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## Introduction

### *Political Exegesis for a New Day*

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Political exegesis, as it is currently practiced, has been characterized by hermeneutics that were defined during the end of the Cold War, a period recognized by its clash between the “free world” and, to use Ronald Reagan’s phrase, “the evil empire.”<sup>1</sup> Now, however, in

1. Significant examples of political exegesis include the work of Warren Carter, *Matthew and Empire: Initial Explorations* (New York: T&T Clark, 2001); Brian Walsh and Sylvia Keesmaat, *Colossians Remixed: Subverting the Empire* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004); and J. D. Crossan, *God and Empire: Jesus against Rome, Then and Now* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2006). Previous political exegesis includes the excellent work of Richard Horsley, for example, *Jesus and Empire: The Kingdom of God and the New World Disorder* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), and of Norman K. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh: A Sociology of Religion of Liberated Israel 1250 to 1050 B.C.E.* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1979). In many ways, the work represented in this volume is merely an extension of their quality scholarship. Other recent pieces that deserve attention include Jörg Reiger and Kwok Pui-lan, *Occupy Religion: Theology of the Multitude* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2012) and Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite, *Occupy the Bible: What Jesus Really Said (and Did) About Money and Power* (New York: Astor and Blue Editions, 2013).

many ways, the structural antagonism of communism versus liberal democracy is a political paradigm that has been replaced by the ubiquitous universality of global capitalism, and the rise of populist movements of protest and resistance in Europe and the United States. However, as the symbolic system of global capitalism is perfected, we are beginning to see it decompose and dissolve under its own pressure, revealed in the form of various crises that have begun (unfortunately) to mark our time as an era of global crisis. Thus, the immediate task of political exegesis is the construction of a new paradigm that incorporates a deep, profound critique of our existing structural conditions, an exercise in engaged biblical interpretation that questions the unsolicited dominance of market ideology, and values the non-representable excess created by this fantasy.<sup>2</sup>

A more modest claim, made by Naomi Klein in her popular book *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, is that the exploitation of crisis and disaster has been the *modus operandi* of disaster capitalism since the Milton Friedman movement usurped Keynesian approaches to macroeconomic theory in the late sixties global marketplace.<sup>3</sup> Klein argues, rightfully, that catastrophic events and global disasters are an exciting market opportunity, a necessary pretext to overrule the expressed wishes of voters in the interest of economic technocrats.<sup>4</sup> For Klein, the emerging corporatist-state model functions on the necessary precondition of increased state surveillance, mass incarceration, shrinking civil liberties, and coercive interrogation.<sup>5</sup> Undergirding the disaster capitalist approach is the reified notion that if the market is not functioning properly, it is

2. Slavoj Žižek, *The Year of Dreaming Dangerously* (London: Verso, 2012), 21.

3. Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2009), 9.

4. *Ibid.*, 10.

5. *Ibid.*, 15.

because human interference has created a market disturbance, and perturbed the delicate balance of unbridled capital exchange.

While we should appreciate the accessibility and popularity of Klein's work in the public consciousness of the North American Left, her analysis fails to identify global capital as, in some manner, the *root cause* of our contemporary global crisis, and thus instead the corporatist state model looks more like a greedy raven picking up unfortunate scraps from the wake of a roadside disaster. Such an approach deflects attention from the systemic irrationality of the capitalist system itself, and encourages sympathetic, liberal approaches to change with a view to "saving the system."<sup>6</sup> The cynical distance of the North American Left, with all its ironic detachment and neo-Keynesian sentimentalities, leaves untouched the fundamental structure of our current capitalist fantasy.<sup>7</sup> The value of a more theoretical approach to understanding our contemporary crisis can be quickly found when we begin to identify the structural necessity of crisis endemic to the global capitalist schema itself.

