

SOURCE, FORM AND REDACTION CRITICISM OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

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INTRODUCTION

It was a finished product—a letter, a gospel, or whatever—that each New Testament writer put together, and which each recipient—an individual, a community, or whoever—received. The recipients may or may not have been aware of the process that lay behind that finished product, may or may not have had first-hand experience of any of the raw material that the writer adopted and perhaps adapted. Unless writers for their own reasons specifically drew attention to earlier material—thus, Luke in his preface (Luke 1:1-2), or Paul in his tactical appeal to tradition (1 Cor. 15:1-3)—those recipients were expected to do one and only one thing, namely, make sense of the finished product. The writer was bound to assume that they would, and the recipients were expected to show that they could.

A preoccupation with the finished product is wholly legitimate, and such a preoccupation undoubtedly enjoys widespread favour in New Testament studies at the present time. 'The synchronic rules, OK?' is more or less the triumphant cry of those who have lost faith in the older tradition-historical disciplines and the ability of those disciplines to cope with the complexities within the texts, or who have lost hope that anything new could possibly result from persevering with the tools of yesterday, or who, for their own conservative reasons, never had any faith in those tools to lose in the first place. For such persons, wishing to write their own griefless *In Memoriam* after what they believe to be the death of diachronic studies, the words of Alfred Lord Tennyson could scarcely be bettered: 'Our little systems have their day; they have their day and cease to be...'

Yet, without retreating an inch from the need for synchronic studies; without resisting in the slightest degree their concern to enter sensitively into the intellectual transaction—the meeting of the minds of original writers and original readers; without reducing the kaleidoscopic variety of ways in which a text may evoke a response in readers of every era and any situation, it remains important to resist an unhelpful polarization. On the one hand, diachronic studies at their

best have not failed to respect the synchronic approach, and that respect needs to be reciprocated. The ideal goal must be such insights as can be made available by the mutual correction and enrichment of both together. On the other hand, diachronic studies, which probe the prehistory of the finished product, are based on evidence within the text itself. That evidence calls insistently for attention and explanation. It establishes the principle that tradition-history is no optional extra. Source criticism, form criticism and redaction criticism, which together bring tradition-history to light, have not outlived their usefulness, and we cannot suppose that they will ever cease to be. And that which does not cease to be cannot possibly cease to be relevant and indeed essential to the task of exegesis.

The last observation can be made even more pointed. Exegesis has to find appropriate ways of being conditioned by, and showing respect for, all the facts of the life of the texts under scrutiny. It involves work, not just on the final stage, but also on all other recoverable stages, in the development of the material. It involves the exercise of sympathetic identification with the processes as well as with the product.

At this point, some definitions need to be put in place:

Source criticism is the process of bringing to light the earlier resources available to an author. Although used conventionally of documents, written resources, and tending to be concerned with literary relationships, there is, it must be said, no reason in principle why it should not include the study of unwritten or oral resources.

Form criticism recognizes that source material may have been in written form, but that it was not necessarily so. It aims therefore to separate out the distinct units of material that the compilers of the sources selected, to establish the earliest forms of those units, to classify them on the basis of 'family likeness', and, by the exercise of informed imagination, to posit for each a setting and a purpose in the life of a community.

Redaction criticism is the study of the theological significance of editorial activity on the part of an evangelist or any other source-using writer. Such editorial activity is most visible in changes made to the content of an individual unit of material, but it also extends to the process of arrangement of plural units, the setting up of sequences, and the use of juxtapositions.

As parts of the overarching whole of the study of tradition-history, each of these three critical methods has opened up perspectives that

enhance the process of exegesis. In combination, they provide evidence of a developing and dynamic process. At the beginning of its life, a distinct unit has a meaning and a function. To analyse its structure, to classify it, and to define its purpose will be a gesture of respect for its integrity. Through the subsequent stages of its internal growth and modification, including its association with other units, whether as immediate neighbours or as one of a set of literary building blocks that form a total building, a change in meaning and function may or may not take place. Exegesis at its best will take all such change into account. To respect and exploit the integrity of the material at each of these stages, and to preserve a sense of the distinctness of each of them, is the opportunity and also the responsibility of exegesis. To compress the process so that developments are ignored would be the very opposite—a failure to recognize an opportunity, and a lack of respect for the individuality of the persons or groups who participated in the generation, the adaptation and the reception of that unit.

The three named 'criticisms' have a quite distinct history within the development of the study of the New Testament. Although by no means restricted in application to the Gospels, their contribution and their essential complementariness have nevertheless been especially clearly exemplified in the area of Gospel criticism. In that area, form criticism (cf. Bultmann 1963) emerged shortly after World War I as a corrective of the supposed one-sidedness of source criticism, while redaction criticism (cf. the survey in Rohde 1968) emerged shortly after World War II as a similar corrective of form criticism. In the first case, Gospel sources needed to be understood in oral and not exclusively documentary terms, and the corollary was that they also needed to have their roles in their presumed communities exposed to the light of day. In the second case, Gospel writers needed to be recognized as theologically creative writers, again in a social and community setting, and not as mere collectors and compilers. In supplementing and complementing, but not displacing or undermining, its predecessor, each method extended and enriched the tradition-historical or diachronic approach to the Gospels. It remains the case that each needs and, at its best, integrates with the others, and similarly, that the diachronic and synchronic approaches need and, at their best, integrate with one another.

Each of the three methods has established itself as an essential part of the New Testament specialist's equipment. To say this is not to

forget that even among those who accept all three in principle there remains considerable space for the exercise of individual judgment in practice, and therefore, wholly unsurprisingly, plenty of disagreement. These disagreements underline the need to be aware, not simply of the great advances and insights that have been achieved, but also of the series of decisions, some of them debatable, that the process of tradition-historical reconstruction includes. Exegesis, drawn along in the wake of tradition-history, cannot be unaffected by the outcome of those decisions. Not only so, but after those decisions have been made, exegesis finds itself faced with further testing questions arising from the sheer fact of the hard and unyielding reality of development that *any* tradition-historical reconstruction exposes. At this point, two things are required: first, to clarify some of the typical decisions that tradition-history, building on the three criticisms, requires, and secondly, to exhibit in a series of examples the serious questions posed for exegesis by the phenomenon of development.

MAJOR ISSUES

Source critical activity quickly brings to the fore the matter of criteria, presuppositions and procedures.

Each and every text, ancient or modern, has first to be read in its own terms and assumed to be coherent and consistent. Source criticism gains its first foothold when lapses in coherence and consistency become apparent. Thus, in the Gospel of Mark, the erratic distribution of secrecy/silence commands suggests that earlier stories have received later emendation. Similarly in the Gospel of Luke, three beatitudes dealing tersely and economically with problems that are characteristically human and by no means restrictedly religious (6:20b-21), presently co-exist with another beatitude, itself both lengthy and emphatically religious (6:22-23). In the Gospel of Matthew, encouragement to persons so resourceless as to be racked by worry about the supply of food and clothing (6:25a, 26, 28-30, 31, 32b) has mixed into it a saying that functions better as a warning to the prosperous (6:25b) and other sayings employing a quite different underlying logic (6:27, 32a). Something seems to be going on that calls for a source-critical solution! Similarly, in the Gospel of John, a reference to a single perplexing 'work' on a sabbath (7:22) establishes a direct connection between 7:15-24 and 5:1-18, but ignores the series of very remarkable events in the intervening chapter. Such inconsistency is sometimes substantial, sometimes stylistic,

sometimes both. Thus, there is manifestly a change of style in John 1:6-8 after 1:1-5; John 1:15 'interrupts' 1:14, 16-17; unusual language and ideas occur in John 1:1-5, 14, 16-17; there is, as it happens, precedent for a book's beginning as John 1:6 does (cf. 1 Sam. 1:1, Job 1:1). Do John 1:1 and 1:6, someone might ask, represent alternative beginnings for this Gospel? All in all, then, the text itself poses questions, the seriousness of which source criticism has to attempt to answer. Of course, in the light of everything one can discover from the whole of an author's work, a judgment has to be made as to whether these really are dislocations and not evidence that the authorial technique employed just happens to be different from the one we would have used.

When more than one document is involved, and a literary relationship involving direct contact or dependence between them has proved convincing on the basis of, say, extensive verbal overlap or common order of disparate component parts, the question is then one of how that relationship would be defined. While debate has not ceased over the so-called tendencies of the Synoptic tradition (Sanders 1969), where such literary relationships are conceded by all but a few, there are certain typical principles that have commended themselves widely. One is that 'the general tendency of early Christology...was from the lesser to the greater' (Davies and Allison 1988: 104). Another related principle is that it is easier to understand the removal than the deliberate insertion of details which might cast a shadow across the figure of Jesus. These principles can be seen at work in the following way:

A synchronic reading of the Gospel of Mark makes clear without a doubt that the term 'Son of God' is set at the heart of his Christology: affirmed in 1:1, acknowledged by demons who as supernatural beings recognize an equally supernatural being in 3:11-12, 5:6 (Wrede 1971: 25), accepted by Jesus himself (14:61-62), and admitted by the representative of the execution squad (15:39), this is gospel truth for Mark. That being so, it defies credibility and demands intolerable credulity that Mark, possessed of Matthew, should scale down the Petrine confession, itself located at the high point of his narrative, from 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God' (Matt. 16:16) to 'You are the Messiah' (Mark 8:29).

In similar vein, the risks involved in painting a picture of Jesus as aggressively impatient (Mark 1:41, 43), possibly illegitimate (Mark 6:3), limited in power (Mark 6:5), and not necessarily as good as God

(Mark 10:18), were patently obvious. Equally obvious and understandable would be a common strategy on the part of Matthew and/or Luke to eliminate or reduce those risks. Hardly persuasive would be any source-critical scheme that required us to envisage Mark as deliberately turning the safe into the unsafe, or the risk-free into the risky.

The much-debated Q hypothesis for the explanation of common Matthew/Luke traditions can be defended by using similar arguments (cf. Catchpole 1993: 1-59; Tuckett 1996: 1-39). The main rival, Luke's use of Matthew (cf. Goulder 1989: 3-71), is jeopardized by variations in wording and ideas which suggest that frequently Luke has an earlier version. Can Luke really have been willing to scale down a 'Jesus = Wisdom' Christology to a 'Jesus < Wisdom' Christology (Matt. 11:2-19//Luke 7:18-35)? Would the scale of a miraculous cure (Matt. 12:22-24//Luke 11:14-16) be reduced or the passion of the Jonah-like Son of man be eliminated (Matt. 12:38-40//Luke 11:29-30)?

If the Synoptic Gospels exhibit to the satisfaction of most specialists the phenomenon of direct literary relatedness, the question of principle concerning when similar relatedness may be presumed is raised in acute form if the fourth Gospel is set alongside the other three. Opinion, it has to be said, remains sharply divided. Over against direct literary relatedness (advocated, for example, by Neiryck in a series of studies, 1991: 571-711) the most favoured alternative remains common Johannine and Synoptic dependence on earlier pre-Johannine and pre-Synoptic tradition, which in turn gives rise to the hypothesis of a signs source with or without a passion narrative attached (cf. Fortna 1970, 1988). The latter hypothesis can appeal with some conviction to the numbering of some of the Johannine 'signs' (2:12; 4:54), the alleged unsuitability of 20:30-31 as an ending for and summary of the Gospel as a whole, and above all to the presence of dislocations or *aporias* within the text (e.g. 14:31). The division of opinion serves to highlight the urgent need for a consensus concerning criteria and presuppositions, perhaps along the following lines. First, the inference that John used the Synoptics should not depend upon the requirement that he should have used them in the same way as they used one another. Secondly, where there is a Johannine/Synoptic overlap there ought to be some features of the Johannine version that appear to be earlier, as well as others that appear to be later, than those in the parallel Synoptic version, if we are to posit the existence of a

version of the tradition that is prior to both. Thirdly, Johannine inclusion of features that are clearly redactional in one of the Synoptic Gospels ought, by and large, to be sufficient to prove Johannine dependence, not on pre-Synoptic tradition, but on that Synoptic Gospel.

Someone might ask whether a source-critical decision on any of these contentious issues matters one way or the other to the exegete. The answer is that it does, since the foundations on which redaction-critical activity may build will have been laid differently, the developments from sources to finished products measured differently, and the intentions of the editor of a given work defined differently.

Form-critical activity has immense potential for an understanding of how texts grow and how their functions may correspondingly change. It also has to be put into effect with care and an awareness of the risks involved. The perils are, however, heavily outweighed by the potential for important insight.

First, in the case of material for which an oral stage of transmission is posited, it is wholly appropriate to respect the norm that the earliest version of a tradition is likely to be, as it were, lean and economical. Sometimes a later written version may be more economical than an earlier one, but when that is the case, it may well serve as a pointer to the substance of what underlies and antedates the earlier one.

The tradition of Jesus' reception of the children is a case in point. Matthew's version (19:13-15) is later, in the sense that it depends on Mark's version (10:13-16). But it is a witness to, without having direct access to, an earlier pre-Markan version, in that only one declaration by Jesus is retained in the story tradition (Matt. 19:14//Mark 10:14), while the other is moved elsewhere (Matt. 18:3//Mark 10:15).

Secondly, the use of parallel and precedent with a view to classification of material into families has an important bearing on how the logic of a tradition actually works, as well as where its origin may be located. This may be a hedge against misunderstanding by virtue of clarifying the necessary interpretative framework. It may also expose the setting within which it is or is not appropriate to treat material.

The tradition of the walk to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-15) is a case in point. It abounds in Lukanisms but, in view of Luke's tendency to paraphrase the wording of his sources, it is not thereby shown to be a Lukan creation. Its approximate pre-Lukan form can be recovered by exploiting the presence of, and then removing, some formally

disruptive elements. Thus, shorn of the interrupting material in Luke 24:21b-24, the story is able to reappear as an independent unit, unconnected to Luke 24:1-12 (cf. Fuller 1972: 105). Again, shorn of the intrusive announcement of the appearance to Peter in Luke 24:33-35 (cf. Fuller 1972: 111-13), itself introduced in the same way as Acts 10:1-11:18 is introduced in advance of Acts 11:19-21 in order to connect a decisive event in Christian history with the experience of an ecclesiastical heavyweight, Peter, the tradition can be seen to have just *one* climax and *one* major concern, its aetiological role as an expression of the community's eucharistic experience of the risen Christ. The pre-Lukan tradition can now be classified. It belongs to the family of journey-type epiphany stories (cf. Gen. 18-19; Tobit 5-12; Mark 6:45-52), which is very important indeed, for the classification of the story has the effect of classifying the Jesus who appears in it. By the choice of this form of story, his risenness is defined in angelic terms, a view which happens to be firmly resisted by Luke. Not for nothing did the evangelist have the risen Jesus eating in emphatically non-angelic fashion (Luke 24:41-43, cf. Tob. 12:19; Josephus, *Ant.* 1:11:2 §197; Philo, *On Abraham* 23 §118)!

Thirdly, in following up the last point, an insistence upon a community setting and on a correspondingly useful purpose is usually extremely helpful. Negatively, if a community setting and purpose cannot easily be envisaged in a particular case, it may well be that creative writing is the explanation nearest to hand. Positively, this insistence recognizes the essentially social character of human life in general, and the early Christian movement in particular.

Redaction critical activity also needs to be hedged in by some cautions or caveats. First, as has often been observed, there is a danger that it may overplay the differences between two versions of a given tradition and fail to give appropriate weight to overlaps, that is, to upset the balance between the changes that were made and those that were not made (cf. Tuckett 1987: 120-21). The latter represent an author's decision just as much as the former. As with the application of the criterion of dissimilarity in historical Jesus studies, there is a danger of substituting the distinctive for the characteristic. Once again, therefore, the method requires that it be supplemented by other disciplines that emphasize the finished product.

Secondly, there is a related danger that all the traditions in a Gospel might be forced violently into one single mould, thus causing an unrealistic consistency to be 'discovered'. After all, any given writer

may or may not have thought through all the issues he intended to discuss, and he may or may not have subordinated all his resources to a single purpose. As mentioned above, the charitable presumption when reading any text must be that the writer was consistent, but critical realism occasionally requires the recognition of inconsistent thinking. One recalls here the vexatious non-uniformity that seems to characterize Luke's presentation of eschatology (Mattill 1979), or the inconsistency of Mark's superimposition of the secrecy motif (Wrede 1971: 11-23). One thinks also of Matthew's handling of worldwide mission, with a perplexing juxtaposition of requirement (Matt. 28:19) and prohibition (Matt. 10:5-6), or his treatment of the Pharisees, with unguarded endorsement of the content of their teaching (Matt. 23:2-3) alongside swingeing denunciation of the alleged discrepancy between that teaching and the divine word (Matt. 15:6-9). Quite clearly, therefore, redaction criticism needs always to be operated with care and to be allowed to disclose a trend in a writer's thinking rather than an entirely homogeneous and consistent product. It must also allow for the possibility that the status and function of different constituent parts of the whole may vary. Thus, for example, it is well known that Matthew intends certain traditions to function as models with ongoing applicability in conduct or belief in a community whose life is disclosed ('transparency'), while other traditions preserve a non-repeatable situation without ongoing relevance to conduct or belief ('historicization') (Strecker 1995: 81-101).

These three traditional and unshakable criticisms form part of the stable foundation upon which exegesis must be built, for all that the use of each is not free from risk. However, if the methods are used, notwithstanding the risks, then the major issue that the exegete must confront again and again is the reality of development. These texts had not reached a final and static state, for they share in, indeed they condition and are conditioned by, the dynamism of early Christian experience. That being so, the exegete has to keep apart the different stages in the development and, above all, must not synthesize them.

USES IN EXEGESIS

Since it is important to remember that the Gospels are not the only texts that pay rich dividends to those who invest in these methods, I shall begin by considering some Pauline material.

No other Pauline passage can hold a candle to Phil. 2:6-11 in respect of theological profundity and influence through the centuries

of Christian history. With the aid of the three critical methods one is able to reach back to an earlier text (source criticism), recover its original purpose and life setting (form criticism), and note the distinct changes of meaning brought about by Pauline editorial work (redaction criticism). How much one would miss by playing the synchronic card alone!

That said, one ought, of course, to play it. Lines of connection between this passage and its wider context are firmly established by the call to be of the same mind (v. 2) and also to share the mind of Christ (v. 5); the request for humility (v. 3) in view of the self-humbling conduct of Christ (v. 8); the critique of 'empty glory' (κενοδοξία, v. 3) in the light of the self-emptying of Christ (v. 7) and the ultimate achievement of God's glory (v. 11); and the strengthening of the demand for obedience (v. 12) by the reminder of the unswerving obedience of Christ (v. 8) (Hooker 1975: 152-53). In other words, the 'story of Christ' is intended to provide a paradigm (Fee 1995: 191-97), deliberately and skillfully directed at a local situation made problematic by sub-Christian 'mindsets' (Fee 1995: 174-97). It is at home in its context. Nevertheless, vv. 6-11 stand out from their context in view of the awkward connection (ὅς) with v. 5; their poetic and rhythmic 'feel'; and the lack of, or at best the limited, correlation between the content of vv. 9-11 and the situation of fractured relationships in the Philippian community. The presence of ideas and terms atypical of Paul, that is, the grasping (ἀρπαγμός), Christ as servant (δοῦλος), Christ's receiving a gift from God (ἐχαρίσατο αὐτῷ), and his high exaltation (ὑπερύψωσεν), gives further support to the existence of pre-Pauline material. One needs therefore to play the diachronic card as well. This will reinforce the results of synchronic interpretation by isolating some Pauline redaction, but it will also enable one to get back to an earlier stage and a non-identical set of meanings. Paul not only adopted, but also adapted, this 'song of Christ's glory'. Adaptation took the form of three widely agreed editorial insertions:

First, 'even death on a cross' (θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ, v. 8). The originality of this phrase is not secured by a recollection of crucifixion as the mode of death prescribed for slaves (*contra* Hengel 1977: 62-63), for the servant Christ is not a slave. The phrase itself matches Paul's conviction about the cross as the centre of the Christian gospel (cf. 1 Cor. 1:18; 2:2; Gal. 3:1; Phil. 3:18) (Martin 1983: xvi, 220-22), and its insertion is readily understandable in those terms. Without it,

the preceding statement comes to a fine climax in 'to the point of death' (μέχρι θανάτου). That being so, the emphasis is now on the whole of the preceding life, and how from beginning to end it was a life of obedience, cf. 3 Macc. 7:16, where μέχρι θανάτου describes committed faithfulness up to the point of being willing to die, though death does not in fact take place.

Secondly, 'in heaven and on earth and under the earth' (ἐπουρανίων καὶ ἐπιγείων καὶ καταχθονίων, v. 10). The insertion of this phrase would fit with Pauline statements in Phil. 3:20-21, where the subordination of 'all things' (τὰ πάντα) by the exalted Christ is presented as the exercise of the power which will also establish the resurrection body. The same pattern is apparent in 1 Cor. 15:20-28, where the present reign of Christ over all but one of the hostile powers culminates in the defeat of the last one, death, and the arrival of the era of general resurrection.

Confirmation of the correctness of removing 'in heaven and on earth and under the earth' comes from a form-critical direction. Its omission leaves a neat chiasmic structure in vv. 10-11:

so that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend,
and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord.

The recognition of this underlying form has a further advantage: it enables the knees that bend and the tongues that confess to be recognized as exclusively human, and then one remembers that Isa. 45:23, which is unmistakably echoed in that ending, is part of a call *to the whole world* of humankind to recognize the sovereignty of the one God:

Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other. By myself have I sworn...: 'To me every knee shall bend, every tongue shall swear'.

So the pre-Pauline poem/hymn sees the sovereignty of God being recognized through an acknowledgment of the lordship of Jesus *by all of humankind, Jews and Gentiles*. That means that the material was produced, not in a restrictedly Jewish Aramaic-speaking context (as some have supposed) but in a community brought to birth by the worldwide Christian mission.

Finally, 'to the glory of God the Father' (εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ πατρός, v. 11). A good deal of raw material is already assembled that can

demonstrate the secondariness of this phrase. First, the form of vv. 10-11 is better without it. Secondly, its presence protects the sole and lonely eminence of the one God, which might be put at risk by placing Christ in the position of God; cf. Paul's usage of Isa. 45:23 elsewhere, with God as the focus of attention (Rom. 14:11). Thirdly, there are similar references elsewhere to the achieving of the glory of God; cf. Rom. 15:7; 2 Cor. 4:15; Phil. 1:11, including the call for the imitation of Paul as a means of imitating Christ in a Jew/Gentile setting and all εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ (1 Cor. 10:31-11:1). Fourthly, the reference to God as Father introduces a Sonship Christology, which is entirely absent from the earlier part of the hymn. It does, however, correspond to the Pauline view of the subordination of the Son to the Father after the final triumph, to quote 1 Cor. 15:27-28 again.

So we can compare and contrast the two stages, the pre-Pauline and the Pauline, in the development of this 'song of Christ's glory'. At the pre-Pauline stage, the exaltation of Christ was a response of divine grace to a whole *life* of obedience. The reality of the exaltation was intended to be acknowledged universally in faith by the whole of humankind—that is, the spread of confessing persons is set out on a horizontal line, as it were. At the Pauline stage, the interest shifted from the life of obedience to the ending of life in death. The reality of the exaltation was intended to be acknowledged by the supernatural powers. These beings are distributed along a vertical line, as it were. Their rule enslaves humankind until the last enemy, death, is destroyed. Then the sovereignty of the Son will give way to the final sovereignty of the Father. Most strikingly, the acknowledgment of the lordship of Jesus changes from a confession of faith to an admission of defeat.

To sum up, source criticism uncovers the pre-Pauline material. Form criticism defines its character, a poem or even a hymn, and provides a setting, a worshipping Christian community of mixed ethnic background. Redaction criticism gives insight into the mind of Paul, acting as a theologically energetic adapter, and strengthens synchronic studies of the contribution of the hymn to the totality of the letter to the church at Philippi.

Consider now some evidence from the Gospels. The basic and most irreducible unit of Gospel tradition is the isolated saying. It may or may not have been transmitted with a setting, and if it has been, the setting may or may not be original. While that setting will disclose something of the human context in which the saying was put to work,

it may or may not be insightful or legitimate.

Take, for example, the saying 'Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's' (Mark 12:17). Two things may be said of the so-called pronouncement story in which it is embedded (Mark 12:13-17). First, its life setting must be that of Jewish Christianity in Palestine, where the payment of tribute posed the question of 'tolerating mortal masters, after having God for their Lord' (Josephus, *War* 2:8:2 §118). Secondly, the logic of the narrative, which hinges on ownership of a coin, and the politically very conservative position it adopts, require Jesus only to say, 'Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor's'. This suggests that the saying, with its two foci of the emperor and God, was probably separate and not embedded in its present context. As such a separate saying, its content is much less conservative, much more enigmatic, much more demanding of a decision by the responsive and responsible listener—more in tune, can one say, with the prophetic Jesus and with the politics of change and hope that were central to his mission? To ask that question is implicitly to answer another question as to the legitimacy and defensibility of the secondary development that embedded such a saying in such a setting. Once the narrative setting is in place, enigma is absent, prophecy is silent, the possibility of change is nowhere to be seen. Methodologically, what is important is that the concerns of form criticism with life setting, aided by an internal dislocation, give insight into the history of a tradition: two stages, two settings, two meanings.

Take another isolated saying, 'But I say to you that (a) if you are angry with your brother you will be liable to judgment; (b) and if you say *raca* to your brother you will be liable to the council; (c) and if you say, "You fool", you will be liable to the hell of fire' (Matt. 5:22). Once again, internal dislocation enables us to reach back source-critically to an earlier version, v. 22ac, which satisfies basic form-critical requirements, and then to come forward redaction-critically to an understanding of the role of the saying in the Gospel of Matthew.

First, within v. 22 as it stands, there is a serious tension. Two equivalent and very mild insults (Luz 1990: 282) have two far from equivalent consequences. In the first case, it is liability to the council (ἐνοχος τῷ συνεδρίῳ) and in the second case, liability to the hell of fire (ἐνοχος εἰς τὴν γέενναν τοῦ πυρός). By 'the council' is meant not a regular Jewish court, still less the Jerusalem sanhedrin, for no ordinary Jewish court would judge the offence described—indeed, 'if

such a law were ever implemented, the courts would be swamped with a flood of cases and the judicial system would be paralyzed' (Betz 1995: 221)! So, the term should be understood in formal but not conventionally Jewish terms as referring to some sort of assembly, which its earlier usage makes wholly natural (cf. Lohse 1971: 861-62). Yet the tension remains: answerability to a human assembly *versus* liability to a divine punishment. This tension suggests that v. 22b does not belong to the same stratum of tradition as v. 22c, with both making concrete an initial demand in v. 22a (*contra* Luz 1990: 281). Nor does the content of v. 22b encourage the thought that an original saying consisting of v. 22ab has received a Matthaean editorial addition in v. 22c (thus Davies and Allison 1988: 515-16). Rather preferable is a reconstruction based on the match between v. 22b and Matt. 18:15-17. Both address the problem of tensions and offences between Christians, and both envisage an assembly (*συνέδριον* = *ἐκκλησία*) which will deal with it. All of this is probably what v. 22b has in mind, which suggests Matthaean redaction as the best explanation. Placing v. 22b alongside v. 22c reflects the same mindset as placing 18:18 after 18:15-17: the decision of the *συνέδριον* or *ἐκκλησία* is the decision of God!

Secondly, v. 22ac is an entirely satisfactory saying in respect of both form and content. Formally, it uses synonymous parallelism, saying the same thing twice in different ways. Content-wise, v. 22c clarifies v. 22a very appropriately: that which stems from the heart (anger) expresses itself openly in dismissive speech. There is also a good match between the two definitions of the consequences of offending: 'the hell of fire' stands for divine punishment, and so too can judgment (*κρίσις*). Moreover, there are plenty of Jewish parallels for 5:22ac, especially in the wisdom literature (Sir. 1:22; 27:30-28:7).

At the pre-Matthaean stage, therefore, there existed a saying voiced by someone who stood four-square within the wisdom tradition:

If you are angry with your brother you will be liable to judgment;
and if you say, 'You fool', you will be liable to the hell of fire.

The speaker would have had a positive concern with inter-personal harmony, and that alone. Matthew introduced a quite different concern, to dispel the suspicion that Jesus had 'come to abolish the law and the prophets' (Matt. 5:17). So along with his aim of adjusting the saying for use in the discipline-cum-conciliation procedures of his Christian community, he also wished to use it under the general heading provided by Matt. 5:17-19, that is, to demonstrate the

continuity between Moses and Jesus. The 'higher righteousness', set polemically over against Pharisaic piety in Matt. 5:20, is described in 6:1-18, but not in the six paragraphs that make up Matt. 5:21-48. Matt. 5:21-22 dominates the first of the six paragraphs, exemplifying the principle set out in 5:17-19. The mission of Jesus (5:17) and the conduct of Jesus' disciples (5:19) are, or should be, conditioned by the classic Jewish position on Scripture. So, with an exact quotation of one Mosaic passage (Exod. 20:13) and a summary of several other passages referring to human judicial process (Exod. 21:12; Lev. 24:17; Num. 35:12; Deut. 17:8-13), Matthew defines the Mosaic base. By adding here (as in Matt. 5:31, 38, 43) the antithetical and authoritative introduction, 'But I say to you...', he formalizes the position of Jesus. And the upshot is the sharpest possible attack on anyone who espouses a Christian theological position that undercuts Moses. In the light of what is said later about Christian prophets, charismatic in practice and (from the point of view of the arch-conservative Matthew) liberal in theology, the attack looks like a confrontation with real people representing an actual and not a theoretical threat. So here is another piece of raw material for exegesis: source criticism and form criticism combining to expose a saying whose setting is within the wisdom tradition of the Jewish community, while redaction criticism exposes the saying's adoption and then adaptation to problems faced by a Christian community—partly problems of strained personal relationships, and partly problems caused by itinerant charismatic Christian prophets. In Matthew's view, their dangerous liberalism would be branded, and they themselves banished, by the judge. Even the identity of the judge has been altered in the process: Matt. 5:22ac by itself had in mind no one but God, but Matt. 5:22 in context has in mind no one other than Jesus.

The third example takes the parables as its focus. It is beyond all doubt that parables played a central role in the prophetic strategy of the historical Jesus. Also clear is the fact that there are many different sorts of parables. The reconstruction of the history of some of the parabolic traditions requires a decision in each case about the sort of parable that is under scrutiny. It can then lead to important insights into that parable's original function, as well as showing how sometimes significant adaptation for later and quite different purposes has occurred. Here are two parables which serve to illustrate both the

process of tradition-history and the nature of the resultant exegetical task.

Perhaps the best known of all the parables in popular parlance is the parable of the good Samaritan. Redaction criticism notices some salient features of the setting provided for this parable by Luke, involving a remodeling of the question and answer concerning the first of all the commandments (Luke 10:25-28//Mark 12:28-34). A changed question is posed at the outset, 'Teacher, what must I do (ποιήσας) to inherit eternal life?', and the idea of doing (ποιεῖν) then becomes a thread running through the whole unit as Luke has edited it (cf. τοῦτο ποιεῖ καὶ ζήσῃ, v. 28; ὁ ποιήσας τὸ ἔλεος μετ' αὐτοῦ—πορεύου καὶ σὺ ποιεῖ ὁμοίως, v. 37). The question itself belongs in the setting of the Gentile mission as understood by Mark (10:17) and then by Luke (Acts 16:30), but by no means in the Palestinian setting of Jesus. Jesus' referral of the questioner to the law reminds us again of the rich young man episode (Mark 10:19//Luke 18:20), though this time the commandments are quoted by the questioner (Luke 10:27). This is important for Luke, for what a person says 'from his own mouth' constitutes a binding commitment (cf. Luke 4:22; 19:22; 22:71). Then there follows from Jesus himself the parable in devastating answer to the extremely theoretical question, 'And who is my neighbour?'

What does one need to know to feel the force of the parable that answers that question? Three things. First, it was plain for all to see that the word 'neighbour' in Lev. 19:18 stands for a fellow member of the Jewish people; cf. 'anyone of your own kin...any of your people'. Secondly, it was plain in advance to all who listened that, after the priest, and then the Levite, there would come down the road an Israelite lay person (Jeremias 1963: 204). After all, the three formed a quite conventional trio (cf. *m. Git.* 5.8 on the order of reading the Torah in the synagogue: 'A priest reads first, and after him a levite, and after him an Israelite'. Similarly, *m. Kid.* 4.1; cited by Meyer 1967: 239-41). Only in this case, what was plain in advance to the listeners turned out to be quite wrong, for the person who showed love was the dreaded and detested Samaritan. Thirdly, the Samaritan, indeed any Samaritan, exposed to the light the shadow side of Jewish experience, the prejudice, the grudges nurtured by historical memory and fed by contemporary provocation. No one can understand the parable without knowing all this, and no Jewish person could hear it without being hurt. But the deeply disturbing meaning of love could

then be drawn out, love embodied in an action which refuses to let the past or the present, race or religion, erect a boundary fence.

The authenticity of this parable is virtually beyond question (though cf. Goulder 1989: 487-91), but on what level does it work, and what is its life setting? Almost certainly it must be the real social and political world of the Jewish people. Can we seriously suppose that the fractured relationships between Jewish and Samaritan people could be passively tolerated by either speaker or attentive hearer of this parable? And can we seriously suppose that the religious establishment as represented by priest and Levite was one with which the speaker of this parable was at home and in sympathy? If that is so, and if the parable was originally set in that rather earthy and realistic world of Jewish society, it follows that Luke has taken a liberty in setting it somewhere else, that is, in a world remote from the need to do something about Jewish/Samaritan racial and religious prejudice, a world in which salvation needed to be sought anxiously rather than presumed gratefully (cf. Sanders 1977). The distinction between the two worlds in which the pre-Lukan and the Lukan parable belong is a distinction that is formative for the exegetical enterprise.

The parable of the mustard seed is preserved in three alternative versions (Matt. 13:31-32//Mark 4:30-32//Luke 13:18-19). Exegesis of a synchronic sort will naturally take account of each evangelist's sequence. In Matthew, the parable is the third in a sequence of four, all carefully linked together by similar introductions, 'he put before them another parable', all taking the form of anecdotes, and all clamped together by scripturally reinforced explanations of the reason and purpose of parable telling (Matt. 13:14-15, 35). In Mark's case, synchronic exegesis will note the particular closeness of this parable to the preceding parable of the seed growing secretly (Mark 4:26-29), with a slightly greater distance between both and the all-controlling parable of the sower being brought about by a collection of separate sayings (Mark 4:21-25). Comparable exegesis of the Lukan sequence will maximize the significance of the pairing of the parables of mustard seed and leaven (Luke 13:18-21) in a setting where no other parables are present. Given that the evangelists have probably been hard at work to produce these sequences, synchronic and composition-critical insights overlap very considerably. But what about the redaction-critical, the source-critical and the form-critical?

Alongside Mark 4:30-32, the existence of another underlying version of the parable is indicated by a series of 'minor agreements'

between Matthew and Luke against Mark. This series comprises the introduction, 'the kingdom...is like...'; the words 'that someone took...' followed by a verb in indicative form, which have the effect of making the parable into a story of something that happened *once*, rather than (as in Mark) a 'similitude' describing something which *always* happens; the location of the sowing in land which belongs to the person whose experience is described (field/garden); the use of the verb 'to grow' (αὐξάνω); the outcome of the process as a tree (δένδρον) rather than a shrub (λάχανον); the nesting of the birds in the branches of the tree rather than under the shadow of the shrub; and finally the pairing of this parable with that of the leaven (Matt. 13:33//Luke 13:20-21), which does not appear at all in Mark.

The Q version is apparently preserved very carefully by Luke 13:18-19, because, when the Markan elements are pruned away from Matthew's version, what is left matches Luke's version! So there are two versions to play off against one another, one telling a quite unique and indeed amazing story, and the other attempting to describe what always happens and is commonplace. Of the two, the Q version looks the more original for two reasons. First, it is less 'heavy' in its explanation of the significance of the mustard seed. It may well be right to say that the mustard seed is the smallest of all the seeds, but the less elaborate and explicit version is likely to be the earlier in this case. Secondly, the nesting of the birds of the heaven is a feature of both versions, and must therefore be original, but, while it hardly fits with the 'shrub' scheme, it fits well with the 'tree' scheme.

