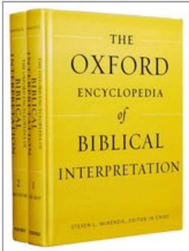
Oxford Reference



The Oxford Encyclopedia of Biblical Interpretation
Edited by Steven L. McKenzie

Publisher: Oxford University Press
Print ISBN-13: 9780199832262
Current Online Version: 2014
Print Publication Date: 2013
Published online: 2014
eISBN: 9780199832279

Race, Ethnicity, and Biblical Criticism

Ethnicity and race are important modes of group social organization that draw on various elements, including a sense of common origin and destiny, religion, language, homeland, or customs. Groups emerge and reemerge at different periods and are able to adapt their mode of organization as a response to changes in the environment, which can include migrations, responses to warfare, and other intergroup conflict. While ethnicity has been an important mode of human organization and socialization from the early third millennium B.C.E. to today, the vast majority of scholars maintain that race is a wholly modern phenomenon arising during the European Age of Discovery in the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries. It was during this period of conquest and colonization that the early modern light-skinned peoples from Europe encountered the dark-skinned peoples of Africa.

Theorizing Ethnicity and Race.

In the late 1960s, Fredrik Barth's work in ethnic studies broke new ground by proposing that ethnic groups are organized by variable and socially defined ethnic boundaries and not strictly through shared culture, as was most often assumed. Subsequently, scholars began to focus their analysis on the construction and maintenance of ethnic boundaries with greater attention to the external and internal forces that influence the shape, durability, and permeability of group boundaries as well as the nature of the relationships between majority and minority groups.

Though ethnic studies focused first on culture and later on boundaries, race, on the other hand, was most often associated with skin color in the nineteenth to twentieth centuries. The earliest discussions about race included commentary about other physical characteristics in defining racial difference, among them cranial capacity and phrenological mapping, measurement of facial angles and forearm lengths, analysis of the position of the navel, configuration of the ear, as well as differences in eye and hair color (Kidd). In recent decades, however, biologists and geneticists have dismantled all of these earlier suggestions, insofar as mappings of genetic difference conclusively show more variation within socially constructed racial or ethnic populations than they do between one population and another. Indeed, consistent with archaeological evidence that suggests that modern humans originated in Africa, scientists note that there is more genetic variation in that

continent than in the rest of the planet put together, facts that demolish the notions of blood purity at the center of most constructions of race in contemporary society.

The most important component of racialized group identity is the permanent nature of phenotype as a marker of identity, and the generally negative mental, moral, and personality characteristics that accompany modern constructions. The earliest English uses of the word "race" occur in sixteenth to eighteenth century discourse about cultural character that tether the temperament of a people to their national origin. The negative epithets from this period about so-called inferior peoples, like the Irish or Teutons or Jews, would soon be applied to the blacks and Natives in the American context. Thus, race rhetoric in the modern period was saturated with beliefs about the ingrained psychological characteristics of groups. Though many view ethnicity as an ascribed characteristic based on physical descent, it is often still possible to change ethnicity through intermarriage, assimilation, conversion, or even concealment. Such change is of course impossible when skin color or facial features identify group membership, as in the case of race. When these physical characteristics hinder acquisition of vitally needed resources, the permanence of race has catastrophic social and economic repercussions.

There is considerable debate about the difference between the concepts of race and ethnicity. Some maintain that race is entirely different from ethnicity, while others hold that ethnicity is an ancient, perennial, and primordial characteristic of human society, viewing race as a subset of ethnic identification. This debate is responsible, no doubt, for the frustrating theoretical overlap between the ideas of race and ethnicity. Much of the problem stems from the fact that in the pre-modern period and stretching into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, "race," "nation," and "ethnic group" were synonyms that referred to groups of people who held a belief in a common origin and/or heritage. If some theorists now emphasize the territorial components of common origin while others stress kinship and common ancestry, the emphasis on common descent constitutes the most pervasive definition of ethnic identity in the most recent discussions. Though some maintain that race is a stigmatized identity that is a subset of ethnicity and others insist that race is wholly imposed, all agree that the two are socially constructed without a basis in biological fact. Indeed, the social construction of race and ethnicity leaves room for the idea that either set of theorists may be right in a given time period, perspectival posture, or social context. The discursive ambiguities in theorizing difference over time has given rise to use of the term "ethnoracial" as a way of pointing to the shifting definitions of these socially constructed concepts (Buell).

