A Postcolonial Commentary on the New Testament Writings

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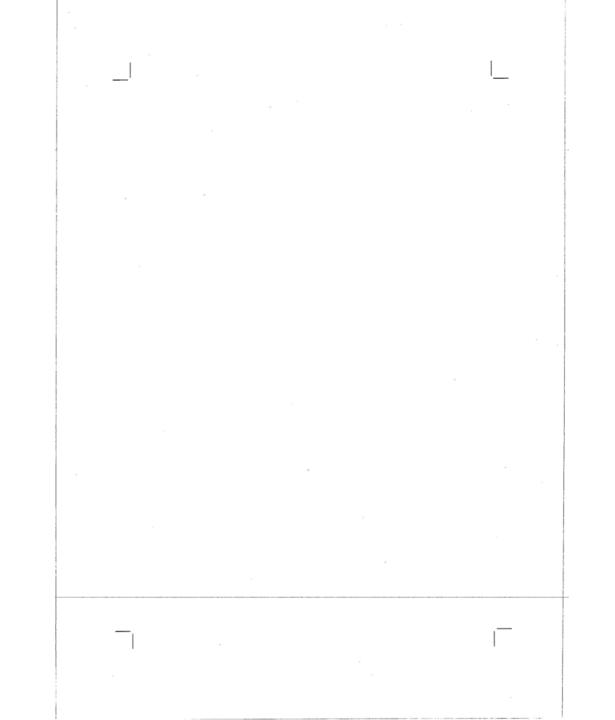
R. S. Sugirtharajah

POSTCOLONIAL AND BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION: THE NEXT PHASE

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INTRODUCTION: CONFIGURATIONS, APPROACHES, FINDINGS, STANCES

Fernando F. Segovia

The present commentary constitutes, on various counts, a landmark achievement in the trajectory of postcolonial biblical criticism: it contains highly integrative critical analysis of all the writings of the New Testament; it brings together a highly diverse representation of critical faces and voices; and it reveals a highly expansive deployment of critical frameworks and responses. A previous volume in this series on The Bible and Postcolonialism (Stephen D. Moore and Fernando F. Segovia [eds.], Postcolonial Biblical Criticism: Interdisciplinary Intersections [London and New York: T&T Clark International, 2005]) has already traced the overall path of postcolonial criticism, its origins and developments, in Biblical Studies, in the light of other poststructuralist and ideological approaches in the discipline. In this introduction, therefore, I should like to pursue a comparative analysis of the different contributions in terms of four fundamental areas of discussion in postcolonial inquiry. These are as follows: (1) configurations, the envisioned meaning and scope of the postcolonial as such; (2) approaches, the particular mode of interpretation adopted as well as the specific line of development undertaken; (3) findings, the range of positions advanced with regard to the perceived interaction between the socio-religious arena of the unfolding Christian texts and communities and the socio-political realm of the Roman Empire; and (4) stances, the relationship between critic and findings. Such an exercise should, it is my hope, bring an overarching sense of the volume as a whole - without doubt, a daunting collection of immense breadth and incredible richness.

Meaning and Scope of Postcolonial Criticism

Mar

Tat-Siong Benny Liew does not specify the force or reach of the term 'postcolonial' as such and hence does not pursue the question of meaning and scope; at the same time, however, he does characterize the Gospel of Mark as a colonial text and his own approach to it as a postcolonial reading. With regard to the Gospel, he speaks of a twofold colonial dimension: first, as a writing coming from a 'turbulent time of colonial politics' (either before or after the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in 70 cE in the first Judeo-Roman War); second, as part of the 'colonizing can(n)on' of the West throughout its period of colonial expansion. With regard to his own reading, a twofold postcolonial dimension is again cited: first, by foregrounding – taking a cue from Norman Cohn – the link between apocalyptic and colonialism, yielding a view of Mark as an apocalyptic writing immersed in politics; second, by distinguishing such an approach from that of Western scholarship in general, pointing to the latter's failure to pursue this connection given its traditional identification with Rome, antagonism toward Judaism, and separation of religion and culture.

Matthew

For Warren Carter, the Gospel of Matthew constitutes a postcolonial text and Rome qualifies as an imperial power, provided that such terms are properly defined and used. Considerable attention is devoted, therefore, to the meaning and scope of the postcolonial. To begin with, a variety of common and established approaches in postcolonial inquiry - the chronological, the geographical; the economic - are pronounced inappropriate for Matthew and its context. For example, in contrast to a sequential understanding of the postcolonial as involving a 'once' of domination and a 'now' of liberation, in light of the global process of decolonization that took place in the mid-twentieth century, the world of Matthew knows of no such transition or experience. The Gospel does not come from the world of the now-liberated, coming to terms with the colonial legacy of silencing and external representation, nor does it belong to the world of the once-dominant, engaged in producing imperial representations of the other. Similarly, distinct from a spatial understanding of the colonial as the implantation of settlements in foreign lands, the world of Matthew was not that of a colonia. To be sure, there were colonia of retired soldiers elsewhere in Syria, and Roman legions were stationed in Antioch itself, but no such settlement was ever established by Rome in Antioch, the likely location of the Gospel. Lastly, in contrast to a Leninist understanding of the imperial as the highest stage of capitalism, the world of Matthew lacks a systematic and centralized exploitation of foreign resources by a state for economic self-gain. Rome certainly sought economic benefits, but in no way can it be characterized along the lines of a capitalist empire of the nineteenth century. Thus, Carter argues, the key to an appropriate postcolonial analysis of Matthew and its context lies in a more expansive notion of imperialism, where the imperial is seen as taking on different forms and working from different motivations throughout history.

Central to such a concept is the element of 'power over', as exercised by one group over another in any number of ways. Postcolonial analysis would then address the whole of this 'imperializing experience', in all of its different variations as well as from imposition to aftermath. Such analysis would include, in effect, the means, the dynamics, the impact and the legacy of imperialization, with special attention to textual and cultural expressions. Only in this broad

sense would postcolonial analysis apply to Matthew and its context: Rome would stand as an example of imperialism – a dominating metropolitan centre with 'power over' others; the Gospel would represent a postcolonial text – a textual product from a context of interaction between imperial culture and local culture. Such analysis would focus precisely on this interaction and thus highlight the reality and experience of imperialization as expressed in Matthew.

Postcolonial analysis would also be applicable to Matthew in terms of two other contexts. On the one hand, a postcolonial focus on Matthew would extend to the use of the Gospel in the concomitant expansion of Western imperialism and the Christian religion in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Why the Western expansion of the fifteenth through to the seventeenth centuries is bypassed is not clear. On the other hand, a postcolonial inquiry would also attend to the use of the Gospel within contemporary ecclesial contexts, as Christians seek to avoid the language, worldview and practices of imperialism today. While the former dimension is not pursued, the latter is, by way of conclusion.

Luke-Acts

Virginia Burrus's approach to meaning and scope in postcolonial inquiry is swift and to the point: such analysis is highly fruitful for reading Luke-Acts and thoroughly sound for approaching the Roman Empire. With regard to the text, she points to three specific features as particularly inviting in this regard; (1) the evident concern of Luke-Acts with power relations between centre and periphery, defined in geopolitical terms as Rome and those under imperial rule - a concern further identified at work in terms of social class (rich/poor), social space (urban/rural), ethnic/racial boundaries (Jew/Gentile), religious space (Jerusalem temple/land of Israel); (2) the universalizing and transcultural perspective adopted by Luke-Acts - a world that imitates the reach of the Greek and Roman Empires and where 'travellers' as well as encounters between 'social "others" ' and 'ethnic "strangers" ' abound; (3) the ambiguities and ambivalences present throughout Luke-Acts - traits marked, following Homi Bhabha, as highly distinctive of the postcolonial condition, and hence of postcolonial literature, and directly responsible for the critical and transforming power of such literature. Indeed, Burrus adds, the lack of postcolonial analysis on Luke-Acts can only be explained on the grounds of the newness of the approach itself or as a result of the well-known ambiguity of Luke's political stance, yielding quite varied interpretations of the work as 'radically subversive' or 'skillfully accommodationist'. With regard to context, while readily acknowledging (following Robert Young) that imperialism and colonialism are not to be conflated as systems of domination, Burrus argues that contemporary theories of 'colonialism, neocolonialism, and postcoloniality' can properly account for Rome's impact, cultural as well as economic, on its subjugated peoples. Consequently, she specifies, the term 'postcolonial' is used not in chronological fashion (the aftermath of colonialism) but in reference to the 'critical potentialities' present within given frameworks of colonialism and imperialism.

John

The realm of the geopolitical constitutes, for Fernando Segovia, the central problematic of postcolonial inquiry, specifically the differential relationship of power at work in imperial-colonial frameworks, involving domination by the core and subordination of the periphery. In a prolegomenon on key issues of method and theory in postcolonial analysis, he begins by addressing the question of meaning and scope, drawing on postcolonial theory to move on to biblical criticism.

Segovia develops the force of the postcolonial by means of three standard approaches to the import of the prefix 'post' and thus the sense of 'coming after' operative in such approaches regarding the relationship between the colonial and the postcolonial. Two of these, he argues, subscribe to a historical-political understanding of the term as a period of time, differentiated by point of departure: the postcolonial as signifying what follows upon either the imposition or the termination of colonization. The third is said to follow a social understanding of the term as a state of mind, whether collective or individual: the postcolonial as marking the emergence of critical awareness regarding the problematic of colonization. Segovia himself opts for this last approach: the postcolonial as 'conscientization' in the midst or face of a geopolitical relationship of domination and subordination. Such conscientization, he argues, is imperative in the critic but not in the text. While the text may or may not exhibit critical awareness regarding such a problematic within the imperial-colonial formation in question, it is the presence of such awareness in the critic, within his/her own imperial-colonial framework, that leads to its foregrounding in the text.

Segovia also examines the reach of the postcolonial by way of various standard approaches to the demarcation of its historical and cultural parameters. The range in question is outlined as follows: from an exclusive focus on imperial-colonial formations of the West in the nineteenth or twentieth centuries; through a broadening of this focus historically, via the extension to Western formations of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, or culturally, through the incorporation of non-Western formations during the period in question; to an inclusive consideration of such formations across history and culture. His own choice is for this last, expansive approach. Consequently, he regards the raising of the postcolonial problematic as most appropriate for biblical criticism, given the presence and relevance of imperial-colonial frameworks for texts and critics alike, although with due attention to the varying components and dynamics of the different formations in question.

In both regards Segovia specifies what the writing of a postcolonial commentary on the Gospel of John entails. With respect to scope, such analysis is granted and viewed as encompassing both text and reader, each within their

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respective imperial—colonial frameworks. With regard to meaning, the following specifications are offered: first, the Gospel itself is classified as a 'postcolonial' writing, given its critical awareness of geopolitical power within the Roman Empire; second, as reader, Segovia characterizes his position as 'postcolonial', in light of his own conscientization regarding the deployment of geopolitical power in his context; lastly, the reading of the Gospel advanced is described as 'postcolonial', given its foregrounding of the imperial—colonial problematic in the text.

Romans

One finds in Neil Elliott's contribution no explicit consideration of the force or reach of the concept of the postcolonial. One does find references, largely dispersed and unconnected, to figures and elements of postcolonial theory, so that, while the meaning and scope of postcolonial inquiry are not pursued as such, its application to the texts of early Christianity and the context of Rome is viewed as appropriate and revealing, even imperative. In fact, one detects in Elliott a decidedly multidimensional approach, variously deployed in the commentary itself, to postcolonial analysis in the study of Christian origins.

A first level of attention, most prominent throughout, concerns the textual production of early Christianity. Thus, invoking Edward Said, Elliott argues for the need to foreground the imperial context of Paul and his letters. Similarly, in approaching the letters themselves, Elliot further highlights various areas of particular interest to a postcolonial reading: the presence of common themes of imperial culture; the representation of peoples and lands as both in need and search of domination; and the employment of terms whose political connotations evoke the theological vision of Rome. Lastly, calling upon Frantz Fanon and James C. Scott, Elliott paints a picture of the colonial situation in terms of control and resistance. A second level of attention, not as pervasive but decisive as a point of departure, addresses the interpretation of early Christianity in the Western tradition. Here he points to traditional unconcern with the context of Roman imperialism in the reading of Romans and a corresponding obsession with the letter as a theological brief - the 'cornerstone' of Pauline theology. In the process, he argues, the immediate setting and aim of the letter are put aside and obscured. A final level of attention, intimated by way of conclusion, deals with the use of Romans in the face of contemporary manifestations of imperial domination.

1 and 2 Corinthians

Familiarity with postcolonial criticism is evident in Richard Horsley's contribution, but no formal discussion of meaning or scope is to be found. In fact, recourse to postcolonial theory as such is mostly by way of brief and scattered references to certain concerns or representatives. One such invocation serves as point of departure for the commentary. Horsley sees postcolonial criticism, a discourse specifically associated with 'fields' of literary criticism, as involving the reading of 'colonial' and 'anti-colonial' as well as 'postcolonial' literatures in their 'colonial'mperial' and 'neo-imperial' contexts, respectively. As such, he argues, this type of analysis is pertinent to biblical studies in two respects: first, with regard to the use of the Bible and the discipline of biblical criticism within the modern imperial cultures of the West; second, in terms of the biblical texts themselves within a variety of imperial cultures, including that of Rome in the case of early Christian texts in general and the Pauline Letters in particular. Actually, as the definition already suggests, such analysis is relevant in a third respect as well, left largely undeveloped here: reading and critical practices within the present context of 'neo-imperialism of global capitalism'.

To begin with, Horsley argues, the modern role of the Bible and biblical criticism as 'colonial literature' must be acknowledged and foregrounded. Not only did the Bible serve as an inspiration for Western imperialism, but also, as the 'focal agenda' behind Christian missionary movements, it secured a place among the colonized territories and peoples. Indeed, it is in this regard, Horsley ventures, that postcolonial biblical criticism will have its greatest impact. At the same time, biblical criticism, whose emergence and development in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries parallels the 'heyday of Western imperialism', not only focused on the theological rather than the political-economic, given the Western relegation of religion to the private sphere, but also largely bypassed or romantically idealized the imperial context of Rome, given its own unreflected linkage with Western imperialism. Consequently, Horsley adds, the role of imperial contexts in the production of the biblical texts must be acknowledged and foregrounded as well, as he himself proceeds to do in the case of Paul and the letters to the Corinthians. Thus, against a Paul fashioned, invoking Edward Said, in the spirit of orientalism - a Paul who was used to justify both European imperial and Christian missionary expansionism, a Paul who functioned as the catalyst in the break away from the 'political and parochial' particularism of Judaism and the turn toward a 'universal and spiritual' religion open to Gentiles, and a Paul who was used to support, along the lines of the deutero-Pauline letters, the system of slavery and the subordination of women - the anti-imperial Paul, the Paul who stood in opposition to the Roman system of domination and set about organizing a movement among the subjugated of the empire, should be highlighted.

Galatian.

Sze-Kar Wan specifically classifies his commentary as 'postcolonial' and has recourse to the language of the imperial and the colonial throughout, but he does not entertain the question of meaning and scope in postcolonial criticism directly. In both regards, therefore, the underlying positions have to be traced and surfaced. His stance on reach emerges as broad-based, while that on force emphasizes the dynamic of struggle, of pressure from the centre and response from the periphery, within the phenomenon of empire.

Regarding meaning, the 'postcolonial' classification certainly applies to both the text and the reception of Galatians. In terms of interpretation, the scholarly tradition is portrayed as 'heavily colonized' by critics steeped in Reformation theology and its dominant lens of justification by faith, yielding a view of both letter and author as in 'ideological captivity'. Such confinement is twofold: a theological approach in search of 'dogmatic dicta' and 'timeless truths', and an essentialistic representation of Judaism as monolithic and devoid of tension. The result is evident: a 'Jesus-movement' in Galatia conceived in the abstract, disembodied and dehistoricized; a Paul envisioned - even within the new perspective on Paul as a Jewish writer - in binary disjunction, as either Jewish or Christian. In contrast, Wan's postcolonial reading sets out to concretize and complicate: dismantling the theological encasement by foregrounding ethnicity as construction and rupturing the binomial Jewish-Christian by muddying the construction of Judaism as well as Christianity, signified by quotation marks around both terms ('Jewish' and 'Christian'). In terms of analysis, the letter is contextualized, both by way of Judaism and ethnicity, as a text 'marked by ... experience in the empire', in which players and positions reflect the 'constant impingement' of empire and attempt to 'construct a vision in response' - a text immersed and participating in a complex clash of narratives. Wan's approach to meaning, consequently, follows the path of conscientization. Regarding reach, conceptual tools borrowed from a wide range of postcolonial theory - the pattern of material and discursive dominance and subjection between centre and periphery; the concept of interstitial space marked by doubleness (Bhabha); the practice of colonial worldling (Spivak); the distinction between settler and occupation colonies - are applied to the analysis of both text and context in a direct fashion. Wan's approach to scope, therefore, is crosscultural and transhistorical.

Ephesians

Although certainly aware of the multiplicity of methods at work in postcolonial criticism and explicitly designating her own approach as 'postcolonial', Jennifer Bird does not set forth in principle what such analysis signifies or covers; its force and range must be secured, therefore, from the way in which she goes about her task. Regarding meaning, a sense of the political, writ large, clearly lies at the heart of what the postcolonial involves. From the start she notes the lack of critical attention given — whether by way of insouciance or rejection— to the political tenor and vision of Ephesians, yielding a consistent spiritual-ized interpretation of the letter. Regarding scope, a broad sense of what the postcolonial embraces prevails, given the concern for both the texts of early Christianity and their interpretive traditions. Thus, she attributes the absence of the political in Ephesians not to the letter as such, a text characterized as profoundly political in its own right, but rather to the critical tradition. Given such conception and extent of the postcolonial, one would anticipate an even

broader historical as well as cultural application in Bird, but the point is neither pursued nor alluded to further.

In light of such critical consensus, Bird's response is threefold. First of all, she argues, recent scholarship on the early Christian movement renders impossible the reading of its texts without a 'political lens' - without attention to their context within the Roman Empire and their engagement with its imperial ideologies. In fact, Ephesians itself is said to advance a counter-empire of its own in the face of Rome. In addition, she continues, in setting aside the political dimension of early Christian texts, the standard interpretation lays bare its own conflicted character - on the surface, seemingly apolitical; at bottom, upholding rather than transforming the status quo through such depoliticization. Consequently, a postcolonial reading of Ephesians and its project of a counter-empire is deemed imperative. Lastly, the political reading of the early Christian texts, she specifies, should have the aim of liberation in mind - seeking to move beyond imperial ideologies and thus be applicable not only to the initial context of composition but also to the different contexts of interpretation, including her own. Therefore, the proposed postcolonial reading of Ephesians and its counter-empire is specifically qualified as a 'critique', not simply a determination of its political stance but also a pointed evaluation of such a stance in the light of liberation.

