David J.A. Clines, *Interested Parties: The Ideology of Writers and Readers of the Hebrew Bible* (Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series, 205; Gender, Culture, Theory, 1; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), pp. 9-25.

1

The Ideology of Writers and Readers of the Hebrew Bible

This book is about ideology, and the impact of various ideologies upon the formation of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) by its writers and upon its reception by its readers. It is not a systematic analysis of the ideologies of writers and readers of the Hebrew Bible, and it is far from presenting a unified and organized profile of ideologies ancient or modern. Rather, this collection of essays is a series of probes into issues of ideology, a set of studies of particular biblical texts and their interpretation in which I have found ideological questions coming to the surface. I did not set out to write a book about ideology, but I find that is what I seem to have done, even when I thought I was writing on Amos or Job or the Psalms.

Ideological criticism is something relatively new among biblical scholars,[1] so an introduction to what I understand by it may be of value. In this Chapter, I shall consider in turn, 1. the term 'ideology', 2. the import of the phrase 'writers and readers of the Hebrew Bible', 3. what I intend to examine under the heading of 'the ideology of writers and readers of the Hebrew Bible', and 4. how the ideology of writers and readers makes them 'interested parties'.

1. At least in its more systematic and theoretical mode; two key works have been Fernando Belo's *A Materialist Reading of the Gospel of Mark* (trans. Matthew J. O'Connell; Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1981) and issue 59 of *Semeia, Ideological Criticism of Biblical Texts* (ed. David Jobling; Guest Editor, Tina Pippin; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992).

1. *Ideology*

The meaning of the word 'ideology' is something it is notoriously difficult to get agreement about. As I see it, there are several equally good denotations of the word, and even more connotations. Since the word appears in the subtitle of this book, I had better try to make clear how I am using it, and what I do not mean by it.[2]

I would arrange the *denotations* of 'ideology' according to their 'weakness' or 'strength', that is, their degree of generality or specificity. 'Ideology' can mean

1. a more or less connected group of ideas
2. a relatively coherent set of ideas amounting to a world-view, or outlook on life
3. a set of such ideas special to a particular social class or group
4. the set of ideas held by the dominant group in a society

Among the *connotations* of the term 'ideology' are the following:

1. ideas that are shared with others

2. Here are some of the works (in alphabetical order of their authors' names) I have consulted on the concept 'ideology': Louis Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', in his *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (trans. Ben Brewster; London: New Left Books, 2nd edn, 1971), pp. 121-73 (reprinted in *Mapping Ideology*, pp. 100-40 [see Ž iž ek below); Maurice Cranston, 'Ideology', in *The New Encyclopedia Britannica: Macropaedia*, XX (Chicago, 1974), pp. 768-72; Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction* (London: Verso, 1991); Eagleton, *Criticism and Ideology: A Study in Marxist Literary Theory* (London: Verso, 1978 [original edition, 1976]); Christopher Hampton, *The Ideology of the Text* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1990); Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981); James H. Kavanagh, 'Ideology', in *Critical Terms for Literary Study* (ed. Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), pp. 306-20; George Lichtheim, *The Concept of Ideology and Other Essays* (New York: Random House, 1967), pp. 3-46; Slavoj Ž iž ek (ed.), *Mapping Ideology* (London: Verso, 1994).

2. ideas serving the interests of a particular group, especially a dominant group
3. ideas that are wrongly passed off as natural, obvious or commonsensical
4. ideas that are assumed rather than argued for
5. ideas that are often unexpressed and unrecognized by those who hold them
6. ideas oriented toward action, ideas controlling or influencing actions
7. 'a representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence'[3]
8. false ideas
9. ideas, different from our own, that other people have
10. rationalistic or metaphysical ideas, as distinct from practical politics
11. a romantic view of the world, idolizing the ideal and scorning the actual
12. a totalitarian attitude
13. a pseudo-scientific attitude to history and social realities.

