

Dr. Dave Mathewson, Hermeneutics, Lecture 16, Deconstruction

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The movement known as post-structuralism gave rise to or included a variety of approaches that are often also seen in terms of post-modern approaches to biblical interpretation. But the last session we looked at one of the approaches, reader response approaches, that focus on the reader as a determiner of meaning. We saw that even reader response approaches seem to make room for at least two different types of approaches, though they are all similar in that the focus is on the reader as making sense of the text and being involved in the discovery or creation of meaning.

But two of the approaches that we spent most time on, one of them was a more conservative approach that looked at readers being guided by the text or guided by the author playing the role of the ideal reader or implied reader in the text that the author creates or the author expects that the reader will identify with. The other more radical reader response approach identified with the likes of Stanley Fish had claims that were much more far-reaching in denying that there was any meaning in the text, but instead, the text was a creation of the reader. And the reader, the text functioned like a mirror to reflect what the reader brings of the text.

We're so influenced by our perspective, the structures in our mind, our values, that that won't necessarily determine what we find in the text. That gave rise to that approach, that radical reader response could be seen as being pushed further to end up in an approach known as deconstructionism or deconstructive reading of text. Deconstructionism seems to have become and is becoming more widespread in literary circles and also has bled over into biblical studies.

Though there's debate as to exactly how to describe it and how to categorize it, it seems to be not just an interpretive approach, but it seems to also reflect a

philosophical approach or a philosophical movement. Basically, at a very simple level, deconstructionism suggests that all texts ultimately undermine themselves and they deconstruct themselves. That is, texts are not stable, there is no stable meaning in the text.

Instead, texts fail to communicate, but instead they undermine themselves, they deconstruct themselves. One definition of deconstructionism went something like this, deconstructionism is generating conflicting meanings from a text and playing those meanings off of each other. So at the heart of deconstructionism is basically communication and text are self-defeating.

There are, one way to put it, fissures or cracks in the text that make stable meaning impossible. There is no stable meaning, meaning does not exist, and instead there's a radical skepticism about meaning in the text. In fact, there's an absence of meaning in the text according to this approach.

The most famous advocate and well-known advocate of this approach to interpretation was the French philosopher Jacques Derrida, who lived from 1930 to 2004, I believe. At the heart of his understanding was the sign and what it signified and what it referred to. And basically, what he said, there was no connection between a sign and what it referred to.

There was a difference or a gap, there was no connection. In other words, according to him, words endlessly defer meaning. Words simply refer to other words and they never catch up, they can never capture meaning.

They never quite catch up, so again, there's no stable meaning. Texts then reveal or text, what one finds in the text are multiple and contradictory meanings.

Deconstructionism then is an undoing of the text.

And again, part of the issue for Derrida was the issue of power, that no one could claim a correct meaning, to do so was authoritarian. And so therefore, texts then overturn authoritarian meanings. Texts overturn stable interpretive approaches.

So this then, they do this by showing that there is no correct meaning in the text. Deconstructionism overturns authoritarian interpretations by showing there is no correct meanings, that there are conflicting or contradictory meanings. So for Derrida, meaning was always something that was unstable, meaning was endlessly deferred, it was only provisional, it was incomplete.

Now Derrida himself did not see deconstructionism as negative, although most of his interpreters have. And part of the difficulty then again that Derrida is responding to is there is no transcendent truth. There is no center.

Basically, at its heart, deconstructionism is usually bound up with atheism. There is no God. There is no transcendent.

There is no center, anything to latch meaning onto. And if this is the case, if there is no transcendent metaphysical truth or no center, then there is, according to Derrida, there is only endless play in the text. So absolute meaning escapes us.

And though Derrida was not always well received, especially by other philosophers and critics, he did have a lasting impact on hermeneutics and also on biblical interpretation. One individual, and I'll give you a couple of examples of deconstructive approaches to biblical text, but one interesting individual, a New Testament scholar named Stephen Moore, actually began his career in Ireland and now I think teaches at Drew University in the United States, spent some time at Sheffield University in England. But Stephen Moore is well known for his books and articles, his publications, that draw on Derrida and deconstructionism.

