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978-0-521-71614-7 - *Methods for Matthew*
Edited by Mark Allan Powell
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METHODS FOR MATTHEW

Today's biblical scholars study the Gospel of Matthew with a wide variety of methods that yield diverse and exciting insights. *Methods for Matthew* offers a primer on six exegetical approaches that have proved to be especially useful and popular. In each case, a prominent scholar describes the principles and procedures of a particular approach and then demonstrates how that approach works in practice, applying it to a well-known text from Matthew's Gospel. As an added bonus, each of the chosen texts is treated to three different interpretations so that the reader can easily compare the results obtained through one approach to those obtained through other approaches. The reader will learn a great deal about two stories from Matthew ("the healing of a centurion's servant" and "the resurrection of Jesus") and will also learn enough about each of these six approaches to understand their function in biblical studies today.

Dr. Mark Allan Powell, Professor of New Testament at Trinity Lutheran Seminary, is an internationally recognized theologian and Bible scholar. The author of more than twenty-five books and a hundred articles, Dr. Powell has served as a visiting professor at numerous American universities, as well as at schools in Estonia, Tanzania, and Russia. He is best known for his work in literary criticism, Matthean studies, and historical Jesus studies.

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METHODS IN BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

The *Methods in Biblical Interpretation* (MBI) series introduces students and general readers to both older and emerging methodologies for understanding the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament. Newer methods brought about by the globalization of biblical studies and by concerns with the “world in front of the text” – like new historicism, feminist criticism, postcolonial/liberationist criticism, and rhetorical criticism – are well represented in the series. “Classical” methods that fall under the more traditional historical-critical banner – such as source criticism, form criticism, and redaction criticism – are also covered, though always with an understanding of how their interactions with emerging methodologies and new archaeological discoveries have affected their interpretive uses.

An MBI volume contains separate chapters from six different well-known scholars. Each scholar first elucidates the history and purposes of an interpretive method, outlines the promise of the method in the context of a single biblical book, and finally shows the method “in action,” by applying it to a specific biblical passage. The results serve as a primer for understanding different methods within the shared space of common texts, enabling real, comparative analysis for students, clergy, and anyone interested in a deeper and broader understanding of the Bible. A glossary of key terms, the translation of all ancient languages, and an annotated bibliography – arranged by method – help new, serious readers navigate the difficult but rewarding field of biblical interpretation.

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Methods for Matthew

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Methods in Biblical Interpretation

A New Series from Cambridge University Press

BACKGROUND

From the mid-nineteenth century until the 1980s, the historical-critical method dominated the study of the Hebrew Bible and New Testament. A legacy of J. P. Gabler, F. Schleiermacher, J. Wellhausen, and their immediate intellectual heirs as well as of philologists studying nonbiblical ancient texts, the historical-critical method can best be understood as an unproblematic quest for the provenance of scripture. A product of Enlightenment thinking, it attempts to find the “true,” original political and social contexts in which the Bible was created, redacted, and first heard and read.

The “linguistic turn” – or, the use and abuse of different critical theoretical approaches to texts – was relatively late coming in the scholarly interpretation of the Bible. When, in the 1970s, biblical scholars began experimenting with methodologies borrowed from philosophy, anthropology, and literary studies, the results were at times creative and invigorating, as theoreticians demonstrated how biblical texts could yield new ethical, political, aesthetic, and theological meanings. Sometimes, valuable older interpretations that had been effaced for many years by historical-critical concerns were recovered. Frequently, however, the results could also be painfully derivative and the authors’ motivations transparent. Students’ and scholars’ strange vocabulary and obfuscations could not hide unexamined political and theological (or antitheological) commitments.

Thanks to the globalization of biblical studies and the emergence of concerns rooted in issues related to ethnicity, gender, economics,

and cultural history, the quest for the Bible's meaning has intensified and proliferated. Both within the academy and within a larger, more interconnected, religiously inquisitive world, the methodologies used to study biblical texts have multiplied and become more rigorous and sophisticated. Their borders may be porous, as a single scholar may work with two or more methodologies, but several schools of criticism in biblical studies are now established and growing. Interest in new historicism, feminist criticism, rhetorical criticism, postcolonial/liberationist criticism, and several other methodologies that focus on the "world in front of the text" has consistently provided paradigm-shifting questions as well as contingent, but compelling, answers. This is not to say that older historical-critical scholarship has simply evaporated. Most scholarship in the United States, and an even larger majority of work done in Europe, still falls comfortably under the historical-critical banner. So, the practice of "classic" historical approaches, like source criticism, form criticism, and redaction criticism, is still widespread, though much of their findings have been altered by coming into contact with the emerging methodologies as well as by new archaeological discoveries.

