The Birth of Ideology:

Genesis and the Origins of Self-Deception

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Abstract

In this article the ideological foundations of modern biblical criticism (MBC) are explored. Using historical interpretations of Genesis as his foil—the author shapes an argument that posits the credibility of the Bible's self-authenticating message, over against the self-deceptive fictions of Modern and post-modern constructions of reality. Drawing on Marxist theories of society, power and the human person, the author renders the possibility that the argument of Genesis is designed to countermand and indeed expose the ideologies of its day; a function that remains relevant for our own time. The adoption of the metaphor of sight as a recurring motif throughout the article suggests the possibility that Modern and post-modern readings of the Bible are blind to other dimensions of existence which are necessary for authentic human existence. Against such blindness, the author juxtaposes the possibility of human self-awareness in the presence of God, and therefore the biblical text which reads us.

Introduction

The last forty years or so have not been kind to modern biblical criticism (MBC) in that many of its basic assumptions, those that informed its methods in respect of both source and form criticism, have been critiqued and found wanting. This is not the place to rehearse the changes that have occurred over these last decades, only to note that even among those who have tried to stay the tide of criticism there is a general acknowledgement that some of the assumptions of MBC were flawed, not least the idea that contradictions in a text indicated different sources as well as the hand of subsequent editors.[1] It is thus wiser today to talk of *apparent* contradictions, for what appears to be a contradiction to us could well have been, for the original audience, what we might call an 'exegetical

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[1] For example J.J. Collins comments in his *The Bible After Babel: Historical Criticism in a Postmodern Age* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2005): we are all "slowly learning to respect the fact that ancient authors did not necessarily see contradictions where we do, and that tensions and contradictions can be found in the writings of most authors, ancient and modern" (22). Collins book is an attempt to dismiss or sidestep so-called postmodern critiques of modern biblical criticism, in short to save modern biblical criticism by acknowledging many of its shortcomings but retaining, thereby, many of its basic assumptions. But this will not do, what he and other defenders of the old orthodoxy (for example John Barton in his *The Nature of Biblical Criticism*, Louisville, Westminster John Knox Pr., 2007 and Joseph Fitzmeyer in his *The Interpretation of Scripture: In Defence of the Historical-Critical Method*, New York, Paulist Pr., 2008) do not properly appreciate is that it is the basic assumptions that inform the very method used that have been critiqued, not just secondary expressions of that method. To be fair to Collins and compatriots this is a point that many biblical scholars do not get and, as a consequence, continue to proceed without the necessary critical reflection on their method.

prompt'; which is to say, a rather sophisticated narrative device.[2] By which is meant that certain anomalies in the text were intentionally present in order to serve to point to higher or, if one likes, deeper meanings. More recently some scholars have argued that the meaning that these anomalies point to is that there is no cognitive meaning able to be represented through language that has to do with things divine.[3]

It is no secret that since at least the late eighteenth century the problem that attended biblical criticism was the tendency of the method to fragment the text being studied. It is one of the ironies of the history of MBC that methods such as the Documentary Hypothesis were developed in order to counter the earlier thesis known as the 'Fragmentary Hypothesis', in this case the text under discussion being the Pentateuch, only the result was to *further* the process of fragmentation not to stop it.[4] It seemed as if Source criticism was of its very nature given to destroying the text it affected to understand. Much the same can be said as well for Form criticism as it too attempted to arrest the process of fragmentation only to end up encouraging it, and for that matter of successive waves of biblical criticism from then on.[5] The fact that in trying to arrest the fragmenting of the text they only aided the process would seem to hint at the fact that it was the method and its assumptions that was

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[2] As L. William Countryman writes in his critique of modern biblical criticism in respect of the inability of scholars to understand the way in which literature can operate: "perhaps one could sum up the point less politely by saying that scholars too often seem to have a tin ear for the complexities of texts" (*Interpreting the Truth: Changing the Paradigm of Biblical Studies*, London, Trinity Pr. International, 2003, p.61).

[3] For example, Walter Reed in his *Dialogues of the Word: The Bible as Literature According to Bakhtin* (Oxford, OUP, 1993) writes how the Bible is composed of a "heterogeneous textuality," by which is meant that it is full of irreconcilable forms and content, and that these work to create both narrative and "alienated anti-narratives" (12-13). In this it reflects a view of history – and one understands this is a true view of history – that is full of contradiction, confusion, multiple points of view (6). Reed follows the lead of Robert Alter who, in his book *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (London, 1981), argued that the aim of the Hebrew Bible was to produce a "certain indeterminacy of meaning" especially in respect of "motive, moral character and psychology." For this reason the Bible defies any "thematically unambiguous closure" of meaning (12). Individual characters are "surrounded by multiple ironies," and there is a use of "contradictions" and "anomalies" to "suggest the unfathomability of life under an inscrutable God" (22, 24). See too Gabriel Josipivici's *The Book of God* (New Haven, Yale Uni. Pr., 1988) where he argues for something similar and does so by way of critiquing the biblical critical methods and assumptions behind theories like the Documentary Hypothesis (14-16, 230, 306, 307-8).

[4] Ernest Nicholson *The Pentateuch in the Twentieth Century: The Legacy of Julius Wellhausen*, Oxford, OUP, 1998, 7-9. R. N. Whybray *The Making of the Pentateuch: A Methodological Study*, Sheffield, JSOT Pr., 1987, 17-18. Whybray notes the rather telling paradox that informed the later Documentary Hypothesis: "the evidence for the disunity of the Pentateuch was the very same as that which provided the Documentary Hypothesis with its basis for the reconstruction of the documents" (22). That is, what served as a 'fracture' in the text also served as a marker of the unity of an earlier posited document that happened to mirror the historical development posited by the scholars concerned.

[5] It wasn't as if there were not salient critiques back at the time source and form criticism were forming. For example there was the Princeton school of evangelical Protestant critics in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and more recently the work of the 'Amsterdam School' of narrative criticism in the 1910s and 1920s has come to light (see the essays in Martin Kessler ed. *Voices from Amsterdam*, Atlanta, Scholars Pr., 1994). What is pertinent is that the criticisms made by these 'schools' are clearly valid and yet they were either ignored or simply summarily dismissed. It is only now in light of the general critique of modernity since the 1960s that these works are beginning to be properly appreciated.

at fault.[6] And yet to this day, even after many years of critical work in which the methods of MBC have been shown to be invalid, many if not most critics are ignorant of what these assumptions are. So it is they still tinker with the methods all the while leaving the assumptions in place.[7] There is, in other words, a strange and yet almost wilful blindness in operation, so much so that we are justified in asking in what does this blindness consist? And it this question that we hope to *begin* to answer, and to do so through showing something of the relationship between ideology and self-deception.

Things in MBC began to change from the 1960s on, not least under the influence of the increasingly radical critique across disciplines of the assumptions of Modernity, call it 'Post-modernity' if you will. It was a state of affairs reflected in MBC in increasing rise to dominance of disciplines like Narrative, Rhetorical, and Canonical criticism, all of which sought first of all to address synchronic or structural issues, rather than to pursue what was felt to be an increasingly arbitrary diachronic method (by which is meant affecting to delineate the historical development of the formation of the text until it reached its final form). But this is not the place to rehearse the history of modern or contemporary biblical criticism (CBC), and yet as intimated above there *is* one aspect that does have great significance for us, and this has to do with the rise of ideological criticism.

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[6] One of the blind-spots today is that many biblical critics do not seem to get that the problem has to do not with the diachronic study of the biblical books, nor even with source criticism itself, but with the basic assumptions and thus the methods that have been employed in these pursuits. When Krzysztof Sonek writes in his book *Truth, Beauty, and Goodness in Biblical Narratives: A Hermeneutical Study of Genesis 21:1-21* (Berlin, Walter de Gruyter, 2009), that synchronic reading need not rule out diachronic study (70) that somewhat misses the point. The point is that what synchronic study has shown is that the means by which source criticism affected to identify 'breaks' in the text–to use Sonek's own term–and then to identify the time and situation which these breaks were said to intimate, are illegitimate. And they are so because what synchronic study shows is they are not, in fact, breaks, but expressions of sophisticated narrative devices. They cannot serve, therefore, as means of diachronic speculation, well not in the way that modern biblical criticism has tended to do.

