scholarship and of faith. They tend to interpret the plain sense of the scriptural text as the text's meaning for a normative community of Christian interpreters. Unlike strictly modernist interpreters, they thereby practice what the semiotic philosopher Charles Peirce would call a three-part hermeneutic: claiming that the *text* (the first part) has its *meaning* (the second) *for a normative community* (the third), rather than identifying the meaning of the text with some historical or cognitive "sense" that is available to any educated reader. Following this approach, these postcritical Christian scholars tend to argue that questions of truth may be raised only within the context of a normative community's exegetical practices. These scholars refrain from adopting a prioristic methods of resolving competing claims among various normative communities. Instead, some tend to advocate an ethnographic method of understanding other communities in terms of the multiplicity of their practices and of their complex conceptual structures. While taking pains to avoid repeating what they consider the errors of reductionism, these scholars attempt to promote dialogue among practitioners of the various scriptural traditions. To locate a common language of discourse, they examine shared textual sources and layers of shared practice and, therefore, of shared meaning.

The postcritical Christian scholars have a special interest in the exegetical practices of rabbinic Judaism. They speak, for one, of a need to reappraise those tendencies in patristic theology which encouraged the delegitimation of Judaism and, with it, the mistreatment of Jews *and* the misrepresentation of Christianity's Jewish origins. At the same time, they speak of the "midrashic method" of the rabbis as a prototype for their own emergent methods of scriptural exegesis.

Stimulated by developments within the traditions of both rabbinic and modern academic scholarship, the Jewish scholars represented in this volume are concerned to identify specific elements of this rabbinic practice of scriptural interpretation, or of the related practices of Jewish exegetes trained in the rabbinic methods. They make non-reductionistic use of the tools of critical scholarship—historical, philological and textual—to identify the hermeneutical

rules which emerge in rabbinic practice but which may possibly be adapted to or observed in other practices as well. These rules may provide the basis for dialogue among Jewish and Christian postcritical scholars, since they belong both to the ethnographic description of rabbinic Judaism and, when examined separately, to any of several contemporary projects of hermeneutical reconstruction.

The scholars represented in this volume do not necessarily describe their work as part of any larger movement, in particular, of a postcritical movement. There is as yet no generally recognized terminology for describing their several but related methods of interpreting scriptural narrative. Are these methods of narrative or ethnographic or pragmatic or performative or postcritical interpretation? I hope that this collection of representative essays will verify my own claims that these scholars share a family of methods, that it is helpful to call these "postcritical methods," and that it is helpful to isolate a paradigmatic set of rules for postcritical scriptural interpretation. Should my own claims prove unconvincing, I trust that readers will nonetheless find these essays of value in themselves, as individually powerful illustrations of recent trends in scriptural hermeneutics.

A HISTORY OF THIS PROJECT

This collection represents an expanded, literary version of a more intimate dialogue that took place in 1987–88 after Moshe Greenberg's Yale faculty seminar on methods of biblical interpretation. Greenberg, the late Hans Frei, George Lindbeck, Steven Fraade and I met several times to explore the relations between Greenberg's "holistic" method of Bible interpretation and Frei's "realistic" method.

Greenberg has introduced his holistic method as an alternative to what, in a 1980 essay, he calls the "two opposed axioms [that] have served, historically, for the interpretation of the Bible: one theological, the other historical-analogical."¹² He explains:

The theological [axiom] maintains that without insight gained from faith in the divine origin of Scripture, its message cannot be understood. . . . Historically, the product of

this axiom has usually been an exegesis that puts into Scripture what ought to be believed rather than attending to what it says.²

The historical-analogical axiom arises as a reaction to this.

The reaction, which reached fullest articulation in ch. vii of Spinoza's *Theological-Political Tractate* (first printing, 1670), insisted that nothing but what Scripture itself revealed of its sense might be used in interpreting it. The ordinary process of induction, so fruitful in arriving at an understanding of nature, was adequate for—was indeed the only legitimate basis of—interpreting the Bible.³

... Having voted for scientific universality, the interpretation of Scripture became linked in the 19th century to the career of literary-historical interpretation at large. The analogy of the latter was decisive for the former: "... The character of a particular party of the OT cannot be decided by an *a priori* argument as regards what it *must* be; it can only be determined by an application of the canons of evidence and probability universally employed in historical or literary investigation."⁴

Noting increasing scholarly dissatisfaction with the reductionistic tendencies of this modern axiom—its tendency to narrow literary options to those already available in contemporary western literature—Greenberg proposes his alternative:

... a holistic interpretation, "emphasizing the organic or functional relation between parts and wholes" (Webster). As the religious person approaches the text open to God's call, so must the interpreter come 'all ears' to hear what the text is saying. ... For an axiom he [or she] has the working hypothesis that the text as he has it has been designed to convey a message, a meaning. For if it does have design and meaning, they will be discovered only by effort expended to justify such an assumption.⁵

To guard, finally, against uncritical acceptance of established or *ad hoc* readings, the holistic interpreter "appropriates something of the historical-analogical [axiom], namely, the inference from the text itself of principles of its interpretation."⁶ This is, through historical-philological work, to reconstitute the range of possible significations inherent in the text at the time "when it had reached its present disposition."⁷

As presented in *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative*, Frei's critique of what he calls the tradition of "mediating interpretation"⁸ provides a logical-semiotic framework applicable as well to Greenberg's critique of the historical-analogical axiom. Frei argues that, emerging in the eighteenth century with John Locke and the latitudinarians in England and the neologians in Germany, this tradition sought to mediate between the hermeneutical and theological extremes of an "orthodox dogmatism and [the naturalists'] radical skepticism about revelation"—that is, between the "rigorous affirmation and denials of the historical positivity of revelation."⁹ The mediators

tended to insist that belief in the factual occurrences reported in the Bible, especially those connected with Jesus, was indispensable. At the same time they either said or hinted broadly that the religious meaning or truth communicated through these events must be understood by reference to a content of religion and morality broader than the Bible.¹⁰

Frei argues that the mediators' mediation was illusory, because it retained the semiotic premises that generated the dialectic of orthodoxy and naturalism in the first place. These were the premises that the ostensive reference of scripture can be separated from its explicative sense and that its meaning is to be identified with ostensive reference. The mediators claimed that the stories of scripture point to their meanings referentially, but that this reference is ideal, appearing in the text as a token of some universally generalizable truths of experience. Dichotomizing text and referent in this way and privileging the latter, the mediators treated their preferred method of identifying reference as if it were foundational: as if, in

other words, mediating theology were a privileged means of identifying the meaning of scriptures. Frei's critique thus offers a framework for Greenberg's. Modernist readers, like the mediators, locate the meaning of scripture in an ostensive referent "behind" the biblical text: in antecedent historical events, in an authorial intentionality or in a conceptual order to which these readers have privileged access.

Like Greenberg's, Frei's alternative to the modernist reading is to relocate meaning within the biblical text itself in its intratextual context. Following Erich Auerbach,¹¹ he seeks to recover the premodern practice of reading the biblical text as "realistic narrative." The Bible is to be read as a collection of stories that are "history-like," not because they point outside themselves to a privileged realm of real events, but because they portray lives lived in a way that reshapes the descriptive and performative languages of the community of biblical interpreters. This is history as paradigm. The question Greenberg put to his holistic method, however, may also be put to Frei's notion of realistic narrative: "How can such an approach be guarded against uncritical acceptance of things as they are, and against reading in *ad hoc* explanations or making fanciful connections?"¹² Greenberg's response is to "appropriate something of the historical-analogical [approach], namely, the inference from the text itself of principles of its interpretation."¹³ The goal is to expand our attentiveness to the range of semiotic possibilities latent in the text as given: not by reading back to some antecedent ground against which the text can be measured, but by reading forward from the text in its philological-literary-historical context to the variety of environments in which it can be legitimately interpreted. Frei's method is, similarly, to look for semiotic richness within the text rather than outside it and to locate meaning in the relation between the text and its community of interpreters rather than between the text and some antecedent ground.

While similar, these two responses to modernity are not identical. In our Yale dialogue, the subtle differences between them were displayed in subtly different descriptions of what it means to return from ostensive reference back to the "plain sense" of scripture. As I recall our discussions, Frei, and to an extent Lindbeck, said that

"plain sense" reading respected the integrity of the words of a scriptural text in its intratextual context *and* displayed the performative force of that text as token of an authoritative community's code of religious behavior. They argued, in sum, that the plain sense of the biblical text *is* its meaning for the authoritative community of interpreters. Greenberg, generally supported by Fraade, on the other hand, tended to distinguish plain-sense and performative (or interpretive) readings, limiting the plain-sense or *peshat* to that aspect of the text which, in the integrity of its intratextual context, rendered all reference possible.¹⁴ In other words, Greenberg reserved the notion of plain-sense for that as yet presemantic or uninterpreted field of meanings from which all meaningful interpretations could be distinguished. In a tradition of Jewish hermeneutics, this is the way he guarded against the foundational or dogmatic attempts of traditional and modern readers to replace the text itself with *their* privileged readings of it, whether historical, legal or theological. Frei, on the other hand, applied the notion of plain-sense to that one meaningful interpretation among others that would serve as a reliable code of behavior for the community of believers. In a tradition of Christian hermeneutics, this is the way he guarded against modernist efforts to distinguish the text in its ostensibly *literal* and thus objective meaning from the text in its performative and thus merely subjective meanings.

Our dialogue never blurred the potential differences between Frei's and Greenberg's approaches. At the same time, the dialogue always worked as a dialogue: each text scholar respected the concerns that moved the other. This indicated to me that all four scholars discussed their differences with respect to commonly held assumptions about what was at stake today in the study of biblical hermeneutics. Before exploring differences among individual scholars or between Jewish and Christian scholars, I was therefore moved, as a preliminary exercise, to identify the assumptions these scholars shared. My first hunch—and the one which led me to collect this volume of essays—was that they shared in some version of the approach to scriptural interpretation that I had first encountered in the rabbinic studies of Max Kadushin, z"l, my teacher at the Jewish Theological Seminary in the early 1970s.

Through a series of six books, published between 1932 and 1987,¹⁵ Kadushin sought to describe the complex conceptual structures of rabbinic Judaism. His method was to identify the collection of rabbinic exegetes as a community of interpreters whose work provided the context in which scriptural texts had meaning for the Jewish people. He argued that this meaning was embodied in the practice of rabbinic exegesis itself and that the rules which informed this practice represented the conceptual order of rabbinic Judaism. He devoted most of his work to examining these rules by examining the system of virtues, or what he called "value-concepts," that were displayed in rabbinic literature. Kadushin believed his work challenged those who assume that conceptual order is to be understood only on what he called a philosophical model. He argued that this assumption leads to one of two errors: either imposing an extraneous conceptual scheme on rabbinic Judaism, or else denying that rabbinic Judaism displays any conceptual order. Instead, he examined religions as indigenous systems of value-concepts. The scholar's task, he said, is to observe how these concepts interrelate with one another and how they guide concrete behavior.