For myself, and for the purposes of this book, I am operating for the most part with denotations 2 and 3. That is, by 'ideology' I do not mean just any group of ideas on any subject whatever; I am interested in the kind of large-scale ideas that influence and determine the whole outlook of groups of people. Sometimes, if I think I can, I try to relate such ideologies to identifiable groups or classes; but sometimes, lacking the evidence, I stop short of suggesting a particular social location for the ideology I am considering. I am not claiming that what I identify as 'ideologies' are necessarily the ideology of the ruling class of their time, whether ancient or modern, but I am usually conscious of the will to power expressed in ideologies, whether it is, for instance, the royal ideology of ancient Israel or the religious ideology of the guild of modern biblical scholars.

As for the connotations of the term, when I say 'ideology' I usually have in mind some of the first seven connotations I have

3. Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', in *Mapping Ideology*, p. 123.

mentioned above, but not the last six. I do not assume, for example, that ideologies are false, partly because I too have ideology and I hold to my ideology with conviction, thinking it 'true'. I don't believe that ideologies are private affairs, however, and I accept that most of 'my' ideology is inherited or acquired from others (from some group or other), that my ideology serves my own interests and the interests of my group or groups, that I tend to think of my ideology as natural and obvious, and that I am not always fully aware of what and how much I am taking for granted. So while I am not ashamed of having an ideology, I am abashed at taking so much at second-hand, so much for granted. Nor am I unhappy that other people have ideologies of their own, but only that they also too often think that their ideologies are obviously right and (especially) that they try to tell me that I should be adopting their ideologies.

Since ideologies are, in my opinion, very often simply assumed, even without their adherents even knowing quite what they are assuming, it is my purpose in this book to do a lot of uncovering of ideologies, ideologies adhered to both by writers and by readers of the Hebrew Bible. I think it is bad when we assert things on the basis of some hidden agenda or presuppositions, worse in a way when we don't even know that that is what we are doing, and worse still when we influence or control other people with our ideology-led assertions, especially when their ideology may be quite different. So I suppose it has become something of a crusade for me to try to reach beneath the surface of the text of the Hebrew Bible and the texts of biblical scholars and to expose what it is I think is 'really' going on underneath the claims and commands and statements of the biblical and the scholarly texts—at the level of big ideas, I mean, of ideology.

The term 'ideology' is by no means unknown in biblical criticism, I must say. Not a few people use it in one of the 'weaker' (though perfectly valid) senses, as when they write about the ideology of kingship in ancient Israel,[4] meaning the

4. For example, Antti Laato, 'Psalm 132 and the Development of the Jerusalemite/Israelite Royal Ideology', *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 54 (1992), pp. 49-66; Robert P. Carroll, 'Textual Strategies and Ideology in the Second Temple Period', in *Second Temple Studies: 1. Persian Period* (ed. Philip R. Davies; Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series, 117;

views people (especially writers of the biblical books) held about kingship, or when they speak of a biblical writer's 'ideological point of view', meaning 'the set of assumptions and convictions against which everything in the story...is evaluated'.[5] But the term 'ideology' is not the most frequently used term for sets of ideas in the biblical writings: much more often, they are called 'theology'. This terminology makes sense, of course, since many of the ideas in the Bible are directly about God and most others have at least a theological element in them. But I prefer to speak of 'ideology' and to regard theology as a subset of ideology, just as I would regard cosmology or politics or law.

Some biblical scholars indeed use 'ideology' in the more pejorative sense of 'false consciousness'. Thus, for example, Walter Brueggemann in his book, *Israel's Praise: Doxology against Idolatry and Ideology*, understands 'ideology' as 'vested interest which is passed off as truth, partial truth which counterfeits as whole

Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), pp. 108-24; Carroll, 'Ideology', in *A Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation* (ed. R.J. Coggins and J.L. Houlden; London: SCM Press, 1990), pp. 309-11; J. Cheryl Exum, 'Murder They Wrote: Ideology and the Manipulation of Female Presence in Biblical Narrative', in *Telling Queen Michal's Story: An Experiment in Comparative Interpretation* (ed. David J.A. Clines and Tamara C. Eskenazi; Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series, 119; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), pp. 176-98 (previously published in *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 43 [1989], pp. 19-39, and in *The Pleasure of her Text: Feminist Readings of Biblical and Historical Texts* [ed. Alice Bach; Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990], pp. 45-68); Michael V. Fox, *Character and Ideology in the Book of Esther* (Studies on Personalities of the Old Testament; Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1992); Sara Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles and Its Place in Biblical Thought* (trans. Anna Barber; Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1989); Seth Schwartz, 'A Note on the Social Type and Political Ideology of the Hasmonean Family', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 112 (1993), pp. 305-309; A.G. van Aarde, 'Narrative Point of View: An Ideological Reading of Luke 12:35-48', *Neotestamentica* 22 (1988), pp. 235-52; S. van Tilborg, 'Ideology and Text: John 15 in the Context of the Farewell Discourse', in *Text and Interpretation: New Approaches to the Criticism of the New Testament* (ed. P.J. Hartin and J.H. Petzer; New Testament Tools and Studies, 15; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1991), pp. 259-70; W.J. Wessels, 'Jeremiah 22, 24-30: A Proposed Ideological Reading', *Zeitschrift für die altestamentliche Wissenschaft* 101 (1989), pp. 232-49.

5. So Stephen D. Moore, *Literary Criticism and the Gospels: The Theoretical Challenge* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), p. 56.

truth, theological claim functioning as a mode of social control'.[6] I am very sympathetic to this definition and especially to his identification and evaluation of the royal, statist, cultic ideology in ancient Israel. But I would rather say that those who opposed that 'bad' ideology were themselves caught up in some ideology or another, and the fault with the royal ideology is not that it is ideology but that it deceptively promotes the interests of those in power—which Brueggemann (and I) do not approve of.

For Brueggemann, the false consciousness he terms ideology is the ideology of certain *writers* of the Hebrew Bible: he finds their ideology inscribed in certain texts, and he finds other texts, such as those of the prophets, to be in opposition to their ideology. For Giovanni Garbini, on the other hand, in his book *History and Ideology in Ancient Israel*, the ideology that distorts reality is the ideology of certain *readers* of the Hebrew Bible, namely theologians who masquerade as historians.[7] To be sure, as Garbini observes, the writers of the biblical histories themselves had 'an ideological motivation which controls the exposition of events',[8] but in this respect they were no different from historians everywhere, and it is not *their* ideological formation that is the problem. The real problem is created by those modern readers who are so susceptible to the biblical ideology that they themselves cannot allow 'a history writing which leaves theological preoccupations out of account'.[9] I am entirely in sympathy with Garbini's position, and applaud his unmasking of an uncritical historiographical ideology. But the way I would express my agreement would be to say that I accept Garbini's ideology in preference to that of his opponents—rather than saying that I am against ideology (as if to imply that he and I have none of our own).

Now by some accounts, what I have said so far about ideology will have sounded very limited, not to say shallow. For a fuller

6. Walter Brueggemann, *Israel's Praise: Doxology against Idolatry and Ideology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), p. 111.

7. Giovanni Garbini, *History and Ideology in Ancient Israel* (trans. John Bowden; London: SCM Press, 1988), pp. 2-3; cf. also p. 174, where he speaks of the 'false problems created by theology'.

8. Garbini, *History and Ideology*, p. 14.

9. Garbini, *History and Ideology*, p. 14.

understanding of the concept 'ideology' will acknowledge that it is not only in words written in texts that ideology inscribes itself, but also in speech and in customs and in images. Hollywood is as much embroiled in ideology as any Marxist text, and the practices of the democratic political system, of education, of the media, as well as the customary behaviour in families, and at formal meetings and informal social events, create and transmit the ideological systems in which we are all implicated, and which we most of the time take for granted as normal and natural.[10] All of these institutions can be regarded, from the standpoint of ideology and its propagation, as 'ideological state apparatuses',[11] which function to reproduce the dominant ideology in successive generations of citizens. And all their practices that convey ideology can be termed 'signifying practices', the different institutions generating their own sets of signifying practices or 'discourses'.[12]

This fuller sense of 'ideology' is one that I entirely accept, but it is not the sense in which I use the term in this book. For I find it hard to conceive how a detailed ideological analysis—in the fuller sense—could be made of ancient Israel, given the extreme paucity of the data we have for the reconstruction of social reality in that culture. I have no doubt that more could be done than has been attempted in the present book, the scope of which is very definitely texts, ancient and modern. I think that both Norman Gottwald and David Jobling, as well as other contributors to the Society of Biblical Literature Consultation on Ideo-

10. So ideology may be defined as 'a system of representations, perceptions, and images that precisely encourages men and women to "see" their specific place in a historically peculiar social formation as inevitable, natural, a necessary function of the "real" itself' (Kavanagh, 'Ideology', in *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, p. 310).

