

REMAPPING BIBLICAL STUDIES

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CUREMP at Thirty

Edited by

Stephanie Buckhanon Crowder and Mary F. Foskett

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Abbreviations

| | |
|---------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ABS | Archaeology and Biblical Studies |
| AHR | <i>The American Historical Review</i> |
| ANEM | Ancient Near East Monographs |
| BASOR | <i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i> |
| <i>BibInt</i> | <i>Biblical Interpretation</i> |
| BibInt | Biblical Interpretation |
| BIPOC | Black, Indigenous, and People of Color |
| BSNA | Biblical Scholarship in North America |
| BTB | <i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i> |
| BW | Bible and Women |
| BZAW | Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft |
| CHANE | Culture and History of the Ancient Near East |
| CRT | Critical Race Theory |
| <i>CurBR</i> | <i>Currents in Biblical Research</i> |
| CUREMP | Committee on Underrepresented Racial and Ethnic Minorities in the Profession |
| DEI | Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion |
| GPBS | Global Perspectives on Biblical Scholarship |
| <i>HvTSt</i> | <i>Hervormde Teologiese Studies (HTS Teologiese Studies/HTS Theological Studies)</i> |
| IECOT | International Exegetical Commentary on the Old Testament |
| JAAR | <i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i> |
| JBL | <i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i> |
| JCS | <i>Journal of Cuneiform Studies</i> |
| JFSR | <i>Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion</i> |
| JNES | <i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i> |
| JSNT | <i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i> |
| JSOT | <i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i> |

| | |
|----------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| JSOTSup | Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series |
| LAI | Library of Ancient Israel |
| LHBOTS | Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies |
| LPTb | Library of Philosophy and Theology |
| NAACP | National Association for the Advancement of Colored People |
| NEA | <i>Near Eastern Archaeology</i> |
| NITGC | New International Greek Testament Commentary |
| NTS | <i>New Testament Studies</i> |
| Or | <i>Orientalia</i> |
| OtSt | Oudtestamentische Studiën |
| PEQ | <i>Palestine Exploration Quarterly</i> |
| RenQ | <i>Renaissance Quarterly</i> |
| SemeiaSt | Semeia Studies |
| SHBC | Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary |
| SHR | Studies in the History of Religions |
| SWBA | Social World of Biblical Antiquity |
| VT | <i>Vetus Testamentum</i> |
| ZAW | <i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i> |

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INTRODUCTION

STEPHANIE BUCKHANON CROWDER AND MARY F. FOSKETT

In *Moral Leadership: Integrity, Courage, and Imagination*, Robert Franklin defines integrity as centering down, courage as stepping forward, and imagination as dreaming up.¹ For decades scholars of African, African American, Asian, Asian American, Latino/a/x, and Native American heritage have employed their central core—their intellect, histories, and lived experience—as a means to live courageously and imagine greater in the Society of Biblical Literature. We each initially found ourselves as the only or one of a few minoritized scholars in a white, Eurocentric, male-dominated guild. Our efforts to push the academic metes and bounds and insist on the worthiness of scholarship rooted in social location, cultural identity, and contextual studies proved arduous. Yet, we persisted.

With this volume, the Society of Biblical Literature marks thirty years since the founding of the Committee on Underrepresented Racial and Ethnic Minorities in the Profession (CUREMP). According to the Society's website, CUREMP was "constituted to assess the status and encourage the participation of underrepresented racial and ethnic minorities in all professional areas of biblical studies."² In this light the committee seeks to advance the representation of racial and ethnic minorities in scholarly and biblical professions while focusing on areas of mentoring and networking.

The Committee first met in 1992, the same year the Status of Women in the Profession Committee was formed. Some of the early trailblazers and CUREMP founders include: Randall C. Bailey, Lydia Lebron-Rivera, Fernando F. Segovia, Henry T. C. Sun, Vincent L. Wimbush, and Gale A. Yee, to name a few. Wimbush would later serve as the first chair of CUREMP.

1. Robert Franklin, *Moral Leadership: Integrity, Courage, and Imagination* (New York: Orbis Books, 2020), 6.

2. https://www.sbl-site.org/SBLcommittees_CUREMP.aspx.

He, along with Segovia and Yee, were each elected to serve as president of the Society of Biblical Literature.