After the Yale seminar, I collected more examples of recent Jewish and Christian studies that might share in Kadushin's general approach, and I attempted to reduce these examples to their shared rules of inquiry.¹⁶ As reported in this collection, I have found that Kadushin's work displayed rules of inquiry that were similar to those displayed in the works of Greenberg, Frei, Lindbeck and Fraade and of eight additional Jewish and Christian scholars. Borrowing a term from Lindbeck's book, *The Nature of Doctrine*,¹⁷ I labeled the approach they all shared "postcritical" inquiry. The label is not itself compelling; until something better comes along, however, it serves to mark the facts that these scholars share some interests and that someone believes they share a rule of interpretation.

In his book, Lindbeck contrasts the "cultural-linguistic" approach of postcritical (or "postliberal") theology with precritical "propositionalist" and critical "experiential-expressivist" approaches. According to Lindbeck, the propositionalists are tradi-

tionalists who read church doctrines as "truth claims about objective realities" and scriptures as referential signs of those claims.¹⁸ He says the experiential-expressivists are liberal scholars, for whom "doctrines [are] . . . nondiscursive symbols of inner feelings, attitudes or existential orientations."¹⁹ They read scriptures as non-referential signs (for example, metaphors) that give expression to "common core experiences" that are available to all humans at all times.²⁰ According to the "cultural-linguistic" alternative, "meaning is constituted by the uses of a specific language." Scriptures therefore display their meaning intratextually, which means within the context of scripture as a system of symbols. These symbols are to be interpreted by the community for which they are meaningful as rules of conduct: first, the conduct of scriptural reading itself, and, then, the everyday conduct that is enjoined by this reading.

In Lindbeck's terms, then, Kadushin was a postcritical scholar. The "propositionalists" against whom he argued were the philosophers who imposed extraneous conceptual schemes on the rabbinic texts, claiming that the texts referred ostensibly to the objective meanings of scripture. The "experiential-expressivists" were the philosophers (and irrationalists) who denied rabbinic Judaism displayed any conceptual order; for them, the rabbinic texts expressed either the rabbis' subjective beliefs or else the root experiences that are common to all humanity. Against these two approaches, Kadushin offered his "cultural-linguistic" alternative: for the rabbis, scripture was a system of symbols, or value-concepts, whose meanings were displayed, within the rabbinic community, in its everyday and its scholarly conduct.

I believe Kadushin's approach is refined in the postcritical Jewish and Christian interpretations collected in this volume. There are, indeed, differences between the Jewish and Christian participants in this collection, and these differences present a significant subject for future study. For now, however, my immediate concern is to attend only to the postcritical tendencies shared by both communities of scholars. These tendencies do not pertain to the everyday practices of either tradition, but only to either tradition's repertory of rules for self-correction. Without blurring distinctions between the commu-

nal practices of Jews and Christians, the goal of this study is to show how both can make use of comparable tools for repairing those practices today.

THE RULES OF POSTCRITICAL SCRIPTURAL INTERPRETATION

In this long section, I take up the technical question of what general tendency of interpretation may be exhibited, in different particular ways, in the works of Jewish and Christian scriptural interpretation represented in this collection. My approach is, first, to select five representatives of the postcritical approach. Among Christian hermeneuts, these are Frei and Lindbeck, whose work is closely intertwined and whose differences represent principally a division of scholarly labor between historical and doctrinal/interpretive studies. Among Jewish hermeneuts, these are Fraade, Fishbane and Halivni, whose independent studies illustrate what I consider the moderate, radical and conservative modalities of Jewish postcritical interpretation.²¹ I then retell what I consider the most critical steps in each of their arguments, largely as presented in the essays included in this volume, but with some additions from other writings of theirs. Since their arguments are complex, this retelling may serve some readers as a simpler introduction to their work. My own purpose is, of course, more tendentious, since I am not merely describing but also arguing that their arguments display a consistent pattern of postcritical interpretation. I redescribe this pattern in semiotic terms, which I borrow in part from the philosophy of Charles Sanders Peirce.

Frei's critique of mediating theology provides a point of departure for introducing the formal, semiotic model of postcritical interpretation. In Peirce's terms, Frei has introduced a distinction between the biblical text, as a *sign*, and two different ways of mapping its meaning. The way taken by the mediating theologians is to suggest that a given text simply refers to a given meaning. This is, in the language of the French semiotician de Saussure, to draw a two-part distinction between signifier (*signe*) and signified (*signifié*). In these terms, the mediators placed the signified, as ostensive referent, outside the signifier the way we would say, for example, that the exit sign in a theater indicates the way to go but is not itself that way, nor

part of that way. According to Peirce, some signs (the ones he calls *indices* or *indexicals*) work this way, but verbal signs generally do not. Verbal signs do not merely point away from themselves, and they do not have merely one referent or object. Instead, he says, they are genuine representations, or *symbols*. This means that they are signs that refer to some object or referent only with respect to some mode of interpretation (or what he calls some *interpretant*, or interpreting agency or mind). Through this definition, Peirce indicates his claim that verbal signs normally have more than one possible referent and that a given mode of interpretation offers a means of distinguishing among a field of possible referents. This claim leads to a triadic semiotic model of the interpretation of verbal symbols. In this model, a symbol is a *sign* (1), that displays its *meaning* (2), with respect to some particular *interpretant* (3).²²

In these terms, we may describe postcritical interpretation as a critique of attempts to apply an inadequate, dyadic semiotic model to the interpretation of genuine symbols, such as biblical texts.

The first stage of postcritical scriptural interpretation is to identify mediating or modern interpreters as interpreters who reduce biblical interpretation to a dyadic semiotic by assimilating the mediating or modern interpretant of a biblical text to its meaning or referent. This is to treat the biblical text as if it had a referent independently of any particular interpretant and as if this referent were intrinsically mediating or consistent with a modern understanding. It might be, for example, to identify the "meaning" of Exodus 14 exclusively with the historical referent of "a tidal event in the Sea of Reeds in the year 1534 BCE," or with the conceptual referent of "the power of hope to liberate those in spiritual bondage."

The second stage of postcritical scriptural interpretation is to identify the consequences of a dyadic scriptural semiotic. These are to introduce a series of dichotomizations that lack warrant in the biblical texts—between text and ostensive referent; between the text's reference and its performative or, in J.L. Austin's term, its perlocutionary force;²³ between the intrinsic meaning of the text and its meaning for the contemporary interpreter; and between literary and historical, "subjective" and "objective," or "scientific" and "religious" methods of biblical interpretation.

The third stage of interpretation is to locate signs of a triadic

semiotic within the biblical text itself, in particular as it is read in the primordial communities of rabbinic or of Christian interpreters. Such a semiotic provides general rules of interpretation which, when defined in the contexts of contemporary study, restore the activities of mediation which are missing from modernist practices of interpretation. Postcritical scholars define and refine these rules in ways that address the particular instances of modernist interpretation that concern them. As a result, there is no single, postcritical model of scriptural interpretation, but, rather, a family of models, each of which may be redescribed in terms of this three-stage pattern of postcritical interpretation.

CHRISTIAN POSTCRITICAL INTERPRETATION IN THE WORKS OF FREI AND LINDBECK

Frei's essay on "The 'Literal Reading' of Biblical Narrative in the Christian Tradition" and Lindbeck's excerpt from *The Nature of Doctrine* illustrate what I consider the three prototypical stages of postcritical scriptural interpretation.

Frei's critique of mediating theology provides the central paradigm for what is logically, but not rhetorically, the *first stage of his argument*. As described above, Frei criticizes the mediators for introducing a dichotomy between the biblical text and its ostensive referent and for privileging the latter. Extending his criticism forward, he describes contemporary phenomenological hermeneutics as the latest expression of the mediating tendency. Frei notes that, as practiced by Paul Ricoeur, David Tracy and others, phenomenological hermeneutics introduces an empirically unwarranted disjunction between texts, as "discourse," and the consciousness which interprets them, or "understanding." To mediate the two, the hermeneutics refer to the text's "power of disclosure," through which it reveals to the understanding worlds of meaning otherwise hidden within discourse. Frei argues that, as shown by the deconstructionists, this attempted mediation is introduced, by *force majeure*, into an interpretive scheme which in fact precludes genuine mediation. In the manner of a Cartesian project, the scheme has an Archimedean point: its unquestioned adoption of the category of "self-presence," of which "understanding" is the prototypical manifesta-

tion. Once self-presence is made the only agent of meaning, interpretation is reduced to the terms of a binary opposition between mere presence (as silent or undisclosed signification) and self-presence (or self-referential signification). In other words, text and reader are as isolated as windowless monads or as speakers of foreign tongues without an interpreter. The text's capacity for "disclosure" is supposed to bridge the gap, but—for Frei and the deconstructionists—this reduces to the reader's capacity to attribute his or her own form of self-presence to the text, rereading the text's signifiers as metaphors for elements in a newly constructed, self-referential system of meanings. The text lacks its own hermeneutic agency.

In the *second stage of his argument*, Frei finds a context for this dichotomous move within the types of interpretation that were available within traditional Christian readings of scripture. He calls this interpretation literal, typological and prescriptive. Beginning with the letters of Paul, Christians have traditionally read the stories of the life of Jesus literally, interpreted it as an antitype of the "Old Testament" texts as types, and adopted it as prescriptive for their communal life. While reading the Jewish scripture allegorically, patristic interpreters read the gospel story in its plain sense: "Jesus' . . . is the subject, the agent, and patient of these stories . . . and the descriptions of events, sayings, personal qualities, and so forth, became literal by being firmly predicated of him."²⁴ In modern times, however, the persistence of allegorical readings of the Jewish scriptures has become problematic. Without allegorical interpretation, there may be no way to maintain both Testaments in the canon and read both literally. It does not seem possible, however, to maintain allegorical readings and also acknowledge the autonomy of the Jewish scriptural tradition. Moreover, allegorical reading of the "Old Testament" sets a precedent for allegorical readings of the New Testament as well. Frei's thesis is that liberal readings of scripture since the reformation have tended to follow this precedent: phenomenological hermeneutics, in particular, read the gospel accounts as types of which some conceptually articulated universal principles are the antitypes. Frei concludes that deconstructive theory successfully deconstructs *this* modern theory of figuration, while then overgeneralizing its deconstruction into the unwarranted claim that *all* literal or referential readings are illusory.