The rejection of essentialized subjects most characterizes contemporary scholarship in ethnic and racial studies. Theorists see essentialism as the act of violently imputing a fundamental, basic, and necessary constitutive quality to a person or group, or enumerating characteristics that are assumed to define the essence, boundaries, or nature of the group in question (Werbner). The key word in this definition of essentialism is "violent" and points to the difference between imposed vs. independent determinations of identity. There is a clear difference between a minority group's own description of itself and the violent imposition of group characteristics and boundaries by powerful outsiders who want to maintain the status quo. Postmodern studies of identity are thus hostile to the kinds of rigid, biologically-based notions of shared origin or common descent found in modern conceptions of race.

This rejection of rigid categories of group identity gives rise to two other trends in research on ethnicity and race: a priority on hearing the voices of the oppressed, and attention to the fluidity and complexity of group identification processes. The emphasis on retrieving the previously muted voices of the oppressed seeks to reverse one of the most tragic results of the modern era—the silencing of categorized and stigmatized population groups who previously only existed as written about, and pressed into assimilation. The proliferation of hermeneutical strategies that focus on these marginalized voices in biblical studies is the most visible and important payoff of interdisciplinary work in ethnic and racial studies and biblical criticism.

The second consequence of scholarship that minimizes essentialism is an emphasis on fluidity and hybridity, which theoretically offers resistance by highlighting the implicit and explicit boundary crossings associated with mixed identities. This resistance is perhaps most visible in the demands that led to the inclusion of a multiracial category in the US census data and elsewhere. Yet even this improvement may subtly contribute to reifying existing hierarchies. On the one hand, the new multiracial category does deconstruct rigid racial categories, but on the other hand, the new category simply functions

as a “non-black” placeholder that does nothing to destabilize the fictional notion of a “pure” whiteness at the top of the racial hierarchy. In other words, as a theoretical construct the notion of hybridity challenges the status quo only to the degree that it problematizes any conception of purity—be it racial, ethnic, or national. An emphasis on hybridity must interrogate the social structures that continue to operate to maintain inequalities, recognizing that culture, ethnicity, and race continue to be utilized as political resources.

Thus, we may define an ethnoracial community as one that believes it shares a common descent, place of origin, and a common destiny, as well as a common set of values, practices, or personal traits, which may include emotional, mental, or moral characteristics. An ethnoracial group is one that believes that its traits or characteristics are transmitted within the self-defined boundaries of the group, through either descent or culture. This definition acknowledges that kinship is an important and crucial element of ethnicity in multiple social and historical contexts. Yet further, this definition acknowledges that values or personal characteristics play a significant and sometimes determinative role in constructions of group identity across history.

Ethnicity and Race in the Biblical Period.

One frequently encounters the claim that ethnicity and race did not exist in antiquity, whether articulated as an observation about the lack of a word that corresponds to the modern concept of ethnicity or encountered in the assertion that race is a wholly modern invention. However, ancient texts reflect a confluence of ideas similar to those associated with the modern idea of ethnicity, despite the fact that the ancients lacked a particular word, as is the case with the related ideas of culture, class, or even gender (Hall, *Hellenicity*). Consider, for example, evidence of a Greek ethnic consciousness as revealed in a passage from the fifth-century B.C.E. historian Herodotus, who comments on Athenian resistance to the Persians in the War of 480–479 B.C.E:

> There are many important reasons that would prevent us from doing this [i.e., surrender] even if we wanted. First and foremost, there are the statues and temples of gods that have been sacked and destroyed; it is necessary for us to avenge these with all our might rather than come to an agreement with the man who did this. In addition, there is the matter of the Greek nature (*to Hellenikon*)—that is, our common blood (*homaimon*), common tongue (*homoglosson*), common shrines and altars (*theōn hidrymata te koina kai thysiai*) and similar customs and habits (*hēthea te homotropa*); it would not be good for the Athenians to betray these things. (Herodotus, *History* 8.144, my translation)

The word “ethnicity” does not appear in this selection, but the passage has several features associated with it, including religion, common blood, language, ways of life, and even “national character” (also see Dionysius, *Roman Antiquities* 1.29–30).