[7] A good example of this is M.D. Hooker's essay 'On Using the Wrong Tool' in *Theology: A Monthly Revue* Vol. XXV.629, November 1972. Hooker critically analyses the means by which source-criticism especially in its 'traditio-critical' approach addresses the quest for the 'historical Jesus'. He expresses something close to wonderment that critics could employ such tendentious and circular methods. Of interest is that among his targets criteria such as 'dissimilarity', which is to say the kind of criteria that was still in use nearly twenty years later at the Jesus Seminar and, in fact, even after further criticisms have been made are still used in some quarters today! Hooker notes that not only are these criteria groundless and self-defeating, but that as well as this they give rise to thousands of different reconstructions–in short that the method expresses its inadequacy in the fact that it gives plausibility to any and every proffered reconstruction. My point, however, is that although Hooker makes all these points and more nevertheless he still accepts that it is the best method we have and that the proliferation of reconstructions somehow proves that the Gospel texts cannot be treated as they stand as reliable accounts. One might have thought that the reasonable conclusion would have been to dismiss the methods employed and critique the assumptions that gave rise to them, but instead Hooker concludes with the very liberal and pluralist assertion that there are no "assured results" and that we must make as our creed the statement "We do not know," for after all is said and done apparently we must be alert to "the dangers of dogmatism" (581). What Hooker does not seem to realise, for he never asks why it is such absurd criteria are used, is that the very goal of this criteria is not to arrive at anything like agreed upon certainty, but instead to foster a never-ending production of arbitrary reconstructions in order to undermine any religious institution that might claim dogmatic authority *vis a vis* the Bible.

In his essay on the politics of biblical interpretation, Jeffrey Morrow gives a schematic overview of the history of the critical study of the Pentateuch.[8] Morrow seeks to chart how politics informed the beginnings of the criticism of the Pentateuch, and this goes towards explaining the tendency of this criticism to fragment the text it sought to understand. Simply put, by affecting to divide up the text into disparate sources a critic, often in the employ of the state or affiliated institution, was then able to claim to be able to put the text back together again such that it now bears the meaning one wants it to mean, a meaning that conveniently supported the political status quo, a status quo associated with growing nationalism and what can be called nationalism's concomitant caesaropapism.[9] The unity of the sacred text was fragmented in order that a unity that bore the imprint of the scholar's ideology could be read into the text, thereby appropriating the authority identified with the Bible.

Questions of Definition: Ideology and Power

It is with the subject of politics that we come to a topic that has in the contemporary world become itself an object to be appropriated and manipulated, that of ideology. A problem that attends the use of this term in common parlance is that it is identified with *overt* politics, the kind in which power is identified with the 'king who sits upon the throne'. 'Ideology' becomes identified with 'power' and power, in turn, becomes associated with the kind of politics we think of when we think of visible institutions such as Parliament, global oil companies, or even religious bodies. 'Power' and thus 'ideology' simply become a shorthand way for an easy cynicism to dismiss any visible institution one happens to dislike. In this it becomes something of an extension of the kind of discourse we associate

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[8] Jeffrey Morrow 'The Politics of Biblical Interpretation: A 'Criticism of Criticism', *New Blackfriars* 91.1035, September 2010. A good companion piece on the politics behind the rise of seventeenth century biblical criticism in relation to Hobbes, Spinoza and Locke is Benjamin Wiker's *Moral Darwinism*, Downers Grove, IVP Academic, 2002, especially chapter seven. One of the major themes informing the rise of the biblical critical method was the need to extract the Bible from the interpretative authority of the Catholic Church and thereby to locate such authority within the new nation state. See G. Reedy *The Bible and Reason: Anglicans and Scripture in Late Seventeenth-Century England*, Philadelphia, Uni. of Pennsylvania Pr.,1985(10-11) and J. Sheehan *The Enlightenment Bible*, Princeton, Princeton Uni. Pr., 2005 (14-15). There was, writes Deborah Shuger in her work *The Renaissance Bible* (Berkeley, Uni. of California Pr., 1994), the championing of the awareness of "historical discontinuity" in which a break was asserted between "early ecclesiastical traditions" with the Semitic culture of the New Testament (23), but also one that helped the "critical use of the historical sources" to remove the Bible from "Catholic tradition" (24).

[9] See Deborah Kuller Shuger *The Renaissance Bible*, Berkeley, Uni. of California Pr., 1994 (17, 23-24), and J. Sheehan *The Enlightenment Bible*, Princeton, Princeton Uni. Pr., 2005. Both authors note that the principle intention of these scholars was to work to extract the Bible from, as Sheehan puts it, "its Catholic superstructure" (15). See too Richard Popkin 'Spinoza and Bible Scholarship' in J. Force and R. Popkin (eds.) *The Books of Nature and Scripture*, Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Pub., 1994. It might be said that this current found something of its culmination in both the anti-Semitic logic of a good deal of Modern Biblical Criticism and the political and social expression of this logic under National Socialism–see Susan Heschel's *The Aryan Jesus: Christian Theology and the Bible in Nazi Germany*, Princeton, Princeton Uni. Pr., 2008 (see too her earlier work, Abraham Geiger and the Jewish Jesus, Chicago, University of Chicago Pr., 1998). Good companions to Heschel's work are J. Hess' *Germans, Jews and the Claims of Modernity*, New Haven, Yale University Pr., 2002, and S. Kelley's *Racializing Jesus: Race, Ideology and the Formation of Modern Biblical Scholarship*, London, Routledge, 2002.

with the Enlightenment in its bourgeois republicanism and anti-clericalism. In respect of MBC this expressed itself in what we might term 'naive reference', by which is meant the idea that there is a simple correlation between any reference to a visible authority in a text and the posited authorship of that text. For example: a passage in the Torah delegates authority to the Levites—Aaron's line in particular—so this must mean that the passage in question was authored by the Aaronite Levites in order to gain power over the people who were, so we are told, all rendered suggestible due to the circumstances of the exile. The principle of 'naive reference' being that any text that depicts the bestowal of authority must have been authored by those on whom the authority was bestowed. It is for this reason that the conspirators have set out to revise history (or simply made it up) so that now the document serves to legitimise their rule.

It is a naive view of the operation of power for the same reason that conspiracy theories are naive: they caricature the complex ways in which people and power operate.[10] They reduce the operation of social interactions and power to something akin to a straightforward formula, but as the most effective form of ideological power operates in both a self-effacing and dissimulating manner then naive reference can itself be seen to be an expression of ideological power. This is because it serves to conceal the *dynamic of concealment*, a dynamic that constitutes ideology proper; that *is* ideology proper. A dynamic that is also, as we will see, necessary to self-deception as well. This is something borne out by the fact that MBC has, as noted above, been very much at home in *the* cultural expression of capitalism today, namely liberal progressivism, and the idea of naive reference is essential to the rhetoric of liberal progressivism.

The naivety of the liberal bourgeois position is translated into the easy cynicism that holds that any visible and hierarchical authority is 'power', where power has become a synonym for all things bad. The overall effect of a position like this is that it not only works to destroy any institutional solidarity that might effectively oppose global capital it also serves to trivialize what might be a useful term; for if everything becomes 'power' then nothing is 'power'. By this is meant that if all human relations that involve authority of some sort can be said to be 'power' then there is no room left to be able to properly discriminate between, say, just and unjust power. As 'ideology' has become identified with

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[10] It is for this reason that Antonio Gramsci in his work *The Modern Prince* argued that Machiavelli's The Prince was first and foremost a work of ideological critique in that it revealed something of the subtlety and dissimulation in the way power operated (reprinted in *The Modern Prince and Other Writings*, New York, International Publishers, 1978). Gramsci coined the term 'cultural hegemony' (though he said he took the concept from Lenin) to explain the way in which ideology became part and parcel of the very background to the thinking of the period in question such that it did not appear as ideology, or even as an idea, but was simply accepted as being the way things are. It was a theme that Louis Althusser took up in his book *On Ideology* (London, Verso, 2008, fp. 1971). Ideology is ideology by reason that it dissimulates itself in reproducing the means of reproduction and the principle or basic means by which it does this is by informing the "category of the subject" such that in the very act of thinking as a self the ideology that has shaped that understanding of the self is perpetuated (for example see pages 4, 46-52). To caricature the way ideological power operates so that it seems an exercise in pointing out what is obvious is to help in the further concealment of ideological power.

the operation of power then it is no surprise that alone with the term 'power' it too has become trivialised.