Frei's most general complaint is against unwarranted generalization. For him, phenomenological hermeneutics, deconstructionists, and even the "new critics" and narrativists with whom he shares some methodologies all err by straining to claim that their arguments are generally valid, rather than valid specifically as responses to the particular problems which have stimulated them. He argues that, when applied to scriptural interpretation, phenomenological hermeneutics extends the ancient method of allegorical reading to the gospel stories themselves: rereading the narratives of Jesus as "carnal shadows of the true 'secondary' world of 'meanings' understood in 'disclosure.'" ²⁵ The story of Jesus is at most a metaphor of generalizable events in the life of consciousness, disclosed in this case to contemporary understanding. This understanding discloses itself to the activity of hermeneutical theorizing itself, which, in turn, discloses itself to nothing other than the self-presence of consciousness. There is, in other words, no mediator between the text and its significance for consciousness. On the one hand, the life of consciousness has no referent outside its own self-presence; on the other hand, as historical referent of the narratives or as a character within the text, Jesus lacks personal agency of his own.

[In the denouement of his essay, Frei extends his critique of the contemporary mediators to related, if less egregious, attempts to reduce meaning to self-presence and to substitute the authority of general theory for the authority of a sacred text. He argues that David Tracy's "analogical" theology retains the phenomenological presupposition of self-presence, even if in a more cautious expression. He notes that, as "an immanent subversion" of phenomenological hermeneutics, deconstruction tends to fall prey to the same tendencies it effectively criticizes: extending its critique of referential readings beyond the domain of the allegorical *cum* ontological tradition it services. He argues that "new criticism," with which he otherwise shares many rules of interpretation, fails to acknowledge its debt to the tradition of plain-sense reading in Christianity. The "new critics" prescind selected features of plain-sense reading and then generalize these features into a general theory of reading, of which they claim Christian plain-sense reading is a limited example. This, says Frei, is a clear case of over-generalization. He offers a comparable critique of recent narrative theology: "it is once more

a case of putting the cart before the horse . . . if one constructs a general and inalienable human quality called 'narrative' . . . within which to interpret the Gospels and provide foundational warrant for the possibility of their existential and ontological meaningfulness."²⁶

In the *third stage of his argument*, Frei explains that the problem that stimulates his inquiry is Christianity's task "of regaining its autonomous vocation as a religion, after its defeat in its secondary vocation of providing ideological coherence, foundation and stability to Western culture."²⁷ His project, then, is to pull in the reins of his religious community's hermeneutical pretensions, deconstructing what he considers its onto-theological illusions and finding in their place a particular text with a foundational and redemptive story and with various traditions of reading that story plainly and performatively.

As an alternative to the mediating theologies, Frei offers a "modest" theory for describing how scripture is in fact read within the religious communities for which it is authoritative. He concludes that the letters of Paul prescribe a non-dichotomous hermeneutic according to which the Jesus narratives are to be read literally and performatively and the "Old Testament" narratives are to be read typologically. Frei does not adopt the Pauline hermeneutic directly, because, as he suggests, contemporary exegetes cannot tolerate two potential correlates of the ancient typological method: Christian supercessionist readings of Jewish scriptures and liberal supercessionist readings of the gospels. Instead, he reaffirms the Pauline hermeneutic in a way that would be appropriate for contemporary exegetes. The most conspicuous rule of this hermeneutic is to *respect the integrity of the scriptural text in its sensus literalis*. This literal sense refers to the way the Christian community both ascribes to Jesus of Nazareth the stories associated with him and adopts those stories as the community's code of behavior and belief.

Because Frei's and Lindbeck's modest theories of literal sense reading are so intertwined, I will, for economy of reporting, resume the discussion of this stage of Frei's argument after introducing the first two stages of Lindbeck's argument.

The *first stage of Lindbeck's postcritical argument* is his critique of "propositionalist" and "experiential-expressivist" ap-

proaches to religion. As reported above in different terms, Lindbeck describes the propositionalists as "cognitivists," who consider religions as systems of propositions or truth-claims about an objective reality.²⁸ He says the experiential-expressivists consider religions, in Bernard Lonergan's terms, as "diverse expressions or objectifications of a common core experience,"²⁹ which is "the dynamic state of being in love without restriction" and "without an object."³⁰ Lindbeck's version of Frei's critique is to argue that both these approaches are extra-textual, replacing the authority of the biblical text with the authority of certain conceptual, historical or experiential descriptions of which the text is considered a merely instrumental (or dyadic) sign.

In the *second stage of his argument*, Lindbeck examines the dichotomizing consequences of extra-textual reading. In *The Nature of Doctrine*, for example, he argues that extra-textual interpreters reduce church doctrines to either term of a rigid dichotomy. Describing doctrines as "informative propositions or truth claims about objective realities," propositionalists assume that "if a doctrine is once true, it is always true, and if it is once false, it is always false."³¹ He argues that they consequently fail to provide or account for ecumenism or for the emergence of new or varied doctrines. Describing doctrines, on the other hand, as "noninformative and nondiscursive symbols of inner feelings, attitudes or existential orientations,"³² experiential-expressivists tend to privatize Christian religious experience. Lindbeck argues that they can provide and account for doctrinal change, but not for the power of doctrines to authorize and sustain communal discourse.

Peirce's semiotic offers another way of articulating Lindbeck's critique. According to Peirce, a proposition may be defined as the application of a relative predicate (or *rhema*), which delivers all its *meaning* or content, to an existential subject (or *index*), which refers the predicate to some observable actuality/ies or moment/s of experience.³³ "This book is red," for example, may be redescribed as the application of "——— the character of being red and a book" to "what I am pointing to." In these terms, Lindbeck may be said to argue that propositionalists describe doctrines as the applications of certain characters (such as, "the dead are raised") to universal indi-

ces ("it is true in all possible worlds that . . ."); while experiential-expressivists describe doctrines as unquantified relative predicates which are neither true nor false ("the dead are raised," make of this character what you will). In Peirce's semiotic, an alternative would be to describe doctrines as rules, or modes of interpretation. These are neither propositions nor mere predicates, but rather ways of formulating propositions, or of applying certain types of predicates to certain types of indices on certain types of occasion. In this case, there would no single way of defining a doctrine—since every purported definition would display only a single application of the doctrine—but there could be certain paradigmatic applications which served, for certain communities, as preferred or authoritative ways of exhibiting the doctrine. In this approach, however, we would have to redefine our use of the term "true."

For propositionalists, "true" indicates that a proposition corresponds to some objective order of things; for experiential-expressivists, it is either an unhelpful designator ("the dead are raised" is neither true nor false"), or it indicates only that a predicate expresses an identifiable feeling or quality ("the dead are raised" expresses this or that to me"). The rule approach would require distinguishing among two categories of truth-terms. In some essays, Peirce used the term "expressiveness" to refer to the capacity of a predicate to display the quality it displays; "veracity" to refer to the conformity of an assertion to the speaker's belief; and "truth" to refer to capacity of an argument (or statement of a rule) to carry the force it claims to carry.³⁴ To take one example, "the dead are raised" has veracity if, for a speaker, "the dead are raised" expresses the quality the speaker sought to express. All three of these terms refer to what we may call types of *validity*: the correspondence between a sign and its intended use. Peirce used the term "strength," or pragmatic force, to refer to the influence of some rule or genuine symbol in the life of some community of speakers.³⁵ Unlike the various types of validity, then, *strength* refers to the correspondence between a symbol and some change in the world. To illustrate, suppose there is some genuine symbol or rule of which "the dead are raised" is true, in the sense of *valid*. We would say that the rule is strong if it, in a significant way, guides or transforms the behavior of a given

community of speakers. We would say that the specific locution, "the dead are raised," is valid if it succeeds in exhibiting this rule to the particular community to whom it is addressed.

In this Peircean approach, propositionalists would be those who assimilate strength to validity by identifying a rule with one of its context-specific locutions; experiential-expressivists would be those who exclude considerations of strength, identifying rules only with the expressive qualities or predicates that attach to their context-specific locutions.

I mention the Peircean approach because it anticipates in a formal, and perhaps formalistic, way Lindbeck's rule theories of doctrine and of religion. In the *third stage of his argument*, Lindbeck makes use of these theories to clarify, for theoretically minded scholars, his intratextual method of scriptural interpretation. Along with Frei, he labels his theories "modest" in order to preserve the priority of text over theory: if his interpretations are compatible with a triadic semiotic, that is only because intratextual Bible reading recommends such a semiotic to the philosophic interpreter, not because Bible readers need to arm themselves with semiotic theory in order to read the Bible.

With Frei, then, Lindbeck reads the Bible intratextually, which means within the context of scripture as a system of literary signs. These signs are interpreted by the community for which they are meaningful as rules of conduct, both the conduct of scriptural reading itself and the everyday conduct that is enjoined by this reading. In this approach, the Bible is not a sign of some external reality, but a reality itself whose meanings display the doubly dialogic relationships between a particular text and its context within the Bible as a whole, and between the Bible as a whole and the conduct of the community of interpreters. What I am calling the community of postcritical Christian interpreters emerges as the community for whom the gospel narratives recommend this hermeneutic itself. As Lindbeck has written,

If one characterizes the literal sense as that which a community of readers takes to be the plain, primary and controlling signification of a text . . . then, as Frei has suggested . . . the narrative meaning of the stories about Jesus

was the uniquely privileged *sensus literalis* of the whole of scripture for the groups by and for whom those stories were composed.³⁶

The narrative meaning is the meaning *of* the text *for* its community of readers.

Lindbeck offers a rule-theory of doctrine consistent with this understanding of narrative meaning. Christian doctrines are the way the Christian community, as "the story-shaped Church," reads the biblical narratives as directives for communal belief and practice.

Church doctrines are communally authoritative teachings regarding beliefs and practices that are considered essential to the identity and welfare of the group in question.³⁷

Such doctrines have expressive meaning or validity for those who practice them, and they display their meaning propositionally with respect to specific contexts of practice, which are specific ways of describing the world and how to act in it. However, the pragmatic force of such doctrines extends beyond any specific context. Lindbeck therefore describes them as rules: patterns of imitating the character of Jesus in the gospel narratives and, thereby, of transforming everyday beliefs and actions in the various ways that are dictated by each context of action.

Addressing theoretically minded scholars, Lindbeck and Frei suggest that their intratextual method of interpretation is consistent with a semiotic or cultural-linguistic understanding of religion as

at once . . . a determinate code in which beliefs, ritual and behavior patterns, ethos as well as narrative, come together as a common semiotic system, and also as the community which is that system in use.³⁸

This religion is to be described through the kind of method Clifford Geertz (after Gilbert Ryle) called "thick description":

It is, first, description of details as parts of 'interworked systems of construable signs . . . within which they can be

intelligibly . . . described.' Second, it is description from the actor's, participant's, or language-user's point of view, yet without mimicry or confusion of identity on the part of the interpreter.³⁹

The assumption here is a semiotic and a pragmatic one: first, that a religion may be understood as a system of signs; second, that such signs display their meaning in use, which means in the way they inform behavior in the community of sign users. In Peirce's formulation, the signs in question here are genuine symbols, which may be redescribed as laws of behavior or as sets of conditional resolutions to act, manifested in the behavior of symbol users as sets of observable actions. From this perspective, to study a religion is to learn these laws of behavior, as displayed in those sets of observable actions.