11. The term is Louis Althusser's; the institutions he identifies as 'ideological state apparatuses' can be found in 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', in *Mapping Ideology*, pp. 100-40 (110-11) (originally in his *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* [trans. Ben Brewster; London: New Left Books, 1977]).

12. This sense of the term 'discourse' comes from Michel Foucault; see especially his work, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith; London: Tavistock, 1972 [first published, 1969]). Cf. also Paul A. Bové, 'Discourse', in *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, pp. 50-65.

logical Criticism of Biblical Texts (originating in 1990), have given more theoretical attention to the social realities of ancient Israel as the matrix of biblical ideologies than I have been able to

do in this book; but I stick to my last, and hope (to continue the metaphor) to leave my readers well shod.[13]

2. *Writers and Readers of the Hebrew Bible*

Wwriters and readers of the Hebrew Bible are equally the focus of this book. That fact makes the book rather unusual, I believe, because the tendency of biblical criticism has been to attend only—or at least primarily—to the writing, the composition, of the texts. Pick up any Introduction to the Old Testament, and you will find an almost exclusive concentration on how the texts came into being, who their authors were and what their intentions in writing them were. The *readers* of the Hebrew Bible, on the other hand, those for whom these very Introductions are being written, and who are expected to lay out good money for them, are invisible. They are never profiled or differentiated; their interests or needs are not referred to.[14] Even that reader of the Hebrew Bible who is the author of an Introduction to it keeps himself (or herself?) hidden; except in the preface, where it is apparently *de rigueur* to divulge details of the author's domestic life, the author goes underground, implicitly representing the contents of his (or her?) book as impersonal, objective, normative scholarship.

With the advent of rhetorical criticism in biblical studies, attention shifted, in some circles at least, away from the writers of the biblical texts to 'the texts themselves', to 'intrinsic

13. I am referring especially to issue 59 of *Semeia*, *Ideological Criticism of Biblical Texts* (ed. David Jobling; Guest Editor, Tina Pippin; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992). Norman Gottwald has been the pioneer in ideological studies of the Hebrew Bible, especially with his groundbreaking work *The Tribes of Yahweh: A Sociology of the Religion of Liberated Israel 1250–1050 B.C.E.* (London: SCM Press, 1980). See also *The Bible and Liberation: Political and Social Hermeneutics* (ed. Norman K. Gottwald; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983). A precursor whose work should not be forgotten is Morton Smith, *Palestinian Parties and Politics That Shaped the Old Testament* (Lectures on the History of Religions, ns 9; New York: Columbia University Press, 1971).

14. I don't mean to deny that certain assumptions about them are made by the authors, especially about their religious beliefs and about the nature of their interest in biblical criticism; it is just that these assumptions are not expressed in the text of their books.

criticism', and so on.[15] And with reader response criticism, the existence of actual readers of texts was at last given some formal and theoretical acknowledgment within the praxis of biblical scholarship.[16] It will be a long day, nevertheless, before the presence of readers, in their varying forms and manifestations, are adequately recognized in the discipline, where authors are still the major focus for scholarship. The present book, with its concern to examine the ideologies of writers as well as readers of the Hebrew Bible, might perhaps be thought to be something of a concession to the traditional biblical criticism, so I should stress that in no way do I abjure the rights of readers to feature in scholarly works about the Hebrew Bible. I simply do not want to concentrate all my attention on readers, and I think that, in the matter of ideology, there are worthwhile things to be said about writers as well as readers. I should also add that by enquiring after authors I do not mean to subscribe to the older questions about date and authorship and composition. I am asking about authors as producers of texts, about their social, class and gender locations, and not usually about 'real' authors, but about 'implied' authors—the authors whom the extant texts presuppose.[17]