The term 'ideology' has today come to mean just about any philosophy, theology, or idea one might hold to that affects to explain the world one lives in.[11] In other words, 'ideology' like 'power' means everything and nothing; and yet this is not quite true, for beneath the degradation of the terms is the operation of a very powerful ideology, one that has informed the history of MBC and that still affects CBC as well. It is for this reason that it is important that the term 'ideology' is clarified and it is so by reference to the object of study itself, the Bible.[12]

The problem can be put like this: when classical Marxism used the term 'ideology' it had definite content insofar as it did not refer to all meaning per se, but to a specific albeit dominant form of meaning. The term denoted the operation of class as it *dissimulated* itself under various forms of cultural and economic status (or 'standing'). Essential to a Marxist understanding was that when the Proletariat truly came into its own through the rise of capitalism proper as expressed in bourgeois liberalism, then the truth of class, indeed *the very existence* of class, would become apparent. Only then would the obfuscation that *is* ideology begin to be exposed. In other words, 'ideology' referred to the operation of a power that shaped culture and ideas and thereby falsified the true status of things. And it did so through the operation of a discourse that was so dominant that the ideology in question seemed to be entirely natural. So natural in fact that one simply assumed this was the way things simply *are*. To put it succinctly, ideology principally works to blind one to being blind, and the important point for the argument of this present work is that this description also serves to sum up the effects of self-deception.

Whether or not we agree with the Marxist view is beside the point; the point is that in classic Marxism not all thinking and ideas were ideological, some, such as Marxism itself, were held to be true and thus destructive of ideology. But with the rise of the New Left especially from the 1960s on, opinions

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[11] A relatively early work in critical theory that represents this shift in meaning can be found in C. Geertz's 'Ideology as a Cultural System' in R. Bocock and K. Thompson (eds.) *Religion and Ideology*, Manchester, Manchester Uni. Pr., 1985 (this essay was from Geertz's book *Ideology and Discontent*, fp. 1964). Geertz argues that ideology is the means by which all societies cope with "functional problems" to do with inevitable "antinomies", "discontinuities", "discrepancies", and "dislocations" in the way things really are (77). In short, an ideology is little more than a species of wishful thinking that all cultures and societies are guilty of. If we jump to more recent works we find a similar line of reasoning only now 'ideologies' are things to be valued as a kind of expression of pluralist variety! For example Michael Freeden's *Ideology: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford, OUP, 2003 where he argues for the idea that ideologies are "instances of *imaginative creativity*" (127) (emphasis in the original). He concludes that because "liberalism" is better "suited than other ideologies to hold together a large degree of structural differences and centrifugality (sic)" then it ought to be the one we accept (125).

[12] Something of this irritation with the way in which the term 'ideology' has been debased to mean just about everything including Marxist analysis can be seen in Roland Boer's *Jameson and Jeroboam*, Atlanta, Scholars Pr., 1996. This is expressed in his point concerning the tension between ideas of liberal pluralism in which all becomes ideology, and the Marxist analysis of dominant forms of power in its "understanding of the world" (7). Although I disagree with a number of Boer's arguments in this and other works he ought to be praised for being one of the few authors to rigorously set about an ideological critique of both the biblical texts and biblical scholars.

quickly changed, and with the increasing dominance of 'identity' causes (women's liberation, gay rights, indigenous rights, to name only the most prominent) and the consequent splintering of the left, the word that now served to judge all things was neither 'Proletariat' or 'class' but 'pluralism'. Suffice it say that this caused, and still causes, not a little consternation among the old die-hards for they have observed that what this effectively does is to reduce the Marxist analysis of class to merely one among many other ideological theories, theories that one can pick and choose from as one likes.[13] The result being that everything is effectively subordinated to the overarching hermeneutic of liberal 'pluralism' in that this effectively means that *all* ideas are held to be expressions of ideology, and for this reason all ideas ought to be given equal place in the global market-place. Thus does the consumer market appropriate, subsume, and nullify any critical voice—and Herbert Marcuse, among others, is proved correct![14] 'Pluralism' is defined by eclecticism, and eclecticism, in turn, is principally defined by the market and its attendant dynamics. In other words, 'pluralism' becomes the shorthand way in which global capitalism reduces terms like 'ideology' and 'power' to little more than what we might call 'epistemological commodities'.

In sum, 'ideology' has become a term that describes any idea that claims the ability to totalise all meaning within a meta-explanatory framework. In other words, 'ideology' refers to any claim to a truth by reference to which all things can find their proper meaning—be this a variety of theological or philosophical universalism, or as in classical Marxism, by reference to a 'scientific' materialism that applies to all concepts and all things. No idea can have pride of place, for the idea of pluralism and consequent eclecticism precludes this, except, of course, in respect of pluralism itself. 'Pluralism' expresses the dissimulated ideological unity that claims to be able to unify what capitalism has fragmented.

It is a view that finds its correlate in CBC insofar as it is informed by contemporary liberal ideas, thus the assumptions of MBC are critiqued by reason not that they were arbitrary and unscholarly, but because they were informed by claims to universal explanations expressive of the principles identified with the Enlightenment (which had been received via Voltaire from the earlier English rationalist Deism).[15] If there were any failing in MBC then it was that its accent fell on the claim to a unity that

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[13] A good example of this can be found in Eric Hobsbawm's *How to Change the World: Tales of Marx and Marxism*, London, Little Brown, 2011. Hobsbawm, said to be one of the pre-eminent Marxist historians in England today, writes of Marx's writings that they are not a "finished corpus but are, like any thought that deserves the name, an endless work in progress. Nobody is any longer going to turn it into a dogma, let alone an institutionally buttressed orthodoxy.' Thus, there is no real difference "between a 'correct' and an 'incorrect' Marxism" (13). Marx is thereby reduced to just one among many options that one can choose from at one's leaisure!

[14] Herbert Marcuse–a member of the Frankfurt School of neo-Marxist (or 'cultural' Marxist) thought–argued in his later years - specifically, but not only, in his book *One Dimensional Man*, 1964–that so powerful an ideology was liberalism/capitalism that it was effectively able to take on board all criticism of itself and not only survive but thrive! Given the fact that everything from the internet and popular music, through Hollywood, to tenured radicals, do well with their dissident messages on the market then Marcuse's argument would appear to be well-founded, even if it was rather pessimistic and defeatist.

[15] An example of this 'Enlightenment' temper in biblical studies can be found in the dedication on the authorised book on the now rather risible Jesus Seminar project (R. Funk, R. Hoover and the Jesus Seminar *The Five*

was founded on an enlightened 'universality', a claim that contemporary liberal pluralism rejects. Certainly, if one wishes to one can hold to methods based upon an idea of Enlightenment universality, but only insofar as one understands that it is simply one among many other assumptions and methods. The overall imperative being that one ought to delight in a plurality of methods and assumptions even if these contradict each other—in some cases, *especially* if they contradict each other! So it is that contradictions in both the text and in the methods one brings to the text are acceptable insofar as the recognition of these contradictions promotes pluralism so-called.

What, then, do we mean by the terms 'ideology' and 'power'?

By power we mean the authority to identify and/or define the value and meaning of the subject at hand. The definition is suitably general in that it intentionally leaves as a secondary question the nature and means of *how* that authority is arrived at and exercised, for the 'how' of power has more to do with our definition of 'ideology'. The definition also leaves to one side the question of whether or not this authority is legitimate, and what in fact defines legitimacy (indeed if it did include this in the definition then it would end up being rather circular, for legitimacy implies questions of value and meaning).[16]

By 'ideology' we mean something pejorative: 'ideology' is a total view of things, one that claims to be able to identify and define the meaning and value of things, but which is, in fact, *wrong*. And there is more. An 'ideology' is a view that claims to be able to define the value and meaning of things, only this claim is *dissimulated* under the primary claim that it is doing no such thing but is merely presenting things as they really are. From the foregoing, it ought to be clear that the fundamental position informing these definitions of ours is that there *is* a true view of the world and that, as a consequence, what is false is able to be identified and critiqued.