The predominant features of the parable are, first, the mustard seed, which is proverbially tiny (cf. Matt. 17:20//Luke 17:6); secondly, the unexpected outcome of the process of sowing; and thirdly, the size of the end product, the tree, which is demonstrated by the nesting of the birds of the heaven. It is the image of the tree with birds' nests in its branches which requires exegetical attention, for it is a familiar biblical image, and it always conveys a message about one nation's sovereignty over all others. The sovereignty may be that of Israel over all non-Israelite nations (Ezek. 17:22-24), or that of Egypt over all non-Egyptian nations (Ezek. 31:5-7), or that of Babylon over all non-Babylonian nations (Dan. 4:10-12). That being so, the life setting of the parable must have been one of high political hope. The ancient expectation of the sovereignty of the Jewish people was being reaffirmed, while the choice of the proverbially minute mustard seed reflected a sense that sovereignty for such an apparently trivial nation

might seem almost unbelievable. The use of an anecdotal form enabled something almost unbelievable to be described, but that simply demonstrates that God's kingly intervention to produce something abnormal was an essential factor in the story.

Exegesis of the parable, recovered by source criticism, and isolated and contextualized by form criticism, would be firmly and unequivocally political. The complexion of the exegesis of that first stage of tradition-history may have been maintained at the second stage, its use in Q as one of a complementary pair of anecdotes describing what a man did (Luke 13:18-19), and then what a woman did (Luke 13:20-21). Q was interested in the political prospects of the Jewish people (Matt. 19:28//Luke 22:30) and the social turn-around which God's kingship would effect (Luke 6:20b-21). But, we may ask, how political was the complexion of the parable when incorporated by the three later evangelists into their Gospels? The answer is 'probably very little, if at all'. The community context for Mark is obviously Christian, and probably incipiently sectarian, for this parable is brought firmly under the control of the all-conditioning parable of the sower (Mark 4:13). That parable is in turn dominated by the notion of the insider/outsider distinction (Mark 4:10-12, 33-34), so helpful to those who search for divine legitimation and the assurance that they—and they alone—have received and understood a revelation from God (cf. Watson 1985: 62-63). The community context for Matthew is much more strongly sectarian, for the Gospel reflects the breakdown in relations between Christians and the parent Jewish community. The Lukan situation is less clear: all that can be said with a fair degree of assurance is that the parable has nothing like its original full-blooded political message.

The final example comes from the Gospel of John. In John 6, there is a remarkable agreement between John and Matthew/Mark in the sequence involving the feeding of thousands of hungry people, the walking on the water, the refusal of a sign, a discourse about food, and the confession by Peter. Since Mark has long been recognized as an author who made his own decisions about order, John's order looks dependent on the earlier Markan redaction. Such dependence is made all the more probable by the firm likelihood that the tradition of Peter's confession is a Markan creation (Catchpole 1984: 326-28). John 6:60-71 depends upon that Markan creation, and it exhibits no arguably pre-Markan features. By inference, the fourth Gospel depends upon Matthew/Mark. In that case, what has the author of that

Gospel done with his source material? What does redaction criticism reveal?

The vital clue is the fact that Peter's confession of Jesus has been remodeled and set in a new context. The sermon on Exod. 16:4, 15 in John 6:31-58 had caused consternation among 'the Jews' and also division among 'the disciples'. Jesus had spoken of himself in extremely strong and realistic terms as God's gift in word and sacrament. This proved just too much. Jesus' question, 'Do you also wish to go away?', enables Peter's answer to be the confession of those continuing loyalists who stay with Jesus. Note in this connection four considerations, each of which treats the Johannine text as 'transparent', that is, as a window through which we may observe the situation of the community for which that text is written (cf. Martyn 1979).

First, Jesus speaks surprisingly and paradoxically about some disciples who do not believe (v. 64), and he explains their position by an appeal to predestination. An appeal to predestination is a sectarian reflex, a typical theological reaction on the part of those who belong to a small breakaway group which feels threatened. John's Christian community is like that (cf. 9:22; 12:42; 16:2), but this breakaway group from the Jewish community has the additional problem that some of their own number also go back to where they came from, that is, to the Jewish synagogue community. Their reason for doing so seems to be that they cannot tolerate the sacramental theology that the Johannine community has developed.

Secondly, the devil is not speaking through Peter, as was the case in Mark 8:33. He is at work in Judas (6:70) and in those former Christian Jews who have now defected and returned to the non-Christian community. To associate the former members of the Christian group with Judas (6:64) is bad enough—to associate them with Satan is ferocious indeed. Such fierce polemic is again typically sectarian.

Thirdly, not 'You are the Messiah' (Mark 8:29), says Peter, but 'We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God' (John 6:69). Why the change of terminology? Answer: The language of holiness is the language of heavenliness and of Sonship. It presents Jesus as a person who belongs essentially to the divine world, the world of the angels in which he is unique (cf. 10:36). That is the essence of Johannine belief about him: he is 'the one coming into the world' (11:27; cf. 3:13).

Fourthly, with the problem of defection from the Johannine

community in mind we ought to take seriously the internal connection between 'we have come to believe and know (ἡμεῖς πεπιστεύκαμεν καὶ ἐγνώκαμεν)' in John 6:69 and the reading 'that you may continue to believe...' (πιστεύητε) in John 20:31. The writer is concerned to keep the Jewish Christians from lapsing back into becoming Christian Jews, that is, members of the Jewish synagogue community who hold a low view of Jesus or, worse still, non-Christian Jews who regard Jesus as someone who led Israel astray (cf. 7:12).

Thus it emerges that the traditional disciplines—source, form and redaction criticism—encourage the exegete to develop a sensitivity to the text as the final stage in a multi-stage development. Each of those stages witnesses to the capacity of highly prized material to be both adopted and adapted, to influence and be influenced by changing challenges, circumstances and convictions. The final stage is readily accessible and vitally important: the earlier stages are sometimes less easily accessible but never less important. The conclusion is therefore clear: between the synchronic and the diachronic there can be, there must be, a complementary and mutually enriching harmony.

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DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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Discourse analysis (less frequently referred to as Textlinguistics or Text Grammar) is a sub-discipline of modern linguistics that seeks to understand the relationships between language, discourse, and situational context in human communication. Consequently, it draws upon the insights of several other academic disciplines, in its early years including linguistics, anthropology, sociology, philosophy (see van Dijk 1985), and in more recent years, communication theory, social psychology (Potter and Wetherell 1987), and artificial intelligence. Discourse analysis is, therefore, an interdisciplinary approach to language and human communicative behaviour and cannot, or should not, be reduced to simplistic definition. My goal here is to highlight some of the guiding tenets and major approaches of discourse analysis so as to provide an overall framework that may be useful in the exegesis of the New Testament. In addition, the select bibliography will guide the reader into more detailed models and applications of discourse analysis.

GUIDING TENETS OF DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

A. *Analysis of the Production and Interpretation of Discourse*

Discourse analysts investigate the roles of the author, the audience, and the text (and its language) in the production and consumption of communicative acts. On the one hand, discourse analysts seek to *interpret a speaker's or author's role in the production of discourses*. In addition to the speaker's role, discourse analysts also seek to *interpret the listener's or reader's comprehension(s) of and response(s) to the discourse*. Every discourse eventually has an audience who will listen to or read it, ponder it, and likely respond to it in some way. Even monologue is based on dialogue. We rarely communicate with ourselves. We communicate with others. We communicate to be heard.

These two sides of the communicative process, and the language used to mediate between them, make discourse analysis a complex undertaking. For example, what is said is not always what is meant, and what is meant is not always what is understood. The speaker, the

language, and the listener each have a certain degree of independence in the communicative act. As P. Cotterell notes,

...the speaker may be either unaware of the real message he [or she] was encoding, or unwilling to admit to the message, so that he can disown the message... In the same way the listener, possibly because of his relationship to the speaker, may 'perceive' a message that cannot be detected by anyone else. If he claims to perceive it, on what grounds can anyone else deny that it is there? Certainly not by analysing the offending utterance as though it were a cold sentence.¹

Despite this always possible impediment to communication, readers want to interpret the symbols set before them: 'Hearers and readers have a powerful urge to make sense out of whatever nonsense is presented to them' (Stubbs 1983: 5). They may not 'get it right', but they attempt to understand and, more than that, to understand 'correctly' (i.e. to understand the intended purpose of a given discourse).

The fact that the same message may invoke multiple interpretations presents another dilemma for discourse analysis. The analyst again may look to the actual language of the discourse, the situation and knowledge of the participants involved, and the responses invoked by the message in order to account for multiple interpretations. The 'why' of multiple interpretations, not the 'fact' of them, is important to the discourse analyst.

Brown and Yule summarize this two-part tenet aptly:

We shall consider words, phrases and sentences which appear in the textual record of a discourse to be evidence of an attempt by a producer (speaker/writer) to communicate his message to a recipient (hearer/reader). We shall be particularly interested in discussing how a recipient might come to comprehend the producer's intended message on a particular occasion, and how the requirements of the particular recipient(s), in definable circumstances, influence the organization of the producer's discourse. This is clearly an approach which takes the communicative function of language as its primary area of investigation and consequently seeks to describe linguistic form, not as a static object, but as a dynamic means of expressing intended meaning (Brown and Yule 1983: 24).

B. Analysis beyond the Sentence

The discourse analyst is also guided by the tenet to *examine*

¹ P. Cotterell, 'Sociolinguistics and Biblical Interpretation', *Vox Evangelica* 16 (1986), p. 64.

language at a level beyond the sentence (cf. Stubbs 1983: 6-7). This is perhaps the most distinguishing, if not best known, doctrine of discourse analysis. The long-lived taboo in linguistics that grammar is confined to the boundary of the sentence has been forsaken by discourse analysts. Grammar, they claim, is influenced by linguistic levels beyond the sentence, namely, the 'discourse'. J.P. Louw's prediction that linguistics in the 1970s would direct its attention to units larger than the sentence was already being fulfilled between the late 50s and the early 70s (Louw 1973: 102). K.L. Pike noted in 1964 that '*beyond the sentence* lie grammatical structures available to linguistic analysis'.² This change in perspective arose from the observation that words or sentences are rarely used in isolation, but typically as part of an extended discourse of sequenced sentences (esp. in the case of written texts). T. Givón criticizes those who do not observe this aspect of language:

It has become obvious to a growing number of linguists that the study of the syntax of isolated sentences, extracted, without natural context from the purposeful constructions of speakers is a methodology that has outlived its usefulness.³

S. Wallace is even more trenchant:

That linguistic categories contribute significantly to the structure of an extrasentential text, indeed, that one does not truly understand the meaning of a linguistic category until one comprehends its function in a text, are suggestions that mainstream twentieth-century linguistics has all but ignored.⁴

The study of larger discourse units, however, does not eliminate the need for investigating words and clauses. Discourse analysts advocate a bottom-up and top-down interpretation of discourse. The analyst might begin at the bottom with the analysis of morphology, moving up through words, phrases, clauses, sentences and paragraphs (i.e. sequences of sentences and embedded sequences of sentences) until reaching the top, the discourse. From here the direction is reversed to

² K.L. Pike, 'Beyond the Sentence', *College Composition and Communication* 15 (1964), p. 129.

³ T. Givón, 'Preface', in *Syntax and Semantics. XII. Discourse and Syntax* (New York: Academic Press, 1979), p. xiii.

⁴ S. Wallace, 'Figure and Ground: The Interrelationships of Linguistic Categories', in *Tense-Aspect: Between Semantics and Pragmatics* (ed. P.J. Hopper; Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1982), p. 201.

see how the larger discourse influences paragraph construction and on down.⁵ In this framework, the analysis of words and clauses is important, but only from the perspective of the larger discourse, as J.L. Lemke puts it:

Language is not simply used to produce word-meaning or clause-meaning, it is used to produce text-meaning, and texts, by co-patterning many word-choices and clause formations, can make meanings that words and clauses cannot. That is why we make texts. Text-meaning realizes social functions...and among the most important social functions of texts is the maintenance and modification of social value systems.⁶

C. Analysis of Social Functions of Language Use

A third tenet of discourse analysis is that *discourse should be analyzed for its social functions and, thus, in its social context* (see esp. Gumperz 1982). The result has been a strong marriage between discourse analysis and *sociolinguistics and pragmatics*. As Brown and Yule state,

Any analytic approach in linguistics which involves contextual considerations necessarily belongs to that area of language study called *pragmatics*. 'Doing discourse analysis' certainly involves 'doing syntax and semantics', but it primarily consists of 'doing pragmatics' (Brown and Yule 1983: 26).

Discourse is not simply a set of propositions (logical, literal, conceptual, or cognitive) with a certain factual content, but rather social, communicative interaction between humans. As N. Fairclough theorizes, 'Discourse is a mode of action, one form in which people may act upon the world and especially upon each other' (Fairclough 1992: 63). This has led discourse analysts away from abstract formalisms of language and into the realm of the interpersonal and functional roles of language. This focus is based in part on the principle that increasingly larger units of language are less and less constrained by grammar and more and more by the communicative context. Consequently, both the immediate context (Malinowski's 'context of situation') and the broader culture ('context of culture') factor into a discourse analysis, since language and language behaviour 'cannot be acquired in isolation, but rather can only be

⁵ On the notions of 'bottom-up' and 'top-down' analysis, see Brown and Yule 1983: 234-36.

⁶ J.L. Lemke, 'Semantics and Social Values', *Word* 40 (1989), p. 48.

learnt and are only available for one's use in situational contexts'.⁷ M.A.K. Halliday has made this tenet central to his theory of language: 'Language is as it is because of its function in social structure'.⁸

D. Analysis of Cohesiveness

That there is a relationship formally, semantically, and pragmatically between the various parts of a given text and that there is some thematic element which flows through it, in part allows a listener/reader to recognize it as a *cohesive* piece of communication rather than a jumble of unrelated words and sentences. How is it, then, that speakers go about forming texts into cohesive units? How do they combine relatively unrelated words and sentences into meaningful wholes? Discourse analysts repeatedly seek answers to such questions, attempting to identify how language is used to create cohesive and coherent communication. Labov describes the task similarly: 'The fundamental problem of discourse analysis is to show how one utterance follows another in a rational, rule-governed manner—in other words, how we understand coherent discourse'.⁹ When attempting to answer such questions, it is important to note that the structural cohesiveness of texts should be viewed as a continuum. At one pole of the continuum are texts with a high degree of unity and cohesiveness. At the opposite pole are texts which can be quickly recognized as a jumble of words and sentences with little 'textuality'. Although a text might be elegantly unified or grossly fragmented, most texts lie somewhere between these two poles—neither altogether cohesive nor altogether incohesive.

Whereas the first tenet of discourse analysis emphasizes the speaker's role in the production of discourse, this tenet recognizes the important role that specific languages (i.e. linguistic codes) play in the production of discourse. Granted, humans are the ones who communicate, who interact with others, who convey 'meaning'. Nevertheless, language (i.e. shared symbols), as it has been formulated and agreed upon by cultural groups, significantly determines the ways in which speakers/authors are expected to construct their message. To put it differently, successful

⁷ R. Wodak, 'Discourse Analysis: Problems, Findings, Perspectives', *Text* 10 (1990), p. 126.

⁸ M.A.K. Halliday, *Explorations in the Functions of Language* (London: Edward Arnold, 1973), p. 65.

⁹ W. Labov, *Sociolinguistic Patterns* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972), p. 252.

communication implies shared grammar. Or as Gumperz maintains,

It seems clear that knowledge of grammatical rules is an essential component of the interactive competence that speakers must have to interact and cooperate with others. Thus if we can show that individuals interacting through linguistic signs are effective in cooperating with others in the conduct of their affairs, we have prima facie evidence for the existence of shared grammatical structure (Gumperz 1982: 19).

In conclusion, many New Testament commentaries say little about the grammatical structure of the text as a whole (though they often comment on the grammar of particular parts of the text) and, conversely, most Greek grammars treat language as an abstract system and not as a system in a particular text (though they often cite examples from particular texts). Discourse analysis of the New Testament should attempt to bring the grammarian and the commentator or exegete more in line with one another. Discourse analysis appraises the language of the text as a whole, keeping in perspective both the language of the text as a system and the individual message(s) of the text. My proposal is that this is what discourse analysis, especially discourse analysis of the New Testament, should be about. It is a reading of discourse based on comprehensive linguistic models of language structure and cohesiveness.

DOING DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

The following discussion represents one possible framework for 'doing' New Testament discourse analysis. It is not intended to be comprehensive, but if combined with the many studies in the select bibliography, it may serve as a springboard into more detailed models of New Testament language and discourse. The discussion is organized around four sections: (a) distinguishing the various linguistic and extra-linguistic levels which influence discourse production and interpretation, (b) analyzing the semantic content of discourse, (c) investigating the interpersonal dimensions of discourse, and (d) studying the cohesive structures of discourse.

A. Levels of Discourse

The first step in discourse analysis, although seemingly obvious, is to identify the text to be investigated. This will preferably be an entire discourse, from beginning to end, or if only part of a discourse, it should be explicitly studied in relation to the larger discourse. In

addition, it is necessary to clarify what aspect of the discourse is going to be analyzed. This question involves what are termed here the *levels of discourse* or boundaries of discourse. Discourse analysts often try to account for the various linguistic and contextual factors which constrain the production and especially the interpretation of texts. These constraints range from the smallest meaningful unit—the morpheme—to the broadest meaningful unit—the speaker's culture. A discourse, then, pertains to these two communicative levels and all of those in between. These levels of discourse may be categorized under two headings: co-text and context. *Co-text* refers to linguistic units that are part of a discourse and, more specifically, linguistic units that surround a particular point in the discourse. *Context* refers to extra-linguistic factors that influence discourse production and interpretation, and it may be broadly categorized in terms of the *context of situation*,¹⁰ that is, the immediate historical situation in which a discourse occurs, and the *context of culture*, that is, the 'world view(s)' in which a discourse occurs. See the following diagram.

Standard Language/Code	<i>Context of Culture</i>
Variety of Language/Dialect	
Idiolect	<i>Context of Situation</i>
Genre/Register	
Discourse	<i>Co-text</i>
(Paragraph)	
Sentence	
(Clause)	
Phrase/Group	
Word	

At the bottom level is the word. Though admittedly problematic to define, *word* is denoted here as 'sound with *sense*' (i.e. attributed meaning)—this includes the combination of meanings contributed by the 'morphemes' which make up the word. *Phrase* includes the function of *attribution*, the ascribing of a quality or characteristic to a central linguistic item or head term. An adjective phrase, for example, contains a nominal element which is ascribed some quality by an

¹⁰ M.A.K. Halliday, *Language and Social Man* (London: Longman, 1974), pp. 28-29: 'Essentially what this implies is that language comes to life only when functioning in some environment... The "context of situation" does not refer to all the bits and pieces of the material environment... It refers to those features which are relevant to the speech that is taking place.'

adjective. In the phrase τυφλός προσαίτης ('blind beggar'; Mark 10:46), the head term is προσαίτης ('beggar') and the adjective τυφλός ('blind') attributes meaning to it. The level of *sentence* adds the function of *transitivity*, that is, processes (aspect and modality), participants (voice, person, number), and often circumstances (when, in what manner, etc.). The largest linguistic level, *discourse*, adds the function of communicative *task*, that is, the overarching purpose(s) or role(s) of the author's communication (e.g. speech acts)—this is roughly equivalent to the notion of genre or register. The clause and paragraph are subsets of the sentence and discourse. However, both the clause and paragraph share the function of *relation* (i.e. the ability to signal ties between stretches of language), since they often contain discourse markers that relate them to their co-text. *Clauses* are often combined by conjunctions to form complex sentences. Similarly, *paragraphs* are often combined by discourse markers to form larger parts of discourse. This is typically accomplished by particles (e.g. γάρ, οὖν, διὰ τοῦτο, ὅθεν, ἄρα, διό, δέ, νῦν), but can also be signaled by generic formulas (e.g. 'I want you to know...' epistolary formulas), grammatical person, number, tense, case, and semantically-signaled shifts in topic.

With these co-textual levels of discourse in mind, the discourse analyst turns to the text at hand ready to inspect how the speaker/author has combined smaller linguistic forms (and their functions) to form a larger discourse. The question is not primarily whether the speaker has done it well, but how it has been done. An incoherent discourse often reveals just as much about discourse structure as a coherent discourse. But where does the interpreter begin when analyzing the various levels of discourse? The concepts of *bottom-up* and *top-down analysis* provide a starting point. To read from the bottom-up is to begin by analyzing the smaller units of discourse and how they are combined into increasingly larger units. The discourse analyst starts with the smallest unit, the word and its morphemes, and concludes with the largest unit, the discourse. To read from the top-down is to begin with an understanding of larger discourse functions (e.g. register/genre) and then to interpret the meaning of smaller units in terms of those functions. Bottom-up analysis may be likened to inductive reasoning, in which the analyst arrives at a theory (e.g. appraisal of a text's theme) based on separate, individual facts (e.g. microstructures). Top-down analysis, on the other hand, is comparable to deductive reasoning, in which a person

reasons from a known principle (e.g. the function of a certain genre) to an unknown (e.g. the meaning of a particular use of a word)—from a premise to a logical conclusion.

Whereas the previous levels of discourse concern explicit linguistic forms, the following have to do with extra- or non-linguistic factors of communication.

Standard Language/Code	Context of Culture
Variety of Language/Dialect	
Idiolect	
Genre/Register	Context of Situation

Sociolinguistic studies have shown that the idea of an isolated, fixed language does not do justice to the facts. Rather, *varieties of language* exist within and across various societies. Only in the case of *standard languages*, perhaps such as Hellenistic Greek, may we think of a *language* in contrast to what is typically termed *dialect*. A standard language, or *code*, is shared by a group of people, either because they are part of the same culture or because they have the need to communicate despite differing cultural backgrounds. Such linguistic codes provide a way to communicate despite regional and social dialects. Each language user not only learns the standard language and varieties of language needed to communicate, but he or she acquires language based on personal experience, resulting in a somewhat idiosyncratic *idiolect* or personal variety of language. All the experiences and events of the individual's life give rise to a unique usage of the linguistic code, a sort of fingerprint. For example, a certain individual might have his or her own pronunciation, intonation, rate of delivery, vocabulary, or sentence structure. More importantly, each language user would recognize the idiolects of others and attach social significance to them. Paul's idiolect, both written and spoken, surely evoked certain types of cognitive and emotive responses from his audiences (cf. 2 Cor. 10:10).

Whereas standard languages and varieties of languages are determined by broad sociological factors, *registers* or *genres*¹¹ have to do with more narrow, limited sociological factors. A variety of

¹¹ The terms are used interchangeably here, perhaps the only difference being that register specifically concerns the social context of a 'way of speaking' and genre has more to do with the spoken or written manifestation of that context.

language refers to *language according to user*,¹² but register refers to *language according to use*. More specifically, the term *register* refers to a *configuration of meanings that is associated with a particular situation* (Halliday and Hasan 1989: 38-39).¹³ Registers are the linguistic expressions of various types of social activities commonly undertaken by social-groups (e.g. telephone conversations; teacher-pupil interchange; doctor-patient appointments; or ancient letters). They are a means of 'doing things' with language. Consequently, registers are one of the most important ways of relating the language of a particular New Testament text to its context of situation.

To summarize the various levels of discourse, words are part of a linguistic code shared by a group of people, but they are also part of a variety of language shared by various subgroups of a society. Furthermore, these words reflect the idiolect of a particular author. This overall semiotic system reflects the context of culture influencing the production and interpretation of discourse. In addition, every discourse is part of a unique historical context (Halliday and Hasan 1989: 42)—a context of situation—which is revealed generically by the register and particularly by its own lexico-grammatical composition. The co-textual levels affect discourse production and interpretation as soon as the first word is written or read. This initial word then influences the possible combinations of other words and in turn the resulting clause influences construction of the ensuing clause. These clauses may be grouped semantically into a paragraph, which in turn influences other formations of paragraphs. Both co-textual (inter-linguistic) and contextual (extra-linguistic) factors, therefore, play a role in the discourse analysis of a particular grammatical item in a text. Consequently, discourse analysis is an attempt at understanding language beyond the level of the sentence (paragraph, discourse, register/genre), but without neglecting the semantic importance of the sentence itself (word, phrase, clause).

B. Analysis of Semantic Content

Halliday, a leading contributor to the field of discourse analysis, proposes two essential functions of language: (1) to understand the environment (ideational), and (2) to act on the others in it

¹² R.A. Hudson, *Sociolinguistics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp. 48-49.

¹³ Halliday further specifies this 'configuration of meanings' in terms of the Firthian contextual categories of field, tenor, and mode.

(interpersonal).¹⁴ The first part of Halliday's theory, *ideational meanings* (sometimes referred to as *experiential meanings*), concerns the real world as it is comprehended by human experience.¹⁵ 'Language...gives structure to experience, and helps us to determine our way of looking at things.'¹⁶ Much of discourse analysis of the New Testament involves studying such ideational features of discourse.

To be more specific, ideational meanings have to do with what is 'going on' in the text in relation to what is going on outside of the text, that is, the use of language to represent 'doings, happenings, feelings, and beings' in the real or imagined world (Halliday 1985b: 101). This is what people usually have in mind when they talk about what a word or sentence 'means'—the 'semantic content' of language. This function of language enables humans to build a mental portrait of a discourse. It enables them to relate language to what goes on around them (the context of situation and the context of culture) and to what they have individually experienced in the course of their lives.¹⁷ The grammar of the clause accomplishes this by means of *processes*,

¹⁴ Halliday 1985b: xiii. Halliday's model of language is serviceable for the discourse analyst in that it attempts to relate the meanings of language to the context of situation, thus dealing with two of the major tenets of discourse analysis (see tenets one and three discussed above). In addition, although the sentence plays an important role in Halliday's functional grammar, his theory moves grammatical study into the realm of the discourse (tenet two above). Halliday's notion of textual meanings of language directly relates to discourse cohesion (tenet four).

¹⁵ Halliday and Hasan 1976: 238. Other terms used to describe this phenomenon include 'representational', 'cognitive', 'semantic', and 'factual-notional'.

¹⁶ M.A.K. Halliday, 'Language Structure and Language Function', in *New Horizons in Linguistics* (ed. J. Lyons; Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1970), p. 143.

¹⁷ The notion of ideational meanings may give the impression that discourse simply represents external reality. This, of course, would be a narrow and incomplete understanding of discourse and the processes involved in comprehension. A significant amount of discourse describes non-real (fictive) people and events, and sometimes quite outlandish ones (e.g. the dancing elephants in Disney's film *Fantasia*). Nevertheless, the world of the text is frequently comprehended with reference to the real world (i.e. experiences) of the reader. For example, the ability to draw analogies from a text results in a proportionate level of discourse comprehension (cf. the *principle of analogy* in Brown and Yule 1983: 64-67).

participants in the process, and *circumstances* associated with the process (Halliday 1985b: 101). In Hellenistic Greek, processes are typically expressed by a verbal phrase, participants by a nominal phrase, and circumstances by adverbial or prepositional phrases: for example, Gal. 1:18 ἔπειτα (circumstance) μετὰ τρία ἔτη (circumstance) ἀνῆλθον (process/participant) εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα (circumstance) ἱστορήσαι (process [of subordinate clause]) Κηφᾶν (participant [of subordinate clause]). These three ideational functions of Greek may be further subdivided, as seen in the following chart which summarizes the five types of processes (i.e. verbal events) in New Testament discourse along with their corresponding participants.

Process	Function	Participants
material: action event	'doing' 'doing' 'happening'	Actor, Goal ¹⁸
mental: perception affection cognition	'sensing' 'seeing' 'feeling' 'thinking'	Senser, Phenomenon ¹⁹
verbal:	'saying'	Sayer, Target, Verbiage
relational: attribution identification	'being' 'attributing' 'identifying'	Carrier, Attribute Identified, Identifier
existential:	'exists'	existent

Process Types and Their Participants

One way of treating the ideational content of a New Testament discourse would be to analyze each clause in terms of the above process and participant types, searching for patterns in the text.

Besides participants and processes, most Greek clauses use *circumstances* to express additional ideational meanings. For example, adverbs, prepositions, and case-forms are all used in Hellenistic Greek to specify functions of extent, location, manner, cause, accompaniment, and role. These functions are summarized in the following chart.

¹⁸ Actor = logical subject, and Goal = patient.

¹⁹ The *Senser* is the conscious participant that is feeling, thinking, or perceiving. The *Phenomenon* is the participant that is being felt, thought, or perceived.

Extent	duration (temporal) distance (spatial)	how long? how far?
Location (Realm)	time (temporal) place (spatial)	when? where?
Manner	means quality comparison	how? with what? in what way? like what?
Cause	reason/purpose/result behalf	why? what for? what result? for whom?
Accompan- iment	comitation addition	with whom/what? who/what else?
Matter		about what? regarding whom?
Role		what as?

Circumstantial Functions

The above discussion of participants, processes, and circumstances primarily deals with the *grammatical* forms of ideational meanings. A more obvious way of representing ideational meanings is by means of lexis or word choice. Indeed, an important part of determining the ideational functions of discourse is by analyzing the lexical choices of the author. Some linguists and psychologists have attempted to set forth stereotypical mental representations of human knowledge of the world, variously termed *scripts*, *scenarios*, *mental frames*, and *schemata*.²⁰ The various theories share the belief that knowledge is organized in memory according to contextual scenarios or schemata; the theories are, thus, cognitive-psychological approaches to discourse comprehension. Understanding discourse is, in this sense, essentially a process of retrieving stored information from memory and relating it to the encountered discourse. This remembered framework may then be adapted to fit reality by changing details as necessary.

The theories emphasise that cognition is central to the act of communication. In order to understand the world 'out there' people organise it into meaningful categories. As an individual's experience increases so does his or her schemata of the world (Brown and Yule 1983: 236).

In the light of work being done on mental schemata, the vocabulary or lexis of a language plays a significant role in conveying the

²⁰ See, for example, D. Tannen, 'What's in a Frame? Surface Evidence for Underlying Expectations', in *New Directions in Discourse Processing* (ed. R.O. Freedle; Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1979), pp. 137-81.

ideational meanings of discourse. Because of the importance of vocabulary for the analysis of ideational meanings, a tool like J.P. Louw and E.A. Nida's *Greek-English Lexicon* is invaluable for the discourse analyst. Despite the title, this work offers much more than the standard lexicon. It seeks to partition New Testament words into their semantic domains and subdomains, that is, the various categories of meaning (usually cultural categories) which distinguish words from one another.²¹ This lexicon is characterized by functional categories, making it especially beneficial for the discourse analyst. For example, rather than listing words in their alphabetical order, Louw and Nida order them according to meaningful categories such as Geographical Objects and Features, Maritime Activities, and Household Activities. Under each category or domain, further subdomains may also be delineated. Under the category of Geographical Objects and Features, for example, are the subcategories or subdomains of Universe/Creation, Regions Below the Surface of the Earth, Heavenly Bodies, Atmospheric Objects, The Earth's Surface, Elevated Land Formations, Depressions and Holes, and so on. By grouping words according to functional categories, Louw and Nida reveal an essential function of words, namely, a means of storing and communicating human knowledge of culture and experience. More importantly, under each category (domain or subdomain) words are listed according to a hierarchy, that is, words with the most general meaning are listed first and those with the most narrow meanings last (from generic to specific). For example, under the category of Household Activities, *οικονομέω/οικονομία* ('to manage and provide for a household') is listed first and *σαρόω* ('to sweep by using a broom') last. In other words, sweeping with a broom conveys a more specific household activity. Though the lexicon is far from perfect (e.g. it needs to be supplemented with extra-biblical literature), it is clearly a move in the right direction for approaching lexis in terms of cognitive schemas of culture rather than isolated and abstracted meanings.

C. Analysis of Interpersonal Dimensions of Discourse

Interpersonal meanings, sometimes referred to as *interactional meanings*, concern the use of language to establish and maintain social

²¹ On the theoretical moorings of the lexicon, see J.P. Louw and E.A. Nida, 'Introduction', in *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains* (2 vols.; New York: United Bible Societies, 1988), I, pp. vi-xx.

relations (Halliday and Hasan 1976: 26-27). Whereas ideational meanings may be likened to 'language as reflection', interpersonal meanings may be likened to 'language as social action'. Through them the speaker expresses his or her own comments, attitudes, and evaluations on the surrounding environment. In addition, interpersonal meanings are used to act on the others in it (Halliday 1985b: xiii). Consequently, interpersonal meanings also reveal 'how the speaker defines how he sees the person with whom he is communicating'.²²

There are four essential interpersonal functions in Hellenistic Greek—offers, commands, statements, questions—as illustrated in the following four-cell diagram.

commodity exchanged role in exchange	goods-and-services	information
giving	OFFER Matt. 4:19 ποιήσω...	STATEMENT John 6:48 ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ἄρτος
demanding	COMMAND Rom. 13:12 ἀποθώμεθα...	QUESTION Heb. 2:6 τί ἐστὶν ἄνθρωπος ὅτι...

Behind all four of these interpersonal functions are two roles being played by the speaker: *giving* and *demanding*.

Either the speaker is giving something to the listener (a piece of information, for example) or he is demanding something from him...giving means 'inviting to receive', and demanding means 'inviting to give'. The speaker is not only doing something himself; he is also requiring something of the listener (Halliday 1985b: 68).

These two speech roles are done with respect to two kinds of commodities, what Halliday calls 'goods-and-services' and 'information'. *Goods-and-services* include any speech event with the aim of getting the audience to perform an action ('open the door!') or give an object ('send the letter!'). The other commodity is the exchange of *information*, which implies a verbal response from the listener—'I am the bread of life' may invoke a 'No, you are not'. The intersection of the two speech roles (giving and demanding) and the two commodities exchanged (goods-and-services and information) result in the four interpersonal meanings found in discourse.

By studying the interpersonal functions of each clause of a

²² Hudson, *Sociolinguistics*, p. 49.

discourse, the New Testament interpreter may gain a better overall perspective on how an individual author chooses to interact with the reader. The following chart may guide such an analysis of an entire New Testament discourse, highlighting the grammatical forms which commonly serve certain speech roles.

Commodity exchanged	Speech function	Common expressions	Example
information	statement or question ²³	indicative	Rom. 5:21 ἵνα ὡσπερ ἐβασίλευσεν ἡ ἁμαρτία ἐν τῷ θανάτῳ, οὕτως και ἡ χάρις βασιλεύσῃ διὰ δικαιοσύνης εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον...
		subjunctive	1 Pet. 3:17 κρείττον γὰρ ἀγαθοποιούντας, εἰ θέλοι τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ, πάσχειν ἢ κακοποιούντας
goods-and-services	command	optative	Rom. 3:9 τί οὖν;...
		modal adjunct	
		imperative	1 Pet. 5:2 ποιμάνετε τὸ ἐν ὑμῖν ποίμνιον τοῦ θεοῦ... μὴ ἀναγκαστῶς ἀλλὰ ἐκουσίως κατὰ θεόν, μηδὲ αἰσχροκερδῶς ἀλλὰ προθύμως
	subjunctive	Luke 2:15 διέλθωμεν δὴ ἕως Βηθλέεμ καὶ ἴδωμεν τὸ ρῆμα τοῦτο	
offer	offer	lexis	1 Thess. 4:1 ...τὸ πῶς δεῖ ὑμᾶς περιπατεῖν καὶ ἀρέσκειν θεῷ
		future	2 Cor. 12:15 ἐγὼ δὲ ἥδιστα δαπανήσω καὶ ἐκδαπανηθήσομαι ὑπὲρ τῶν ψυχῶν ὑμῶν
		subjunctive	Luke 6:42 ἄφες ἐκβάλλω τὸ κάρφος
		modal adjunct	Rom. 11:14 εἰ πως παραζηλώσω μου τὴν σάρκα καὶ σώσω τινὰς ἐξ αὐτῶν

²³ Statements and questions are not always grammatically distinguished; however, the interrogative pronoun is one way of distinguishing the two.