So, as I say, I am interested here in the ideologies both of writers and of readers of the Hebrew Bible. I make no claim to a

15. On rhetorical criticism, see, for example, Jared J. Jackson and Martin Kessler (eds.), *Rhetorical Criticism: Essays in Honor of James Muilenburg* (Pittsburgh Theological Monograph Series, 1; Pittsburgh: Pickwick Press, 1974); David J.A. Clines, David M. Gunn and Alan J. Hauser, *Art and Meaning: Rhetoric in Biblical Literature* (Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series, 19; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1982).

16. See, for example, Robert Detweiler (ed.), *Reader Response Approaches to Biblical and Secular Texts*, *Semeia* 31 (1985); David J.A. Clines, *What Does Eve Do to Help? and Other Readerly Questions to the Old Testament* (Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series, 94; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990).

17. I shall try not to speak of the ideology of the texts, since, as Stephen Fowl has rightly pointed out, texts do not 'have' ideologies, any more than they 'have' meanings ('Texts Don't Have Ideologies', *Biblical Interpretation* 3 [1995], pp. 15-34). For that matter, I should probably not speak of *writers* having ideologies, but rather of ideologies having writers. But I shall not promise to resist the way of the world on either count.

generalizing analysis of the ideologies of either group. On the Hebrew Bible front, what I am undertaking in this book is to examine certain key texts, like the Decalogue or Job or Amos, in order to uncover the ideologies that lie beneath the surface. And on the readers' front, I am mainly interested in the ideology of scholarly interpreters of those texts, especially the ways in which they either uncritically adopt the ideology of the text they are commenting on or impose the values of their own ideology upon the biblical text. There are of course more biblical texts, and a much greater variety of readers, than I have paid attention to in these essays. They are essays that are meant to be exemplary rather than comprehensive.

3. *The Ideology of Writers and Readers of the Hebrew Bible*

The essays contained in this volume do not all follow the same method. Some of them concentrate more upon the writers, some more upon the readers of the Hebrew Bible. Some of them suggest it is a good idea to read the Hebrew Bible from the standpoint of our own ideologies, some of them try to point out how foolish doing that can be. Some of them attempt to expose the uncritical complicity of modern readers with the ideology of the ancient texts, and some, contrariwise, take issue with the colonization of the ancient texts by alien modern ideologies. In short, I find, looking back over these essays, that in the four years I have been writing them I have been experimenting with questions about the clash of ideologies, and even now am only beginning to understand what the tendencies of these studies may be.

Deep down, I think these essays are operating with a fundamental distinction I want to make between *understanding* and *critique*.[18] In the project known as 'understanding' (which is the

[18]. I first outlined this distinction, and briefly argued for the foregrounding of the project of critique, in 'Possibilities and Priorities of Biblical Interpretation in an International Perspective', *Biblical Interpretation. A Journal of Contemporary Approaches 1* (1993), pp. 67-87; see, for example, pp. 86-87: 'If we are not all the time making *judgments* on what we read and what we see, what claim can we have to be intellectual or ethical? Perhaps

Enlightenment project to which most scholars of the present day still subscribe), we aim at a fair-minded, patient and sympathetic re-creation of the meaning, significance and intentions of the ancient text in its own time.[19] Now that I am more alert than I used to be to the pervasive effects of ideology, both in the ancient and in the modern world, I am all the time looking for evidence of the ways ideologies threaten to hinder or skew this project of understanding the texts—which I continue to regard as part of my proper business. The project of understanding is always at risk when one of the three following facts is ignored: that the biblical text is an ideological production, that the interpreter is reading the text from within a particular ideological formation, and that the ideologies of ancient Israel are historically and culturally far removed from the ideologies of our own day. Now, there is no procrustean procedure that must be followed willy-nilly in order to ensure that the question of ideology is brought to the forefront, but in one way or another it is essential, so I have come to believe, that we recognize the ideologies of writers and readers and the inevitable distance between the ideologies in which both writers and readers are embedded.