It has become clear that the structural crisis of capitalism is a system geared not toward the maximization of material wealth in general (held in public commons), but toward the maximization of wealth in the socially antagonistic form of private profit—specifically in the hands of those who own the means of production, distribution, and capital exchange.<sup>8</sup> Thus, in this present economic crisis, the poor and working classes have been instructed to "maintain effective demand" by plunging further and further into debt via credit expenditures, cheap loans, and sub-prime mortgages.<sup>9</sup> Between the fourth quarter of 1981 and that of 2008, credit market debt in the United States

6. Murray E. G. Smith, *Global Capitalism in Crisis: Karl Marx and the Decay of the Profit System* (Winnipeg: Fernwood, 2010), 7.

7. Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989), 30.

8. Smith, *Global Capitalism in Crisis*, 6.

9. *Ibid.*, 9.

mushroomed from 164 percent to 370 percent of total American GDP, while at roughly the same time the average real income of the bottom 90 percent of American taxpayers declined by more than 7 percent.<sup>10</sup> Global capital continues to prey on the crisis of poor and working peoples through more simple credit arrangements, which reveal the structural imbalance necessary for capitalist control: predatory lending rates, increased rates for automobile and home insurance, rent-to-own furniture, and roll-over loans through credit companies like Check 2 Cash, Fast Cash, or H&R Block.<sup>11</sup>

On a macroeconomic level, the structural condition of crisis continues to be noticed in the escalation of international debt and the growing reality of financial precarity worldwide. Through the expansion of the credit system, it is estimated that the United States owes in excess of \$11 trillion dollars to global finance conglomerates, while at the same time the US government gladly took over the liabilities of the giant mortgage companies Fannie Mae and Freddy Mac—to the tune of \$5.4 trillion dollars.<sup>12</sup> Globally, the size of the “real economy” in which goods and services are produced is estimated at \$48.1 trillion dollars, while the size of the “global financial economy” (the total amount of stocks, securities, and deposits) adds up to more than \$151.8 trillion dollars.<sup>13</sup> This means that the global financial economy (the speculative economy) has swollen to more than three times the size of the real economy (or actual monies).<sup>14</sup> Perhaps figures like this help to augment our definition of global capitalism as a “fantasy” that produces non-

10. Ibid.

11. Brett Williams, “Body and Soul: Profits from Poverty,” in *The Insecure American: How We Got Here and What We Should Do about It*, ed. Hugh Gusterson and Catherine Besteman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 227.

12. Istvan Meszaros, *The Structural Crisis of Capital* (New York: New York University Press, 2014), 29.

13. Ibid., 28.

14. Ibid.

recognizable excesses, often in the form of what appear as contradictions to free market ideology: poverty, homelessness, and environmental destruction.

Recent shifts in the relationship between state and market indicate the predominance of the multinational corporation, at the expense of democratically elected regulatory state bodies. In their work entitled *System in Crisis: The Dynamics of Free Market Capitalism*, authors James Petras and Henry Veltmeyer highlight the growing predominance of “transnational corporations” to usurp the power of the state in times of economic uncertainty:

International financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, through their structural adjustment policies, free trade doctrines and privatization directives, had so drained the wealth of local economies that client states were weakened and rife with corruption, as private sector elites and politicians pillaged the treasuries.<sup>15</sup>

Global capital, and specifically the transnational corporation, has replaced (or is replacing) the state as the dominant mode of political-economic power at the international level, and this phenomenon should change the manner in which we approach the problem of global instability.

Thus, when we begin to search for answers regarding the nature and scope of our global crises, we must bear in mind the general impotence of the state against the ubiquitous power of the global marketplace. It is the structural crisis of global capital that has provided us with a consistent narrative of instability from which we interpret our world—a perpetual “state of exception” that perversely defines economic, social, and ecological instability as *normal*. In this new state of exception provided by global capital, the proper

15. James F. Petras and Henry Veltmeyer, *System in Crisis: The Dynamics of Free Market Capitalism* (Winnipeg: Fernwood, 2003), 26.

functioning of the law is thus “unformulatable,” as power exists outside of the scope of democratic control and legal order.<sup>16</sup> The exception proves what was there all along—that true sovereignty exists in the hands of those who control capital and define reality in terms of an embedded crisis. That global capital defines reality as a constant state of exception means that the vast majority of people are deprived of any meaningful cognitive orientation, and thus lack the means (administrative, democratic, or economic) by which to change their circumstances in any significant fashion.<sup>17</sup>