Philippians

In explicit conversation with postcolonial theory, Efraín Agosto is directly forthcoming on the meaning and scope of postcolonial analysis. Drawing on Georg Gugelberger, he adopts an oppositional view of such criticism: the postcolonial optic focuses on the impact of imperialism upon the colonized and seeks to reinsert the voices of the latter 'back into history'; in so doing, it encompasses within its angle of vision both the texts of hegemony and the texts of subordination. Moreover, such an approach is said to apply in any context of imperial domination and thus, in principle, across history and culture. Consequently, Agosto regards a postcolonial optic as quite appropriate for biblical criticism, with his own interest focused on the texts of early Christianity in general, the letters and figure of Paul in particular, and the Letter to the Philippians most concretely.

Such application, Agosto explains, is actually threefold. First, it concerns the texts themselves, insofar as they emerge from the context of Roman imperial domination. In effect, Paul's communities were founded in imperial 'colonies' of the eastern Mediterranean, including Philippi, and thus Philippians reflects and addresses the situation of one such 'subject' congregation. Second, it involves the tradition of academic criticism, given its development in the context of Western imperial domination. As such, approaches to and interpretations of the Bible produced throughout the modern era of Western expansionism stand in need of critical reassessment. Third, it has to do with the contemporary

criticism among the children of colonization, in light of the enduring effects of Western imperial domination over the non-Western world. These new voices bring, given their unique position within the system of domination, an alternative and necessary perspective to the critical task. At all levels, Agosto points out, criticism must take into account the impact of imperialism as well as the reaction to such domination. His own proposal in this regard addresses not just Philippians within its Roman context but also his own reading of the letter within his context as an heir of colonization.

Colossians

There are numerous references to postcolonial reading in Gordon Zerbe and Muriel Orevillo-Montenegro's contribution, but no explicit discussion regarding meaning and scope. From these various expositions, however, it is possible to put together a broad picture of what such analysis entails and encompasses. The entire discussion is conducted in terms of biblical criticism, with a focus on Colossians itself, but within the context of Paul and his mission and the Pauline correspondence as a whole. From the point of view of meaning, the proposed postcolonial reading may be described as contextual, ideological and dialogical. First, it is a reading grounded in the authors' location and experience in the Philippines and contrasted with the dominant tradition of interpretation in the West. Within the Philippines itself, moreover, this reading is further located in a context of struggle, on the side of social transformation with a vision of social justice and cultural integrity. Second, as such, it is a reading concerned not so much with the standard Western tradition of searching after historical questions (authorship, community situation, tradition) or religious content (spiritual meaning) but rather with issues of a cultural, social and political nature. Third, it is a reading committed to ideological critique of texts and interpretations in the light of such struggle and such issues. This it does by seeking to establish whether such texts and interpretations promote or confront the project of colonialism - its 'intentions and assumptions', its 'ideologies and patterns' - in their respective contexts. In terms of scope, therefore, the postcolonial reading envisioned involves a variety of texts produced in colonial contexts: the biblical texts themselves - the Letter to the Colossians; modern interpretations of the West - critical and missionary readings of Colossians; contemporary interpretations inside as well as outside the West - critical and ecclesial readings of Colossians.

1 and 2 Thessalonians

In Abraham Smith's contribution there is attention to both force and reach in postcolonial analysis, mostly within the ambit of postcolonial biblical criticism but with reference to postcolonial studies as well. Indeed, he begins with a series of affirmations about postcolonial criticism in general, from which he then proceeds to a consideration of meaning and scope in postcolonial biblical criticism as such. First, postcolonial analysis is defined in wide historical terms

as encompassing the 'whole complex of imperialism' – from the actual process of 'colonization', through the stage of resistance for the sake of 'political independence', to the emergence of 'neocolonialism'. Second, although none of these terms is defined, 'colonialism' is, following the distinction of Kathleen O'Brien Wicker into 'historical' (political, economic and social domination) and 'discursive' (psychological domination through appeals to authority); however, its relationship to the other terms is not specified. Finally, postcolonial analysis is further said to focus on 'constructions' of the 'other'. Against this backdrop, then, Smith takes up the question of force and reach in biblical 'postcolonial interrogation'.

Regarding meaning, he explains, biblical critics set out to trace 'the shadow of imperialism', historically as well as discursively, 'within and beyond' the biblical texts. In so doing, he adds, they highlight the question of power relations in the representation of 'the other'. Regarding scope, such tracing is said to admit of various 'interrelated types of criticism': analyzing the imperial shadow in the history of interpretation; examining the 'anti-imperialist stances' of the texts; and critiquing 'imperialist tendencies' within the texts regardless of any 'tacit overtures or explicit claims' against colonization in them. For Smith, therefore, postcolonial criticism involves: (1) a sustained focus on strategies of domination and constructions of 'the other' in imperial-colonial frameworks - that is, its force; and (2) attention to the biblical texts as well as to their reception histories (scholarly as well as popular) - that is, its reach. Given the broad definition of the postcolonial, one would suspect that Smith would have no difficulty in extending such analysis in transhistorical as well as crosscultural fashion. Finally, the conclusion makes it clear that this foregrounding of domination and construction of the other does have, although untheorized, the 'creation of a just world' as a goal.

Pastoral Letters

Evidently in dialogue with postcolonial studies, sharply described as 'perhaps more complex and convoluted' than biblical studies in its 'further reaches', Ralph Broadbent approaches the issue of meaning in postcolonial criticism in direct but hesitant fashion, citing the 'risk of oversimplification' in the face of such discursive breadth. This he does in terms of focus and objective: postcolonial criticism deals with power and hierarchy 'within imperial settings' and does so with contestation in mind. At the same time, the question of scope is not raised as such. It is clear, nevertheless, from his reading of the letters – viewed, in agreement with mainstream scholarship, as pseudonymous and hailing from the second or third generation of Christianity (90–120 cE) – that postcolonial criticism addresses both the biblical texts within the context of the Roman Empire and critical interpretations of these texts within modern and contemporary imperial—colonial frameworks, with a special focus in his case on commentators from the time or legacy of the British Empire. Given the empha-

sis on biblical studies, it is impossible to tell whether Broadbent would grant greater transhistorical or transcultural application to postcolonial analysis.

Philemon

Allan Callahan's position on the force and reach of postcolonial inquiry is not explicitly formulated but can be inferred from the argument as a whole. Its meaning is framed in terms of the development of modern Western colonialism, with a twofold emphasis on the settlement of foreign territories and the needs of political economy. Its scope emerges as wide-ranging, comprehending any situation of colonialism, from antiquity to modernity to the present.

With regard to meaning, Callahan begins by outlining two variations in modern colonialism: dependent colonies, in which the transplanted minority relies on the oppressed indigenous majority as the source of surplus labour; and settler or creole colonies, in which the transplanted minority effects a permanent displacement of the indigenous population and turns to importation as the source of surplus labour. While the former scenario is said to provide the framework for the 'guerrilla theoreticians' of foundational postcolonial discourse, the latter is appropriated as his own, with specific reference to the United States - a settler colonialism 'with colour', racialized and relying on the importation of Africans as slaves. The resultant postcolonial reading, he explains, presents two distinguishing traits: it must acknowledge the colonial legacy as ongoing, so that no reading is possible without reference to colonialism and its effects; it must choose between an anticolonial and a neocolonial orientation, that is, between opposition to and advancement of the colonialist project. His own brand he situates squarely within the first camp: a foregrounding of colonialism throughout in order to reject it and all readings in support of it.

In terms of scope, the stance adopted comes across as applicable, in principle, across colonial situations. Such is certainly the case with regard to the history of interpretation of the Letter to Philemon. Thus, the standard reading of Philemon is characterized as 'imperialist' throughout, from its beginnings in late antiquity, through its invocation in the United States and the New World, to its regular assessment in contemporary criticism. Such is the case as well with regard to the text itself within Roman colonialism, given not only the reference to 'moments' in the letter that point toward an anti-colonial stance but also a historical interpretation of it in direct opposition to its standard reading.

Hebrews

Informed in general by postcolonial studies, but in close dialogue with postcolonial biblical criticism, Jeremy Punt considers at length the question of force in postcolonial analysis while bypassing that of reach. His point of departure in this regard is a twofold affirmation: the ongoing phenomenon of imperial-colonial frameworks today and the continued collusion of the biblical texts and their histories of reception in such frameworks. Thus, he declares, not only are the forces

of imperialism, neocolonialism and eurocentrism 'alive and well' in the world, but also the 'legitimating and totalizing' discourse of the Bible and its interpretive histories are to be found at work in such 'hegemonies of imperialism'. Against this contemporary backdrop, then, the task of postcolonial criticism is unveiled.

In terms of meaning, Punt characterizes postcolonial criticism as deconstructive, constructive and postmodernist. It is deconstructive insofar as it highlights the 'entanglement' between colonization, its discourse and practice, and the Bible, its writings and readings. Such foregrounding has two distinctive objectives: problematizing the 'co-optation' of texts for hegemonic purposes and searching the texts for suppressed or distorted voices. It is constructive insofar as it seeks an 'alternative hermeneutics' in opposition to colonial biblical interpretation. Toward this end, it turns to the resources of the local, allowing for a reading 'on our own terms' and 'from our own specific location', without, however, deifying the local in the process. It is postmodernist insofar as it lays no claim to 'objective', 'final and prescriptive', 'exhaustive' meaning in interpretation and rules out no other 'exegetical or hermeneutical' approach. Rather, it emphasizes throughout the role of construction and contextualization - the real reader and social location - in interpretation, avoiding thereby becoming an imperial model in its own right. In terms of scope, it becomes clear from the discussion that, for Punt, the lens of postcolonial analysis includes the biblical texts as well as their reception histories, but it cannot be established whether he would allow for more extensive application across history and culture.

In sum, against a traditional biblical criticism deeply implicated in imperial-colonial frameworks, Punt advances a postcolonial model. Its traits can no longer be, following Kathleen O'Brien Wicker, those of colonial criticism: a patriarchal lens; the view of Christianity as either the one and true or even a superior religion; identification with the political postures of the texts as theologically justified; the disqualification of texts on the grounds of orthodoxy and heresy; and the decontextualization of textual content. Rather, postcolonial criticism should be marked by accountability in the use of texts, the promotion of geopolitical liberation, encouraging global diversity alongside appreciation of the local and the native, and the pursuit of liberating strategies of interdependence in a globalized world. In the end, Punt presents his own postcolonial reading of Hebrews as contextual, emerging from postcolonial Africa in general and post-apartheid South Africa in particular; and perspectival, reflecting his own diasporic and hybrid status as Afrikaner – an indigenous white with no other home and embodying a 'variety of traditions and contexts'.

James

While Sharon Ringe calls the Letter of James a 'postcolonial' voice, describes its standard interpretation as 'colonized' and regards this voice as relevant to any situation of 'imperial challenges', she does not address theoretically what postcolonial analysis signifies or comprehends. The discussion proceeds entirely

within the confines of biblical criticism, with undeviating focus on the letter. Yet, her operative understanding of the force and reach of such criticism can be construed on the basis of her repeated invocations of the category 'postco-Ionial' and related terms. As far as meaning is concerned, postcolonial analysis is regarded as political and oppositional. It is political insofar as it has foremost in mind the contexts of 'imperial domination' behind biblical texts and their interpretations as well as the reactions of both texts and interpretations to such contexts. It is oppositional insofar as it reserves the denomination 'postcolonial' to those texts and interpretations that react by way of resistance to imperial contexts. Such resistance, Ringe specifies, can take two forms, with the first as possibly leading to the second: resistance by way of critique and resistance by way of alternative proposal. As far as scope is concerned, postcolonial analysis is viewed as applicable to the biblical text - the Letter of James, its history of interpretation - the dominant reading of James across a variety of discourses (ecclesial and academic, secular and others, scholarly), and its ongoing reception history - the world of contemporary interpretation, broadly understood, including her own. As such, postcolonial analysis is envisioned as extending across historical periods within the Western world, from antiquity through the present. At the same time, given Ringe's position that the postcolonial stands for opposition in any situation of imperial domination, such analysis emerges, in principle, as universally applicable across culture and history.

1 Peter

There is pointed and sophisticated attention in Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's contribution to matters of theory and method in postcolonial criticism. Among them, the question of meaning is entertained directly, while that of scope indirectly. Both come to light in her articulation of a critical feminist postcolonial analysis. Indeed, the various components of this designation provide a ready key in both regards.

What such criticism entails is clear from the juncture of critical feminist interpretation and postcolonial interpretation. The former approach, already well established, stands as foundation for the present one. As such, this project is described as 'interpretation', since it does not require the ability to read as condition, only conscientization and critical analysis; 'critical', insofar as it involves systemic analysis of structures and ideologies; and 'feminist', because it examines the system of kyriarchal domination (lord, slave-master, father, husband, elite male) and does so with emancipation in mind. What renders this approach 'postcolonial' is a matter of emphasis. In effect, the present project foregrounds the 'colonial-imperial' dimension in the systemic analysis of kyriarchal domination, within which such a dimension constitutes one of multiple layers of domination. Thus, Schüssler Fiorenza declares, critical feminist analysis and critical feminist postcolonial analysis are 'practically identical'.

Two further considerations are in order with regard to meaning. First, against any claims of identity politics and any invocation of essential difference between a dominant or 'Western' and a subaltern or 'Third World' feminism, the proposed approach qualifies as properly postcolonial, given its critical and feminist orientation. Although advanced from the perspective of a 'white Western feminist', it is in principle no less 'postcolonial' than any other; at the same time, it does not exclude from critical attention the question of social location. Second, against a conception of feminism as focused exclusively on women and gender, the proposed approach adopts the category of 'wo'men' to signify that it is attentive to all voices of the 'submerged' under the different layers of kyriarchal domination and hence inclusive of women and men.

What such criticism attends to can be discerned in, as well as extrapolated from, the discussion. In practice, it involves the biblical text (the letter of 1 Peter, classified as a pseudonymous writing from the end of the first century cE) as well as scholarly interpretations of the text (the dominant exegetical tradition characterized as 'malestream', written by Euro-American Christian academicians). This is the actual focus of the analysis. In theory, given her modulation of the term 'interpretation' and definition of 'kyriarchal system', it would ultimately encompass all interpretations of the text, beyond the scholarly and the written, as well as all contexts of kyriarchal domination, across history and culture. Such is the potential focus of analysis.

2 Peter

There is no recourse in Cynthia Briggs Kittredge's contribution to postcolonial studies and hence no engagement with the question of force and reach in postcolonial analysis. The discussion is conducted solely in terms of biblical criticism, with a sustained focus on 2 Peter and critical approaches to it. A sense of what such criticism means and includes is possible on the basis of her various assertions regarding its concerns and aims. In terms of meaning, postcolonial criticism is presented as contextual-perspectival, from below, and contestatory. Thus, a postcolonial critic is described as someone grounded in a 'specific' context (social, historical, theological) and raising questions from this 'particular' perspective. Consequently, she argues, it is by definition a highly diverse type of criticism. Further, the context in question is characterized as one of subordination, so that a postcolonial critic is also someone who stands defined as 'other' and deprived of a role as 'subject and actor' in history. Given such a context, a postcolonial critic is also presented as someone who challenges texts in terms of their rhetorical strategies and the ramifications of such strategies within the dynamic of domination/subordination. In terms of scope, Briggs Kittredge simply allows, without further discussion, for the application of postcolonial analysis to 1 Peter, and thus to the biblical texts and the historical context of Rome. Yet, from the definition of what this approach entails, one could readily argue for a vision of broad application on her part – in effect, whenever a location of subordination and a stance of contestation are present.

Throughout, it should be noted, Briggs Kittredge mentions feminist criticism and postcolonial criticism in the same breath. For her such approaches belong together but are not hyphenated. The two approaches are clearly differentiated, as signified by her own self-description as a feminist scholar both situated within the Western tradition and challenged by the questions of postcolonial critics. What brings them together, then, is their perceived common situation of subordination and contestation; what sets them apart, is the distinctive nature of their respective contexts and challenges.

Johannine Letters

The appeal to postcolonial studies in R. S. Sugirtharajah's contribution is pervasive and substantial: from the initial identification of colonial discursive traits in the letters; through the subsequent exposition of the ideological framework advanced as akin to a colonial scenario, representation of the religious world constructed as influenced by Buddhism and thus hybridized, surfacing of postcolonial discursive traits, and espousal of a contrapuntal reading involving Buddhist textual traditions; to the concluding description of the letters as marked by ambivalence. Such recourse to the literary and conceptual apparatus of postcolonialism extends to the question of meaning but not that of scope in postcolonial analysis.

The force of postcolonial criticism is defined as oppositional, 'repairing of colonial misrepresentation and defamation', and committed, 'engaging in the struggle for a better world'. With regard to the letters, Sugirtharajah points out various dimensions of such criticism: counteracting the binary thinking developed by the author; pursuing a contrapuntal reading of the letters alongside Buddhist texts, with a view of the two religious traditions as complementary and hence the aim of making connections between them; siding with their emphasis on a praxis of truth, justice and love. The reach of postcolonial criticism, as one can gather from his approach to the letters, emerges as broad. To begin with, Sugirtharajah deals with the biblical text, its history of interpretation, and, in keeping with the goal of contrapuntal reading, other texts from the various contexts in question, ancient or modern. In addition, he clearly views the discursive characteristics of coloniality and postcoloniality as transhistorical, and there is no reason to think otherwise with respect to culture as well.

Jud

While characterizing his approach to Jude as a 'postcolonial' reading and a reading 'with decolonization in mind', Rohun Park does not take up the issues of meaning and scope in postcolonial analysis and thus provides no explicit location of his reading project within a critical spectrum in either regard. Further, while invoking terms such as 'colonialism' and 'neocolonialism' and

adding that 'colonialism', like 'imperial power relations', has never come to an end but rather has undergone various transmutations, he does not draw on postcolonial studies for a definition of such terms and concepts, focusing instead on a conjunction between politics and religion ('colonizing desires' and 'religious symbols and structures' or 'cultic ritual systems') identified as operative in imperial-colonial frameworks throughout. The discussion proceeds, consequently, by way of current affairs and biblical criticism. As a result, Park's position on the force and scope of the postcolonial can only be established, and tentatively at that, from the actual line of argumentation. Regarding meaning, he clearly views postcolonial criticism as oppositional - a strategy for decolonization, as he puts it. His aim is to expose this working alliance between colonization and religion in order to work against it, to break it apart, in the interest of the colonized. Such a project, further described as an exercise in 'alternative hermeneutics', is designed to approach cultic ritual systems in 'more liberating' fashion by allowing the call of God to filter through the layer of imperial domination in the lives of 'colonial subjects and postcolonial subjects'. Regarding scope, Park clearly regards postcolonial criticism as applicable across history and culture. Thus, he ranges from the ancient world of Rome to the modern and postmodern world of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Similarly, within this latter period, he deals with Asia by way of Japan and Korea as well as the West by way of the United States. In sum, for Park postcolonial analysis emerges as contestatory in character and wide-ranging in application.