In this approach, scripture functions within its community of interpreters as the paradigmatic token of that community's religion, or semiotic code. To enact that code is to act in such a way that one's actions are tokens of the genuine symbols of which scripture in its literal sense is the paradigmatic token. If the genuine symbols could be conceptually defined, then the student of this approach might be tempted to imitate what Frei called the allegorizing practice of phenomenological hermeneutics: substituting conceptual descriptions of the symbols for their scriptural tokens. The symbols are displayed, however, only in indefinite series of conditional resolutions to act. The text of scripture itself is the only enduring token of these series. For Frei and Lindbeck, the literal sense of scripture is the paradigmatic form in which the Christian community of interpreters reads the text as such an enduring token.

It is at this point that both Frei and Lindbeck advertise the importance of rabbinic studies for postcritical Christian theology. For Frei, the demise of Christian onto-theology marks the demise, as well, of Christian universalism: not the universal import of Christianity, but the subordination of scripture reading to the terms of universal theories about the meaning of human experience as such. Frei believes that, relieved of the burdens of foundationalism, Christian scriptural interpretation may be more similar to rabbinic scriptural interpretation than previously assumed.⁴⁰ In an essay entitled

"Doctrine in Christianity: A Comparison with Judaism,"⁴¹ Lindbeck notes that both he and the Jewish philosopher David Novak share the conviction "that biblical religion has to do with chosen peoples, and that is why the social or communal role of doctrines is primary."⁴² He says, "my suggestion is that Christianity has been and could again be much more like Judaism in this respect than is often supposed."⁴³ The rabbinic community, or *kahal*, then becomes a prototype for the community of Christian interpreter-practitioners.⁴⁴

FRAADE'S MODERATE JEWISH POSTCRITICAL INTERPRETATION

Steven Fraade's "The Turn to Commentary in Ancient Judaism" is a version of the introduction to his book, *From Tradition to Commentary: Torah and Its Interpretation in the Midrash Sifre to Deuteronomy*.⁴⁵ His book displays the Jewish postcritical approach in what I'll call its moderate or centrist form. He presents his book explicitly as an alternative to two dialectically opposed tendencies in modern scholarship in rabbinics, which he calls "the hermeneuticist and historicist fallacies."⁴⁶ He argues that, on the one hand, by viewing "the historicity of commentary's representations" apart from the hermeneutical grounding of its performance," historicists allow the text only to face "out upon history and society." On the other hand, by "viewing the hermeneutics of commentary's interpretations" apart from the sociohistorical grounding of its performance," hermeneuticists allow the text to "face in upon itself." Concerned to minimize subjectivistic readings, historicists attend strictly to the objective aspects of meaning: the syntactics of the text itself and the referential relation of the text to what they take to be its meaning for the historically specific society in which it was redacted. Concerned to reclaim dimensions of textual meaning lost in historicist readings, "hermeneuticists" focus their attention on the possibilities of interpretive activity of which they take the rabbinic texts to be symptomatic. Schleiermacher's goal remains prototypical of their effort "to understand the author better than he understood himself," or at least to privilege the scholar's empathetic understanding as the irreplaceable source of hermeneutical reconstruction. In Lindbeck's terms, then, historicists are modern propositionalists, for whom the

meaning of rabbinic texts is to be found only in their objective reference; hermeneuticists are modern experiential-expressivists, for whom the meaning of rabbinic texts is to be found only in readers' subjective responses to them.

Fraade's response is that, however useful it may be "for the maintenance of our disciplinary boundaries," the modern attempt to bifurcate these two tendencies distorts the meaning of rabbinic literature. His goal is to reintegrate the two tendencies by giving voice to a third mode of inquiry which, true to his approach, he identifies only by performing it. I find the following characteristics of his performance to be the most telling.

Without disclaiming critical inquiry, he seeks to reclaim a dimension of textual meaning that is lost in the ancient texts themselves. His method is to find *within these texts* a mode of inquiry that, when reappropriated within the context of modern scholarship, would enable that scholarship to reclaim the dimension of textual meaning it had lost. His method is thus dialogic—in his terms, a "shuttling back and forth" between modern and ancient discourses in order to recover both the overlooked meaning of rabbinic literature *and* the appropriate method for disclosing it. He calls this the method of *commentary* and sets out both to *describe* rabbinic scriptural commentary *and* to *perform* his new variety of modern scholarly commentary.

Fraade notes that, like other commentaries, rabbinic commentaries "begin with an extended base-text, of which they designate successive subunits for exegetical attention, to each of which they attach a comment or chain of comments, which nevertheless remain distinct from the base-text, to which the commentary sooner or later returns . . . to take up the next selected subunit in sequence."⁴⁷ Like other commentaries, rabbinic commentaries are therefore paradoxical, in that they derive their rhetorical framework from the sequence of subunits in their scriptural base-texts at the same time that they atomize and re-order those sub-units for the sake of analysis.⁴⁸

He sets out to engage the "rabbinic turn to commentary" in its aboriginal form, both by studying rabbinic commentaries in their textual entirety and integrity and by focusing on "one of our earliest compilations of rabbinic exegesis . . . against the backdrop of its

only known antecedents as biblical commentary": the prophetic *pesharim* of the Dead Sea Scroll and the allegorical commentaries of Philo. Through detailed studies of selected, individual texts, he isolates the major hermeneutical traits of these antecedents that are of relevance to a study of rabbinic commentary. As a type, the *pesharim* represent "deictic" commentary, which means they refer each phrase of their biblical base-texts to specific (in this case, allegorical) referents. As a type, Philo's allegories represent "dialogical" commentary, which allows the commentator to interact with the base-text by posing questions of it and proffering answers.

Examining the *Sifre* to Deuteronomy in its textual integrity, Fraade notes how it integrates both deictic and dialogic forms of commentary, while emphasizing the latter. He considers, for example, *Sifre's* commentary on Deuteronomy 32:7:

Remember the days of old (*olam*), consider the years (*shenot*) of each and every generation; ask your father and he will inform you, your elders and they will tell you. "Remember the days of old": [God said to them:] Take heed of what I did to the earliest generations . . . "Consider the years of each and every generation": You can find no generation without people like those of the generation of the flood . . . but each and every individual is judged according to his deeds. "Ask your father and he will inform you": These are the prophets as it says, "When Elisha beheld it he cried out [to Elijah], 'Father, father'" (2 Kgs. 2:12). "Your elders and they will tell you": These are the elders, as it is said, "Gather for Me seventy men of the elders of Israel" (Num. 11:16).⁴⁹

Fraade explains how the atomized element "father" is taken to refer deictically to "prophets" and "elder" to "elder." *Sifre's* overall reading is dialogic, however. In this commentary, *Sifre* interprets the scriptural passage as referring to a biblical past, from earliest times to the present. In "another interpretation" brought after this one, *Sifre* interprets the passage as referring to the future, from the sufferings of the present ("whenever God brings sufferings to you") to the ultimate future ("Consider the years of each and every generation":

This is the generation of the Messiah")—a time when Israel will hear directly from her "father" (now referring to "the Holy One"). The only elements common to each interpretation are the "elders," referring each time only to "elders." Fraade interprets these "elders"—standing in between the prophets of the past and the God revealed in the distant future—to mean the rabbinic sages themselves: the "inspired class" which mediates between revelation and redemption. *Sifre's* commentary has thereby interacted dialogically with its base-text, eliciting from it a message about the role of the rabbinic sages in Israel's relation to God.

Here is a sampling of the other features of *Sifre's* commentary to which Fraade draws our attention.

- The commentary allows for multiple interpretation of the base-text, while still respecting the integrity of the text's plain sense. No matter how many interpretations it brings, it bases these on a reading of all the words of its Deuteronomic text in their intratextual setting.

- By bringing the base-text into dialogue with all of scripture, the commentary provides a medium through which scripture can refer to and interpret itself.

- The commentary presents itself as the product of collective and cumulative, rather than of merely individual, activities of interpretation.

- It effects a dialogical relationship between scripture as a whole and the interpretive rabbinic community, through which textual meaning and communal practice are mutually transformative. Thus the words of Torah become the sages' words.⁵⁰ The goal of commentary is to stimulate continuous study and the continuously transformative activity which accompanies it. Fraade's comment about the "elder" as the rabbinic sage is a brief sampling of his analyses of ways in which the sages included themselves and their mode of inquiry into scripture's subject matter.

Fraade concludes that rabbinic commentary, so described, "requires that our own critical interpretation of its texts adopt two converging perspectives: that of their formation and that of their reception." As literary historians, modern rabbinic scholars must examine how rabbinic redactors integrated various traditions into running commentaries. As hermeneuts, they must also receive and

respond to the commentary as if they were its intended students, thereby achieving some understanding of its performative method and force. Fraade is proposing, in sum, "that the critical analysis of a rabbinic scriptural commentary take itself the form of commentary, one that in its own way is dialogical, alternating between the perspectives of the text's formation and reception, as between that of the ancient student of the text and the modern critic of it."

The leading principles of his modern commentary thereby reappropriate the principles of rabbinic commentary: to respect the integrity of rabbinic and prerabbinic base-texts in their plain-sense; to bring these base-texts into dialogue with comparable texts, so that the modern commentary may serve as a medium for the ancient text's self-reference; to engage the modern reader in an activity of reinterpreting the base-texts as well as of re-evaluating modern methods of interpretation; to contribute to the collective work of transforming modern rabbinic scholarship.

In sum, Fraade's book displays the three prototypical stages of postcritical scriptural interpretation. In *the first stage of his argument*, he criticizes the bifurcation of modern rabbinic scholarship into historicist and hermeneuticist tendencies. In *the second stage*, he identifies ways in which historicist and hermeneuticist scholars distort the meaning of rabbinic texts by reducing meaning to either mere reference or mere interpretive form. In semiotic terms, this means that they either reduce interpretation to reference or reduce reference to interpretation. In *the third stage of his argument*, Fraade locates paradigms for non-reductive interpretation within what he considers primordial texts of rabbinic Judaism. Like Lindbeck's, Fraade's interpretive paradigm is doubly dialogic: displaying the dialogic relation between a particular text and its intratextual context in an entire document at the same time that it displays the dialogic relation between this document and the performative life of its community of interpreters.