Ethnicity is communicated over time through particular conventions that shape the experience of a people, conventions residing in myths, memories, values, and symbols. Premodern ethnic groups are populations with common ancestry and a set of common myths, histories, and culture. They are named communities who have a sense of group solidarity and an association with a particular homeland (Smith, pp. 22–32). Though most ancient peoples were largely unaware of their cultural distinctiveness—or at best, an ethnic sentiment only resided among the elites—ancient Israelites/Second Temple Jews are perhaps the parade example of the persistence of ethnic sentiment. In the biblical material this people had well-preserved and well-known narratives of common descent and shared history. The stories about origins were reinforced by the distinctive culture promoted in the materials, and were supplemented by narratives of group conflict in the tradition. Given that conflict is perhaps the most effective stimulus of ethnic sentiment, narratives about Egyptian slavery and the conquest of Canaan, defeat by a succession of ancient near-eastern empires, the Hasmonean revolt, and the wars with Rome all served to build and sustain Jewish ethnic sentiment. Even if the intensity of ethnic sentiment waxed and waned, we have evidence in the historical record for a strong sense of group solidarity that likely transcended social and class divisions in Jewish society throughout much of the biblical period.

With respect to the question of whether race exists in antiquity, it should be noted at the start that even though translators commonly render the Greek word *genos* with the English "race," the ancient concept had little to do with skin color or physical appearance. Generally lacking color prejudice against dark-skinned people like that which accompanies modern racism, images and portrayals of blacks in classical antiquity bear little of the pejorative and negative associations of Enlightenment-era color prejudice against dark skin (Snowden). Similarly, the biblical authors do not make use of the modern racial categories that associate blackness or other physical characteristics with pejorative psychosocial traits. In the Hebrew Bible, for example, Ethiopians (Cush) are not depicted as racially inferior, beyond the presence of an Israelite ethnocentric bias that values many other peoples less than their own (Sadler). It is true, however, that early Christians were deeply conscious of difference, and engaged in rhetorical othering of blacks/blackness, Egypt/Egyptians, and Ethiopia/Ethiopians in negative and sometimes positive ways, building and reinforcing their own boundaries and symbols of Christian virtue by defining themselves over and against the Egyptian and Ethiopian other (Byron). These observations are important in tracing the evolution of modern color consciousness, but we should note the direction of these conclusions, that they implicitly assume the connection between color and race found in modernity and do not interrogate ancient constructions of race on their own terms.

If racism is the ideology which assigns negative psychosocial traits to certain permanent physical features and is thus a key component of the modern idea of race, then it is possible that there are analogous processes in antiquity that correspond to modern ethnoracial dynamics even in the absence of color prejudice in those societies. In fact, the climatological determinism in classical literature does appear to correlate with the "scientific" racism of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Classical texts show that the ancients combined geographic determinism with the belief that progeny inherit acquired traits as well as physical ones from their parents (Isaac 2004). For example, climatological determinism would hold that a people living in a temperate climate have agreeable natures, while hostile climates produce warlike peoples (e.g., Strabo, *Geography*, 2.5.26). If a racial group is a group of people who are believed to share imagined physical, mental, or moral characteristics that are entirely determined by unchangeable factors, then the ancients exhibit "proto-racism" when they assume that personal characteristics come from an association with the geography of their birthplace and the climate associated with that territory (Isaac 2004).

By understanding racism via the key element of determinism, we are able to correlate determinism in antiquity as ideologically analogous to the racialist determinism of modernity, despite the fact that the former uses geography and climate as a focal point while the latter revolves around biology. Thus, racism occurs when a group is the object of imagined attributed characteristics determined by immutable forces. This transhistorical framework for race and racism thus accommodates the definition of the "Jewish race" in Nazi Germany as well as the situation in contemporary American society in which blacks and other people of color are racialized vis-à-vis whites. Though the mechanisms of determinism vary by epoch, the similarities in the intergroup identity processes are nevertheless clearly discernible.