D. Analysis of Discourse Cohesiveness

That there is a relationship, both *semantically and grammatically*, between the various parts of a text (cohesive ties), and that there is some *thematic element* that flows through it (information flow), results in cohesive discourse rather than a jumble of unrelated words and sentences.²⁴ Cohesion 'occurs where the *interpretation* of some element in the discourse is dependent on that of another. The one *presupposes* the other, in the sense that it cannot be effectively decoded except by recourse to it' (Halliday and Hasan 1976: 4). These cohesive relationships may occur between words and phrases or even between sentences and paragraphs (i.e. thematically-organized sequences of sentences). That such relationships occur in texts is not an overly sophisticated observation, but the question remains: How is language used to create these cohesive relationships? Or, for the New Testament interpreter: What criteria may be used to discuss the relative cohesiveness of a text? The notion of cohesive ties has been one linguistic approach to such questions. *Cohesive ties* refer to a language system's ability to form relations between linguistic items of the various levels of discourse. The nature of this relationship is primarily semantic, that is, the ties are related in a meaningful way. Cohesive ties consist of two types: organic and componential.

Organic ties primarily concern the conjunctive systems of language, such as particles which serve as markers of transition (e.g. γάρ, ἀλλά, δέ, καί). Organic ties are also signaled by prepositions, grammatical structure (e.g. genitive absolute using γίνομαι), and conventionalized lexical items (e.g. λοιπόν). Organic ties make up the 'logical' system of natural language and consist of two functional systems: (1) interdependency or 'taxis' (parataxis and hypotaxis), which is found at all levels of language, and (2) expansion and projection, which is limited to the levels of clause and paragraph (see Halliday 1985b: 192-251, 302-309). *Hypotaxis* is the logico-semantic relation between a dependent element and the element on which it is dependent (dominant element). *Parataxis*, on the other hand, is the logico-semantic relation between two linguistic elements of equal status and, thus, either could stand independently of the other (e.g. 'I am going to the store' '...and I will buy some soup').

²⁴ Halliday often treats a fourth function of language under the rubric of textual meanings, namely, *logical* meanings (e.g. the rhetorical functions of 'and', 'because', 'if...then', and 'or').

In both types of clause structures, the logico-semantic relation between the primary and secondary clause may be one of *projection* or *expansion*. In the case of *expansion*, the secondary clause 'expands' the primary clause in one of three ways: (1) elaboration, (2) extension, or (3) enhancement. In *elaboration*, the secondary clause or phrase expands upon the primary by 'elaborating' on it or some portion of it, that is, restating, specifying, commentating, or exemplifying. In *extension*, the secondary clause 'expands' the primary clause by moving beyond it, that is, adding to it, giving an exception, or offering an alternative. In *enhancement*, the secondary clause 'expands' the primary clause by qualifying it with a circumstantial feature of time, place, cause, or condition. For example, in Greek a preposition plus infinitive may be used to expand a primary clause, with the preposition specifying the type of expansion. By way of simile, the three types of expansion may be likened to enriching a building: (1) *elaborating* the existing structure of a building; (2) *extending* it by addition or replacement; (3) *enhancing* its environment. The following chart may serve as a reference tool for analyzing these three types of organic ties in New Testament discourse. One benefit of such study is that we may gain a better understanding of how an author builds an argument from one clause to the next or how a story develops from one section to the other.

ELABORATION (+)	
Apposition	(restate or re-present; exegetical)
expository	ὅτι, ἵνα, τοῦτο ἐστίν (in other words, that is, I mean, to put it another way)
exemplifying	οὕτως, οὕτω, γέγραπται, ῥητῶς (for example, for instance, thus, to illustrate)
Clarification	(summarize or make precise)
corrective	μᾶλλον, μενοῦν, μενοῦνγε, ἀλλά, οὐχ ὅτι (or rather, at least, to be more precise, on the contrary, however)
particularizing	μάλιστα (in particular, more especially)
summative	λοιπόν, οὖν (in short, to sum up, in conclusion, briefly)
verifactive	ὁλως, ὀντως (actually, as a matter of fact, in fact)

EXTENSION (=)	
Addition	
positive	καί, δέ, τέ, πάλιν, εἶτα, ἐπί, καί...καί, τε...καί, τε...τε, μέν...δέ (and, also, moreover, in addition)
negative	οὐδέ, μηδέ (nor)
Adversative	ἀλλά, δέ, μενοῦν, μενοῦνγε, μέντοι, πλὴν, παρά (but, yet, on the other hand, however)
Variation	
replacive	ἀντί, τοῦναντίον, μέν...δέ (on the contrary, instead)
subtractive	ἐκτός, εἰ μὴ (apart from that, except for that)
alternative	ἢ, ἢ...ἢ, ἢτοι...ἢ (alternatively, or)

ENHANCEMENT (x)	
Spatio-Temporal	
following	καί, δέ, κατά (then, next, afterwards)
simultaneous	ὡς, ὅτε, ὅταν, πότε, ποτέ, καθώς, ἅμα, ἐφάπαξ (just then, at the same time)
preceding	πρό, πριν, πρῶτον, ἤδη, πάλαι (before that, hitherto, previously)
conclusive	λοιπόν (in the end, finally)
immediate	εὐθύς, εὐθέως (at once, immediately, straightaway)
interrupted	ταχύ, ταχέως, αὐριον, μέλλω (soon, after a while)
repetitive	ἄνωθεν, πάλιν, εἰς τὸ πάλιν (next time, on another occasion)
specific	μεταξύ, σήμερον, αὐριον (next day, an hour later, that morning)
durative	ἐν τῷ μεταξύ (meanwhile, all that time)
terminal	ἕως, ἄχρι, μέχρι (until then, up to that point)
punctiliar	νῦν, δεῦρο (at this moment)
Comparative	
positive	ὅμοιος, ὁμοίως, τοιοῦτος, ὁμως, ὡς, ὡσεὶ, ὥσπερ, καθώς, καθά, καθό, ὡσαύτως (likewise, similarly)
negative	ἢ, ἢπερ, negated 'positive forms' (in a different way)

Causal-Conditional	
(1) causal	
result	διό, πρόσ, εἰς, ἵνα, οὖν, τοίνυν, τοιγαροῦν, ὡς, ὥστε (in consequence, as a result)
purpose	ἵνα, ὅπως, ὥστε, μήποτε, μή πως (for that purpose, with this in view)
reason	ὅτι, γάρ, διά, διότι, χάριν, ἕνεκεν, ἐπεὶ (on account of this, for that reason)
basis	ἐπί, νή (on the basis of, in view of)
(2) conditional	
positive	εἰ, εἴπερ, ἐάν, ἐάνπερ, εἴτε...εἴτε, ἄν, πότερον (then, in that case, if, under the circumstances)
negative	εἰ μή, ἐάν μή (otherwise, if not)
concessive	καίπερ, καίτοι, καίτοιγε, κἄν [καί + ἐάν] (yet, still, though, despite this, however, even so, nevertheless)
Respective	
positive	ὧδε, ἐνθάδε (here, there, as to that, in that respect)
negative	ἄλλαχού (in other respects, elsewhere)

The other type of cohesive tie involves *componential* relationships in discourse. Whereas organic ties generally concern various paratactic and hypotactic, logico-semantic relationships between clauses and paragraphs, *componential ties* generally concern the meaningful relationships between individual linguistic components in the discourse (e.g. repetition of words). In order to account for the various semantic relationships between discourse components, Halliday and Hasan appeal to three types of componential ties: (1) co-reference; (2) co-classification; and (3) co-extension (see Halliday and Hasan 1980: 43-59). These are akin to the distinctions of reference, denotation, and sense often discussed in semantic theory.

Co-reference or reference refers to the cohesive ties between linguistic items of the same identity. In the sentence 'John bought the suit, which he gave to his brother', the relative pronoun 'which' refers to the entity 'suit'. Both lexical items—'suit' and 'which'—share the same identity. The same is true of ὁ ἀσθήρ and ὅν in Matt. 2:9. *Co-classification* or denotation—the second type of componential tie—refers to cohesive ties between linguistic items of the same class or genus. One way to create this type of tie is by *substitution*, as in 'I

want the children to draw with crayons' and 'I want the teenagers to draw with pencils'. By substituting 'teenagers' for 'children' and 'with pencils' for 'with crayons' the two sentences form a cohesive tie of co-classification with respect to who should do the drawing and how it should be done. A co-classificational tie (of 'sinning') is created in Rom. 2:12 by substituting ἀνόμως with ἐν νόμῳ (ὁ σοὶ γὰρ ἀνόμως ἤμαρτον...καὶ ὅσοι ἐν νόμῳ ἤμαρτον). Another way to convey co-classification is by *ellipsis* or zero-anaphora. For example, an individual might say to another, 'I hit the ball so hard it went over the parking lot. How hard did you [hit the ball]?' A cohesive relationship exists between these sentences because of the elided element 'hit the ball'. Both sentences do not refer to the same event; rather, they fall into the class of 'ball-hitting'. Similarly, in Phil. 2:4 (μὴ τὰ ἑαυτῶν ἕκαστος σκοποῦντες ἀλλὰ τὰ ἐτέρων ἕκαστοι) the participle, σκοποῦντες, is elided after ἀλλά, creating a co-classificational tie of 'considering'. *Co-extension* or sense—the third type of componential tie—refers to cohesive ties between linguistic items of the same semantic field, but not necessarily of the same class. In the sentences 'John ate the pizza' and 'Susie gobbled down the cake' the linguistic pairs 'John' / 'Susie', 'ate' / 'gobbled down', and 'pizza' / 'cake' do not refer to the same entities nor do they refer to the same class (e.g. pizza is not a kind of cake). Co-extensional ties are one of the most common ways of creating cohesiveness in texts and interpreting cohesive links in texts. These ties are primarily lexical. By using words with similar senses, speakers talk about similar things in similar ways.

Co-extensional ties may be further subdivided into (1) instantial and (2) general types. *Instantial lexical relationships* arise from the particular demands of the text (Halliday and Hasan 1980: 43-59). For example, the author of 1 Timothy may be referring to the specific individual Τιμοθέος when he uses the vocative ὦ ἄνθρωπε θεοῦ in 1 Tim. 6:11. However, this understanding is based on shared knowledge between the author and reader and not gained from the Greek language itself. That is, ὦ ἄνθρωπε θεοῦ, as a Greek expression, is not a unique referent for Timothy. Instantial ties often prove difficult for the modern reader because their interpretation is based on knowledge of the immediate text or the context of situation; a study of other contemporary literature or of Greek semantics is of little or no help.

General lexical relationships originate from the language system

itself; thus, they are shared by a group of language users. General co-extensions take five forms: reiteration, synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, and meronymy. *Reiteration* occurs when both members of the cohesive tie consist of the same lexical item. This is one of the more obvious forms of cohesive ties. However, the simple repetition of a lexical item does not imply total synonymy nor does it leave out the possibility that the same (spoken or written) lexical items have two quite different meanings with the same spelling (a monetary 'bank' or a river 'bank') and/or pronunciation ('meet' and 'meat'). Furthermore, the repetition of some words, such as the article δ , does not necessarily indicate cohesiveness. That is, repetition is not a phenomenon of the code itself but of the code as it is used by a speaker/author; hence, its presence in discourse as a cohesive device must be argued for by the interpreter, not simply asserted (this is an important point for debates over literary integrity of New Testament texts). *Synonymy* refers to cohesive ties created by lexical items sharing similar meanings (but not necessarily totally synonymous), that is, words from the same semantic domain. *Antonymy* refers to cohesive ties created by lexical items opposite in meaning. It is not that antonyms are unrelated in meaning but that the antonyms differ in one or more semantic features but share others—there is negativity and similarity. Thus 'dog' and 'kite' are not antonyms, because they do not share anything in common that would allow the listener to recognize a semantic tie between the two. But a cohesive tie might be intended between 'hot' and 'cold' (when used in the same text) because they share the semantic notion of temperature. *Hyponymy* refers to cohesive ties created by an inclusive semantic relationship between lexical items. One lexical item is included in the total semantic range of another item (but not vice-versa). This allows for a hierarchy of meanings in lexical systems. For example, 'Labrador' is a hyponym of 'dog', 'dog' is a hyponym of 'animal', 'animal' is a hyponym of 'living beings', and so on. Similarly, $\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ is a hyponym of $\mu\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\omicron\varsigma$. The one is included in the semantic range of another, which in turn is included in the semantic range of another, and so on. Hyponymy may be further distinguished according to contracting types (e.g. 'People got on and off. At the news-stand *businesspersons*, returning to Paris, bought that day's papers.') and expanding types ('*Tulips* are cheap even in January. But then, *flowers* seem to be necessary to Scandinavians during the darkest season.'). *Meronymy* refers to part-whole relationships between lexical items. For example,

the word 'fur' is a meronym of 'dog' or 'cat'. Similarly, $\kappa\acute{o}\mu\eta$ is a meronym of $\kappa\epsilon\phi\alpha\lambda\acute{\eta}$. The one is a part of the other. Because it is part of the other, it may be used to create a semantic relationship between the words.

Through the analysis of co-referential ties (e.g. pronouns, demonstratives), co-classificational ties (e.g. substitution, ellipsis), and co-extensional ties of both instantial (i.e. those tied to the situational context) and general types (repetition, synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, and meronymy), the discourse analyst is able to demonstrate a major component of textual cohesiveness. As seen above, co-reference and co-classification are primarily expressed by *grammatical* networks in the language and co-extension is primarily expressed by *lexical* networks.

A nagging question remains: What makes one text seemingly more cohesive than another? Or, for the New Testament interpreter: What criteria may be used to discuss the relative cohesiveness of a New Testament text? The notion of *semantic chains*, primarily discussed in systemic-functional linguistics, provides a reasonable set of criteria for such questions. A chain is formed by a *set* of discourse lexemes, each of which is related to the others by a semantic relation of co-reference, co-classification and/or co-extension. If a text, for example, contains a discourse participant who is identified using pronouns ('he preached...'), demonstratives ('that one healed...'), or the person's name ('Jesus said...'), then these elements form a chain of co-reference. There are two types of chains: identity chains and similarity chains. *Identity chains* are expressed by co-referential ties and *similarity chains* are expressed by co-classificational and co-extensional ties. Exposing the identity and similarity chains of a text, nevertheless, proves less than adequate when attempting to speak about the relative cohesiveness of a text. In order to determine relative textual cohesiveness, the discourse analyst should differentiate between peripheral, relevant, and central tokens. *Peripheral tokens* include those linguistic items which do not take part in a chain. This happens, for example, when a topic is brought up in a clause and then subsequently dropped from the discussion. It is isolated from other chains and, hence, is peripheral to the author's larger argument. *Relevant tokens* include all linguistic items in the text which are part of one or more chains. It should not be concluded, however, that a high proportion of relevant tokens to peripheral tokens necessitates greater textual cohesiveness (although it may play some role). *Textual*

cohesiveness is primarily occasioned by central tokens. Central tokens refer to linguistic items in chains that interact with linguistic items in other chains. If the two chains interact in more than one part of the text (especially in close contexts), it is likely that the author is 'on about' a similar topic, thus creating cohesiveness and potential coherence in the text. He is establishing a thread in the discourse, and using language in an organizing manner.

'The minimum requirement for chain interaction can be phrased as follows: for two chains x and y to interact, at least two members of x should stand in the same relation to two members of y' (Halliday and Hasan 1980: 57). In other words, two lexical items (the same or different) of the same chain must be used in conjunction with at least two other lexical items (the same or different) of another chain.²⁵ Typically, chain interaction involves a chain of *participants* (e.g. 'the Philippian Christians') and a chain of *events* (e.g. 'think...'); however, chain interaction may occur when one chain of participants interacts repeatedly with another chain of participants (e.g. 'Paul' says, hopes, sends 'the Philippians...'). The theory of cohesive ties is based on the view that a key factor for creating coherence lies in similarity. Chain interaction is a theory of similarity in texts—the view that cohesiveness is created by speakers saying similar kinds of things (e.g. chain 1) about similar kinds of phenomena (e.g. chain 2). In non-technical terms, chain interaction is the speaker's *being 'on about' similar kinds of things*. This understanding of language use is closely related to the principle of linguistic *redundancy*, that is, texts will typically transmit less information than the sum of their linguistic parts. Redundancy 'serves to reduce the likelihood of an error in the reception of the message resulting from the loss of information during the transmission'.²⁶ By repeating certain semantic content, the author better enables the reader to correctly understand the intent of the discourse.

²⁵ To limit chain interaction to 'two' may seem arbitrary, but it is the necessary lowest boundary since if only 'one' chain interaction were required then every clause of discourse would necessarily be a central token—a problematic conclusion. Admittedly, Halliday and Hasan are after a relative (scalar), not absolute, set of criteria for speaking about the cohesiveness of discourse.

²⁶ J. Caron, *An Introduction to Psycholinguistics* (trans. T. Pownall; New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), p. 5.

CONCLUSION

The tenth anniversary issue of the journal *Text* (1990), volume eleven of *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* (1990), and the International Congress of Linguists in Berlin (1987)—where discourse analysts formed the largest contingent—all testify to this model's popularity among both theoretical and applied linguists. In 1989, W.A. Beardslee prophesied about the potential alliance between discourse analysis and biblical studies,

It may well turn out to be the case that another type of linguistic interpretation [discourse analysis], making much less extensive hermeneutical claims, will come to be even more fruitful for actual exegesis than structuralism or Gütgemann's generative poetics (Beardslee 1989: 188).

Despite such promising words, it can hardly be claimed that discourse analysis has presently been established as a widespread hermeneutic in mainstream biblical scholarship. Its reputation is, however, growing. If it is to be as successful in biblical studies as it has been in linguistics, we need more New Testament exegetes to set forth clearly defined methods of discourse analysis which are then applied to New Testament texts. Furthermore, if modern linguistics is to have a lasting impact on New Testament studies, there will need to be a revival of interest in grammatical study. And, although Greek grammar still requires further study with respect to morphology or its formal units of meaning (e.g. verbal aspect and tense-forms), it surely requires even more research with respect to the discourse functions of the language. Although the present study is decidedly cursory in scope, an attempt has been made to provide an overall map which may guide the reader into further study and prompt thoughtful interaction especially with modern linguistic theory.²⁷

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²⁷ A more detailed discussion of this model of New Testament discourse analysis may be found in Reed 1997: 16-122.

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RHETORICAL AND NARRATOLOGICAL CRITICISM

DENNIS L. STAMPS

INTRODUCTION

It may seem odd linking rhetorical and narratological criticism, as they represent two different interpretative perspectives, but at a number of significant points, the two interpretative approaches converge to share similar foundations. In addition, the two have been linked as distinguishing two sides of one coin in terms of the two main critical tasks of discourse theory: narrative demarcating the textual ways and means; rhetoric the effects of such textual devices.¹ In order to introduce the significance and importance of rhetorical and narratological criticism, it is helpful to examine their common foundations and their relationship to a common critical task.

Exegesis includes understanding the biblical text in its final form. The final form of a biblical text is that form of the text which results from the conclusions of textual criticism, source criticism and tradition criticism. In addition, when biblical critics refer to the final form of a text, they generally mean the complete literary (and canonical) form of the text that a reader reads without necessary reference to the literary origins and development of the text. Rhetorical and narratological criticism are two critical approaches to the New Testament that are concerned with the final form of the text.

Within the bounds of the final form of New Testament texts, rhetorical and narratological criticism also are concerned with examining the modes and effects of literary arrangement. Terry Eagleton, in his revision of literary theory as discourse theory, suggests a link between rhetorical and literary criticism by defining the interpretative critical task as follows: 'What would be specific to the kind of study I have in mind... would be its concern for the kinds of *effects* which discourses produce, and how they produce them... this is, in fact, probably the oldest form of "literary criticism" in the world,

¹ J.H. Hayes and C.R. Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner's Handbook* (London: SCM Press, 2nd edn, 1987), pp. 73-80.

known as rhetoric'.² Wayne Booth also explicitly links rhetoric with narrative in his work, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*: 'My subject is the technique of non-didactic fiction, viewed as the art of communicating with readers—the rhetorical resources available to the writer...as he tries, consciously or unconsciously, to impose his fictional world upon the reader'.³ Eagleton and Booth as critics of literature are both concerned to examine the way literary texts affect the reading event and the reader. From this larger literary perspective, both rhetorical and narratological criticism, as forms of biblical criticism, are concerned to discover and analyze the 'formal devices of language' or the imbedded textual strategies that operate within a text. But both critical methods conceive the operation of these textual strategies in different ways: rhetorical criticism in terms of argumentation; narrative criticism in terms of the story.

As mentioned above, within the scope of the examination of textual strategies comes a concern for the effects of such. Rhetorical criticism is concerned with how the arrangement of the components of argumentation work towards proof or persuasion. Narratological criticism examines the way the narrative components work to create a story. This concern for the effects of textual strategies can, in both cases, be called a rhetorical concern. M.A. Powell distinguishes between the two approaches as follows: rhetorical criticism is concerned with the rhetoric of persuasion, that is, how the textual components work together to persuade the reader to adopt particular theses presented within the text for their assent; narrative criticism is concerned with the rhetoric of narrative, that is, how the components of story-telling work together to create narrative coherence.⁴

An interesting aspect of both rhetorical and narratological criticism is their concern for a unified text or the ways the parts cohere to make the whole. Biblical historical criticism often leaves a text in disparate parts, showing how different parts of a biblical text relate to different origins, literary and situational. With regard to Gospel criticism in particular, form, tradition and redaction criticism often atomize the

² T. Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), p. 205.

³ W.C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2nd edn, 1983), p. xiii.

⁴ M.A. Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism? A New Approach to the Bible* (London: SPCK, 1993), pp. 14-15.

story into unrelated literary pieces.⁵ Rhetorical and narratological criticism acknowledge that a text has many parts (devices, components, etc.), but assumes an internal textual connectedness or integration. Rhetorical and narratological criticism assumes that biblical texts can be understood in terms of a holistic overarching purpose, whether that purpose is to persuade or to tell a meaningful story.

In sum, rhetorical and narratological criticism represent a kind of final-form criticism of the biblical texts which is neither solely nor primarily occupied with the historical origin and development of the text. As interpretative perspectives, they are interested in analyzing the text in terms of textual components or devices which cohere with respect to an overarching communicative intention. The critical agenda is to discover and examine the textual components and to analyze how they work together to create a purposeful effect.

THEORETICAL AND INTERPRETATIVE ISSUES AND THEIR RELEVANCE FOR EXEGESIS

Having examined the foundational interpretative issues that rhetorical and narratological criticism share, it is necessary to look at each separately and examine what is distinctive to each interpretative approach with respect to the exegetical task. In so doing, it is also important to have some sense of how each critical perspective developed into a recognized distinctive interpretative method. The development and theory of rhetorical criticism will be discussed first, then narratological (or narrative) criticism.

Rhetorical Criticism

The application of rhetorical criticism to the New Testament has a long history.⁶ It extends back to the early Church Fathers who, trained in rhetoric, read many New Testament texts in order to analyze the persuasive style of the New Testament so that contemporary preachers could imitate this biblically-sanctioned rhetoric; a good example of this is St Augustine's *On Christian Doctrine* (Book 4). The 'revival'

⁵ N.R. Petersen, *Literary Criticism for New Testament Critics* (GBS; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), pp. 11-20.

⁶ A handy summary of the history of rhetorical criticism in biblical studies is D.F. Watson and A.J. Hauser, *Rhetorical Criticism of the Bible: A Comprehensive Bibliography with Notes on History and Method* (BIS, 4; Leiden: Brill, 1994), pp. 101-109.

of rhetorical criticism in biblical criticism in the late twentieth century has occurred through a number of influences. The writings of three scholars, James Muilenburg,⁷ Amos N. Wilder,⁸ and E.A. Judge,⁹ have been particularly important. Modern application of rhetorical criticism in New Testament studies, however, is better known for that critical perspective initiated by H.D. Betz. In 1974, he suggested that the whole of Galatians should be interpreted and analyzed as a rhetorical discourse, an apologetic letter, which utilizes traditional ancient rhetorical categories of speech.¹⁰ Then in the mid-1980s, a classicist, G. Kennedy, applied Greco-Roman rhetorical criticism to the whole range of New Testament literature in his book, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, suggesting a formulaic procedure for analyzing textual units according to the theories of ancient rhetoric.¹¹ His easily applicable procedure for rhetorical criticism has spawned numerous rhetorical analyses of New Testament texts, and is a watershed manual in New Testament rhetorical criticism. Like Betz, Kennedy attempts to show how the New Testament texts are examples of the art of ancient Greco-Roman rhetoric and/or function in a manner similar to ancient rhetorical categories. Kennedy states the rhetorical critical task as follows:

What we need to do is try to hear his [Paul's] words as a Greek-speaking audience would have heard them, and that involves some understanding of classical rhetoric... The ultimate goal of rhetorical analysis, briefly put, is the discovery of the author's intent and of how that is transmitted through a text to an audience.¹²

From this perspective, the New Testament supposedly was written and read in the context of Greco-Roman rhetoric and one can reconstruct that historical dimension in the text by identifying the classical rhetorical units, classifying them, and thereby discerning their

⁷ J. Muilenburg, 'Form Criticism and Beyond', *JBL* 88 (1969), pp. 1-18.

⁸ A.N. Wilder, *The Language of the Gospel: Early Christian Rhetoric* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964).

⁹ E.A. Judge, 'Paul's Boasting in Relation to Contemporary Professional Practice', *Australian Biblical Review* 16 (1968), pp. 37-50.

¹⁰ H.D. Betz, 'Literary Composition and Function of Paul's Letter to the Galatians', *NTS* 21 (1975), pp. 353-79; *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979).

¹¹ G.A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1984).

¹² Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*, pp. 10, 12.

rhetorical function and intent in relation to the original situation, the original author, and the original audience.

W. Wuellner also has been influential in the application of rhetorical criticism to the New Testament. In particular, his appropriation of the New Rhetoric and modern communication theory in his most recent writings has extended New Testament rhetorical criticism so that it includes any communication theory that helps illumine the way a text works to create its effect.¹³ Wuellner posits a form of rhetorical criticism that corresponds with the movement for a rhetoric revalued or rhetoric reinvented. From this perspective, rhetoric is understood as a practical performance of power inseparable from the social relations in which both the rhetorical act is situated and the rhetorical critic is situated. Wuellner states his position as follows:

...as rhetorical critics (rhetorics as part of literary theory) we face the obligation of critically examining the fateful interrelationship between (1) a text's rhetorical strategies, (2) the premises upon which these strategies operate (gender in patriarchy or matriarchy; race in social, political power structures), and (3) the efficacy of both text and its interpretation; of both exegetical practice and its theory (= method).¹⁴

While Wuellner's definition of rhetoric is far from clear, his move away from rhetoric as the application of Greco-Roman categories to the New Testament or as a way to excavate the historical meaning is obvious.

As implied in the survey of the development of recent New Testament rhetorical criticism, there is no single overarching methodology that can be found in the current practice of rhetorical criticism of the New Testament. Critical practice depends on whether one understands rhetoric as a purely historical phenomenon identified with ancient Greco-Roman rhetorical convention, as a universal communicative perspective identified with modern analyses of argumentation, or as some combination of the two.¹⁵ Based on the previous survey, several of the different rhetorical-critical approaches to the New Testament will be examined.

The first rhetorical-critical approach is the historically-based

¹³ W. Wuellner, 'Where is Rhetorical Criticism Taking us?', *CBQ* 49 (1987), pp. 448-63; 'Hermeneutics and Rhetorics: From "Truth and Method" to "Truth and Power"', *Scriptura* 3 (1989), pp. 1-54.

¹⁴ Wuellner, 'Hermeneutics and Rhetorics', p. 38.

¹⁵ Watson and Hauser, *Rhetorical Criticism*, pp. 109-15.

rhetorical criticism. Since the historical paradigm still governs exegesis of the New Testament in the guild of New Testament studies, it is not surprising that rhetorical criticism with a historical emphasis, as advocated by Betz and Kennedy, dominates most rhetorical-critical studies of the New Testament. This stream of rhetorical criticism seeks to correlate the text with its supposed original historical context, specifically ancient Greco-Roman rhetoric.

This particular approach is interested in reconstructing the rhetorical form and function of the biblical text in its historically-reconstructed situation. The text is analyzed as a piece of ancient Hellenistic rhetoric according to the historical-rhetorical categories gleaned from ancient rhetorical handbooks and ancient rhetorical compositions.¹⁶ The rhetoric of the text, from this historical perspective, is a recovery of the original author's use of Greco-Roman rhetoric to persuade the original readers in the context of the original historical setting or rhetorical situation. M. Mitchell's book, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, provides one of the clearest examples of this approach.¹⁷

The second historically-based perspective, the 'Kennedy' school, while remaining historical in perspective, seeks to restate the interpretative goal in exclusively rhetorical terms, and according to classical or Greco-Roman rhetorical terms. He adopts a five-step approach to analyze any rhetorical argument: (1) determine the rhetorical unit, either a self-contained textual unit or an entire book; (2) define the rhetorical situation, that is, the person, events and exigence which precipitated the rhetorical response; (3) determine the species of rhetoric (judicial, deliberative or epideictic) and the rhetorical problem or stasis; (4) analyze the invention (argument by ethos, pathos and logos), arrangement (the ordering of the argument according to the components such as the *exordium* or introduction, the *narratio* or statement of facts, the *probatio* or main body of the argument, and the *peroratio* or the conclusion), and style (the use of

¹⁶ Greco-Roman rhetorical theory based on the handbooks and compositions, in general, dealt with five aspects of the practice of rhetoric: invention, arrangement, style, memory and delivery. A convenient explanation and definition of these five aspects can be found in B. Mack, *Rhetoric and the New Testament* (GBS; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), pp. 25-48.

¹⁷ M.M. Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991).

figures of speech and other such devices to shape the speech according to the needs of the invention); and (5) evaluate the rhetorical effectiveness of the rhetorical response in addressing the rhetorical situation.¹⁸

D. Watson, in his book, *Invention, Arrangement and Style*, provides an application of Kennedy's methodology to the epistles of Jude and 2 Peter.¹⁹ He first sets forth an amplification and simplification of Kennedy's rhetorical theory, which also draws heavily on ancient rhetorical handbooks to provide clarification and definition of the rhetorical terms and categories he uses.²⁰ Watson then analyzes Jude in the following way. The rhetorical unit is the letter as a whole. The situation is identified as 'the infiltration of the church or churches by a doctrinally and ethically divergent group'.²¹ He classifies the species of rhetoric for Jude as deliberative, and analyzes the invention or argument of the letter as follows: the *exordium* (v. 3); the *narratio* (v. 4); the *probatio* with three proofs (vv. 5-16); the *peroratio* (vv. 17-23). Interestingly and questionably, he labels the epistolary prescript as 'quasi-exordium' (vv. 1-2) and the letter closing, a doxology, as 'quasi-peroratio' (vv. 24-25); these two literary units of letters do not easily conform to the classical oral rhetorical model Watson uses as the basis of his analysis. Through the application of his rhetorical-critical theory, Watson not only wants to illumine the rhetorical nature of the argument, but to solve the problems of literary integrity and dependency between Jude and 2 Peter.

As mentioned, another rhetorical-critical perspective practised in New Testament studies is advocated in the work of Wuellner. Wuellner advocates the priority of rhetoric over hermeneutics. This re-prioritization not only constitutes the reinvention of rhetoric, but also the complete abandonment of the interpretative task as presently practised in New Testament studies:

It made a revolutionary difference to take the familiar notion, that human beings in general, and religious persons in particular, are hermeneutically constituted, and replace it with the ancient notion familiar to Jews and Greeks alike, that we are rhetorically constituted. We have not only the capacity to understand the content or propositions of human signs and

¹⁸ Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*, pp. 33-38.

¹⁹ D.F. Watson, *Invention, Arrangement, and Style: Rhetorical Criticism of Jude and 2 Peter* (SBLDS, 104; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988).

²⁰ Watson, *Invention*, pp. 1-28.

²¹ Watson, *Invention*, p. 29.

symbols (= hermeneutics); we also have the capacity to respond and interact with them (= rhetorics).²²

For Wuellner and others like him, the rhetoric of a text is the power of a text to effect social identification and transformation in every act of reading. The operative rhetoric is dependent upon the immediate social context of any reading (whether ancient or modern) and of the readers, emphasizing the ideology of the text as a practical exercise of power. A helpful example of this approach is A.C. Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets*.²³

With regard to exegetical procedure, the different rhetorical-critical practices in New Testament interpretation suggest an essential rhetorical-critical method. Whether or not an exegete correlates the New Testament text with Greco-Roman oratorical rhetorical practice, rhetorical criticism is about analyzing a text in order to assess and evaluate the modes and means of the argumentation and the effect(s) of that argumentation in terms of its power to persuade. In order for an exegete to classify the forms of argumentation being utilized, the exegete will have to adopt some kind of theory of argumentation. The options available are numerous, and include Greco-Roman rhetorical theory, the New Rhetoric of Chaim Perelman,²⁴ and more general theories of argumentation, often based on a theory of rhetoric.²⁵ Assessing and evaluating the persuasive power of the argumentation is a more subjective procedure and will often depend on the context in and to which the rhetorical-critical task is being addressed.

In terms of application to Scripture, a biblical critic needs to identify a textual unit that has some integrity (a beginning, middle and conclusion). Then, using the theory of rhetoric adopted, to identify and analyze the rhetorical components or devices of this unit which work to persuade the audience to assent to the ideas and beliefs presented in the text. The rhetorical-critical task also includes evaluation of the effectiveness of the devices, of the consequences of

²² Wuellner, 'Hermeneutics and Rhetorics', p. 38.

²³ A.C. Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets: A Reconstruction through Paul's Rhetoric* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1990).

²⁴ C. Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation* (trans. J. Wilkinson and P. Weaver; Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989).

²⁵ W.J. Brandt, *The Rhetoric of Argumentation* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1970); W. Nash, *Rhetoric: The Wit of Persuasion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

the way the argument is presented, and of the effect the point-of-view might have upon the audience in view.

Within this very general theory of rhetorical criticism, there are several important assumptions which need further explanation. First, critics must identify the rhetor in their theory of rhetoric. For most biblical rhetorical critics, the rhetor is the original historical author, but notionally it is possible to identify that historical author with the implied author who is limited to the authorial identity entextualized within the discourse.²⁶ Secondly, rhetorical criticism can work on almost any size unit of text down to a sentence, possibly even a clause or phrase, and up to a whole discourse like a Gospel or epistle or even the whole Bible. The problem is whether rhetorical criticism, in analyzing a unit of text, discerns a textual integrity which was intentionally created, or critically imposes a pattern of coherence as an analytical procedure. Thirdly, identifying, analyzing and evaluating the rhetorical components depends a great deal upon the situation the rhetoric is perceived to be addressing. For many biblical critics, the situation in view is the original historical occasion in which the writer addresses the original audience (whether hearers or readers of the text), but rhetorical criticism can work equally in the situation of the canonical text addressing a modern audience (or any variant of this type of situation).

Rhetorical criticism is a very helpful critical perspective, which provides a methodological approach for analyzing and evaluating the argumentation of a biblical text based on a particular theory of rhetoric adopted by the biblical critic.

Narratological Criticism

Examining the biblical text in terms of its literary qualities is not a new critical practice. What is more recent is the sustained effort to apply modern 'secular' literary-critical theories of narrative to the Gospel literature. In actual practice, this effort has been complex and complicated and cannot be fully comprehended apart from an attempt to relate modern literary criticism to contemporary biblical-literary criticism.²⁷ For the sake of brevity, only the particular practice of

²⁶ The implied author is the author (re)constructed by the reader from the textual traces of the author within the narrative; see Booth, *Rhetoric*, pp. 66-77.

²⁷ Reliable guides for such are S.D. Moore, *Literary Criticism and the Gospels: The Theoretical Challenge* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); and S.E. Porter, 'Literary Approaches to the New Testament: From Formalism to Deconstruction and Back', in S.E. Porter and D. Tombs (eds.), *Approaches to*

narrative criticism that has emerged in biblical studies will be examined.

The development of narrative criticism in biblical studies in recent years has a twisted route. The dominance of historical-grammatical criticism since the Enlightenment in biblical studies is well documented.²⁸ Alongside this development there has occurred the occasional literary reading of the Bible, but for the most part, these two distinct approaches have occurred without any mutual interaction. With reference to the Gospels, this means that historical critics focus on the development and transmission of the Gospels from their sources to their present canonical form. The reconstruction of this historical process is always also done in relation to a reconstruction of the individuals and communities who were associated with each step of the development, writing, editing and transmission of each Gospel.

From the 1940s onwards, an approach developed which was essentially identified with the study of literature. In schools and universities it was known as 'the study of the Bible as literature'.²⁹ As secular literary criticism fragmented into different interpretative methods beginning primarily with the New Criticism and going up to and including deconstructionism and New Historicism, the biblical texts were occasionally read using these different methods. On the whole, biblical critics took no notice.