Actually, he started in more literary and moved on to more reader response and now moved beyond that to more deconstructive approaches to interpretation. But his publications clearly intend and clearly reveal his intention to apply Derrida's deconstructive approaches to biblical text. In such books labeled as Mark and Luke in Poststructural Perspective and another one of his books, Poststructuralism in the New Testament, Derrida and Foucault at the Foot of the Cross.

And in these texts, in these books, the biblical text, sometimes even the English languages, consistent with deconstructionism, but not only the English language, but the biblical text is manipulated and reflects deconstructive approaches so that all that is left is to play with the text. One classic example that you often find referred to in hermeneutical texts that discuss or deal with deconstructionism, one famous example from Stephen Moore in applying deconstructive approaches to biblical text is the way he applies deconstruction to the Book of Mark. And let me just read an excerpt.

Again, this is one that's frequently referred to as exemplary of this type of approach. And so listen to what Stephen Moore does with the Gospel of Mark. He says, Mark's theology is commonly said to be a theology of the cross, a theology in which the life and death crisscrosses.

In Mark, the signature of the disciple can only ever be that of a crisscross or a Christ cross, which my dictionary defines as the figure of a mark of a cross in general, especially that made in signing his name by a person that cannot write. That comes from the Oxford English Dictionary. But a person unable to write is generally unable to read.

And in Mark, the disciples, generally at cross purposes with Jesus, are singularly unable to read. Jesus must speak cross words to his puzzled disciples. Chapter 8, verse 33, and see Chapter 8, 17 through 21.

A cross is also a chiasmus. And notice what he's doing. He's playing with the text and making word associations, even English ones.

So he's not interested in trying to uncover the author's intention or a stable correct meaning. Now he is simply drawing all kinds of connections and simply engaging in free play with the text. A cross is also a chiasmus, a crosswise fusion in which the order established in the first instance, whoever would save their life will lose it, is inverted in the second instance.

And whoever loses their life will save it. Central to Mark is the fact of the crucifixion. A fiction structured like a cross or a chiasmus.

Again, my intention is not so that you understand this, but to simply see what goes on with this type of reading. Chiasmus comes from the Greek word chiadzeme, which means to mark with the letter X, pronounced ki. And ki is an anagram of ich, which is German for the personal pronoun I. And the technical term in Freud that English translators rendered as ego.

And Jesus, who identifies himself to his terrified disciples in Mark 6.50 with the words ego eimi, the Greek word for I am or it is I, himself possesses a name that is an echo of the French je suis, I am. The single superfluous letter being the I or ego, which is thus marked out for deletion. Father, not what I want, ego, but what you want, chapter 14, verse 36.

To be marked, we're almost done, to be marked with the X, the cross, is painful. For chiadzeme also means to cut. Another meaning of chiasma is piece of wood.

And the chiasma on which Jesus writhes or writes is a lectern as well as a writing desk. Dying, he opens up the book of Psalm 22 and reads the opening verse, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Chi, the first letter of Christos, is also the 22nd letter of the Greek alphabet. Similar to Psalm 22.

So do you see what Moore has done? However wacko or crazy or strange this seems to us, it's very consistent with a deconstructive approach. That simply plays with the text. There's no stable meaning.

Signs endlessly defer to other signs. And so he can bring in German and French and draw all kinds of strange connections. Because he's not interested in trying to capture the correct meaning of the text that the author intended or that is found in the text.

But instead from a post-structural and deconstructive approach that draws on the insights of Derrida, Stephen Moore reads it from a deconstructive perspective. To give a couple of other examples, One Old Testament scholar that is interested in applying deconstructive methods or deconstructionism to interpreting biblical text is David D.J. Clines. Who has written several articles that apply deconstructive approaches.

One of them on Job. And interestingly what he says when you read the book of Job, God vindicates Job. Again to show how the text turns in on itself and deconstructs itself.

God vindicates Job in the book of Job. But Job has claimed that God has unfairly treated him or punished him in the book. But if God vindicates and supports Job, That must mean that God himself is unjust in how he treats Job and what he says.

So the text of Job itself betrays itself. It turns in on itself. It deconstructs.