Pavalation

There is in Stephen Moore's contribution extensive recourse to postcolonial theory, in matters both minor and central, application of the distinction between 'settler' and 'occupation' colonization to describe the Roman pattern, with a focus on Asia Minor; use of the concept of hegemony, as advanced by Antonio Gramsci, to account for the durability and efficiency of Roman administration in the province of Asia; appeal to the rhetorical device of catachresis, as revisioned by Gayatri Spivak, to capture the basic stance of Revelation toward Roman presence and power; deployment of the categories of ambivalence, mimicry and hybridity, all derived from the conceptual repertoire of Homi Bhabha, to pursue key dimensions and ramifications of Revelation's basic posture toward Rome; invocation of the concept of strategic essentialism, as proposed by Spivak, to provide a functional explanation for the binomial political strategy adopted by Revelation. In sum, Moore's reading is imbued with postcolonial studies, in line with the goal of opening a 'supplementary space' in the longstanding analysis of Revelation's 'relations to empire' by means of engagement with 'postcolonial theory or discourse'.

Yet, interestingly enough, one finds in Moore no formal consideration of force and reach in postcolonial analysis, both of which can only be supplied from the reading itself. With respect to meaning, Moore lists a variety of 'phenomena' under the postcolonial umbrella: colonialism, imperialism, decolonization, globalization, neocolonialism. Of these, only 'imperialism' is defined: the set of mutually constitutive ideologies (political, economic, racial/ethnic, religious and so forth) within a metropolitan centre that 'impel' its annexation of distant territories and 'determine' all subsequent relations. Thus, for Moore, postcolonial criticism is concerned with all the different dimensions involved in the dynamics and mechanics of imperial-colonial frameworks. With respect to scope, the swift translation of models from contemporary theory to the study of early Christianity within the Roman Empire signals a decided tendency toward broad application.

Approach and Argument in Postcolonial Criticism

Matthew

In light of his position on meaning and scope in postcolonial inquiry, with its call for a consideration of the 'imperializing experience' as a whole (means, dynamics, impact and legacy of 'power over'), Carter's approach to Matthew, has both cultural production and material matrix in mind. At the same time, the balance tips clearly toward the text rather than the context, for within an 'imperializing experience' he immediately highlights the diversity of textual and cultural expressions for special attention. For Carter, therefore, Matthew constitutes one such expression: a text emerging from a particular interaction of imperial culture and local culture, the imperial world of Rome, and enmeshed, actively so, in its 'nexus of power relationships and societal structures'. In effect, texts both reflect and intervene in contexts, and Matthew is no exception. Consequently, Carter proceeds to analyze both the Roman imperial system and the Matthean literary production.

The historical context, though tied closely to the city of Antioch and the province of Syria, is ultimately universalized. The argument is explicitly made that, should such an attribution be incorrect and should its composition have taken place elsewhere, the systemic analysis of Roman power offered would still apply, given its 'pervasive' nature. As a result, such analysis is at once comprehensive and broad: on the one hand, it takes into account various dimensions of the Roman presence (administrative structures, political economy and socio-economic conditions, military deployment, cultural manifestations, religious practices); on the other hand, it presents all such facets not as distinctive of Syria but rather as empire-wide. The Matthean text is examined through extended analysis of two narrative features, plot and character. The plot, said to provide the action that holds the narrative together, is pursued in terms of six major sections, each assigned a specific role and purpose in the development of the plot. Jesus' character is identified as the fulcrum of the action: he challenges and alienates the Jerusalem elite through his attack on societal structures as contrary to God, is crucified by a coalition of the local elite and the Roman governor, and is raised by God. Such analysis foregrounds the political stance subscribed to by Matthew within the imperial context of Rome.

Mark

Liew's reading of Mark is decidedly focused on text rather than context and thus on cultural production rather than material matrix. Texts, he argues, not only reflect history and culture but also create them. Thus, while situating Mark squarely within the colonial context of its time, it is Mark's rhetorical constructions of such a context that are analysed. For this purpose, Liew adopts the organizing filter of a 'politics of time'. To begin with, following Peter Osborne, he accepts a close relationship between politics and temporality: constructions of modernity led to constructions of time (the 'present' of the West as the 'future' of all others) and constructions of colonial politics ('development' as imperative). Then, following Stephen O' Leary, he sees apocalyptic rhetoric as involving the interplay of time, authority and evil, to which mixture he adds the element of gender, given his conviction that women function as signifiers of both colonial oppression and postcolonial resistance. With this theoretical framework in place, Liew proceeds to examine the politics of apocalyptic time in Mark by way of a threefold development, namely, as conveyed through its rhetorical constructions of authority, agency (human ability to resist evil and bring about change) and gender.

Luke-Acts

In principle, as her position regarding the suitability of postcolonial inquiry for both the text of Luke-Acts and the context of Rome indicates, Burrus is open to analysis of cultural production and material matrix alike. In practice, it is the text of Luke-Acts on which she focuses, almost exclusively. With regard to context, two comments are in order. First, although the appropriateness of a postcolonial literary approach attentive to textual indeterminacy and instability is deemed 'especially promising' with respect to Luke-Acts, given its ambiguities and ambivalences, a historical approach sensitive to the 'polyglot' character of the colonial context of antiquity as well as the neocolonial context of postmodernity is readily granted. Second, in the analysis of Luke-Acts, references to context, while approached as discursive representations within the Lucan framework, are also expanded by comments about the extra-textual nature of such context, thus placing the Lucan representations in broader view. The material matrix does not disappear altogether, therefore, but does yield to cultural production as overriding focus.

Such predominant focus on the text is pursued by foregrounding the ideological stance and literary art of Luke-Acts. With respect to ideological thrust, Burrus calls attention to the political and economic framework of Luke-Acts as conveyed by Luke, approached by way of theories of empire and resistance. It is here that one finds the filling out of Lucan representations by reference to extra-textual information. The procedure is clear: a composite of Lucan ideology is put together through a sequential consideration of key texts from the Gospel and Acts and then read in the light of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's view of empire and James C. Scott's approach to resistance. With respect to literary artistry, Burrus highlights Luke's heightened self-awareness as a writer, his conscious use of and position toward a set of broader literary practices, and the novelistic aspects of Luke-Acts, approached through theories of the novel and postcoloniality. The procedure is similar: a composite of Lukan art, viewed from a variety of categories (time and space, language, border encounters), is drawn through the invocation of key texts from the Gospel and Acts and subsequently read through the lens of Mikhail Bhaktin's view of the novel and Homi Bhabha's approach to postcolonial literature. In the end, these two dimensions of Luke-Acts emerge as closely related given their pronounced use of ambiguity.

John

In his prolegomenon on matters methodological and theoretical, Segovia raises the issue of subject matter directly within the section on 'terrain'. Postcolonial criticism, he argues, should address material foundations as well as cultural expressions. Both foci, moreover, should be envisioned and pursued in comprehensive fashion: the cultural as involving the whole of textual as well as non-textual production; the material as ranging across the various dimensions of society. Such joint attention, furthermore, is in order at both the level of composition, the production of John as text, and of interpretation, the consumption of John by way of readings and readers. In the commentary itself, however, Segovia restricts himself to textual analysis. Two grounds are adduced: first, a critic may opt for emphasis on one or the other pursuit, provided that such a move is surfaced and justified; second, and more significantly, the lack of evidence regarding the composition of John and thus the high degree of abstraction present in any consideration of its proximate context. Yet, the material matrix does not disappear altogether. The study approaches the text as an active intervention in its social and cultural context, with attention to the latter as represented in the text.

Such textual analysis Segovia undertakes through a study of Johannine 'reality' as constructed by the Gospel. Such representation of 'all that is' is examined from three literary standpoints: (1) the story or temporal sequence of events abstracted from the narrative, pursued in terms of three overarching stages and seen as conveying a postcolonial proposal; (2) the opening or 'prologue' of the narrative, examined in light of key figures and dynamics introduced and described as advancing a postcolonial alternative; (3) the plot or causal sequence of events deployed by the narrative, developed in terms of its generic casting as a life of Jesus, yielding a threefold division, and its literary recourse to the journey motif, yielding a complex travel structuration,

all presented as delineating a postcolonial programme. In the end, therefore, for Segovia the Gospel constitutes and is approached as a literary, rhetorical and ideological product.

Romans

The tight connection drawn by Elliott between text and context, between the Letter to the Romans and the imperial framework of Rome, signals combined attention to cultural production and material matrix. The letter is used as point of entry throughout and thus becomes the main focus of attention. On the one hand, its rhetoric is used to lay out the historical context, distant as well as proximate, from which the letter emerges and to which it is addressed; this context is further amplified by extra-textual references to the dynamics of Roman imperialism. On the other hand, its rhetoric is also used to lay bare the strategic response offered by Paul to the Romans in the light of the context envisioned and the dynamics identified. For Elliott, therefore, the text discloses, as in traditional historical criticism, both historical setting and theological aim, now properly expanded and corrected by a postcolonial optic of attention to empire.

Such combined attention to text and context is sustained and systematic. To begin with, the addressees and intent of the letter are named - Gentile Christians in Rome, in the face of emerging anti-Judaism among such congregations. Such circumstances are explained by recourse to context: long-standing Roman prejudice toward the Jews, most recently expressed by way of expulsion from Rome through the edict of Claudius. Then, the central message of the letter is summarized - an ethic of 'mutual interdependence' embracing higher-status and lower-status Christians, accompanied by a corresponding distinction between the present status of Israel and its ultimate status in the light of God's covenant. This message is similarly placed in context: the return of impoverished Jewish Christians to Rome, the adoption of Roman ethnocentrism toward the vanquished (the Jews), and the patronage system of the empire based on status. Further, the stance of the letter vis-à-vis the empire is unveiled - total inversion of imperial ideology by way of a different Lord, an alternative universal vision encompassing all nations, and a contrasting project of justice. This stance is also placed in context: the claims and representations of the Roman emperors as well as the actual practices of the Empire. Lastly, the nature of Paul's mission is examined - his expressed obligation to all nations, including the vanquished and the barbarian, and in particular Israel, whose covenantal promises are reaffirmed with a view toward God's action in the future. This conception is set in context as well: Rome's hierarchical vision of all peoples under its power and the Roman subjection of Israel.

I and 2 Corinthians

Given the definition of postcolonial criticism adopted – the study of literatures from imperial contexts in the light of such contexts – Horsley's approach

embraces cultural production, the various components of the Corinthian correspondence brought together in the present 1 and 2 Corinthians, as well as their material matrix, the imperial setting of this correspondence in both local and general fashion, that is, with respect to the city of Corinth itself as well as the Roman system as a whole. This combined emphasis on text and context, moreover, is balanced: the context is drawn as immediate backdrop for the composition of this series of ad hoc communications on the part of Paul, while the various communications in question are interpreted directly against this backdrop. Cultural production and material matrix are thus used to point to and enlighten one another in sustained and systematic fashion.

A depiction of the historical context provides the point of entry. It is a picture drawn in broad terms: the imperial record of Rome in the eastern Mediterranean, including the destruction of Corinth in 146 BCE and its restoration as a Roman colony in 44 BCE; the record of resistance to Rome among 'Israelite peoples' in Palestine (peasant revolts, prophetic and messianic renewal movements, apocalyptic expectations); the character of the 'Jesus-movement' as a renewal movement of Israel against Jerusalem and imperial rule; the character of the Jewish diaspora as a partly self-governing community through assemblies and variously assimilated to the dominant culture; the early adhesion of diaspora Jews, including Paul, to the anti-imperial Jesus-movement; the status of Corinth as a commercial centre and cosmopolitan city - the centre of imperial influence and control in Greece, where the emperor cult featured prominently and a circle of elite families flourished as beneficiaries of the imperial patronage system while most of the population remained in severe economic marginalization. Out of this context, Horsley argues, emerges Paul and, with him, a 'master-narrative' of opposition to Rome: a vision of history and providence as channelled not through Rome but through Israel, not through the Emperor but through Jesus, in whom the promises of Abraham for Israel and all nations have been fulfilled and whose triumphal return is imminent. In the light of this complex historical context and radical vision of Paul, then, the letters are read. It is a reading that proceeds in sequential fashion: a beginning focus on 1 Corinthians, in internal sequential fashion as well, with analysis of its major sections from beginning to end; a subsequent focus on 2 Corinthians, in terms of continuing issues in the communities. It is also a reading that pays particular attention to rhetorical design and aims, as well as political and economic concerns and postures, with further explication of the context interspersed throughout.

Galatians

As applied to the letter, the main focus of the commentary, Wan's postcolonial reading entails a sense of Galatians as a concrete response to the contingencies of empire and thus calls for contextualization, which, given the pivotal role assigned to 'ethnic tension' in the letter, is carried out in terms of ethnicity in general and Judaism in particular. As such, the reading proffered is at once

concerned with material matrix and cultural production. The context, clearly coming to the fore in the text, is put together from a variety of sources, including Galatians itself; the text, distinctly set against the context, is approached as a strategic option within it. By way of introduction to such a dual pursuit, Wan offers a theorization of the concept of 'ethnicity' at work throughout. This he does via an essentialist-constructivist spectrum, with decided predilection on his part for the latter pole and its view of all ethnic categories as 'inherently stable' and 'forever in flux'. This position is described as true both today and, indeed 'even more' so, in the first century.

Wan turns first to a delineation of the material matrix of the letter. This he unfolds in narrowing fashion: first, outlining competing definitions of Jewish identity at work in the first century in light of the given axis - with the Book of Jubilees and Philo of Alexandria representing essentialism and constructivism, respectively; second, locating such rival visions within the 'Christ-following' sect of Judaism - marked, not at first but subsequently, by Paul at Antioch and the 'pillars' in Jerusalem; finally, situating the conflict in Galatians along such lines as well - with a view of Paul as representative of the universalizing position and of his interlocutors as adherents to the primordialist stance. Wan then undertakes a literary analysis of Galatians as a cultural product. Here he unpacks Paul's construction of a 'new discourse' for the 'new movement', revolving around three postulates: a new colonial self - autonomous and hybrid, paralleling and displacing the centrality of Jerusalem; a new ethnos - a new creation, defined as 'in-Christness', encompassing all Jews and Gentiles without distinction; and a new authority structure - a vision of himself as a 'new patriarch' within an 'emerging colony'.

In the end, however, it should be noted that, despite this undeniable sequence of argumentation, context and text are used throughout to configure and enlighten one another.

Ephesians

By its very nature, Bird's 'primary' insight into Ephesians as advancing a counter-empire in the face of Rome – a political project involving a sustained exercise in mimicry whereby the heavenly empire of God is constructed along the lines of the earthly empire of Caesar – calls for attention to cultural production as well as the material matrix. To establish such a pattern of imitation, she proceeds to examine, in comparative fashion, the image of God's counterempire elaborated by the letter and the vision of Rome's empire offered through its discourses and practices – in effect, a twofold focus on text and context.

This task is pursued by way of three key dimensions of the letter's political project. First, the imperializing rhetorics of the letter as a whole. Here a wide net is cast: from the foundational reinscription of empire in the heavenly realms of God with Christ as its ruler; through a variety of devices and references (building metaphors to describe the community as the temple for the worship

of God; the seal of the Spirit as the stamp of empire; the unity between Jews and Gentiles brought about by Christ, yielding the citizenship of all within the empire; the gnosticizing ascription of 'fulness' and special knowledge to the community; and the sense of the movement as global); to the very exercise of writing itself as a means of asserting community control and submission. Second, the sociopolitical exhortations conveyed by the household codes, with the calls for fear and obedience on the part of wives and slaves as well as the invocation of unequal gender images to characterize the relationship between Christ as ruler and the community as ruled (his body and bride). Finally, the concluding appeal to battle imagery to depict the proper life and conduct of the community in the world. All such terminology, Bird argues, involves religiopolitical claims and should be taken as such rather than spiritualized. In each case, therefore, she shows how what is claimed of God's counter-empire in the letter finds a basis, mutatis mutandis, in what is claimed of Rome's empire. Thus, while the text is accorded primacy of focus in analysis, the context is invoked throughout, so that in the end both serve to illumine one another.

Philippians

As the study of imperial domination, with its twofold focus on the effects of imperialism and the responses of the subjugated, postcolonial analysis involves, for Agosto, attention to the material matrix, the imperial context in question, as well as cultural production, the texts produced within such a context, whether from the side of domination or that of subordination. This is true at all three levels of inquiry identified. Such is certainly the case here with regard to his analysis of both Philippians itself, the primary focus of inquiry, and his own reading of the letter.

What Agosto advances, therefore, is a conjoined approach to text and context: attention to the Philippian situation and the imperial order as well as attention to the letter as a letter. Thus, analysis of one dimension always has the other in view, with mutual referencing and illumination as a result. The text serves as the point of departure. To begin with, then, Philippians is analysed as a rhetorical communication, marking the various components of its argumentative structure and highlighting its strategic concerns and aims. The latter are identified as follows: overall friendly disposition; composition from prison, with death as a real possibility; exhortation to unity in the face of conflict and opposition, grounded in the moral example of various leaders; reference to a network of financial support. Subsequently, the Philippian context - both in its local, communitarian and its general, imperial dimension - is examined in terms of various central aspects foregrounded in the letter. These are as follows: the nature of the prison system as well as the causes and conditions of Paul's imprisonment; the representation of community leadership in opposition to the model of imperial leadership; the vision of a heavenly citizenship for the community in the face of the promise and benefits of Roman citizenship; the development of a Christian

model of underground economy vis-à-vis the Roman model of top-down and margins-to-centre political economy.

Colossians

In light of the call for attention to cultural, social and political issues in interpretation, against the predominantly historicizing and spiritualizing interpretations of the West, one can readily conclude that Zerbe and Orevillo-Montenegro are interested in both context and text in postcolonial analysis. To be sure, the primary emphasis here is on cultural production - not only Colossians itself but also its reception history. Thus, the letter is analysed in terms of the three perspectives identified as central to postcolonial reading: the cultural angle - an attack on alternative religious beliefs and practices; the social angle - recourse to a programme of hierarchical order in order to secure identity and cohesion; the political angle - proclamation of a Christ victorious over all powers. Similarly, its history of interpretation is examined in terms of how such perspectives fare in a variety of reading frameworks: traditional criticism, common missionary practice; emancipatory critical approaches. At the same time, a focus on the material matrix is evident throughout, though in passing fashion: delineation of theological and hermeneutical programmes and their ramifications in the Philippines, references to the missionary enterprise of colonialism and its consequences, unpacking of the community situation, information about the Roman imperial order. At all levels of inquiry, the text functions as point of entry into the context, in itself developed both in light of the text in question and independently of it.

1 and 2 Thessalonians

The initial description of postcolonial analysis in general readily reveals Smith's interest in both material matrix and cultural production. Not only is such analysis said to encompass the phenomenon of 'imperialism' across its various historical phases, but also the phenomenon of 'colonialism' (howsoever related to 'imperialism') as defined entails consideration of both text (discursive) and context (historical). The ensuing description of postcolonial biblical criticism as attentive to the discursive and historical dimensions of the 'imperial shadow' in texts and beyond confirms such combined interest in literary texts and historical contexts. Smith's own approach to the Thessalonian letters takes to heart such a call for joint analysis of cultural production and material matrix.