There is one last point to be made and it is this: ideology operates through dissimulation, a process that is both complex and complicated and not easily disentangled into its various social, political, economic and cultural components for the simple reason that they are all continuous one with

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Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus, New York, Macmillan, 1993); the authors dedicate their work to Galileo, Thomas Jefferson, and David Strauss. The tone is positively old-worldly in its resolute refusal to take on board so-called postmodern criticisms of Enlightened thinking. Something similar can be found in Gerd Lüdemann's *Jesus After 2000 Years*, London, SCM, 2000. In his Introduction Lüdemann defends the modern biblical critical approach against its postmodern critics by simply asserting that it "has its foundations in the intellectual history of Western culture and should not be denigrated as European ethnocentricity" (2). Lüdemann's blindness to the problem with the modern biblical critical approach is well expressed in the fact that he admits that though there has been a plethora of "different reconstructions" as to the historical Jesus this, nevertheless, does not undermine the approach or method used (2). At no time does he see that the fact of a multitude of often contradictory findings casts doubt upon the objectivity of the method employed. He simply asserts that as this is a method identified with "Western culture," especially European culture, then it *must* be valid. To follow Funk et al, if it was good enough for Thomas Jefferson and David Strauss then it is good enough for us!

[16] For more on this see my article, 'Caritas in Veritate and the Metaphysics of Defiance' in N. Ormerod and P. Oslington (eds.) *Globalisation and the Church*, Sydney, St Pauls, 2011 (59-60).

another. As a consequence ideology has to do not only with objective structures operative in a society, but more importantly with how these structures influence *the individual in a society*. Ideology has to do with how an individual introjects—or as Althusser put it, 'interpellates'—for good or for bad, the values of a society; values that inform the ways in which the world is understood and experienced. Ideology thus goes towards informing the very way in which an individual experiences him or herself and his or her standing in society. Subjectivity is not immune to the effects of ideology but is rather the first place in which the effects of ideology are to be observed. Ideological dissimulation operates not only in a general and objective cultural fashion but works as well in an individual *and this is what both allows for and aids self-deception*. There is an integral relationship between ideology and self-deception, so much so that the two cannot be disentangled; *to explain one is to begin to explain the other*. As this is such an integral point to this essay it needs to be spelled out: the very definition and meaning of 'self' and how this meaning informs our experience of *our* 'self' is at the heart of any ideological critique.

Genesis and the Nature of the Self

In general scholarship the discussion of ideology tends to revolve around its role in totalitarianism for it is there that the subject is writ large. Now, at the heart of all totalitarian schemes is a redefinition of what constitutes human nature and, following on from that, what it is that properly defines the nature of the self.[17] As a rule in totalitarianism the idea is that the only 'nature' proper to humanity is that it has *no fixed nature* but is plastic and therefore malleable.[18] How we understand the nature of the

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[17] See my *Benedict XVI and the Search for Truth*, Leominster, Grace Wing, 2007, chapter three 'A Very Modern Totalitarianism' on liberal progressivism as a very effective totalitarian ideology.

[18] "The aim of totalitarianism is nothing less than the remaking of humanity and the world," so writes Dana Villa in his study of Hannah Arendt (*Politics, Philosophy, Terror, Princeton*, Princeton Uni. Pr., 1999, 17). Totalitarianism probes "the limits of human plasticity" (20). As Arendt wrote, "What totalitarian ideologies...aim at...is the transformation of human nature itself" (cited 31-32). As Trotsky wrote: "What is man? He is by no means a finished or harmonious being..." The aim, Trotsky went on to say, is to "produce a new 'improved version' of ma – that is the future task of communism." "Man must look at himself and see himself as a raw material, or at best a semi-manufactured product" (quoted in Slavoj Žižek *Revolutions: Žižek Presents Trotsky*, London, Verso, 2007, xxix). It's a theme taken up by Peter Singer in his book *A Darwinian Left: Politics, Evolution and Co-operation*, New Haven, Yale Uni. Pr., 1999. Singer writes that belief "in the malleability of human nature has been important for the left because it had provided the grounds for hoping that a very different kind of human society is possible" (24, see too 60-61). That the National Socialists felt the same way ought not to be surprise, for they too held via Darwin that humanity was something malleable and to be shaped into something better, see Richard Weikart's *From Darwin to Hitler: Evolutionary Ethics, Eugenics, and Racism in Germany*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004. In respect of our topic it is interesting how the "rise of biblical criticism" facilitated this project (13). As for liberal progressivism it has been very much in the forefront of the idea of shaping humanity into something better through eugenics, contraception, abortion and the inculcation of the idea that humanity has no fixed nature proper but is something malleable: see Edwin Black *War Against the Weak: Eugenics and America's Campaign to Create a Master Race*, New York, Four Walls Eight Windows, 2003; Troy Duster *Backdoor to Eugenics*, New York, Routledge, 2003; Michael Freeden 'Eugenics and Progressive Thought: A Study in Ideological Affinity' in his *Liberal Languages: Ideological Imagination and Twentieth Century Progressive Thought*, Princeton, Princeton Uni. Pr., 2005. On how this liberal ideological program works itself out practically speaking see: Matthew

human person is essential, then, to identifying an ideology and understanding how it operates. As a consequence, any work that affects to identify the operation of ideology and, thereby, to identify the way in which power is structurally encoded in a culture, must first and foremost define *what the nature of humanity is*. Furthermore, for reasons touched upon above, defining the nature of humanity is also essential *to understanding and identifying self-deception*. And as it happens this is exactly what the first three chapters of Genesis set out to do; to define the nature of what it is to be human. This then implies that Genesis opens with a critique of a dominant ideology, one that is employing definitions of 'self' and 'human nature' in order to justify a false meaning of unity.

For reasons intimated earlier in this essay the Documentary Hypothesis as it has come down to us must be rejected by reason of its method corrupted as it is by certain ideological assumptions. Assumptions that are reflected in the way that it not only arbitrarily divides the Pentateuch up into JEDP, but the way in which it also leads to the apparently endless proliferating of sub-divisions and sub-groupings derivative of those four major divisions. However, having said that it seems clear that the Pentateuch does, in fact, use disparate sources and documents, or at least elements thereof, not least because it tells us so.[19] And what is pertinent is how these documents are situated in the text; how the documents are contextualised within an overarching meta-narrative that serves as the unity that defines their proper significance and meaning. It is only by reference to this narrative that we can tell if an intended juxtaposition affirms, subverts, or redefines the meaning of the document or source employed. And yet it is exactly this meta-narrative that MBC obscured in order to foist upon the text other sources of unity and thus meaning.

By way of example of the biblical use of narrative juxtaposition we might consider Exodus 15:1-18 and 21 where we have the song of Moses, Miriam, and Israel following the parting of the sea and the drowning of the armies of Egypt. It is a song of pious and martial celebration extolling the might of God and expressing great confidence in God. Only, the author has placed it in the immediate context of the beginning of Israel's whingeing,[20] which is followed soon after by more complaints,[21] and soon after by even more[22]—and from then on it is non-stop whingeing, apostasy, and rebellion. The narrative context of the song of Moses and Israel puts the lie to the song's strident and confident expression of the people's faith. To what end it does this is another question, one that leads into issues concerning the date and provenance of the final form of the text. The point is that the issue that must first of all be addressed has to do with the structure of the text as it has come down to us, not

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Connelly *Fatal Misconception: The Struggle to Control World Population*, London, Belknap Pr., 2008; and Novtej Purewal *Son Preference: Sex Selection, Gender and Culture in South Asia*, Oxford, Berg, 2010.

[19] For example: *Numbers 21:14* a reference to the Book of the Wars of the Lord; *21:17-18* a reference to a song popular in Israel; *21:27* a reference to a song sung by the 'ballad singers'; *24:15* an oracle of the prophet Balaam; *36:13* the "commandments and orders of Moses"; *Deut. 1:1* the" words of Moses spoken to Israel beyond the Jordan"; *Deut.4:44* "This is the law of Moses..."–to note only a few such sources.

[20] *Exodus 15:24*.

[21] *Exodus 16:1-3*.

[22] *Exodus 17:1-7*.

least in how what are recognisably earlier sources—such as the aforementioned song—are situated within that structure. It is only by doing this that we can see how juxtaposition, allusion, and other like narrative devices are employed to convey meanings that are not readily accessible to a more superficial reading, meanings that point to the overall unity of the text.[23] Only then can we begin to speculate about the history of the development of the text and the situation-in-life of the different sources.

In brief, the argument here is that the way in which the Pentateuch is structured reflects a prophetic hand in that prophecy as an office was principally concerned with an internal critique of Israel. The Bible has a rather realistic view of human behaviour and is unsparing in its depiction of humanity, but it is especially so of Israel. Again and again, the office holders in Israel—be they elders, priests, kings, generals, judges, or even court prophets—are depicted in their all too often corrupt glory. The role of the prophet was to undermine and expose the specious justifications by which the corrupt legitimised their unjust practices. The argument is that the Pentateuch was a prophetic work that used earlier sources concerning the history of Israel to put the lie to the ways in which those earlier sources had been used in Israel to buttress a sense of identity by which others could be oppressed or manipulated, or simply cheated out of their livelihood. For this reason the Pentateuch represents one of the earliest recognisable ideological critiques proper in that dominant historical narratives concerning the identity of a people are taken to task. It ought to be stressed that among other things what this means is that the visible and hierarchical authority of the office, say, of priests or kings is not questioned, but rather the corruption and abuse of the office is.