To give a couple of other examples, One person, one well-known scholar that has applied at times deconstructive methods to interpreting New Testament text is John Dominic Crossan. Who is often better known for the role he played in the Jesus Seminar. And some of the things that he's concluded about the historical Jesus.

What we can or cannot know about who he was and what he said. But John Dominic Crossan has written quite a bit on the parables. Often interpreting them and reading them from deconstructive type approaches.

For example, one of the more interesting ones that I've come across, I've seen others mention this, but I've come across and read. Is his treatment of the parable of the treasure in the field. Remember in Matthew 13, one of the parables Jesus uses to compare the kingdom of God.

Is someone who goes out to a field. They find a treasure and they go and sell everything they have. So they can buy this field and possess the treasure.

John Dominic Crossan interprets this as meaning one must abandon everything for the sake of the kingdom. But then he goes further and says, but if one should abandon all. If one should abandon everything, one then must also abandon this parable.

And ultimately one should abandon abandonment. So again, he simply as Dominic Crossan himself says, he's simply engaging in free play. That is text one can interpret forever.

Another book that has often been subject to deconstructive type approaches is the book of Revelation. Interestingly, the way Revelation is often seen as acceptable to deconstructive approaches. That is looking at the fact that there's no stable meaning.

That the book generates conflicting meanings. It turns in on itself. It contradicts itself.

Is in Revelation, John appears to condemn Rome for its violence and its use of force. Over and over again by portraying Rome as a beast. And by describing it as built on bloodshed and force.

And built on the death of the saints. But also taking the lives of everyone in the entire world. John over and over again condemns Rome, condemns empire for its violence and for its force.

However, John's condemnation of Rome actually undermines his book. When not only John condemning Rome. But when God ends up punishing Rome by violence and force.

In the form of the seals and the plagues. The different plagues. The seals and the bulls and the trumpets.

And ultimately the ultimate judgment. The final judgment. Where God throws the wicked and the evil into the lake of fire.

Deconstructive approaches to Revelation emphasize and highlight the fact that. While John condemns Rome for its violence and its use of force. The book of John's message undermines itself.

It deconstructs when God punishes Rome by the same violence and force that John condemns. So that then God is guilty of the same crime as Rome is. As Rome is accused for and punished for.

Furthermore, God does not ultimately overcome evil because he uses evil to destroy evil. So at the heart of understanding Revelation in those terms. Is a deconstructive approach that sees Revelation lacking any stable meaning.

And instead generating conflicting meanings. That the text kind of breaks down and the text undermines itself. So what should we say by way of evaluation to deconstructive approaches to interpreting the Old New Testament? First of all.

Deconstructive approaches in my opinion are ultimately at odds again. With understanding the text of scripture as inspired by God. Deconstructive approaches are ultimately in conflict with a God.

Who inscripturates his revelation in the biblical text. And expects his people to understand it and to obey it and put it into practice. That approach seems to me to be at odds with an approach that says there is no stable meaning.

Texts simply generate conflicting interpretations and conflicting meanings. That can be played against each other. Or an approach that says there is no stable meaning.

There is no metaphysical truth or reality or meaning that anchors and grounds interpretation. Second is deconstruction should. Deconstructive approaches should ultimately deconstruct themselves.

And as many have recognized. It's interesting that at least some authors. Although perhaps the example we read from Stephen Moore would be an exception.

But some authors do write again to be understood. And to communicate their understanding of deconstructionism. In a way that we will understand it.

Again finally. With deconstructive approaches obviously. Their subjectivity and relativism reigns in what one finds in the text.

So that there is again no criteria for a good or bad reading or interpretation. So those who are interested in are there good or bad readings. Are there correct or incorrect interpretations.

Are there good or better readings and interpretations of a text. Will find little value in deconstructionism helping to answer those types of questions. But perhaps to just mention a couple of insights of deconstructionism.

I think at the very least deconstructionism does remind us. Of the sloppiness or messiness of interpretation at times. That again it's not always a straight forward process.

Of inductively applying these methods. And being able to abstract the pure objective meaning of the text. But deconstructionism does remind us of kind of the messiness of interpretation.

That as Paul says we do see through a mirror dimly. Which I would contribute to human sinfulness. Rather than the inherent instability of meaning.