However, in the 1960s there was an avenue of study that examined the parables from a modern literary perspective. From this and the growing inter-disciplinary nature of the study of the humanities at this time, in the 1970s there erupted a concerted effort in biblical studies to apply modern literary-critical methods to the biblical text, primarily the Gospels. The pioneering work of William Beardslee, David Rhoads, Jack D. Kingsbury, R. Alan Culpepper and Robert C. Tannehill meant that, by the 1980s, there was a substantive literary analysis of each of the five New Testament narratives by a recognized biblical critic.³⁰ As of today, there is a well-established discipline

New Testament Study (JSNTSup, 120; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), pp. 77-128.

²⁸ R. Morgan with J. Barton, *Biblical Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 44-200.

²⁹ The classic text is M.E. Chase, *The Bible and the Common Reader* (London: Macmillan, 1952).

³⁰ W.A. Beardslee, *Literary Criticism of the New Testament* (GBS; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969); D. Rhoads and D. Michie, *Mark as Story: An*

within biblical studies of the literary and narratological interpretation of Scripture.

It is important to recognize, however, that narrative criticism as it is practised in biblical studies has no parallel in secular literary criticism. It resembles in many ways some of the developments that are associated with New Criticism and the subsequent developments within the reader-oriented perspectives in secular literary studies.³¹ In order to understand the practice of narrative criticism in biblical studies, it is necessary to examine both the essential literary principles which are assumed and the elements of narrative analysis which are employed. However, like rhetorical criticism, there is no universal agreement as to what exactly comprises narrative criticism in biblical studies, but there is far more agreement in this interpretative approach than with rhetorical criticism.

In the introduction, some of the basic assumptions that narrative criticism shares with rhetorical criticism were noted. In its focus upon the final form of the text, narrative criticism not only concentrates on the coherence of the text but on the text as an end in itself.³² In this sense, the text is not primarily a source to recover the events and persons associated with the original writing and reception of the text, but an event in itself. The focus is on the experience of the text as a communication event within a specified context. In this regard, the text's reference to the world outside the text is one of the components or devices of narrative that must be analyzed. It is out of this assumption that narrative critics interpret a text with a second essential understanding, that a text be interpreted in reference to the implied author and the implied reader as opposed to the real author and the real reader. The implied author and reader are figures within the narrative, implicitly or explicitly, which are presupposed and constructed by the narrative itself:

The implied author is a hypothetical construction based on the requirements of knowledge and belief presupposed in the narrative. The

Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982); J.D. Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986); R.A. Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983); R. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation* (2 vols.; Philadelphia and Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1986, 1990).

³¹ Porter, 'Literary Approaches', pp. 83-120.

³² Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?*, pp. 7-8.

same is true of the implied reader. The implied author is the one who would be necessary for this narrative to be told or written. The implied reader is the one who would be necessary for this narrative to be heard or read.³³

A third basic principle is the assumption of a writing and reading process which undergirds any narrative interpretation. Literary texts are a product of a composition process in which the written text is a form of communication through which a message is passed from the author to the reader(s). In terms of the reading process, a reader encounters a text in sequential order, and generally understands the narrative as a unified whole, connecting the parts to a larger narrative scheme.

With these basic literary assumptions, narrative criticism examines various narrative elements or devices and considers their role and effect in constructing a narrative whole (the story) and their effect upon how the story is told or the rhetoric of the story (the discourse).³⁴ The various narrative elements are related to the more general narrative concepts of structure or plot, characterization, point-of-view and setting. Each of these general concepts can be broken down into several narrative features or devices.³⁵

Narrative structure is the pattern of the narrative elements or of the narrative components of the story. In particular, structure relates to the order of the events. Events may be ordered chronologically or topically, by using prediction or foreshadowing or flashback. Structural patterns include devices like repetition, chiasm, contrast or comparison, and summary, which are used to organize and develop the story and shape the discourse. In addition, the duration and frequency of the events are part of the structure; duration refers to the amount of 'ink' an incident is given over other incidents; frequency refers to the number of times an incident is referred to in the story. In

³³ E.S. Malbon, 'Narrative Criticism: How Does the Story Mean?', in J.C. Anderson and S.D. Moore (eds.), *Mark and Method: New Approaches in Biblical Criticism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), p. 27.

³⁴ The distinction between story and discourse stems from S. Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978), pp. 19-22.

³⁵ Useful discussions of narrative features are found in Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?*, pp. 23-82; *idem*, 'Narrative Criticism', in J.B. Green (ed.), *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), pp. 244-48; Malbon, 'Narrative Criticism', pp. 26-36; also Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, pp. 43-262.

John's Gospel, John the Baptist foreshadows the events to come by his declaration, 'Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). A key to the structure of Acts is tied to a geographical progression foreshadowed in Acts 1:8. In Mark's Gospel, the repetition of the three passion predictions (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34) all occur after a climactic recognition of who Jesus is by the disciples in Mark 8:27-30. Two events, the healing of Jairus's daughter and the healing of the woman with a haemorrhage, are intercalated to provide a comparison and contrast about faith in Mark 5:22-43. Summary provides important transitions in the story of Acts (1:43-47; 4:32-35; 6:7; 9:31).

Plot relates directly to narrative structure, but is often concerned with the specific causal links between events. Jesus' conflict with evil and with the religious authorities propels Mark's story forward and explains the 'why' for many of the events (see Mark 3:6). The martyrdom of Stephen and the consequent persecution of Christians is the cause of Christians leaving Jerusalem for Judea and Samaria (Acts 1:8). When no explicit cause is given to an event, it is the element of plot which suggests that a reader implicitly seeks a connective link between events. The seemingly designed pattern of miracles, parables, exorcisms and teaching in Mark 1-8 provides a fruitful example of the need to try to discern an implicit plot.

Character and characterization refer to the way persons are presented in the story. Presentation includes what a person says and the way a person acts. Characterization is also developed by what others say about them, how they function in the plot and what the narrator says about them. Characters are generally crucial to the development of the story. The disciples in Mark's Gospel are consistently portrayed as misunderstanding Jesus and his mission even at the resurrection. Judas is a complex character in Mark's Gospel, but fairly flat or one-dimensional in John's Gospel. Philip, Peter and Paul in Acts provide interesting examples of characterization which is linked vitally to the plot.

Point-of-view is a pervasive narrative technique, in that the story is always being presented or told from some perspective which has an evaluative consequence. Most narratives are dominated by the narrator, who is generally related to the implied author, and is usually considered to have a reliable perspective. The change in point-of-view in Mark's Gospel when the author moves from narration to direct commentary, particularly in the incident when Jesus teaches about

what comes from the heart of a person (Mark 7:16, 19), provides a very significant comment within the story. Sometimes the narrator is identified with a character, thus when different characters speak, we are hearing their point-of-view. The divine voice from heaven in Mark 1:11 and 9:7 is an example of a reliable point of view that contributes to the plot; equally, when the demons speak in Mark's Gospel, they speak with supernatural insight that is absent in humans.

Setting refers to the where and when or the spatial, temporal and social locations of narrative events. Different settings have implications for the plot and rhetoric of the narrative. Luke's Gospel clearly manipulates setting for significant narrative purposes. Jerusalem and the Temple (Luke 2:22-38), the wilderness and the forty days (Luke 4:1), the mountain (Luke 6:12; 9:28)—all evoke a sense of prophetic significance when an event occurs in these settings. The controversies with religious leaders in Mark 2:23-3:12 are heightened because they occur on the Sabbath.

Other important narrative devices include symbolism, irony and intertextuality. The use of water in John's Gospel assumes symbolic meaning at points representing Christian baptism. Irony, in which the reader knows that the proper response is contrary to that which is stated in the text, may be the operative device in the ending of Mark's Gospel when, after seeing the empty tomb, the women said nothing for they were afraid. In Matthew's Gospel, intertextuality is at work with the Old Testament allusions and quotations that riddle the story and provide implicit commentary on the significance of the events of the plot.

Narrative criticism is important for the interpretation or exegesis of the New Testament narratives. Narrative criticism assists the exegetical task by suggesting the relationship between different textual units in the Gospels and Acts. But it primarily provides an interpretative perspective which can evaluate the purpose or significance of the what and why (structure and plot), the who (characters), the when and where (setting), and the wherefore (point-of-view) of the events in a biblical narrative.

THE USES AND ABUSES OF RHETORICAL AND NARRATOLOGICAL CRITICISM IN EXEGESIS

There are some significant issues which must be confronted in the use of rhetorical and narrative criticism for exegesis. The exegetical issues with regard to these two interpretative approaches centre

around the matters of genre, history and textual integrity.

With regard to both rhetorical and narrative criticism there is the problem of application with respect to different genres in the biblical corpus. Rhetorical criticism, especially the school of rhetorical criticism that employs a form of ancient Greco-Roman rhetorical theory, is best suited for speech-like texts such as the New Testament epistles, homilies and the prophetic oracles found in Revelation. There have been no satisfactory rhetorical-critical analyses of the Gospel as a whole or of significant portions.³⁶ The most effective rhetorical analyses of the Gospel tradition have been with respect to the smaller textual units that make up pronouncement stories or *chreiai*. The exegetical question persists: should rhetorical criticism be applied to narrative texts which are far more removed from speeches than even the didactic epistles?

In fact, there is much debate as to the appropriateness of using ancient rhetorical categories even for analyzing New Testament epistles.³⁷ The ancient rhetorical handbooks of the first century CE which are extant were prescriptive for the construction of the appropriate speech for a defined social situation. They did not include instructions for writing letters. In fact, letters appear to have been recognized in categories other than rhetorical speech. The debate over the rhetorical analysis of Galatians well represents the problem.³⁸ What type of rhetorical species is Galatians? What is the rhetorical invention or pattern of argumentation for Galatians? It appears that no two rhetorical critics agree. At best, the rhetorical analysis of New Testament letters using Greco-Roman rhetorical theory is a heuristic device for identifying and analyzing patterns of argumentation.

A similar concern applies to narrative criticism. As would be expected, most narrative criticism has been applied to the Gospels. Can narrative criticism be applied to New Testament epistles? An interesting example is N. Petersen's literary-sociological analysis of

³⁶ For an expanded discussion of this matter, see D.L. Stamps, 'Rhetorical Criticism of the New Testament: Ancient and Modern Evaluations of Argumentation', in Porter and Tombs (eds.), *Approaches to New Testament Study*, pp. 129-51.

³⁷ Stamps, 'Rhetorical Criticism', pp. 141-48.

³⁸ See the insightful discussion in S.E. Porter, 'Paul of Tarsus and his Letters', in S.E. Porter (ed.), *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period (330 B.C.-A.D. 400)* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), pp. 533-85.

Philemon.³⁹ In this treatment, he takes a letter and transforms it into a story utilizing narrative elements like plot, characters, setting and point-of-view. The principal objection to this exegetical procedure is that it requires a generic transformation in order to work: the letter is transformed into a narrative before it is analyzed. This seems to violate some of the literary assumptions of narrative criticism, which accepts the final form of a text. While Petersen provides one of the most interesting and provocative readings of a New Testament letter, his method implicitly assumes all discourse is narrative at one level and can be analyzed as such. This assumption begs too many questions with regard to genre and exegetical procedure (but deserves further consideration).

The matter of genre and narrative criticism goes to the heart of the exegesis of the Gospels and Acts. Is there a sense in which narrative criticism assumes a modern literary phenomenon, the novel, as the basis for its critical assumptions? And if so, does this impose upon the ancient writings a literary perspective that is inappropriate? Indeed, are the Gospels even narratives at all? Does the recognition of the Gospel genre as *bios* or *kerygma* and Acts as history put a question over the application of narrative criticism to these texts? On the other hand, narrative criticism provides some of the most exciting and insightful analyses of the Gospels. Some critics would argue that narrative criticism is more appropriate than the historical-critical method, because it respects the coherent story and biographical nature of the texts.⁴⁰ This debate is, however, far from closed.

A second matter which applies to both narrative and rhetorical criticism is the relationship of each method to history. Narrative criticism is often criticized for being non-historical or a-historical. This stems from its concern for the text as an event in itself and not the historical occasion in which and to which the text is addressed and its concern for the implied author and reader(s) versus the historical author and reader(s). Certainly, narrative criticism is not the appropriate method to ascertain answers to historical questions one might ask in relation to an ancient document like the Bible, but this does not mean that it vitiates historical concerns. Narrative critics respond to this charge by stating that a narrative critic must be conversant with the historical information the implied reader is meant

³⁹ N.R. Petersen, *Rediscovering Paul: Philemon and the Sociology of Paul's Narrative World* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985).

⁴⁰ Powell, 'Narrative Criticism', p. 254.

to have, that body of common knowledge assumed in the world of the story.⁴¹ For modern narrative critics of the Bible, this will include historical and cultural information not generally known today, thus requiring some historical investigation on the part of the narrative critic.

The more difficult historical concern with regard to narrative criticism is how it conceives of the referentiality of the text in regard to the historical context. Narrative criticism eschews the premise that the biblical texts are the primary evidence for the historical situation in which they were written and to which they were written, or at least the premise that this perspective has the primary claim on the meaning of the text. It is one thing to say that narrative criticism cannot be used to extract this historical information; it is another thing to say that such information is unimportant to the interpretation of the text or, more radically, that the text by its very nature as narrative cannot answer such historical questions. Good exegesis cannot ignore historical concerns, even if narrative criticism chooses to.

Rhetorical criticism has the opposite problem. Much rhetorical criticism, especially the kind that utilizes Greco-Roman oral rhetorical categories, assumes a direct correlation between the original historical situation that prompted the response, and the form of rhetoric and kinds of rhetorical devices used in the response. Equally, this form of rhetorical criticism presumes a direct relationship between the rhetorical analysis and the author's intention, that is, the rhetorical critic's analysis of the rhetoric of a biblical text is an effort to discover, in a one-to-one correspondence, the original author's compositional intention. It is this commitment to historical concerns which has prompted some historical critics to suggest rhetorical criticism is simply one more critical tool in the historical critic's bag.⁴² But this form of historical rhetorical criticism falls prey to much of the same criticism that traditional historical criticism has received. On the other hand, there are those rhetorical critics like Wuellner who look to other interpretative goals than history, and who adopt a less direct correspondence between the rhetoric of a text and the situation behind it. The hermeneutical question of how well an interpretative method can recover, even reconstruct, the historical context of a text's

⁴¹ Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?*, p. 20.

⁴² For a fuller discussion of how rhetorical criticism has been assimilated into the historical-critical method, see D.L. Stamps, 'Rhetorical Criticism and the Rhetoric of New Testament Criticism', *LT* 6 (1992), pp. 268-79.

composition is still open for discussion among rhetorical critics.

Another interesting problem which both narratological criticism and rhetorical criticism have attempted to address as part of their critical task is the integrity of a text. As both methods operate with an underlying assumption that a text in all its parts has an overarching unity, this methodological assumption has been used to counter arguments for compositional incoherence. For instance, a rhetorical-critical analysis of Philippians by Watson suggests that the rhetorical cohesion of the argument of the canonical text of Philippians contradicts any partition or multiple-letter theories for the letter.⁴³ However, simply because an interpretative method can discern a literary integrity for a text does not mean that the text originated as a coherent whole. Both narrative criticism and rhetorical criticism have the means for integrating discourse digression and disjunction into the larger discourse purpose. It should be equally possible that rhetorical and narratological criticism might assess a text as so disjointed in argument or as a story that it could not be considered as an integrated textual whole. The simple problem is that rhetorical and narratological criticism cannot necessarily solve a problem like textual integrity when, by presupposition, both methods assume textual wholeness or unity.

CONCLUSION

Rhetorical and narratological criticism are two interpretative approaches that focus on the final form of the text in order to analyze the literary arrangement of the textual components or devices and to assess the effect of this arrangement. Rhetorical criticism particularly analyzes a text in order to evaluate the argument and its persuasiveness. Narratological criticism assesses the way a narrative text tells a story. Both critical approaches use diverse and particular interpretative methods to classify and evaluate the literary techniques employed within a text. Both methods are particularly useful in the exegetical task in seeing how a text works as a whole to present a coherent (or incoherent) argument or story.

⁴³ D.F. Watson, 'A Rhetorical Analysis of Philippians and its Implications for the Unity Question', *NovT* 30 (1988), pp. 57-88. For a more balanced approach to the issue, see J.T. Reed, *A Discourse Analysis of Philippians: Method and Rhetoric in the Debate over Literary Integrity* (JSNTSup, 136: Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), pp. 124-52, 406-18.

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NEW TESTAMENT LITERARY CRITICISM

BROOK W.R. PEARSON

INTRODUCTION

Literary theory has, over the past three decades, become a very important contributor to the field of New Testament exegesis, and has gained a fairly wide following in current New Testament criticism. This is not surprising when one takes into account the many highly stylistic portions scattered throughout the New Testament, such as the Beatitudes (Matt. 5:1-7) or the Christ 'hymn' of Phil. 2:6-11. These sections seem naturally to lend themselves to literary, aesthetically sensitive treatments that traditional historical criticism has been unable to provide. To put it bluntly—the existence of traditional 'literary' devices within the different genres of New Testament literature simply invites literary treatment.¹

As obvious as this need for literary treatment of New Testament texts may seem, literary criticism has actually been somewhat of a latecomer to the scene of New Testament study. Although it has taken little time to become popular in New Testament exegesis, literary methodology took much longer to catch on in New Testament studies than it did in the study of the Old Testament. This lag between the widespread use of literary criticism in the study of the Old Testament and that of the New Testament is telling. It can probably be explained by three main factors, each of which, when reversed, poses a problem for the practitioner of New Testament literary criticism: (1) The historical information regarding the New Testament literature—all of which was written within, at most, a hundred year period only two millennia ago—is, to most scholars, much clearer and more prodigious than the information we have regarding the Old Testament. This older collection is literature of often indeterminate date, extensive editorial influence, and, at the least, between a millennium

¹ In the Gospels there is everything from simile (Matt. 13:31-33) and extended metaphor (Mark 12:1-12) to foreshadowing (Mark 8-10); some of the Pauline letters have obvious hymnic/poetic portions (Phil. 2:6-11; Col. 1:15-20; 2 Tim. 3:16); and Revelation is, if nothing else, incredibly image-laced (e.g. ch. 18 with the whore of Babylon).

and two centuries older than the New Testament. (2) A much higher proportion of the Old Testament is in what we traditionally see as 'literary' form, such as the poetry of the Psalms and the proverbial statements of the wisdom literature. There seem to be only small portions of the Old Testament that do not lend themselves to literary treatment. (3) Very soon after the formation of the modern state of Israel, the study of the Old Testament was placed within the literary faculties of its universities, and some important western universities, while not going quite that far, actively applied literary methodology in the study of the Old Testament fairly early on. The New Testament, beyond the acclaim garnered by the King James Version as a classic of the English language in English departments, has stayed resolutely in the religious studies or theological faculties of western universities. Certain biblical studies faculties have indeed turned to a more literary approach, but this has not had the same effect on the field as the literary appreciation of the Old Testament.

These same three factors that have encouraged the use of literary methods in the study of the Old Testament, when reversed, act as obstacles to the use of literary method in New Testament study. In direct contrast to the practice of literary criticism in the study of the Old Testament, the New Testament literary critic has three problems that must be addressed: (1) The New Testament documents are able to be placed much more clearly within specific historical settings; (2) The bulk of the New Testament books are not in a recognizable literary form;² (3) The field of New Testament criticism is not one that has historically supported literary methodologies. One additional factor that blocks the undiminished use of literary criticism in the study of either the New Testament or the Old Testament is the fact that the historical nature of the events reported therein is of utmost importance to the followers of at least one of the world's major religions, and is, in many ways, the most significant factor that has been threatened by traditional historical criticism. Literary criticism, which is largely a-historical in theoretical or methodological orientation, does not usually ask or answer the historical questions that

² Of 27 New Testament 'books', only the Revelation, the four Gospels, and Acts are not in epistolary form (although the Revelation does have epistolary qualities). This leaves 21 'books' not fitting into a normal 'literary' form, since letters have traditionally not been considered as literature per se, but rather as functional literary forms or types. See the Chapter in this volume on Genre in the New Testament.

are so important for, among others, confessional reasons. Some find this aspect of literary treatments of the New Testament threatening.

However, as much as these obstacles are real ones, the promise of exegetical 'payoff' with the use of literary-critical methods has drawn many practitioners of New Testament criticism to experiment with their usefulness for exegesis. Unfortunately, one of the damaging characteristics of most New Testament literary criticism has been its 'appropriative' nature. Much New Testament literary criticism has felt free to pick and choose from the various methodologies that are available to the secular literary critic, but this appropriation means that New Testament literary criticism has not necessarily gone through the same theoretical and methodological 'growing pains' that the field of literary criticism has over the course of the last approximately one hundred years. Some literary methods have thus become very popular in New Testament exegesis to the exclusion of others, but without the theoretical and historical underpinnings that they have in literary criticism. This 'appropriative' character of New Testament literary criticism is one of the issues that needs to be addressed in future literary work in New Testament study.

The most popular literary methodologies currently in use in New Testament criticism are: formalism, with its close relative, the New Criticism; reader-oriented criticisms; post-structuralism and deconstructionism; and anthropological structuralism.³ The appeal of these particular methodologies is easy to understand—they seek access to the center of meaning in the experience of reading (or, in the case of deconstructionism, the lack of a center). This search for access to meaning and significance is perhaps the most important element that literary methodologies can add to the discipline of New Testament criticism. This is especially true when one considers that traditional historical criticism has not typically had the search for the significance of the text as its *raison d'être*, and has at times even denied the possibility of finding a text that could be understood. Each of these three methods of literary criticism that have typically been utilized by New Testament critics is part of the search for a center of meaning, and, hopefully, access to understanding.

³ Other methodologies that have been utilized, but which have not yet proved themselves, are biographical criticism, genre criticism, and archetypal criticism, among others. The method of anthropological structuralism is not discussed in this chapter because, although it often appears under the title 'literary criticism', it is much more of a social-scientific approach than a literary one.

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USES AND ABUSES OF NEW TESTAMENT LITERARY CRITICISM

Textual Intercourse: Post-Structuralism and Deconstruction

Post-structuralism, while by definition not a monolithic methodology, is that which is based (sometimes more closely than at other times) on the work of several loosely connected philosophers. Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Julia Kristeva, Harold Bloom, Roland Barthes, Paul de Man and Jacques Lacan are the key figures in the field of post-structural thought, and their work comes from, and has been applied to several different disciplines.

'Post-structuralism' is often seen as a synonym for 'deconstructionism', but the relationship between the two is in fact a one-sided one. Deconstructionism is more properly thought of as the work by and patterned after the post-structuralist thinker Jacques Derrida. The term is, however, often applied to much that should simply fall under the broader title of 'post-structuralism'.

The literature that this movement has spawned has been prodigious—to even attempt to distill the thought of any one of these thinkers would take, and has taken, several thick volumes. Because of this, and because my interest here is with the application of this criticism to the New Testament, I will instead rely upon the methodological description of self-confessed New Testament practitioners of post-structuralist and deconstructionist approaches.

The most prolific New Testament post-structuralist is Stephen D. Moore, whose several books and articles are the most thorough-going examples of deconstructive New Testament criticism. Moore's distillation of post-structuralism is based on several quotations from Paul de Man and Jacques Derrida:

'The paradigm for all texts consists of a figure (or a system of figures) and its deconstruction' (de Man).

'A deconstruction always has for its target to reveal the existence of hidden...fragmentations within assumedly monadic totalities' (de Man)

'The text...tells the story, the allegory of its misunderstanding' (de Man)

'It has been necessary to...set to work, within the text...certain marks...that...I have called undecidables...that can no longer be included within philosophical (binary) opposition, but which, however, inhabit philosophical opposition, resisting and disorganizing it' (Derrida)

'I do not "concentrate", in my reading...either exclusively or primarily on those points that appear to be the most "important", "central", "crucial". Rather, I de-concentrate, and it is the secondary, eccentric, lateral, marginal, parasitic, borderline cases which are "important" to me and are a source of many things, such as pleasure, but also insight into the general functioning of a textual system' (Derrida)

'Deconstruction is inventive or it is nothing at all; it does not settle for methodical procedures, it opens up a passageway, it marches ahead and marks a trail...it produces rules—other conventions' (Derrida).⁴

This smorgasbord of quotations from the two most well-known practitioners of the deconstructive (anti-)project gives a good idea of what deconstructive criticism is about. Moore has summarized well. Essentially, the deconstructive/post-structuralist critic looks for places that texts' binary oppositions—what Derrida calls 'undecidables'—(such as spirit/flesh, light/dark, etc.) break apart. This is, however, not like looking for breaks in the text as redaction critics do—perceived cracks in the finished surface of a text that point to an earlier stage of production. Rather, it is looking for where the philosophy of the text breaks down—where the system that ostensibly holds the text together can be shown to be unstable. By pointing out these cracks and working on them as if with a crowbar, the critic hopes to deconstruct the hegemony or integrity of the (repressive) text.

Part of the deconstructive project is the idea of the relatedness of all texts—intertextuality—that asserts that all texts are connected to all other texts. This concept, first developed by Kristeva, allows the critic to creatively demonstrate this connectedness in the empty space that has been provided by the deconstructive efforts. We will see below an example of this 'intertextuality' when we examine some of Moore's work.

Much of the work that has been associated with Foucault and his particular version of post-structuralism has focused on the power structures inherent in texts, and the way that they have both created and maintained actual power structures. The work that has followed this recognition has often sought to subvert those power structures by pulling texts to pieces in a hope that this will have a similar effect on the actual power structures upon which they rely. In essence, the post-

⁴ S.D. Moore, 'Deconstructive Criticism: The Gospel of the Mark', in J.C. Anderson and S.D. Moore (eds.), *Mark and Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), p. 85.

structural/deconstructive project offers new texts in place of the old.

Post-structuralist exegetical techniques allow critics to assert themselves in the space they have created by pulling down old texts. This is often accomplished through the use of complicated word-plays, innuendoes (often sexual), interlinguistic etymologies (often in reverse chronological order), and outright re-writing of the text. These are all more than amply demonstrated in Moore's treatments of the New Testament. Perhaps the best example is to be found in the introductory essay from which I quoted earlier, which is actually a distillation of the first half of an earlier book entitled *Mark and Luke in Poststructuralist Perspectives: Jesus Begins to Write*.⁵ In the section of the essay that bears the same title as both the essay and the first part of the earlier book,⁶ Moore writes,

Mark's theology is commonly said to be a theology of the cross, a theology in which life and death crisscross. Jesus' crucifixion... In Mark, the signature of the disciple can only ever be that of a crisscross or Christcross, which my dictionary defines as 'the figure or mark of a cross in general; esp. that made in "signing" his name by a person that cannot write' (*OED*). But a person unable to write is generally unable to read, and in Mark, the disciples, generally at cross-purposes with Jesus, are singularly unable to read. Jesus must speak cross words to his puzzled disciples...

A cross is also a chiasmus, a crosswise fusion in which the order established in the first instance...is inverted in the second instance... Central to Mark is the fact of the crucifixion, a fiction structured like a cross or chiasmus.

Chiasmus comes from the Greek verb *chiazein*, 'to mark with the letter c', pronounced *chi*. And *chi* is an anagram of *ich*, which is German for the personal pronoun *I*, and the technical term in Freud (whose appearance here is anything but accidental)⁷ that English translators render as *ego*. And Jesus, who identifies himself to his terrified disciples in Mark 6.50 with the words *egō eimi* ('I am,' or 'it is I'), himself possesses a name that is an echo of the French *Je suis* ('I am'), the single superfluous letter being the *I* (or *ego*), which is thus marked out for deletion: 'Father not what I [*egō*] want, but what you want' (14.36).

⁵ S.D. Moore, *Mark and Luke in Poststructuralist Perspectives: Jesus Begins to Write* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

⁶ 'The Gospel of the Mark' where 'Mark' is crossed through with a large 'X' in Moore, 'Deconstructive Criticism', p. 95.

⁷ Much of the work of J. Lacan is based on the work of Freud.

To be marked with the c, the cross, is painful, for *chiazein* also means 'to cut'. Another meaning of *chiasma* is 'piece of wood'. And the *chiasma* on which Jesus writ(h)es is a lectern as well as a writing desk. Dying, he opens up the book to Psalm 22 and reads the opening verse... *Chi*, the first letter of *Christos* ('Christ'), is also the twenty-second letter of the Greek alphabet.⁸

The purpose of this lengthy (and almost entirely continuous) quotation is to demonstrate just how counterproductive the results of this methodology can be. Moore is, however, a faithful practitioner of deconstructive methodologies and programs—there is no question about that. My contention is simply that the methodology has not yet produced, and gives no hint that it ever will produce, anything of lasting value to the field of New Testament study.⁹

While Moore's three full-length books on various aspects of literary criticism and deconstruction do at least make for some interesting reading if one is interested in post-structuralism, this is not always true of criticism that claims to be 'deconstructive'.

David Seeley's *Deconstructing the New Testament*¹⁰ is a good example of work that illustrates methodological confusion—it bears the title 'deconstructive', but probably should not. Its title and introduction seem to suggest that it will be a work of deconstructive criticism, but it ultimately fails to consistently implement any of the major tenets of the various post-structuralist agendas. It is, in many

⁸ Moore, 'Deconstructive Criticism', pp. 95-96.

⁹ Perhaps one of the problems is that the actual exegetical work done by Moore is limited by the fact that much of it seems to make multiple appearances. See 'Are there Impurities in the Living Water that the Johannine Jesus Dispenses? Deconstruction, Feminism and the Samaritan Woman', *BI 1* (1993), pp. 207-27, *Literary Criticism and the Gospels: The Theoretical Challenge* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), pp. 159-70, and *Poststructuralism and the New Testament: Derrida and Foucault at the Foot of the Cross* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), pp. 43-64 for a triple treatment of John 4 and the theme of living water in John's Gospel. In one incarnation of this he states, 'What remains unquestioned in [previous] readings, however, is Jesus' superiority to the Samaritan woman. He retains his privileged role as the dispenser of knowledge...while the woman retains her traditional role as the compliant recipient of knowledge, a container as empty as her water jar, waiting to be filled. The hierarchical opposition of male and female—the male in the missionary position, the female beneath—remains essentially undisturbed' (*Poststructuralism and the New Testament*, p. 50). This is a good example of the innuendo that is often found sprinkled amongst the kind of deconstruction that Moore practises.

¹⁰ D. Seeley, *Deconstructing the New Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 1994).

ways, a work of historical criticism in the guise of literary treatment, and ends up being a good example of neither. This, as we have mentioned, is a recurrent problem with many so-called 'literary treatments' of the New Testament—work is labeled one way, but carried out according to a different set of presuppositions.

Recourse to the Text: Formalism

On the other end of the literary scale stands formalism. Formalism has been perhaps the most significant contributor to the field of New Testament exegesis.¹¹ The reason for its genesis in the field of 'secular' literary criticism may help to explain its popularity in New Testament exegesis. Formalism began in the early part of the twentieth century primarily as a response to the historicism and psychologism that had dominated literary studies up until that point. The name of formalism's most popular and influential manifestation, the 'New Criticism', hints at the way in which this theoretical stance affected the field of literary criticism. Its hegemony in literature departments lasted for around forty years, but its influence is by no means completely dissipated. It continues to be tacitly taught by many literature teachers, and it is the theory against which much deconstructive and reader-oriented theory is practised.

In reacting to the historicism and psychologism that had held sway in various permutations since the Enlightenment, the New Criticism (and its formalist cousins) asserted that the text was sufficient in and of itself for the process of interpretation, and that the goal of interpretation was the understanding of the text itself. Thus, rather than merely pointing to historical facts or the author's psychological development, the text was asserted to be important *in and of itself*. The text took over the primary role for determining its meaning, and reference to 'extrinsic' material such as history or biography was kept to an absolute minimum.¹² This was coupled with a tacit belief that the text itself was enough to guide the interpreter to an understanding that more or less coincided with that of the author.

New Testament practitioners who have been frustrated with the

¹¹ This is arguably true for literary criticism as a whole in this century.

¹² Some claim that the New Criticism disallows *any* recourse to so-called 'extrinsic' factors, but this is not borne out by reading the most important New Critical thinkers, such as T.S. Eliot in 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', in *Selected Essays* (London: Faber & Faber, 1932; 3rd edn, 1951), pp. 13-22, and R. Wellek and A. Warren, *Theory of Literature* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 3rd edn, 1956 [1942]), pp. 39-40.

endless stream of seemingly unanswerable questions posed by historical criticism, or the lack of regard for the text in its final form except as it points to its earlier stages of production, can probably understand the attractiveness that this theory has had for both its original proponents and those New Testament exegetes who have recently discovered it.

Unfortunately, perhaps because of the greater perceived import of the history surrounding the New Testament texts, much that has taken the title 'formalist' or 'New Critical' in New Testament exegesis has not been able to shed its historical-critical presuppositions and agendas. This has led, again, to pseudo-literary/pseudo-historical treatments that serve merely to reinforce older historical-critical work, with little new material added to the discussion.

Not all the New Testament New Critical work, however, has had this failing. Most notable amongst the successful New Critical treatments of New Testament texts has been that of David Rhoads and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story*.¹³ It is unique in that it is co-written by both a New Testament scholar and a 'secular' literary critic. It reads more like a work of 'secular' literary criticism than a work of New Testament exegesis, and the authors are very clear about their presuppositions and goals both in the introduction and throughout the book:

The purpose of this book is to aid in recovering the experience of the Gospel of Mark as unified narrative, to better understand the story as a whole and to appreciate its impact...

The study of narrative emphasizes the unity of the final text. Such a study of the formal features of Mark's gospel tends to reveal the narrative as a whole cloth. The narrator's point of view in telling the story is consistent throughout. The plot is coherent: events that are anticipated come to pass; conflicts are resolved; predictions are fulfilled. The characters are consistent...the unity of the gospel is apparent in the remarkable integrity of the story it tells. Although scholars know little about the origin of this gospel, a literary study of its formal features suggests that the author succeeded in creating a unified narrative.¹⁴

A good example of this method at work is found in their discussion of one of the structural features of the Gospel—the way Mark

¹³ D. Rhoads and D. Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982).

¹⁴ Rhoads and Michie, *Mark as Story*, pp. 2-3.

arranges episodes in concentric patterns:

In the concentric pattern...related episodes form rings around one central episode. A comparison of the paired episodes illuminates and enriches many aspects of these stories.

The five conflicts between Jesus and the authorities in Galilee show a concentric relationship of A, B, C, B¹, and A¹. Paired episodes A and A¹ along with B and B¹ form an outer and inner ring around the central episode C. Episode A (the healing of the cripple) and episode A¹ (the healing of the withered hand) reflect each other in structure, content, and theme: both occur indoors, involve the healing of the body, and include the same characters (Jesus, the authorities and the person healed); both healings are delayed while the narrator reveals unspoken accusations against Jesus (blasphemy in A and healing on the Sabbath in A¹); and both involve serious legal penalties. Furthermore, in both episodes Jesus responds to the unspoken accusations with rhetorical questions. Cleverly he avoids indictment by healing instead of pardoning sins (thus avoiding the charge of blasphemy) in episode A, and by not touching the withered hand (thus avoiding the charge of doing work on the Sabbath) in episode A¹.

Episodes B (eating with sinners) and B¹ (picking grain on the Sabbath) are also related: both are concerned with eating and with uncleanness (from toll collectors in B and from violation of the Sabbath in B¹). The form of both episodes includes an action, the authorities' objections and Jesus' explanation of the action. Both involve the same characters (Jesus, disciples, and the authorities). In both cases, Jesus answers with a proverb and then with a statement of his purpose and authority.

These four episodes (A, B, B¹, A¹) form two concentric patterns around episode C in which Jesus teaches about fasting (in contrast to the eating theme of B and B¹). By contrast with other episodes, the setting is indefinite and the questioners are not specified. Nor are the questioners hostile. As a result, this central episode focuses on Jesus' response rather than on conflicts or actions, and Jesus' response illuminates all five of the episodes that make up the concentric pattern...

These five 'conflict' episodes create a dramatic experience for the reader.¹⁵

One can see immediately the potential exegetical significance of this kind of approach. Indeed, this illustrates what is probably the greatest strength of the formalist approach (and much reader-oriented

¹⁵ Rhoads and Michic, *Mark as Story*, pp. 51-53.

criticism), namely that it deals with the text and its form *as it has been received*, which is patently *not* the point of most historically oriented criticism.