The question for us is what kind of abuse and corruption might the first three chapters of Genesis be pointing to? It is significant that these are also the first chapters of the whole Pentateuch in that they serve to set the context for all that follows, and they are thus fundamental to understanding what kind of ideology it is the Pentateuch is opposing. In order to answer the question we ought to pay attention to the way the text is structured, especially the way the author uses the juxtaposition of apparently contradictory accounts.

It is not too difficult to see that there is a difference in accounts between the first and second chapters of Genesis. On a superficial reading the differences may seem merely a matter of expansion in that the second account adds more detail to the first. That there is an expansion cannot be denied, but to suggest that it is *merely a matter of expansion* is misleading, for there are at least two profound

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[23] A good example of allusion in respect of possible reference to extra-biblical sources, one that touches upon our topic, has to do with the Atrahasis text. In Atrahasis humanity is created in order to do the hard labour intensive work that the lesser gods, the Igigi, had to do. Oppressive work is, in other words, of the very order of creation. But in *Genesis 3:17-19* arduous work is a result of the Fall and is not of the order of creation per se; it is a result of the failure of moral responsibility. Much the same can be said of the flood: in the Atrahasis epic the flood is a result of people complaining about the hard work, while in *Genesis 6:11* it is due to violence and moral corruption. As a rule biblical criticism did not see the relationship between the texts as one of critique but of borrowing and even demythologising, hence the nineteenth and early twentieth-century phenomenon of Pan-Babylonianism.

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differences between the accounts that are not amenable to such an explanation. The question then arises if these differences point to two different creation accounts that have been edited together, as has been popularly held.[24] One problem with this is that the second account is not, in fact, a creation account in anything like the same manner as the first is. To get around this one has to posit not only different documents that have been rather inexpertly edited together, but one must also posit a history of development in creation accounts in general, one that explains the primary discrepancy between the two accounts. Furthermore, the second account is clearly in narrative continuity with the first account and expands upon elements found therein. Thus, one has to hypothesise the above history of development and editing in the face of a clear narrative continuity. The overall impression is that there is an intended relationship between the two accounts, one that demands the two accounts be seen as an inextricable literary unity, such that even to call them 'two accounts' is misleading. And yet the continuity *is* one that involves a juxtaposition of two apparently contradictory narratives in respect of some very important elements in the overarching story.

If we are to approach the text with some semblance of objectivity—by which we mean with a method that can be checked by the text under discussion so as to avoid arbitrariness - then we must first of all treat of the synchronic (the text as we have it) and *then* of questions concerning the diachronic (or possible development of the text over time into its final form). To repeat our earlier point, we must be alive to the fact that what we think are fractures in the text that evidence badly edited sources, may well be literary devices that point to higher meanings than those that first appear. With this in mind we must pay attention to the way in which the first two chapters of Genesis are structured, we must do so in order to see if the apparent 'contradictions' point to a higher meaning, and if this meaning is continuous with the surface meaning, serving to give the surface meaning its substance. It is *then* that we can begin to speculate about the nature of the text's origin and development.

Genesis and the Use of Juxtaposition

One of the first things we ought to note is that in the first account the fact of the goodness of creation is highlighted by the repetition, seven times, to the effect that all that is created is good ('*tov*' in Hebrew). The number seven, of course, is a very significant number not only in the Bible, but throughout the Ancient Near Eastern world as well for it tends to signify completion and perfection (in the Pentateuch it is also identified with priestly matters). What's more, in the first account this sequence of seven concludes with reference to the creation of humanity which creation makes all things "very good" (*meod tov*).[25] The superlative state of creation is arrived at with the appearance of

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[24] It was often argued that *Genesis 1:1-2:4* represented a Priestly account while the rest of the second chapter hailed from the 'Yahwist'.

[25] *Gen. 1:31*.

humanity created as a communion of difference: "male and female He created man."[26] It is this communion that not only renders all creation 'very good' but serves as the image of God as well.[27]

In the second account things are rather different; humanity is represented by *one* person for Adam is created *alone*. That this is problematic is evident in the fact that an attempt is made by God to find a 'helpmeet' for Adam, a suitable companion such that there will be a communion proper. Indeed, so problematic is this state of affairs that God says that it is "*not good* for man to be alone" ('*lo tov*' in Hebrew), a statement that puts the second account in deliberate opposition to the first account with its sevenfold sequence of 'good'. The reference to the pinnacle of creation, humanity, being in a state of 'not good' is said prior to the Fall, but it also follows straight after the first warning of the Fall; Adam is not to eat of the tree of the fruit "of the knowledge of good (*tov*) and evil" for in that day he "shall die."[28] The author has juxtaposed the apparent contradiction in accounts, and placed the second contrasting passage straight after the warning of the Fall, in order to tell the reader what the Fall consists in; *aloneness*.

If we want to know what 'good' looks like then the first account has told us; 'good' looks like creation as it is meant to be, capped off by the communion of humanity, which communion is the image of God. But what does 'evil' look like? The second account tells us: evil looks like 'not good' and this looks like the absence of proper communion for only *one* man, Adam, is created. A superficial reading would answer that 'not good' looks like death for death is the consequence of knowing evil.[29] But if we think that death means *physical* death then there is a problem, for when Adam eats of the tree he does not die, as many critics of the Bible have pointed out since time immemorial. Indeed, he doesn't die for a very, very long time after the incident.[30] It may be objected, of course, that the dying began the moment he ate of the fruit, perhaps so, but the sense of the passage certainly seems to suggest that death proper takes place at *that* very moment, the moment of the eating of the fruit of the tree. It

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[26] *Gen. 1:27*.

[27] The sequence of God's speech in the first account also serves to bring out the point being argued for int he body of this work. Prior to the creation of humanity God speaks in the mono-vocal imperative: "Let there be light!" But when it comes to the central mystery of creation, to the height of creation, to that which makes all things "very good," namely to humanity, God speaks in a deliberative and consultative voice: "Let *us* make man in *our* image" (*Gen. 1:26*). Commentators since time immemorial have speculated on who this 'us' refers to: angels? Could it be early evidence of the Holy Trinity? Or is it a holdover from an early form of polytheism? Whatever the merits or otherwise of these explanations the narrative point being made is that the act of creation mirrors what is being created, at least in respect of humanity. Given that it is the image of God that God is creating then this seems a reasonable point to make. Not only is the act of creation on the part of the creator informed by an *act of communion*, that which is being created is also *a communion*. Consequently, if that communion should be broken then so too is the understanding of God that is dependent upon that image–for as Genesis stresses, humanity is the *only* valid image of God for it is an image made by God.

[28] *Gen. 2:16-17*.

[29] To be exact, death is tied to knowing good *and* evil. With the Church Fathers one can argue that this is because evil is nothing in itself but is a falling away from being into non-being. As a consequence one only knows evil by reference to the good and to the absence of the good, or the posited absence of the good such that one is now suspicious of what might lie behind the good.

[30] 930 years according to *Gen.5:5,* though how one is meant to date Adam's age in respect of his being created a mature male is somewhat obscure.

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would be facile to think that the writer/s or editor/s had made a mistake and were caught napping, facile and misleading, for by assuming such a scenario one would make oneself blind to the narrative structure and thus to the deeper points being made. Rather does the text use the apparent failure of physical death to eventuate to point to a definition of death that is *prior* to physical death, albeit one that is expressed most clearly in physical death.

Earlier commentators argued that death first of all meant spiritual death, and I think that this is a view that does more justice to the text than many other explanations, but even granted this it still leaves unanswered what it is that is meant by 'spiritual' death. And this is something we need to know if we are to know what 'not good' looks like, and it something that the author tells us, for death first and foremost means the absence or sundering of communion. But the author tells us more, for he also tells us not only what death looks like, but goodness and life. It is no new insight that in the Bible the common theme that expresses goodness is that of fruitfulness and fecundity, which is to say by life; while evil is expressed by sterility, decay, and death. In other words, evil is the privation of life and is thus the privation of the good. Thus, in the first account both humans and animals are created and commanded to be fruitful and multiply, for this has to do with their being good.[31] But in the second account as Adam alone is created then there is no chance of his being able to fulfil this command and thereby fulfil the goodness that properly attends human nature. It is not good for man to be alone for he cannot be fruitful and multiply. It is in the communion and consequent multiplication of humanity that creation attains to its status as being 'very good' and that the image of God is fulfilled.

