

Biblical Studies and the Christian Faith as an Ideology

(An abstract)

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From a historical perspective, the practice of biblical interpretation presupposes a reading community, and the history of the practice of interpretation is continuously shaping the identity of this community and its development. From a sociological perspective, this is a kind of ideological activity behind that community. This process is profoundly related to the development of the history of the Christian faith, in which biblical studies plays a crucial role. This essay aims at exploring the present situation of biblical studies and the constructive role that the Christian faith may be involved in the guild.

“Ideology” in today’s use is often loaded with negative meaning. Thus this essay first examines the history of the use of the term “ideology,” and explores the significance of its application to the Christian faith. In light of this framework we then investigate the issues involved in the process of canonization and, subsequently, the interpretation of the Bible. According to this analysis, the Bible is the testimony of the divine revelation to the primitive church, and so biblical interpretation is crucial to the passing on of the Christian faith. Turning to the contemporary academic situation, the issue that has become pressing is whether this

positive ideological function of biblical interpretation can be retained, or whether the use has been twisted into a hidden form of domination. This tension is ever-present in the practice of biblical interpretation. And the outcome lies in the identity of the practitioner and his/her will to grapple: is (s)he a pilgrim struggling to reshape his/her identity in this open history?