The moderate form of Fraade's inquiry corresponds to his criticizing both historicist and hermeneuticist tendencies with generally equal force. In his recent book, *Peshat and Derash: Plain and Applied Meaning in Rabbinic Exegesis*,⁵¹ Halivni is responding primarily to the excessive subjectivity of contemporary legal interpretation; he therefore places particular emphasis on the conservative,

or objectively referential, aspect of his postcritical inquiry. On the other hand, in his recent book, *The Garments of Torah: Essays in Biblical Hermeneutics*,⁵² Fishbane responds primarily to the excessive objectivism in both traditional and modern text interpretation; he therefore places particular emphasis on the more radically interpretive aspect of his inquiry. These two works display the limits of Jewish postcritical scriptural interpretation. Offering context-specific criticisms of either of two poles of modern/premodern interpretation, Halivni and Fishbane articulate their triadic semiotics in the dichotomizing forms of context-specific polemics.

HALIVNI'S CONSERVATIVE JEWISH POSTCRITICAL INTERPRETATION

Halivni's "Plain Sense and Applied Meaning in Rabbinic Exegesis" is a composite of parts of four of his essays, two from earlier manuscripts of his book *Peshat and Derash: Plain and Applied Meaning in Rabbinic Exegesis*.⁵³ Read according to its own *peshat*, Halivni's *Peshat and Derash* offers a theological/hermeneutical recommendation about how observant rabbinical scholars may resolve conflicts they perceive between the *peshat*, or plain-sense, of the scriptural text and the *midrash halakhah*, or the scriptural readings the Talmudic rabbis have offered for the sake of making legal judgments. Briefly stated, he offers an historical-like account and justification of the rabbis' identifying their *midrash halakhah* as the correct *peshat* in those cases where the conflict would have consequences for legal decision making.⁵⁴

At the same time, as Halivni indicates in his Preface, the performative form of his book also delivers part of its message. Divided into separate scholarly and theological parts,

the structure of the book . . . mirrors its central theological proposition—that rabbinic exegesis and *halakhah* (legal norms) are integrally, but not always inextricably, linked.⁵⁵

On the one hand, "the critical scholar . . . [has] an allegiance to the dictates of objective truth and accuracy—indeed, to *peshat*."⁵⁶ On the other hand, Halivni's theological method is the "systematic

mining of rabbinic theological sources," drawing "inferences" that relate these sources to issues of existential concern.

As a dialogue between these objective ("scholarly") and subjective ("theological") methods, Halivni's book as a whole represents a postcritical inquiry: interpreting the rabbinic corpus (as symbol) as it bears on an issue of immediate existential concern (its interpretant). This appears to be Halivni's concern to respond, on the one hand, to Orthodox critics of his anti-authoritarian Talmudic science and, on the other hand, to Conservative critics of his persistently orthodox religious practice. In response, he suggests that all his critics share in the mistaken belief that science and practice share a common authority and that the results of each should therefore be harmonized. He believes that this leads contemporary Orthodox scholars to reduce their exegetical science to the changing standards of authority and convention that govern religious decision making (*halakhah*) and that it leads contemporary Conservative scholars to reduce their process of religious decision making to the objectifying standards of science that govern exegesis. As an alternative, he offers an historical-hermeneutical account and justification of the exegetical approach exemplified in the Rashbam's work.⁵⁷ As text scholar, exemplifying "the highest genre of *Torah Lishmah* [the study of Scripture for its own sake]," the Rashbam searched for the *peshat*, even at the expense of his own legal readings.⁵⁸ As *posek*, or adjudicator ("one of the greatest *posekim* of his time"), he relinquished his fidelity to *peshat*; responding to the needs of his community, he no longer, in Halivni's words, "had the luxury" of studying the text for its own sake.⁵⁹

There is also a third dimension of Halivni's book: the critique of modernist reductionism implicit in his response to traditionalist reductionism. In this regard, Halivni's scholarly discussion of the evolution of rabbinic exegesis is most telling. Like Fraade, Halivni has sought to avoid the reductive tendencies of modern inquiry by reclaiming for a modern rabbinic commentary the indigenous rules of rabbinic exegesis. He has sought to examine these rules, however, as they are displayed not only in single documents, but also in what he considers the singular trajectory of rabbinic exegesis in its evolution from the Second Temple period to today. Reducing an extensive collection of rabbinic documents to their operative rules of in-

terpretation, he has observed a tendency that links one to the other in historical sequence. He says this is a progressive tendency to respect the integrity of scriptural and rabbinic texts in their extended intratextual contexts (*peshat*) and the integrity of the halakhic process (*midrash halakha*) in its time-bound, communal context. In a 1979 article, Halivni distinguishes what he calls his "dialectically critical method" from both the "conceptual method" of traditional Talmudic study in the *veshivot* and the "critical method" of "academically trained Talmudic scholars."⁶⁰ He says

The conceptual method concentrates mainly on the *logical exploration* of the statement under discussion, the critical method concentrates mainly on the *textual state* of the statement under discussion, and the dialectically critical method concentrates mainly on the *evolving* nature of the statement under discussion.⁶¹

While "the weakness of the conceptual method is its loose connection with the text," the weakness of the critical method is its "adhering too closely with the text, to the point that it restricts itself almost completely to meanings that lie on the surface of the text."⁶² But

There is more to a text than meets the eye. Deliberation, indeed meditation on a text, yields not only new nuances that have not been contemplated before, but may also affect the very direction and purport of the text. . . . Communication with a text means pondering over it long enough until it opens up and reveals the many and varied allusions that otherwise would have remained buried beneath the surface. . . . The critical scholar ignores these allusions . . . ; by denying validity to non-explicit meaning, he is imparting to textual learning a quality of *shallowness* that is unwarranted by its content.⁶³

While sharing the "critical scholar's concern for an accurate text," the dialectically critical scholar looks for meaning "beneath the textual surface," by "seeking out [the present text's] antecedents and tracing their fluctuations and subsequent development" "through dialectical means"—that is, by generating hypotheses about how the

text may have evolved and by engaging the text's argumentation on the basis of these hypotheses.⁶⁴

Restated in terms of a postcritical semiotics, Halivni's thesis is that, in its evolutionary trajectory, rabbinic exegesis tends to draw a tripartite distinction among the *peshat* of the text (as *symbol*), time-bound interpretations of the text's references (as *meaning*), and the time-bound contexts of interpretation (as *interpretants*). Here, *peshat* (as "extended intratextual context") refers to the unburdened presentation of the symbol as locus of possible meaning. This means that referential, hermeneutical and pragmatic studies of the *peshat* are true to the extent that they *do not fail to uncover* whatever possibilities of signification are displayed by the text in its intratextual context. They are false if they misrepresent those possibilities or *limit them* by attending preferentially to certain possibilities over others.⁶⁵ The plain-sense scholar (*pashan*) displays the semantics of the text and identifies the range of meanings that might possibly attend such a text as interpreted with respect to the range of known interpretants. The interpreter (*darshan*) explores the possibilities of meaning that are available with respect to single interpretant.⁶⁶

Halivni argues that "contemporary critics" misconstrue this evolutionary trajectory because they have evaluated it in terms of the modern standards of "original [authorial] intent" and of "literal sense."⁶⁷ From this perspective, he says, these critics believe that rabbinic exegesis has through the years "zigzagged" back and forth between concern for *peshat* and for *derash*. Thus

Talmudic interpretation of the Bible is generally considered by modern exegetes to be quite distinct from the *peshat*, out of tune with the 'natural' meaning of the biblical text it purports to explain. In contrast, medieval exegesis, especially that of Rashbam . . . and Ibn Ezra . . . is regarded as close to *peshat* (relatively speaking). . . . Postmedieval exegesis is again unacceptable, harking back to talmudic interpretation of the Bible.⁶⁸

According to Halivni, however, authorial intent and literal sense are the preferred standards of only one, more recent phase in the evolution of rabbinic hermeneutics. To interpret earlier phases according

to these standards is to remove them from their historical contexts and impose on them an alien intentionality. The result is to read into previous modes of exegesis a dichotomy between "natural" *peshat* and "artificial" *derash* that is not evident in those modes.⁶⁹

Halivni's argument may be redescribed in terms of the paradigm of postcritical interpretation. In the first stage of his argument, Halivni criticizes interpretive tendencies either to overly harmonize *peshat* and *derash*, and thus, with the seminarians, to assimilate reference and interpretation, or to overly dichotomize the two, and thus, with the moderns, to ignore the relations between reference and interpretation. In the second stage of his argument, he claims that each of these errors results from a failure to respect the integrity of the scriptural or rabbinic texts as genuine symbols. In the third stage of his argument, he seeks to reclaim for modern rabbinic commentary the rabbinic tradition's progressive respect for the integrity of *peshat* as extensive intratextual context. Understood this way, the study of *peshat* does not compete with midrashic interpretation; instead, it prepares readers, in the integrity of their contexts of interpretation, to engage the text in the integrity of its context of symbolization.

FISHBANE'S RADICAL POSTCRITICAL INTERPRETATION

"Extra-Biblical Exegesis: The Sense of Not Reading in Rabbinic Midrash" illustrates the theological context of Fishbane's investigation into the rules of inner-biblical and early rabbinic text interpretation. In these remarks, I will describe that context as it is more fully displayed in Fishbane's *The Garments of Torah: Essays in Biblical Hermeneutics*⁷⁰ (in which the essay also appears) and as it is served by the discoveries of his *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*.⁷¹

In *Garments*, Fishbane celebrates the maieutic voice of scripture: the capacity of its mystery to challenge the limits of language, to deflate ontological pretensions, and to decenter. At the same time, he identifies the dialogic partner to whom this voice is addressed and for whom it would be redemptive: what he calls, after Martin Buber, the monologic modern self, alone in its autonomy the way Roland Barthes says the interpreter is left with nothing else

than his or her "will-to-power."⁷² *Garments* records Fishbane's search for ways of renewing a modern culture that has lost its connection to sacrality, to community and, thus it appears, to the conditions of meaning which the biblical traditions once provided. He organizes the book into three parts, reflecting the "three typical moments whereby cultures renew themselves hermeneutically," as well as what I take to be the three elements of his own program for renewing the culture of scriptural reading. These elements are: first, to examine the range of exegetical possibilities inherent in the *peshat* of the scriptural text; second, to identify the forms of exegesis, in the Bible and in rabbinic literature, that emerged in response to epistemological dislocations in biblical and early rabbinic cultures; and, third, to identify the epistemological dislocations that stimulate modern exegetical scholarship and, then, to reintroduce the forms of biblical and rabbinic exegesis which may respond to these dislocations.