Exegetically, formalism and the forms of reader-oriented criticism related to it are probably the most significant methodologies. They have the most to offer to an exegete who is interested in an interpretation that is somewhat *text* oriented. One point must be noted, however. Both formalism and reader-oriented criticism (see below) are well past their prime in 'secular' literary studies. The forms of these criticisms that still have significant voices have worked through many methodological problems and issues, responded to many theoretical challenges, and incorporated many new ideas. New Testament literary criticism must make an effort both to catch up to and to stay abreast of these changes and developments, so as to avoid falling into methodological problems that have already been addressed by 'secular' literary critics.

Textual Discourse: Reader-Oriented Criticism

Reader-oriented criticism is perhaps the hardest to define of the three criticisms at which we are looking. In both New Testament study and 'secular' literary criticism, reader-oriented criticism swings from pseudo-deconstructionist¹⁶ to pseudo-formalist,¹⁷ and everywhere in between.

Reader-oriented criticism rests to varying degrees on the work of several different theorists. The most notable of these are Wolfgang Iser and Stanley Fish, whose work has been at the forefront of the two major schools of reader-oriented criticism. Iser's work has been a mediating position between formalism and a more radical form of reader-response. He recognizes that there is much that is stable in a text, but allows that there is enough that is indeterminate so as to allow for the reader to have a hand in creating the 'work' (as opposed to the simple 'text', which acts as a guide to the reader in the act of

¹⁶ Moore's earliest work exhibits this mixture of reader-oriented ideas and deconstructionist ones. See especially the permutation of his treatment of John 4 and the theme of living water in the fourth Gospel as it appears in *Literary Criticism and the Gospels*, pp. 131-70.

¹⁷ See J.A. Darr's *On Character Building: The Reader and the Rhetoric of Characterization in Luke-Acts* (Literary Currents in Biblical Interpretation; Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992) and R.A. Culpepper's *The Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1983), esp. pp. 3-11 and 203-28, discussed below.

reading, and which, in combination with the experience of the reader, forms the 'work').¹⁸ The second school of thought, largely following the lead of Stanley Fish, is more radical, and goes so far as to assert that, without the reader, there is no text.

In New Testament criticism, John Darr and Alan Culpepper are perhaps the two best examples of practitioners of the kind of reader-oriented criticism espoused by Iser. Culpepper is a self-confessed formalist, but his chapter on the reader in *The Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* goes a long way towards a reader-oriented criticism, while Darr's methodology is more overtly reader-oriented. Both of them emphasize the *implied* reader.¹⁹ Darr's overt reliance on Iser's work puts him firmly in the reader-oriented camp, as the following passage more than amply demonstrates:

Our search for 'the reader' of Luke-Acts must begin with a good long look in the mirror, for, to a greater or lesser extent, we tend to create readers in our own image. Critics cannot escape the circularities of interpretation by positing a neutral, 'zero degree', objective, transcendent reader, or by appealing to some pristine original audience. To some degree, *the* reader is always *my* reader, a projection of my own experience of reading the text. And, of course, my particular cultural horizon—shaped by factors like gender, class, social setting, education, age, vocation, and ideological orientation—colors that reading.

The imaging of readers is always conditioned by the critic's individual experience and cultural environment. It would be wrong to conclude from this fact, however, that we must simply identify the modern interpreter as *the* reader of Luke-Acts. Indeed, if our treatment of Lukan characters and characterization is to be truly *text-specific*, then the audience to which we

¹⁸ W. Iser's view, as his 1972 paper entitled 'The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach' (*New Literary History* 3 [1972], pp. 279-99) suggests, owes much to the phenomenology of Martin Heidegger. This may be why it also comes very close to his student, H.-G. Gadamer's concept of 'horizons' in reading, the fusion of which is the essence of interpretation (see *Truth and Method* [New York: Crossroad; London: Sheed and Ward, 2nd edn, 1989], pp. 302-307).

¹⁹ This terminology is drawn from the communications model put forward by the formalist linguist R. Jakobson, later modified by S. Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978), p. 267. Culpepper reproduces the diagram of this model to help facilitate his discussion and demonstrate which parts of the model he finds important for criticism and understanding of texts (see *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, pp. 6-8).

refer should fit the cultural profile of the readers for whom the account was written. That is, we must reconstruct—to the fullest extent possible—the extratextual repertoire, literary skills and basic orientation of the original audience. In doing so, our ultimate purpose is hermeneutical, not historical: we are less concerned with discovering the identities of intended addressees than with ascertaining the type and degree of 'cultural literacy' the author seems to have assumed for his audience. In other words, the question is not 'Who is the reader *per se*?' but rather, 'What did a reader have to bring to a text in order to actualize it competently?'²⁰

A good example of this formalistic reader-oriented criticism at work is found in the following page from Darr's *On Character Building*:

Luke's story is but a part of a much larger, ongoing story in which God plays the major role.

But how, then, is the reader made aware of God's actions and will? How does one determine what God—this invisible, mysterious super-agent—has done? The answer, of course, is that the readers are provided with the carefully authenticated oracles which explicate how the divine impinges on personages, events, and natural forces. It has long been noted that the author was very careful to establish precise lines of authority among characters, and to confirm every major new phase in the progression of Christianity. . . .

Readers of Luke-Acts soon recognize that the divine impinges on this narrative world in certain carefully designated ways. The sources of divine accreditation and approbation are delimited and specified meticulously. Much like the narrator's perspective, the divine frame of reference provides the audience with a consistent and highly authoritative guide for constructing and/or evaluating characters and their roles in the action.²¹

In ostensible contrast to the Iserian method adopted by Darr, Robert Fowler places his work on the other end of the reader-oriented scale, following Stanley Fish.²² Unfortunately, Fowler's work is not entirely

²⁰ Darr, *On Character Building*, pp. 25-26, emphasis on the last sentence added.

²¹ Darr, *On Character Building*, pp. 51-53.

²² Fish's work underwent a major shift over time—whereas he started out with the idea of 'affective stylistics', which was very close to the approach espoused by Iser, his later work went in a much more radical direction, epitomized by his assertion that, without readers, there are no texts. It is this later Fish that Fowler attempts to follow. See S. Fish, *Is there a Text in this Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980).

successful at leaving his formalistic and historical-critical roots behind. He asserts that

once the author finishes the text and gives it to the world, she [sic] no longer has control over it; thereafter the text has a life of its own. Once out of the author's hands, the text is totally dependent on its readers. Such life as it continues to enjoy flows from them. Unless the text is read and comes to life in the reading experience, it is simply a lifeless assemblage of paper, binding, and dried ink. The text has no life or meaning unless life and meaning are conferred upon it by a reader.

This makes good Fishian sense, but seems to be at odds with his following paragraph on the same page:

Although perhaps indeed 'readers make everything', such slogans over-simplify. Saying that the reader is everything, the way some reader-response critics do, is misleading. Practically speaking, the text is important...²³

Here, not even a sentence later, Fowler seems to be retreating from the theory that 'the text has no life or meaning unless life and meaning are conferred upon it by a reader', to a more formalist-oriented criticism such as that which we saw in Darr and even in Rhoads and Michie.

Reader-oriented criticism is perhaps the most flexible of all literary criticisms currently being practised in New Testament exegesis. As noted above, it can theoretically range from pseudo-formalistic to pseudo-deconstructionistic work. This range of possibilities may be a strength, but it more often than not displays itself as a weakness—the problem with having so much leeway is that it becomes very difficult to measure the results of one's criticism against the theory one is purportedly following. This is obviously a problem for someone like Fowler, who sounds alternatively formalistic and radically Fishian, but this problem is by no means limited to Fowler's work.

Indeed, as I mentioned above, this is one of the largest problems in New Testament literary exegesis as a whole—its appropriative and hybrid character. Methodological confusion often leads to confused, mis-labeled exegetical results. Seeley, as we saw above, is an example of a critic who has perhaps become enamored with the idea of a particular brand of literary criticism, but who fails to carry it out in any measurable, legitimate way. This is perhaps the key problem to be overcome by New Testament exegetes who wish to make use of

²³ R.M. Fowler, *Let the Reader Understand: Reader-Response Criticism and the Gospel of Mark* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), p. 26.

literary criticism, and one which, until it can be addressed, will continue to hamper the establishment and development of literary criticism as a major force in New Testament exegesis.

APPLICATION: A FORMALIST READING OF MATTHEW

This chapter has thus far dealt with a variety of different literary criticisms, showing how some of the major methods have been applied in the study of New Testament texts. As suggested above, however, not every criticism has been equally well received, nor, in my opinion, is equally well-suited to the task of exegesis. My belief is that the formalist-motivated approaches probably have the most potential for exegetical 'pay-off'. The following few pages are an example of a formalist reading of a portion of Matthew's Gospel.

Matthew has long been recognized as a highly organized and well structured piece of literature. This organization and structure has, perhaps, been the most frustrating aspect of the Gospel for those historical critics eager to discern the *ipsissima verba* or 'actual words' of Jesus. And so, hoping to strip away the detritus which the author layered on top of the earliest strands of tradition which he wove into the final form of the Gospel, source and form critics dismantled the structure of the text, interested only in the left-over pieces (pericopes). Later, scholars began to realize that the way in which the Gospel writers put together the different blocks of tradition may have had some significance, and so redaction criticism was born to determine what those significant over-all features might be. The development of redaction criticism brought the Gospel as a whole back into view, but it focuses its lenses on the *seams* between the pieces, which, though a step beyond just looking at the individual pieces, still leaves the Gospels as essentially patchwork blankets made up of unrelated pericopes, and anything which did relate the pieces is seen as revealing 'redactional tendencies'. In a sense, redaction criticism is just source criticism from a different perspective.

And so the turn to a formalist approach to the Gospels (what has often been identified with 'narrative criticism' in Gospel studies). Formalist literary criticism is concerned with studying the Synoptics not so much in the light of the other Synoptics, but rather as finished products in and of themselves. In many ways, the similarities between the Synoptic Gospels have clouded the fact that each one is a complete work of its own, self-referential, and deserving of examination in its own right. Perhaps the Gospel of John has been

lucky in this respect, in that, possibly because it is so unlike the others, a great deal of 'literary' work has been done on it. The Synoptics have also begun to garner this kind of attention, as we saw in the first part of this chapter.

Matthew has long been recognized to be very keen to portray Jesus as the replacement of several elements of the national experience and practice of Israel. The place where this Matthean trend is perhaps the most obvious is in ch. 12. There, Jesus asserts that he is greater than, in turn, the Temple (v. 6), Jonah (v. 41), and Solomon (v. 42). One cannot help but think of the early Christian appellation of Jesus as Prophet, Priest, and King, or even, perhaps, the prominence of these three as the trio of pre-Christian loci of messianic expectations.²⁴ This much is obvious, and has been mentioned many times before, but how does this theme fit in with the developing plot of Matthew's Gospel?

The plot that Matthew establishes from his very first chapter is driving and relentless. From the formal genealogy that introduces this 'book of the generations of Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abraham' (1:1) until the end of the Gospel, the movement of the plot-line is the most important and significant factor of the work. One manner in which Matthew develops the plot-line and characterization of Jesus is with the language of seeing, especially with imperatives of sight.

Throughout the Gospel we the readers are implored to 'behold...' ²⁵ many things. The 'behold...' idiom is one that is frequent in the longer Synoptic Gospels—59 times in Matthew and 55 in Luke. It is somewhat less frequent in Mark and John, with seven and four occurrences respectively. However, this idiom seems to have special significance for Matthew. His most common use of this word is as a narrative marker, which sets off either the introduction of or conclusion to significant events in the Gospel.²⁶ This usage as a clear

²⁴ See, especially, *T. Levi* 18:2, where the offspring of Levi is called prophet, priest and king. This is often suggested to be the person of Alexander Jannaeus, the only Hasmonean ruler (who were all both kings and priests) who was also known as a prophet, thus being the only figure in the history of Israel to bring these three together.

²⁵ ἰδοὺ, the participle formed from the frozen aorist active imperative of εἶδον.

²⁶ Examples of this are numerous. Some of the more significant are throughout the infancy narrative at 1:20, 23; 2:1, 9, 13, 19; at Jesus' baptism and temptation in 3:16, 17; 4:11; as well as throughout the rest of the Gospel, often in the context of miracle stories, 8:2, 24, 29, 32, 34; 9:2, 3, 10, 18, 20, 32; 12:2, 10, 46; 15:22; 17:3, 5; 19:16; 20:30. Perhaps the most noticeable areas in the Gospel

marker of narrative development, which is the most common use of the word throughout the Gospel, forms a backdrop against which the more striking usages occur, when it is almost always on the lips of Jesus, with only three exceptions: Gabriel in 1:23, the Pharisees at 12:2, and Peter at 19:16.²⁷ This idiom, while it may very well relate a usual pattern of speech for those of the time, on the basis of the fact that Matthew includes it at places that the other Synoptics do not, even when there is a parallel passage, seems indeed to hold special significance for him.

In the first sixteen chapters of Matthew, up to the point in the plot where Jesus begins 'to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things...' (16:21), there is an element of tension that builds up for the reader, because it becomes patently clear early on that the confrontations between the teacher Jesus and the Pharisees are such that they will not end happily. The fact that the readers can see this quite clearly, while the characters in the narrative do not, works well for the development of the tension of this first part of the Gospel's plot. One gets the sense that the characters in the Gospel are being swept along, with Jesus, the protagonist, being the only character who is aware of the consequences of his actions. Of course, as the readers are also aware of this tension, we must be aware that any audience or readers of this book would have been (and are still) assumed to have been aware of the end of the story, knowing what the outcome of Jesus' seemingly flagrant disregard for these authorities will be. Matthew was quite aware of the fact that the readers knew the ending already, and thus the point of the book is not to keep the readers in the dark, but rather to help them understand the significance of and reasons for the ending. However, until this fact is made clear by Jesus himself, right after Peter's confession, no one else seems to understand the import of the events that are taking place. This process

where this usage occurs (largely unparalleled in the other Synoptic Gospels) are the passion, resurrection and resurrection appearances: 26:47, 51; 27:51; 28:2, 7, 9. ἰδοὺ is also found on the lips of Jesus in several parables, and as a part of several Old Testament quotations. Although it is not my purpose here to discuss the relationships between the Gospels, it is interesting to note that, of the 34 usages as a narrative marker, where the narratives are paralleled in one or both of the other Synoptics, Matthew's use of ἰδοὺ is only paralleled four times by Luke, twice by Mark using the form ἴδε, and once by Mark using ἰδοὺ.

²⁷ This list does not include the occurrence in 12:47, as it seems that, on the basis of both the external textual evidence and the lack of parallel for this type of usage in Matthew for ἰδοὺ, it should be excluded.

of hinting on Matthew's part skillfully adds to the tension which builds up until the secondary climaxes²⁸ of Peter's confession and the subsequent revelation by Jesus of his future in Jerusalem. The theme of replacement in the Gospel is very important in building up this dramatic tension, so that, when Matthew tells us that Jesus begins to instruct his disciples regarding his death, we the readers are not surprised that death is at the end of this chain of events.

The three usages of ἰδοὺ ('behold') which stand out in this first half of the Gospel, and which firmly establish the theme of replacement, are all found within ch. 12. The first, on the lips of the Pharisees in 12:2, culminates with Jesus saying, '...I say to you that one greater than the Temple is here' (12:6). The second two, both in response to the demand by the scribes and Pharisees for a sign, are in vv. 41 and 42: '...behold, one greater than Jonah is here', and, 'behold, one greater than Solomon is here'. It is significant that these three occurrences in this narrative²⁹ begin with a question from Jesus' frequent interlocutors in this Gospel, the Pharisees. It is an integral part of Matthew's irony that some of the most significant observations and revelations concerning Jesus come from the mouths of those most antagonistic to him.³⁰ This pattern of ironic admissions continues at the beginning of this chapter when the Pharisees point out to Jesus that his disciples are not acting in accordance with their idea of the Law. This is, although they do not realize it, an admission that something special is going on when it comes to Jesus. Otherwise, why would they merely ask him about it, rather than *do* something about it? Why use it as an excuse to question Jesus? If there was not some tacit understanding that Jesus was a teacher to be reckoned with, then the disciples would have been handled on their own, which they are obviously not in this case. Instead, *Jesus* is made to answer for his

²⁸ By a 'secondary climax', I mean a resolution of tension in the plot-line which is not that which forms the pivotal development in the book. The primary climax of this Gospel is not until the end, when Jesus is resurrected from the dead.

²⁹ Set off at the opening with the formulaic, 'In that time...' (12:1), and, at its closing, with 13:1, 'In that day...'

³⁰ The most striking example of this is in the infancy narrative, when the unsuspecting Magi tip Herod off to the fact that they have astrological proof that a king of the Jews has been born, to which he replies, 'Where is *the Christ* to be born?' (2:4, emphasis added). The fact that this admission of Jesus' messiahship is on the lips of his first human enemy is easily overlooked by those already convinced of this fact, but to one not so convinced, or to those newly initiated to the story of Jesus' life, what a striking admission!

disciples' perceived misdeeds, which gives him the opportunity to tell the Pharisees why he has allowed them to do such a thing. Throughout, he is seen as the one in control, and his statement that one greater than the Temple has come is the height of the replacement theme in Matthew.

The scene has been set for some fairly tense words to pass between Jesus and the Pharisees by the time we reach ch. 12, and we the readers are not disappointed. This time, in contrast to an earlier exchange in ch. 9, the Pharisees know to ask Jesus first, rather than his disciples, and they are rewarded with the fairly clear statement that Jesus is antagonistic both to them and to their conception of the Law. Instead of offering a rival interpretation of the Law, Jesus argues that the Law itself is broken by the priests in the process of the Temple worship (something which was seen as inviolate, the center of Jewish religious and cultural identity), but even that is meaningless, because, as he says, 'I tell you, something (or, someone) greater than the Temple is here' (12:6). This claim on Jesus' part, whether it is to be understood as a claim which he makes for himself, or a claim that he makes concerning the kingdom of heaven which he has been proclaiming (the verb is without an expressed subject, and is sufficiently ambiguous to allow either reading), is beyond anything that he has said before in the Gospel. And then, concluding an *inclusio*³¹ begun at 9:13 during the earlier exchange of hostilities between Jesus and the Pharisees, he says to them, 'But if you knew what it is, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice", you would not have condemned the blameless, for the son of man is lord of the Sabbath' (12:7, 8). In contrast to their claim to merely have the proper *interpretation* of the Law, he, Jesus, 'the son of man', is over all of it, Sabbath, Law, and, most importantly, Temple.

The last set of confrontations was over the fact that Jesus and his disciples ate with sinners and tax-collectors. This time, they do not question Jesus, but rather his disciples, exactly the opposite of the pattern in ch. 12. In fact, they never ask Jesus a question at all in ch. 9, but rather he voluntarily offers the words of Hosea, 'Go and learn what this means, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice"' (Matt. 9:13; cf.

³¹ 'Inclusio' is a term used to refer to a section of a particular work that is set off from the rest, often by a formulaic expression at either end. From an exegetical standpoint, such things are quite important, as they can provide important keys to understanding what the author is conveying by the way that he has arranged the material within the delineated section.

Hos. 6:6), after overhearing their question to the disciples. Significantly, this previous exchange also follows an *ἰδοὺ* phrase, which introduces the fact that 'many tax-collectors and sinners, coming, reclined with Jesus and his disciples' (9:10). In the intervening narrative, among other things, John's disciples question Jesus about the differences between his disciples and himself, and the Pharisees. This follows directly on from the run-in over eating with undesirables, and allows Jesus the chance to discourse on the very differences to which the reader was just introduced in narrative format. The reaction of the Pharisees to Jesus' subsequent healings and the acclaim he receives as 'Son of David' (9:27), as well as being something that has never been seen before in Israel (9:33), is that, 'By the ruler of demons he casts out demons' (9:34). This exchange gains significance and completion in ch. 12.

After this exchange, the calling of the Twelve, and discourses on future persecutions, troubles, and rewards, John's disciples reappear. This time they have been sent directly from John, and are there to ask him if he is indeed the Christ. Jesus' cryptic response may very well be an admission on his part of his status as messiah that would only be able to be fully understood by John's disciples,³² but the continuing discourse that sets up those who are 'least in the kingdom of heaven' (11:11) to be greater than John is clear in its intention to place Jesus' followers (and himself) on a higher plane than those who have gone before.

Back in ch. 12, as with the earlier cycle of confrontation vignettes in ch. 9, following rather quickly on the primary confrontation is another, regarding the permissibility of healing on the Sabbath. This confrontation is also introduced with an *ἰδοὺ* phrase: 'and behold, a man having a withered hand' (12:9). Jesus apparently heals the man, although the healing is not done by any word or command, but merely seems to have taken place while Jesus was debating with the Pharisees about the lawfulness of doing good on the Sabbath. This event causes the Pharisees to plot 'how to destroy him' (12:14).

Jesus' healing continues after this first run-in with the Pharisees in ch. 12, which is followed by the programmatic quotation of Isa. 42:14 (Matt. 12:18-21). Then we encounter the second of the triad of

³² It is possible that this passage makes reference to a tradition shared by a document from Qumran (4Q521), which may have also been known by the disciples of John the Baptist. For a discussion, see C.A. Evans, *Jesus and his Contemporaries: Comparative Studies* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), pp. 127-29.

replacement statements in the chapter. In 12:22, a blind and dumb demoniac is brought to Jesus for healing. Jesus heals him, restoring both his sight and his ability to speak. This causes many who witness this event to wonder, out-loud, whether this could be the 'Son of David' (12:23), a significant term in Matthew (starting even with the genealogy in ch. 1), probably having much to do with Jesus' status as the messiah. However, the Pharisees' response to this is that Jesus is casting out demons by 'Beelzebul, the prince of demons' (12:24). The previous incident in ch. 9, where these two elements (both 'Son of David' and the accusation of Jesus' ability to cast out demons coming from Beelzebub) are also in close collocation to each other, comes to a conclusion in this passage. Left open there, its themes are drawn together and interpreted in this passage. It is exactly the same thing that Jesus has done here, as in ch. 9, which has caused the crowds to marvel, and they have marveled in exactly the same way as before, wondering if Jesus could be the son of David. This may very well have something to do with the tradition that Solomon, David's son, had become, during the intertestamental period, associated with the control and use of demons (see the *Testament of Solomon*), but, regardless of this possible connection, it is a connection with Jesus that the Pharisees are loathe for the crowds to make, and so they attempt to turn this marvel into a horror. Jesus, however, is said to be 'knowing their thoughts' (12:25—'knowing' is a perfect participial form of the verb translated 'see' in many circumstances cited in this chapter, from the same root as *ἰδοὺ*), and he responds to them with an argument concerning the absurdity of such a concept, and then provides us with the clearest evidence that the opposition that has formed between him and the Pharisees is final:

the one not being with me is against me, and the one not gathering with me scatters. On account of this I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but the blasphemy of the spirit will not be forgiven. And whoever should speak a word against the son of man, it will be forgiven him, but whoever should speak against the holy spirit, it will not be forgiven him either in this age, or in the one about to [come] (Matt. 12:30-32).

Immediately after this exchange we come to the final two replacement sayings. They come as a result of a request on the part of the scribes and Pharisees for a sign from Jesus (12:38). He responds almost violently with the assertion that they will be given nothing but the sign of Jonah. This, to the readers, is a clear parallel with, indeed,

almost a description of the final climax of the book—Jesus' death and resurrection. However, the import of the sign goes further than this—those in Nineveh will rise and judge 'this generation' (12:41), because they (though Gentiles?) repented at the preaching of Jonah, 'and behold, something (or someone) greater than Jonah is here' (12:41). This is followed by a further condemnation for 'this generation', as the Queen of the South will also judge them at the final judgment, because she came to hear the wisdom of Solomon, 'and behold something (or someone) greater than Solomon is here' (12:42). These last two replacement sayings cinch the case against the Pharisees, the scribes, and any others contained in the appellation 'this generation'. Jesus is *almost* saying that he is the replacement for these people, but not quite. He has been hailed twice as Son of David, but said nothing, now he says that something greater even than the Son of David is here. He has preached and taught throughout this first part of the Gospel, but those contained in 'this generation' have not heard. He has embodied the very essence of the three strains of Jewish national experience, and those who should be able to understand do not. The parable that follows on these two replacement sayings may be a reference to the priesthood that had existed since Hasmonean times, and stands as a very direct, though still veiled attack upon it. If this is so, then this would hark back to the first replacement saying at 12:6, and form a direct link between this discourse and Jesus' attack on the religious leaders at the beginning of the chapter.

This language of seeing that drives the plot forward in the Gospel is one of the primary ways in which Matthew structures his work in such a way that the reader is tipped-off that something significant either is happening, is about to happen, or has just concluded that will provide part of the key that will unlock the reasons, the motivation for Jesus' death. After all of the focus on the replacement by Jesus of the most important and cherished parts of the Jewish national experience in ch. 12, ch. 13 provides a string of closely packed references that focus on the seeing language in a new way. The first is the often debated quotation of Isaiah in 13:14 and 15.³³ Here, Jesus explains why he teaches in parables, and answers that the reason he does this is because it fulfills the words of the prophet Isaiah who said,

³³ Often debated because Mark introduces this with *ὅτι*, probably with a sense of purpose, while Matthew seems to soften it by dropping the *ὅτι* and introducing it as an explanation, not some sort of prophetic requirement.

hearing, you will hear, but will not understand; seeing, you will see, but you will not see (or perceive), for the heart of this people has been dulled, and they hear with heavy ears, and they close their eyes, lest they should see with [their] eyes and they should hear with [their] ears and understand with [their] heart and they should turn, and I heal them (Matt. 13:14, 15; cf. Isa. 6:9, 10).

This quotation serves as an indictment of all those who have missed the significance of the events of the first part of the Gospel, and as an explanation as to why they have done so. It is important that this reason be given, as this now begins to make sense of what has been taking place. It is followed by the next occurrence of the language of sight, vv. 16 and 17: 'But blessed are your eyes because you see, and your ears because you hear. Truly I say to you that many prophets and righteous ones longed to see what you see, and did not see [it], and to hear what you hear, and did not hear [it].' The disciples, reasonably minor characters in the Gospel up until this point, are explained as the true seers. In a sense, this blessing is similar to the function (although with a dissimilar content) of that at the end of John's Gospel (20:24-29) after the confession of Thomas. In this case, the reader is also one who has seen, and who has heard. The status of the disciples is, in a sense, being conferred on the reader.

Space has allowed this to only be a small and cursory example of how awareness of the literary features of the New Testament writings can aid in their interpretation, and the job is not done. It is important that, in future literary work on the New Testament, we pay attention to the objections that have been and continue to be raised concerning the use of literary criticism to interpret New Testament texts.³⁴ As Craig Evans puts it, 'there is a danger inherent in the employment of these new methods, if conventional modes of exegesis are neglected. An exegesis that cares little about history...is in danger of misunderstanding the text and distorting the distinctive motifs the respective evangelists may have wished to convey.'³⁵ In my exegesis

³⁴ An excellent, if somewhat demanding, overview of the problems with much New Testament literary criticism is S.E. Porter, 'Literary Approaches to the New Testament: From Formalism to Deconstruction and Back', in S.E. Porter and D. Tombs (eds.), *Approaches to New Testament Study* (JSNTSup, 120; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), pp. 77-128.

³⁵ C.A. Evans, 'Source, Form and Redaction Criticism: The "Traditional" Methods of Synoptic Interpretation', in *Approaches to New Testament Study*, p. 19.

of Matthew in this chapter, I hope it is quite obvious that literary methods by no means have to reject the findings of historical criticism, and are indeed illumined by recourse to them. If literary criticism is to become anything but a side-show in future biblical criticism, it is important that this link with both history and historical criticism be maintained, and this will potentially lead to the results of both criticisms benefiting from each other's results.

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IDEOLOGICAL CRITICISMS, LIBERATION CRITICISMS, AND WOMANIST AND FEMINIST CRITICISMS

TINA PIPPIN

INTRODUCTION TO THE AREA AND ITS IMPORTANCE FOR NEW TESTAMENT EXEGESIS

During the last half of the twentieth century, the world began to shift out of the colonial empires of Europe and the United States. Independence movements and revolutions reshaped the map, but these changes did not initially have much of an effect on academic biblical scholarship in the countries of the former colonizers. Missionary movements and translations of the Bible continue to uphold the hegemony of the 'West'. In a postmodern age, however, multiple, marginal voices are becoming more prevalent. The debates about the 'original' context of the New Testament are shifting from a myopic focus on historical 'facts' and what the text 'means' to an opening of the conversation with and about the text to multiple readers and meanings. Reading the New Testament is no longer considered a neutral or innocent act; issues of power and domination are being revealed. Part of this revelation includes the importance of the ethics and politics of interpretation and the ethical responsibility of the New Testament scholar in the web of past, present and future relationships between the text and lived experience. New Testament exegetes are finding themselves in a larger interpretative world, where the history of the New Testament as both an oppressive and liberatory text is gaining strength.

The main voices of liberation in New Testament exegesis come from the liberation theologies in the broadly defined areas of Latin America, Asia and Africa. In the United States, African-American biblical hermeneutics and feminist, womanist and mujerista readings are also under the category of liberation hermeneutics. Liberation hermeneutics is a general term for all these interpretative strategies that link theory and practice and emphasize social and cultural location in reading the New Testament. More specifically, liberation criticisms call into question the authority of the biblical canon and the notion of Scripture. Liberation criticisms arise in response to the oppressive systems of racism, sexism, heterosexism, classicism,

colonialism and christo-fascism (a term from Dorothee Soëlle). In the 'Third World' (or two-thirds world) and in the 'First World' (or one-third world), those who have traditionally been excluded from power and voice create their own structures for reading the New Testament.

The theoretical base for ideological criticisms comes from the class analysis of Karl Marx. For Marx, ideology was false consciousness, and the ideology of the ruling classes could be revealed using reason and scientific methods. Marxist literary readings attempt to uncover the 'reality' of the text: the discursive practices of ideology present in narrative. The idea of discursive, signifying practices (between human subjects) comes from both Antonio Gramsci and Louis Althusser, and Marxist literary critics such as Fredric Jameson and Terry Eagleton utilize their approaches. Every text and every reading is ideological; even the way one talks about ideology is ideological. Catherine Belsey offers a summary definition of these approaches, stating that ideology is

the sum of the ways in which people both live and represent to themselves their relationship to the conditions of their existence. Ideology is inscribed in signifying practices—in discourses, myths, presentations and representations of the way 'things' are—and to this extent it is inscribed in the language (1980: 42).

Ideology is about 'lived experience' (Althusser) and about power (Michel Foucault). Texts represent the struggle for power and the complex relations of power. Foucault takes further the Marxist definition of ideology as the mystification or illusion of the values of the ruling classes. Ideology as it relates to power is '...a partial truth, a naturalized understanding or a universalistic understanding or a universalistic discourse...' (Barrett 1991: 168). Ideological criticisms (also called 'ideology critique'; I am using the plural here to emphasize the different types of these criticisms) push against the partial truths in narratives to its 'twin aspirations of emancipation and exposure' (Billig and Simons 1994: 1). Strictly speaking, ideological criticisms are those interpretative methods that use the critical theory of Marxist literary criticism. In a broader sense, all liberation hermeneutics are part of ideological criticisms, because they want to unmask the power relations in writing and interpreting. Also, ideological criticisms provide the theoretical foundation to much liberation hermeneutics, including the Marxist-Christian dialogue, materialist, feminist, postmodern and postcolonial readings of the Bible. Ideological criticisms in the narrow sense are more often found

in Hebrew Bible scholarship, but in the broad sense New Testament studies has a wealth of liberatory readings of texts; the readings at Solentiname are perhaps the most comprehensive readings from the oppressed.

Furthermore, in New Testament studies the presence of ideological and liberative criticisms brings new conversation partners and previously neglected aspects of the text into the exegetical discussion. One example is that, while introductory textbooks on the New Testament are beginning to make space for feminist and liberation hermeneutics, this inclusion is still minimal (cf. Pregeant's section, 'Theological and Ideological Interpretation', 1995: 19-21). New Testament exegesis is becoming more interdisciplinary and global, and these criticisms point to the shape and content of future debates.

THE MAIN ISSUES

History, meaning, truth and reality are all terms used in ideological criticisms, and the idea is to subvert the traditional notions of these terms. Whose history, meaning, truth and reality is being represented? In ideological criticisms, the search for cracks in the dominant structure is of fundamental importance. There are relationships in the text—personal, political, structural—but ideology is not linear. Rather, there is a clash of ideologies in a text which forces the reader to make theoretical and practical choices. Who controls the professional and publishing aspects of New Testament studies? What are the ideological commitments of the translators of the New Testament into English and other languages? What is at stake in the interpretative process? For two thousand years the dominant agenda in Christianity has been keeping women submissive to men (and out of the priesthood), arguing that homosexuality is a sin, supporting the physical disciplining of children, accepting the death penalty, legitimizing warfare and Christian participation in it, and anticipating a violent end of the world. Readers have used the New Testament to argue for and against these beliefs and actions. Which interpretations are ethical? Are any and all interpretations allowable? Certain texts have been made central and others, such as, 'sell what you own, and give the money to the poor' (Mark 10:21), have been rationalized. The choices made and the makers of these choices are a focus in liberatory criticisms. Any interpretation that has 'canonical' place in New Testament scholarship is called into question. Different voices engage

in a conversation with their own contexts and with traditional, historical modes of interpretation.

Clarice Martin shows the issues of ideological critical readings of the New Testament as connected to race and gender. In her reading of Acts 8, Martin points to the existence of the 'politics of omission' in biblical scholarship that omits Africa and Africans from the discussion of New Testament texts (Martin 1989). From her womanist perspective she concretely encourages African-American biblical hermeneutics to '...encourage black males and black females to assume an advocacy stance in identifying liberatory biblical traditions that promote ideological and existential empowerment for black women at every level of ecclesiastical governance' (Martin 1991: 230). Here the connection between ideological texts and readings is clear as Martin points to the effects of the household codes on the lives of black women in the Church. Interpretation is a political act that has multiple effects on and in the lives of people.

In liberatory readings there is a search for liberatory texts (especially previously neglected ones) and the confrontation with oppressive texts or texts that have an oppressive history of interpretation. Often the text may be oppressive, but as Sheila Briggs relates, there is 'the voice of the oppressed under the text' (Briggs 1989: 137), when the oppressed claim and subvert oppressive texts to liberatory ends. The New Testament is a product of its times, but the dominant readings are questioned and resisted. The voices of the marginalized or the oppressed provide the hermeneutical key to reading the New Testament.

Reconstructive strategies are prevalent in liberatory readings. Mainstream feminist hermeneutics is basically reconstructionist, claiming a positive place for women in the New Testament. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza developed an important feminist reading of the New Testament that accepts the texts that are liberating to women (and men) as authoritative as the word of God and that rejects the oppressive texts as patriarchal inventions. Schüssler Fiorenza relates: 'Reclaiming the Bible as a feminist heritage and resource is only possible because it has not functioned only to legitimate the oppression of all women...' (1984: xiii). She sets up four reading strategies in feminist biblical hermeneutics, which are: hermeneutics of suspicion, hermeneutics of remembrance, hermeneutics of evaluation and proclamation, hermeneutics of liberative vision and imagination (1992: 52-76). Schüssler Fiorenza uses these strategies to

interpret Luke 10:38-42. This text is traditionally positive for women, but the hermeneutic of suspicion shows that the silent woman (Mary) is the one traditionally honored, and Jesus as Lord is still at the center of the story (1992: 62). A hermeneutic of remembrance shows the struggles of Mary and Martha as reflecting the struggles of women in the early Church (1992: 68). The hermeneutics of evaluation and proclamation reveals the paradox of the concept of 'service' and brings forth '...the need to re-envision women's ministry as such a practice of solidarity and justice' and not subordination and self-sacrificial service (1992: 73). The hermeneutics of imagination calls for feminist reinterpretation in which contemporary women retell the story from their own contexts and experiences (1992: 73-76). With these critical tools the reader is to explore the oppressive and liberative parts of the text and work toward a historically reconstructive, liberative paradigm of reading. Both women and men can share in the liberating power of the New Testament and work toward dismantling oppressive structures.

