

Chapter 2 of *Re-Enchanting the Text*  
by Cheryl Bridges Johns

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# The Search for a Way Ahead

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**Johns does not give the answer here.  
She exposes the alternatives.**

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An aerial, fisheye view of a dense city at sunset. The buildings are packed closely together, and the sky is a mix of orange, red, and blue. The text "CULTURE WARS" is overlaid in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters, centered on the image.

# CULTURE WARS

## Outline

### The Search for a Way Ahead

- Alienated from one another/Strangers to the Biblical text 25
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- The Pressing Need for Re-enchantment 29
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“We all hunger for a new textual reality wherein the text comes alive as a multidimensional world that beckons us into its mysteries.”

**Johns, p 35.**

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## Alienated from one another/Strangers to the Biblical text

- Johns set the problem up as disenchantment. This must be partially true because of the variety of incursions into the errors and problematic logic of any magical worldview. 25

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# Alienated from one another/Strangers to the Biblical text

- What's the difference between mystery and magic?
  - Mystery is a confrontation with that which can't be understood by human faculties at some time.
  - Magic is the attempt to bend or ignore reality in the interest of furthering some agenda besides reality or God's plan. (1 Samuel 15:23)
  - The two can't happily coexist since magic is an attempt to change reality.

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# Alienated from one another/Strangers to the Biblical text

- “Without returning to a precritical era, how do we re-enchant this text?”

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# Alienated from one another/Strangers to the Biblical text

- One of the most powerful texts competing for Christian affections today is what Peterson calls “**the text of the ‘sovereign self.’**”
- “The sovereign self is fed from the wells of consumption and acquisition.”
- In the context of this me-centered thinking, “biblical illiteracy is especially toxic.”



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# Alienated from one another/Strangers to the Biblical text

- Second is, “**the enticing text of empire.**” Though goods can proceed from empire, it tends to eclipse Christian identity in nationalism, fusing what should be committed to God instead to a national ideology in the form of patriotism. “When this happens, the Bible becomes the script for national security and manifest destiny. It becomes the script for justification of unjust wars.”
- Can you think of any particular wars that have been propagated from these vantages?

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# **Alienated from one another/Strangers to the Biblical text**

- “The ‘cultural subversion of the biblical faith’ should grieve us all.”
- Reverting to tribalism makes enemies out of our natural allies, our fellow citizens.



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# Beyond the killing fields . . .

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<https://www.oscarchamps.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/1984-Killing-Fields.-The-09.jpg>

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# Beyond the killing fields of the culture wars

- Johns points to the right and the left for making enemies.
- “Both the religious right and the left are captive to certain visions of Christianity that are culturally scripted more than biblically narrated.”

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# An aside . . .

- Though I do not recognize left and right as useful political categories, it is easy to recognize the religious right by their need to prosecute the culture war against citizens of the USA. I'm not sure who she is talking about on the left, or how those people are supposedly captive to a cultural non-biblical script. I think she assumes that we know these targets. But I don't.
- I would be happy to be enlightened on this matter.

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# Beyond the killing fields of the culture wars

- War produces victims, orphans, refugees, the tragically wounded.
- “The culture wars are no exception.”
- “The refugees of the culture wars are growing in number. They are the ‘postfundamentalists’ or the ‘exvangelicals.’” These are the people we find around the conversations held by Brian McLaren.

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# Beyond the killing fields of the culture wars

- Social media records the story of young people leaving behind the killing fields of their elders.
- “We all deserve a Bible that beckons us to enter a wonderland where we encounter a living God who knows and loves us.”

An illustration of a man in a black suit standing in a blue room. On the wall behind him is a large, stylized graphic of a human brain. The scene is lit from above, creating a shadow on the floor. A bright yellow horizontal line is positioned above the text.

# The pressing need . . .

<https://startup.netapp.in/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/how-artificial-intelligence-eases-pressing-needs-of-mental-health.jpg>



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# The Pressing Need for Re-enchantment

- “Unless the Bible is reclaimed as Holy Scripture, the identity ‘Christian’ will continue, but it will cease to reference a biblical religion.
- “What is desperately needed today is a way of re-enchanting the Bible so that we are ravished with wonder by both the beauty and the terror of the text, and by the shock and awe of a living God whose presence the Bible mysteriously reveals.”

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# The Pressing Need for Re-enchantment

- “Postfoundationalism is the search for some sort of middle ground between ‘beliefs that cannot be questioned’ and nonfoundationalism’s assertion that there is no such thing as an objective reality.”
- I wouldn’t go so far. I see this problem not as a rejection of objective reality, but a human inability to express that reality in language.



# BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW

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**Beyond a biblical worldview . . .**

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# Beyond a Biblical Worldview

- read 8 points on top of 31.
- “Biblical worldview ideology represents the height of Enlightenment thinking and modernity’s emphasis on rationalism. Biblical worldview proponents fail to see how the Bible they offer is just another modern version of truth-telling that is grounded in the idea that *correct thinking is the key element of the Christian faith.*”

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# Beyond a Biblical Worldview

- Christianity is not a propositional distillation of principles.
- It “is not the same as abiding in the mysterious realm of sacred Word.”
- Rationalizing the Word “has stripped it of its ability to capture us by its mysteries.”



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# Postfoundationalism . . .

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<https://www.shermjournal.org/vol-1-no-1/grenz-and-franke%E2%80%99s-post-foundationalism-and-the-religion-singularity>

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# Postfoundationalism

- Between modernity and postmodernity is postfoundationalism which is postliberalism.
- “Postfoundationalism’s approach to the text understands belief systems to be culturally and linguistically formed.”
- On this account, we construct our selves and Christian communities by the text, but there is no real foundation or trajectory.

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# Postfoundationalism

- “The Bible, they say, is ‘identified and received as a living Word . . . [that] demands the presence of faithful community to interpret and embody the texts.’” (Tim Condor and Daniel Rhodes)
- Inspiration is a “collaborative process, a holy give-and-take, a partnership between Creator and creator.” (Rachel Held Evans)



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# Postfoundationalism

- Humans are the arbiters of the text.
- There is a danger of textual tribalism.
- Postfoundationalism does not help to re-enchant the Bible.

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“No community can replicate the power of revelation in its convicting and life-transforming force. The community can testify to the Word, but only in a way that is secondary and interpretative.”

**Cheryl Bridges Johns 34**

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# Foundationalism & Postfoundationalism

- “The Bible has become a book that, in the words of Walter Brueggemann, speaks in ‘cadences that sound strangely like our own.’
- “It has become a text that describes our world and not one that has the power to disrupt, redescribe, or reorient it.”

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reprise . . .

“We all hunger for a new textual reality wherein the text comes alive as a multidimensional world that beckons us into its mysteries.”

**Johns, p 35.**

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# Where to now?

- “The answer lies beyond the trenches of the culture wars.
- “It is found in our discovery of the Bible as a sacred , dangerous, mysterious, and presence-filled wonderland.
- “Unless we find the depth of this text, the rate of biblical illiteracy will increase, and the post-Christian landscape will continue to expand.”