Turning, then, to a consideration of what ancients meant when they identified themselves as a *genos* (race, people, clan) or an *ethnos* (nation, people, gentile), we cannot provide an exhaustive description of these concepts given the difficulties in defining ethnicity and race in the modern period and the fragmentary nature of the historical data. We can note, however, the nature of the ancient usage in the texts in which the words appear. *Ethnos* appeared in a broad variety of contexts in antiquity, some going well beyond what we mean by "ethnicity" or "ethnic group," the words most closely aligned etymologically with the Greek word. The word describes swarms of bees and flies and flocks of birds in Homer's *Illiad* in the eighth century B.C.E. (*Iliad* 2.87; 2.469; 2.459), elsewhere referring to warriors, the dead, and groups of young men (*Iliad* 2.92; 3.33; *Odyssey* 10.526). Romans in the empire would use *ethnos* for the provinces outside Italy (Appian, *Civil Wars* 2.13). The word *ethnos* was sometimes a virtual synonym for *barbarous* (barbarian) and used to designate other in a way analogous to Jewish and Christian denigration of non-Jews, and reminiscent of the modern use of "tribe" to designate primitive groups who are deficient in civilization (Aristotle, *Politics* 1324.b.10; cf. 3 Macc. 6.9 and Gal 2:15).

The Greek words *genos* and *ethnos* often functioned as synonyms in antiquity much as the analogous terms race and ethnicity do in contemporary thought (1 Pet 2:9 ; Jer 38:35–37 ; Diodorus, *Library of History* 2.46.4). Nevertheless, analysis reveals differences in usage: later second temple Greek writers who are neither Jewish nor Christian construct

ethnic identity primarily in terms of territory or homeland, and racial identity in this context is overwhelmingly associated with common descent. The dual emphasis on racial kinship and ethnic homeland in constructions of identity results in the kind of boundary rigidity and permanence that is analogous to popular racial understandings in the modern era. Further, given the way that ethnocentric endogamous marriage practices and geographic constraints on travel produced a high degree of kinship within confined territories, we can see that homeland was the central organizing principle of identity for these writers.

Just as views about ethnoracial identity in the contemporary period differ by culture and/or nationality—whites and blacks for instance think about race in very different ways—Jewish constructions of identity differed from non-Jewish concepts, primarily based on the differing importance of religion in the respective societies. In the Hebrew Bible Israelite ethnicity was more clearly dependent on religion than on language, kinship, physical appearance, or any of the other markers of ethnic identity, though the authors of the Hebrew Bible do not all espouse the same religious ideologies (Sparks). For example, while Hosea used his religious sentiments in support of a "mono-Yahwist" agenda, Amos and Isaiah preferred a "Yahwistic universalism." Religious identity—not kinship—is a principal concern of the Deuteronomist and Jeremiah, but in Ezekiel, practices such as observance of the Sabbath and circumcision become criteria distinguishing the Judeans from others (Sparks). Likewise, in the second temple Jewish literature, religion is the central organizing principle in ethnicity, and there is a de-emphasis on territory compared to contemporaneous Greco-Roman constructions because religion saturated most aspects of Jewish life. This implies that the lack of a territorial homeland had a negligible effect on social and religious identification in the Jewish Diaspora. In Jewish texts about race, on the other hand, the dominant element is group consciousness or awareness of being a certain people, a sense fostered by religious customs and values and buttressed by kinship claims.