USES AND ABUSES OF THE TOPIC IN EXEGESIS

Ideological criticism of the New Testament is about how one reads and appropriates the text. Stephen Moore traces the significance of the term ideology as used in relation to point of view in narratological readings of the New Testament (1989: 56-63). One example is Alan Culpepper's use of the term 'ideological point of view' to describe the narrator's 'stereoscopic view', but partial telling, in the Gospel of John. The narrator leads the audience toward belief in Jesus as the preexistent Logos (1983: 32-34; based on the poetics of Boris Uspensky). This idea of the ideology/point of view of the authors, narrators and characters of a story is the prominent usage of the term ideology by New Testament critics. This definition keeps ideology in the realm of literary devices and structures. Fred Burnett takes this narratological idea further to disclose the ideology of the implied author in the Gospel of Matthew. Burnett argues that the reader is to take sides with Jesus against 'the Jews', thus producing an anti-Jewish ideology in the Gospel: 'The formation of "the Jews" as a negative topos, rejecting Jesus and thus separated from their father-God, is an ideological construction. I contend that real readers through the centuries have read Matthew correctly because they have been manipulated by the anti-Jewish norm of the text...' (1992: 175). Burnett is pointing to the existence of multiple readings of the text

across time and the hermeneutical effects of this anti-Jewish ideology in 'lived experience'.

The Bible and Culture Collective pushes the use of ideology even further into the realm of social and political relations. The definition is that 'ideological reading...is a deliberate effort to read against the grain—of texts, of disciplinary norms, of traditions, of cultures' (1995: 275). Ideological criticism involves acts of reading that are both resisting and engaging (cf. Sugirtharajah 1995: 316). Examples of New Testament readings come from materialist readings of the Gospel of Mark from Fernando Belo and Ched Myers (see the discussion in *The Bible and Culture Collective*, 1995: 293-300). Belo focuses his semiological reading of Mark on the subversive political ideology that he calls 'materialist ecclesiology' (1981: 5). Belo's interest is in the social formation and transformation and uses a logical, semiological method to reveal how ideology works in the text. Myers has a similar concern, but focuses more on political hermeneutics in determining that Mark is a subversive Gospel of liberation of the poor from the dominant Roman power. Mark's Gospel holds the discourse of liberation in ways that contemporary oppressed people can utilize in their struggles for justice.

R.S. Sugirtharajah gathers a group of marginal voices together in his collection of essays. His main interest is in relating postcolonial theory to global experiences of the Bible. In his own exegesis, he shows different readings of Paul's conversion experience and then offers a 'dialogical approach' based on interfaith experiences. This approach '...acknowledges, the validity of the varied and diverse religious experiences of all people and rules out any exclusive claim to the truth by one religious tradition...every religion is worthy of love and respect' ([ed.] 1995: 310). Sugirtharajah sees conversion in a broader sense—that one might not be converted from Hinduism to Christianity but be able to combine elements of both religions, as Paul did with Judaism and belief in Jesus. Thus, Sugirtharajah finds Paul's conversion as a transformative experience ([ed.] 1995: 312). This approach has radical ramifications for New Testament exegesis, for it is open to including sacred Scripture from other religious traditions (e.g. the story of Rama from the Ramayana used in different Hindu groups in different ways) and different cultural experiences (visiting the Hindu temple) ([ed.] 1995: 314). There is no hegemony of Christianity in Sugirtharajah's liberatory method. He states: 'All religions contain liberative as well as oppressive elements and the

hermeneutical task is to enlist the liberative aspects to bring harmony and social change to all people' ([ed.] 1995: 310). This idea echoes Eagleton: 'If a theory of ideology has value at all, it is in helping to illuminate the processes by which such liberation from death-dealing beliefs may be practically effected' (1991: 224). There is a revolutionary, egalitarian and transformative nature to liberatory criticisms, and the effect on New Testament exegesis is to bring new contextual readings to the text.

Another approach to an interfaith global perspective has been made by Fernando Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert in two workshops they organized on social location criticism. Basically, the social location of the interpreter influences the interpretation. Exegesis occurs in the context of struggle—predominantly of the struggle against (white, male EuroAmerican) meta- or master-narratives, since these narratives have historically excluded any global conversation (Segovia 1995: 32). Social location is also called the 'politics of location' (Tolbert 1995: 306), a term from feminist poet Adrienne Rich. Individuals often have multiple identities and experience multiple struggles that affect their reading of the New Testament.

In conclusion, ideological criticisms lead to careful, committed readings and provide a critical edge. When New Testament scholars read the Bible, they invent ideologies. Liberatory readings are creations of new (utopian) narratives. Does the reader submit to or revolt against the ideologies of a text? Ideological and liberatory criticisms allow the readers choices and the chance to break out of any hegemonic interpretative discourse. The old stories live and function in new ways, converging with readers' lives and stories. Ideological criticisms shake New Testament exegesis from its scientific, historical-critical base and can lead to what Schüssler Fiorenza calls "the dance of interpretation" as a critical rhetorical process' (1992: 75). The interpretative process opens up to a wealth of possibilities. Rather than focusing on the impossibilities of what an exegete cannot know (e.g. the 'meaning' of a text), the emphasis is on possibilities for dialogues—and for liberation.

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SOCIAL-SCIENTIFIC CRITICISM

STEPHEN C. BARTON

INTRODUCTION: ISSUES OF DEFINITION AND BACKGROUND

Social-scientific criticism of the New Testament is best understood as a development of historical criticism (Barton 1995). As such, it is part of the overall task of interpreting the New Testament texts in the context of the first-century Mediterranean world from which they come. However, whereas historical criticism traditionally focuses on questions of dating, authorship, language, genre, historical background, the history of the tradition, and the particularity of historical events narrated in the texts, social-scientific criticism asks questions of a different kind, to do more with the typical social patterns and taken-for-granted cultural conditions most likely to have characterized the New Testament world. Howard Kee (1989: 65-69) has grouped these social-scientific questions in seven categories: boundary questions, authority questions, status and role questions, ritual questions, literary questions with social implications, questions about group functions, and questions concerning the symbolic universe and the social construction of reality. The claim of 'sociological exegesis' is that, by asking a different set of questions, aspects of the text often left hidden from view by traditional methods are allowed to come to the surface (cf. Garrett 1992: 89-90).

Putting it another way, whereas historical criticism focuses diachronically on relations of cause and effect over time, social-scientific criticism focuses synchronically on the way meaning is generated by social actors related to one another by a complex web of culturally-determined social systems and patterns of communication. This difference may be compared to that between interpreting a motion picture, in which meaning arises in the viewer's response to a succession of frames in sequence over time, and interpreting a single frame, where meaning is sought in the relation of the subjects to each other and their environment as they are caught in a single moment. The shift is from a simple, linear, cause-and-effect model of interpretation to one which tries to engage in what anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1973: 3-30) refers to as 'thick description' in interpretation.

A useful definition is the one given recently by a leading North American exponent of the method, John H. Elliott (1995: 7):

Social-scientific criticism of the Bible is that phase of the exegetical task which analyzes the social and cultural dimensions of the text and of its environmental context through the utilization of the perspectives, theory, models, and research of the social sciences. As a component of the historical-critical method of exegesis, social-scientific criticism investigates biblical texts as meaningful configurations of language intended to communicate between composers and audiences. In this process it studies (1) not only the social aspects of the form and content of texts but also the conditioning factors and intended consequences of the communication process; (2) the correlation of the text's linguistic, literary, theological (ideological), and social dimensions; and (3) the manner in which this textual communication was both a reflection of and a response to a specific social and cultural context—that is, how it was designed to serve as an effective vehicle of social interaction and an instrument of social as well as literary and theological consequence.

Social-scientific criticism has made a considerable impact on interpretation of the New Testament in the past twenty-five years, as a number of bibliographies make clear (e.g. Harrington 1988; Theissen 1989; May 1991; Elliott 1995: 138-74). The reasons for this impact are numerous and of various kinds. They include: the rise to prominence of the social sciences from the late nineteenth century on, and the impact of the sociology of knowledge in a wide range of academic disciplines; the influence on interpretation theory of the hermeneutics of suspicion represented by such intellectual giants as Nietzsche, Durkheim, Marx and Freud; the exhaustion of the historical-critical method as traditionally understood, and the failure of form criticism to fulfil its promise of identifying the *Sitze im Leben* of the New Testament texts; shifts in historiography generally away from the 'great man' view of history typical of Romanticism to one more attentive to history 'from below', with a much stronger popular and social dimension; the influence of the discovery of texts and archeological remains, as at Qumran, which provide important new comparative data for social history and sociological analysis; and the surfacing of different kinds of questions to put to the New Testament in the light of developments in twentieth-century theology, not least, the failure of liberal theology and the urgent concerns (often of a social and political kind) raised by liberation and feminist theologies.

THE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF SOCIAL-SCIENTIFIC CRITICISM

One major strength of the method, implicit in the foregoing, is that social-scientific criticism has revitalized historical criticism of the New Testament by enlarging the agenda of interpretation, allowing a different set of questions to be put to the text, and providing methods and models to help answer these new questions in a controlled and accountable way. Now the reality to which the New Testament texts bear such profound and brilliant witness is able to be grasped more fully by the interpreter: that the texts have a social and political dimension as well as an individual and religious dimension; that the transformation involved in becoming a follower of Jesus is a transformation of body as well as soul; and that incorporation into Christ through repentance and baptism involves taking on a new identity and participating in a new society. Robin Scroggs (1980: 165-66) put the point well in a programmatic address to New Testament scholars in Paris in 1978:

To some it has seemed that too often the discipline of the theology of the New Testament (the history of *ideas*) operates out of a methodological docetism, as if believers had minds and spirits unconnected with their individual and corporate bodies. Interest in the sociology of early Christianity is no attempt to limit reductionistically the reality of Christianity to social dynamic; rather it should be seen as an effort to guard against a reductionism from the other extreme, a limitation of the reality of Christianity to an inner-spiritual, or objective-cognitive system. In short, sociology of early Christianity wants to put body and soul together again.

Thus, social-scientific criticism offers the possibility of enlarging our understanding both of the world behind the text and the narrative world within the text, as well as of ourselves as culturally-embedded interpreters of the text. It makes possible what Wayne Meeks (1986) has called 'a hermeneutics of social embodiment'. The creative outworking of this kind of approach can now be seen in a very wide range of studies on every New Testament text (surveyed in Barton 1992). Classic amongst these are John Gager's analysis of the social world of early Christianity as millenarian (Gager 1975), Gerd Theissen's pioneering work on the Palestinian social setting of the Jesus movement (Theissen 1978), J.H. Elliott's sociological exegesis of 1 Peter (Elliott 1981), Bruce Malina's anthropological approach to 'the New Testament world' (Malina 1981), and Wayne Meeks's study

of the urban setting and ethos of Pauline Christianity (1983, indebted to Theissen 1982). This work is increasing rapidly in sophistication. In Pauline studies, for example, Theissen (1987) has experimented more recently with psychological models, Margaret Mitchell has drawn on rhetorical analysis (Mitchell 1991), and Dale Martin has drawn upon a wide range of anthropological data (ancient and modern) to interpret 1 Corinthians (D.B. Martin 1995).

Of course, such work is not without its potential (or real) weaknesses, nor its critics. Some argue that the danger of anachronism in using models from a quintessentially modern discipline like sociology is too great, and will have the disastrous result of giving a reductionist account, allowing the interpreter to find in early Christianity only what the interpreter is looking for already or only what the sociological tools are equipped to discover. The widespread use of the Weberian church-sect typology may be a case in point. In spite of refinements by Bryan Wilson and others (cf. Esler 1987: chap. 3), it may just be too blunt a tool of analysis to do sufficient justice to the startling novelty and historical particularity of the movement inaugurated by Jesus. On the other hand, it may be the case that the typology of the sect or the study of millenarian movements or Weber's theory of the routinization of charisma may draw attention to features of early Christian social dynamics which might otherwise go unnoticed (cf. Barton 1993).

A related concern arises from an awareness of the genealogy of the social sciences in post-Enlightenment atheistic positivism. Recently, John Milbank has argued powerfully that, historically-speaking, the social sciences are attempts to 'police the sublime'. They are parasitic on Christian orthodoxy and represent modern heretical deviations grounded in an ideological and methodological atheism (Milbank 1990: 51-143). However, not all theologians share Milbank's hostility to the social sciences (e.g. Flanagan 1992; Roberts 1993), and it is worth noting that some of the most significant analyses of biblical material from a social-scientific perspective have come from sociologists and anthropologists who are themselves religiously committed (e.g. Douglas 1966, 1973). For such as these, it is a matter of accepting that the social sciences offer an interestingly different map of the same ground. Such a map may be illuminating in providing certain kinds of information not otherwise so readily available, but it need not be the only map there is. Sociologist of religion David Martin puts the point sharply (D. Martin 1995: 40):

[S]ociology can have nothing whatever to say about the Incarnation. Sociology might consider the long-term impact of Jesus Christ on human history, or analyse the struggles between groups which surrounded this or that formulation of Christian doctrine, but it cannot trespass directly on who He is. You may remember the conclusion of Schweitzer's *Quest of the Historical Jesus* where Schweitzer says that those who follow Him will *find out* who He is. Sociology is not concerned with that *kind* of finding out. It may identify Christ as a bearer of charisma, that is, as anointed by a powerful grace, but the Incarnation is not within its scope. You cannot even imagine a sociological argument the conclusion of which triumphantly vindicates or disproves the Christian claim concerning Christ.

It may be that Martin overstates his case here, as if social-scientific investigation could have no possible bearing on the truth claims of Christian faith. Since this is not so of historical investigation—the findings of which, it has always been held, can and do bear on Christian doctrine—it is hard to see why social-scientific investigation should be hermetically sealed off from Christian doctrine as Martin suggests. Nevertheless, the basic thrust of his comment helps to allay some of the concerns raised by Milbank that the social sciences are inimical *per se* to the theological and spiritual dimensions of New Testament interpretation.

Perhaps the best way to test this out and to see in general what social-scientific insights have to offer is to take a case study. Since it is probably true to say that most sociological exegesis so far has concentrated on the letters of Paul (cf. Neyrey 1990), the example which follows is a case study from the Gospels.

SOCIAL-SCIENTIFIC METHOD IN PRACTICE: JESUS' REJECTION AT NAZARETH (MARK 6:1-6)

The story of Jesus' rejection in his hometown (*patris*) is a critical story in Mark's Gospel (cf. Barton 1994: 86-96). It brings to a climax the theme of the misunderstanding and rejection of Jesus by his own kith and kin (cf. 3:20-35) and anticipates Jesus' rejection by his people as a whole, a process which culminates in the passion. Strikingly, this is the only occasion in Mark where Jesus' power to heal is thwarted almost completely (6:5). It is also the only occasion when Jesus is said to be 'amazed' (*thaumazein*)—one of a group of terms normally used for the natural response to a revelation or epiphany (e.g. 5:14, 20, 42). Ironically, however, what comes to him

as a revelation is the unbelief (*apistia*) of those native to his own locality, people who should have been on Jesus' side. It is no coincidence then that this is the last episode in which we hear of Jesus' kinsfolk in Mark's account.

But how may we account for this crisis in Jesus' hometown? Why is it here, among those familiar to him, that his authority as a wise teacher is challenged and that 'he could do no mighty work'? Why, when his wisdom and miraculous powers are acknowledged (6:2) does his presence nevertheless generate such hostility: 'And they took offense (*eskandalizonto*) at him' (6:3b)? What is the significance of the list of Jesus' brothers and sisters (6:3)? Such questions may be answered quite properly at a number of levels. At the level of Markan theology, for example, we have here a case-study in the nature of unbelief and the need for faith (cf. Marshall 1989: 189-95), where this negative example contrasts powerfully with the two positive examples—the faith of the woman with the haemorrhage (5:25-34, esp. v. 34a) and the faith of Jairus (5:22-24, 35-43, esp. v. 36)—immediately preceding. At the level of Markan poetics, we have a striking instance of Mark's use of irony, where those closest to Jesus fail to recognize him. In spite of the force of their own threefold confession (6:2b), they are like those of whom Jesus spoke earlier who 'see but do not perceive and hear but do not understand' (4:12). At the historical-doctrinal level, it is quite common for the biographical information in 6:3 to be interpreted above all as an aid to discerning the status of the Catholic doctrines of the virginal conception and the perpetual virginity of Mary (cf. Brown 1978: 59-67).

However, while the theological, literary and historical approaches are adequate so far as they go, social-scientific critics would suggest that there are likely to be elements in the narrative which may become intelligible or be thrown into sharper relief if insights from the social sciences are drawn in also. Of particular interest for this approach is the verbal exchange between the townsfolk and Jesus at the very heart of the episode (6:3-4). The 'many' people present in the synagogue express their offense at Jesus by saying, '...Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?'. The sharp riposte of Jesus follows, in proverbial form: 'A prophet is not without honour, except in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house'.

From a social-scientific perspective, a number of points are worth

attention. First, there is the importance of conflict, since conflict situations bring to the surface usually hidden assumptions about norms, values and things taken-for-granted (Cosser 1956). This episode is one of many episodes of conflict in Mark, not a few of which occur in the synagogue and/or on the sabbath (e.g. 1:21-28; 2:23-28; 3:1-6). Such conflicts show that the breaking in of 'the kingdom of God' with the coming of Jesus (1:15) is a social as well as a spiritual reality. Traditionally significant places like the synagogue and the Temple and traditionally important times like the sabbath or the festivals are seen in a new light and reinterpreted in such a way as to make possible novel patterns of action and sociability (cf. Kelber 1974; Malbon 1986). One such novel pattern is referred to explicitly in the opening of this very episode: 'He went away from there and came to his own country; and his disciples followed him' (6:1). It seems very likely, from a sociological point of view, that the offense generated by Jesus' appearance in his hometown is related, at least in part, to the challenge to a settled, Galilean peasant community represented by Jesus' itinerant lifestyle in the company of twelve chosen followers (3:13-19; cf. 1:16-20; 2:13-14). Noteworthy in this connection is the fact that, after the rebuttal in Nazareth, Jesus resumes his itinerancy straight away and even sends out the twelve in pairs as an extension of his own work (6:6b-13). It is as if the rebuttal in Nazareth consolidates, not only the hostility of Jesus' kith and kin (cf. 3:20-21, 31-35), but also the alternative pattern of sociability developing around Jesus.

A second point of importance in social-scientific terms is that the conflict focuses on the inter-related issues of identity and authority and the recognition of the same by the giving or withholding of 'honour' and 'faith' (cf. Moxnes 1993). In traditional societies, personal identity is ascribed more than acquired. It is a matter not so much of 'Who am I?', but more of 'To whom do I belong?'. In other words, it is a matter, not so much of individual existential self-discovery (so characteristic of modernity), as of what is given in group membership (Malina 1981: chaps. 3, 5). The most significant group for defining identity in antiquity is the family or (extended) household (*oikos* in Greek, *familia* in Latin) (bibliography in Hanson 1994).

Precisely this conception lies behind the challenge to Jesus in the question put by the people in the synagogue (6:3). They see him in traditional terms where identity and authority are ascribed according

to occupation ('the carpenter'), kinship group ('the son of Mary, and brother of James and Joses...'), and accepted location ('and are not his sisters here *with us*?'). Over against this, the identity and authority of Jesus are conveyed in different terms: his unannounced appearance with a retinue of disciples in train (6:1), his adopting the role of teacher in the synagogue (6:2a), and his reputation for wisdom and miracle-working, a reputation which both precedes him and which he seeks to confirm in the people's presence by his words and by the ritual of the laying on of hands (6:2b, 5b). His identity and authority are implicit also in his self-designation (in proverbial terms) as a 'prophet' (6:4).

It is this divergence over the terms for identifying and acknowledging Jesus which lies at the heart of the conflict and which social-scientific analysis helps to clarify. To use categories from Max Weber's analysis of ideal types of authority (Weber 1964), it is a divergence between seeing Jesus in the traditional, kinship and household terms of Galilean village life and seeing him in charismatic terms as the Spirit-inspired Son of God (1:1, 9-11, 12-13, etc.) bringing a new order ('the kingdom of God') into being. Significantly, the novelty of the social dimension of this alternative order is characterized in part by the relativization of ties of natural kinship in favour of ties of fictive kinship. Hence, Jesus' earlier declaration: 'Whoever does the will of God is my brother, and sister, and mother' (3:35; cf. 10:28-30).

We can, however, take the social-scientific analysis of this passage a stage further. The issue from the townspeople's point of view is not just the identity and authority of Jesus: it is a question of their own identity and authority as well. Their question about the source of Jesus' wisdom and power ('Where did this man get all this?') and their refusal to look beyond the horizon of Jesus' occupation and kith and kin for an answer represents a reaffirmation of their own traditional way of seeing things. It is an attempt to reclaim Jesus and to limit his charismatic authority by making him 'one of them' once more. Their 'offense' is strongly interpersonal, an offense directed 'at him' (*en autō*) (6:3b). As such, it is an attempt to shame Jesus by putting him in his place, which is the place ascribed above all by his kin group. To acknowledge that Jesus has another identity and an authority legitimated from some other (supernatural) source would be to acknowledge a new order of things, along with the corollary that they belonged to him instead of him belonging to them.

That Jesus recognizes the response of his compatriots as an attempt to put him in his place is clear from his reply which, in its tripartite form, is an intensifying expansion of the standard proverb (cf. Luke 4:24; John 4:44) and powerfully conveys the strength of his disaffection: 'A prophet is not without honour, except in his own country, *and among his own kin, and in his own house*' (6:4). In consequence, a mutual distancing in social relations takes place. If the people's response is one of 'offense' at him (6:3b), his response is one of 'amazement' at their unbelief (6:6a).

There is one final, remarkable point that invites comment: the fact that Jesus was able to do 'not even one mighty work' (6:5a). If we approach this statement christologically, especially if our Christology is the traditional Chalcedonian 'two natures' orthodoxy, there is an obvious problem stemming from the admission here of a limitation on Jesus' supernatural power (cf. 13:32 also!). Awareness of this problem is reflected, for example, in Charles Cranfield's explanation: 'The point... is not that Jesus was powerless apart from men's faith, but that in the absence of faith he could not work mighty works *in accordance with the purpose of his ministry*' (Cranfield 1959: 197; his emphasis). This may be a legitimate gloss on the narrative which helps to soften the christological dilemma. But perhaps Christology is not the main point here, and the dilemma is an artificial one.

In fact, a social-scientific perspective would suggest that the main point is the breakdown of reciprocity in relations between Jesus and the people. Their refusal to ascribe honour to him on the basis of his wisdom and supernatural powers—and indeed, there is the further possibility that they are attributing Jesus' wisdom and power to a demonic source, as has happened earlier (cf. 3:22-30)—means that there exists no longer a basis in sociability for Jesus to confer the grace which flows from him. It is not that Jesus cannot work a miracle (as the exception in 6:5b shows), but that the basis in human reciprocity and sociability which would make a miracle mean anything does not exist (cf. Pilch 1992). We are talking, in other words, not so much about the nature of Christ, as about the nature of (Palestinian) society and what it is that permits or inhibits positive, life-giving reciprocity. If this is so, then a significant corollary is that the 'unbelief' identified in 6:6a is not just (what we might call) a spiritual failure, it is a social and relational failure as well.

CONCLUSION

The above case-study demonstrates in miniature the way in which social-scientific criticism complements traditional historical and theological concerns in New Testament interpretation by allowing a new set of questions to be put to the text. The potential of this method for revitalizing historical criticism has become apparent in many recent publications (e.g. Neyrey 1991; Theissen 1992; Esler 1995). The discipline has reached a sufficient level of maturity to make it possible now for new 'lives of Jesus' to appear (e.g. Crossan 1991), and new biblical commentaries to be written (e.g. Malina and Rohrbaugh 1992). It remains to be seen, perhaps, whether social-scientific criticism will help revitalize New Testament theology and ethics as well. Certainly, some promising beginnings have been made (e.g. Countryman 1989; Meeks 1993).

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CANONICAL CRITICISM*

ROBERT W. WALL

1. INTRODUCTION

The dramatic rise of scholarly interest in the canon of the New Testament in recent years has two focal points—historical and hermeneutical. Historians of the biblical canon are primarily interested in its formation within early Christianity, whether as a theological notion or a literary collection. Although the questions addressed often imply substantial theological problems, sometimes recognized and considered, most of these studies specialize in the historical features of the Bible's formation or the ideological freight which guided the canonizing process. Thus, for example, the relationship between a book's authorship and its canonization, while theologically interesting, is typically discussed in terms of how attribution of authorship influenced the reception of a particular book both within the earliest Church and then into the biblical canon.

Some interpreters of the biblical canon are especially interested in the *idea* of a biblical canon, which then provides the conceptual freight for various interpretative strategies, typically articulated under the rubrics of 'canonical criticism' (James A. Sanders) or 'canonical approach' (Brevard S. Childs). Not only are practitioners of canonical criticism joined by a common orientation toward Scripture which provides a touchstone for their interpretation, but they also share a common criticism of the historical-critical enterprise, although to different degrees and with different concerns. Generally, however, it is thought that the methodological interests of historical criticism demote the Church's more theological intentions for the Christian Bible. Thus, while historical-critical analysis is primarily concerned with the circumstances that shaped particular biblical writings at their diverse points of origin, the orienting concern of canonical criticism is the theological purpose of each stage of the Bible's compositional

* Portions of this essay are excerpted from R.W. Wall, 'Reading the New Testament in Canonical Context', in J.B. Green (ed.), *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), pp. 381-404.

history—from the moment of composition to the moment of canonization. The issue of Scripture's referentiality and intentionality, then, is decisive in forging the *Gestalt* of canonical hermeneutics, which supposes that the very act of interpretation enables and empowers the rendering of the Christian Bible as the word of God for today's canonical audience.

Actually, the idea of a biblical canon includes two integral ingredients: the Christian Bible is both a canonical collection of writings and a collection of canonical writings. In the first case, emphasis is placed upon the Bible's final literary form (*norma normata*), and in the second case, emphasis is placed upon its ongoing religious function (*norma normans*).¹ The methodological interests of canonical criticism follow along the lines of these two emphases, introduced by the work of Old Testament scholars, B.S. Childs and J.A. Sanders. Their disagreements over what constitutes agreed hermeneutical essentials have charted the territory of canonical criticism for the guild of biblical scholars.

In brief, the 'canonical approach' of Childs posits hermeneutical value in the Bible's final literary form (*norma normata*), which supplies the normative written witness to Jesus Christ.² The Bible's role as Christianity's 'rule of faith' presumes its trustworthy (or 'apostolic') witness to him whose incarnation ultimately provides the norm for the community's 'rule of faith'. Only in this christological sense can one say that Scripture supplies both the subject matter for the Church's theological reflection as well as the theological boundaries or context within which Christian theology and ethics take shape. An interpretative emphasis on the Bible as a specific and limited body of sacred writings not only values its subject matter for theological reflection and confession, but also envisages the very ordering of the Bible's sub-units as the privileged, permanent

¹ Cf. J.A. Sanders, 'The Integrity of Biblical Pluralism', in J.P. Rosenblatt and J.C. Sitterson, Jr (eds.), *Not in Heaven: Coherence and Complexity in Biblical Narrative* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), pp. 154-69, esp. pp. 154-57.

² Without question, Childs's most influential work is his *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979); in my opinion, he has not advanced his discussion of the 'canonical approach' since its publication. See, however, Gerald Sheppard's fine essay on 'Canonical Criticism', *ABD* 1 (1992), pp. 861-66.

expression of an intentioned, dynamic interaction between the faithful and their written rule of faith.

The canonical approach to biblical interpretation is less interested in lining up behind the reconstructed historical or linguistic intentions of a pre-canonical stage in the formation of a particular composition or collection. The 'synchronic' interest of Childs is rather posited in a subsequent period during which the Christian Scriptures took their final literary shape and at the same time stabilized certain theological convictions as true in a more universal or catholic sense.³

³ I recognize the contested nature of what 'synchronic' interpretation intends to accomplish in biblical and literary analysis; see M.G. Brett, *Biblical Criticism in Crisis: The Impact of the Canonical Approach on Old Testament Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 104-15. Further, there are multiple definitions of the 'canonical process' within the field of canonical criticism. For Childs, the idea of a canonical process is vaguely historical and refers to the final stage in the formation of the biblical canon when the believing community 'recognized' its 'rule of faith' in the shape and content of a discrete form (i.e. the 'final form') of its Scripture. I would agree with Childs that this recognition of a biblical canon took place within history and resulted in the 'fixing' of a particular shape of biblical literature; but this final stage in the formation of a discrete Scripture was largely guided by impressions of its truthfulness or intuitions of its ongoing religious utility rather than the outcome of some positivistic or rational judgment. Nor did some final redactor (or God, according to the fundamentalists) wave an 'editorial wand over all the disparate literature', to use Sanders's phrase, to create the Church's Bible. In fact, the primacy Childs grants to the final stage of the canonical process is really an appeal to a useful metaphor for the primacy he grants to the final form of the canon. Although Brett successfully, in my view, provides Childs with the necessary epistemology to anchor his methodological interests, Sanders's notion of canonical process complements Childs's approach in a different way. Sanders's point is to describe the hermeneutics of the canonical process by which we understand more adequately *how and why* Jewish ('prophetic') and Christian ('apostolic') writings were preserved, collected and canonized into biblical form. First of all, the canonizing process was a 'monotheizing process' by which biblical writings became the 'Word of God', brought near to God's people in relevant response to their ever-changing needs; cf. Sanders's superb summary of his account of canonical criticism in 'Integrity'. Secondly, however, biblical writings became God's Word by the act of biblical (i.e. rabbinical or midrashic) interpretation, so that 'what got picked up and read again and again, and was recommended to the children and to other communities nearby, and continued to give value and to give life, was what made it into the canon' (Sanders, 'Integrity', p. 168). For Sanders, the biblical canon 'norms' are the community's hermeneutics by which biblical texts are resignified into theologically relevant

No one is entirely clear why these various writings and collections, so different in theological conception and sociological origination and so fluid during their early history, eventually stabilized into the Christian Bible. Certainly, one probable reason is aesthetic: over time, different communions of believers came to recognize one particular arrangement of books as more useful for a variety of religious services, even as the number of alternative arrangements (or 'canon lists') was eventually narrowed by disuse. In other words, a specific form of biblical literature triumphed because it facilitated or better served its intended role within the faith community.⁴ Thus, according to Childs, the final shape of the Christian Scriptures best combines and relates its subject matter to serve the Church as the literary location where theological understanding is well founded and soundly framed.

The 'canonical criticism' of Sanders posits value in the act of interpretation which enables the Bible to function canonically in shaping the theology and guiding the praxis of the Church (*norma normans*). The methodological interests of Sanders are more intuitive than those of Childs, emphasizing rather the interpretative calculus found at the composition's point of origin, during the canonical process, and throughout the history of interpreting the biblical canon. For Sanders, 'canonical process' is not concentrated by a specific historical moment or literary product as it is for Childs; hermeneutics is not synchronic in this sense. Rather, the canonical approach of Sanders is more 'diachronic', and involves the entire history of the Bible's interpretation, whenever the faith community draws upon its Scriptures to provide a norm for its faith and life. Beginning even before biblical texts were written and continuing today, faithful interpreters contemporize the meaning of their Scriptures so that the faith community might better understand what it means to be and do what God's people ought.

For Sanders, canonical function antedates and explains canonical form, even as final form facilitates those functions the faith community intended for its canon. In my view, Childs has offered no compelling response to the objection that his interest in the Bible's

teachings, which help to form the community's particular identity amidst the ambiguities and vicissitudes of human life and history.

⁴ This point draws upon H.-G. Gadamer's idea of 'classical' literature; cf. *Truth and Method* (New York: Crossroad; London: Sheed and Ward, 2nd edn, 1989), esp. pp. 285-90.

final literary form is too parochial, elevating the final form of the Protestant Bible over the various other biblical canons within the Christian Church. On the other hand, by shifting his attention from the Bible as *norma normata* to the Bible as *norma normans*, from its literary form to its ecclesial function, Sanders relativizes the hermeneutical importance of the Bible's final form. Since, for him, canonical function takes precedence over canonical form, the literary shape (or translation!) of a particular community's Bible is subsumed under the interpreter's more important vocation of adapting Scripture's meaning to the community's ever-changing life situation.

Canonical criticism, then, concentrates on how a biblical text becomes canonical in the act of interpretation, when different interpreters pick up the same text again and again to 'comfort the afflicted or afflict the comfortable'. In the hands of faithful interpreters, past and present, Scripture acquires multiple meanings. Of course the aim of relating the canon to the faith community is to form a people who worship and bear witness to the one true God.⁵ Thus, the Christian Bible is more than a canonical collection of sacred writings, shaped by religious intentions and insights into a discrete literary anthology that itself envisions patterns of hermeneutical engagement. The Bible is canonical primarily in a functional sense, with an authorized role to provide a norm for the worship and witness of all those who belong to the 'One Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church'. Under the light of this perspective toward the Bible, interpreters are led to ask additional questions about the meaning of every biblical text that attends first of all to the *theological shape* of the Church's faith (in both confession and conflict) rather than to the literary shape of its biblical canon.⁶

In this sense, Sanders reminds Childs that the history of the Bible's formation did more than settle on the shape of a canonical collection

⁵ See J.A. Sanders, *Canon and Community* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984).

⁶ While Sanders contends that the biblical canon is characterized by its textual 'stability' and contextual 'adaptability', his principal methodological interest has always been the Bible's adaptability (even as Childs's methodological interest has always been the Bible's stability). For Sanders, the fluidity of the biblical canon is a matter of the historical record; yet, it is also the constant experience of faithful interpreters, whose task it is to find new meanings in the same biblical texts for their new situations. It is this *experience* of interpretation that justifies this interest in Scripture's characteristic of adapting itself to new hearers and readers.

of sacred writings to delimit the Church's 'official' theology and ethics; it also evinced a species of hermeneutics that contemporizes the theological quotient of biblical teaching to give it an authoritative voice for today's community whose worship and witness is again undermined by similar theological crises. What got picked up again and again and reread over and over were those same writings that could interpret the present crisis of faith and resolve it in a way that maintained faith and empowered life.

In fact, biblical writings were first preserved because they were sufficiently ambiguous in intent for different interpreters to mediate truth to their different audiences. At the same time, other writings were filtered out as being too narrow in sociological context or semantic intent to have a life beyond their first readers. According to Sanders, the elevation of a scriptural writing to canonical status required an inherent capacity to be reinterpreted over and again in spiritually profitable ways by different interpreters for different situations. This sort of unrecorded hermeneutics envisages the same canonical function found in the Bible's final literary form: the Bible is formed to inform the community's understanding of God.

My own work has sought to combine and extend these insights of Sanders and Childs.⁷ In doing so, I recognize the contested nature of canonical criticism within the guild of biblical scholarship. Nevertheless, the present chapter does not seek to defend the methodological interests of canonical criticism against its main competitors. Nor does it intend to provide critics with the proper epistemological credentials to lend support to my exegetical conclusions. This important work has already been undertaken by others, so that the methodological interests of canonical criticism can now be more fully exploited for fresh insight into the meaning of Scripture for today.⁸

⁷ See R.W. Wall and E.E. Lemcio, *The New Testament as Canon: A Reader in Canonical Criticism* (JSNTSup, 76; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992).

⁸ See especially Brett, *Biblical Criticism*. Brett's work requires supplementation in two ways: (1) to distinguish between a canonical approach to Old Testament studies and New Testament studies, where some of the methodological problems Brett raises and responds to are not quite as important (e.g. the duration of the canonical process) but where other problems are (e.g. the relationship between the two testaments); and (2) to show more carefully and critically how the 'canonical approach' of Childs is different from and complemented by the 'canonical criticism' of Sanders. This latter point has been recently taken up in a helpful essay by M.C. Parsons, 'Canonical Criticism', in

2. THE METHODOLOGICAL INTERESTS OF CANONICAL CRITICISM

Biblical Exegesis

Theological reflection on the Bible integrates two discrete tasks—biblical exegesis and theological interpretation. The foundational task of the hermeneutical enterprise is exegetical, which aims at a coherent exposition of Scripture's 'plain meaning'.⁹ My use of the catchphrase 'plain meaning' is metaphorical, indicating a primary interest in the final form of the biblical canon, rather than in the literary or sociological environs at its point of origin, its author, or any of its sub- or pre-texts (however important these constructions might be to achieve a holistic meaning). Neither do I view the exegetical task as interested in privileging one particular meaning as 'canonical' for all believers for all time.¹⁰

D.A. Black and D.S. Dockery (eds.), *New Testament Criticism and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), pp. 253-94.