The literary text functions as the point of entry for the exercise as a whole. Thus, Smith begins with 'summaries' of each letter which are meant to serve as a foundation for a postcolonial reading in terms of strategies of domination and constructions of the 'other'. These summaries involve descriptions of the rhetorical strategies deployed and constructions of the community situations in question in the light of such strategies. Here, then, the twofold focus is beyond question. The literary text continues to play the leading role through

the postcolonial reading and its 'interrogative lens'. This Smith pursues in three stages, the first two of which are directly relevant to the discussion. To begin with, he traces the shadow of empire in scholarly as well as popular readings of Paul in general and the Thessalonian letters in particular. These reception histories are closely linked to their respective historical contexts. Both interpretive traditions, Smith concludes, 'obstruct' the political and antiimperial dimension of the Pauline Letters. Consequently, and in keeping with recent revisionist readings of Paul in this regard, Smith undertakes a reading of the letters as texts of opposition and resistance to the imperial order of Rome. This he does by foregrounding various strategies of resistance at work in the letters: the recourse to apocalyptic traditions, the development of alternative 'assemblies', the critique of accommodationist practices. In each case, Smith situates the rhetorical and ideological strategies of the letters squarely within their historical context, whether of the empire in general or of Thessalonica in particular. Again, the twofold focus is without question. For Smith, therefore, cultural production and material matrix shed light on one another and should be pursued concomittantly.

Pastoral Letters

In principle, given his definition of postcolonial criticism as concerned with power and hierarchy and as oppositional in mode, Broadbent stands open to analysis of both material matrix and cultural production. His comments regarding the application of such criticism to the Pastorals confirm such openness. With regard to the letters, he raises the question of the community situation behind them and why they reacted to Rome as they did. With regard to mainstream scholarship, particularly in the British context, he declares outright that the critical tradition, as revealed by its hermeneutical choices, was keen on supporting empire and the 'power and authority' of the elite in control. In practice, however, Broadbent's focus rests primarily on the literary text rather than on the historical context. Indeed, his representation of the contexts behind both the letters and the critical tradition is directly derived from his analysis of these texts. In the case of the Pastorals, he argues for a deliberate brake on egalitarian impulses present within the community. In the case of mainstream scholarship, he posits fundamental agreement with the hierarchical impulses of empire. Such analysis of power and hierarchy proceeds by foregrounding key passages from the letters having to do with the attitude of colonial subjects, the condition of slavery, the role of women, and the qualifications for male leadership in the community.

Philemon

In principle, given his position on the multidimensionality of both the colonial experience and the postcolonial optic, it is clear for Callahan postcolonial inquiry involves historical context and textual production; in practice, however,

it is the discursive element that is foregrounded, while the material element is identified but not pursued, in such analysis.

The importance of the material matrix is beyond question. Indeed, Callahan is very much concerned with the question of political economy, its character and postulates, in colonial contexts. Thus, slavery is identified as the 'most important' power relation at work in the colonialist project of Rome, while a similar exploitation of surplus labour is surfaced as the primary power relation behind the colonialist project of Western modernity, in both its dependent (oppression of indigenous labour) and its settler (importation of labour) variations, with recourse to 'colour' slavery as marking the project in the Americas as a whole and the United States in particular. Interestingly, while speaking of the colonial legacy as a sine qua non of contemporary interpretation, Callahan does not address the question of political economy in the present global context. The significance of cultural production lies, then, in its mode of relation toward the material base. Thus, Callahan proposes, texts are to be examined on whether they serve to foster or counter the project of colonialism, whether they function as 'imperialist' or 'neocolonial', therefore, or 'anti-colonial'. In biblical criticism such analysis proceeds at various levels: the biblical text itself, written within a colonial context - such as the Letter to Philemon in Roman colonialism; the reading of this text in other colonial contexts - such as the standard interpretation of Philemon from late antiquity through to modern criticism; the reading of this text in the context of ongoing colonial legacy - such as the contemporary interpretation of Philemon, including his own.

Hebrews

Various aspects of postcolonial analysis as envisioned by Punt call attention to both the material matrix and cultural production: the collusion posited between imperial—colonial frameworks, ancient and modern, and the Bible, its writings and critical tradition; the emphasis on global diversity with its corresponding focus on the local and the native; the pivotal role assigned to social location and the real reader in interpretation, yielding a 'polyphonic hermeneutics'; and the aim of liberation at a geopolitical level. Such joint attention is readily confirmed by his twofold characterization of Hebrews as an example of 'contextual theology' and of his reading of Hebrews as contextual and perspectival. Yet, it is analysis of the literary text that prevails, with analysis of the historical context provided mostly by way of background information or present-day application.

Thus, for example, Punt's description of his own location and perspective as an Afrikaner in post-apartheid South Africa is not expanded beyond its basic summary as a diasporic and hybrid existence, while the general context of post-colonial Africa is invoked at various points, but with no systematic or interlacing analysis. Similarly, there are recurrent allusions to historical Christianity and

contemporary globalization, but again in largely intermittent and unconnected fashion. Lastly, not much information is given regarding the context of Hebrews itself, whether by way of the community situation, characterized as profoundly 'diasporic' and of 'desperate urgency', or the Roman imperial-colonial framework, which remains quite in the background throughout.

In contrast to such relative absence of the material matrix, the focus on the text of Hebrews is sustained and comprehensive. Punt examines a wide variety of theological topics, ten in all, deemed particularly relevant to a postcolonial reading: the projection of a Christian dualism, the exalted identification of Jesus Christ, the themes of diaspora and rest, the issues of sin and atonement, the concept of the Word of God, the question of faith and eschatology, the figures of Abraham and Sarah, and the question of discipline. Interspersed throughout this exposition of theological strategies one finds references to historical context — the world of Rome and of the later Western empires, the world of subsequent Christianity, the world of today in general and of Africa in particular. This focus on the text does extend to the critical tradition on Hebrews, and expansively so, but largely in ad locum fashion; for the most part, therefore, the discussion remains centered on Hebrews itself.

James

Ringe's view of postcolonial criticism as political and oppositional, whereby resistance to imperial projects on the part of texts and interpretations is foregrounded, logically demands joint attention to cultural production and the material matrix, and that is indeed the case. Thus, with respect to James, she points to its context of Roman imperial domination as an 'indispensable...backdrop' for critical analysis. Such a judgment cannot but apply as well to its dominant history of interpretation, given the charge of 'colonization' of the letter as a result; however, neither such reception nor its underlying context(s) of imperial domination constitute a focus of inquiry here. These elements are mentioned as constitutive for postcolonial analysis, especially in light of their impact on the common reading of James and their 'interception' of its postcolonial voice, but not pursued. In this combined focus on cultural production and material matrix, the letter serves as the point of departure throughout. First, by way of the community situation identified at work behind the letter - a distortion of Pauline theology that reflects the values of the 'surrounding culture of empire' with nefastous consequences for community life. Then, in terms of central thematic concerns of the letter that crystallize the nature and consequences of such imperial values in response to the community problematic - economic, linguistic and ideological issues. In each category, as the contrast between the values of the empire and the values of the gospel is developed, Ringe introduces pointed information regarding both the imperial context and the community situation. As a result, text and context are read alongside one another - the former as entry point, the latter as backdrop.

1 Peter

From her delineation of critical feminist postcolonial criticism, with its call for analysis of the structures and discourses of kyriarchal systems of domination, it is clear that Schüssler Fiorenza has material matrix and cultural production in mind. In this regard, however, she makes an important distinction between the context as represented by the text and the context as upon the text. The dynamics involved in such a distinction and bifocal attention can be readily unpacked by following her exposition of the fundamental methodological components at work in the proposed approach.

Four such components are identified in all. To begin with, the approach is decidedly rhetorical in orientation. Not, however, along the formalist lines of 'classical-rhetorical' or 'literary-rhetorical' analysis, where the text functions as a means of communication, but rather along the ideological lines of Edward Said, with a view of the text as 'embedded in power relations' - the text as a 'field of power and action'. Further, following Chela Sandoval, the approach examines this 'worldly' embeddedness of the text in pyramidal as well as horizontal fashion, borrowing from the conjunction of such power relations in the political economy of capitalist globalization. As a result, the power relations embodied in the text are viewed as both kyriarchal and networking, since kyriarchal domination yields a multiplicity of structures that intersect and heighten one another. In addition, following Sandoval again, the approach analyses the text-as-embodied with a counter-vision of 'democratics', grounded in a 'methodology of the oppressed' and a stance of 'dissident consciousness'. In so doing, it seeks to read 'against the kyriocentric grain' by searching for voices behind that of the author, submerged by the text and its rhetorics - a reading concerned with the 'historical agency of wo/men'. Finally, for the actual execution of the approach, a fourfold procedure is outlined: (1) establishing the socio-religious location of both author and addressees, (2) uncovering the power relations inscribed in the text, (3) reconstructing the rhetorical strategies of the text, (4) reconstructing the voices and arguments submerged by the text. Throughout, the text serves as point of departure, with information about the context extracted from the text and amplified from a variety of other sources, primary or secondary. Text and context thus shed light on one another, with the text (the rhetorical response) having the lead role, since the context (the rhetorical situation) can no longer be directly accessed but only reconstructed from the text (as 'fitting' response).

This approach, as her commentary shows, is clearly regarded as applicable to both the text and its history of interpretation, although the centre of attention remains the former. Furthermore, although the reception history envisioned is in principle broadly conceived, the centre of attention also remains academic criticism and its dominant tradition of 'malestream' exegesis. Thus, Schüssler Fiorenza draws a crucial distinction between 'malestream' exegetical and feminist emancipatory analysis: the former, which fails to problematize its own socio-religious situation of neutrality and objectivity, fails to observe as well the distinction

between the rhetorics of the text and the rhetorics of the context. As a result, it allies itself, out of its unreflected and unquestioned position within a kyriarchal system of domination, with the rhetorical perspective advanced by the biblical text and hence its underlying kyriarchal vision, with similar ramifications for dissident voices within systems of kyriarchal dominations in both past (continued submersion) and present (ongoing submersion). Given such a working alliance, feminist emancipatory analysis cannot but offer a critical systemic analysis of structures and ideologies at work in both texts and interpretations.

2 Peter

Given her representation of postcolonial criticism as contextual and perspective, indeed from below and oppositional, one would expect from Briggs Kittredge a joint analysis of cultural production and material matrix. While that may well be the case in principle, and I suspect that it is, the point is not made here as such. The focus of the discussion remains throughout on the text of 2 Peter and its rhetorical strategies as well as on the interpretation of such strategies in the scholarly literature. The historical context is but briefly considered by way of the community situation, which is used in turn to explain the reason for the deployment of such strategies in particular. Following a most succint portrayal of the community problematic, therefore, Briggs Kittredge foregrounds the three strategies in question (construction of authority, institution of a canon, polemical self-definition) and then proceeds to contrast the readings offered of such strategies by feminist and postcolonial critics with those advanced by other critical approaches. The discussion throughout is thus discursively oriented, so that even the context of empire does not surface in the analysis of the letter itself or its various interpretive traditions.

Johannine Letters

As conveyed by his definition of postcolonialism as discursively oppositional (correcting misrepresentation and defamation) and ethico-politically committed (struggling for a better world), both cultural production and material matrix prove significant for Sugirtharajah. Yet, it is the text by far that draws the greater attention. Analysis of the historical context involves a consideration of the community situation behind the letters and the multireligious situation in the Mediterranean world, with not much amplification in either case. The community context revolves around a 'schism', a 'great dissension' regarding the 'person and work' of Christ between the author (viewed as 'possibly' the same for all three and identified as 'probably' John the Elder) and a dissident party, possibly Hellenistic in background, who deny not that Jesus was a human being but who do question the attibution of exalted claims to Jesus, including that of the promised Messiah. The multireligious context focuses on the presence of Mahayana Buddhism in urban centres of the Mediterranean and its influence on gnosticism as well as on the Johannine community and its religious worldview.

Analysis of the literary text, in contrast, is more thorough, pointing out the many colonial traits evident in the author's rhetorical and ideological strategy as well as a number of postcolonial traits similarly discernible, which allow room for a partial contrapuntal reading of the letters. The commentary's structural design follows this latter sequence: exposition of colonial traits; unfolding of postcolonial traits, with contrapuntal expansion; final evaluation of the letters in the light of such a combination of traits.

Jude

In foregrounding the intersection of politics and religion, colonizing projects and ritual systems, in imperial-colonial frameworks, Park subscribes in principle to combined analysis of cultural production and material matrix. This joint critical attention comes across clearly in his approach to recent imperial-colonial contexts. The various texts considered - the visits of Japanese prime ministers to the war-dead memorial, the theological pronouncements of the US president on both the country and his own figure, and the missionary enterprise of US churches in Korea - are all set, albeit briefly so, against their respective historical contexts. Such joint critical attention proves quite evident as well in his reading of Jude within the context of the Roman Empire. In two ways, actually. On the one hand, by way of general context, in terms of the politico-religious collusion at work in Roman imperial religion, strategically extended to the provinces with ramifications for society and culture alike - the emperor as master and lord, divinely appointed and favoured. On the other hand, more concretely and at greater length, in terms of the community situation presupposed and addressed by the letter - a conflict involving local believers and outside 'intruders', in which the politico-religious collusion operative throughout the empire plays a part as well. Park's actual approach to Jude proceeds in two stages: first, drawing on the letter itself, he reconstructs the community problematic in question; then, he reads the letter as a response to this problematic. In this reading he highlights rhetorical design and flow: a close, sequential reading following the major structural divisions outlined and showing how the various argumentative strategies, with particular emphasis on 'articulations of faith' and 'criteria advanced for acknowledging falsehood... and finding spiritual orientation and worship', relate to the conflict at hand. For Park, therefore, text and context stand as closely interrelated, both shedding light on one another; at the same time, it is the text that plays the pivotal role throughout, with information about the context mainly derived from the text itself, though from other sources as well.

Revelatio

Moore's approach to postcolonial analysis as attending to a variety of phenomena in imperial-colonial contexts (from imperialism and colonization to decolonization and neocolonialism to globalization) and as including a variety of mutually constitutive ideological frameworks (from the political and economic to the ethnic-racial and religious) leads to critical consideration of material matrix and cultural production alike. This twofold focus is structurally embodied within the commentary itself: a first part concentrates on the historical context of the Roman Empire, in general as well as with respect to Asia Minor and the westernmost province of Asia; the second part focuses on the rhetorical and political strategy of Revelation in light of the context outlined. In so doing, Moore tips in the direction of the text, but not overwhelmingly so.

The exposition of the context, a 'fleshing out of the socio-political context', is multidimensional: the tradition of colonization in Asia Minor - a heavily Hellenized region readily absorbed by the 'consummately' Hellenized Romans; the pattern of Roman colonization both in general and in Asia - an 'occupation' model (foreign administration of a majority indigenous population) involving urban communities of Roman citizens (mostly composed of military veterans and few in number relative to the indigenous population), self-governing and serving as centres of administration over assigned surrounding territory; the mode of Roman governance in Asia - domination not by military force (ungarrisoned province) but by 'hegemony' or consent of the indigenous through the incorporation of local urban elites, in competition with one another for imperial recognition and benefits within a provincial infrastructure of cities; and the symbolic omnipresence of the imperial cult in Asia - a key channel for the ethos of competition among the urban elites. The exposition of the text reads it against this backdrop: a 'catachrestic' response involving the appropriation and redeployment of Roman imperial rule. Revelation emerges thereby as a 'stunning' example of anti-imperial resistance literature: a 'consummately counter-hegemonic' work that foretells the destruction of the Roman Empire, describes its imperial cult as a monstrosity in service of Satan, and advances a Christian Empire instead (God as emperor, Jesus Christ as co-regent and the Christian communities as priests of the imperial cult). This grand rhetorical and political strategy of resistance Moore unfolds through close reading of selected key sections of the work.

Christian Church and Roman Empire in Postcolonial Criticism

Matthew

As a text emerging from and enmeshed in a context of interaction between imperial culture and local culture, where Rome is the wielder of power-over, Carter situates Matthew within an imperialized local culture and hence among the ranks of the subordinated and the marginalized. As a 'silenced provincial' and a 'voice on the margins', the discourse of Matthew, he specifies, is that of an individual or a collectivity who 'writes back' in challenge of Rome. For Carter, therefore, Matthew stands as a text of opposition. As such, it provides a view of life in the margins of empire, revealing in the process modes of imperial sub-

jugation as well as modes of local resistance. At the same time, Carter hastens to point out, resistance in local cultures can vary considerably. Indeed, in the interaction between the local and the imperial, a complex process of negotiation is always at work. The outcome of this process, as it is presented, ranges over a broad spectrum, which could be summarized as follows: from outright submission (accommodation, complicity, cooperation, co-optation), through tactical ambiguity (protective compliance, mimicry, disguised resistance), to open protest and confrontation (non-violent or violent). As an oppositional text, Matthew emerges as a conflicted text, a mixture of confrontation and co-optation—open challenge to Rome, in keeping with the principles of Rome. To wit: the Gospel defies, on the one hand, the imperial values of Rome through the figure and teachings of Jesus; the Gospel couches, on the other hand, the local role and values of Jesus in the concepts and language of the empire. In opposing the existing power-over of Rome, consequently, Matthew enacts the alternative power-over of Jesus.

All aspects of the Gospel, then, reflect this conflicted stance of resistance and imitation, from the literary genre adopted to the theological formulations advanced. All are shown to have an imperial underside, yielding a mirror image of a similar claim on Rome's part. Such is the case with the turn to biography, a vehicle for the presentation of leading figures in the empire (whether for praise or censure): Matthew presents a compromised Jesus, a 'provincial peasant' at once crucified by the empire for defiance of its values and launching an imperial project of his own - a coming empire of God, ultimately overcoming in violent triumph. Such is also the case with the depiction of God and Jesus: God's sovereignty over creation, history and human beings bears all the marks of imperial sovereignty - acceptance or punishment; Jesus' ministry as part of God's saying work follows the theological claims of Rome - uniqueness, with no room for competitors; Jesus' divine presence recalls the global reach and beneficial character ascribed to imperial rule - assurance of triumph and validation of worldwide mission as well as a promise of blessings, for the poor in spirit and in a future world; the extent of Jesus' authority matches that of Rome - absolute power over the past, the present and all things. Such is further the case with the construction of the world as binary: the stance adopted toward the reign of Satan, in control of all empires and in coalition with leadership groups, duplicates that of Rome toward its rivals - elimination for being too evil; the view of the world as a place of sins and in need of redemption by Jesus recreates the imperial division of time - the 'before' and 'after' of Rome; the alternative societal experience advanced by Jesus (promise of blessings for all, celebration of inclusion, bias towards the non-elite) embodies imperial divisiveness - by no means inclusive, gendered and with blessings for the community only. In this parallelism of Rome and Matthew, Carter sees a perfect example of Homi Bhabha's concept of mimicry at work: while the Gospel mocks and threatens imperial power, accounting for Jesus' crucifixion, it also lays claim to imperial counter-mastery, to be effected through Jesus' eschatological return. In sum, as he aptly puts it, the Gospel is both a product of and productive of imperial power.