And the absence of any stable meaning or any metaphysical reality. Or the existence of God himself. A second thing is sometimes deconstructionism I think can remind us.

Not to gloss too quickly over tensions in the text. When there do seem to be oppositions or tensions in the text. Deconstructionism can draw our attention to that.

And remind us not to gloss over those too quickly. And then finally I think deconstructionism. Much like reader response approaches.

Functions to engender humility. Again realizing that we do bring our assumptions. Our presuppositions to the text.

We do read it from our own background. That because of human sinfulness. Interpretation is not always an easy and straight forward process.

There is sometimes a messiness to it. Deconstructionism can help us approach the text with humility. It can engender a humility in the interpreter.

In realizing the limitations of the interpreter. When we approach the biblical text. Having said that we will move on to look at ideological.

Just a couple of ideological approaches to biblical text. But again post-structuralist or deconstructionism. Is probably often seen as the most extreme form.

Of post-structural approaches to the text. Often one that is least amenable to evangelical interpretation. That sees the word of God as God communicating.

That there is a reality that grounds meaning. And grounds interpretation. There is a stable meaning.

However difficult it is to get at. However much we cannot arrive at that. Exhaustively and perfectly.

That we still can substantially. However dim and dark the window is. There still is a window.

And there is a reality in the person of God. That grounds meaning. So for those reasons often deconstructionism.

Or deconstructive approaches to hermeneutics. Are usually seen as the least amenable and least valuable. At least for evangelical interpretations.

Let me make two more comments about. Post-structuralist or post-modern approaches to the text. Let me just return again to summarize.

What is often labeled post-modern approaches to interpretation. As I said post-modern approaches. Could be seen as having a handful of values.

Or a handful of characteristic features. That seem to lie behind post-modern approaches. Or what we often hear of as post-modern interpretation.

Most of these we have already mentioned. But first of all. There is no one correct interpretation.

Of a text. To advocate a correct interpretation of a text. For post-modern approaches.

Is more of a political move to again establish power. But what post-modernism wants to do. Is level the playing field.

So there is not one correct interpretation. All readings and all interpretations are equally valid. The second thing that post-modernism advocates.

Is that our interpretations are colored by our previous assumptions. Our social locations. What we bring to the text.

There is no such thing as an objective and neutral observer. That comes to the text in a purely inductive manner. But instead again our social location.

The assumptions we bring to the text. Our values etc. Our traditions will affect what we find in the biblical text.

And third. According to post-modern approaches. There is again no meta-narrative.

There is no grand story. That accounts for everything. But instead all stories.

All narratives are equally valid. So therefore post-modern approaches. With similarities to post-structuralism.

And deconstructive approaches. Suggest that there is no stable definite meaning. Post-modernism advocates a refusal to acknowledge.

Any one correct meaning. Or any definite meaning in the text. Placed there by the author.

But again post-modern approaches. Although inherently difficult. With the advocating of pluralistic interpretation.

And no one correct meaning or stable meaning. Especially for evangelicals. Who see the Bible as the record of God's revelation.

His revelatory acts to his people. That he expects them to understand and to obey. Despite that.

Post-modern approaches once again. Can function for Christian readers and interpreters. To engender humility.

To come to the text humbly. Recognizing our sinfulness. And recognizing our human limitations.

When we interpret a text. Second. Again post-modern approaches.

Can help us to recognize what we bring to the text. And third. Also can cause us.

As we saw with reader response criticism. To listen to. For Christians can cause us to listen to other voices.

Or other perspectives on the text. And when those perspectives align with the text. Can also as I said help us to overcome.

Our own hermeneutical myopia. Or our own short-sightedness in interpreting the text. Another facet of post-modern types of approaches.

Or where hermeneutics has gone. And is going. That I just want to touch on briefly.

And that in some respects has come into vogue. And still remains to be seen exactly what is going to be done with it. But is what is known as ideological approaches to biblical interpretation.

That is intentionally interpreting text from certain ideological perspectives. And approaches. And the assumption behind this is this.

That texts are ideological. Biblical texts are ideological. In that they reflect the beliefs and values.

And assumptions of an author in a certain culture and location. So meaning in a text is really the result. Is really ideological.

