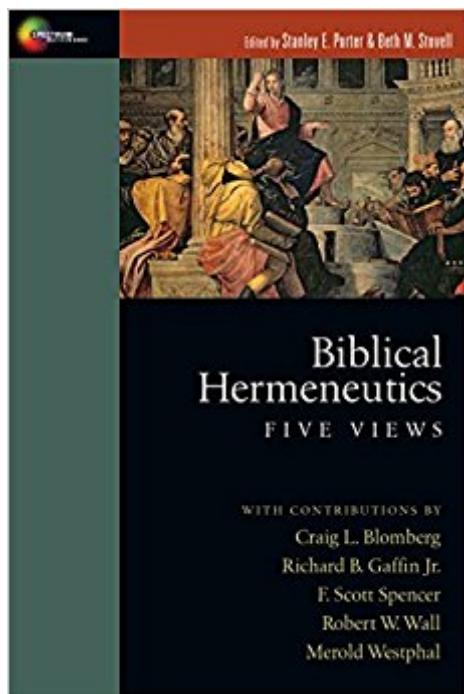


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# Biblical Hermeneutics: Five Views (Spectrum Multiview Books)



## **Synopsis**

Five experts in biblical hermeneutics gather here to state and defend their approach to the discipline. Contributors include: Craig Blomberg with the historical-critical/grammatical approach, Richard Gaffin with the redemptive-historical approach, Scott Spencer with the literary/postmodern approach, Robert Wall with the canonical approach and Merold Westphal with the philosophical/theological approach.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

"This is an undoubtedly interesting volume. The contributors describe their methodologies clearly and largely succeed in making the abstract and theoretical nature of the subject matter accessible." (Jonathan Kearney, *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, 35(5)) "Biblical Hermeneutics is a welcome addition to the often labyrinthine discussion of biblical interpretation. Each essay is clearly and astutely written, and the congenial tone of the contributors is refreshing." (Andrea L. Robinson, *Journal for Baptist Theology and Ministry*, Fall 2013) "The dialogue between these five views presents a basic hermeneutical conversation in a very accessible way. . . . Academics, students of biblical studies, and pastors will find this a helpful addition to their libraries." (Matthew James Hamilton, *Bible Study Magazine*, September/October 2012)

Stanley E. Porter (Ph.D., University of Sheffield) is president, dean and professor of New Testament

at McMaster Divinity College in Hamilton, Ontario. At McMaster he also holds the Roy A. Hope Chair in Christian Worldview. He is the author of numerous studies in the New Testament and Greek language, including *The Paul of Acts: Essays in Literary Criticism, Rhetoric, and Theology*; *Idioms of the Greek New Testament and Verbal Aspect in the Greek of the New Testament, with Reference to Tense and Mood*. He has also edited volumes such as *History of Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period, 330 B.C.-A.D. 400* and *Handbook to Exegesis of the New Testament*. Beth M. Stovell (PhD, McMaster Divinity College) is assistant professor of Old Testament at Ambrose Seminary of Ambrose University, Calgary, Alberta, Canada. She has authored *Mapping Metaphorical Discourse in the Fourth Gospel: John's Eternal King* and co-edited *Biblical Hermeneutics: Five Views* with Dr. Stanley E. Porter. Beth has also contributed chapters in edited volumes such as *Holy Spirit: Unfinished Agenda*, *Devotions on the Hebrew Bible and Global Perspectives on the Bible*.

This was one of the most challenging books I've ever read. It truly unveils the complexity of biblical interpretation and raises all kinds of interesting questions. I suspected I would dislike Westphal's "philosophical hermeneutics" treatment since I'm a Reformed guy, but I found it the most compelling. Blomberg and Gaffin's was good, but I find some of their maxim claims a bit arbitrary now. For example, Gaffin's assertion that the OT prophets \*had\* to have some kind of knowledge about what they were prophesying about (e.g., Messiah) just didn't make sense. Blomberg did well but I still did not find the traditional "texts can have only one meaning with possible 'fuller' meaning" assertion substantiated. I have to say though, I prefer the Zondervan CounterPoints series' format much more than this series by InterVarsity. The Counterpoints series has responses immediately after each view is presented. InterVarsity's series has responses saved till last - which doesn't work because you just can't hold 5 or 4 theological views in your head until the very end. They should really change that before they publish another dozen volumes in this series - but I suppose if they do, they'd look like they were imitating Zondervan too much. Whatever.