In recent theoretical engagements with this issue, what has become increasingly clear is that the incessant development of global capital relies on a constitutive imbalance within the system; that crises (ecological, financial, social) are far from constrictions on the global market, instead they are the “very impetus of its development.”<sup>18</sup> Slavoj Žižek notes that in global capitalism, the structural crisis of capital is contained within the system itself, and this internal contradiction compels capital to extended permanent reproduction.<sup>19</sup> According to Žižek, global capital is a ubiquitous cultural system that relies on structural crisis or “failure” as a necessary feature of its own existence, a pathological imbalance that requires crisis to animate the libidinal structure of consumptive desire.

Žižek’s notion is a useful one, for it identifies the structural necessity of global crises (ecological, economic, and social), which unfortunately appear as atomized, isolated phenomena within the “worldless constellation” of global capital.<sup>20</sup> The paradoxical feature of global capitalism is its ability to transform crisis (its very limit) into

16. Giorgio Agamben, *The Time that Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 106.

17. See Žižek, *Year of Dreaming Dangerously*, 54.

18. Žižek, *Sublime Object of Ideology*, 52.

19. *Ibid.*

20. Žižek, *Year of Dreaming Dangerously*, 53.

the source of its power. In these conditions, crisis is not an ancillary feature to the structure of commodity exchange, nor is it a strange coincidence, an aberration: rather the “normal” state of global capital is the permanent revolutionizing of its own conditions of existence, evident in any number of rotating crises or “disturbances immanent to the system.”<sup>21</sup>

### **Biblical Interpretation in a Time of Crisis**

Global capitalism, in many ways, represents a new, or novel ideological constellation—one that cannot be represented within the field of previous ideological constellations, one that requires a new lens of interpretative concerns. Within this ideological constellation, biblical interpretation does not remain immanent to itself, but is fashioned by the goals, expectations, concerns, and dialectical tension(s) established by global capital, in its diverse forms. It would be remiss to call global capital a hermeneutical lens in a formal manner, as it lacks one single methodological principle; however, global capital now appears to function in what Michel Foucault might call an internal regime of power, which means that it serves, among other things, to organize biblical interpretation in terms of intelligibility and coherence to its ends.<sup>22</sup> Within the discourse of biblical interpretation, it is specifically a question of what governs statements, and the way in which they govern each other, that constitutes a set of propositions that are methodologically, scientifically, or, even, theologically credible.<sup>23</sup> So, to suggest that contemporary biblical interpretation is not impacted by the logic of global capitalism is akin to suggesting, for instance, that we could

21. Frederic Jameson, “Postmodernism and the Market,” *Social Register* 26 (1990): 279.

22. Michel Foucault, “Truth and Power,” in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–77* (New York: Pantheon, 1980), 112.

23. *Ibid.*

understand, let's say, Friedrich Schleiermacher apart from Romanticism, or that, perhaps, the apostle Paul was not influenced by the goals or expectations of the Roman Empire itself.

In order to appear as truthful biblical interpretation (as diverse as "truthful interpretation" may now appear), biblical studies is already linked in a circular manner with "systems of power which produce and sustain" the regulation, distribution, and operation of appropriate statements within global capital.<sup>24</sup> This is not to suggest, in a naïve manner, that global conglomerates purposely manipulate the proceedings of yearly society meetings, or that senior scholars are paid off by dishonest publishers to write in favorable, pro-capitalist terms. In this sense, the paranoid should recognize that there is no global conspiracy; instead, biblical studies proceeds within the context of global capital because it purposely avoids, or simply cannot address, ultimate questions of meaning.

Specifically, the modern historical critical method, and its approach to scholarly objectivity, leaves religious material as an isolated feature of the past, and this now functions as an apologetic for capital in the world. It is the perceived distance between the neutral, objective observer and his or her observed religious phenomena that keeps religious phenomena as isolated features of the past, usually viewed in terms of ancient primitivism, or naïve superstitions. In this context, questions of ultimate meaning are inappropriate to the task of scholarly biblical interpretation, and presuppositions—which are fashioned in an ideological manner—remain concealed in the interest of an imagined scholarly objectivity. So, modern biblical interpretation has proceeded, and continues to proceed in a distinctly apolitical fashion. Biblical history remains an ad hoc collection of random, isolated fragments, and, likewise, possible solutions and

24. *Ibid.*, 133.

alternatives to our global plight remain buried somewhere in the historical mud.