⁹ My use of the controversial term, 'plain meaning', is neither naive nor courageous. It seeks rather to exploit two discussions, one medieval and another modern, the first Jewish and the second Christian. The first source for defining 'plain meaning exegesis' is the medieval rabbinate, whose commentaries on Scripture typically distinguished between *peshat* ('straightforward') and *derash* ('investigation') as two integral exegetical modes. If the aim of hermeneutical inquiry is *peshat*, the interpreter is concerned with a closely reasoned description of what the text actually says. In this first mode, the interpreter responds to the hermeneutical crisis of the text's incomprehensibility within a congregation of believers for whom that text is canonical. If the aim is *derash*, the interpreter is concerned with an imaginative interpretation of what the text means for its current audience. This second task, while rooted in the first, responds to a different and more important hermeneutical crisis, which is the perception of the text's theological irrelevance for its current readers. If the biblical canon intends to facilitate theological reflection, then the ultimate aim of exegesis is not *peshat* but *derash*. My second source is the work of R.E. Brown who reintroduced the idea of Scripture's *sensus plenior* into the scholarly debate over biblical hermeneutics ('The History and Development of the Theory of a *Sensus Plenior*', *CBQ* 15 [1953], pp. 141-62; *The Sensus Plenior of Sacred Scripture* [New York: Paulist Press, 1960]). According to Brown's more modern (and positive) definition, the *sensus plenior* or 'plenary sense' of a biblical text agrees with the theological aspect of the entire biblical canon. My use of 'plain meaning' includes this sense, so that the single meaning of any text bears witness to the Bible's witness to God.

¹⁰ See R.W. Wall, 'The Relevance of the Book of Revelation for the Wesleyan Tradition', *WTJ*, forthcoming.

Moreover, I view the exegetical task in a collaborative way: it is the shared task of a community of interpreters, whose different interests in the biblical text expose its multiple contours in pursuit of a 'thickened' or holistic description of meaning. However, a methodological interest in the plain meaning of a particular text is constricted by compositional and canonical contexts within which specific texts acquire their distinctive literary and theological meaning. Plain meaning exegesis aspires to a 'standard' meaning, since texts do not gather together an inclusive community of infinite meanings. Common sense and critical attention to words and patterns of words point the exegete to specific meanings. Exegetical strategies are prioritized, then, that are concerned with the meaning and arrangement of words and pericopes as well as the theological content they convey.

Of course, Scripture has a profoundly intertextual texture, which is exploited in canonical criticism. The careful interpreter is naturally sensitive to the citations, allusions, and even echoes of other 'subtexts' heard when reading a biblical text. And the canonical critic is inclined to value these, especially biblical, subtexts hermeneutically: that is, they provide an implied yet normative context for the writer's own theological reflection on the events being narrated or the spiritual crisis being resolved. There is a sense in which New Testament writers are viewed as interpreters of their Scripture and their compositions as commentaries on Scripture. More importantly, this exegetical sensitivity to the author's intended meaning, in turn, enhances the exegete's understanding of the text's plain meaning.¹¹

The scholar's search for the plain meaning of a biblical text or tradition does not mark a return to a fundamentalistic literalism, which denies both the historical process that formed the Christian Scriptures and the theological diversity found within it. Rather, a concern for plain meaning guards against hermeneutical supersession. Thus, the community at work on biblical texts pursues meaning with ideological blinders on, without immediate regard for the integral wholeness of Scripture: critical exegesis seeks to restore to full volume the voice of every biblical writer so that the whole meaning of Scripture can then

¹¹ In canonical criticism, this exegetical sensitivity takes on a theological cast when speculating on the relationship between the two testaments of the Christian Bible: the New Testament is a midrash on the Old Testament, for it bears witness that the salvation promised in the first is fulfilled by the Jesus of the second.

be vocalized as a chorus of its various parts. To presume the simultaneity between every part of the whole, without also adequately discerning the plain meaning of each in turn, undermines the integral nature of Scripture and even distorts its full witness to God. Finally, however, the aim of critical exegesis, which has successfully exposed the pluriformity of Scripture, is 'to put the text back together in a way that makes it available in the present and in its (biblical) entirety—not merely in the past and in the form of historically contextualized fragments'.¹² In this sense, then, the plain meaning of individual writings or biblical traditions, although foundational for scriptural interpretation, has value only in relationship to a more holistic end.¹³

Even though the search for the plain meaning of Scripture concerns itself with stable texts and standard meanings, the exegetical history of every biblical text is actually quite fluid. This limitation is deepened by recognition of the inherent multivalence and intertextuality of texts. Further changes in the text's 'plain meaning' result from new evidence and different exegetical strategies and from interpreters shaped by diverse social and theological locations. In fact, the sort of neutrality toward biblical texts that critical exegesis envisages actually requires such changes to be made. Our experience with texts tells us that the ideal of a 'standard' meaning cannot be made absolute, whether as the assured conclusion of the scholarly guild or as some meaning ordained by (and known only to) God. Thus, the fluid nature of exegesis resists the old dichotomy between past and present meanings, and between authorial and textual intentions.

As a practical discipline, plain meaning exegesis clarifies the subject matter of Scripture, which supplies the conceptual freight of those theological norms and ethical principles that form Christian faith. Simply put, the straightforward meanings of the variety of biblical writings, considered holistically, help to delimit the range and determine the substance of the Church's current understanding of what it means to believe and behave as it must. Yet, whenever biblical theology is still attempted, it remains (with a few notable exceptions) exclusively an exegetical enterprise as though a careful description of the Bible's theology is sufficient to perform its canonical roles. It is in response to this misconception that I claim exegesis is the means but

¹² J.D. Levenson, *The Hebrew Bible, The Old Testament, and Historical Criticism* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), p. 79.

¹³ Esp. B.S. Childs, *Biblical Theology of Old and New Testaments* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), pp. 719-27.

not the end of the hermeneutical enterprise: the plain meaning of Scripture must come to have contemporary meaning for its current readers before it can function as their Scripture.

Theological Interpretation

The interpreter's second task is *interpretation*, which, in my definition, aims to give the subject matter of Scripture its canonical significance for today. That is, if exegesis locates canonical authority in biblical texts, then interpretation re-locates religious authority in the social contexts of the faith community where the Word of God is ultimately heard and embodied. Biblical interpretation, as I understand it, is fully contextual and aims at an imaginative (i.e. analogical) reflection on the subject matter of biblical teaching. The purpose of such reflection is to 're-canonize' biblical teaching so that the faith community might know who it is as God's people and how it is to act as God's people within a new situation. While critical exegesis aims to restrict the plain meaning of a biblical text to a single standard (at least in theory), the interpretative task seeks an application of that meaning for a people whose faith and life are in constant flux. Of course, the problem to which the act of interpretation responds is the recognition that biblical writings are all occasional literature, written by particular authors for particular audiences in response to crises of a particular time and place. No biblical writing was composed for the biblical canon nor for the universal readership it now enjoys.

In fact, the interpretative presumption is that current readers will not draw out the very same meaning from a composition that might have been intended by its author or understood by its first readers. Times and places change the significance of texts for new readerships. Rather than decanonizing certain Scripture as 'irrelevant' or imposing a biblical world-view upon a contemporary readership, an interpretative strategy must be engaged that seeks to relate the whole witness of the biblical canon and the whole life of the faith community in fresh and meaningful ways.

In this sense, the crisis of biblical authority is the propriety of prior interpretations of Scripture—including those of the biblical writers—for a 'new' situation. This is ultimately a theological crisis, since the subject matter of biblical revelation fails to convey God's Word to a particular people with clarity and conviction, either because they cannot understand what Scripture says, or because they cannot

understand its immediate relevance for life and faith.¹⁴ In this case, then, imagination is required by the interpreter to exploit more easily the inherent polyvalency of biblical teaching in order to find new meanings for new worlds.

Thus, the interpreter presumes that the agreed plain meaning of a biblical text embodies a community of analogical meanings, while at the same time recognizing that not all of these meanings hold equal significance either for a particular interpreter or for the interpreter's faith community. The interpreter's interpretations of Scripture seek to clarify and contemporize the Bible's subject matter for those who struggle to remain faithful at a particular moment in time and place. In this regard, then, the act of interpretation imagines an analogue from a range of possible meanings that renders the text's subject matter meaningful for a people who desire to remain faithful to God within an inhospitable world.

The Role of the Interpreter

All of what has been said to this point about the exegetical and interpretative tasks implies something about the interpreter's 'authority'. Perhaps because its pioneers are theologically located within Reformed Protestantism, canonical criticism has always emphasized the authority of the Christian Bible. However, whether an interpretation satisfies the Church's intentions for its Bible depends to a significant degree upon the interpreter's 'individual talent'. The talented interpreter has the capacity to make coherent and contemporary the meaning of diverse biblical traditions, each singly and together within the whole; and then to relate the canon to the faith community in ways that facilitate the hearing of God's word.

To be sure, the interpreter's talent to facilitate a meaningful conversation between canon and community is determined in part by one's vocation, whether 'prophetic' or 'priestly'. On this basis, creative and compelling interpretations of biblical texts are made that relate the plain meaning of the biblical text to the current social context in ways that actually produce theological understanding (and so a more vital faith in God) and moral clarity (and so more faithful obedience to God's Word). In this sense, the talented interpreter renders Scripture in ways that empower the community's worship of and witness to God in the world. Thus, the interpreter imagines what

¹⁴ For this point, see M. Fishbane, *The Garments of Torah* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), pp. 16-18.

'analogical meaning' can be made of the text's 'plain meaning' for the community's formation as God's people, whether to 'correct and rebuke' a distorted faith (prophetic hermeneutic) or to 'teach and train' a developing faith (priestly hermeneutic).

Further, the interpreter's talent is shaped by time and place. Not only does the interpreter bring a particularized perspective to the biblical text; the interpreter also brings one's own 'special' texts to the text, to participate in a conversation already under way.

A Model for Canonical Interpretation

Under the light of these methodological interests, the framework for an interpretative model can now be constructed as a sequence of three discrete although integral parts: canonical context, content and conversations. What follows is a brief description of the task *apropos* to each part.

Canonical Context. An interest in the final literary form of the New Testament leads the interpreter to an initial set of hermeneutical clues derived from consideration of both the placement and titles of New Testament writings, which are properties of their canonization. Quite apart from authorial intentions, the literary design of the biblical canon suggests that particular units of the New Testament canon (Gospel, Acts, Letter, Apocalypse) have particular roles to perform within the whole. This consideration of the structure of the New Testament orients the interpreter to the subject matter found within each of those canonical units. Often the title provided for each unit by the canonizing community brings to clearer focus what particular contribution each unit makes to a fully Christian faith.

In this regard, the sequence of these four units within the New Testament envisages an intentional rhetorical pattern—or 'canon-logic' to use Albert Outler's apt phrase¹⁵—that more effectively orients the readership to the New Testament's pluriform witness to God and to God's Christ. By the logic of the final literary form of the New Testament canon, each unit is assigned a specific role to perform within the whole, which in turn offers another explanation for the rich diversity of theology, literature, and language that casts Scripture's subject matter. Thus, the Gospel is placed first within the New

¹⁵ A.C. Outler, 'The "Logic" of Canon-Making and the Tasks of Canon-Criticism', in W.E. March (ed.), *Texts and Testaments: Critical Essays on the Bible and Early Church Fathers* (San Antonio, TX: Trinity University Press, 1980), pp. 263-76.

Testament because its narrative of the person and work of the Messiah when taken as a fourfold whole, is theologically and morally foundational for all that follows.

Along with the final placement of writings and collections within the biblical canon, new titles were provided for individual compositions, sometimes including the naming of anonymous authors. These properties of the canonizing stage shed additional light on how these compositions and collections, written centuries earlier for congregations and religious crises long since settled, may continue to bear witness to God and God's Christ for a nameless and future readership. The importance of any one biblical voice for theological understanding or ethical praxis is focused or qualified by its relationship to the other voices that constitute the whole canonical chorus. Extending this metaphor, one may even suppose that these various voices, before heard only individually or in smaller groups, became more impressive, invigorating, and even 'canonical' for faith only when combined with other voices to sing their contrapuntal harmonies as the full chorus.

Canonical Content. A biblical text, once placed within its distinctive canonical context, acquires a potential for enhanced meaning that should help to guide the exegetical task. A canonical approach to exegesis is never solely concerned with an 'objective' description of the biblical text in isolation from other biblical texts; rather, the analysis of a writer's literary artistry or theological tendencies serves the overall canonical project. The description of the text's plain meaning results from a close and critical analysis of its compositional and theological aspects (see under 'Biblical Exegesis' above). In many ways, this part of the canonical-critical enterprise is the most traditional. *Canonical criticism does not sponsor any new exegetical strategy; rather, it sponsors a particular orientation toward the biblical text whose principal methodological interests are its final literary form and canonical functions.* Naturally, the canonical interpreter is first of all drawn to those exegetical strategies that seek to make meaning out of the biblical text itself rather than its prehistory or the historical circumstances that occasioned its writing.

Canonical Conversations. The intended rôle of the biblical canon is to adapt its ancient teaching to contemporary life; this is also the primary objective of biblical interpretation. Under this final rubric, the results of the first two tasks are now gathered together as the subject matter of two formative and integral 'conversations' about the community's

life of faith. The first conversation is *intercanonical* (i.e. conversations between different biblical traditions/writers) and the second is *intercatholic* (i.e. conversations between the Bible and different faith traditions); the first provides a norm and guidance for the second.

While a number of metaphors work well to express the Bible's theological plurality coherently and constructively, my preference for the interpreter's practical task is *conversation*. Naturally, there are different kinds of conversations between people. A canonical approach to the New Testament's pluriform subject matter envisages a conversation that is more complementary than adversarial. In one sense, the *intercanonical* conversation is very much like an intramural debate over the precise meaning of things generally agreed to be true and substantial. The purpose or outcome of debate is not to resolve firmly fixed disagreements between members of the same community or panel as though a normative synthesis were possible; rather more often, it is the sort of debate that clarifies the contested content of their common ground. Likewise, the biblical canon stabilizes and bears continuing witness to the historic disagreements between the traditions of the Church's first apostles, which were often creative and instructive (cf. Acts 15:1-21; Gal. 2:1-15). Not only do these controversies acquire a permanent value within Scripture, but Scripture in turn commends these same controversies to its current readers who are invited to engage in a similar act of what Karl Popper calls 'mutual criticism',¹⁶ in order to provide more balance to parochial interests or supply instruction to clarify the theological confession of a particular faith tradition.

In fact, the point and counterpoint of this sort of conversation sometimes works better than those that seek agreement, in that they more readily expose the potential weakness of any point made *to the exclusion* of its counterpoint. In this sense, I presume that a more objective and functional meaning emerges that is neither the conception of any one biblical writer—a 'canon *within* the canon'—nor the presumption of any one expositor—a 'canon *outside* of the canon'. Rather the canonical interpreter seeks to relate the different ideas of particular biblical writers and canonical units together in contrapuntal yet complementary ways, to expose the self-correcting (or prophetic) and mutually-informing (or priestly) whole of New

¹⁶ I learned of Popper's helpful categories for determining textual objectivity as a good reason for both receiving and preserving literary texts from Brett, *Biblical Criticism*, pp. 124-27.

Testament theology. In this way, the diversity of biblical theologies within the New Testament fashions a canon of 'mutual criticism', resulting in a more objective interpretation of Scriptural teaching. A New Testament theology thus envisaged underscores what is at stake in relating together the individual parts, whose total significance is now extended beyond their compiled meaning: the New Testament's diverse theologies, reconsidered holistically as complement witnesses within the whole, actually 'thicken' the meaning of each part in turn.

The midrashic character of biblical interpretation compels the contemporizing of texts, so that 'new' meanings are not the result of textual synthesis, but rather arise from contextual significance. Thus, by reconstituting these intercanonical disagreements into a hermeneutical apparatus of checks-and-balances, the interpreter may actually imagine a comparable dialogue which aids the Church's awareness of how each part of the New Testament canon is important in delimiting and shaping a truly biblical religion. In fashioning a second conversation under the light of the first, therefore, the checks-and-balances are re-imagined as *intercatholic* conversations which continue to guide the whole Church in its various ecumenical conversations.

How the intercanonical conversations are arranged and then adapted to a particular faith tradition is largely intuitive, and depends a great deal upon the interpreter's talent and location (see above). It should go without saying that my particular adaptation of Acts owes a great deal to who and where I am when coming to this text and its current socio-ecclesial context, so I must try to listen to other interpreters, believing that true objectivity emerges out of a community of subjectivities. Thus informed, a close reading of biblical texts and ecclesial contexts can be more easily linked together, particular communions with particular New Testament writers, in order to define the normative checks-and-balances of a complementary conversation that maintains and legitimizes traditional distinctives on the one hand, with the prospect of correcting a tendency toward triumphalist sectarianism on the other.

3. THE CASE OF THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

The following section of the present chapter seeks to illustrate the importance of locating the book of Acts within its 'canonical context' for exegesis, where the interpreter elevates the significance of a book's *intracanonial* relationships with collections of other biblical

books in forming Scripture's full witness to God. No one disagrees anymore that Scripture's theology is at the very least the sum of its various theologies; our point is rather to underscore their *synergy* so that their whole is actually greater than their mere sum when factoring in the theological importance of these intracanonical relationships which are fixed by the final form of the New Testament. As argued in a previous study, the placement and title of Acts provide substantial clues for proceeding in this regard.¹⁷

The Placement of Acts in Canonical Context

Sharply put, the strategic placement of Acts between the Gospels on the one hand and the apostolic letters on the other is suggestive of the transitional role it performs within the New Testament: the narrative of Acts both *concludes* the prior fourfold narrative of Jesus and *introduces* the subsequent twofold collection of apostolic letters that follow. This placement of Acts within the New Testament is even more strategic if P. Achtemeier is correct in noting that the relationship between the Gospels and letters is roughly analogous to the relationship between the Lord and his disciples: that is, even as the disciples follow the Lord's lead, so also the advice and instruction of the biblical letters follow the lead of Jesus tradition.¹⁸ In this way, Acts may well function within the New Testament as a 'bridge' which connects the collections of Gospels and letters in meaningful dialogue by providing a paradigmatic narrative that explores the continuing relationship between disciples and their risen Lord.

The Relationship between Acts and the Fourfold Gospel. The variegated relationship between Luke and Acts is a topic of longstanding interest among critical scholars. Our interest is similar although concentrated differently by the relationship between the fourfold Gospel and Acts within the New Testament. In this regard, the close relationship between Acts and the Gospels is indicated by the formal features of a succession narrative found in the prologue to Acts (1:1-14). (1) The Evangelist first recalls the public ministry of Jesus (1:1) and indicates that the apostolic successors will continue this ministry in his absence (1:2). The convenient opening phrase,

¹⁷ See R.W. Wall, 'Acts of the Apostles in Canonical Context', *BTB* 18 (1988), pp. 15-23.

¹⁸ P.J. Achtemeier, 'Epilogue: The New Testament Becomes Normative', in H.C. Kee, *Understanding the New Testament* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 4th edn, 1983), p. 369.

'began (ἤρξατο) to do and teach', and common address (cf. Luke 1:4), 'Theophilus', underscore this robust sense of continuity between the narrative of Acts and the antecedent narrative of Jesus' earthly ministry; indeed, we anticipate that the word of God, which Jesus proclaimed and enacted, will now be articulated by the speeches and deeds of his apostolic successors (cf. Mark 1:1, 14). The overall canonical effect of this relationship is rather similar to the author's own intention, even though the biblical Acts now qualifies a fourfold narrative of Jesus' earthly ministry: the revelation of God through Jesus continues to be disclosed through the earthly mission of his immediate successors, whose names are listed for the reader (1:12-14), and ultimately through the congregations they founded.

(2) The narrative and theological importance of the ascension of Jesus (1:9-11; cf. Luke 24:50-53) has been variously considered.¹⁹ As a feature of the transitional role Acts performs within the New Testament, Jesus' departure from earth marks the 'official' ending of his earthly ministry (and its narrative in the fourfold Gospel) and the beginning of his apostolic succession (and its narrative in Acts). As such it fashions the mid-point of the New Testament's continuing narrative about the doings and sayings that disclose God's reign within history, which Jesus (= Gospel) had begun. In this sense, Jesus' departure from earth is also his departure from the narrative, his place within salvation's history now to be occupied by the apostles who will also be empowered by God's word and Spirit until Jesus returns.

(3) Central to this succession story is the Lord's commissioning of his apostles (1:8), which establishes the Church's identity and obligation as a missionary community and the geographical index by which the narrative of the Church's mission is framed in Acts. The final phrase, 'to the end of the earth (= Rome?)', echoes Isa. 49:6, where the servant of Yahweh brings God's salvation to the nations. Yet, according to the Gospel, God's messianic Servant offered God's salvation only to Israel, even though a universal salvation is predicted at his birth (Luke 2:29-32). Not until Acts is God's salvation extended to the nations, thus completing the Gospel narrative. Significantly, the narrative ends ambiguously in Rome, with Paul awaiting the Caesar's audience and his fate unknown. From a canonical perspective, the narrative ending functions to commission the readership to succeed

¹⁹ Esp. M.C. Parsons, *The Departure of Jesus in Luke-Acts* (JSNTSup, 21; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987).

Paul in bearing witness to God's reign by word and deed.

Two features of this commission in particular explain the nature of the continuity between Jesus and the Church. (a) The apostolic vocation is to bear 'witness' to the risen Lord, whose messianic ministry culminating in the resurrection testifies to the triumph of God over sin and death. Not only do the apostolic speeches of Acts repeat—more or less—the principal events that compose the story of Jesus, but their acts of 'signs and wonders' typically envisage the triumph of the resurrection as continuing confirmation that the story of Jesus is true. (b) More importantly, this missionary vocation is empowered by the Spirit of the risen Christ. The Lord's promise of the Spirit and its eventual fulfilment at Pentecost respond to the theological crisis provoked by his departure: what is the current status of the 'word' that bears witness to God's reign on earth now that God's Messiah has left? The incomprehension, even uncertainty, of the disciples even after Easter, clearly indicated by their questioning of Jesus (1:6), envisages this present crisis. Only after Pentecost, when the Spirit fills the community (2:4), is the full status of the risen Lord grasped (2:22-36). Even the Baptist's witness to Jesus' 'greatness', which is measured by the baptism by Spirit and fire rather than by water (Luke 3:16), is not yet realized until the Spirit's arrival. Sharply put, the New Testament witness to God's triumph in Christ is incomplete without the narrative of the Spirit found in Acts. In fact, the absence of parousia hope in the speeches of Acts may well be intended to underscore the fundamental importance of Pentecost, since the arrival of the 'Day of the Lord' as the great and manifest day of salvation (Acts 2:20-21) occurs at the Pentecost of the Spirit rather than at the parousia of the Lord. In this sense, this story of the Spirit more than continues the story of Jesus: in fact, Acts concludes and completes the Gospel about Jesus by providing the final and clearest confirmation of his ongoing importance for God's people.

The Relationship between Acts and the Multiple Letter Canon. The intracanonical relationship between Acts and the following two collections of letters is more difficult to 'stage-manage'. On the one hand, epistolary literature is generically different than narrative; differences of all sorts between Acts and the letters seem even more apparent as a result. For example, the deeper logic of narrative moves from the fact of experience to theological conclusion rather than moving the other way as is more often the case with letters. Further, the purposes and orienting concerns of the various authors are also

different. For example, Luke's idealized *Paulusbild* appears rather contrary to Paul's own self-understanding.²⁰ In fact, while Luke seems to know a great deal about Paul, his story of Paul has very little basis in the Pauline Letters. Yet, on the other hand, there is an obvious connection between Acts and the letters that the Church has always recognized: Acts offers readers of the New Testament a theological (rather than a chronological or historical) introduction to the letters that follow.²¹

For example, (a) Acts offers biographical introductions to the authors of the letters. In canonical context, such biographies serve a theological purpose by orienting readers to the authority (religious and moral) of apostolic authors as trustworthy carriers of the word of God. While the historical accuracy of Luke's narrative of Paul and other leaders of earliest Christianity may be challenged,²² their rhetorical and moral powers only confirm and commend the importance of their letters. Even the unstoppable expansion of Christianity into the pagan universe through apostolic preaching, which Acts narrates with profound optimism, serves to underscore the anticipated result of reading and embracing what these same agents of the divine word have written and now read as canonical. Again, the issue is not that Acts fails us as a historical resource; rather, that its narrative succeeds as a theological resource which orients us to the literature that follows. In this case, Luke's intention to defend Paul and his Gentile mission, which especially shapes the second half of his narrative, serves well the overarching canonical intention to introduce his writings as theologically normative.

Further, (b) a reading of Acts fashions a narrative context within which to better understand the diverse theologies of *both* collections of letters, Pauline and those from the 'pillars' of the Jewish mission, 'James, (1-2) Cephas and (1-3) John' (so Gal. 2:9). Acts retains and approves of the theological diversity found within the apostolic witness (cf. Acts 15:1-21). Even though the modern discussion has

²⁰ Cf. J.C. Lentz, Jr., *Luke's Portrait of Paul* (SNTSMS, 77; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

²¹ See R.W. Wall, 'Israel and the Gentile Mission According to Acts and Paul: A Canonical Approach', in I.H. Marshall (ed.), *The Theology of Acts* (The Book of Acts in its First Century Setting, 6; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, forthcoming).

²² However, see C.J. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History* (WUNT, 49; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1989).

emphasized how a catholicizing narrator softens the disagreements between the leaders of earliest Christianity, yet, what is often overlooked in making this point is that the Church eventually collected and canonized a Pauline corpus whose principal letters were often polemical and potentially divisive. The question is never raised why these letters were included in the canon of a catholic Church if the aim was to shape theological uniformity.

Might it not be the case that the canonizing process looked to Acts not to smooth Paul's polemical edges, as Baur insisted, but to interpret them? Might the canonical intention of Acts be to explain rather than temper the diversity, even divisiveness, envisaged by those very letters that follow it in the Second Testament canon? According to Acts, the Church that claims its continuity with the first apostles tolerates a theological pluralism even as the apostles did; yet, not without controversy and confusion. What is achieved at the Jerusalem Synod is a kind of theological understanding rather than a theological consensus. The divine revelation given to the apostles according to Acts forms a pluralizing monotheism which in turn informs two discrete missions and appropriate proclamations, Jewish and Gentile (cf. Gal. 2:7-10). Thus, sharply put, Acts interprets the two collections of letters in a more sectarian fashion: the Pauline corpus reflects the gospel of the Gentile mission, while the non-Pauline collection reflects the gospel(s) of the Jewish mission. However, rather than causing division within the Church, such a theological diversity is now perceived as normative and necessary for the work of a God who calls both Jews and Gentiles to be the people of God. As a context for theological reflection, Acts forces us to interpret the letters in the light of two guiding principles: first, we should expect to find kerygmatic diversity as we move from Pauline to non-Pauline letters; and secondly, we should expect such a diversity to be useful in forming a single people for God. Against a critical hermeneutic which tends to select a 'canon within the canon' from among the various possibilities, the Bible's own recommendation is for an interpretative strategy characterized by a mutually-informing and self-correcting conversation between biblical theologies.

Finally, (c) the 'orienting' theological commitments of Acts guide theological reflection upon the letters. The point here is not that a theology of Acts determines or even anticipates the theological ideas found in the letters; rather, the point is that Acts shapes a particular perspective, a practical 'worry', an abiding interest that influences the

interpretation of the letters. For example, one may contend that the primary orienting concern of Acts is the missionary advancement of the word of God to the 'end of the earth'. This concern then functions in theological reflection as an implicit way of thinking about and organizing the subject matter of the letters that follow. If the orienting concern is the Church's Spirit-empowered succession to Jesus' messianic mission, then a reading of the letters under the light of Acts will bring to sharper focus the identity and praxis of a missionary people who respond to the Lord's demand to be his witness to the end of the earth.

This orienting concern is even true of the non-Pauline letters which do not seem to be missionary writings. For example, the faith community addressed by the non-Pauline letters is typically cast in terms of its marginal status in the world rather than in terms of its missionary vocation. How does this orienting concern provided by Acts, then, finally deepen the rather contrary understanding of God's people as a community of 'aliens and strangers'? The canonical approach presumes the connection is complementary rather than adversarial. In this case, a missionary Church, which may be inclined to accommodate itself to the mainstream of the world system in order to more effectively spread the gospel (cf. 1 Cor. 9:12b-23), is reminded by the non-Pauline witness that it must take care not to be corrupted by the values and behaviors of the world outside of Christ (cf. Jas 1:27). That is, the synergism effected by the orienting concern suggests that the diverse theologies that make up the whole biblical canon compose a dynamic self-correcting apparatus which prevents the reader from theological distortion.

The Title, 'The Acts of the Apostles', in Canonical Context

The modern study of the title, 'The Acts of the Apostles', typically reflects an interest in the intentions of the author or in the genre of his narrative. This is mistaken if, as likely, the title is a property of the canonical process rather than of the author. That is, the title envisages the intended role of the narrative *within the biblical canon* for nurturing theological understanding, whether or not this New Testament role agrees with the literary or historical intentions of the author for his first readers. The significance of the canonical title involves two interrelated observations. First, the canonical process moved the Evangelist's more particular intention for his narrative to Theophilus to perform a more universal role in nurturing the Church's understanding of God. Secondly, the effect of the title's reference to

'the apostles' is to shift the reader's attention from the Spirit (and a more 'charismatic' theology) to the apostles (and a more 'institutional' theology).

The first idea presumes that, sometime during the canonical process, the narrative of Acts became associated with the ancient literature of 'acts' (*pracheis*), setting aside its original function, like Luke's Gospel, of a διήγησις (Luke 1:1), a genre of historical 'narrative'. On the other hand, an 'acts' is yet another genre of historical narrative consisting of stories of persons (real or fictive) with exceptional powers who act in mighty ways. Significantly, the literary 'acts' is a kind of aretology—a 'folk' narrative about the wondrous powers of someone who participated significantly in a community's or nation's history. Indeed, the canonical process recognized the importance of a narrative about the powerful words and deeds of the apostles whose witness to the risen Christ founded the Church and formed its rule of faith.

Significantly, such a narrative about heroic powers scores a deeply religious point as well, since these mighty deeds were not of one's own making but rather testified to divine favor. Not only was the hero divinely blessed, but the narrative's readers were typically insiders who linked their own destiny with that of their heroes whose favored status indicated their own. In this regard, the second half of the title, 'of the apostles', envisages a similar clue for reading Acts in the context of the Christian Scriptures. Given the importance of the Spirit's work in enabling witness to the risen Jesus, the credit of mighty 'acts' to the apostles is something of a misnomer—from the author's pentecostal perspective they are in truth 'acts of the Spirit'. What theological significance attends to the title's shift of focus from Spirit to the apostles?

Perhaps such a shift during the second century reflects an interest in defending 'mainstream' Christianity's claims against rivals (e.g. Judaism, Gnosticism, Montanism), but, as a canonical marker, it orients the current reader to Acts for interpreting its message. That is, the reader of a narrative who focuses on the story of apostles rather than on the 'signs and wonders' of the Spirit is naturally drawn to the authority of these Spirit-filled persons, who exemplify particular commitments and values for subsequent generations of believers who confess their loyalty to the 'One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church'. The role of the canonical narrative is to shape identity into the next generation.

HELLENISTIC PHILOSOPHY AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

GREGORY E. STERLING

In his presidential address to the Society of New Testament Studies which he delivered in 1993, Martin Hengel correctly affirmed that 'a New Testament scholar who understands only the New Testament, *cannot* at all correctly understand this'.¹ What else should he or she understand? Ideally, as much as she or he can about the Hellenistic, Roman, and Jewish worlds; realistically, choices have to be made. I suggest that one of the more promising choices is Hellenistic philosophy.

At first, this might seem strange. New Testament writers rarely mention Hellenistic philosophers or their works explicitly. When they do, they reveal divergent judgments. The author of Colossians warns the community against 'someone' taking them prisoner 'through philosophy and empty deception' (Col. 2:9). 'Empty deception' is probably the author's way of describing the Colossians' 'philosophy' (see below). On the other hand, the author of Acts offers a positive assessment. He sets the scene for Paul's *Aereopagetic*a by presenting him in debate with certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers who charge the Christian missionary with the crime for which Socrates was executed (Acts 17:18, 20; Xenophon, *Mem.* 1:1:1; cf. also Justin Martyr, *1 Apol.* 5:3; *2 Apol.* 10:5). This is not the first time in Acts that a disciple or group of disciples appears in a role reminiscent of Socrates (cf. Acts 4:19; 5:29; and Plato, *Apol.* 29d). The speech which follows is an argument that Greek philosophy is a forerunner to Christianity. The author even cites a line from Aratus of Soli who learned his Stoicism from Zeno, the founder of the Stoa (Acts 17:28; Aratus, *Phaen.* 5). In this way, the author anticipates the more famous formulation of Clement of Alexandria who argued that Greek philosophy was for the Greeks what the law was for the Jews (*Strom.* 1.5.28; cf. also Philo, *Virt.* 65, for an earlier Jewish version). Such a view hardly swept the field; there were always opponents. Clement's counterpart on the southern shore of the Mediterranean, Tertullian,

¹ M. Hengel, 'Aufgaben der neutestamentlichen Wissenschaft', *NTS* 40 (1994), p. 321.

expressed his dissent in an often cited *bon mot*: 'What in fact does Athens have to do with Jerusalem?' (*Praes.* 7:9).

These statements—both the rejections and the recommendations—point to the fact that early Christians did not avoid Hellenistic philosophy. Within the context of the first two centuries, it would be difficult to see how they could. There are several factors which naturally led early Christians to appropriate Hellenistic philosophy. First, early Christians' monotheistic understanding of an imageless God finds a counterpart in Greek philosophy. It is not at all surprising that, when Greeks first encountered groups of Christianity's parent religion, they naturally compared them to philosophers (e.g. Theophrastus in Porphyry, *De abst.* 2:26; Megasthenes in Clement, *Strom.* 1:15:72:5; and Clearchus of Soli in Josephus, *Apion* 1:176–83). Jewish authors later cultivated this image by presenting themselves as a philosophical movement. The most obvious example of this is the practice of presenting sectarian groups as philosophical schools who either devote themselves to contemplation (e.g. Philo's portrait of the Therapeutae [*Contempl.* 26, 28, 67, 69, 89] and Essenes [*Prob.* 88]) or differ in ways analogous to the Hellenistic philosophical schools (e.g. Josephus's presentation of Jewish sects [*War* 2:119–66; *Ant.* 18:11–25]). Jewish authors such as Aristobulus, the author of the Wisdom of Solomon, and Philo used Hellenistic philosophy to restate their own understandings of the divine. It should hardly occasion surprise to discover Christians appropriating concepts from Hellenistic philosophy to present their evolving christologies, for example, Origen's understanding of the incarnation (*Prin.* 2:6:3). Secondly, during the Hellenistic and Roman periods, Hellenistic philosophy invited this appropriation by becoming more religiously oriented. This is clearly evident in Middle Platonism when Eudorus, following Plato, defined the purpose of life (τέλος ἀγαθῶν) as 'likeness to God' (ὁμοίωσις θεῷ [Plato, *Tht.* 176a-b; Eudorus in Stobaeus 2:7:3 = 2:49:8-12 Wachsmuth; Philo, *Fug.* 63]). This proclivity became so enticing in some instances that someone like Philo of Alexandria thought Moses and Plato both grasped the same realities, although Moses more fully (e.g. *Virt.* 65; *Spec.* 2:164-67). Similarly, Justin Martyr argued that Socrates was a Christian since he lived according to the Logos (*1 Apol.* 46:3). Thirdly, the moral emphasis of Christian paraenesis finds its closest Greco-Roman counterpart in moral philosophy. Seneca described the function of philosophy to Lucilius in these words: 'it forms and fashions the soul, sets life in order, rules

over actions, demonstrates what should be done and what should be given up...' (*Ep.* 16:3). In another letter he pointedly asks: 'Is philosophy not the law of life?' (*Ep.* 94:39). Jewish predecessors had already learned the value of casting Jewish ethics in the form of Greek virtues (e.g. *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*; *4 Maccabees*; Pseudo-Phocylides; Philo, *Virt.*). Later Christians would make this connection explicit by christianizing pagan philosophers such as Seneca (Tertullian, *De anima* 20; Jerome, *Ad Joven* 1:49), Epictetus (Origen, *Ag. Celsus* 6:2), and Musonius Rufus (Justin Martyr, *2 Apol.* 8:1; Origen, *Ag. Celsus* 3:66). So great was the attraction of Seneca's moral outlook that a fourth-century Christian (or Christians) composed a set of fourteen fictitious letters between Paul and Seneca.²

These observations help us to pose the question of the importance of Hellenistic philosophy for the interpretation of New Testament texts in a historical framework. We have uncontested Jewish precedents and unambiguous patristic evidence for Jewish and Christian use of Hellenistic philosophy. Do the authors of the New Testament stand within this tradition, or do they represent an alternative perspective?