Part I of *Garments* delivers the lesson of Fishbane's *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*.⁷³ that scripture interprets itself and, thus, that scriptural revelation is a revealed activity of interpretation. The pragmatic force of this lesson is that scripture is a living dialogue in which the modern reader has a part. This is what Halivni calls a "non-maximalist conception of revelation," and what a postcritical semiotician may term the genuinely symbolic character of scripture, which calls the reader to hear and respond to the complaints of which it is a sign. Fishbane interprets this pragmatic message through the language of the kabbalah:

Rabbi Simeon said: If a man looks upon the Torah as merely a book presenting narratives and everyday matters, alas for him! . . . The Torah, in all of its worlds, holds supernatural truths and sublime secrets. . . . The tales related in the Torah are simply her outer garments, and woe to the man who regards that outer garb as the Torah itself, for such a man will be deprived of portion in the next world. . . .⁷⁴

The words of the Torah are garments; the inner message lies within—in Fishbane's reading, I take this to mean the inner message for

the modern, solitary self for whom the words of scripture have otherwise lost their sacrality.

The question, of course, is how that message can be heard once again. Fishbane's response begins with his scholarly study of the genres of innerbiblical exegesis. These appear in his work to be signs of the Torah's inner life, sewn into the "garments" themselves. In the language of postcritical semiotics, these genres are tokens of the semiotic law according to which the scriptural text, as symbol, displays its meaning to its various interpreters. To study them, in other words, is to study tokens of the divine semiosis. Fishbane catalogues the genres as "scribal," "legal," "aggadic," and "mantic-logical"—exemplified in a plurality of specific exegetical strategies, or logia, of which there is no over-arching logos. The lack of any single archetype means that the divine semiosis cannot be reduced ultimately to any language other than that of the biblical text as a whole, alive with all of its semiotic indeterminacies and, thus, its drive to be actualized in as yet undisclosed ways. Kadushin described the rabbinic value-concepts in just this way, as having a "drive to concretization." He claimed the value-concepts named certain rules of knowledge-and-conduct, however, such as "loving-kindness" (*gemilut hasadim*) and "God's mercy" (*middat ha-rahamim*). In Fishbane's work, the logia are strictly rules of exegetical conduct, such as scribal correction, "lemmatic legal exegesis" (legal interpretation bound to an authoritative legal text), analogical agadic exegesis, and the recontextualization of historical narratives as oracular signs. A fruitful subject of study would be to examine the relations among exegetical rules and behavioral rules: are they independent, is one subordinated to the other, or both to a third set of rules?

In "Extra-Biblical Exegesis: The Sense of Not Reading in Rabbinic Midrash," Fishbane offers a case-study which, as I read it, shows how the rules of exegesis may be tokens of value-concepts, or, in his terms, of rabbinic theologies. The context is his identifying scribal corrections of the biblical text as occasions for the rabbis' playfully suspending the authority of the text as written and substituting for it some semantic marks of their own theological innovations. Fishbane identifies two aspects of this embedded theology: "divine empowerment through ritual praxis and divine pathos in

response to human suffering."⁷⁵ To illustrate the rabbinic theology of divine empowerment, he notes how the homilist of the *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* rereads Job 17:9—"But the righteous one holds fast to his way, and the pure of hands will increase [his] strength (*yosiph onetz*)—to mean

that God—who is both righteous and pure of action—gives strength (*koach*) to the righteous in order "that they may do His will." This construction concluded, the Joban passage is then further applied to both Moses and the righteous. On this last application, R. Azariah interprets the verse to mean: "Whenever the righteous do the will of the Holy One, Blessed be He, they increase strength (*moshephin koach*) in the *dynamis*"—that is to say, they empower the divine principle of immanent power through their performance of the commandments.⁷⁶

To illustrate the rabbinic theology of divine pathos, he notes how the homilist of *Exodus Rabbah* (XXX.24) rereads Isaiah 56:1, "for My salvation is near to come (*ki qeroba yeshu'ati lavo*)."

[The homilist] begins with a philologist's observation: "Scripture does not say 'your salvation' (second person plural) but 'My salvation.'" And he adds: "May His name be blessed! For were it not [so] written [in Scripture], one could not say it." . . . [the *derashah* continues] "If you [Israel] do not have merit, I shall perform [the salvation] for My own sake (*bishvili*); for *kivvyakhol* [as it were], as long as you are in trouble, I am with you, as it says [in Scripture]: 'I am with him (Israel) in trouble (*'imo anokhi be-tzarah*)' (Ps. 91:15)."⁷⁷

If biblical exegesis is indeed a form of ritual praxis, then its appearance within the Bible itself would seem to illustrate, within the biblical context, the rabbinic concept of divine empowerment through biblical exegesis! If, furthermore, human suffering provides the occasion for biblical exegesis, then this exegesis may provide the occa-

sion for divine pathos. I take this, in fact, to be the pragmatic message of Parts I and II of Fishbane's book. And I take it to be consistent with a stronger claim that remains merely implicit in his work: while not the only stimulus to interpretation, human suffering is the archetypal stimulus. Other stimuli give rise to referential or iconic readings of the Bible, that is, efforts to identify precisely what the Bible means or how to live in its image. But only suffering gives rise to genuinely symbolic readings, by which I mean readings which engage the revealed word in a mutually transformative dialogue.

Developing this theme, Part II of *Garments* displays Fishbane's conviction that crises and dislocations in Israel's hermeneutical life mark the occasions of symbolic, or dialogic, scriptural interpretation in traditional as well as modern practice. Here, Fishbane examines the "axial ruptures in cultural system," which he believes stimulated the major hermeneutical innovations in Israel's life.⁷⁸ The first was Israel's primary break with the mythic cosmology of the ancient Near East, corresponding to the emergence of Torah as an autonomous source of meaning and law. The second was Israel's secondary movement "from a culture based on direct divine revelations to one based on their study and reinterpretation."⁷⁹ Beginning in the time of Ezra, this shift corresponded to the emergence of hermeneutics as Israel's prototypical mode of religious discourse. As Fishbane notes in *Biblical Interpretation*, "the common denominator underlying the socio-historical, textual, and mental settings of legal exegesis is *conflict*," and "the historical exigencies that elicited the literary transformations [displayed in the *aggadah*] . . . [express] a particular type of crisis or dislocation which affected the continuity of perception of the . . . [authoritative content of scriptures]."⁸⁰ Sufferings—crises and conflicts—accompany semiotic dislocations, where conditions of interpretation that once apply no longer apply—where, therefore, God's word has for the moment lost its referentiality and the loving God has become the hidden God (*'el mistater*).⁸¹ Yet, paradoxically, by freeing the dialogic partner to his or her solitary autonomy, God's absence stimulates this partner to imitate God's own creative activity. Searching (*l'derosh*) the scriptural sources⁸² for new conditions of interpretation, the human partner renews the dialogic relationship with a God made closer through hermeneutic absence.

In Part III, Fishbane describes the hermeneutical dislocation of the modern reader, symbolized by the collapse of modern scholarship's dichotomous presuppositions—subjectivistic on the one side (in Fishbane's terms, "fideistic," or "personalistic") and objectivistic on the other ("philosophical," "objective," or "historical-philological"). At the center of these presuppositions is what Buber calls the monologic self, dislocated by its own autonomy from the capacity to listen and to hear. Paradoxically, however, this dislocation both insulates modern readers from the sacrality of scripture and offers them the occasion to rediscover the vitality of scripture as a genuine symbol. In the approach of Buber and Rosenzweig, this is to rediscover scripture as a *spoken* word: "Only responsiveness to the claims of the hour can open the heart of this monologic self and give him the one thing needful—speech."⁸³ In Rosenzweig's terms, this is God's speech, which, addressing us by name, says "Love Me!"⁸⁴ For Fishbane, modernity is thus redeemed by its potential receptivity to God's love, as offered by the words of scripture when they are read "from deep to deep," that is, from the depth of one's own suffering heart to the depth of scripture's inner meaning.

Fishbane thus draws a tripartite distinction among the scriptural word as *symbol* (the subject of Part I) and the *interpretive contexts* of its referentiality or *meaning*. He divides these contexts into two sets: the contexts of scripture's historically primordial meanings (the subject of Part II) and of its present meaning (Part III), which is also the interpretive context of his own inquiry. Re-stated in terms of the postcritical paradigm, Fishbane has argued, *first*, that modern scholarship has errantly dichotomized subjective and objective approaches to the study of scripture; *second*, that this scholarship maintains the dislocation of the modern self from scripture as a source of speech and, thus, of God's love; *third*, that the route to relocation begins with the performative study of innerbiblical exegesis itself: scripture displays the route to its own reclamation.

CONCLUSION:

POSTCRITICAL INTERPRETATION AS PRAGMATIC INQUIRY

The scholars described in this essay or presented in this collection have not declared themselves representative of a postcritical

tendency in Jewish and Christian scriptural interpretation. My argument is simply that it is possible and helpful to redescribe their various arguments according to a single, general paradigm. Thus far, the Jewish postcritical interpreters have not offered such a general paradigm. Frei and Lindbeck have offered a theory of intratextual reading, informed by the practices of "new criticism" and associated with Wittgenstein's theory of language and Geertz's interpretation of religions as cultural and symbol systems. They also suggest that the rabbinic practice of midrashic interpretation may offer Christian scholars a prototype of this kind of intratextual reading. I have found that Peirce's semiotic provides both the precision and flexibility needed to extend their intratextual paradigm to rabbinic as well as Christian interpretation.

Summarized in a sentence, the argument of both Jewish and Christian postcritical interpreters is that modern scholars have reduced biblical interpretation to the terms of a dyadic semiotic that lacks warrant in the biblical texts. The postcritical scholars claim that, as read in the primordial communities of rabbinic or of Christian interpreters, these texts recommend a triadic semiotic, according to which the text displays its performative meanings *with respect to* its community of biblical interpreters.

Readers may still find the concept of "triadic semiotics" too abstract. To bring it down to earth a bit, I will, in closing, restate the postcritical paradigm once more, this time in terms of Peirce's theory of pragmatism, which is a theory about how abstract inquiries like this one are connected to our everyday practices in the world. According to Peirce's theory of pragmatism,⁸⁵ our everyday reasonings about the world and about what we are supposed to do in it are informed by deep-seated rules of knowledge that we do not ordinarily have reason to question. Instead, these rules set the largely unperceived context in terms of which we question and correct our understanding of particular facts and behavioral norms. At times, however, our incapacities to correct problems in everyday understanding stimulate a deeper level questioning: what Peirce calls a "pragmatic" inquiry, designed to adjust our deep-seated rules of knowledge to changing conditions of life. Postcritical inquiry is a pragmatic inquiry of this kind, stimulated by the doubts certain text

scholars have about the fundamental rules of scholarship they inherited from modern academia. More specifically, these are doubts about modern scholarship's capacity to sponsor pragmatic inquiry when it is called for and to recognize pragmatic inquiry when it is already in place. The postcritical claim is that modern scholarship tends to define rational inquiry on the model of everyday inquiry: as if reason operates only when a community's deep-seated rules of knowledge are in place and when the task of inquiry is strictly referential, that is, to identify facts and norms with respect to these rules. Modern scholarship therefore tends to reduce the pursuit of knowledge to the terms of a binary opposition between referential, rational inquiry (when the deep rules are in place) and non-referential irrational inquiry (when they are not). In the case of scriptural studies, the effect is to assume either that scriptural texts are simply referential (in which case they display their meaning by pointing ostensively to certain facts or norms) or that they are non-referential (in which case they are either silent or display their meaning only expressively or metaphorically). The postcritical complaint is that this binary opposition excludes the possibility that scriptural texts may have pragmatic reference: that is, that they may represent claims about the inadequacy of certain inherited rules of meaning and about ways of transforming those rules or adjusting them to new conditions of life. To the degree that they refer pragmatically, scriptural texts will not disclose their meanings to modern methods of study.