Mark

For Liew, Mark's politics of apocalyptic time are at once radical and imitative, embodying a profoundly conflicted vision of life within a colonial context. At the heart of it, one finds the expectation of an imminent intervention of God in history, which shall bring to an end the present evil age, under the dominion of Satan, and usher in a new and perfect age, the kingdom of God. This kingdom is proclaimed and unleashed, as an attack on Satan, by Jesus, God's only Son and unique representative. Such a fundamental vision of life moulds the Gospel's construction of authority, agency and gender. With regard to authority, Jesus is depicted as replacing all traditional authority - not only political, Jewish and Roman alike, but also wealth, family, ethnicity, rituals and traditions, and the desire for power. However, in so doing, Liew points out, Mark sets up a new supreme authority and hierarchical structure, centred on Jesus and representing a new system of inclusion and exclusion, with violence and destruction for the latter. In terms of agency, neither Jesus nor his followers are presented as able to effect lasting change in the world; such change, according to Mark, can only come about as a result of God's action. Consequently, Liew observes, human beings have but one choice, to serve God or Satan, and the former option implies a life of suffering and martyrdom. With regard to gender, Jesus is portrayed as forming a new family in the world. Yet, Liew notes, within such a family women continue to play a traditional role under Jesus' authority and as Jesus' followers, obedient to male authority and confined to home and family.

In the light of such findings, Liew concludes, the anti-colonial vision of Mark ends up reproducing, within the Christian community, central elements of colonial politics under Rome: rigid central authority, utter human powerlessness in the face of evil and patriarchal gender relations. Thus, what at first sight appears to be a radical intervention in colonial politics under the Empire turns out to be, upon closer inspection, a mirror imitation of such politics within the community in opposition to the empire.

Luke-Acts

Burrus' analysis of ideological stance and narrative art in Luke-Acts identifies ambiguity as a key feature of the text. Politically, first of all, Luke is at pains to situate the story of Jesus and his followers within the world of Roman/Judaean politics and its complex web of power mediation. In so doing, Luke emphasizes the dastardly role of the priestly elite of Judaea, downplays the role of the Romans and their Herodian allies by portraying the benign effects of such rule, and creates a space for a kingdom of God with a 'global' community of believers. From the perspective of Hardt and Negri's analysis of postmodern

empire - an empire with no Rome, with decentred political sovereignty and globalized economic incorporation - Luke's envisioned kingdom is seen as similarly inclusive and dangerous: a space without boundaries where distinctions between the imperial and the colonial become irrelevant, a 'counter-empire'. From the perspective of Scott's analysis of resistance - appropriation of the public transcript of domination by the subjugated as a strategy of resistance - Luke's envisioned kingdom is seen, even if totalizing in its own right, as subversive: using the values of Rome to question the policies of Rome, such as the execution of an 'innocent' figure like Jesus. In the end, Burrus argues, while the influence of Rome emerges as rather benign, no mediator of Rome is depicted in positive light. Economically, then, Luke also takes great pains to situate the story of Jesus and his disciples within the world of Roman/Judaean economic relations and its imperial system of taxation and patronage. In the process, Luke adopts a twofold strategy: an idealistic past in which the radicalism of Jesus and his early followers prevails in the face of the imperial tax burden, with denunciations of exploitation and poverty and calls for justice and sharing; a pragmatic present where accommodation and paternalism rule, with espousal of the patronage system and philanthropy in mind. In the end, Burrus concludes, it is impossible to judge how subversive Luke-Acts actually proves regarding the political economy of Rome.

Artistically, Luke follows the rise of novelistic writing that flourishes upon the advent of the empire and the profound dislocation that it brings about. This is a genre where the boundaries between history and fiction become blurred and where cultural difference vis-à-vis both Rome and others is in constant negotiation along ever-changing borderlines. It is a genre, therefore, that questions the hegemony of the empire as well as any monolithic version of truth or history. This is true, first of all, of its relationship to time and space. Drawing on Bakhtin, the novel is described as a parody of genres, where conventions are exposed and subverted at once. Temporally, Luke-Acts not only rewrites earlier gospel accounts and adds a book of Acts but also provides no closure to its own story: the past of Jesus is brought into dialogue with the present of ministry in the empire, in itself quite open ended, since the fate of Paul in Rome is left in suspension. Spatially, Luke-Acts presents a gravitating centre in Jerusalem for both Paul and Jesus that no longer exists and ultimately shifts that centre to a Rome that fails to materialize: the result (invoking Bhabha) is a 'flawed imitation' of imperial expansionism - the reconquest of the world through a story. Second, it is also true of the novel's relationship to language. Again drawing on Bakhtin, the novel is described as having a polyglot consciousness. Thus, Luke-Acts places multiple languages in dialogue: the experience of the Spirit, the use of direct speech, the marking of such speech as angelic, inspired or scriptural. Such heteroglossia cannot be contained and might even signal (invoking Bhabha) a movement toward the 'in-between' space of 'hybridity'. Finally, it is true as well of boundary negotiation. Luke-Acts' mission of evangelization emerges as highly complex and unstable: a tale of conversion, a critique of colonization, a resistance to empire – all highly compromised in the end. In sum, ambivalence rules in Luke-Acts, whether in the ideological or the artistic plane.

John

For Segovia the Gospel of John emerges as an outright and searing postcolonial text - a text whose story emplaces a proposal of absolute challenge, whose opening strikes a chord of absolute otherness, and whose plot traces a programme of absolute opposition. At some undetermined point in some undetermined location, he argues, John casts a critical eye upon the imperial-colonial framework of Rome roundabout. Such a gaze is said to yield utter condemnation of Roman dominion and power alongside a radical vision of divine power and dominion. Such a gaze is further said to comprehend not only imperial Rome and its colonial minions but ultimately all religio-political frameworks in the world. Its judgment is unsparing: all lies under the rule of Satan. Its alternative is totalizing: salvation lies only in the rule of God. This kingdom of God is made known, within the kingdom of Satan, by the Son of God, the Word sent by the Father and humanized in Jesus, and his disciples - the children of God sent by Jesus and divinized by the Spirit. This rule of God the Gospel presents as follows: breaking out in outlying territories of the Roman Empire - lands and peoples associated with the Jewish ethnos; issuing forth from a provincial deity - the God of Judaism, claimed as the one and true God; irrupting through the words and deeds of a provincial subject - Jesus of Nazareth, Messiah of the Jews and Savior of the world; and enduring beyond him via provincial followers of all sorts - Jews and non-Jews alike re-born as children of God.

In the narrative, Segovia continues, this vision of the Gospel emerges as a conflict between the two worlds constitutive of Johannine reality – the world above of God and the world below of Satan. A myth of beginnings presents the this-world of flesh as created by the other-world of spirit. Prior to the sending of the Word, however, the two worlds stand in stark but passive opposition to one another. With the arrival of the Word in Jesus, such opposition turns into outright conflict, yielding rejection and hostility, and builds up to a decisive climax, the death/resurrection of Jesus and the triumph/defeat of Satan. After the glorification of Jesus the Word, active opposition continues by way of his followers, now subject to rejection and violence as well. A myth of fulfilment anticipates a 'last day' whereupon this opposition between the two worlds will come to an end.

In this overall scenario, Segovia points out, the disciples of Jesus – those who have come to believe in his claims and have thereby undergone regeneration by the Spirit as children of God – constitute, in the wake of Jesus, a clearing of space, a colony, of the other-world in the this-world. In this outpost of the empire of God, light and life, grace and truth, are to be found. Within it, the children of God give

witness to the rule of God and the example of Jesus, with love and service toward one another. At the same time, he adds, this site of enlightenment and resistance within the empire of Satan, this colonial settlement from above, proves complex as well as ambiguous. On the one hand, decidedly unstable: not only hated and tormented from the outside, but also subject to removal and destruction from the inside. On the other hand, uncomfortably imperial: condemning and demonizing whatever lies outside, while deploying hierarchy and obedience inside. In sum, a remarkable postcolonial intervention of absolute challenge, otherness and opposition, ultimately beholden 'perhaps...much too much' to the imperial–colonial formation of Rome and Satan 'for its own good'.

Romans

In Romans Elliott finds a decidedly anti-imperial text, second only to Revelation in the corpus of the New Testament. This oppositional stance is expressed in both local and general terms: not only with respect to the local Christian communities in the city of Rome, therefore, but also with regard to the Christian mission and presence throughout the dominion of Rome.

In the case of Rome itself, the community dynamics among Christian believers are said to move against the backdrop of the return of Christian Jews to the city after the rescission under Nero of the edict of banishment of 49 C.E. Gentile Christians, now predominant in such communities (the 'strong'), stand in danger of falling prey to a view of Jewish Christians, dispossessed and dishonoured as they are (the 'weak'), through the filter of Roman ethnocentrism in general and anti-Judaism in particular - the 'stumbling' of Israel and 'boasting' over Israel. In the face of such developments, in a situation where contempt and resistance are seemingly fluorishing, Paul counters the imperial practices and claims of Roman supremacy through a call for mutual obligation, a 'preferential option for the powerless', and a defense of the continuing validity of God's promises to Israel despite all appearances to the contrary. In the case of the empire, the dynamics of the Christian mission and message are set against the background of the design and project of Rome. In the face of a Roman discourse of power and subjugation, Paul offers a counter-discourse: in lieu of the emperor, Jesus as the Son of God; in lieu of imperial global reach, a commission to bring all nations under the 'obedience of faith'; in lieu of imperial policies of subjection and terror and claims to piety and justice, a coming triumph of God and a coming era of justice; in lieu of a vanquished Israel and a tortured creation, liberation from slavery.

1 and 2 Corinthians

In the eyes of Horsley, the letters to the Corinthians reflect and convey Paul's vision of imperial opposition, derived from the Jesus-movement of Palestine and transplanted to the peoples and territories of the eastern Mediterranean, including Corinth. This counter-imperial vision bears a master narrative, a per-

sonal mission, and a plan of action. To begin with, the ruling narrative brings about a radical displacement of Roman claims in favour of Christian claims. In effect, it was through Israel, a subject people of Rome, and through Jesus, a provincial rebel leader executed by Rome, that the course of history and the hand of providence moved. Indeed, God's vindication of Jesus through resurrection and exaltation as 'Lord of the world' signified the fulfilment of the Abrahamic promises, so that in Jesus, and through his movement - the blessings of God would flow on both Israel and on all peoples of the world. Further, through Jesus' return the power of Rome would be brought low and the power of God would be triumphantly established. Second, the appointed mission bestows on Paul a universal role as 'lead apostle' to non-Israelite peoples. He it was who would spearhead the offer of God's blessings in Jesus throughout the subject peoples of the empire. Lastly, the strategic plan of action puts into effect an 'international' movement of resistance against Rome. Among the subjugated of Rome. Paul's task would be that of organizing a network of local cells, in the style of a 'labour movement or anti-colonial movement', that would stand together as an alternative society - in charge of its own affairs, marked by an egalitarian ideal regarding membership, with exclusive loyalty to God, given to care for one another, and in pursuit of a horizontal sharing of resources. Corinth, a city to which Paul devoted considerable time, was one such target of Paul's movement, mission, and narrative.

At the same time, Horsley points out, as with other cells of the movement, not all proved smooth in Corinth. On the one hand, a variety of important issues - ranging from the communitarian to the social, the moral to the confessional - arose after Paul's departure; on the other hand, a number of dissenting viewpoints emerged as well, in opposition to Paul. Such concerns and stances were brought to his attention by letters from the community, and these he proceeded to address in his own various letters to the community. Behind such developments, Horsley adds, stood above all a view of wisdom, grounded in Hellenistic Jewish mystical theology, as the means to attain immortality of the soul, knowledge of the divine and spiritual enlightenment. In the face of Roman domination, Paul regarded such emphasis on personal 'spiritual transcendence' not only as disruptive of community solidarity but also as contrary to God's fulfilment of history in Jesus and against Rome. Such wisdom, therefore, Paul countered with his own wisdom of counterimperial resistance, grounded in the crucifixion and vindication of Jesus. Two final comments are in order. First, it is impossible to tell, Horsley admits, what the ultimate outcome of these interchanges were in the case of the fledgling Corinthian community. Second, Paul's ideal of an alternative society, Horsley further acknowledges, was compromised in some respects, such as, for example, a certain regression regarding the equality of men and women and too great an accommodation in the direction of the language and concepts of the wisdom faction in Corinth.

Galatians

At the core of the crisis in Galatians, Wan proposes, lies a fundamental struggle over ethnic identity and relations, revolving around the criteria for admission of the Galatians, as 'Gentiles', into the Jesus-movement, 'Jewish' in origins and composition: should the requirements of the Mosaic law be observed or not? Among the 'Jesus-followers' themselves, there is profound disagreement: Paul, on the one hand, argues in opposition; Antioch-Jerusalem, on the other hand, argues in favour. Both crisis and responses, Wan argues, should be set against the background of empire, with Rome as impinging centre and Jerusalem as resistant periphery. In the process, both responses emerge as 'survival strategies' within Judaism as a minority group within the Roman Empire. This scenario Wan elaborates at various levels of application, from the general to the concrete.

At the widest level, Jerusalem (signified by the 'temple administrators') is said to develop, in reaction to the dominant power and discourse of Rome, a totalizing discourse and power of its own. Such an exercise in 'mimicry' and 'worlding' relies on the following principles: first, a myth of homogeneity is used to flatten 'Gentiles' and 'Jews' alike, while a myth of difference is invoked to separate such constructs into a binomial opposition; second, a 'classic' colonial pattern of domination is established with Jerusalem as centre and Jewish communities elsewhere as peripheries. Thereby, not only is the homogeneity advanced by Rome called into question but also its position as centre relegated to the periphery. Within Judaism itself, moreover, various positions develop regarding identity and outsiders: toward one end, a primordialist view according to which Gentiles can be received only through full integration; toward the other end, a universalizing position where integration is worked out by insiders and outsiders in an 'interstitial' space.

At the intermediate level, this situation is seen as replicated within the 'Jesus-movement': Jerusalem (signified by the 'pillars') functions as the centre, undertakes the establishment of 'colonies' throughout by way of the missions and expects obeisance and tribute from such settlements. When the admission of Gentiles into the movement becomes problematic in Antioch, with Paul opting for a universalizing position and others espousing an essentialist position, Jerusalem first sides with Paul but then, subsequently, goes back on such an agreement, resulting in the creation of a Jerusalem-Antioch alliance. At a concrete level, this situation is said to be replicated in Galatians: against emissaries of the Jerusalem-Antioch stance, who call for full submission to the Mosaic law, Paul defends his stance, forged in the 'hybridity' of diaspora and agreed to by Jerusalem, demanding faith in Christ without the requirements of

For Wan, therefore, the controversy that surfaces in Galatians is not at all between 'Jewish' and 'Christian' but within the circles of a Jewish 'sect' whose constitutive parties view faith in Jesus as the Christ as an essential requirement for membership but disagree on the need for other requirements. These competing positions, moreover, subscribe to the overall resistant strategy adopted by Judaism as a minority group in the face of imperial contingencies and yielding a counter-hegemonic domination of its own. The parting of the ways comes on the issue of admission of Gentiles, such as the Galatians, as Jesus-followers. Within this envisioned state of affairs, Wan portrays Paul as realizing from the start how the flow of Gentiles into the new movement would result in ambivalence and prepared for such a development accordingly. In sum, all 'Christian' sides in Galatians are 'Jewish', messianic, anti-imperial as well as totalizing and colonizing, but in different ways and with different consequences.

Ephesians

Bird regards the political project of Ephesians as highly complex: a vision at once oppositional, positing a conflict of empires between that of Caesar and that of God, and hybrid, involving a thorough linguistic and conceptual intermingling of such empires. On the one hand, the counter-empire constructed is decidedly spiritualized, given its location in the heavenly realms, yet such a move should be seen as by no means apolitical but rather as sharply political. Indeed, the sense of 'citizenship' in the heavenly empire of God ultimately renders allegiance to Rome inconsequential, leading to submission to the worldly empire of Caesar for the sake of avoiding persecution and preserving peace. On the other hand, the construction of this spiritual counter-empire emerges as ultimately dependent on the material empire. As a result, the heavenly Empire ends up duplicating the worldly in structure and dynamics, with similar ramifications for insiders and outsiders. The result, Bird argues, is an escapist and imitative political project. To wit: a Christian imperial order, set in the heavenly realms of God and under the rulership of Christ, which (1) at once relativizes and bows to the Roman imperial order and (2) at once distantiates itself from and incorporates within itself the Roman imperial order.

For the community in the face of Rome, the ramifications of this imperial order are numerous and profound. Bird draws them in terms of all three dimensions of the project examined.

The first is the imperializing rhetoric at work. First and foremost, in the heavenly counter-empire, at the right hand of God, sits the exalted and all powerful Christ as ruler, having triumphed over all powers and with all peoples subject to him. In this 'household of God' the community stands as 'ctitzens', holding sway over all the powers of oppression, marked as God's own by the seal of the Spirit and assured of their promised salvation and inheritance. Among them, Jews and Gentiles, Jesus as supreme ruler has established unity and peace. Theirs too is a sharp awareness of 'fulness' and 'special knowledge' that sets them off from all outside. Theirs as well is a keen consciousness of belonging to an international movement as opposed to all outsiders. All this Ephesians conveys to the community as a 'material manifestation' of its counter-imperial ideology.

The second is the household codes adopted. Both the instructions for wives and slaves and the portrayal of the community as body and bride of Christ reinforce the sense of a 'household of God' whose lives are solely for the glory of the counter-emperor.

The third is the call to battle issued. Such military imagery further convey the sense of the 'household of God' as the army of the counter-emperor, ready to inflict violence upon their enemies and oppressors.

In the end, Bird argues, such a portrayal of life, its beliefs and practices, within the Christian imperial order is both positive and problematic. Without doubt, given their situation within the Roman Empire, such a vision of belonging to a higher political order is bound to bring consolation and reassurance to the community. At the same time, such a sense of belonging shifts the eyes of the community away from the material to the spiritual realm, making way for a view of the worldly empire as immaterial and of their own relationship to it as one of tactical subordination for the sake of preserving life and peace. In sum, a counter-empire that is both escapist and hybrid.

Philippians

The Christian community founded by Paul at Philippi – a politically and economically prosperous 'colonia', renamed in honour of Augustus in 31 BCE by the emperor himself as a reward for loyalty – constitutes, in Agosto's eyes, an 'alternative society', set up by Paul in opposition to the claims and practices of Rome and facing opposition from the outside as a result. This community, Agosto continues, is also experiencing dissension from the inside, ultimately grounded as well in this counter-imperial project of Paul.

This vision of an alternative society is readily evident in the systematic transformation of imperial ideology at work throughout the letter: the proclamation of a different 'good news' about another 'Lord', Jesus Christ; the representation of this 'Lord' not as one in search of glory and honour but rather as divesting himself of such for the sake of others; the further representation of this 'Lord' as exalted by God and as returning in triumph; the definition of honour and glory for the community in terms of both a righteousness attained through faith in this 'Lord' and of citizenship in terms of a world other than that of Rome. Given their adherence to such principles and practices, the Christian community finds itself facing the same type of opposition as Paul, who is himself confronting the hardships and uncertainties of jail as a result of such a vision. At the same time, and by no means unrelated to such a vision and its consequences, conflict has erupted within this alternative society. Indeed, there are those who question Paul's leadership precisely because of his imprisonment. Other disputes, such as that between Euodia and Syntyche, threaten disruption as well. In the face of such a precarious situation, Paul's response is to seek steadfastness and unity through self-giving, always with the welfare of others in mind, following the example of Jesus Christ, that of Timothy and Epaphroditus, and his very own.