That it's the result of the struggle of the author in a culture. To assert himself. To express himself.

So that the text necessarily reflects the values. The interests. And the beliefs and assumptions of the author.

And so ideological approaches to the text do a couple things. Number one. They attempt to uncover the ideological perspectives of the text.

And the author. That is as a reflection of the fact that text was produced in a certain time and location. So in some respects ideological approaches have some overlap with historical approaches.

Asking the question of the author and his situation. His social location. But what it does.

It tries. As I understand it. At least partially.

It's an attempt then to uncover the ideological perspective of the text. And how the author was trying to shape the readers from that perspective. But second.

Ideological approaches go further and call on the reader to engage in and undergo an ideological critique of the text. So it uncovers the ideological perspective. The values.

The assumptions of the text. The beliefs of the author. But it goes further and notes where certain other perspectives are silenced.

Or not given voice to. Or it asks. It looks at the illegitimate.

Often ideological criticism is seen as the. Understood as the illegitimate use of power. So it looks at how the author has attempted to persuade the readers of his ideological perspective.

It looks at how other perspectives have been silenced. And it basically critiques the perspective of the text. Usually in light of the values and concerns and interest of the modern reader in his or her culture.

Let me give you an example from what is often known as feminist approaches. Or feminist criticism. And their approach to interpretation.

Feminist approaches or feminist criticism of biblical text. Often results in reading the biblical text in a way. That again exposes its oppressive attitudes towards females.

It assumes again. Sometimes relying on traditional historical critical approaches of the text. It assumes that the biblical text were often produced in a very patriarchal culture.

A male dominated culture. And so it reads the text to analyze it from that perspective. But expose that ideological perspective.

And how it is oppressive. And how it oppresses and silences women. And so therefore it reads the text in a way that is liberating towards women.

And towards females. So it begins with a perspective outside of the text. The need for liberation.

The feeling of oppression. The experience of oppression and exclusion on the part of females. And it reads the text in a way that exposes an ideology of oppression.

And then it calls for the liberation of women. In reading the text. So in that respect it's similar to older liberation theology.

Or liberation reading of text. So it critiques the text of its ideological limitations. Again it tries to expose the illegitimate use of ideology.

The illegitimate use of power. And it attempts to note where certain perspectives are silenced. It notes where the text is oppressive to certain readers such as females.

One well-known feminist interpreter of the Old New Testament. Especially the New Testament. Is a Harvard scholar.

Harvard professor Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza. A German scholar. Who again reads the New Testament in particular.

In light of the female or women's experience of oppression and exclusion. And their struggle for liberation. So Fiorenza reads the text appealing to criteria.

Self-consciously appealing to a canon or criteria. Outside of the Bible itself. That is the need for the experience of oppression.

And the need for liberation. And again she sees the Bible as patriarchal in its structure. And she engages in a reading that critiques that.

That viewpoint and shows how it is oppressive. And reads it in a way that is more liberating for the female reader. Again, even feminist approaches can be seen.

Can be seen from the perspective of more radical approaches to the text. As opposed to sometimes more softer. For lack of a better word.

More softer approaches to the text. The latter of which might have some value for interpretation. Even for evangelicals.

An example of a more radical approach to interpreting a biblical text. Is again found in the book of Revelation. And one scholar in particular has done more than any other.

To advocate, to advocate ideological reading or feminist reading of a biblical text. And that is a New Testament scholar by the name of Tina Pippin. Tina Pippin has written quite a bit on the book of Revelation.

Advocating in most of her writings that the book of Revelation is an unsafe space for women. It is hostile towards women. And basically it should not be read.

It has no value for females at all. And what she does, she goes to the text and she notes how the female is treated. How the woman is treated.

Even in the, especially in the symbolic vision of the book. She notes how the woman, the female, is treated. In fact you can go all the way back to chapter 2 and 3 of Revelation.

To note how even in the seven messages or the seven letters. How women are treated. For example, the text that I'm looking for.

Where the author refers to a woman named Jezebel. And he says in verse 22. This is chapter 2 and verse 22.

One of the messages to the church at Thyatira. He says, nevertheless I have this against you. This is verse 20.