Now, not only is Genesis making a point about the nature proper of humanity as being per se constituted as communion, it is also making a point about how humanity can have full and proper communion with God. In the second account it clear that Adam although created alone has communion not only with all of creation *but with God as well*, and yet as Adam does not have an appropriate communion, one that corresponds to his nature, then communion with creation and with God *is not enough*. We need here to spell out what it is that is being said by understanding something of the context of the text of Genesis in its location within the Pentateuch. The primary context is the religion of Israel, at whatever period of this development it may have been. In the Pentateuch the religion of Israel is presented in context of a series of covenants all of which relate to her communion with God and, thereby, to her identity proper (of which more below). But what the juxtaposition of the two accounts in the opening of Genesis tells Israel is that without proper human communion there can be no communion proper with God, even if one has full dominion over all the world. The question then is what might this point mean to Israel? The first and most obvious point is that the communion necessary for full communion with God is one that has to do with *all humanity* and not just with Israel.

The significance of the foregoing is that it informs all of what follows in the Pentateuch, and it is a significance that is further highlighted by the very way in which the first account is structured, for it is

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[31] *Gen. 1:22* and *28*.

structured on the lines of the Temple.[32] One proceeds through the first account through a series of divisions, both in respect of inanimate things (light and dark, waters above from those below, day and night, waters from the earth, and the distinction between the seasons that are the basis for the festivals) as well as animate (animals "according to their kinds"). It is a procession through divisions that reflects those associated with the priesthood and the Temple, not least in respect of the High Priest's journey through to the Holy of Holies.[33] When we come to the Holy of Holies of the creation sequence we find ourselves in the presence of the image of God, namely humanity-as-communion. The irony is palpable, for possibly the most serious law given at Sinai is the prohibition against making an image of God. The irony being that here, at the very beginning of the Pentateuch God Himself makes an image of God. Furthermore it is an image that entails all humanity, male and female. In light of the way in which the Pentateuch is structured the implication is that when the High Priest entered into the Holy of Holies of the Temple there was then an image of God present in the innermost sanctuary. What's more it was an image that meant that the High Priest not only represented Israel, but through Israel all the nations as well. A point is being made, one that we can argue was meant to correct the dominant way in which those in power in Israel thought of their identity *vis a vis* God. It was a point that was further highlighted in the way in which the Pentateuch presents the Sinai covenant as being located within a series of overarching covenants. In ordering its material in this way, the Pentateuch served both to contextualise the covenant made at Sinai and, thereby, to give to it its proper meaning.

What follows must of necessity be brief. The author of the Pentateuch has ordered his material such that the Sinai (and Aaronic) covenant is located within the Abrahamic covenant, and thus the meaning of the Sinai covenant is defined ultimately by that made with Abraham, a covenant that was distinguished by the fact that in Abraham's seed *all the nations of the earth* would bless themselves; in turn, the Abrahamic covenant is located within the covenant with Noah, hence it is defined by reference to a covenant that is made with *all humanity* (for Noah is depicted as a recapitulation of Adam); and Noah's covenant is in context of the Adamic covenant which, of course, likewise included *all humanity*. Thus, the Pentateuch defines the meaning and significance of Sinai by reference to a universal communion inclusive of all peoples.[34] It is this commission that explains why it is that Israel

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[32] On the subject of the priestly structures informing the first account of Genesis (though I would argue they also inform the second account as well) see: F. Gorman Jr. *The Ideology of Ritual: Space, Time and Status in the Priestly Theology*, Sheffield, JSOT Pr., 1990, (esp. 52-60); M. S. Smith *The Priestly Vision of Genesis 1*, Minneapolis, Fortress Pr., 2010; J. H. Walton *The Lost World of Genesis One*, Downers Grove, IVP Academic, 2009. A work that is relevant to the above is also Mary Douglas' *Leviticus as Literature* (Oxford, OUP, 1999) as this deals with the way in which the text is structured (albeit Leviticus) in order to mirror the Temple.

[33] See G. Beale's essay 'Eden, the Temple, and the Church's Mission in the New Creation' (*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 48:1, March, 2005) for references both biblical, rabbinic, and the Church Fathers for Eden being the original Holy of Holies and that this is what was replicated in the Temple.

[34] It is a point that St Paul made in his argument as to what defines the nature proper of the Law. Paul notes how the narrative structure of the Pentateuch locates the context of the Law within the over-arching ambit of the promise to Abraham, see *Romans 4:9-12* and *Galatians 3:16-18*. One might also note that following on from the

is a "nation of priests" for being a priestly nation she represents others apart from herself. She is to be the means by which the original communion of humanity is to be restored. Israel is the priestly mediator who is to represent all humanity, not just herself, to God, and this implies, in light of an ideological critique, that Israel had conveniently forgotten this point and saw her covenant with God as a means of self-aggrandizement. A state of affairs that required the writing of the Pentateuch as it has come down to us today. It is for this reason that we can say that the Pentateuch is the first ideological critique proper that we have.[35]

By way of summary we can say that the apparent contradiction between the two accounts is, in fact, no contradiction at all but is rather a masterful use of juxtaposition made with the aim of pointing to the nature proper of humanity and, thereby, the nature proper of religion and priestly service. We can go on to say that another implicit point that the juxtaposition of the two accounts serves to make is that if there has been a sundering of the human communion resulting in a fundamental schism, then *this cannot but affect the revelation of God*. After all, if humanity is the image of God then if its nature proper is obscured then so too is the nature proper of God obscured. And this then brings us to a question that should be at the heart of all discussion of ideology and self-deception: what does ideological and self-deceptive obscurity look like? And the answer is that it looks *like clarity* for the simple reason that ideological and self deceptive obscurity does not advertise itself as such. When a person is blind to being blind it is pointless to ask them if their vision looks like blindness, for they will simply say that that is absurd, that if they were blind then they would be the first to know.[36]

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passage in Romans Paul then goes on to locate all salvation covenantal history within the context of Adam (*Rom. 5:12-21*).

[35] It is probably unnecessary to add that this overarching system of inter-contextual covenants was obscured by MBC in its claim to using an historical-critical method, which method was neither historical nor critical but simply served to mask the operation of Modernist ideology. It is for this reason that no matter how often the findings of MBC were shown to be fallacious, nevertheless the method continued to be employed. For example, in his critique of the concept of the Deuteronomist, Richard Coggins observed that so arbitrary was it that we "find ourselves confronted with dates ranging from the eighth to the third centuries as the suggested period in which the Deuteronomist influence was at its height" 'What Does 'Deuteronomistic' Mean?' in L.S. Schearing and S. McKenzie (eds.) *Those Elusive Deuteronomists* Sheffield, JSOT Pr., 1999 (26). Or for a critiques of the idea of the Yahwist see T. Dozeman and Konrad Schmid (eds.) *A Farewell to the Yahwist: The Composition of the Pentateuch in Recent European Interpretation*, Atlanta, SBL Pr., 2006. The point is that many of the points made by these and other scholars have been made many times before, and yet even though the criticisms are never rebutted the method carries on regardless, even by those who write these critiques! That the MBC method obscured the universalistic theme that unites the Pentateuch is itself telling, for it is often held by way of an article of faith in MBC that true universalism came from non-Jewish sources, the implication being that the Jews could never have conceived of such a thing and only Gentiles can. It is of course, another example of the anti-Semitic logic that haunts MBC.

[36] This is a reference to case that Oliver Sachs wrote of in 'The Last Hippie' in his *Anthropologist on Mars* (London, Picador, 1995). The patient was blind but claimed otherwise stating with "impeccable logic, 'If I were blind, I would be the first person to know it'" (63).

The Blindness to Being Blind

What, then, does this blindness to being blind look like? That is, what does ideological obscurity look like? Or rather, what does *obscurity-as-clarity* look like? There is possibly no more important question to ask than this, and I would argue that the Pentateuch sets out to answer it. The short answer is that obscurity-as-clarity looks like the evasion of responsibility through the employment of specious justifications. Furthermore, it is this refusal to acknowledge moral responsibility that is not only conducive to further schism in the human communion, but to violence as well, for violence is both the principle effect and expression of fractured communion.