Such self-giving clearly includes the mobilization of financial assistance for those in need, whether in prison, as in the case of Paul himself, or in other struggling communities – in other words, a movement of resources within the Christian network of communities along horizontal rather than vertical lines. In the face of opposition from without and conflict from within, therefore, the Philippian community is to remain firm and united as an 'alternative society' in opposition to the empire – under its 'Lord', following the moral path of its leaders, and with their eyes set on their citizenship in the heavens.

Colossians

A central task of postcolonial reading, as postulated by Zerbe and Orevillo-Montenegro, is to determine whether, within a context of colonialism, texts promote or contest the colonial order. Such ideological analysis of texts is conceived not in terms of a binomial opposition but rather along the lines of a spectrum. Within such a spectrum, Colossians is placed toward the middle - an 'ambivalent text', with tendencies in both directions. This 'hybrid' position is established on the basis of the letter's cultural, social and political stance. For this inquiry the community situation serves as point of departure, opening the way to these various perspectives of the text and ultimately, through them, to its position vis-à-vis the colonial context. This community situation is sharply put: in Colossians Paul (the issue of authorship is not addressed) is faced with an internal crisis on the part of a community not founded by him. In effect, 'rival teachers' have introduced 'alternative' beliefs (intermediary cosmic powers) and practices (circumcision, special festivals, rules for drinking and eating, asceticism, mystical experiences). The letter seeks, therefore, to reassert the 'apostolic' authority of Paul in this 'wayward' community, enjoining a normative understanding of beliefs and practices and enhancing social identity and cohesion within the community as well as with other Pauline communities.

From a cultural perspective, the letter is said to advance 'Christological absolutism': Christ is represented as supreme over all other powers, religious and political alike. From a social perspective, it is said to assert 'hierarchical order', most clearly at work in the household code: the status quo is upheld through religious legitimation and to the detriment of the powerless (slaves, women, children). From a political perspective, the letter is said to proclaim Christological triumphalism: Christ is represented as 'unmasking' and 'shaming' the powers – actually created 'in, through and for' him – through his crucifixion. Such positions, the authors reflect, prove ultimately ambiguous: while embodying the oppositional views of a 'minority movement' struggling for survival within the context of Rome, they ultimately construct a colonial framework of their own, marked by expansionism and exclusivism. Indeed, the authors add, not only can interpretation go in such a direction, but it has done so repeatedly. Consequently, postcolonial analysis stands in need of ideological critique at this point, having foregrounded the stance of the text and its ramifications.

1 and 2 Thessalonians

Given his commitment to trace the discursive and historical 'shadow of empire' in the biblical 'texts and beyond' and the pursual of this commitment through analysis of the strategies of domination and constructions of the 'other' present in the letters, the relationship between the Christian community and the imperial order emerges as quite prominent in Smith. As point of entry in this regard, Smith relies on the rhetorical and ideological strategies of the letters as well as the community situations inferred from such strategies.

On the one hand, he argues, 1 Thessalonians - dated to 50 or 51 cE and explicitly ascribed to Paul, following consensus opinion - makes use of military imagery and group distinctiveness to urge the 'assembly' to remain faithful ('to stand firm') to the 'apocalyptic gospel' preached by Paul, characterized by the expectation of an imminent parousia. Behind this rhetoric, Smith points out, stands hostility to the community on the part of its former neighbours and the lure of its former ways. On the other hand, he continues, 2 Thessalonians - seemingly accepted as pseudonymous, in keeping with majority opinion, but with no date provided - also appeals to group cohesion and military 'diction' and with the same purpose in mind of warning the 'assembly' to remain faithful ('to stand firm') to the apocalyptic traditions handed down by 'established apostolic authorities, now marked, however, by a projection of the parousia into an unspecified future and the deployment of apocalyptic details. Behind such rhetoric, Smith explains, lies not only ongoing hostility from the surroundings - not necessarily in Thessalonica itself, he cautions, but with 'likely' familiarity with 1 Thessalonians on the part of the addressees - but also the emergence of 'enthusiastic apocalypticists' within the community, whom the author sets out to counter through such expanded apocalyptic expectations and corresponding directives toward involvement in everyday life.

Then, over and beyond their close link to the underlying community situations, Smith proceeds, relying on the work of James C. Scott, to analyse such strategies as concrete expressions of resistance and opposition to the imperial order. The invocation of apocalyptic traditions, for example, may be seen as embodying a critique of the rulers and values of 'this age', in light of the extensive recourse in the letters to imperial imagery and terminology. Similarly, against a background of resistance to Rome by way of both local armed conflicts and 'alternative philosophical movements', the formation of Christian 'assemblies' such as those at Thessalonica as sites of communal participation, broad membership and a 'reformatory ethic' may be viewed as amounting to a profound questioning of the dominant values of imperial society. Lastly, various aspects of the letters - such as the emphasis on salvation through Jesus and the exhortations toward self-reliance within the community - may be read as critiques of the local elite, given the accommodationist impulses at work revolving around imperial honours. These strategies, therefore, Smith uses to foreground the question of domination and construction of the other in the Thessalonian letters vis-à-vis the Roman Empire, giving rise thereby to a view of the letters as sharply political and anti-imperial documents, in direct contrast to their standard interpretation in both the scholarly and the popular histories of reception.

Pastoral Letters

With respect to the relations envisioned by the Pastorals between the Christian communities and the Roman Empire, Broadbent's sustained focus on both letters and interpretations should be kept in mind. In both cases, a distinction is made between the ideological stance advanced by the texts, biblical and critical, and the historical contexts in question, where other ideological options are in evidence and could have been invoked.

Regarding the Pastorals, Broadbent posits a sharp difference between the community situation behind the letters and the community response urged by the letters. The rhetorical stance advocated reveals, on all issues foregrounded, an 'accommodating attitude' to the imperial order, usually accounted for in the literature as a deliberate choice in the face of persecution and death. The letters thus call for submission to hierarchical authority on the part of imperial subjects, slaves and women. In so doing, the letters further present male leadership as normative and define its constitutive characteristics accordingly: proper and efficient management of the household; respectability outside the community; absence of love of money (implying wealthy status). The historical context reveals claims for greater participation on the part of women and slaves, 'possibly' as a result of a Pauline egalitarian model of community. Such developments, Broadbent suggests, the author - alongside other prominent male members of the community - set out to arrest through the strategy of accommodation to imperial norms. This, he continues, was the result of not only outside pressure, fear of imperial retribution, but also internal pressure, fear that their own power as wealthy men in authority would be undermined by such developments.

Regarding the Western critical tradition, and the British one in particular, Broadbent shows, through specific hermeneutical decisions and observations, how commentators side with the ideological stance of the letters (for submission and against egalitarianism) as a way of upholding imperial order and norms in their own contexts. Such commentators, Broadbent observes, do not hesitate in applying the accommodating message of the Pastorals to their own contexts, taking a stand thereby against any options for egalitarianism present in such contexts.

From a postcolonial perspective, therefore, Broadbent posits in both the Pastorals and its interpreters a decision for accommodation to empire over against any option for resistance available in their respective contexts. In both cases, moreover, he attributes such a conscious choice to the self-interest of the male authors as members of the elites in question, who stand in outright opposition

to any surrender of their own political, class and gender privileges in the name of egalitarianism.

Philemon

Following the division drawn between texts of advocacy and texts of contestation in the face of political economy in colonialism, Callahan contrasts the values and practices that mark both sets of texts. On the side of advancement, the system of exploitation is promoted: a myth of 'radical alterity' – a dialectical structure involving the 'superordinate' colonial self over against the 'subordinate' colonial other; a rhetoric of entitlement – an authoritarian stance demanding obedience from the other and yielding a discourse of rights; and recourse to coercion – the use or threat of violence against the colonial other in order to secure compliance and defend rights. On the side of opposition, agency without exploitation is promoted: a call for 'solidarity'; a rhetoric of indebtedness, producing a discourse of justice; and recourse to persuasion.

From his own anti-colonialist perspective, it is this latter programme that Callahan finds at work in the Letter to Philemon. In effect, the Paul that stands behind Philemon is viewed as an 'organizer' of 'Jesus-communities' in the Greek-speaking eastern Mediterranean, who, in the face of a situation involving a rupture among members, adopts a strategy embodying anti-colonial values and practices toward its resolution. This dispute, Callahan argues, has nothing to do with slavery: Onesimus and Philemon stand to one another not as slave and master but as blood brothers who have fallen apart. Consequently, Paul's attempt at reconciliation does not address in any way the issue of slavery within the Christian community but the status of two brothers as colleagues in the gospel. Such reconciliation, moreover, is grounded on a solidarity of love, a rhetoric of relationship and intimacy among those working together in the project of the gospel, and a recourse to appeals and commendations.

Hebrews

The relationship between the Christian community and the Roman Empire does not figure very prominently in Punt, nor do relations within the community itself. The discussion centres rather on the character and objective of Hebrews – an anonymous Christian homily, bearing epistolary features, dated to the second generation of Christianity but with a post-70 cE date left open – as a diasnoric and hybrid text.

Hebrews, Punt argues, offers a representation of Jesus, in the light of Jewish tradition in general and the Moses tradition in particular, as the 'great high priest' who inaugurates a new covenant through his death and resurrection. Toward this end, he continues, Hebrews draws, in 'syncretistic' fashion, on a great variety of religious and philosophical traditions, from the Hellenistic to the Jewish to the early Christian. In the process, these traditions are reappropriated and redeployed with a different goal in mind: to assist believers – described as

'Hellenistic-oriented' and 'dissenting-Hebrew' Christians – in overcoming 'the stranglehold of past traditions' and adjusting to 'fresh movements of God in a fast-changing world'. For Punt, therefore, Hebrews offers, in the face of a Christian life seen as profoundly diasporic, a hybrid contemporization of belief in Jesus as Son of God for its day and age. Such a version of the gospel, Punt concludes, constitutes a call to 'persistent, unwavering faith', conveyed not in 'traditional garb' but in a 'with-it' translation understandable to and relevant for its addressees.

In sum, from the point of view of Punt's own diasporic location and hybrid perspective, Hebrews emerges as an exercise in contextual theology in which the 'Christ-event' undergoes creative reformulation, given new developments in the situation of the Christian community, by drawing upon multiple resources from such a situation — a hybrid response to a diasporic Christian life.

James

At the heart of the community problematic behind James, which involves a fundamental disagreement regarding the relationship between community and empire, lies, according to Ringe, a 'distortion' of Pauline theology whereby the elements of faith and ethics, inseparable in Paul, have been divorced from one another. This separation has come about as a result of surrender to the attraction of imperial ideology and its values (competition, domination) and has led, in turn, to the loss of individual and community integrity. More pointedly, such adoption of 'alien' values has brought about a fissure in the community especially along class lines, as community members who have prospered under the imperial system mistreat, in keeping with the values of the system, other members below them in wealth and power. In response, James - a pseudonymous letter from the turn of the first century CE - offers a 'corrective' affirming, in line with Paul, the coherence of faith and ethics. For James, the community, a 'diasporic' people (literal or metaphorical) under political domination from the outside, stands in danger of cultural domination from the outside as well. Consequently, Ringe argues, James sets before them a fundamental choice between the wisdom of God and the wisdom of the world, in which there can be no separation between belief and conduct. Thus, to belong to the community means to place faith and action under the values of God and against the values of the world, so that the Christian life emerges as a 'radical alternative' marked by faith in Jesus and a love grounded in acts of justice, following the teachings of Jesus.

What such Christian life entails in detail is fleshed out through analysis of the letter's economic, linguistic, and ideological vision. In terms of economics, over against the imperial message of prosperity, James underscores the fragility of wealth and points to God as the sole source of true security. With respect to the Christian community, the letter challenges any attitude toward wealth in league with the imperial project: favouritism toward the rich is decried, God's

'option for the poor' is upheld, and the wealthy are accused of oppression. In terms of discourse, over against imperial manipulation of language in the service of domination, James emphasizes the crucial role of language in an integrated life of faith. With the Christian community in mind, the letter urges a use of language contrary to that of the imperial project: in the interest of cohesion and wholeness, matched by correspondence in action, and avoiding competition for honour and status. In terms of ideology, over against imperial imposition of unity and pursuit of greed and competition, James proposes single-minded devotion to the wisdom of God. With respect to the Christian community, the letter calls for unity and values at variance with the imperial project: personal and social integrity at all levels in terms of faith and ethics as defined by God and proclaimed by Jesus.

1 Peter

As a writing that classifies its addressees as 'resident aliens', locates them in a province of the Roman Empire (Asia Minor), and describes them as 'marginalized' and subject to 'harassment' and 'suffering', Schüssler Fiorenza sees I Peter as a text that 'invites' postcolonial or decolonizing interpretation. Such interpretation, following the fourfold method outlined for critical feminist postcolonial analysis, sets out to contrast the rhetorical stance adopted by the author and the rhetorical stance open to other voices in light of the socio-religious situation common to all within the context of the Roman Empire and its kyriarchal system of domination — a situation involving, therefore, the religio-cultural world as well as the socio-political order. The end result is a view of the letter as in fundamental alliance, given its position of limited accommodation to Empire, with the ethos of kyriarchal domination.

The context shared by author and addressees is portrayed in sharp colonialimperial terms. Thus, 1 Peter is described as a circular letter sent from colonial subjects living in Rome, at the centre of empire ('Babylon'), to colonial subjects living in Asia Minor (Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, Bithynia), whether such territories are understood as geographical areas or, more probably, actual provinces. Further, all colonial subjects in question, inscribed sender and recipients alike, are identified as self-consciously within diaspora Judaism, including the large numbers of Gentile converts likely present in their ranks. These two designations prove crucial for the demarcation of the situation in common. First, as colonial subjects, the inscribed recipients form part of a region, Asia Minor, long marked by imperial domination: to begin with, as a result of Hellenistic colonization of the local kingdoms, which introduced Hellenistic social and cultural institutions; then, by way of Roman colonization of the Hellenized kingdoms, which readily conformed such institutions to the norms of Roman society and culture. This pattern of domination brought about a profound social division: on the one hand, an aristocratic upper class and a new middle class made up of colonial settlers and Hellenized elites; on the other, the working and lower classes consisting of the masses of indigenous peoples. Within such a context, the privileged classes, propertied and educated, functioned as guarantors of unity and stability in the empire. Second, as diasporic Jews, the inscribed recipients, who would otherwise have formed part of the settler middle class, stood out by virtue of their lifestyle, their religion and their history of resistance against Rome.

As a communication between colonial subjects of the Jewish diaspora, Schüssler Fiorenza argues, 1 Peter keenly reflects such status. Thus, the inscribed recipients are characterized as follows: 'transients' ('innigrants', 'foreigners') – exiles away from home; 'resident aliens' ('noncitizens', 'settlers', 'colonials') – second-class citizens subject to social and cultural exclusion as well as exposed to suspicion and hostility. Such status readily accounts, in turn, for their representation as suffering and marginalized. Indeed, as colonial subjects and diasporic Jews, such status, Schüssler Fiorenza adds, would have been greatly impacted upon, in the aftermath of the Roman–Jewish War, by their designation as 'messianic' Jews (christianol) – 'revolutionary messianists undermining the dominant society'.

Against this backdrop, then, the inscribed author is said to send, invoking both Petrine (directly, by way of authorship) and Pauline (indirectly, by way of genre) authority, a 'letter of advice and admonition' to messianic Jewish communities of Asia Minor in which an overall rhetorical strategy of 'good conduct and sub-ordination' is urged upon the inscribed recipients. In so doing, the author portrays the communities in exalted terms of divine election and love (a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a temple of the spirit). The author further addresses them as both 'household of God', in which God stands as the paterfamilias and father of Jesus Christ and they as his 'obedient children' and 'brotherhood' (gender inclusive), among whom an ethic of love toward insiders and a code of honour toward outsiders are to prevail. These two designations prove essential to a delineation of the rhetorical stance deployed. First, in the course of Hellenistic and Roman colonization, a discourse of household management unfolds in Asia Minor (and the Mediterranean as a whole) in which the stability of the 'household' emerges as crucial to that of the empire. Such stability, centred in the leading social classes, worked to counteract egalitarian tendencies within Graeco-Roman society and involved 'ethical mitigation' of the absolute power of the paterfamilias through an ethos of fidelity, cooperation and proper relations based on fear and love. Second, within this context, the term 'brotherhood' was appropriated by religious and political associations (such as collegia and mystery cults) to convey, in contrast to the household, an ethos of collegiality and solidarity. As such, these associations were regarded as problematic to imperial stability and kept under close watch.

In describing the Christian communities along the lines of 'household of God' and 'brotherhood', Schüssler Fiorenza argues, the inscribed author imports a colonial-imperial model of governance and conduct. In the face

of ongoing exclusion and harassment, the communities are urged to show, at once, 'honourable behaviour' toward all outside (slave wo/men are to endure harsh treatment from their masters in patient suffering, freeborn wives are to persevere in the conversion of their husbands, all messianists are to obey the authorities and the emperor) and 'constant love' toward all inside (unity of spirit, mutual sympathy, brotherly/sisterly love, compassion, humble mindedness). To promote this twofold goal, the author marshalls a three-pronged argumentative strategy: (1) suffering, presented as a way of life inseparable, given the example of Jesus the Messiah, from being Christian and doing good - a theological interpretation along moralizing or naturalizing lines; (2) election and honour, offered as a way of dealing with social disgrace through engagement, following the example of Christ, in honourable conduct - a theological borrowing of the cultural ethos; and (3) subordination, advanced as a call for submission within and without the community, with special emphasis on freeborn women and wo/men slaves - a theological adoption of the rhetoric of subjection. Consequently, Schüssler Fiorenza concludes, 1 Peter represents a 'Christianizing' of the kyriarchal system of domination in light of the adverse socio-religious situation. In effect, a stance of limited accommodation to Empire in the face of hostility from the world - in the end, a decidedly colonizing rather than anticolonial stance.

2 Peter

The problematic at play behind 2 Peter - classified as a pseudonymous work written toward the end of the first century CE - is crystallized by Briggs Kittredge as involving a fundamental questioning of Jesus' promised return among some members of the community. In response, the letter, attributed to the apostle Peter, brings together a pointed combination of generic features: in part testamentary, in which the author appeals to tradition and mounts an attack on the 'false teachers and prophets' in question as wicked and immoral; in part exhortative, in which the author appeals to Scripture for proof that God stands over the wicked in judgment. Three rhetorical strategies are identified as central in such a response. First, the letter advances a monolithic model of authority and leadership, invoking the unity of tradition and the eyewitness of Peter. On the one hand, the author constructs a uniform line of tradition from the prophets, through Jesus, to the apostles; in this construction, moreover, Peter and Paul stand in unity as 'models and heroes' of the church. On the other hand, the author claims privileged authority as a witness of Jesus' transfiguration, given the restriction of this experience to three apostles. Second, the letter develops a canon of Scripture, marking certain writings in particular - among them the letters of Paul and Peter - as authoritative. Moreover, given its use of the testament form, the letter further marks itself as the end of the Petrine tradition. Third, the letter unleashes a bitter tirade against the false teachers and prophets, resorting to highly vituperative language and engaging in a dehumanization and demonization of the opposition. For Briggs Kittredge, such strategies are not without consequence.