Biblical scholarship of the modern ilk, in general, relies on a “unitary conception of rationality, one which takes for granted that any attentive and honest observer, unblended and undistracted by the prejudices of prior commitments to belief, would report the same data, the same facts.”<sup>25</sup> It is the radical positivism of the Enlightenment period that has remained as a strange artifact, or ode to modernity in biblical interpretation, an approach that establishes a functional relationship between an unbiased, neutral observer and religious or biblical data that can be demonstrated as observable fact. It is the avowedly “unbiased” approach of modern biblical interpreters that sees scholarly objectivity as simply “the real world seen aright,” and to a certain extent, these methodological assumptions still remain disguised, often as historical rigor.<sup>26</sup> Within this scholarly “world seen aright,” the question of the impact of global capital on the practice of biblical interpretation is, quite simply, a question that cannot appropriately be asked. In this context, economic, environmental, or social crises cannot legitimately be included into the methodological assumptions of the modern critical historical approach, and therefore the practice of biblical interpretation continues to proceed as if the global crises created by capital are “unformulatable,” an unrecognized, neglected element within the hermeneutical horizon of the interpreter.

With the advent of postmodern biblical interpretation, and the subsequent recognition of ideology as ideology, it was thought that, with the addition of new, advanced hermeneutical approaches and the rejection of modern object-centered rationalities, biblical

25. Alasdair MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Inquiry: Encyclopedia, Genealogy, and Tradition* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 17.

26. Timothy Fitzgerald, *The Ideology of Religious Studies* (London: Oxford University Press, 2003), 15.

interpretation might be able to identify in a more clear manner its own relationship to ideology, and thus reveal latent, liberating elements overlooked by the false modern fascination with scholarly objectivity. Guided by the notion that all interpretation was, in some sense, a “false will to power,” postmodern biblical interpretation was a rallying cry meant to establish a new relationship between the bible and subaltern political approaches.<sup>27</sup>

In many ways, now, postmodern biblical interpretation remains “within the confines of the pessimistic wisdom” of a failed encounter, one that seeks to maintain a distance between the interpreter and the impossible fullness of an idea.<sup>28</sup> In order to avoid the totalitarian consequences of full attachment to an idea, postmodern biblical interpretation has sought to consistently reassert difference as a feature of its existence, noted, perhaps, by the growing proliferation of alternative subsections at yearly academic conferences and scholarly gatherings.<sup>29</sup> Within this context, the exhausting proliferation of difference and the creation of nuanced scholarly identities occur in a manner that is consistent with the goals and

27. Postmodern biblical interpretation is best witnessed by a few key works, most noticeably George Aichele et al., *The Postmodern Bible: The Bible and Culture Collective* (Binghamton: Yale University Press, 1995); David Jobling et al., *The Postmodern Bible Reader* (New York: Wiley, 2001), and A. K. M. Adam, *What is Postmodern Biblical Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995). Under the general rubric of postmodern biblical interpretation functioned a number of key sub-disciplines such as: deconstructionism, postmodern feminism, postcolonial criticism, ideological criticism, and queer biblical interpretation. Perhaps one of the first major attempts at postmodern re-readings of biblical material was Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza’s landmark work, *In Memory Of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (Hertford NC: Crossroad, 1994). Other, more recent attempts at postmodern biblical interpretation include Moore, *Poststructuralism and the New Testament*, 1994; Jerry Camery-Hoggatt, *Irony in Mark’s Gospel: Text and Subtext* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Aichele, *Sign, Text, and Scripture: Semiotics and the Bible*, 1997.

28. Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject* (London: Verso, 1999), 134. The death of postmodern biblical interpretation was, perhaps, first witnessed by many of us in attendance for Stephen Moore’s excellent address “Past the Post: The Slight Rise and Precipitous Decline of Postmodernism in Biblical Studies” at the 2014 Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting, San Diego California (November 24, 2014).

29. Žižek, *Ticklish Subject*, 135.

expectations of global capital, developing a scholarly apparatus that cannot address fundamental questions of ultimate meaning. This confirms the insight of Alain Badiou, whose perspective into the dynamics of capital can be appropriately applied to the practice of postmodern biblical interpretation:

Capital demands a permanent creation of subjective and territorial identities in order for its principle of movement to homogenize its space of action; identities, moreover, that never demand anything but the right to be exposed in the same way as others to the uniform prerogatives of the market.<sup>30</sup>

Here, the dynamics of global capital does not necessarily limit the proliferation of alternative scholarly voices, nor does capital necessarily produce violent scholarly hegemony or academic monoculture, or quash minority voices. Instead, global capital produces scholarly subjectivities with impressive variety, a context in which almost any interpretive approach is now valid, except for the approach that challenges the patron of all interpretation itself—global capital.

Now, global capital functions not only as a simple means of monetary exchange, but rather as a universal system of meaning, one that affects the very fibers of ourselves, and thus fashions the goals, expectations, insights, and practices of scholarly interpretation. Due to the manner in which global capital proceeds as a universal system of meaning, there is no nook or cranny within biblical interpretation that remains immanent to itself. Recognizing global capital as a universal system of meaning in a formal manner does not negate its impact within the practice of biblical scholarship, nor does raising global capital to the level of hermeneutical awareness change the cold

30. Alain Badiou, *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*, Cultural Memory in the Present (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 14.

fact that capital is, already, “in all and through all” (to borrow the language of Eph. 4:6).

In many ways, this is a perverse, yet stimulating turn in biblical scholarship itself. All of a sudden, the old fault lines of liberal Protestant interpretation versus conservative evangelical interpretation are, quite simply, irrelevant—all exist within the same machinery and apparatus. Likewise, biblical interpretation that previously sought to fashion an authentic account of one’s relationship to the state, most notably in the popular “(insert biblical character here) versus empire” genre, should begin to revise this relationship, given the irrelevance of the state within the horizon of global capital. The ubiquity of global capital has established new fault lines that demand new models of interpretation—ones that include the contradictions and crises that capital creates—in order to address and provide meaning to those of us who suffer under these various, rotating crises.

The goal of this volume is not to provide voice to a particular shade of difference, we are demanding more than just another voice to add to the mix. Nor should we fall into the trap of “finding capital everywhere in the past,” thus reifying the concept of capital in an anachronistic manner—as if it were always there. This volume represents a robust attempt to include capital, and the rotating crises within which the interpreter exists, formally into the field of biblical interpretation, so that biblical interpretation may become meaningful within the precarious context of global crisis. It may have been a simpler task to organize the volume around specific issues of crisis—a volume for ecology, a volume for debt, a volume for this or that other aspect of crisis—but we thought that these issues in isolation would not highlight the universal manner in which global capital proceeds. Organizing discussions of various crises together perhaps

helps us to see these crises as a whole, and not as unrelated, or isolated phenomena.

The volume is organized into three main sections. In Part 1, *Global Crisis and the Practice of Biblical Studies*, contributors give thought to some of the implications of global capital to the task of biblical studies as a discipline itself. In the lead article, “Reading the Bible through a Hermeneutic of the Poor,” the Reverend Liz Theoharis and Willie Baptist (both of the Poverty Initiative at Union Theological Seminary) discuss the implications of Jesus’ statement in Matthew 26:11 that “the poor will be with you always,” not only in terms of its reception history among scholars of privilege, but also with regard to how the verse functions within poor populations in America today. Such a nuanced reading is not a warm, fuzzy academic affinity with the poor; rather, each scholar has spent time suffering under the crisis of capital, in order to develop a methodology that they now call “Reading the Bible with the Poor.” The goal of such a reading is to begin to see the poor as legitimate readers and interpreters of biblical material, and to include economic catastrophe into the hermeneutic lens of our contemporary situation.