The prominence of religion in developing the ideas of ethnicity and race in biblical literature produces a porousness of ethnoracial identity that is deeply at odds with modern popular constructions of race with their permanent boundaries marked by skin color. When religion is a central component of identity, conversion can result in a change in race or ethnicity, as seen in Philo's views on the standing of proselytes vis-à-vis native Jews. In Philo, Jews warmly embrace proselytes, honoring them as much as the native-born because their change in life marks them as superior (*Special Laws* 1.51–52). For Philo, God gives precedence to proselytes, helping them because they have forsaken their false and vain ancestral customs, rewarding them for having crossed over to serve the true and living God (*Special Laws* 1.309). For Philo and others, outsiders who worship the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob could become members of the Jewish people. Thus, those who insist that it is inappropriate to identify "gentile" as an ethnic category in Christian literature are right only insofar as they have in mind definitions of ethnicity that privilege kinship and territory in Greco-Roman and modern western discourse. Further, constructions of peoplehood that center religious faith and practice also characterize some postbiblical early Christian thought about identity (Buell). Likewise, the New Testament exhibits similar dynamics where it juxtaposes Gentile inclusion and participation in the Jesus movement with familial language and claims about Christian kinship (Matt 12:47–49 ; Gal 3:6–9).

There is thus a contrast between ancient and modern constructions of identity regarding the way "race" functions over time. In antiquity, "race" was a term that peoples used of themselves and others, and it did not necessarily convey a sense of otherness or alienness, as it frequently does now; ancient Jewish and non-Jewish Greek-speakers used different terms to convey this sense of otherness. While non-Jews used the word *barbaros* to exclude the alien outsider, Jews used *ethnos* as a term for exclusion and often used *genos* to convey a sense of shared origin and heritage (e.g., Phil 3:5). This situation has been completely inverted in the contemporary world: now theorists are trying to promote the idea that ethnicity is a ubiquitous property of people groups, while the word "race" most often communicates deviance and exclusion. Though antiquity lacks the association with marked physical characteristics that dominates modern race rhetoric, both race and ethnicity nearly always appeal to common descent across time, even though religion dominates the biblical materials as the major factor in ethnoracial identity.

The fluid and sociohistorical nature of ethnic and racial identity means that we cannot discuss these phenomena in a given period without attending to the contextual parameters that shape the ideas in that period. As mentioned earlier, no study or

dataset will ever be able to calculate definitively the nature of race or ethnicity for an era given the fluidity of the concepts, and especially not in a case so far removed from our own. Nevertheless, just as there are factors in current discourse about identity that influence the prevailing ideas about race, so too were there contextual features that contributed to the construction of race in antiquity. More attention is required in investigating the nature of constructions of ethnicity, race, prejudice, and racism across time, analysis that will help all readers of ancient documents better understand the horizons of the texts as well as the social perceptual lenses through which they read those texts.

Engaging Ethnicity and Race in Biblical Scholarship.

Perhaps the earliest work in biblical studies that engaged modern ideas about ethnoracial identity emerged in scholarship about the African presence in the Bible, which challenged Eurocentric silence and/or assumptions about black characters, themes, or interests in the narratives. One of the foremost voices in this area was Hebrew Bible scholar Charles B. Copher. In "The Black Presence in the Old Testament," Copher's investigations identified blacks in the narratives by locating adjectives and names used to describe black or dark-skinned people (*Šaḥor*, *ḥām*/*ḥūm*, *Kūš*, *Pīneḥas*, *Qēdār*). In the same collection featuring Copher's work, Randall Bailey describes a systematic "de-Africanization" of ancient near-eastern studies, maps of the Near East, and discussions about the location of Cush, especially when considering important Cushite characters in the narratives. Bailey builds on this program in a different essay with a re-reading of Exodus 2:1–10 , arguing that the oldest layer of the traditions on Moses's biography depicts him as an Egyptian, and that later additions correct his biography in order to account for the lawgiver's Egyptian name, ultimately giving him a Jewish identity.

Several passages in the Hebrew Bible have been at the center of discourse about race in modern society deep into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The so-called "Curse of Ham" (Gen 9:18–27) and Ham's traditional association with African peoples has been an important bulwark in the construction of race. Assuming the "whiteness" of Noah and his family, early modern interpreters often identified blackness as that which arises from the curse on the descendants of Noah's son Ham, despite the fact that the text identifies Canaan as the recipient of the curse. Several scholars have engaged in understanding how interpretation of the passage contributed to the construction of race and the justification for black slavery in the modern period, investigating interpretations in Christian, Jewish, and Muslim traditions (e.g., Goldberg). In the *Forging of Race*, historian Colin Kidd reviews the way that biblical interpretation has been deeply intertwined in the construction of race, and describes how conflicts between racist ideology and scripture gave rise to a "crisis of faith" among Christian interpreters. Those who wanted to assert the naturalness of black inferiority in Anglo/American slave debates found themselves at odds with the Adamic and Noachic narratives of monogenesis in the Hebrew Bible.