You tolerate that woman Jezebel who calls herself a prophetess. Jezebel is probably not her real name. But a name from the Old Testament that the author gives her.

To simply characterize her. And he says, by her teaching this Jezebel misleads my servants into sexual immorality. And eating food sacrificed to idols.

I have given her time to repent of her immorality. But she is unwilling. And verse 22.

So I will cast her on a bed of suffering. And I will make those who commit adultery with her to suffer intensely. Unless they repent of their ways.

So notice Tina Pippin would read this and say. Look how females are treated in this book. She's simply treated as a prostitute.

Thrown on a bed. And caused to suffer. But Pippin in the visions of Revelation itself.

She also draws attention to other references to women. For example, in chapter 12. John sees a vision of a woman.

Who is adorned with the stars of heaven. And she's pregnant about ready to give birth to a child. So even there, the primary role of a woman is simply to give birth to children.

But furthermore, when the narrative goes on. Later on in the story. Verse 6. After she gives birth to the son.

The dragon. This dragon. The other part of the vision.

The dragon goes after the woman. And in verse 6. The woman fled into the desert to a place prepared for her by God. So the woman is marginalized and isolated.

She's kind of exiled into the desert. Forced into the desert to play no role. Chapter 17.

Again, in chapter 17. Notice how Babylon. Probably a reference to the city of Rome.

In chapter 17. Is portrayed as a woman who is a prostitute. So the only time the woman appears in chapter 17.

All of a sudden she's a prostitute. Abused and used by males. And in fact, at the very end of chapter 17.

Actually, yeah, chapter 17. Notice how the woman is destroyed. It says.

The beast. This is chapter 17 of Revelation. In verse 16.

The beast and the ten horns that you saw. Earlier in the vision of chapter 17. The beast and the ten horns you saw will hate the prostitute.

And they will bring her to ruin and leave her naked. They will eat her flesh and burn her with fire. So Pippin's approach is.

Women. This is not a safe book for women. Women are marginalized.

They're prostitutes. They're victims. They're victims of male.

Sexually as far as prostitution. They're abused. They're beaten.

Even chapter 21. Even chapter 21. Where we would seem to be in more positive territory.

As far as how women are viewed. The new Jerusalem is compared to a female. A woman.

But again. Pippin takes the language of the nations entering her. Rather literally.

As sexually entering her. So the woman in Revelation. Is a prostitute.

Victimized by males. She is exiled to a desert. And even in chapter 21.

She is an object of male sexuality. So for Tina Pippin. The book of Revelation.

Is not a safe space for women. And in fact she rejects it all together. And sees it as something that is hostile towards women.

A more softer approach might be to read. Again approaching the Old and New Testament from feminine perspectives. Might again uncover ways to read texts.

That we might have missed. That might actually be more in line with the text itself. One interesting reading.

That has a number of interesting possibilities. That I came across at one point. Goes back to John chapter 4. We've dealt with this text a couple of times.

In connection with the background of the text. With the reference to the Samaritan. The fact that the woman that Jesus meets with is a Samaritan.

And the backdrop and history of the Jewish relationship with Samaritans. That was not a good one. And how that makes a difference in the way we read a text.

But also it's interesting that Jesus meets with a woman. And so chapter 4 of John. Is very interesting when we read Jesus' dialogue with and his engagement with the woman.

And what happens is. Jesus basically begins to question and interact with this woman. And he says something very interesting.

He asks the woman to call her husbands. And the woman says that I don't have a husband. And then Jesus says I know you don't.

You've had five of them. And the one you're now living with is not your husband. Now usually the way that we read this.

And have been taught to read this. Is this woman that Jesus lives with is highly immoral. Perhaps she's a prostitute.

But she's immoral. She shacks up with whoever she wants. She can't keep a marriage together.

She jumps from one husband to the other. And now shacks up with someone that she's not even married to. So she's painted in very negative terms.

And that's often how we read the text. And how we've been taught to read it. Yet interestingly.

A couple of approaches to this text that I've read. That is more sensitive towards approaching it from the perspective of a female. Or a feminine approach.

Suggests that perhaps. Perhaps we've read this all wrong. What if the woman is not.

What if this woman that Jesus dialogues with. Is not a prostitute or a loose living woman. Or one that simply jumps from one person to another.