It is possible to believe that the scholarly study of the Bible has reached its goal when it has attained an 'understanding' of the texts. Most biblical scholars indeed regard it as the whole of their task to understand, exegete, explain, and comment on their texts. There is, however, yet another distinct project in which I think that we ought to be engaged as readers of the biblical texts: that of 'critique' or evaluation. It is a measure of our commitment to our own standards and values that we register disappointment, dismay or disgust when we encounter in the texts of ancient

in fact the almost unchallenged assumption that the task of biblical scholars is essentially to *interpret* the text represents a systematic repression of our ethical instincts.'

19. I am aware of the problems associated with concepts like 'meaning' and 'intention', and in another, more purist, frame of mind would be denying that texts 'have' meanings, that texts can 'intend' anything, that texts should be regarded as the expression of authorial intentions, and so on. In everyday life, however, I act and speak 'as if' such sentences were unproblematic, just as I generally say without embarrassment that the sun 'rises' though I know that strictly speaking it does no such thing.

Israel ideologies that we judge to be inferior to ours. And it is a measure of our open-mindedness and eagerness to learn and do better that we remark with pleasure, respect and envy values and ideologies within the biblical texts that we judge to be superior to our own. 'Critique' does not of course imply *negative* evaluation, but it does imply evaluation of the texts by a standard of reference outside themselves—which usually means, for practical purposes, by the standards to which we ourselves are committed. For the task of critique, it is not *distance* between the ideology of the text and our own that we want (as for the project of understanding), but a close confrontation. To evaluate the text according to our own best values, we have to read it as the people we are, to collapse the historical distance between the text and ourselves, to treat the Bible as a book existing in the modern world, in competition to be heard alongside all the other ideological productions that surround us.[20] We have a responsibility, I believe, to evaluate the Bible's claims and assumptions, and if we abdicate that responsibility, whether as scholars or as readers-in-general of the Bible, we are in my opinion guilty of an ethical fault.

To my programme of reading the biblical texts according to my own cultural and ethical values I give the name, 'reading from left to right'.[21] If we are to read a Hebrew text, there is a cultural convention that our eyes must move from right to left; try to read a Hebrew sentence from left to right and it will be gibberish. The control exercised by this ancient cultural con-

20. A recent work that is taking seriously social and thus ideological location of interpreters is *Reading from this Place: Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in the United States* (ed. Fernando F. Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), with a sequel announced that addresses the wider world.

21. In my first paper using this phrase, 'Reading Esther from Left to Right: Contemporary Strategies for Reading a Biblical Text', in *The Bible in Three Dimensions: Essays in Celebration of Forty Years of Biblical Studies in the University of Sheffield* (ed. David J.A. Clines, Stephen E. Fowl and Stanley E. Porter; Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series, 87; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), pp. 22-42, I used 'left to right' to mean in our own cultural context and using the reading strategies of our own time. In the present book, however, the phrase has taken an ethical turn, and it means rather: according to the values of our culture.

vention, even over modern readers who read everything else from left to right, is an absolute one. Now this orthographic control is what I use as a symbol for the control the texts try to assert (and are often successful in asserting) over their readers. Readers who are not wide awake to the designs that texts have on them (to speak anthropomorphically) find themselves succumbing to the ideology of the texts, adopting that ideology as their own, and finding it obvious and natural and commonsensical. That is the default mode for commentators on biblical texts, for they rarely, if ever, offer a critique of the text; in confining themselves to 'understanding' and 'explaining' the text they typically screen out or suppress questions of value—and so leave half their proper task unattempted.