RATIONALE

What, then, is needed at this time is a group of short books that would introduce the best work from within these various schools of criticism to seminarians, graduate students, scholars, and interested clergy. *Methods in Biblical Interpretation* aims to fill that need.

The key to reaching the full, wider spectrum of this readership is to build these books around the most widely studied books of the Bible, using the best possible writers and scholars to explain and even advocate for a given perspective. That is, rather than long, separate introductions to methodological "schools," like postcolonial criticism, rhetorical criticism, and source criticism, *Methods in Biblical Interpretation* publishes separate, shorter texts on the most popular biblical books of the canon, with chapters from six leading proponents of different schools of interpretation.

DESCRIPTION

In order to make the volumes truly introductory, comparative, *and* original, each of the chapters is divided into two parts. The first part of the chapter introduces to students the given method, a bit of its history, and its suitability and promise for the entire book under discussion. This part gestures toward various ideas and possibilities of how this particular methodological approach might interact at various points with the biblical book.

The second part of the chapter, building on the background material presented in the first, then shows the method “in action,” so to speak. It achieves that by asking each contributor to focus this second part of the chapter on one of two passages from within the biblical book. The comparative and pedagogical value of this second section of each chapter allows students to view different methods’ interactions with the same biblical verses.

The two-part chapters offer opportunities for scholars both to explain a methodology to students and to demonstrate its effectiveness and cogency; that is, the chapters do not merely offer bland, shallow overviews of how a theory might work. Subjective, opinionated scholarship, especially in the second half of each chapter, is in full display. Authors, however, have also written their contributions for a student and general audience, and thus have explained and distilled theoretical insights for the uninitiated. So, lucidity and accessibility are equally manifest.

Each of the *Methods of Biblical Interpretation* volumes also contains an annotated bibliography, arranged by methodology, and placed at the end of the book. Such material, as well as a short glossary, provides students with tools to understand the application of any given theory or methodology and to further investigate the history of its development.

It is not desired, nor probably even possible, to have the same methodologies included in every volume of the series. Certain biblical books lend themselves much more easily to certain forms of criticism (e.g., rhetorical criticism and Paul’s letters, narrative criticism and the synoptic Gospels). Therefore, there is some flexibility on which methods will be included in a volume. The selected methods depend, of course, on the choice of contributors and are determined by the volume editor in consultation with Cambridge University Press. Such flexibility helps ensure that the

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best people, writing the most exciting and compelling scholarship, are contributing to germane volumes. Following these considerations, the series aims to have half of the essays closely related to historical-critical work and half devoted to more recently emerging methodologies.

It is hoped that these carefully structured volumes will provide students and others with both a sense of the excitement involved in such a wide spectrum of approaches to the Bible and a guide for fully making use of them.

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Abbreviations

<i>ABD</i>	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>
AcBib	Academia Biblica
<i>AJT</i>	<i>American Journal of Theology</i>
<i>ANRW</i>	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i>
ATFS	Australian Theological Forum Series
BA	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
BALS	Bible and Liberation Series
BDAG	Bauer, Danker, Arndt, and Gingrich, eds, <i>Greek-English Lexicon</i>
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum lovaniensium
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
<i>BibInt</i>	<i>Biblical Interpretation</i>
BIS	Biblical Interpretation Series
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BRS	Biblical Resource Series
<i>BTB</i>	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
<i>BZ</i>	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CRINT	Compendia rerum iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum
<i>DBI</i>	<i>Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation</i>
<i>ETL</i>	<i>Ephemerides theologiae lovanienses</i>
<i>EvT</i>	<i>Evangelische Theologie</i>
<i>ExpTim</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
FBBS	Facet Books, Biblical Series
GBS	Guides to Biblical Scholarship

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GC	Gender and Culture
IBS	<i>Irish Biblical Studies</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JETS	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
JFSR	<i>Journal of Feminist Studies of Religion</i>
JR	<i>Journal of Religion</i>
JSNT	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTSS	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series</i>
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LEC	Library of Early Christianity
LTT	Library of Theological Translations
NovT	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NTL	New Testament Library
NTOA	Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus
NTS	New Testament Studies
PTMS	Pittsburgh Theological Monograph Series
RB	<i>Revue biblique</i>
SBEC	Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
TTod	<i>Theology Today</i>
TLZ	<i>Theologische Literaturzeitung</i>
TU	Texte und Untersuchungen
TynB	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
VC	<i>Vigiliae christianae</i>

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