We can't get nowhere until we settle accounts with history.

Earl Lovelace

This paper will have three parts. First, I will try to spell out what postcolonialism is about, and outline some of its theoretical and praxiological intentions and assumptions. Secondly, I will deal with the applicability of postcolonialism to biblical studies; and in the concluding part I will try to answer some of the questions constantly asked about postcolonialism, and end with my own cautionary support to the theory.

Briefly, let me try to spell out what postcolonialism is about. At the outset, I must admit that the task is not an easy one given the limited space, and, more importantly, because of the definitional ambiguity that surrounds the notion of postcolonialism. To begin with, there is reluctance and shyness among the theorists to spell out the purpose and parameters of the discourse, electing to be freelance and thus making vagueness a cardinal virtue. Each scholar, depending on his or her academic speciality, subject status, and institutional connection, has come up with a different set of definitions, examples and emphases. Then there is the vexed issue of the positioning of the hapless hyphen. It has caused constant hermeneutical squabbles among the practitioners and their critics. In its hyphenated

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form, post-colonialism, does it mark the end of colonization? Or the unseparated term, postcolonialism, does it indicate the continued messy and complicated history colonialism left in its awake? Then the whole discourse is torn between its use of mutually incompatible critical categories such as Marxism and poststructuralism. Added to this is the constant changing of frames of reference within the field.

*Streams of Postcolonialism*

There are three streams of postcolonialism at work. The first characterizes the notion of invasion and control; the second places enormous investment in recovering the cultural soul; and the third stresses mutual interdependence and transformation.

The first stream is about textual practices and resistance to colonial supremacy and management of other peoples' lives, territories and cultures. The focus of the discourse here is to expose colonial control and domination, with a view to gaining eventual independence and liberation. There are essayists, cultural critics and political activists ranging from Trinidadian C.L. James to Martiniquan Aime Cesaire, to Sri-Lankan Ananda Coomaraswamy, whose textual input is directed towards such a task. Here the hermeneutical engagement is locked into a battle between two unequal homogeneous entities—the invader and the occupied. Ironically, the debate is shaped by the language of resistance, and the epistemological assumptions of the occupier who supplied and informed anticolonial attitudes to class, culture, gender, subjectivity, and so forth.

The second stream concentrates on recovering the "cultural soul" from the intellectual and cultural grip of the master. Here we see two ploys at work. One is bent on recouping the pure essence of the native soul and culture which is momentarily debased and disgraced; the other is engaged in exposing the wiles of the master and the pitfalls of his claims to preeminence. The former is espoused by, among others, Ananda Coomaraswamy who emphasises the immense potentiality and perennial usefulness of indigenous cultural energies. The latter is exemplified by Fanon and Memmi whose distinguished work exposes the illegitimacies of the master culture. Both camps believe in the spiritual and theological superiority of African and Asian cultures which were undermined by the current Western supremacy. They tend to rely on the essentialist notions of a civilized