By juxtaposing the second account with the first the author of Genesis has told us what the Fall effects when it effects death, namely aloneness or the absence of communion proper. How this is expressed in everyday life is then traced out following immediately on from the Fall. On seeing that they are naked, Adam and Eve clothe themselves with leaves—why? That this is not principally concerned with the birth of concupiscence and lust is evident, after all they *had* prior to the Fall been commanded to be fruitful and multiply. Indeed, we often clothe ourselves in order *to create* sexual allure, nudist camps being notoriously unappetizing places for thinking on things sensual. Rather must the reason for their clothing themselves be found in another commonly experienced sentiment, and this has to do with suspicion and the concomitant feeling of vulnerability. Succinctly put, we clothe ourselves to protect ourselves and not just from the elements. Clothes can serve to distance us from others, and, of course, to hide who it is we feel we truly are, being embodied creatures we naturally associate shame and nakedness for in both we stand revealed. The accent in Genesis following the Fall is first and foremost on hiding, and this is corroborated by what follows immediately after the covering of their bodies; Adam and Eve using trees hide themselves from God. Knowing good and evil they now experience fear and distrust, both with each other and with God. In short, communion is fractured; is now disjoint and out of kilter, and the primal expression of this is the desire to be hidden for all is coloured by suspicion and a fearful sense of vulnerability.

There is one other point that the author of Genesis brings out in order to describe the nature of the 'hiddenness' that attends the human condition following on from the Fall. First Adam and Eve hide their bodies one from the other, then they hide themselves from God, and then when confronted by God they blame everyone except themselves. Eve blames the serpent, but Adam does better, he blames both Eve and God, after all it was God that made Eve. This is the beginning of self-deception, for the essence of self-deception is self-exculpation by way of spurious self-justification, it is in other words to hide from the responsibility for ones actions.[37]

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[37] Perhaps the height of justification of both lying and self-deception is that found today, for it is now a common place to argue that self-deception and lying are evidence of superior evolutionary adaptation and are, as a consequence, necessary for survival even to this day. One of the earliest popular books to argue this was Daniel Goleman's *Vital Lies, Simple Truths*, London, Touchstone, 1985, but see too: E. Giannetti *Lies we Live By: The Art of Self-Deception*, London, Bloomsbury, 2000; A. Shea and Steve Van Aperen *The Truth about Lies*, Sydney,

What follows on from this are the curses that are said to attend the Fall, albeit it might be better to say they are consequences rather than curses. Whatever the case may be it is important to see in what these consequences or curses consist: all is disjoint and all is in rebellious upheaval; the relationship between male and female is marked now by the desire of the woman to usurp the position of the man and so the man must now master her, a situation that is one depicted as needing continual vigilance; much the same applies in respect of the man with the earth, it too will not naturally submit to the man and so there is a war of sorts in which the man must continually work to bend it to his will; and between the woman and the serpent there is war. Nothing works naturally so, everything is out of joint, and vigilance, sweat and effort are required at all times. Now there is either violence or the threat of violence. This is what sundered communion looks like, violence. And so it is that following immediately on from the Fall and the subsequent expulsion from Eden, there is the first murder, Cain kills Abel—and to this day it's been murder all the way. The way in which the Genesis narrative is structured brings out the point that the first murder—and all subsequent murders—is an expression of the primary schism in the communion of humanity, a schism that not only informs 'external' society but, by reason that human nature is constituted *per se* as communion, then it is also, at the same time, a schism that runs interiorly in each and every individual. There is division and doubleness in all society and in all individuals, and it is this that unites ideology and self-deception for both proceed from the same origin, and both are fuelled by each other.

If there is one theme that the Bible accents in both Testaments it is the problem of doubleness; that is the division between heart and tongue that allows for deceit and injustice.[38] For it is in the division between intention and appearance that every crime finds its opportunity; it is through this doubleness that every evil finds its strength. It is also in this division that is doubleness that both ideology and self-deception are able to operate. Both ideology and self-deception operate, of necessity, through dissimulation, misrepresentation, and obfuscation—in other words, through hiddenness that is

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ABC Books, 2006; David Livingstone Smith *Why we Lie: The Evolutionary Roots of Deception and the Unconscious Mind*, New York, St Martins Pr., 2004. There is an interesting tie-in with this and the rather fashionable theme in contemporary politics to the effect that hypocrisy is necessary for the flourishing of liberal democracy, that it saves us from the so-called barbarism of fundamentalist religion and political utopianism–for example see David Runciman *Political Hypocrisy*, Princeton, Princeton Uni. Pr., 2008. What the foregoing expresses is what is adumbrated in the body of this essay, namely the symbiotic relationship between the dominant ideology of a culture–here liberal progressivism and its attendant liberal market economics–and self-deception.

[38] It is a theme that can be found through all the Bible, and it is one that informs the Torah's own claim that a covenant will be needed that circumcises not only the flesh but the heart as well, thus *Deuteronomy 10:16* and *30:6*. And it is thick upon the ground in the Prophets as well–for example *Jeremiah 4:4, 14; 5:12-13, 24-28; 6:10-14; 7:4-8; Isaiah 6: 5-10; 30:11-12; 32:3-7*, and so on and so forth. It is pertinent to note that again and again this doubleness is tied to the oppression of the poor and vulnerable. But it is in the Wisdom literature and the Psalms that the problem of doubleness is writ large, so for example: *Psalms 4:6, 9-10; 10:7-11; 12:2-5; 17:10-12*, etc. As for Proverbs one might argue that it was primarily written to provide guidance to one who had to do with a world in which one cannot know what it is people really intend, for example: *Proverbs 7:21-23; 8:13; 10:18-19, 32; 12:6, 17, 20*, etc.

doubleness.[39] It is in this sense that Genesis can be said to be the record of the birth not only of ideology but of self-deception as well.

Only, in self-deception there is a further complication, one that causes no end of problems for philosophical disquisitions on the subject—rare though these disquisitions might be[40]—and the problem can be stated thus: how is it possible for a person to be both the deceiver and the deceived? That is, how is it possible for a person to be, at one and the same time, both the deceiver and the victim of the deception? What is the nature of this strange doubleness? It is by reference to Genesis that we can answer that conundrum by pointing out that the way in which the conundrum is phrased is wrong and that the paradox is a product of this error. The person is a deceiver but is *not* a victim, for the lie that is believed is one that fulfils the goal intended by the deceiver, one that serves their own benefit (perverse and dangerous to the ultimate well-being of the person in question though it may be).[41] As can be seen in Genesis, the goal is to avoid the responsibility for one's actions.[42] This is not

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[39] The theme of doubleness as the principle expression of the operation of ideology is one that features large in classical Marxist theory but not so much in contemporary theorising on the Left. Exceptions to this include the likes of Slavoj Žižek who, one might say, makes it central to his reading of contemporary culture. And he does so not least in respect of the role of 'transgression' as the means of buttressing and reproducing global capitalism– see for example his *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*, London, Verso, 2008 (fp. 1999) especially pages 258-261, nb.54 p.277, and 482. Also his *Living in the End Times*, New York, Verso, 2010: writing on so-called "transgressive outbursts" he writes that the "violation of public rules is thus not performed by the private ego, but is enjoined by the very same public rules which are in themselves redoubled" (8). That is, people tend to define themselves today, to experience their very subjectivity, by way of transgressing the rules, but this transgression is, in fact, the operation of contemporary capitalist and consumerist ideology reproducing itself. To put it another way, the doubleness is redoubled every time transgression is valorised either in theory or action. In his *The Plague of Fantasies* (London, Verso, 2008, fp. 1997), Žižek observes how the "power-edifice" that is served by ideology necessitates itself being "split from within" if it is "to reproduce itself and contain its Other..." That is, an ideology becomes its own "excess" its own "transgression" if it is to continue to function (35).

[40] One of the first works in the contemporary period to begin to address the philosophical enigma of self-deception was H. Fingarette's *Self-Deception*, Routledge Kegan & Paul, 1969. Certainly, since the 1980s the pace has picked up a bit but not to the degree that one might think it should, for the topic of self-deception is one that touches upon just about every aspect of philosophy.