Unable to hold these two impulses in tension, some interpreters turned to Gen 4:15 as a mediating narrative to account for blackness, interpreting the mark of Cain as the origin of blackness. Others questioned Adam's race and skin color—white, black or red—or maintained that blacks originated from a pre-Adamite race, holding that two different races emerge from the two creation narratives in Gen 1–2 . Thus, many white southern Protestants who wanted to claim a biblical sanction for slavery but reject polygenesis could rely instead on the Curse of Ham as an explanation for black slavery.

Kidd's work powerfully depicts how biblical interpretation and theology contributed to the construction of race in the Anglophone west, resisting the trend among scholars in modern race theory to ignore these theo-political contributions. His larger thesis that Protestant theology did as much to inhibit racialized thinking as it did to promote it founders especially in light of more recent work on the topic of race-as-theology, particularly in the work of theologian Willie James Jennings' *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race*.

In the latest research at the intersection of ethnicity, race, and biblical criticism, scholars explore the way that biblical themes and stories promote, sustain, or resist ethnic prejudice and racism as they appear in modern society. Vincent Wimbush's body of work in African American biblical hermeneutics has been influential in this arena, especially in helping to move scholarship away from concerns about biblical rhetoric about Africans. Highlighting agency in engaging the Bible, his particular concern is with analysis of African American interpretation, interrogating appropriations of scripture in

African American spirituals, sermons, and speeches. In a recent essay, for instance, Wimbush uses Fredrick Douglass' 1883 speech "The United States Cannot Remain Half-Slave and Half-Free" to explore the rhetoric of nation and scripture in building US public policy. In the speech, Douglass recasts the major characters of the exodus story so that post-slavery/post-Lincoln America is a "mixed rabble" of whites and peoples of color, lacking a modern Joshua to lead the wandering peoples out of the wilderness of debate about the status of blacks in a pluralistic nation. Wimbush sees in Douglass' work an example of an African American hermeneutic that seamlessly blends biblical imperatives with the political, as Douglass' speech casts blacks' political hopes for justice in larger–than-life eschatological and apocalyptic terms. In a different register, Brian Blount's work in *Can I Get a Witness?* sees an analogy between the African American struggle for civil rights and the anti-imperialism of the Apocalypse. Here Blount gains critical leverage by connecting the biblical text to African American political resistance, instead of Wimbush's use of African American interpretations of scripture.

Reader response criticism from Asian, African, Latino/a, and postcolonial hermeneutics likewise engages racial and ethnic studies. Book length treatments in these areas include a collection of Fernando Segovia's essays on postcolonial methods in *Decolonizing Biblical Studies*, ethicist Miguel De La Torre's *Reading the Bible from the Margins*, and Tat-siong Benny Liew's *What is Asian American Hermeneutics*, where he deftly deploys race and ethnic studies from Japanese, Chinese, and Korean perspectives in reading the New Testament. Tat-siong Benny Liew, Fernando Segovia, and Randall Bailey's edited collection *They Were All Together in One Place: Towards Minority Biblical Criticism* opens up an exciting new avenue in biblical scholarship, as it seeks to move toward cultural exchange among scholars working in African American, Latino/a, Asian American, and feminist hermeneutics. According to the editors, the double-consciousness of bicultural fluency in minority and dominant cultures that are coincident with the social location of minority scholars may yield political and interpretive practices that have particular transformative potential.

