No academic discipline comes from nowhere. This is especially noticeable for a field like postcolonial studies and other subjects in the so-called ‘margins.’ Consequently, in order to do any analytical work at all it is important to understand the foundations of the discipline. Therefore, before focusing on postcolonial critique of modern biblical studies and its contributions to the field, it is necessary to analyse the theoretical location of the field.¹ By theoretical location I understand the discipline’s locus within its episteme. In order to trace and define this locus it is important to understand in which episteme, and where in the episteme, the discipline belongs. Only then may the overarching theoretical origins and foundations of the field be found.

We shall begin this ‘epistemic search’ with a discussion of the postcolonial phenomenon. Then we shall proceed to define some important terms used to describe the postcolonial phenomenon. Finally, a definition of the episteme will be given followed by the localisation of New Testament exegesis within the realities in which postcolonial studies exist.

3.1 The Postcolonial Phenomenon: A Presentation and a Definition

Postcolonial studies are often thought of as being complex and difficult, lacking a clear consensus regarding its definition.² One of the few ideas that seems to be acceptable to most scholars is that a phenomenon exists that causes reactions and consequences, a phenomenon that

¹ The question of locating postcolonial studies has been debated in many studies, cf. Loomba, Colonialism/Postcolonialism, 1–103, Ashcroft, Griffith, and Tiffin, The Empire Writes Back, 1–13, Bhabha, The Location of Culture, 1–39, and Segovia, “Mapping the Postcolonial Optic,” 23–78.

² For an introduction to terminological problems in postcolonial studies, see Robert J. C. Young, Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 13–69.
has its roots in a colonial situation. What it should be called and how it should be defined are still under debate. It is therefore necessary to give an introductory discussion and presentation of the definition that will be used in the present study.

The simplest definition of what is usually called ‘postcolonialism’ understands the phenomenon as having its beginnings after a colonial period has ended. With this definition, the word ‘post’ is emphasised and ‘colonialism’ is defined as a situation in which a geographical or political entity is ruled by a coloniser during a limited time period. The problem with this definition is that it implies an understanding of the period following the withdrawal of the colonial power as one of independence without enslaving foreign influences. The former colonised country would become non-colonised when the colonisers have left.

This might be true if we consider a colonisation as a military act only—but the term ‘postcolonial’ is usually applied to refer to more complex aspects of a hegemonic political and epistemic situation than such a one-sided definition would allow for. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin write:

> We use the term ‘post-colonial,’ however, to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day.

Defining the term in this way, a postcolonial situation describes a state of being, during and after a colonial enterprise has taken place. In

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5 See Hall, “When was ‘the Post-Colonial’?” 245. Hall states that “the ‘post-colonial’ references something more than direct rule over certain areas of the world by the imperial powers. I think it is signifying the whole process of expansion, exploration, conquest, colonisation and imperial hegemonisation which constituted the ‘outer face,’ the constitutive outside, of European and then Western capitalist modernity after 1492.” Hall’s definition of postcolonialism is broad; he considers it to be a global phenomenon and emphasises that the postcolonial reality does not necessarily have to be in the “same way” everywhere, which does not mean that the postcolonial reality is not “in any way” (241). For further discussion, see Laura. E. Donaldson, “Postcolonialism and Biblical Reading: An Introduction,” *Semeia* 75:3 (1996): 1–14, 3.