[41] See footnote 39 above for how this doubleness, or self-splitting, works out in the way that ideology reproduces itself as its own transgression. An integral part of the operation of doubleness both in ideology and self-deception is the need both to know the rules of the game but not to know them, and certainly not to know that one is affirming these rules by playing according to them. Žižek in his *The Plague of Fantasies*, *op cit*, writes how in the Soviet Union it was not only forbidden to criticize Stalin "*it was perhaps even more forbidden to announce this very prohibition*" (37, emphasis in the original). He also cites by way of example in his essay 'Can You Give my Son a Job?' (*London Review of Books*, 21/10/10) the way in which the Communist Party in China and the State are inextricably entwined, though all are to pretend it is otherwise: "It isn't that people are supposed not to know that a hidden Party structure shadows the state agencies: they are supposed to be fully aware that there is such a hidden network" (8). It is a "double procedure" (9). Eduardo Giannetti in his *Lies we Live By: the Art of Self-Deception*, *op cit*, writes of the 'Stalin paradox' where Stalin revised his official biography so that the following sentence was included: "'Stalin never let his work be affected by the least shadow of vanity, presumption or idolatry" (114). How this doubleness plays itself out in the individual psyche is something that the work pioneered by Gregory Bateson and taken up by Ronald Laing provides insight. Morris Berman in his work *The Re-enchantment of the World* (Ithaca, Cornell Uni. Pr., 1981), details the work of Bateson in the study of double binds, and how these play havoc on those individuals who don't quite get the rules of the game (222-223). Laing put it like this: "Rule A: Don't. Rule A.1: Rule A does not exist. Rule A.2: Do not discuss the existence or non-

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to say that there are no other goals involved in self-deception, just that self-exculpation through specious self-justification is *the principle goal*, and may well be the one from which all other goals ultimately derive their legitimacy.[43]

In drawing out the contiguity between ideology and self-deception we can see that all ideology, *to some degree*, involves an individual's willing acceptance of the play of social doubleness, insofar as in accepting the dominant ideology he or she is enabled to do what it is they know, *reasonably so*, to be morally wrong. Furthermore, the individual knows that in accepting the play of doubleness there are benefits, even if this simply means they will not lose their lives, or more probably their jobs of chance of promotion.[44] There is, in short, always a degree of individual complicity in any ideological system. What this means is that the all too common assertion that because ideology was operative then an individual had little choice but to act in the way they did is itself a ruse that evidences self-deception. Ideology cannot be used as a means of self-exculpation in that it cannot free one from the demands of moral responsibility (though it may diminish ones moral sensibility and the ability to act).

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existence of Rules A, A.1, or A.2" (228). Berman notes how double-binds are ideological and inform the formation of the sense of the self (233).

[42] Pretty much the same point is made concerning self-deception by M.R. Haight (*A Study of Self-Deception*, Sussex, The Harvester Pr., 1980). Haight writes that self-deception is designed to get around the 'Judges Rule' which is "If you know, you were responsible" (viii, see too p. 108). The aim being to get oneself to believe that one does not know. See as well M. Heffernan *Wilful Blindness*, London, Simon & Schuster, 2011, to the effect that by making ourselves "morally blind" we do not feel the need to act (104). See too David Pears' *Motivated Irrationality*, Oxford, Clarendon Pr., 1984, where he points out how we can employ apparently irrational means in order to intentionally confuse the issue to ourselves, so that in expressing a "motivated misperception of the facts" (18) we can excuse ourselves from having to respond in a proper way. And we ought to add to this the observations of Ernst Hilgard's *Divided Consciousness: Multiple Controls in Human Thought and Action*, New York, John Wiley & Sons, 1986. Hilgard notes how we can employ a 'directed forgetting' which is to say a deliberate forgetting (65) such that we can conveniently excuse ourselves for sins of commission or omission. We thereby train ourselves in the art of "selective inattention" (77), but in the process 'disassociate' ourselves from ourselves (or in more common parlance, we split ourselves off from ourselves in order to hide those aspects that might demand a proper moral response. It was the once famous 'psychiatrist anti-psychiatrist' Thomas Szasz' argument that much mental illness and its corroborative classification by mental health authorities was another form of doubleness in that those who are said to be mentally ill can change their status from being one seen in moral terms to one seen in medical terms. The patient is, for example, no longer say a malingerer but is 'sick' and thus rather than deserving disapprobation needs to sympathy and care. See his *The Myth of Mental Illness*, London, Paladin, 1972, fp.1961 (42 and 54).

[43] As Amélie Oksenberg Rorty notes, self-deception is never a solitary activity for it necessitates the social dimension in that one is only really able to have one's self deceptions confirmed through the support of others. The self-deceiver puts "herself in situations where her deflected attention will be strongly supported by her fellows" 'Use Friendly Self-Deception' in R. Ames and W. Dissanayake (eds.) *Self and Deception*, Albany, SUNY Pr., 1996, (77).

[44] J.A. Barnes observes that studies tend to show that a skill in detecting deceit can have adverse social consequences in that being consciously aware of what is going on can lead to social friction–*A Pack of Lies*, Cambridge, CUP, 1994 (118). One would argue then that most if not all of us make decisions as part of a group compact not to look too closely at what is said and done, furthermore, that we have also agreed that this compact is neither commented on in respect of the group, nor reflected upon in respect of ourselves.

Conclusion

To conclude in respect to Genesis and, ultimately, to the whole Pentateuch, we might ask if our synchronic study, informed by a reflection on the discipline of ideological critique, can shed any light on matters diachronic? That is, are we better placed to comment on the provenance of the text as it came into its final form? As intimated in the course of this work I think we can say something by way of valid speculation in that we do not have to have recourse to hypothetical developmental views of history based upon false conceptions as to what constitutes 'fractures' in the unity of the text.

The argument here is that the Pentateuch evidences the work of a prophetic author (or authors as case may be), one who sets out to critique a culture in which a 'nationalism' informed by a concept of election is operative. In brief, the ideological system that Genesis opposes is a view of human nature predicated on an idea of election that valorised the fractured human communion as being something that evidenced the special status of Israel. A status that consisted in Israel, by reason of her relationship to God, being an end-in-herself, rather than *having been elected in order to be a means of blessing to all humanity*. Being an end-in-herself meant that all others were subordinate to her well-being and pleasure, which in turn justified any crimes she might commit against any other. But this notion would also have served to justify any crime against those *within* Israel who did not enjoy social status, power, or wealth. For it can be taken as something of an invariable rule that the notion of an elect nation involves the idea of an elect among the elect who, as *the* representatives of the elect nation, feel that they are justified in doing pretty much what it is they want to do. But is there any date in the known history of Israel that might best match this way of thinking?

It might be observed that if one takes the Bible seriously then the above scenario could fit the bill for pretty much any period in ancient Israel's history. Perhaps so, only I would argue that it would apply, especially so, to the latter half of Solomon's reign. But though I feel this theory has greater validity than those thrown up by the Documentary Hypothesis or any of its variations, nevertheless it is still speculative and ought to be treated as such.

Finally, what of scholarship itself? Both our reading of Genesis and our reflection on the nature of ideology and ideological critique, tells us that MBC evidences the fundamental signs that attend the operation of ideology. Indeed, we could say that MBC provides *the* salutary example of how ideology can and does operate in historical scholarship. For despite its widely acknowledged history of producing arbitrary reconstructions; how the same method when employed could produce results that rarely if ever came close to coinciding one with the other; that it was from its very inception tied to the rise of the modern secular and nationalistic state; that it was informed by an anti-clericalism that was, at first, simply anti-Catholic, but then anti-Semitic; and that it has in more modern days been the tool of progressive liberalism in its attempts to gain ideological power; despite the fact that there has been critique after critique showing that its method and assumptions are incoherent, contradictory, and without substance—despite all these and other like indicators of its ideological essence, nevertheless

MBC still commands respect in many quarters! What this tells us is that the ideology that MBC instantiates is one that is very serviceable to self-deception on the part of many scholars and commentators.

When MBC treated of the Bible it inevitably fragmented the text being studied, as a consequence scholars and commentators were able through their arbitrary—which is to say, self-serving—reconstructions to reconfigure the text into a new unity that was closer to their needs; needs that accorded with what the cultural and political climate required. In essence, ideology is the attempt to appropriate the authority attendant upon a legitimate unity, only as this new unity is illegitimate then it is false and thus fragile, and being so it requires different forms of violence to support itself. Thus, the new unity ends up being conducive to further fragmentation—we might say that it ends up doing increasing violence to the text.

Where we go from here is harder to tell, but we could do worse than study the ways in which the Biblical texts themselves subvert the dominant ideologies of their day.