

The Concept of Ideology in Biblical Criticism

Ideology has been the subject of increasing attention in biblical criticism during the past century. This increasing attention is reflected in the pages of the Journal of Biblical Literature. A search for Journal articles containing the term “ideology” in the text (excluding book reviews) produces 397 articles: 96 written between 1932 and 1986 (none prior), 56 between 1987 and 1996, 87 between 1997 and 2006, and 158 between 2007 and 2016. The last ten years produced more articles using the term than the first ninety-six years of the twentieth century. Throughout its history, researchers in the political and social sciences have had difficulty reaching a consensus regarding the term’s meaning due to the numerous definitional elements applied. This presentation will trace the use of the concept in the Journal since its first appearance in 1932 in order to determine how understandings of the term “ideology” may have changed and to what degree consensus exists among biblical scholars regarding the meaning of the term. In categorizing the various articles, special attention will be given to explicit definitions of the term and the definitional criteria used.