In terms of the theory of pragmatism, semiotics functions as an instrument for reclassifying the elements of scriptural texts as records of pragmatic inquiry. We have previously described a genuine symbol as a *sign* that refers to its *object* (or meaning) with respect to some particular *interpretant* (or system of deep-seated rules). Peirce distinguishes symbols from *indices* and *icons*. An index refers to its *object* by virtue of some direct force exerted by the object on the sign. This means that an index is indifferent to its interpretant, the way modern scholars suppose a referential text simply refers to some facts independently of any particular context of reference. An icon (image) does not refer to its object ostensively; instead, it appears to its *interpretant* to share certain characters with its object. The icon therefore displays its meaning metaphorically, through similarity,

the way modern scholars suppose a non-referential text is either silent or fully subject to the interpreter's attributions. According to Peirce, the genuine symbol does its referring by virtue of some implicit law that causes the symbol to be *interpreted* as referring to its object.⁸⁶ This means that, while a symbol displays its meaning only to a particular interpretant, it is not fully subject to the interpreter's attributions. Instead, a symbol *influences* the way its interpretant attributes meaning to it. The symbol therefore engages its interpretant in a dialogue, the product of which is *meaning*. As agent of a semiotic law, the symbol engages its interpreter in some tradition of meaning. Transferring agency to the interpreter, the symbol also grants the interpreter some freedom to transform the way in which that meaning will be retransmitted. *In this way, the symbol is the fundamental agent of pragmatic inquiry*. It is itself the interpretant of a community's deep-seated rules of knowledge (its semiotic law), of which it serves as an agent. At the same time, the freedom it grants its own interpreter serves as a sign that these deep-seated rules are also subject to and, we presume, in need of change. The simultaneously conservative and reformatory activity of interpreting a symbol is what we call pragmatic inquiry. In the process of inquiry, the interpreter can use his or her freedom for nought—that is, without accepting the responsibility to hear the symbol's complaints, as it were, and to determine what changes need to be instituted in its semiotic law. Or the interpreter can use his or her freedom for the good of this law, inquiring after its needs for change.

For postcritical scholars, scriptural texts do not always function as genuine symbols and thus as signs of the need for pragmatic inquiry. When they do not—that is, when textual elements refer iconically or indexically—then modern scholarship offers useful instruments for scriptural study. To the degree that scriptural texts function as symbols, however, modern scholarship fails to serve as their agent. This is a serious failing, indeed, since it represents a failure to *hear* the text's call for help, as it were: a failure to make use of the freedom the text grants its interpreter to search after (*l'derosh*) those deep-seated problems of which it is a sign. Postcritical interpretation attempts to reform the deep-seated rules of modern schol-

arship in order to render that scholarship useful as an agent of this kind of search.

APPENDIX:

THE POSTCRITICAL METHOD OF PHILOSOPHIC INTERPRETATION

For the technically-minded reader, I offer here a description of the method of inquiry I employ in this project. This is a form of philosophic analysis of which cultural anthropology is a vaguer and more well known illustration. Like an ethnographer, I have attempted to become a participant-observer of an intriguing practice, in this case, the scholarly practice of "postcritical interpretation." As a philosophic ethnographer, I assumed that it would be possible and useful to identify this practice by describing what Peirce would call its *logica utens*, or embedded rules of operation. The science of description here is logic, but as a postcritical science of how a particular class of scholars might best articulate its rules of reasoning, rather than as a modern, foundational science of how scholars in general ought to reason. I assume that the purpose of any logical science, with all its technicalities, is to locate a means of classifying and evaluating practices and, thereby, correcting them if necessary. A postcritical logic would be distinctive only in the specificity of its pragmatic context. This means that the purpose of logical description is not to hold a mirror to the practices, but rather to make a useful claim about how they may be evaluated—useful, that is, *for* responding to some problem, and useful *to* some particular community of practitioners. In the case of this project, the identity of the community remains in question. Unless this proves to be an atypical case, a postcritical logic may therefore display its performative dimension in the way it helps nurture the community for which its claims are meaningful.

In this project, the first stage of logical description has been to reduce a given scholar's practice to a few identifiable rules. The second stage has been to compare this practice with other ones for which related rules could be constructed. These rules are not related by strict similarity, but in the way they appear to contribute to the

resolution of similar problems. The third stage has been to attempt to collect a family of such practices by constructing a general paradigm of inquiry that each practice could be said to illustrate in its response to these problems. This is the paradigm of what I have called the three stages of postcritical scriptural interpretation: criticizing attempts to reduce biblical interpretation to a dyadic semiotic, tracing the consequences of such attempts, and offering in their stead various models of triadic biblical interpretation.⁸⁷ In constructing this paradigm, I am not attempting to understand the work of a number of scholars better than they understand it themselves, but rather to offer a new claim about what would happen if their various works were juxtaposed. To offer comments about what would happen is to move from logical description to a non-foundational metaphysics, which amounts to what may be called a speculative anthropology. This is to envision what the behavioral consequences would be if a given logical construction were adopted as a rule of actual practice.

I will conclude by envisioning three of these consequences. The first consequence of collecting the various forms of postcritical scholarship under some general paradigm would be to provide a dialogic model of rationality. To have abandoned the foundational pursuit of universal norms of reasoning is not to have abandoned the pursuit of regional norms. The paradigm of postcritical scriptural interpretation delimits a regional universe of practice within which rules of reasoning and criteria for truth and falsity could be articulated. To be sure, these rules and criteria would not be the same sort that accompany non-regional universes. They would accompany a universe whose elements were overlapping and interactive practices (rather than individual instances of general forms) and which would therefore admit dialogic or interactive procedures for adjudicating truth claims (rather than strictly inductive/deductive procedures). These procedures would be rational, nonetheless, and would need to be serviced by the postcritical equivalents of logicians and philosophers.

A second consequence would be to collect a family of mutually supportive procedures for correcting social and religious institutions informed by non-dialogic models of rationality. Among the postcritical interpreters, Lindbeck, for example, noted that these models

divide into "propositionalist" and "traditionalist"—what Fishbane called "personalistic" and "objectivistic"—alternatives. Peirce's logic provides a way of reducing these alternatives to the common ground of a dyadic semiotic.

A third consequence would be to encourage mutually supportive discussion among postcritical scholars of anthropology and philosophy, on the one hand, and of biblical interpretation and textually grounded theology on the other hand. The regional universe of postcritical inquiry emerges specifically out of traditions of biblical interpretation that enunciate the particular pattern of dialogic rationality examined in this project. The leading principles of this rationality are to be identified with biblical words themselves, as interpreted in these traditions. It would therefore be the task of postcritical biblical interpreters to identify the leading principles of postcritical rationality. It would be the task of postcritical philosophers and anthropologists to articulate the logic of inquiry that is informed by those principles.

NOTES

1. The scholars whose work appears in this volume are merely representative of an expanding collection of scholars whose work displays the tendencies of postcritical interpretation. Here is a sampling of these works.

Additional works by Christian scholars: Ronald Thiemann, *Revelation and Theology: The Gospel as Narrative Promise* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985); Bruce Marshall, *Christology in Conflict: The Identity of a Saviour in Rahner and Barth* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987); Katherine Tanner, *God and Creation in Christian Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988); William C. Placher, *Unapologetic Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1989); Avery Dulles, *The Craft of Theology: From Symbol to System* (New York: Crossroad, 1992). Dulles introduces a Catholic postcritical theology, engaging Lindbeck's postcritical theology in a manner that illuminates and extends the discussion in this volume. Because Dulles' text appeared just as this volume went to press, I have space only to sample its postcritical program. In an introduc-

tory chapter, "Toward a Postcritical Theology," Dulles argues that "postcritical thinking does not reject criticism but carries it to new lengths," scrutinizing the errant tendencies of modernist criticism to overstate and decontextualize doubt. Complementing the postcritical philosophies of Michael Polanyi, Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur, postcritical theology resituates criticism in its appropriately social and hermeneutical setting. Two features of Dulles' hermeneutics are of particular relevance to this volume: his semiotic model for theological discourse, and his advocating several potentially complementary approaches to scripture, including Lindbeck's "cultural-linguistic" approach.

Additional works by Jewish scholars: David Stern, "Midrash and Indeterminacy," *Critical Inquiry* 15 (1988): 132-61; Richard Sarason, "Toward a New Agendum for the Study of Rabbinic Midrashic Literature," in J. Petuchowski and E. Fleischer, eds., *Studies in Agadah, Targum and Jewish Liturgy in Memory of Joseph Heinemann* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1981): English section, pp. 55-73; Jacob Neusner's forthcoming descriptive theology of late rabbinic midrashim, presented in a series of studies beginning with *From Literature to Theology in Formative Judaism*; Michael Wyschogrod, *The Body of Faith: Judaism as Corporeal Election* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1983); David Novak, *Jewish-Christian Dialogue: A Jewish Justification* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Michael Rosenak, *Commandments and Concerns: Jewish Religious Education in Secular Society* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1987).

1a. Moshe Greenberg, "The Vision of Jerusalem in Ezekiel 8-11: A Holistic Interpretation," in *The Divine Helmsman: Studies on God's Control of Human Events, Presented to Lou H. Silberman*, ed. J.L. Crenshaw and S. Sandmel (New York: KTAV Pub. House, 1980), pp. 143-63. For related articles in English, see "What Are Valid Criteria for Determining Inauthentic Matter in Ezekiel?" in *Ezekiel and His Book*, Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium LXXIV, ed. J. Lust (Leuven: University Press, 1986), pp. 123-35; and "Can Modern Critical Bible Scholarship Have a Jewish Character?" *Immanuel* 15 (1982/83): 7-12.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 143.