In this book, the various chapters present differing ways of critiquing ideology. In *The Ten Commandments* (Chapter 2) my aim is to uncover the class and gender ideology of a text that is usually regarded as purely of general theological import. I call the programme of reading biblical texts according to our own values a 'reading from left to right'—which is to say, subjecting the ancient text to a critique from (what I perceive to be) our own ideological position. The focus here is on readers. In *Haggai's Temple* (Chapter 3) the issue is the ideology of the writer who conceives of the Jerusalem temple as a treasury (rather than simply as a place of worship), with obvious implications for eschatology and Jewish–Gentile relationships in the writer's own day; the ideology of scholarly readers of Haggai, who make a theological and apolitical reading of an essentially political text, are considered only coincidentally. In *Why Is There a Song of Songs, and What Does It Do to You If You Read It?* (Chapter 5) and in the parallel essay on the Book of Job (Chapter 6), the accent is strongly on the influence that the ideology of the ancient text continues to exert upon modern readers, with an implicit message to modern readers that they should resist any uncritical adoption of the ideology of the text. In *Metacommentating Amos* (Chapter 4) the accent is upon discerning the ideological identity of the text by counterposing to it our own ideological stances about God and about crime and punishment, for example; without a counterpoint from an alien ideology, it has proved

difficult for readers to recognize ideology in the book of Amos, and, for the most part, Amos has been thought to be transmitting some truth that is beyond cultural relativity. It is much the same with *A World Founded on Water (Psalm 24)* (Chapter 8): the deconstructive approach to the ancient poem highlights the ideology about holiness and war on which the text depends and invites modern readers to critique it according to the standards of their own ideology rather than simply adopt it as their own. In *God in the Pentateuch* (Chapter 9) the difficulties in identifying the ideology of the ancient author come to the fore: to what extent does the Pentateuch proffer an ideology of the divine that is harmonious and comfortable, and to what extent is it troublesome, inconsistent or subversive? No doubt the ideology of the reader who is also the author of this study has a powerful effect in shaping the way he constructs the ideology of the writer of the text. *David the Man: The Construction of Masculinity in the Hebrew Bible* (Chapter 10) begins from an analysis of the modern ideology of masculinity, and asks whether the biblical text matches the elements of that ideology at any point. What comes to light through such an analysis is that modern representations of the character David operate with the ideology of the present day rather than that of ancient Israel. So the implicit message of the essay is that the biblical narrative is distorted if it is read uncritically out of the constructions of masculinity prevalent in our own time. In *Job and the Spirituality of the Reformation* (Chapter 7) it is the ideology of the sixteenth century that is under investigation, with the intention of showing the distinctive contours of readings by Luther and Calvin that uncritically superimposed their own ideology upon the ancient text. I am not arguing that they (or we) should not use our own values when reading a text, but simply that they (and we) should not assume that there is no difference between the values inscribed in the biblical texts and those of interpreters from another culture. *Psalm 2 and the MLF (Moabite Liberation Front)* (Chapter 11), the last of the chapters, returns to the theme of *The Ten Commandments* in inviting readers to distance themselves from the ideology of the text by bringing to bear upon the text what I assume to be their own modern ideological convictions; it brings

the book to a conclusion by emphasizing what I perceive to be the ethical dimension in this controversy of ideologies and by launching what I call a 'Bible readers' liberation movement'—a liberation from false ideologies (as I would call them) of certain biblical texts and especially of commentators.

4. *Interested Parties*

The final question for this introductory chapter is: How does the ideology of writers and readers of the Hebrew Bible make them 'interested parties'?[22]

At the simplest level, what I mean by that term is that writers and readers alike have some ideological investments.[23] Writers do not, on the whole, write their texts just for the fun of it; they have a case to put, an argument to advance, or an opponent to overcome. And since the name for their case, their argument, their position, is their 'ideology', I say that their text is a realization of their ideology, a performance of their investment in their ideology; one could say that ideology is 'inscribed' in their texts, meaning that the texts are themselves ways of thinking and speaking ideologically.[24] Readers too have ideological invest-

22. This is the place where I should thank my colleague Philip Davies for suggesting that the title of this book should be *Interested Parties*. It is not the first time that he suggested the *mots justes*.

23. It was a different world in the university system of the nineteenth century (a system that many academics think is still in operation), where a fundamental principle, not only in Germany, was the '[s]eparation of ideas from vested interests, the search for truth without extraneous influence' (Christian Simon, 'Hitory as a Case-Study of the Relations between University Professors and the State in Germany', in *Biblical Studies and the Shifting of Paradigms, 1850–1914* [ed. Henning Graf Reventlow and William Farmer; Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series, 192; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995], pp. 168-96 [174]).

