

PREFACE

The authors and editors dedicate this volume to Professor Fernando F. Segovia, Oberlin Graduate Professor of New Testament and Early Christianity in the Divinity School and Graduate Department of Religion at Vanderbilt University, in anticipation of his sixty-fifth birthday. We also express our admiration and appreciation to Dr. Elena Olazagasti-Segovia, Senior Lecturer in Spanish at Vanderbilt. All of us have worked with Fernando as students or as professional colleagues. All of us find our careers—many of us, our lives—shaped by his influence.

We have chosen to diverge from a common academic tradition. On the occasion of milestone birthdays a prominent scholar often receives a *Festschrift*, a collection of essays produced in his or her honor. Because such volumes typically address only other scholars, and because they often lack conceptual coherence, few of them reach a broad audience or influence the field of biblical studies. We deem it particularly fitting that a volume dedicated to Fernando Segovia should prove useful to teachers and students as well as to professional scholars and that such a volume should represent a significant and coherent—though not necessarily unified—intervention in our field.

Fernando himself provides the model for such an endeavor. His collaboration with Mary Ann Tolbert, the two-volume anthology *Reading from This Place* (1995) and the anthology *Teaching the Bible* (1998), represents a milestone development in biblical studies.¹ *Reading from This Place* emerged at a moment when many professional biblical scholars were beginning to attend to the role of real readers, including their variegated relations to culture, power, and identity, in the process of interpretation.² The *Reading from This Place* project was unique in that for the first time remarkably diverse groups of interpreters gathered in one space to explore the intersection of social location and biblical interpretation. The published volumes that resulted from those conferences included programmatic essays by Segovia and Tolbert that still

inform both interpretive work and classroom teaching almost twenty years later. The current volume honors Fernando's work in several ways: it features collaborative scholarship from a diverse international team of scholars, it represents up-to-date critical engagement with culture, power, and identity in the work of interpretation, and it aims to reach both classrooms and professional libraries.

Fernando Segovia's career both reflects and has influenced the larger shape of contemporary biblical studies. We will rehearse only the broad outlines. His revised doctoral dissertation, *Love Relationships in the Johannine Tradition* (1982), employs both philological research and redaction criticism to explore the sectarian history of the Johannine community and the theological significance of love in that context.³ Fernando's work on John's Gospel takes a literary turn in his study of the Farewell Discourse, *The Farewell of the Word* (1991). As other scholars noted at the time, Fernando's concerns with the redaction history and social circumstances of the Fourth Gospel continued, but they now reflected stronger literary and rhetorical sensitivities, reading the text "as an artistic and strategic whole."⁴ These literary, or narrative, approaches further developed in essays concerning the Fourth Gospel's plot and in Fernando's collaboration with other scholars on a variety of literary and social studies of that Gospel. These studies frequently combine narrative approaches with social-scientific insights.⁵

Reading from This Place, then, marks a major turn in Fernando Segovia's work and in contemporary New Testament interpretation. As Fernando's scholarship progressed from historical criticism (including redactional analysis) to literary and social scientific interpretation, so did New Testament studies. Throughout his career, Fernando has combined such concerns with theological matters, particularly liberation theology.⁶ Around 1995 and 1996, however, we begin to see a concern with what Fernando and others call "cultural studies." Whereas historical criticism locates meaning in the *ancient* contexts from which biblical texts emerge, as do social-scientific approaches, while literary criticism finds meaning *within* the text itself, cultural studies opens biblical interpretation not simply to the past and to the text but to all the contexts in which the text has been interpreted and deployed. A great deal of Fernando's scholarship describes the emergence of diverse practices in such cultural interpretation. Would Fernando admit that some of his most compelling work also *prescribes* how it may move forward?⁷

Fernando Segovia's interventions in cultural studies demonstrate his commitment to intellectual work that engages people's lives and fosters liberation. In this respect, he works as public theologian as well as biblical

scholar. Indeed, Fernando has served as president of the Academy of Catholic Hispanic Theologians in the United States and will serve as president of the Society of Biblical Literature in 2013–2014. Space prohibits a full bibliographic account, but Segovia's work includes the Johannine literature, Latino/a theology,⁸ postcolonial and diaspora studies,⁹ and minority criticism.¹⁰ Collaboration represents a distinctive commitment of Fernando's work, and many of the contributors to this book have coedited volumes with Fernando, contributed essays to volumes Fernando has edited, and/or included Fernando's contributions in their own edited work.

Today biblical scholarship includes an astonishing array of methodological approaches. The scholars who contribute to the field represent its global reach and ethnic/racial diversity. No longer is it the case that a woman's gender provides the primary definition of her scholarship or status—though gender certainly remains a powerful factor in the profession. For that matter, gender studies now take account of men as well as women. Diversity in terms of gender identification (beyond the male/female dichotomy) and sexual orientation has won explicit attention. Fernando Segovia has participated in and contributed significantly to the proliferation of voices and approaches in contemporary biblical studies, notably to matters of culture, power, and identity. One cannot deny the progress that has occurred.

At the same time, it is fair to say that only a minority of biblical scholars pay explicit attention to the real people who read the Bible, whom Segovia identifies as “flesh and blood readers,” or to their role in the process of interpretation.¹¹ Especially rare is the introductory textbook that attends to such matters. Meanwhile, conversations regarding culture, power, and identity in interpretation have continued over the past decades. Not only does this volume express these developments through up-to-date contributions from an outstanding team of scholars, we intend it to serve classroom settings as a supplemental reading. The essays cover a wide range of New Testament texts and a broad range of interpretive questions. By advancing the conversation concerning the role of culture, power, and identity in interpretation, and by providing an accessible format for students and general readers to explore these ideas, we build upon the work of many predecessors, including Professor Fernando F. Segovia. We extend our thanks to each of our contributing authors, as well as to Andrew Benko for work on the bibliography.

In gratitude,

Francisco Lozada Jr. and Greg Carey