Following the excellent work of Theoharis and Baptist, Fortress Press’s own Neil Elliott addresses the relationship between academic publishing and global capital—not only as that relationship fashions the discourse of biblical studies, but also as it fails to address fundamental issues of materiality and economic crisis. Writing from the perspective of an insider who is knowledgeable about the apparatus of scholarly publishing, Elliott addresses the role and function of religious information as it pertains to denominations, academic presses, journals, seminaries, and university classrooms. Elliott forcefully argues that biblical scholarship itself is built to withstand, deflect, and generally contain mass social change, suggesting that, in many ways, biblical interpretation needs to

question the ideological manner in which the term “religion” now functions—mostly as a means to ignore questions of materiality and deflect the communal task of economic justice.

In the third essay in Part 1, Christina Petterson (University of Newcastle) challenges the recent “turn toward the individual” in postmodern biblical interpretation. Petterson notes that in many ways (autobiographical criticism, personal criticism, etc.), the individual has become the ultimate horizon in postcolonial biblical studies, and this individualizing tendency is noticeably consistent with the logic of global capital. Here, what appear as legitimate contextual horizons in postcolonial interpretation include one’s own individual feelings, existential displacement, hybrid ethnic origins, and other, exotic types of self-representation. However, due to the fragmentation of social life after the rise of global capital, neglected features within postcolonial biblical interpretation include the obvious—collective socioeconomic relations, and all that cannot be represented by the individual. Petterson’s work is a strong challenge to postcolonial interpretation, which she views as a discourse that can too easily be accommodated within diverse logic of global capitalism. The answer? In returning to the difficult task of history, we might begin to re-conceptualize ancient collectivity beyond the individual, and reveal all that was negated by our current, individualist ideological constellation.

The essays in Part 2, *Global Crisis and the First Testament*, address various global crises through reflection on the Hebrew Bible. The section is anchored by the excellent work of Roland Boer (University of Newcastle), who (given the crisis of food shortage and the need for alternative methods of food production) proposes a detailed model of subsistence farming, based on the practices of farmers in the southern Levant (ancient Israel). Boer does not seek to proof-text the practice of subsistence farming through a cheap appeal to ancient Israelite

farming practices; however, by exploring the reality of subsistence farming in the southern Levant, Boer is, likewise, able to explore the real possibility of subsistence farming in our contemporary context of global food shortage and corporate food control.

Following Boer, Matthew Coomber (St. Ambrose University) addresses the issue of debt and debt abuses in the Hebrew Bible from the context of the economic collapse in America after 2008. After a lengthy, helpful introduction to the concept of debt and the “gamble” of international capitalism, Coomber highlights a number of instances and controls over the phenomenon of debt in the Hebrew Bible (see Isa. 5:8–10 and Mic. 2:1–4, for example). Coomber carefully avoids establishing an equivocal relationship between Israelite economic practices and contemporary global capitalism; however, Coomber is able to compare the Assyrian extraction of Israelite resources to contemporary forms of global exploitation (Tunisia is his case study). In all cases, according to Coomber, debt functions a means of social exploitation and control, and requires prophetic engagement to limit its obvious abuses. Here is a great example of a biblical scholar familiar with the contemporary practice of debt exploitation carefully using this expertise to understand and highlight the mechanism of debt in ancient Assyrian-Israelite relations.

Continuing with the theme of debt and displacement in the Hebrew Bible, Robert Wafawanaka (Virginia Union University) explores the phenomenon of land exploitation and the “race for Africa” through the story of Naboth’s stolen vineyard in 1 Kings 21:1–16. This essay poignantly highlights similarities between the two narratives of land exploitation and exegetes the text in a manner that fully identifies with the practice of land exploitation in both ancient Israel and modern-day Africa. Wafawanaka argues that 1 Kings offers a useful window into the unjust world of land seizure,

and in this manner 1 Kings and the story of Naboth resonate with many Africans like Wafawanaka, who have suffered under similar social and financial injustices.