Womanist biblical scholars such as Renita Weems and Clarice Martin, who explore the interaction of feminist theory, race, and biblical scholarship, were on the forefront of intersectional analysis and biblical studies, and attorney and biblical scholar Cheryl Anderson's *Ancient Laws and Contemporary Controversies* continues this rich tradition through her accent on inclusive biblical interpretation. First coined by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw in the late 80s, "intersectionality" refers to the way that multiple identity modalities such as race, gender, sexual orientation, class, and religious bigotry, intersect to create a network of oppression rather than acting independent of each other; this kind of analysis is the hallmark of womanist biblical criticism. Outside of womanist scholarship, in *Prejudice and Christian Beginnings*, editors Laura Nasrallah and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza bring together a collection of essays that explores the intersectionality of race, gender, class, sexuality, and imperialism in early Christian studies, and several of the contributions in the volume directly or indirectly engage biblical interpretation. For example, Joseph Marchal's essay builds on Homi Bhabha's concept of colonial mimicry to analyze the theme of imitation in 1 Corinthians, while Cynthia Baker explores the multinational/multiethnic diversity of ancient Jews in Philo and in Acts.

Scholarship on anti-Semitism in the New Testament also features work that engages the topics of ethnic and racial identity. Shawn Kelley's *Racializing Jesus* argues that racialized Enlightenment valuations of cultures deeply saturated the thought of two of the most important modern philosophers Martin Hegel and Martin Heidegger, and that these two thinkers shaped the discipline of biblical scholarship through their influence on Ferdinand Christian Baur and Rudolph Bultmann. Kelley argues that the influence of Hegel's racialized schemas of history and civilizations on a cultural continuum (primitive Africans, despotic Orientals, free and enlightened Greco-Romans/Europeans) are subtle but still perceptible in later thinkers such as Conzelmann, Käsemann, and the parable scholarship of Funk and Crossan. Daniel Boyarin and Caroline Johnson Hodge represent other work in this arena that explicitly addresses the topic of anti-Semitism through the categories of racial and ethnic identity. Daniel Boyarin locates the genesis of aspects of modern Christian identity politics in the Pauline corpus in *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity*, where he maintains that Pauline theology is supersessionist, obliterates the legitimacy of Jewish difference, and normalizes white, male, European identity. In *If Sons Then Heirs: A Study of Kinship and Ethnicity in the Letters of Paul*, Caroline Johnson Hodge explores ethnic constructs in Paul's arguments about Christian identity, and forcefully challenges the view that Christianity is a religion that transcends ethnicity and eschews markers of culture and human practice. Hodge argues that in Paul kinship and ethnicity are not

metaphorical, but that the concepts of lineage, paternity, and peoplehood are central to his arguments; according to Hodge, they are the preeminent categories for understanding status before God. Thus, the categories of ethnicity and race are becoming more important in both historical and ideological biblical criticism.

[See also African Biblical Interpretations; Asian American Biblical Interpretation; Chinese Interpretation; Cross-Cultural Exegesis; Cultural Studies; Feminist Biblical Interpretation; Latina/o Interpretation; Postcolonial Biblical Interpretation; Postmodern Interpretation; Reader-Response Criticism; and Womanist Interpretation]

Bibliography

Anderson, Cheryl. *Ancient Laws and Contemporary Controversies: The Need for Inclusive Biblical Interpretation*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Find this resource:

Bailey, Randall C. “Beyond Identification: The Use of Africans in Old Testament Poetry and Narratives.” In *Stony the Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation*, edited by Cain Hope Felder, 165–186. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991.

Find this resource:

Bailey, Randall C. “Is That Any Name for a Nice Hebrew Boy: Exodus 2:1–10: The De-Africanization of an Israelite Hero.” In *The Recovery of the Black Presence: An Interdisciplinary Exploration*, edited by Randall C. Bailey and Jacquelyn Grant, 25–36. Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1995.

Find this resource:

Bailey, Randall, Fernando Segovia, and Tat-siong Benny Liew, eds. *They Were All Together in One Place: Towards Minority Biblical Criticism*. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009.

Find this resource:

Barth, Frederick, ed. *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture*. London: Allen and Unwin, 1969.

Find this resource:

Blount, Brian. *Can I Get a Witness? Reading Revelation through African American Culture*. Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2005.

Find this resource:

Boyarin, Daniel. *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.