24. See Catherine Belsey, *Critical Practice* (New Accents; London: Methuen, 1980), p. 5: 'Ideology…is not a separate element which exists independently in some free-floating realm of "ideas" and is subsequently embodied in words, but a way of thinking, speaking, experiencing'. Bernard Sharratt has drawn our attention to the way anonymous texts (like those of the Hebrew Bible, we might say) have a special capacity for imposing their ideology on readers through the absence of an author; there is no author to stand over against the reader as an Other, just a text that

ments—in what they choose to read, how they incorporate or fail to incorporate what they read into their own structure of opinions, how they report on what they have read and how they recommend or insist to others that they read the same works. Writers and readers alike are, on the whole, not casual, disinterested bystanders to their own activity, but promoters of their own ideological causes as they write and as they read.

There is another sense of 'interested parties' that is perhaps more important. It depends on the fact that ideologies are not just sets of mental ideas, but ideas that influence people's actions,[25] and so the relations among people, in the world. Since there is almost always a dissymmetry of power in relations between people and groups of people, an ideology tends to support and enhance the power of its adherents. In some streams of modern thought, indeed, ideology has been defined as the set of ideas that legitimate a dominant political power—as if ideology had to do only with social structures. I do not see the need to be so exclusive about the forms of ideology that can be encountered, but I agree that ideology is an important element within power relations. All those with ideological positions—which means all of us—are interested parties in the sense that our power, our control, and our significance are upheld by our ideology, and a challenge to our ideology is a threat to our importance.

There is yet a further sense I have in mind when I use the phrase 'interested parties' as the title of this book. I am thinking of the tendency to concealment (deliberate or unconscious) by ideologues of the motivation or rationale (in part or whole) for what they are saying. On the surface, their texts lay claim to coherence and rationality, and they give the appearance of sincerity and either moral fervour or objectivity. But beneath the surface there are issues of power, of self-identity and security, of group solidarity, of fear and desire, of need and greed, that have also played a role in the production of the text, sometimes a leading role. These are the kinds of interests that writers and

readers are tempted to call their own (*Reading Relations: Structures of Literary Production. A Dialectical Textbook* [Brighton: Harvester Press, 1982], pp. 118-19).

25. 'Action-oriented sets of beliefs' (Eagleton, *Ideology*, p. 2).

readers of the Hebrew Bible are serving. We all do this kind of concealment of our motivations, and perhaps there is nothing wrong in it. Perhaps you do not even want to know what unexpressed reasons I have for writing this book,[26] and perhaps I could not tell you the most of them even if I wanted to. Perhaps you do not know for what hidden reasons you are reading it. But texts and readers are fair game for ideological critics, and especially when texts are used by their readers in the service of power and of social control—which is often how the Bible is used—the temptation on the part of those who feel they are being controlled to search out what has been concealed becomes overwhelming. So this is not an innocent book, any more than the texts and the readers it discusses are innocent of vested interests. It does not lay claim to a calm neutrality or a distanced objectivity—not as a whole, that is. There is, I should hope, a good deal of scholarly rigour within it, but I would be deceiving myself if I thought that I (or any of us) were capable of disinterested scholarship. This book too is an ideological production. *Caveat lector*.

[26]. Part of the pleasure of reading is that authors never tell us the whole truth; reticence and partial concealment have their own special charm, as connoisseurs of the erotic know well enough. Analogically, Freud recognized that day-dreamers, even if they were to communicate their fantasies, 'could give us no pleasure by [their] disclosures'. But when a creative writer transforms his or her personal day-dreams into literature, 'we experience a great pleasure' ('Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, IX [trans. and ed. James Strachey, in collaboration with Anna Freud; London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1959], pp. 143-53 [152-53]). In Chapter 4 and elsewhere in this book, it may seem that I take a higher moral tone with commentators who conceal what they are doing from their readers; but I hope that my pleasure (not *Schadenfreude*, I insist) in the game of hide and seek is evident. See too Peter Hutchinson, *Games Authors Play* (London: Methuen, 1983), esp. pp. 21-23, on reading the 'unwritten' as a game in which authors and readers collaborate.