3. *Ibid.* Greenberg cites this passage of Spinoza's: "... the

method of interpreting Scripture does not differ from the method of interpreting nature. . . . For as the interpretation of nature consists in drawing up a history (= a systematic account of the data) of nature and therefrom inferring definitions of natural phenomena, so Scriptural interpretation necessarily proceeds by drawing up a true history of Scripture and from it . . . to infer correctly the intentions of the authors of Scripture. . . . Everyone will advance without danger of error . . . if they admit no principles for interpreting Scripture . . . save as they find in Scripture itself." Baruch Spinoza, *Theological-Political Tractate*, trans. R.H.M. Elwes (New York: Dover, 1951), p. 99, adjusted to Wirzbuski's Hebrew translation (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1961), p. 79.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 144, citing S.R. Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*, 9th ed. (Edinburgh: Clark, 1913), pp. viif, x.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 145-46.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 146.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 148.

8. Hans Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1974), pp. 60ff.

9. *Eclipse*, pp. 62, 61.

10. *Eclipse*, p. 118.

11. Frei cites Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968).

12. "The Vision of Jerusalem in Ezekiel 8-11: A Holistic Interpretation," p. 146.

13. *Ibid.*

14. At the same time, Greenberg offers a mediating alternative in his method of reading the plain-sense as it would be received by what he calls an "ideal reader." See "The Vision of Jerusalem in Ezekiel 8-11," *op. cit.*

15. Kadushin's two most well-known works are *The Rabbinic Mind* (New York: Bloch Pub., 1972) and *Worship and Ethics* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964).

16. Among the essays I wrote on Kadushin's method were "Max Kadushin as Rabbinic Pragmatist," in *Understanding the Rabbinic Mind: Essays on the Hermeneutic of Max Kadushin*, ed. Peter Ochs (Atlanta: Scholars Press for South Florida Studies in the History of

Judaism, 1990); "A Rabbinic Pragmatism," in *Theology and Dialogue*, ed. Bruce Marshall (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990); and "Rabbinic Text-Process Theology," in *Jewish Thought* 1, No. 1 (Fall, 1991): 1-36.

17. George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine, Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1984).

18. *The Nature of Doctrine*, p. 16.

19. *Ibid.*

20. *The Nature of Doctrine*, p. 31.

21. There is a reason for the choice of three Jewish and two Christian hermeneuts. Among postcritical interpreters, I have found that the Christians are moved, more than the Jews, by the ideal of a single, authoritative hermeneutic in the study of which individual hermeneuts would differ only through a division of scholarly labor. In this case, for example, Frei emphasizes historical study, Lindbeck interpretive doctrine and theory, but their work appears to serve a single goal. The Jews, on the other hand, may find unity in the fact of a shared text, but are less inclined to seek (or at least to achieve) agreement on preferred methods of interpreting it. Jewish postcritical interpretations may cohere dialectically, therefore, rather than through similitude: in this case, Fraade, Halivni and Fishbane are joined by a division of modalities—moderate, conservative and radical modes of postcritical interpretation—rather than by a division of labor.

22. See, *inter alia*, *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, eds. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1934-35), Vol. 1, par. 338ff and Vol. 2, par. 228. Future references to this collection will be to CP, followed by volume and paragraph number (e.g., CP 1.338). For relevant discussions of Peirce's semiotics, see Vincent Colapietro, *Peirce's Approach to the Self* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989), *passim*, and Michael Raposa, *Peirce's Philosophy of Religion* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), pp. 117-23, and *passim*.

23. Cf. J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978). Note the relevant discussion of Austin in Edith Wyschogrod, "Works That 'Faith': The Grammar

of Ethics in Judaism," in *Cross Currents, Religion and Intellectual Life* 40.2 (Summer, 1990): 176-93.

24. "Literal Reading," in this volume, p. 58.

25. "Literal Reading," in this volume, p. 61.

26. "Literal Reading," in this volume, p. 78.

27. "Literal Reading," in this volume, p. 80.

28. *The Nature of Doctrine*, pp. 16, 24, *passim*, where the approach is exemplified by Peter Geach, G.K. Chesterton, C.S. Lewis and Malcolm Muggeridge.

29. *The Nature of Doctrine*, p. 31, citing Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (Herder and Herder, 1972): 101-24.

30. Citing Lonergan, pp. 120, 122.

31. *The Nature of Doctrine*, p. 16.

32. *Ibid.*

33. See CP 2.262; 3.419ff.

34. See CP 5.570; Cf. 5.140ff.

35. See CP 5.192.

36. George Lindbeck, "The Story-shaped Church: Critical Exegesis and Theological Interpretation," in *Scriptural Authority and Narrative Interpretation*, ed. G. Green (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), p. 164.

37. *The Nature of Doctrine*, p. 74. Cf. pp. 4, 12, *passim*.

38. Frei, "Literal Reading," p. 33.

39. *Ibid.*, citing Clifford Geertz, "From the Native's Point of View: On the Nature of Anthropological Understanding," in *Interpretive Social Science*, ed. P. Rabinow and W.M. Sullivan (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), pp. 240ff.

40. "Literal Reading," p. 36.

41. Delivered at the American Theological Society, Princeton, 1987; hereafter, "Doctrine."

42. "Doctrine," p. 2.

43. "Doctrine," p. 12.

44. "The Story-Shaped Church," pp. 169, *passim*. Elsewhere, Lindbeck argues, in fact, that Luther's conception of the creed is fundamentally homiletic, or "haggadic," because the gospel itself is *haggadah*: see "Martin Luther and the Rabbinic Mind," in *Understanding the Rabbinic Mind: Essays on the Hermeneutic of Max*

Kadushin, ed. P. Ochs (Atlanta: Scholar's Press, 1990), 141–64, at 146ff.

45. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991.
46. *From Tradition to Commentary*, p. 24.
47. *From Tradition to Commentary*, pp. 1–2.
48. *Ibid.*
49. *Sifre Deuteronomy* § 310, cited in *From Tradition to Commentary*, pp. 75–76, with commentary following pp. 76–79 (Fraade translates from the MS Vatican).
50. *Sifre* interprets:

"May my discourse come down as rain" (Deut. 32:2): Just as rain falls on trees and infuses each type with its distinctive flavor . . . so too words of Torah are all one, but they comprise *mikra* (Scripture) and *mishna* (oral teaching): *midrash* (exegesis), *halakhot* (laws) and *haggadot* (narratives). (§ 306, cited in *From Tradition to Commentary*, p. 96).

51. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.
52. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989.
53. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.
54. Among the features of this account are his interpretations of the legal nullity of scriptural texts transmitted through the First Temple period and of Ezra's role in restoring the correct meanings of these texts and thereby initiating the rabbinic mode of midrashic exegesis.

55. *Peshat and Derash*, p. v.
56. *Peshat and Derash*, p. 92.
57. *Peshat and Derash*, p. ix.
58. *Peshat and Derash*, p. 103.
59. *Ibid.* Halivni notes that the Rashbam "could afford to adhere strictly to *peshat* even when it ran counter to practical halakha because," in these cases, he tended to ground his halakhic expositions on some redundancy of word or letter in the scriptural text (p. 27). Separating the realms of *peshat* and *derash* more radically, Halivni has no need to adopt this exegetical device.

One implication is that Halivni's work on the *peshat* of the Tal-

mud might contribute to the process of halakhic decision-making, but not directly. Its contribution would come, if at all, only in the way its readings might in the long run filter into reformulations of centuries of accumulated patterns of legal argumentation. Halivni reminds us repeatedly that law is not guided by the text alone, but also by precedent and by the time-bound contingencies of social life. God, he says, has withdrawn from direct participation in the legal process; the eternal is the immediate subject-matter only of intellectual speculation (*hashkafa*), not of *halakha*.

60. "Contemporary Methods of the Study of Talmud," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 30 (1979), pp. 192–201, at 193.
61. *Ibid.*
62. "Contemporary Methods," pp. 195, 198.
63. "Contemporary Methods," p. 198.
64. "Contemporary Methods," pp. 199–200. As indicated by the title of his critical scholarship on the Talmud, "Sources and Traditions" (*Mekorot Umasorot*, Jerusalem: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1982), Halivni's most general hypothesis is that a distinction may be drawn between rabbinic sayings which preserve their original form ("sources") and those which have been changed in the course of transmission ("traditions"). Subsequent interpreters have attempted to rectify inequalities between the two through forced interpretations; Halivni has sought to rectify them, instead, by reconstructively distinguishing original forms from the transmitted ones.
65. This does not imply that the possibilities are endless, since an accurate intratextual reading would warrant discounting most possibilities.
66. Halivni may also attribute to the speculative scholar the capacity to display the ideal meaning of a text with respect to an ideal ("eternal") interpretant. If so, his approach in this regard either reflects a medieval-modern concern to privilege one context of meaning as transcendent or supra-contextual, or a postcritical scholar's context-specific effort to offset subjectivist tendencies.
67. *Peshat and Derash*, p. 50.
68. *Peshat and Derash*, p. 49.
69. The most striking illustration of the force of Halivni's critique is his study of *pilpul* ("farfetched casuistic deductions") in

halakhic scholarship of the sixteenth century and after (*Peshat and Derash*, pp. 42–44). He notes that when *peshat* is identified with natural sense, the pilpulists appear to deviate most problematically from rabbinic Judaism's progressive concern to protect the integrity of the *peshat*. *Pilpul* appears to ignore the text's literal reference. When *peshat* is identified, however, with extended intratextual context, the pilpulists appear to exemplify this concern! They fully respect the contextual integrity of their base-texts as stimuli for additional deductions.

70. Michael Fishbane, *The Garments of Torah. Essays in Biblical Hermeneutics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989).

71. Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

72. Fishbane's words, in *Garments*, p. 45.

73. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989 (1985).

74. *Zohar* III. 152. Translation from *Zohar—The Book of Splendor: Basic Readings from the Kabbalah*, ed. Gershom Scholem (New York: Schocken Books, 1963), pp. 121f. Cited in *Garments*, p. 34.

75. *Ibid.*

76. *Garments*, p. 24, citing *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* II, ed. Mandelbaum, pp. 379–81.

77. *Garments*, pp. 27–28.

78. Cf. *Garments*, pp. 64–65.

79. *Garments*, p. 65.

80. *Biblical Interpretation*, pp. 271, 408–09.

81. Cf. Buber's discussion of God's hidden face (for example, "Job," *The Prophetic Faith*, New York: The Macmillan Co., 1949, pp. 187–97) and Arthur Cohen's notion of catastrophic moments as *caesuras* in the historical-hermeneutical continuum of Israel's life (in *The Tremendum: A Theological Interpretation of the Holocaust*, New York: Crossroad, 1981).

82. From *l'derosh*, "to search after."

83. *Garments*, p. 100.

84. Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, trans. William Hallo (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970), p. 198.

85. For Peirce's original statement of this theory, see "The Fixation of Belief," *Popular Science Monthly* 12 (1877): 1–15; repr. CP

5. 358–387. See also "What Pragmatism Is," *The Monist* 15 (1905): 161–81; repr. in CP 5. 411–37.

86. These definitions of icon, index and symbol are adapted from CP 2.247–49.

87. See above, "The Rules of Postcritical Interpretation."