Johannine Letters

One finds in Sugirtharajah's contribution a displacement of the 'colonial scenario' or imperial-colonial framework under investigation: from the relationship between the Christian communities and the Roman Empire to that between two segments of the community in conflict – a faction represented by the author and a faction embodied by the opposition. The one exception in this regard is his description of the author's representation of Jesus as the 'imperial Christ' – far more than the Jewish Messiah expected, indeed the 'Savior of the world', and, as such, a new emperor in place of the Roman emperor; this insight, however, remains undeveloped. Sugirtharajah proceeds to show instead how the letters – 1 John as a circular letter; the other two as personal letters – deploy a colonizer-colonized strategy to deal with the conflict and the opposition.

Rhetorically, this strategy has recourse to a series of standard features of colonial discourse: rejection of diversity and discussion (espousal of 'unvarying and exclusive truth'), language of intolerance (branding of the opposition as 'sons of Satan' and 'antichrists') and an arsenal of hermeneutical strategies. The latter include a claim to authority as eyewitness (establishing credibility), insistence on the authenticity of the message (preserving the original message), designation of supporters as God's people (legitimizing both their power and their role as judges in theological disputes), advancing a highly exalted image of Christ (calling for total allegiance), restricting hospitality (denying food and lodging to theological dissidents) and employing flattery and threat (playing up to supporters and warning opponents). Ideologically, the strategy denies a 'voice' to the other, either speaking to them or on their behalf. Toward this end, two moves are foregrounded, both designed to maintain tight control over the community: setting up a binary opposition between the two parties (two kinds of reality) and addressing the community as children (father-child relationship).

In the end, the 'colonial scenario' is clear: a local and divided Christian community, in which the author (alongside those who stand with him) takes on the role of 'colonizer', while casting the dissidents (alongside the 'majority' who have gone over to their side) in the role of 'colonized'. At the heart of this scenario, there stands the figure of Jesus: for the 'colonizer', Jesus as the imperial Christ, with emphasis on his incarnation and sacrificial death of atonement; for the 'colonized', a human Jesus devoid of such exalted claims, hence their identification as 'antichrists'.

Jud

The situation underlying and addressed by Jude involves, according to Park, a sharp conflict between two different parties within a Christian community, its original members and newcomers from outside, revolving around the introduc-

tion by the latter among the former of a different set of beliefs and practices. This situation Park further portrays as pitting a standing local community in the Jewish-Christian tradition against a band of intruders (seemingly of Gentile extraction) in accord with Graeco-Roman culture. For Park, therefore, this is a conflict bearing strong, though indirect, imperial—colonial connotations.

As reconstructed from the letter, the outsiders, described from the outset as 'ungodly', emerge for Park as 'itinerant teachers or prophets' of the sort common in early Christianity. Their beliefs and practices are further presented as in opposition to the received apostolic tradition. Thus, they are said to deny the exclusive lordship of Jesus Christ, submitting to other lords or even demanding worship of themselves; to slander the angels; and to depict themselves, presumably on the basis of their charismatic authority, as the truly spiritual. Similarly, they are said to be marked by moral laxity and idolatrous worship and to look out only for themselves. This party Park sees as espousing 'some sort of religious and cultural assimilation' to the dominant Graeco-Roman culture. In the process, they are wreaking havoc in the community, luring followers from among the locals into their ranks. As conveyed by the letter (classified as a pseudonymous letter of exhortation written in the late first century CE), Park portrays the author as writing an urgent response, in which a variety of rhetorical strategies are deployed to counteract such developments: affirming the sole authority of Jesus as Lord and Master; providing ethical instructions for living in keeping with Jesus' lordship; warning the community, in particular those who have wandered away, about the falsehood of all such claims and the destruction forthcoming upon such intruders and their followers. Throughout, Park observes, a Jewish-Christian definition of faith and life prevails, most evident perhaps in the extended recollection of figures from the past, both disobedient angels and erring Israelites, who suffered punishment as a result of their sinful intercourse with unbelieving Gentiles.

Behind this conflict, therefore, Park posits the presence of the imperial order and the power of imperial religion. While the 'intruders' stand for accommodation, Jude urges resistance. For Jude, it is not the emperor who is 'master' and 'lord', wielder of supreme power over his subjects and head of the imperial order, but Jesus Christ, in keeping with the exclusive lordship of the God of Israel. For Jude, moreover, it is not the emperor who is divinely appointed and favoured, following the collusion of politics and religion in the empire, but Jesus Christ, in whom God has acted in history. Such a God, Jude reminds his addressees, has acted in the past, bringing judgment upon those who deviate from the true path, and will act again in the future — a note of consolation and warning.

Revelation

Despite Moore's classification of Revelation as a work of resistance against Rome, yielding a binomial opposition between existing Roman imperial rule and envisioned Christian imperial rule, the actual relationship signified by Revela-

tion between the empire of Rome and the empire of God, and hence between Roman authority and Christian community, emerges as profoundly conflicted. At a surface level, the end result of its grand catachrestic strategy is evident. In its radical displacement and replacement of the Roman Empire by a Christian empire, through appropriation, Revelation sets up an unyielding 'metaphysical and moral opposition' between the two imperial realms. Such separation is and must remain absolute. At a deeper level, however, a further result of such catachrestic strategy becomes evident as well. In retaining the Roman model of empire through redeployment in the Christian model of empire advanced, Revelation remains utterly dependent on Rome, reinscribing rather than opposing empire.

This conflict at the heart of Revelation Moore pursues through Bhabha's critique of dichotomization in imperial-colonial relations. First, such relations seek, through imposition, the replication of the colonizer - 'mimicry'; this goal, however, is never perfect, for the colonized is never an exact copy nor does the colonizer so desire it, lest the distinction between the two collapse, and the goal prove dangerous in the end, ever threatening to turn into parody or mockery. Mimicry, Moore argues, is 'endemic' to Revelation. While the book parodies Rome as a pale imitation of the divine realm, it is actually the divine realm that is described in terms of Rome, and thus Rome remains the ultimate authority. Second, such relations are grounded not in opposition but in simultaneous attraction and repulsion - 'ambivalence'. Revelation's utter rejection of Rome, Moore points out, is severely compromised by its imitation of Rome. Third, such relations create not a fusion of independent cultures but an in-between space in which cultures are never pure but always impure - 'hybridity'. Revelation's determination to remain distinct and pure, according to Moore, is severely compromised by the presence of the Nicolaitans, assimilationists to imperial culture, and thus impurity within. In the end, Moore concludes, the binary opposition fiercely established by Revelation emerges as fundamentally parasitic on Rome, an imitative and infiltrated Christian Empire. What thus seemed at first glance like a consummate work of resistance turns out to be, upon closer inspection, a supreme example of reinscription, in which empire and counter-empire emerge as but mirror images of one another.

Interpretive Findings and Critical Stance

Matthew

Postcolonial reading does not stop for Carter with critical analysis of the text in the light of its imperial context. Such a task calls for two further moves, similarly important and imperative. The first is not pursued in this study for reasons of space: attention to the use of Matthew in the era of Western imperial expansion, given the accompanying expansion of Christianity. The second is addressed at length: evaluation of Matthew as a production from within an imperial context in order to avoid any possible repetition of imperial concepts,

terminology or practices of the text in the contemporary world. While only the latter move is explicitly identified with church-based readers, those who look to the Gospel for 'guidance and formation', both presuppose such ecclesial context, within which Carter clearly locates himself. In this regard, given his reading of Matthew as a highly conflicted text – an 'impure subject', at once in resistance to and complicity with empire – Carter argues for a reading posture of suspicion rather than idealization.

The critical principles underlying such a posture are well outlined. First and foremost, holding both dimensions of the text together in reading, the contestation as well as the replication of Roman power. Second, employing the critique of empire offered by the Gospel against its own imperial project and practices: intimidation and coercion of the disciples into submission, expectation of a violent victory of God over all rivals, erection of privilege by means of an 'us-versus-them' division. Lastly, using a theological affirmation of the Gospel - the image of a God who is predominantly 'merciful and life-giving' to all in the present - against itself: the image of God's reign in the future as 'violent, coercive and punitive' for those outside. The practical implications of a reading from suspicion are also well delineated: examining the claim of imperial benefit, tracing any elements of coercion and destruction; questioning the claim to exclusivity in the dispensation of God's justice, looking for signs of such justice among all peoples and in all texts; examining all structures, societal and ecclesial alike, attentive to signs of exploitation; and challenging the language of empire, imagining new ways of describing God's merciful and life-giving ways.

Mark

Of the various assumptions identified by Liew as underlying his reading, two are to the point here. First, the reading of Mark advanced is described as neither positivist nor idealizing, but rather as one caught up in its own politics of time. It is a reading, therefore, that grants a complex relationship between ancient text and the reader's perspective - it denies any finding of unchanging 'truths' in Mark. Whatever 'truths' are found, Liew notes, derive from and are tied to the various locations and interests of its readers, so that Mark speaks in 'multiple voices'. Second, such a reading is said to call for interaction on the part of the reader(s). It is a reading that posits a critical relationship between ancient text and the reader's perspective - it denies any view of the 'truths' in Mark as 'timeless'. Whatever the 'truths' in question are, Liew argues, political critique is of the essence, so that Mark, and its rhetorical constructions, is always subjected to critical appraisal. In the end, however, Liew's critique of Mark remains deliberately indirect. Afraid of 'defeating [his] own postcolonial logic', seemingly by supplying a sustained response of his own, he poses, in the spirit of Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic style, a series of questions without answers.

Luke-Acts

Burrus does not raise the issue of dialogue with or evaluation of the text as interpreted on the part of the critic. However, she does envision, in general terms, a recourse to and use of the text in the world of the twenty-first century. The character of Luke-Acts as both an anti-imperialist and a postcolonial text emerge as particularly relevant for such an exercise. The exercise itself presupposes a twofold grounding. On the one hand, a fundamental similarity between the imperial context of Rome and our imperial context of today. Thus, the political complexity and universalizing ambitions of Rome are said to resemble — in keeping with the analysis of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri — our own 'globalizing, postmodern "neo-empire" " much more than the imperial models of modern Europe. On the other hand, an imperative of resistance to empire today. Consequently, Luke's insight into and strategy within its own imperial context stand as valuable resources for contemporary readers, given the imperial similarities and the critical mandate in question.

First of all, while the ambiguities of Luke-Acts lie beyond resolution, there is no doubt that the work does contain a distinctly anti-imperialist vein. Unfortunately, this aspect of Luke-Acts has been seriously underplayed in the scholarly literature, largely as a result of the subtlety and ambivalence of this critique. In light of Luke's keen 'attunement' to the power and project of Rome, such anti-imperialism, Burrus argues, must be surfaced in full, in all of its ambivalence and subtlety, with our own 'project of resistance' to empire in mind. Second, while a postcolonial historical approach is by no means ruled out, a literary approach sensitive to textual indeterminacy and instability brings out the nature of Luke-Acts as a "hybrid" novelistic text, full of ambiguities and ambivalences. Behind these, such an approach further reveals a vigorous process of negotiation and contestation of identity at work, in the borders of cultural difference and as a result of colonial resistance. Again, in light of Luke's reading of Rome, its control and programme, such a site of 'emergent political possibilities', Burrus argues, may stand us in good stead for our project of resistance. In the end, therefore, although a critical assessment of Luke-Acts is not undertaken, it would be fair to say that Burrus holds a positive view of this text as a work of resistance within an imperial setting, indeed exemplary for contemporary readers.

John

Various working principles underlie Segovia's position on the text-reader relationship in postcolonial analysis, all coming to expression within the prolegomenon on method and theory. To begin with, in unpacking meaning and scope, two general principles are set forth: postcolonial criticism as applicable to ancient texts and modern readers alike in light of their respective imperial-colonial frameworks; postcolonial enlightenment on the part of readers as a point of departure. Further, in dealing with terrain, a third general principle

is outlined: a call for combined material and cultural attention to both texts and readers. Lastly, in the section on mode, two specific principles are added regarding his own approach: it is constructivist – related in close but complex fashion to his location and agenda as reader, thus allowing for a multiplicity of other postcolonial interpretations of the Gospel; and it is interactive – demanding critical discussion and evaluation, with such dialogue extending not only to the geopolitical stance advanced with regard to the Gospel but also to other postcolonial interpretations of such a stance.

In the commentary, however, Segovia limits himself to exposition of the Gospel's geopolitical stance, with neither interaction with it nor attention to other readings and readers. This failure to pursue such dimensions of postcolonial analysis, advanced as fundamental to the task, is directly attributed to the constraints of the assignment and declared essential for the future. In a closing reflection, Segovia refers to such critical dialogue as imperative and ineluctable, especially for those who have the Gospel as a religious and ecclesial legacy, among whom he situates himself. He also goes on to posit two other pressing tasks: an ongoing nuancing and refining of the postcolonial vision constructed in the light of narrative details and close conversation with other ideological discourses (feminist, queer, minority, materialist).

Romans

There is in Elliott's contribution no explicit critical interaction with the text of Romans, so that the call for postcolonial attention to the reading of Romans within the context of present-day imperialism remains unpursued. At the same time, there is no doubt that Elliott is in profound agreement and sympathy with Paul's stance vis-à-vis Rome. This can be readily inferred from both his evaluation of the traditional interpretation of the letter in the West and his concluding observations on Rom. 13.1-7.

Thus, at present, Elliott argues, a 'fundamental ideological struggle' rages within Pauline Studies regarding the interpretation of Christian origins. On one side, there is the array of traditional readings of Paul and especially Romans in highly theological terms, with three main approaches ('dogmatic-apologetic') in evidence: the soteriological (the offer of God's salvation, in the face of universal human sinfulness), the universalistic (a charter of universalism, in the face of Jewish particularism or ethnocentrism) and the sociological (defence of freedom from the law for Gentiles, in the face of Judaizing pressures). On the other side, one finds a view of Paul and Romans in highly political terms, with emphasis on the context of Rome: an imperial power marked by a military machine of enormous might and a political economy based on large-scale exploitation.

Within this battle, Elliott's option for the latter, political approach is unreserved. However, within this line of interpretation, where Romans emerges as a fully fledged oppositional text with a message against both Roman ethnocentrism in the light of the Christian communities of Rome and Roman ideology in the face of the Christian mission as a whole, Rom. 13:1-17 gives pause. This admonition of subjection to the governing authorities. Elliott readily admits, would seem to undermine beyond redemption Paul's oppositional discourse and turn his eschatological rhetoric into a flight of fancy. Such pause is but momentary. What Rom. 13:1-7 exhibits, Elliott argues, is hard realism on the part of Paul in the face of the colonial situation. As such, the text is to be read not against the binary framework of Franz Fanon (revolution or accommodation) but the everyday resistance scenario of James C. Scott (multiple acts of insubordination, including the appropriation of public symbols). In effect, Rom. 13.1-17 represents a 'survival strategy' in the face of Roman power: not a call for accommodation to empire, but a call for caution, for eschatological realism, in the defiant pursuit of the Christian message and mission.

In the end, therefore, there can be little doubt that Elliott views Paul's stance in Romans as highly relevant for today as well. Indeed, his final sentence clearly points the way in this regard: in our own contemporary striving for liberty as children of God, in a similar situation of imperial domination, the letter offers 'important guidelines'.

1 and 2 Corinthians

Horsley undertakes no critical evaluation of 1 and 2 Corinthians as interpreted. As a result, there is no direct glimpse as to how postcolonial criticism, as defined, functions today. That it is applicable, there is no question. He explicitly defines the contemporary world as a new imperial order, characterized as follows: at the base, a political economy constituted by 'multinational, global capitalism'; at work, a system whereby which the economic resources of the poorer nations are drained through the financial policies of such bodies as the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund, resulting in greater impoverishment; on guard, a 'policing' structure maintained by the power of the American military. This new order, moreover, is explicitly likened to that of Rome, both in terms of a centralized political economy and the draining of resources from subject peoples. What the reading of the Bible and the doing of biblical criticism entail in such a context emerges indirectly but forcefully, Indeed, Horsley's reading of Paul shows that he finds himself in sympathy with the counter-imperial vision projected. The evidence in this regard is substantial.

First, he argues strongly for a separation of the genuine letters from the pseudonymous letters, the radical Paul from the 'conservative' Paul. This latter Paul, brought into accommodation with the imperial order, became the 'establishment' Paul, in the light of which all the letters were read. The result was a 'subordinationist' Paul, used to argue on behalf of slavery, the subjection of women and imperial-colonial relations. Similarly, Horsley looks with favour upon the collection organized by Paul as an 'international' movement of economic resources along 'horizontal' rather than 'vertical' lines, comparing the

latter in the process to the policies carried out by the World Bank or the IMF. Finally, he has no patience for the type of position espoused by the wisdom opposition at Corinth, as conveyed by Paul in 1 Corinthians. Their view of Sophia as the means and content of salvation, with its corresponding claims to immortality of soul and transcendent spiritual status, he characterizes as a 'personal' spirituality akin to the 'new age' spirituality of today, highly detrimental to cooperation and solidarity in the community. In the face of Rome, Horsley clearly sides with Paul's view of the crucifixion as the fulfilment of history and the end of the imperial order. In fact, he finds fault with Paul for giving in too much in language and symbols to the opposition in 2 Corinthians, in light of the evident failure of 1 Corinthians to stem the tide; in so doing, Horsley observes, Paul has moved 'half-way' toward the spiritualization of 'his gospel' evident in Colossians and Ephesians.

Galatians

At no point in his postcolonial reading of Galatians, a task involving both letter and reception history, does Wan raise the question of critical engagement; as a result, no formal position is forthcoming regarding the reader-text relationship and the responsibilities of criticism in such a project. At the same time, the commentary does offer insights into what the overall parameters of such a stance on his part might be.

Such is more clearly the case with respect to the interpretive tradition. Thus, Wan indicts the vestigial obssession with matters theological and dogmatic, with its lens of justification and its abstract approach to the crisis, to the detriment of the imperial context and its clash of narratives – the script imposed by Rome and the script offered in resistance by Jerusalem. Wan further indicts the sharp disjunction drawn between Judaism and Christianity, even within the new perspective on Paul, to the detriment of the complex discussion regarding Jewish identity in the face of empire and its narrative.

In terms of reception history, therefore, for Wan a postcolonial reading is one that seeks to move beyond prevailing theological and essentialist categories to bring out the concreteness of empire and its ramifications for ethnic identity and relations. With respect to critical findings, the situation is more opaque. On the one hand, there is no doubt that Wan favours a constructivist approach to ethnicity, whether in the present or in the past, thus tipping his hand toward the diasporic position of Paul rather than the essentialist stance of Jerusalem-Antioch. On the other hand, it remains unclear how he would ultimately come down on his evaluation of both positions as privileging 'Judaism' (howsoever conceived) vis-à-vis the 'Gentiles' within the empire, since both responses are said to constitute variations of a discursive 'imperial' narrative of its own, positing a different centre in the face of Rome. In terms of textual analysis, therefore, for Wan a postcolonial reading is one that seeks to displace stable and unchanging categories of identity construction to emphasize flux instead in

all such constructions, though the extent to which such a task should be pressed remains uncertain.