Find this resource:

Buell, Denise Kimber. *Why This New Race: Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005.

Find this resource:

Byron, Gay. *Symbolic Blackness and Ethnic Difference in Early Christian Literature*. London: Routledge, 2002.

Find this resource:

Copher, Charles B. “The Black Presence in the Old Testament.” In *Stony the Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation*, edited by Cain Hope Felder, 146–164. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991.

Find this resource:

De La Torre, Miguel. *Reading the Bible from the Margins*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2002.

Find this resource:

Goldberg, David M. *The Curse of Ham: Race and Slavery in Early Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.

Find this resource:

Hall, Jonathon. *Hellenicity: Between Ethnicity and Culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002.

Find this resource:

Hays, J. Daniel. *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race*. Downer's Grove, Ill. IVP Academic, 2003.

Find this resource:

Hodge, Caroline Johnson. *If Sons Then Heirs: A Study of Kinship and Ethnicity in the Letters of Paul*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Find this resource:

Isaac, Benjamin. *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity*. Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004.

Find this resource:

Jennings, Willie James. *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race*. New Haven, CT Conn.: Yale University Press, 2010.

Find this resource:

Kelley, Shawn. *Racializing Jesus: Race, Ideology and the Formation of Modern Biblical Scholarship*. New York: Routledge, 2002.

Find this resource:

Kidd, Colin. *The Forging of Races: Race and Scripture in the Protestant Atlantic World, 1600–2000*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Find this resource:

Liew, Tat-siong Benny. *What is Asian American Hermeneutics? Reading the New Testament*. Intersections: Asian and Pacific American Transcultural Studies. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008.

Find this resource:

Martin, Clarice J. "Womanist Interpretations of the New Testament: The Quest for Holistic and Inclusive Translation and Interpretation." In *Black Theology*. 2 vols., edited by James H. Cone and Gayraud Wilmore, 225–244. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1993.

Find this resource:

McKenzie, Steven L. *All God's Children: A Biblical Critique of Racism*. Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1997.

Find this resource:

Nasrallah, Laura, and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, eds. *Prejudice and Christian Beginnings*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009.

Find this resource:

Sadler, Rodney Steven, Jr. *Can A Cushite Change His Skin: An Examination of Race, Ethnicity, and Othering in the Hebrew Bible*. London: T&T Clark, 2005.

Find this resource:

Sechrest, Love. *A Former Jew: Paul and the Dialectics of Race*, LNTS 410. London: T&T Clark, 2009.

Find this resource:

Segovia, Fernando F. *Decolonizing Biblical Studies: A View from the Margins*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2000.
Find this resource:

Smith, Anthony. *The Ethnic Origin of Nations*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1986.
Find this resource:

Snowden, Frank. *Before Color Prejudice: The Ancient View of Blacks*. Cambridge, Mass.: London: Harvard University Press, 1991.
Find this resource:

Sparks, Kenton. *Ethnicity and Identity in Ancient Israel: Prolegomena to the Study of Ethnic Sentiments and Their Expression in the Hebrew Bible*. Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1998.
Find this resource:

Renita Weems, "Womanist Reflections on Biblical Hermeneutics," in *Black Theology*, James H. Cone and Gayraud Wilmore, eds. 2 vols., 2:216–224. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1993.
Find this resource:

Werbner, Pnina. "Essentialising Essentialism, Essentialising Silence: Ambivalence and Multiplicity in the Construction of Racism and Ethnicity." In *Debating Cultural Hybridity: Multicultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-Racism*, edited by Pnina Werbner and Tariq Modood, 228–230. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985.
Find this resource:

Wimbush, Vincent. " 'No Modern Joshua…' Nationalization, Scriptures, and Race." In *Prejudice and Christian Beginnings*, edited by Laura Nasrallah and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, 259–278. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009.
Find this resource:

Love L. Sechrest

WAS THIS USEFUL? Yes No

PRINTED FROM OXFORD REFERENCE (www.oxfordreference.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2013. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms o from a reference work in OR for personal use.

Subscriber: Fuller Theological Seminary; date: 26 September 2017