In 2019, an estimated 15 percent of the Society's more than 7,000 members self-identified as African, African American, Asian, Asian American, Pacific Islander, Indigenous, Native American, or Latino/a/x.³ These figures are significant for a Society founded in 1880 by an initial group of forty-five scholars, unsurprisingly all white, Protestant men working in the United States.⁴ While there are areas for growth on its publishing boards, the Society's Council and various committees reflect elements of CUREMP's original intent and the Society's values of diversity, inclusivity, and equity. In 2023, the same year that Musa Dube served as president of Society of Biblical Literature, the Society called Steed Davidson as its first executive director from an underrepresented racial and ethnic minoritized group. Such is the thirty-year fruit of CUREMP.

The guild has come a long way, but still has miles to go. Both this Society and society writ large need scholars who will ashamedly marry who-ness with what-ness for the sake of justice, love, and mercy. This volume, *Remapping Biblical Studies*, not only honors the four presidents who have helped lead the intellectual community that CUREMP fosters; it also recognizes the longstanding prowess of the committee and all those who participate in and advance its work.

There are four pivot points to this volume highlighting the presidential addresses of CUREMP members. Each section opens with a presidential address, which is followed by reflections and essays noting personal points of engagement and/or challenge. The first section centers on the 2010 presidential address of Vincent L. Wimbush, "Interpreters—Enslaving/Enslaved/Runagage." Wimbush is the first African-American to have taken the helm of the Society. His address calls the guild to freedom to mine not just biblical texts but all interpretations of Scripture. Biblical scholars Gay L. Byron, Jacqueline M. Hidalgo, Velma E. Love, and Andrew Mbuvi offer thoughts on Wimbush's work while noting their own

3. This percentage is an estimate based only on members who completed their membership profile and indicated that the United States was the country of birth. The exact percentage is likely higher. See Society of Biblical Literature, "2019 SBL Membership Data," <https://www.sbl-site.org/assets/pdfs/sblMemberProfile2019.pdf>. A more recent report has yet to be published.

4. See Ernest Saunders, *Searching the Scriptures: A History of the Society of Biblical Literature, 1880–1980*, BSNA 8 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997).

relationship with Wimbush and journeys with CUREMP and the Society of Biblical Literature.

The second section opens with Fernando F. Segovia's 2014 president address, "Criticism in Critical Times: Reflections on Vision and Task." Segovia is the first person of Latino descent to lead the Society of Biblical Literature. His message on geopolitical contexts urges a pushing of the geographical borders for more inclusive scholarly engagement. Respondents Tat-siong Benny Liew, Yak-hwee Tan, Abraham Smith, and Ekaputra Tupamahu share their contextuality and connect to Segovia's clarion call for a *responsible* approach to biblical studies from the Global South.

In honor of Brian K. Blount's 2018 presidential address, "The Souls of Biblical Folks and the Potential for Meaning," scholars note his call to a hermeneutics aligning with social locus. Contributors Gregory L. Cuéllar, Raj Nadella, and Angela N. Parker expound on the role of language and location and embodied interpretation in their research. Referencing Blount, together the scholars' work evidences the personal paths taken to interpretive means.

The final section of this volume is dedicated to Gale A. Yee's 2019 presidential address, "Thinking Intersectionally: Gender, Race, Class, and the Etceteras of Our Discipline." Yee is the first person of Asian descent to serve as the president of the Society of Biblical Literature. Recounting her narrative as a Chinese scholar, Yee highlights the significance of self and story in academic pursuits. Writers Leslie D. Callahan, Janette H. Ok, Ahida Calderón Pilarski, and Jin Young Choi reflect on the matters Yee addresses in relation to their own career paths and in light of the ongoing work that minoritized biblical scholars are pursuing.

There are synergistic themes in the four presidential addresses aligning with the purpose of CUREMP. Identity and intellectual pursuits must be correlates. How society works is worth the work of the Society. This volume seeks to capture such tenets. In various ways, minoritized scholars in Society of Biblical Literature have remapped biblical studies by asking new questions; by interrogating the field's presumptions, methods, and aims; and by making connections between biblical scholarship and the lived realities of marginalized communities.

We have and continue to center down, step forward, and dream up. It takes integrity, courage, and imagination to do this work. We honor those who have led and are leading the way, and we look forward to the work and the new readings, methods, and insights that lie ahead.

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