And sleeps around. What if this woman is a victim. What if the husbands have left her.

And in that day and age. To not be attached to a husband. Would have made it very difficult if not impossible.

For her to survive. And so the fact that she's had five marriages. Isn't only her fault.

But maybe because it's the males or the husbands that have left her. And causing her then to have to continually remarry. And attach herself to another husband.

And although the one she is with now. Is not her husband. Still she finds it necessary then to attach herself to a male figure.

Just for survival's sake. So sometimes a softer, for lack of a better term. Feminist or ideological approach.

Might reveal insight into a text or perspective. That might uncover blind spots in her own approach. And in fact might even be more consistent with the text itself.

As I've said before. Often one of the functions of ideological approaches. Is that they can often, as I've said.

Reveal blind spots in her own interpretation. Sometimes ideological approaches may reflect perspectives. That are closer to the text itself.

Such as feminine approaches. However again one must be aware of the stance of ideological approaches. That merely critiques the ideology of the biblical text.

Without letting the ideology of the text. Or the theology of the text. Critique our ideological standpoints.

And our approaches to interpreting biblical text. So that actually brings us to the end. Of looking at post-structural approaches to biblical interpretation.

Especially reader oriented responses. Reader oriented approaches to biblical text. To summarize we've seen that hermeneutics and interpretation.

Has moved sort of logically and even historically. Through the three main phases of communication. That is an author produces a text.

And communicates that to readers who must read it and make sense of it. We saw that text centered or author centered approaches. Belong to historical critical approaches.

That look at meaning kind of sort of focus behind the text. Approaches that locate meaning and hermeneutical activity behind the text. Such things as reconstructing the historical background.

The historical features that are referred to in the text. Uncovering those to help understand the text. Looking at things like source informed criticism.

And redaction criticism that focus on the sources behind the text. And ultimately on the author who produces the text. Then author centered approaches that focus.

Authors intention that focus on the author producing a text. And the authors intention as the determiner of meaning. We saw that because of some of the difficulties inherent in author centered approaches.

Interpretation moved on logically and historically. Not exclusively but generally moved on to text centered approaches. Where the text itself was the focus of meaning.

And so different literary approaches rooted in formalism arose. Narrative criticism. Things like structuralism.

Looking at not just the surface structure of the text. But the underlying deep structure. And looking at things such as opposition.

And the function of actants and narratives. Rhetorical critical approaches that focus on the text as a whole. Text centered approaches that focus on the entire text.

And find meaning residing in the text. But again due to the difficulties of some of those approaches. And their inability to provide stable meaning.

And to provide objective meaning. Interpretation moved then into more reader centered approaches. And more post structural approaches.

That focused on reader response criticism. That the reader discovers or even creates meaning in the text. There is no objective meaning in the text.

There is no text. But the reader makes sense of text. Even more extreme approaches that see the text sort of as a mirror.

That merely reflects the reader's disposition. And the reader's values and beliefs. And the community to which the reader belongs.

And then finally even beyond that to deconstructive approaches. Where there simply is no stable meaning of the text. Texts deconstruct themselves.

They are inherently unstable. They generate conflicting meanings. And conflicting and contradictory interpretations.

So that the result and the goal is simply to sort of play with the text. An endless free play. An endless interpretation.

And then finally we looked at some ideological approaches. How the New and Old Testament is commonly looked at. In terms of the ideological forces.

The ideological perspective of the author. And uncovering that. And then even critiquing that.

To demonstrate where that might be unjust. Where that might be oppressive to certain readers. What I want to do next then.

In the next session. We will begin to kind of shift our attention. And shift our focus to look at other methods of interpretation.

Other approaches that fall within these different aspects. That we've just looked at. More reader and historical.

Or text centered. I'm sorry author and historical. Text centered or reader centered.

Begin to look at a variety of methods and approaches. That are usually treated in hermeneutical textbooks. And are seen as important methods for interpretation.

And starting with the next session. We'll begin to look at sociological criticism. And briefly summarize again what that is.

How that has been utilized in Old and New Testament studies. And also evaluate weaknesses and strengths. And how it might be useful in hermeneutics and interpreting biblical text.