5 stars for content. 4 stars for Kindle version. Like all books where footnotes are important, the Kindle format suffers. You have to click on the footnote then arrow back to the page. It's a much more natural reading format on paper. That being said, I loved this introduction. Each view is explained pretty well but in pretty academic language. I would probably say that the fourth viewpoint on literary interpretation is probably the most difficult to follow. The rest are very well written. As for me, I personally was most impressed by the philosophical and canonical viewpoints. I think the first

(most traditional, i.e., historical grammatical) viewpoint is accurate and needed but I agree with Westphal (philosophical) that it should not be normative. Rather, it should be a guidepost to biblical interpretation. The philosophical and canonical viewpoints offer a fresh interpretation that need not conflict with historical grammatical. Excellent introduction to the concepts! Highly recommended.

There are books and then there are answers in the books. You will enjoy this for your improvement in ways like no other.

Good read! A solid overview of hermeneutics. Not a difficult read, broken up up to a point where it's easy

The book reviewed the different aspects as to how to approach the bible, with clarity and opens the understanding to new aspects. May help evolve in the technical aspects of interpretation.

One of the five contributors didn't offer much in the way of positive support for his position.

Hermeneutical approaches have greatly expanded in recent years even within conservative Christianity. Proponents of various methods often share much common ground and therefore come to many of the same conclusions, and yet important differences often arise. In this volume the editors selected five prominent hermeneutical views and assigned a scholar to describe and defend each approach and then apply their methodology to an interpretation of Matthew 2:12-16 and its use of Hosea 11:1. A response section follows in which each scholar critiques the other four views. Craig Blomberg champions what is normally called the historical-grammatical hermeneutic which seeks to discover the original meaning of the biblical text as intended by the author, and then make application to the current readership. While Blomberg claims to appreciate the other approaches he rightly sees his as foundational to all others (p. 28). Rather strangely, he adds the word "critical" to his methodology, terming it the "historical-critical/grammatical" view. He does so because he sees the importance of form, source and redaction criticism of the text (pp. 34-37). However historical-critical has traditionally been identified with liberal hermeneutics and higher criticism. Richard Gaffin, in his response to Blomberg, takes him to task for the use of this hyphenated word and believes it should be banned (pp. 178-182). I would agree. The literary/postmodern approach is given by F. Scott Spencer. Much of what he offers is highly complicated and virtually

incomprehensible, but when all the dust has settled he indicates that interpretation is determined more by the reader than by the original author, and in fact different readers will find different meanings (p. 67). Literary/post-modern hermeneutics is comfortable with multiple meanings. The philosophical/theological view, explained by Merold Westphal, is somewhat similar to the last view. It finds its grounding in Friedrich Schleiermacher and the dominance of presuppositional thought (pp. 70-73). That is, what we see is based on our perspective, a concept taught by both Nietzsche and Kierkegaard (pp. 74-77). This results in a double hermeneutic in which the texts remain open to different meanings in different contexts (pp. 79-83, 138, 184). With redemptive-historical hermeneutics, defended by Richard Gaffin Jr, we are taken from the postmodern emphasis of the former two approaches and turned to the Reformed, covenantal tradition, of the author (pp. 89-93). In this understanding Christ is “either explicitly or implicitly, its [scriptures] ubiquitous focus throughout” (p. 92), and the Old Testament is interpreted in light of the New Testament (p. 101). Gaffin is saying that in one way or another all of Scripture references Christ. Blomberg correctly critiques Gaffin’s essay by pointing out that while Luke 24:44 confirms that everything in the Old Testament that speaks of Christ has been fulfilled, not everything written in the First Testament is about Jesus (p. 142). The canonical hermeneutic is represented by Robert Wall and looks to the canonical process for proper interpretation of Scripture. It is framed by three important practices: exegesis is constrained by the so-called “rule of faith; the “effects” of Scripture when “received” is an important witness to its full meaning; and the spiritual authority of the interpreter who is seeking new meaning yet within the guardrails of the historical church (pp. 115-117). In Spencer’s critique of this approach he warns that the rule of faith can restrict interpretation in a negative way (pp. 152-153). Gaffin is also rightly concerned that the rule of faith can become “a canon above the canon” and thus will have ultimate authority over Scripture (p 183). “Biblical Hermeneutics” is a good introduction to these five approaches to Scriptural interpretation, however it is overly complicated, difficult to read and at times obscure. Even after reading the defenders of the views and the critiques by their detractors, I am still not certain I have a firm handle on the various views. At times it seemed like the authors go out of their way to explain their views in ways that actually resists clarity. Reviewed by Gary E. Gilley, Pastor-teacher Southern View Chapel.

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