To end Part 2, Gregory Fewster (University of Toronto) charts the relationship between food production and political control, first in the narrative of the patriarch Joseph, and secondly through the multinational contemporary food conglomerate Monsanto. In this innovative piece, Fewster highlights similarities between control of ancient foodstuffs, political power, and corporate food production. Fewster offers a refreshing critique of contemporary ecological hermeneutics as a naïve attempt to “save the system,” and suggests ways in which the practices of Monsanto are eerily similar to the dream of Joseph in Genesis 37:1-11.

In Part 3, *Global Crisis and the Second Testament*, scholars address key topics related to the various crises created by global capital. In the first essay, Robert Myles (University of Auckland) charts the crisis of homelessness through the homelessness of Jesus as outlined in Matthew 4:12-25. Here, Myles suggests that (false) modern neoliberal perspectives on homelessness do not allow for a proper interpretation of Jesus’ own itinerant travel in the Gospel of Matthew. Popular capitalist interpretation, clouded by high Christology, cannot but see Jesus’ homelessness as a personal choice, and therefore fails to understand Jesus himself as one who suffers as a homeless person, one under significant political threat due to his relationship to John the Baptist.

My own essay, “Romans 13:1-7: With an Eye to Global Capital,” applies Gadamerian and Habermasian insight into the political plight of Paul in Romans 13:1-7. I suggest that here, Paul understands “ideology as ideology,” yet can do nothing but continue to pay his taxes—a political deadlock many of us continue begrudgingly to reflect. Though Paul recognizes the Roman authorities “do not bear

the sword for nothing,” we are reminded to submit to authority on earth, as it reflects authority in heaven (a nasty, complicated political insight). I conclude by suggesting that any biblical interpretation or application of this passage that ignores the reality of global capital, now, as an “authority” is irrelevant; true authority in the world now exists in the hands of global capitalists, not the modern state apparatus. Interpretation of this passage should change in kind.

In the third essay, Jonathan Bernier (McMaster University) argues that just as Tahir Square and Zucotti Park became places for resistance in the recent Occupy movement, so too did Solomon’s Portico become a place in which early Christian believers sought resistance to universalizing powers (see Acts 4:11; 5:12-13).<sup>31</sup> Using the methodology of Alain Badiou and the “Event,” Bernier graciously charts the tale of competing universalisms—one of the Occupy movement and the other of global capital, as parallel to the competing universalisms of the early Christian movement and the Roman Empire. This saves for us, in the end, the progression of an idea that we might call communism.

Finally, Ryan L. Hansen (Blakemore Church of the Nazarene) is appropriately focused on the book of Revelation, highlighting the reality of ecological catastrophe within a world currently dominated by global capital. Here, Revelation is significant in that its author, John, presents an alternative vision where cosmic reality, known as crisis, or “an ordeal” (Revelation 1:9; 2:9, 10, 22; 7:14), is fragmented and dissolves. Thus, John’s call to the seven churches should be seen as establishing local pockets of resistance to the false rhetoric of Rome, and provides a pattern of resistance for contemporary interpretation, within the context of ecological catastrophe.

31. As an aside, it should be noted that the idea for this volume was first proposed to me by Jonathan Bernier, and he is to be credited for the initial inertia behind the book.

The volume is appropriately rounded out by a postscript by preeminent political exegete Richard Horsley. Such a decision reflects our concern to tie contemporary political exegesis with the work of Richard Horsley and others, many of whom have courageously attempted to intersect biblical material with our current political situation. While the political horizon continues to change, in many ways our work is merely an extension of a project that began long ago, with the work of Norman Gottwald, Horsley, and others. One may also notice the strange inclusion of the theological voice within the vision of some of the essays. This is by design. There was a time when the theological voice remained separate from the practice of biblical interpretation. We, however, we have found it useful to include the theological perspective in the practice of political exegesis, as a possible site of resistance. So, in many ways, we are picking up the task of political biblical exegesis, but in ways that explicitly identify global capitalism as the new site of ideological control. In this manner, the Bible provides exciting opportunities for resistance and creative mechanisms to deal with rotating crises, all of which profoundly affect the manner in which we read and exegete biblical material.