Ephesians

In defining postcolonial reading as a 'critique' with liberation as aim, Bird adopts a position of active critical engagement between reader and text. For her, it is not sufficient simply to establish the political stance of a text; critical evaluation of such a stance and its ramifications must follow. This critical position she grounds in her own social location, both as a woman in a field of study dominated by men and as a Christian with an ecclesial background that includes mainstream liberalism and an intervening 'turn' in conservative fundamentalism. The driving hope behind such a critique, and hence the nature of the liberation in mind, is identified as an altogether different conception and use of power, marked by sharing-with rather than domination-over. Its ultimate goal, then, is the development of 'liberative spaces' and 'new ways of being' toward an alternative understanding of community for all. This critique is brought to bear on Ephesians and its political project of a counter-empire of God.

The critique is applied to all three dimensions of the letter analysed. In the case of the imperializing rhetorics, the evaluation is biting. With regard to the foundational reinscription of empire, not only does the portrait of the exalted and all-powerful Christ weaken the humanity of Jesus and his identification with the weak, but also the vision of the community as 'citizens' of the 'household of God' holding sway over all powers turns the oppressed into the oppressors. The status of peace and unity established by Christ among all citizens of God's household not only rides on conquest and obedience but also signifies woe to those outside. The claim to fullness and special knowledge on behalf of the community leads to escapism in the face of injustice and oppression. The consciousness of a worldwide community brings about distantiation from, as well as demonizing of, outsiders. Finally, the use of writing signifies a desire for control and subordination of the community. Second, with respect to the household codes, the evaluation is also quite harsh. On the one hand, the directives concerning wives and slaves not only import fear and control into the community but also single out those who, given their central role in the economics of the household, prove the greatest threat to the imperial order. On the other hand, the turn to somatic and bridal images to describe the relationship between Ruler and ruled further imports into the community a thoroughly androcentric and patriarchal perspective. Lastly, the call to battle receives a sharp critique as well. The deployment of military imagery inscribes a sense of aggression and violence within the community.

In short, for Bird, Ephesians merely replaces one system of power and domination with another: ultimately, a counter-empire, even if spiritual and heavenly, remains an empire. As such, from the standpoint of liberation, both the letter and its critical tradition are found wanting. Both stand in need of

'liberationist subversion', therefore, if we are to move imperial ideologies and dynamics: the text, insofar as its political project reinscribes imperial power and domination and its strategy of submission to Rome in order to secure peace and avoid persecution yields indifference regarding social change; the standard interpretation, insofar as it not only fails to enter into critical engagement with the letter but also regards it as apolitical. For 'glimmers of hope' to prevail, Bird concludes, a postcolonial critique is of the essence in both respects.

Philippians

In keeping with his call for multidimensional postcolonial analysis, including what is described as the imperative need for interpretation of the texts by the children of the colonized in order to render a 'better, more complete' reading, and his own self-description as one such critic, Agosto openly acknowledges that his reading of the letter proceeds from his own experience of colonization and enters into critical interchange with the reading advanced in the light of such experience. This he does, he further explains, as a 'Latino' child of colonization - a member of a non-Western minority in the United States, born in the country of parents from the colonial possession of Puerto Rico, taken over in the course of the Spanish-American War (1898). From this Latino perspective, therefore, Agosto approaches the central points surfaced in the text and analysed in the context. In each and every case, he views the letter as highly relevant for the contemporary context of imperial domination.

The factor of prison and imprisonment opens the way to a consideration of the use of prison in modern and contemporary imperial systems of domination. For such comparative analysis, Agosto draws on figures from both the United States and Puerto Rico. The question of proper community leadership, marked by counter-imperial values of service and sacrifice, connects readily with the development of leaders from within marginalized Latino communities. Such leaders, Agosto notes, follow neither the credentials nor the expectations of the broader society. The issue of citizenship, heavenly vis-à-vis Roman, is seen as paralleling the ongoing situation of Puerto Rico. Here, Agosto points out, the extension of US citizenship has brought undeniable economic advantages as well as a keen loss of identity. Lastly, the emplacement of an underground economy among the communities of Paul in the midst of an oppressive Roman economy brings up the question of church responsibility in the midst of global capitalism and its oppressive consequences for many throughout the world. Such alternative economies, Agosto argues, while perhaps not very effective on a grand scale, signify nonetheless a much-needed and subversive approach. At this point, a brief point of criticism surfaces in Agosto: while Paul did not raise a more fundamental challenge to imperial economic oppression, in all likelihood as a result of his eschatological expectations, there is no reason why the children of the colonized should not do so today.

Colossians

Zerbe and Orevillo-Montenegro view critical interaction with texts as a central task of postcolonial analysis. Upon establishing the orientation of a text within the spectrum of promotion—opposition vis-à-vis colonialism, therefore, ideological critique is imperative. Such critique here is undertaken by way of the history of interpretation of Colossians, ultimately leading to a critical exchange with the text itself. In light of the proposed character of Colossians as a hybrid text, a text with tendencies in both directions, the authors point out both how the letter has been commonly interpreted in favour of colonialism and how it can be read in opposition to it.

The record of colonial promotion stands clear. Culturally, first of all, its advocacy of Christological absolutism has resulted in the rejection of indigenous religious beliefs and practices by the colonial missionary enterprise, a stance still in evidence today among certain pastors in the Philippines. Such absolutism, moreover, Western criticism has viewed favourably as resistance to error on the part of Paul, with no discussion of the religious and cultural issues involved. Second, socially, the letter's espousal of hierarchical order - with only a minor softening of the distinctions advanced (men are to love, parents are not to provoke children; masters are to treat slaves justly) - has placed it on the side of androcentrism, patriarchalism and classism. Such hierarchy, again, Western criticism has used to argue that Christianity favours 'transformation from within' or to conclude that Paul's legacy is one of 'fundamental conservatism', refraining from any critique whatsoever. Lastly, politically, the letter's espousal of Christological triumphalism has given way to endorsement of the ruling powers and the project of civilizing and Christianizing the subjugated, both positions in recent evidence as well in the Philippines. Such triumphalism, once again, Western criticism has approached by way of spiritualization, without concrete political reference. As a result, the authors point out, Colossians - along with the Pauline corpus as a whole - has not featured prominently in the struggle for social transformation, in the Philippines or elsewhere.

At the same time, the authors hasten to add that, while such a deconstructive reading is indispensable, an emancipatory reading is not only possible, given the letter's ambivalence, but very much in order, given the high status ascribed to the Scriptures in the Philippines. Fundamental in this regard is the contrast drawn between historical context and contemporary context: Christianity as a minority religious movement struggling to survive in the face of highly attractive alternatives; Christianity as a colonial religion, expansionist and exclusivist in nature, wedded to materialism (capitalism) and eliminating alternatives. In this light, the promotional side of Paul can be understood in historicizing fashion, while the oppositional side can be foregrounded in light of later developments and interpretations. Toward this end, a broad variety of strategic moves in reading the letter is offered, all meant to bring forth the emancipatory side of Colossians.

1 and 2 Thessalonians

Given his commitment to trace the shadow of Empire in the biblical texts and the critical tradition through analysis of 'anti-imperialist' as well as 'imperialist' tendencies present in their strategies of domination and constructions of the 'other', critical dialogue emerges as imperative in Smith's contribution. Such dialogue is undertaken with the goal in mind of working toward a just world, although what this vision implies is not formally addressed.

From the discussion one can infer that at heart it involves breaking down power relations of domination, including those having to do with untoward constructions of the 'other'. Such interaction can be readily observed at work with regard to both the letters and their 'effective history' or tradition of interpretation.

Concerning interpretation, Smith points out how the scholarly tradition as well as the popular tradition 'obscure' and 'obstruct' the political thrust of the letters. On the one hand, the academic reception has been ruled, from its beginnings, by two driving representations of Paul: first, within the framework of Protestant-Catholic debates, the 'bold proclaimer' of justification by faith, against a Judaism essentialized as a 'religion of merits'; second, within the framework of Western racial discourse, the 'creator' of a 'superior' (universal) religion, against a Judaism categorized as 'inferior' (parochial). On the other hand, the popular reception has been marked, in the North Atlantic in general and the United States in particular, by a representation of Paul as a preacher of the end-times: the purveyor of a 'millennialist, Manichaean' discourse. The Thessalonian letters in particular, Smith points out, have played a significant role in this latter popular tradition, serving as the source for the belief in a coming 'rapture' and the speculation regarding the identity of the 'antichrist'. Both developments, he adds, have played a major role in the mythic identification of the US as a 'nation uniquely chosen by God'. Against such reception histories, Smith brings out the highly anti-imperial thrust of the letters, especially in terms of apocalyptic discourse.

Concerning the letters, Smith shows how, despite their strong anti-imperial stance, they remain complicit with the imperial project in the way they 'reinscribe' within the Christian 'assemblies' the 'hierarchical arrangement of social relations' in the empire. In effect, by turning to invective in the construction of the 'other', the authors deploy standard androcentric critiques in their denunciations of sexual depravity, greed and lack of discipline in the community. Thus, for example, the letters rail against ignorance of God, immorality and greed as qualities associated with outsiders. In so doing, moreover, the letters espouse an 'ethic of self-mastery' in which self-control is viewed as a masculine trait. Similarly, the letters address their readers as 'faithful military recruits' in order to set them apart from the lack of order and discipline that mark those outside. Consequently, Smith concludes, the letters reveal an 'internal rhetoric of othering' based on the imperial 'rhetoric of othering'.

In sum, from the point of view of creating a just world, the letters emerge as highly ambiguous texts: obscured by the shadow of empire in their histories of reception in the West, exhibiting strong anti-imperial impulses in the face of empire, and betraying strong imperial impulses in its own strategies of domination and construction of the other. Yet, such analysis is precisely what is needed: examination of power relations 'wherever they exist'.

Pastoral Letters

In keeping with his definition of postcolonial criticism as contestatory of power and hierarchy in imperial settings as well as his sustained attention to texts and interpretations, Broadbent engages in sharp critical dialogue with both the letters and the critical tradition. This interaction is pursued throughout. With regard to the Pastorals, he argues that the strategy of accommodation should be seen as directly related to the gender and class interests of the wealthy male elites in the Christian communities, for whom the emulation of 'the hierarchical rules of empire' prove most beneficial. With regard to criticism, he consistently exposes the geopolitical links at work between 'subsequent interpreters' and 'modern imperial projects', most particularly in the British context, in their sustained identification with and espousal of the strategy of imperial accommodation advocated by the Pastorals, all in support of the imperial project as 'beneficial to its imperial subjects'. Such interaction finds its sharpest moment in his concluding reflections. In the case of the critical tradition, such espousal of power and hierarchy, he observes, has had untold consequences for the native subjects of empire, for women and slaves, and for the poor working classes at the heart of empire. In the case of the Pastorals, he wonders, whether the proper path to follow should be removal from the canon or preservation with full consciousness of their 'internal flaws' and conservative reception.

Philemon

Callahan's project of a postcolonial reading of anti-colonialist orientation, grounded as it is in a problematization of the colonial legacy in the United States and calling as it does for evaluation in terms of advancement of, or opposition to, the colonialist project, clearly calls for critical dialogue for texts produced in colonial contexts. Such interchange he does not pursue with the Letter to Philemon as interpreted, since he finds it in full accord with the programme of contestation that he himself favours. Such critique he does undertake, however, with respect to the sustained and systematic interpretation of the letter as the 'Pauline mandate' for the justification and preservation of slavery as the mode of production in colonialism from Christian antiquity (John Chrysostom) through Western Christendom (Cotton Mather and Alonso de Sandoval) to biblical criticism (The Oxford Annotated Bible). According to this interpretation, Onesimus is a runaway slave whom Paul returns to his master, Philemon, with an appeal for reconciliation; thus, in effect, not only did Paul not question the

power relation of slavery but he actually stood for the obedience of slaves to their masters. This line of interpretation Callahan characterizes as 'colonialist' throughout and rejects, aligning himself squarely in the process with those African American slaves who reacted to this reading in anti-colonialist fashion. In contrast to predominant Christian tradition, therefore, Callahan draws up a dissenting tradition: from Paul, to slave interpretations, to his own version.

Hebrews

Various central features ascribed to postcolonial analysis by Punt establish a basic need for critical dialogue with the text: from its deconstructive side, the surfacing of political-textual collusion and the quest for voices silenced or misrepresented; from the constructive side, the emphasis on diversity and the local; from the postmodernist side, the foregrounding of contextualization and construction in criticism. Other features advanced by way of contrast to colonial analysis heighten the need for such dialogue: the call for accountability; the stress on polyphonic hermeneutics; the search for liberating strategies of interdependence; and, above all, the promotion of geopolitical liberation. This interaction Punt carries out by analysing the manifold ramifications of the diasporic-hybrid exercise in contextual theology unveiled in Hebrews through the lens of the ten theological strategies deployed by the letter. Such interaction is ultimately grounded on a contextualization model like that attributed to Hebrews: to render the 'gospel message', and certainly Hebrews itself, comprehensible to and relevant for this day and age.

As he proceeds through the different theological topics, Punt offers an ongoing critique of these strategies from a variety of perspectives: former and ongoing projects of colonization, past and present collusion of Christianity in colonization, the contemporary situation of globalization and its untoward consequences for so many, the posteolonial conditions of his own African continent. In every instance such critique is offered with the goal of liberation in mind, in all of its various aspects. In the process, the highly commendable exercise in contextual theology offered by Hebrews is shown to have a highly objectionable underside as well. Thus, while Hebrews is found to offer a 'valuable perspective' on the need for continuous reinterpretation of Jesus Christ, it is also found to be implicated in 'imperialist endeavours', both within its own historical context and by way of its 'reception history' in other contexts of Christianity. From the perspective of 'Christian faith in the third millennium', Punt concludes, postcolonial criticism can and does offer a 'valuable hermeneutical strategy' for surfacing hegemonic complicity as well as liberating strands in the biblical texts.

Jame

Ringe's description of the postcolonial voice and of postcolonial analysis as resistance to imperial domination entails critical engagement with the text: both the biblical text and its history of interpretation. Here such engagement pro-

ceeds by way of the dominant tradition of reading James rather than the letter itself, since Ringe finds herself in fundamental agreement with the vision of James, once removed from the governing ambit of its interpretation. In effect, Ringe argues, in accord with Elsa Tamez, James has been 'intercepted' by its reception history: its postcolonial voice of opposition to empire in its context has been 'colonized' by ecclesial and theological elites - given their captivity to the 'doctrinal norm' of Paul in Romans; by secular and other authorities - in light of their rejection of the letter's social and economic vision; and by the critical tradition - given its exclusive focus on historical questions and its dismissal of the letter's theological value. Thus, Ringe's postcolonial reading of James recovers, or liberates, the postcolonial voice of James: an author who is not opposed to Paul as such but to a distortion of Paul and who advances, grounded in the union of faith and ethics, both a radical critique of imperial reality and values and a substitute reality and values in Jesus. In so doing, Ringe affirms, the author calls on the 'moral authority' of James and the traditions of Jesus himself, thus embodying 'the core of the gospel' in the face of imperial domination and community surrender. Ultimately, this oppositional voice of James, with its deployment of the 'inherently destabilizing values' of the gospel, is regarded as central to any situation of empire, including the present, in which she herself stands together with James.

I Peter

As called for by the objectives and mechanics of postcolonial feminist biblical interpretation, Schüssler Fiorenza undertakes a critical analysis of the rhetorical stance – the rhetorical strategies and power relations inscribed – adopted by the inscribed author of 1 Peter in light of the socio-religious situation unveiled. In so doing, as further called for by her project, she pursues as well a critical analysis of the 'malestream' tradition of interpretation regarding the letter. In both respects the critique is quite sharp: with regard to the letter, because of its colonizing rhetorical strategy – its Christianization of the ethos of kyriarchal imperial domination; and with regard to scholarship, because of its historicizing and objectivist stance, which results in continued colonization – its implicit identification with the rhetorical strategy of the letter and legitimation of its kyriarchal relations of power and dominance. For this twofold critique, the fundamental point of departure lies in imagining a different rhetorical stance than that of the inscribed author within the common socio-religious situation identified.

What is required, Schüssler Fiorenza proposes, is an interpretation 'against the grain', going against the hegemonic rhetorical project of the letter and bringing to the surface voices submerged by such a project. The proposed counterinterpretation seeks to construct a historical consciousness of resistance and to give voice to the argumentative strategies of such resistance on the part of the submerged. In other words, to conceive of an alternative response to the

dandelion into an allegory: in the face of relentless pressure from 'intruders' in league with dominant Graeco-Roman culture - the expansive green grass, under the ultimate power and authority of the Roman Emperor - the landowner, a Jewish Christian community in possession of traditional Christian beliefs and practices does belong to and should grow in God's world - the unwanted yellow dandelion.

In the end, such outright identification with the argumentative strategy and political stance of the letter yields Park's own attitude toward politico-religious collusion in imperial-colonial frameworks: resistance to domination and subordination through liberation of cultic space from the exploitation of colonization; affirmation of God's presence in the world and of existence for all in God's world; and looking out for others rather than oneself.

Revelation

There is in Moore's contribution no explicit grounding or call for critical conversation with the text within the task of postcolonial criticism. Yet, behind his analysis of the relations of Revelation to empire, a definite though subdued critique can be discerned. This critique surfaces straightaway in the introduction, when, in opening up a space for postcolonial criticism, he notes that the proposed focus on empire is by no means a 'novel gesture' in the scholarly literature. On the one hand, traditional scholarship has read the book as 'the most uncompromising attack' on both Rome and collusion with Rome; on the other hand, liberation critics have not only placed empire at the centre of their reading but also have used the book as a tool against ancient and contemporary empires. Both positions will be ultimately called into question by Moore's postcolonial reading à la Bhabha. The critique reappears in the discussion regarding the concept of ambivalence and its relevance for Revelation. This relation of simultaneous repulsion and attraction, Moore observes, is evident in the book's duplication of the Roman imperial ethos in its own proposed Christian imperial ethos. Through such absorption of its antithetical opposition, he adds, Revelation foreshadows the turning of Christianity into Rome in the Constantinian and post-Constantinian periods. Again, both the traditionalist and liberationist positions are profoundly called into question thereby. As an attack on Rome and a foundation for an attack on all imperial-colonial frameworks, Revelation, Moore would counter, is severely flawed.

The critique comes to a climax in the concluding reflections on Revelation as a 'Book of Empire'. First, it is given unreserved expression. In Constantinian Christianity, Moore declares, the parasitic inversion of the Roman Empire in the Christian empire comes to actual historical expression, a 'monstrosity' beyond the imagination of the seer yet in line with the work's fatal flaw: an empire that is both 'Roman and Christian at one and the same time'. Further, it is expanded to encompass the whole of Christian theology. Any construction of God or Christ, Moore comments, that draws on imperial ideology does not