STATUS QUAESTIONIS

While there have been many individual attempts to answer this question, there have been three sustained efforts. The initial attempt came in the seventeenth century in the form of *Observationes* and *Annotationes*, two closely related forms of commentaries which provide parallels to New Testament texts. It reached its apex in Johann Jakob Wettstein's (1693–1754) edition of the New Testament which supplied both an *apparatus criticus* for the text and an apparatus listing parallels. Wettstein explained the rationale for the latter in his accompanying essay 'On the Interpretation of the New Testament'. He wrote: 'If you want to understand the books of the New Testament more clearly and more fully, clothe yourself in the person of those to whom they were first delivered by the apostles for reading'. He continued: 'Transfer yourself in thought to that time and that place where they were first read' (Wettstein 1962: II, p. 878). The parallels he listed were offered as a means of recreating that lost

² For the texts, see E. Hennecke and W. Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha* (2 vols.; Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, rev. edn, 1991, 1992), II, pp. 46-53.

world, largely—although not exclusively—through lexical material. Wettstein was so successful that his collection has not yet been superseded in a single source, although there are currently several efforts underway to do so. One of these is an effort to present parallels to the New Testament from a history-of-religions perspective. The initial publication came in Germany (Berger and Colpe 1987), but has recently been seconded by an English counterpart (Boring, Berger, and Colpe 1995). There is another project underway to revise Wettstein's New Testament, the *Neuer Wettstein* (Strecker and Schnelle 1997). Although the scope of interest for these projects extends beyond the philosophical material, it is easily one of the richest sources of parallels.

The enduring value as well as the limitations of Wettstein's New Testament have long been recognized. In the early decades of this century, C.F. Georg Heinrici launched a revision effort. Like the contemporary project, he labeled his 'a new Wettstein'; however, the name was later altered to *Corpus Hellenisticum Novi Testamenti* (CHNT).³ Although the project had a well defined objective, the task of the project and the political difficulties created by two world wars have forced the project to move in fits and starts. There are currently three centers working on the two major branches of material: the Hellenistic Jewish at Halle, Germany, and the pagan at both Utrecht, The Netherlands, and the Divinity School of the University of Chicago in the USA. The admirable but extremely ambitious goal of the project to investigate everything from antiquity which is of significance for an understanding of the New Testament forced the heads of the project to rethink the feasibility of issuing a new Wettstein. They wisely chose to publish the conclusions of their research in a series of interim articles and monographs. To date they have published six volumes in the *Studia ad Corpus Hellenisticum Novi Testamenti* series, and a number of monographs and articles elsewhere. The project is especially important because the initial publications of those working on the pagan materials concentrated on Hellenistic moral philosophers. These include many of the major figures: Apollonius of Tyana (Petzke 1970), Dio Chrysostom (Mussies 1972), Plutarch (Almquist 1946; Betz 1975 and 1978), Musonius Rufus (van der Horst 1974), Hierocles (van der Horst

³ For a recent summary of the project by one of its leaders, see P.W. van der Horst, 'Corpus Hellenisticum', *ABD* 1 (1992), pp. 1157-61.

1975), and Lucian (Betz 1961). Unlike Wettstein, who worked from the New Testament to Greco-Roman parallels, publications within this project set up their comparisons in numerous ways: from the New Testament to Greco-Roman parallels, from Greco-Roman texts to the New Testament, and thematic arrangements.

The third collaborative effort has concentrated on a more restricted corpus than the previous two. During his career at the Divinity School of Yale University, Abraham Malherbe worked on and promoted the study of Hellenistic moral philosophers. The work which he has inspired has progressed in two stages. In the first, he served as teacher and *Doktorvater*. He published his own work in articles (Malherbe 1987, 1989, 1992), and successfully encouraged a number of students to write and publish their dissertations or revised dissertations (Hock 1980; Balch 1981; Stowers 1981; Fiore 1986; Fitzgerald 1988). This process has now reached a second generation with his students producing students in the same area (Glad 1995). The second stage began when several of his former students, under the leadership of John T. Fitzgerald, organized the Hellenistic Moral Philosophy and Early Christianity Group of the Society of Biblical Literature. While Malherbe's influence continues to be felt, the group has become more diverse and taken on an identity of its own. In contrast to previous efforts which have primarily worked from one text to other sets of texts, this group has worked on producing translations of obscure texts (Clay, Glad, Konstan, Thom, and Ware forthcoming) and *topoi* common to both moral philosophy and Christian paraenesis (Fitzgerald 1996 and 1997). In the latter case, New Testament texts are but a small part of the larger effort to understand the *topos* in various philosophical traditions.

AREAS OF RESEARCH

The diversity of the major projects and their range of interests indicate the potential Hellenistic philosophy has for understanding the New Testament. The following are *suggestions* based on some of the larger areas of past and potential research. I have not made any attempt to be exhaustive. The material naturally falls into several major (overlapping) divisions.

Paradigms: Prophets, Pastors, or Philosophers?

At the end of the third century CE, a governor of lower Egypt named Hierocles wrote a treatise entitled *Philalethes* ('Lover of

Truth') comparing Apollonius of Tyana, the first century CE Neopythagorean, to Jesus of Nazareth. The work generated enough excitement that Eusebius of Caesarea felt compelled to write a response. Heriodes had a case: there are a number of striking similarities between the two, especially in the miracles they performed (see Petzke 1970). While the thrust of the controversy was not whether Jesus was a philosopher but whether Apollonius was divine, the debate points out Jesus' similarities to a philosophical figure.

In recent years, the specific point of comparison has been with the Cynics. One of the most famous descriptions of Cynics comes from the Stoic Epictetus. This student of Musonius Rufus opens his description of the ideal Cynic, an ideal many Stoics did not consider personally attainable, with a question: 'How is it possible for someone who has nothing, is naked, without home, without hearth, unbathed, without servant, without city to live comfortably? Look, God has sent you one who will demonstrate in practice that it is possible.' He then quotes his imaginary Cynic: 'Look at me. I am without home, without city, without possession, without a servant. I sleep on the ground. I have no wife, no child, no lousy governor's mansion, but only the earth, sky, and one lousy threadbare cloak.' He then challenges: 'Yet what am I lacking? Am I not without pain? Am I not without fear? Am I not free? Which of you has ever seen me fail to get what I want or fall into what I would avoid?' He then turns to interpersonal relationships: 'When have I ever censured either God or human, or accused anyone? None of you has ever seen me depressed, have you? How do I deal with those whom you fear and hold in high regard? Isn't it as though they were slaves?' He comes to the climax: 'Who has seen me and not thought that he saw his king and master?' Epictetus then urges his audience: 'Look at these Cynic words! Look at the character! Look at the commitment!' He does so because he knows that not everyone accepts this ideal depiction: 'No, but a lousy wallet, staff, and great jaws [make a Cynic]' (3:22:45-50).

It would be hard for those familiar with the New Testament to miss some of the similarities between this description and various New Testament texts. One of the most obvious is the Q text containing Jesus' responses to would-be followers. Jesus' reply to the first volunteer echoes the text above: 'The foxes have holes and the birds have nests, but the Son of Man does not have anywhere to lay his head'. The second response, 'Let the dead bury their own dead' (Matt. 8:18-22//Luke 9:57-60 [61-62]), sounds very much like the Cynic

disdain for burial conventions (Lucian, *Dem.* 66; Diogenes Laertius 6:79). In the same way Jesus sent the disciples on an itinerant mission charging them: 'Carry no money-bag, no wallet, no sandals. Greet no one in the way' (Luke 10:4//Matt. 10:10). While the specifics of the Q text differ from the distinctive features of the Cynics, the ethos is the same, that is, homeless itinerants who are reduced to living by the generosity of others. Such analogies have led several scholars in recent years to argue that the closest parallel to Jesus and the Jesus movement which produced Q is Cynicism (e.g. Theissen 1975 [for Q]; Downing 1988 and 1992; Crossan 1991 and 1994; Mack 1988 and 1993). Certainly there were Cynics in the general area, for example, Menippus, Meleager, and Oenomaus all hailed from Gadara in Syria and Meleager spent his adult life in Tyre. It is not, however, clear that the villagers of rural Galilee would have perceived Jesus and his followers as identical with the urban Cynics who began to resurface in the first and second centuries CE after an apparent hiatus. The identification is even more problematic if we compare the essence of the messages. 'The kingdom of God', a concept squarely anchored in Judaism, stood at the heart of Jesus' message. This is radically different than 'living according to nature' which lies at the center of Cynic preaching. We should also remember that Jesus formed a movement which came to include communities, a social phenomenon at odds with the Cynics as we know them. In short, I find it difficult to conceive of Jesus of Nazareth in terms that are not principally Jewish. This does not mean that he and his immediate followers did not share some aspects in common with Cynics. It is, however, one thing to share common life-styles and rhetorical techniques; it is quite another to argue that a Jewish prophet was a Cynic philosopher.⁴

A much stronger case can be made for Paul's indebtedness to

⁴ There are a significant number of critiques of the Cynic hypothesis from a broad spectrum of perspectives. Some of the more important include: C.M. Tuckett, 'A Cynic Q', *Bib* 70 (1989), pp. 349-76; H.D. Betz, 'Jesus and the Cynics: Survey and Analysis of a Hypothesis', *JR* 74 (1994), pp. 453-75; R. Horsley, 'Jesus, Itinerant Cynic or Israelite Prophet?', in *Images of Jesus Today* (ed. J.H. Charlesworth and W.P. Weaver; Faith and Scholarship Colloquies, 3; Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1994), pp. 68-97; J.M. Robinson, 'The History-of-Religions Taxonomy of Q: The Cynic Hypothesis', in *Gnosisforschung und Religionsgeschichte: Festschrift für Kurt Rudolph zum 65. Geburtstag* (ed. H. Preißler and H. Seiwert; Marburg: Diagonal, 1994), pp. 247-65; P.R. Eddy, 'Jesus as Diogenes? Reflections on the Cynic Jesus Thesis', *JBL* 115 (1996), pp. 449-69.

popular philosophy. The discussion began in earnest with efforts to discover the history-of-religions background for an apostle. Walter Schmithals stated the issue in these words: 'The question is whether there is not at least an *institution* to be found which could be compared with the primitive Christian apostolate'. Citing Epictetus's statements as his principal evidence, he affirmed that the Cynic-Stoic sage who was also divinely commissioned as a messenger/proclaimer was the closest analogy.⁵ In recent years, the discussion has become much more nuanced. Malherbe has pointed out Paul's familiarity with the traditions of popular moral philosophers, especially the Cynics, in a series of publications (Malherbe 1987 and 1989). For example, he pointed out the striking parallels between Paul's defense of his ministry in Thessalonica (1 Thess. 2:1-12) and Dio Chrysostom's description of an ideal Cynic (32:11-12) (Malherbe 1989: 35-38). He did, however, recognize a fundamental difference between Paul and the Cynics: 'Paul...was a founder of communities, of which the Cynics had none. In his communal concern, Paul was more like the Epicureans, although we know little about contemporary Epicurean communities' (Malherbe 1989: 8). The study of the Herculaneum papyri, and the identification of some of the writings as Epicurean, are now changing that. Clarence Glad has recently argued that Pauline psychagogy ('guidance of souls') finds its closest analogy in the Epicurean communities of Athens, Naples, and Herculaneum. These communities were headed by Zeno of Sidon, the scholiarch of the Epicurean school at Athens, and two of his students, Siro at Naples and Philodemus at Herculaneum. Glad argues that Paul's apparent inconsistencies in dealing with the Corinthians were the result of his practice of psychagogic adaptability (cf. 1 Cor. 9:19-23). In particular, he contends that the shift from harsh to gentle responses within a community setting is best illuminated by the treatises of Philodemus from Herculaneum. Unlike some of the recent publications on Jesus and the Jesus movement which tend to identify Jesus and his followers with Cynics, Malherbe and Glad prefer to point out that Paul is simultaneously *Paulus christianus* and *Paulus hellenicus*.

There is an important distinction which needs to be made in all assessments of early Christians and Hellenistic philosophers: we must distinguish between our analyses of ancient figures as witnesses to

⁵ W. Schmithals, *The Office of Apostle in the Early Church* (Nashville/New York: Abingdon, 1969), pp. 111-14.

philosophical practices/traditions and their self-identities. For example, Philo of Alexandria is a witness to Middle Platonism; he was not, however, a professional philosopher working in the Platonic tradition in the same sense that Alcinous was. Philo's principal commitment was to Moses, even if his Moses was a Platonized Moses. Similarly, Jesus of Nazareth, his immediate followers, and early Christians may share a great deal in common with different philosophical traditions; we must not, however, forget their primary loyalty. Such allegiances often result in modifications to the material they appropriate.

This limitation does not, however, negate the importance of working comparatively with philosophical materials. There is still a good deal of work to do on the traditions in the Gospels. Detailed analyses of the sayings material is limited. Hans Dieter Betz's recent commentary on the Sermon on the Mount is perhaps the most comprehensive work on a significant textual base.⁶ I think that, in the case of a Gospel such as Luke, it would be worth examining how philosophy shapes the larger narrative. For example, I am suspicious that the consistent elimination of fear and strong emotion in the portrayal of Jesus' death in Luke is modeled on accounts of the death of Socrates (e.g. Luke 22:39-46//Mark 14:32-42; Luke 23:27-31; Luke 23:48//Mark 15:33-39).⁷ The same need exists for the epistolary literature. Malherbe has worked primarily in the Thessalonian correspondence and Pastorals; and Glad in 1 Corinthians. While these are the most obvious beginning points, they do not exhaust the possibilities.

Hellenistic Moral Philosophy and Christian Paraenesis

This previous work does, however, point to the most promising area of research, the formation of individuals and communities through established paraenetic practices. For the sake of clarity I will group these into larger analytical subdivisions.

Modes of Discourse. Within the twentieth century, researchers have explored three modes of discourse which are specifically related to popular moral philosophy. Although these have at times been confused with genres, they are best considered as modes of discourse

⁶ H.D. Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995).

⁷ J. Kloppenborg, 'Exitus Clari Viri: The Death of Jesus in Luke', *TJT* 8 (1992), pp. 106-20, is a beginning point for research.

rather than literary categories. By classifying these as philosophical modes of discourse, I do not mean to imply that they were restricted to philosophical circles. They were, however, carefully cultivated within the philosophical tradition of education.

Diatribē (διατριβή). Rudolf Bultmann launched his career with a thin but famous dissertation in which he summarized previous research on the diatribe and applied it to Paul (Bultmann 1910). The older view which he inherited was that Bion of Borysthenes created the diatribe. Later Cynics and Stoics developed it as a form of a philosophical sermon for popular consumption. More recently, Stanley Stowers has demonstrated that the diatribe was intimately associated with school instruction among philosophers (Stowers 1981). It is attested among numerous philosophical traditions: Cynics (Teles, Dio Chrysostom), Stoics (Seneca, Musonius Rufus, Epictetus), Epicureans (Philodemus), and Platonists (Plutarch, Maximus of Tyre). One of the clearest ways in which we can understand the significance of the term is to remember that the oldest manuscripts of Arrian's notes of Epictetus's lectures give them the title 'diatribes'. Diatribe thus refers to the dialogical or give-and-take mode of classroom discourse which uses the Socratic method of censure and persuasion. It was not, however, restricted to philosophical circles, as Thomas Schmeller has shown (Schmeller 1987). In his latest assessment, Stowers suggests that the term should be used 'for moral lectures and discussions in philosophical schools, written records of that activity, and literary imitations of that kind of pedagogical discourse'.⁸ Both Jews and Christians found the method to be useful. In Alexandria, the author of the Wisdom of Solomon and Philo of Alexandria employ the diatribe (Wendland 1895). Paul uses it extensively in Romans (e.g. interlocutor [2:17-29; 3:1-9; 3:27-4:2], address in the second person singular [2:1-5, 17-29; 8:2; 9:19-21; 11:17-24; 14:4, 10], and objections [6:1, 15; 7:7, 13; 9:14, 19; 11:1, 11, 19]) and less frequently in other letters (e.g. 1 Cor. 6:12-20; 15:29-35). The only other New Testament author to make clear use of it is the author of James (e.g. address in second person [2:19-23; 4:13-5:6], objection [2:18], and rhetorical questions [2:2-7, 14-16; 3:20-21; 4:4, 12]).

The Paraenetic Style (ὁ παραινετικός χαρακτήρ). Pseudo-Libanius, the ancient epistolographer, describes the paraenetic style in

⁸ S. Stowers, 'Diatribē', *ABD* 2 (1992), p. 191. Cf. also his discussion, 'The Diatribe', in *Greco-Roman Literature and the New Testament* (ed. D.E. Aune; SBLSPS, 21; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), pp. 71-83.

these words: 'The paraenetic style is that style by which we exhort (παραινοῦμεν) someone by urging him to undertake something or to avoid something'. He suggests that it is divided into two parts: encouragement and dissuasion. There was, however, a problem in the ancient world: some confused paraenesis which only encourages what is self-evident with advice which must persuade.⁹ Unfortunately, the understanding of paraenesis is still problematic. One of the complicating factors which needs attention is the relationship between paraenesis as a form of discourse and paraenesis as a literary category. For example, within the New Testament we can point to three different applications of paraenesis: paraenetic letters (see below), paraenetic sections of letters (e.g. Rom. 12:1-15:13; Gal. 5:1-6:10; 1 Thess. 4:1-5:25; Eph. 4:1-6:20; Col. 3:1-4:6), and letters which scatter paraenetic sections and techniques throughout (e.g. 1 Corinthians and Hebrews). Since paraenesis is not restricted to a distinct literary genre or genres, I think that we should distinguish between a paraenetic mode of discourse and paraenetic forms of discourse.

Some of the most important features of the paraenetic mode of discourse which have echoes in the New Testament are: the use of the language of exhortation, the appeal to tradition or what the hearers already know, the use of examples to be imitated and an antithetical style which contrasts what should be avoided with what should be emulated (Fiore 1986: 10-21; Malherbe 1989: 49-66 and 1992: 278-93). The best New Testament examples of these features come from 1 Corinthians, 1 Thessalonians, and the Pastorals. Paul and his later student(s) frequently place the language of exhortation/advice on the apostle's lips (e.g. (δια-)μαρτύρομαι [1 Thess. 2:12; 4:6; 1 Tim. 5:21; 2 Tim. 2:14; 4:1]; νουθετέω [1 Cor. 4:14]; παραγγέλλω/παραγγελία [1 Cor. 7:10; 11:17; 1 Thess. 4:2, 11; 1 Tim. 1:5, 18; 6:13]; παρακαλέω/παρακλήσις [1 Cor. 1:10; 4:13, 16; 16:15; 1 Thess. 2:3, 17; 4:1, 10; 5:14; 1 Tim. 1:3; 2:1]; and παραμυθέομαι [1 Thess. 2:12]). Nor is this list complete: it could be expanded significantly if we included the references to Paul's charges to his deputies or to mutual exhortation. Paul's use of 'you know' or 'just as you know' in 1 Thessalonians (2:1; 3:3, 4; 4:2; 5:2 and 1:5; 2:2, 5, 11 respectively) is strikingly similar to Seneca's anaphoric use of 'you know' in his

⁹ I have used the edition of A. Malherbe, *Ancient Epistolary Theorists* (SBLSPS, 19; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), p. 69 (Pseudo-Libanius 5).

defense of advice as exhortation (*Ep.* 94:25-26). In the same way that the Pseudo-Socratic Cynic epistles appeal to Socrates as an example, Paul and his disciples appeal to his life as a model (e.g. 1 Cor. 4:16; Gal. 4:12; Phil. 3:17; 1 Thess. 1:6; 2 Thess. 3:7; 1 Tim. 1:16; 2 Tim. 1:13; 3:10-11; cf. also 2 Tim. 4:6-8 [for details see Fiore 1986]). Finally, like Epictetus and many others, Paul likes to state things antithetically, that is, 'not...but' (e.g. Epictetus 2:12:14; 1 Thess. 2:3-4).

The Protreptic Style (ὁ προτρεπτικός χαρακτήρ). Another factor which increases our difficulty in understanding paraenesis is the confusion over whether protreptic (an exhortation to take up the philosophic life) and paraenetic refer to distinct rhetorical traditions or whether protreptic is subsumed beneath paraenesis. Like paraenesis, protreptic can refer to either a mode of discourse or a distinctive literary form. Unlike paraenesis, no rhetorician or epistolographer defined a protreptic literary work. Perhaps this is due to the antipathy between rhetoricians and philosophers who cultivated the protreptic style. One of our best descriptions of the style is found in Epictetus's defense of the protreptic style against an interlocutor who wants to defend the epideictic style. Epictetus maintains that a philosopher's task is to improve the hearers, not entertain them: 'Men, a philosopher's school is an operating room. You should not leave in a state of happiness but of pain' (3:23:30). His interlocutor then asks whether there is a protreptic style. Epictetus, on affirming there is, goes on to describe it: 'It is the ability to demonstrate to one and many the battle in which they are thrown about and that they think about everything except what they want'. He explains: 'For they want the things which produce happiness, but they are looking for them in all the wrong places' (3:23:34). The protreptic style thus consists of at least two components: negatively, it is pointing out the problems with the hearer's present state; and positively, it is offering a solution through an invitation to take up the philosophic life.

This form of philosophical rhetoric could and did assume literary shape. While Plato criticized the Sophists for their protreptic speeches (*Euthd.* 278e-282d, 288b-307c), he also wrote several himself (*Phaedo* and *Epinomis*). His most famous student and his successors also composed *protreptikoi* (Aristotle [Diogenes Laertius 5:22 and Stobaeus 4:32:21 = 5:786:1-4 Hense]; Theophrastus [Diogenes Laertius 5:49]; Demetrius of Phaleron [Diogenes Laertius 5:81]; and Aristo of Ceos [Diogenes Laertius 7:163]). Cynics (Antisthenes

[Diogenes Laertius 6:16] and Monimus [Diogenes Laertius 7:83]) and Stoics (Persaeus [Diogenes Laertius 7:36]; Cleanthes [Diogenes Laertius 7:175]; Chrysippus [Plutarch, *Mor.* 1041e]; and Poseidonius [Diogenes Laertius 7:91, 129]) also wrote invitations to their philosophical traditions. One of the most famous is Cicero's *Hortensius* which is now lost, but which exercised a profound influence over Augustine (*Conf.* 3:4). Such a genre had a natural appeal to Jews (Wisdom of Solomon) and Christians (Justin Martyr, *Dialogue*; Clement, *Protrepticus*; Minicius Felix, *Octavius*; and the *Epistle to Diognetus*). Paul's letter to the Romans is probably a letter drawing from his protreptic preaching but modified to suit the specific requirements of the occasion.¹⁰ This may help to explain why he opens with a severe censure and then moves on to offer hope through a new life.

Literary Forms. These examples point out that New Testament authors, particularly Paul and his disciples, knew and used the language and techniques of moral exhortation. They also used the larger forms which were typical of such discourse.

Paraenetic Letters. The largest such form is actually a type of letter. Pseudo-Libanius offers the following sample of a παραινετική επιστολή: 'My good friend, always be a follower of virtuous men. For it is better for the follower of good men to enjoy a good reputation than following the bad to be shamed by all.' This short sample points out several important features. First, ancients recognized the paraenetic letter as a distinct form. Secondly, the essence of exhortation is captured in the gnomic encouragement to imitate worthy models. Thirdly, reputation is the motivating factor. Fourthly, style and form are inseparable. This is unmistakable in the use of imitation and contrast. The function of such a letter is not to teach anything new, that would be advice; rather, it is to reinforce what the hearers already know but have not incorporated into their lives fully. There are several letters within the New Testament which should probably be considered paraenetic: 1 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, James, and 1 Peter.

Lists of Virtues and Vices. A common literary form in moral instruction is lists of vices and virtues. The Stoics and those

¹⁰ D.E. Aune, 'Romans as a *Logos Protreptikos*', in *The Romans Debate* (ed. K.P. Donfried; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2nd edn, 1991), pp. 278-96, has argued Romans is a *logos protreptikos*.

influenced by them were particularly fond of such lists. So, for example, Dio Chrysostom has more than 80 of these lists. The Stoics frequently formed virtue lists by subordinating appropriate virtues beneath Plato's four cardinal virtues ('prudence' [φρόνησις], 'moderation' [σωφροσύνη], 'justice' [δικαιοσύνη], and 'courage' [ἀνδρεία]) (Plato, *Phd.* 69c; *Rep.* 427e; *Leg.* 631c). They sometimes did the same for the corresponding vices ('folly' [ἀφροσύνη], 'profligacy' [ἀκολασία], 'injustice' [ἀδικία], and 'cowardice' [δειλία]) (for examples see *SVF* 3.262-94). Jewish authors both appropriated lists and created their own. We have numerous examples of the four cardinal virtues common in Platonic and Stoic circles (e.g. *4 Macc.* 1:2-4, 18; 5:23; *Wis.* 8:7; and Philo, *Leg.* 1:71-72) as well as other lists, some of which can be incredibly long (e.g. Philo, *Sacr.* 32). They are also common in the New Testament: there are approximately 18 independent vice lists (Matt. 15:19; Mark 7:21-22; Rom. 1:29-31; 13:13; 1 Cor. 5:10-11; 6:9-10; 2 Cor. 12:20-21; Eph. 5:3-5; 1 Tim. 1:9-10; 6:4-5; 2 Tim. 3:2-4; Titus 3:3; 1 Pet. 2:1; 4:3, 15; Rev. 9:21; 21:8; 22:15), 16 independent virtue lists (2 Cor. 6:6-7a; Eph. 4:2-3; 5:9; Phil. 4:8; 1 Tim. 3:2-4, 8-10 and 12, 11; 4:12; 6:11, 18; 2 Tim. 2:22-25; 3:10; Titus 2:2-10; Heb. 7:26; 1 Pet. 3:8; 2 Pet. 1:5-7) and four compound lists (Gal. 5:19-21 and 22-23; Eph. 4:31 and 4:32-5:2; Col. 3:5-8 and 12; Titus 1:7 and 1:8). Interestingly, in the compound lists, the vices always precede the virtues. These lists can assume several different forms: most lack connectives (asyndetic [e.g. Gal. 5:19-21, 22-23]) but some use multiple connectives (polysyndetic [e.g. 1 Cor. 6:9-10]). The traditions that stand behind New Testament lists are problematic. A list such as Matt. 15:19, which specifies the sins of the Decalogue, clearly comes from a Jewish tradition. On the other hand, many—although not all—of the virtues and vices are common to the moral philosophers as well. Perhaps more intriguing is the function of such lists. They are frequently used to illustrate virtue and vice (e.g. Mark 7:21-22). They can serve protreptically to point out the morally unacceptable condition of the hearer in need of moral conversion (e.g. Rom. 1:29-31), paraenetically to encourage hearers to continue their moral improvement by reminding them of how far they had come through contrasting lists (e.g. Gal. 5:19-23; Eph. 4:31-5:2; Col. 3:5-8, 12) or by reminding them of either where they once were (e.g. 1 Cor. 6:9-10) or need to be (e.g. 2 Pet. 1:5-7). A vice list can function polemically to characterize an opponent (e.g. 2 Tim. 3:2-4),

while a virtue list can spell out qualifications for a Church office (e.g. 1 Tim. 3:2-4, 8-10 and 12, 11).

Hardship Lists (περιστάσεις). These are not the only lists which are largely indebted to the moral philosophers. Another list is the so-called hardship catalogues (περιστάσεις, e.g., Rom. 8:35-39; 1 Cor. 4:9-13; 2 Cor. 4:8-9; 6:4-10; 11:23-28; 12:10; Phil. 4:11-12; 2 Tim. 3:11). The term *περίστασις* means both circumstance and difficult circumstance. From this, some writers began to use the term as a comprehensive phrase for a list of difficult circumstances (Fitzgerald 1988: 33-46). One of the most striking New Testament examples is Paul's use of four contrasting clauses in 2 Cor. 4:8-9 to describe how God has made evident the presence of the divine treasure (the message of Jesus Christ) in clay pots (the apostles):

put in a tight situation but not crushed,
at a loss but not without a hint,
hounded but not abandoned,
thrown down but not out.

The apostle's description is similar to Plutarch's later paradoxical characterization of the Stoic sage (*Mor.* 1057e):

although confined is not hindered,
although thrown down a cliff is not forced,
although stretched on the rack is not tortured,
although mutilated is not made lame,
although he falls in a wrestling match is unbeaten,
although surrounded is impregnable,
although sold by his enemies is untaken ...

John Fitzgerald (1988) and Martin Ebner (1991) have shown how Paul's hardship catalogues are part of his apostolic self-understanding. His use of such catalogues is particularly striking in his relationship with the Corinthians. The specific function of each catalogue varies with contextual concerns: sometimes Paul offers his own hardships as a model (1 Cor. 4:9-13 [see also 14-16]), at other times, he uses his hardships to demonstrate how God is at work in him (2 Cor. 4:8-9; 6:4-5), and at other times he uses a list polemically to distance himself from his opponents (2 Cor. 11:23-28). In all cases, the paradox of battered but not beaten which we find in the philosophers is at the fore. As we have learned to expect, Jewish authors had already appropriated such catalogues (e.g. Philo, *Det.* 34; *Jos.* 26; *T. Jos.* 1:3-7 [which contains a Christian interpolation]). Like Paul, some of these attribute the power to endure directly to God (e.g. *T. Jos.* 1:3-7).

However, this is not an exclusively Jewish-Christian feature: a Stoic like Seneca can also recognize the presence of divine power in suffering (*Ep.* 41:4-5). What I find most intriguing about Paul's use of these lists in his Corinthian correspondence is that they function as a means of authenticating his ministry. In this way, the lists impinge on Paul's self-understanding; yet, it is his self-understanding as an apostle of Jesus Christ, not a sage.

Haustafeln. Another form of a list or catalogue is the group of texts which set out the responsibilities of members of a household, which Martin Luther appropriately called *Haustafeln* (Eph. 5:21-6:9; Col. 3:18-4:1; 1 Pet. 2:13-3:17). These are based on the three pairs set out by Aristotle: master-slave, husband-wife, father-child (*Pol.* 1:1253b1-14; *N.E.* 1134b9-18; 1160a23-1161a10; cf. also Pseudo-Aristotle, *M.M.* 1:1194b5-28). Hellenistic moralists, especially Stoics, developed codes of behavior around these three pairs (e.g. Chrysippus in Pseudo-Plutarch, *Mor.* 7e; Aristo, who opposes the arrangement in Seneca, *Ep.* 94:1-2; Arius Didymus [in Stobaeus 2:7:26 = 2:148:5-149:24 Wachsmuth]). Others expanded the relationships in various directions (e.g. Hierocles, *On Duties*). The same expansion is evident in the New Testament and early Christian texts (1 Tim. 2:8-15; 6:1-2; Titus 2:1-10; *1 Clem.* 1:3; 21:6-9; Ignatius, *Pol.* 4:1-6:1; Polycarp, *Phil.* 4:2-6:1).

The source from which early Christians drew their *Haustafeln* has been the occasion of an extended debate in the twentieth century.¹¹ The main contours of the discussion are as follows. Early in the century, Martin Dibelius argued that Col. 3:18-4:1 was a Christianized version of a Stoic household code. Karl Weidinger (Dibelius's student), David Schroeder, and James Crouch have subsequently all pointed out that Greek-speaking Jews had already adopted household codes (Pseudo-Phocylides 175-227; Philo, *Dec.* 165-67; *Hypoth.* 8:7:3; Josephus, *Apion* 2:189-209). More recently, Dieter Lührmann, Klaus Thraede, and David Balch have argued that the discussions derive from the Hellenistic discussion of the *topos On Household Management* (περὶ οἰκονομίας) which derives from Aristotle's earlier presentation. The strength of the last position is the way the New Testament texts function contextually. It appears that New Testament authors are encouraging early Christians to live the

¹¹ For summaries, see D. Balch, 'Household Codes', in *Greco-Roman Literature and the New Testament*, pp. 25-50; *idem*, 'Household Codes', *ABD* 3 (1992), pp. 318-20; and J.T. Fitzgerald, 'Haustafeln', *ABD* 3 (1992), pp. 80-81.

basic values of the larger world in order to avoid unnecessary criticism (e.g. 1 Pet. 2:11-12). This suggests that the appropriation may have been direct.

Topoi. Like several of the other categories we have mentioned, there is a debate about the meaning of *topos*. The ambiguity begins with Aristotle, who used τόπος to refer to both the contents of an argument and the form (*Rh.* and *Top.*). He made a further distinction between stereotypical arguments which are useful in specialized areas (ἴδιοι τόποι) and those which are useful in all areas (κοινοὶ τόποι or *loci communes*). The result has been a great deal of confusion both in antiquity and in modern scholarship. Alexander Pope expressed his disdain for the bewilderment with a barbed satire: 'I therefore propose that there be contrived with all convenient dispatch, at the public expense, a Rhetorical Chest of Drawers, consisting of three stories, the highest for the Deliberative, the middle for the Demonstrative, and the lowest for the Judicial'. He then adds the punchline: 'These shall be divided into Loci or Places, being repositories for Matter and Argument in the several kinds of oration or writing' (*Peri Bathous*, chap. 12). New Testament scholars have not helped the situation by using the term to refer to a literary category.¹² I prefer to follow Malherbe in this instance and understand the term to refer to 'conventional subjects' when applied to the moralists. There are a number of set themes which philosophers across a wide spectrum of views discuss. The easiest way to discover these is to compare the headings of moral essays, diatribes, or sections for our major sources, for example, Cicero, Seneca, Musonius Rufus, Epictetus, Hierocles, Plutarch, and Stobaeus.

The most widely studied *topos* in recent research is *On friendship* (περὶ φιλίας). Betz has shown how Paul draws on friendship motifs in his argument in Gal. 4:12-20.¹³ Peter Marshall has examined Paul's relationship to the Corinthians from this perspective (Marshall 1987). A number of scholars in the SBL Hellenistic Moral Philosophy and Early Christianity Group have examined Philippians in light of friendship (L. Michael White in Balch, Ferguson, Meeks 1990: 201-

¹² See D.G. Bradley, 'The *Topos* as Form in the Pauline Paracnesis', *JBL* 72 (1953), pp. 238-46 and the critiques of T.Y. Mullins, 'Topos as a New Testament Form', *JBL* 99 (1980), pp. 541-47 and J.C. Brunt, 'More on the *Topos* as a New Testament Form', *JBL* 104 (1985), pp. 495-500.

¹³ H.D. Betz, *Galatians* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), pp. 220-37.

15; John Reumann, Ken Berry, Abraham Malherbe, and John Fitzgerald in Fitzgerald 1996: 83-106, 107-24, 125-39, 141-60 respectively). Although I think it would be a mistake to suggest that early Christians adopted the philosophical model of friendship as a basis for their interpersonal relationships—fictive kinship is more appropriate—they clearly knew and used the concept.

Hellenistic Philosophy and the Beginnings of Christian Theology

It is widely recognized that it was not until the second century that Christians began extensively using Hellenistic philosophy to write Christian theology. There are, however, some exceptions which are worth noting. We should not think of these as systematic appropriations of metaphysical systems as is true with Clement and Origen, but as popular appropriations of metaphysical thought in exegetical or liturgical contexts.

Platonic Ontology and Metaphysics. Augustine thought that Neoplatonism was the philosophy best suited to Christianity, although he had some reservations about it (*City of God* 8:12). Some New Testament authors and communities found its predecessor to be attractive. This is somewhat surprising since there is a fundamental tension between the Platonic worldview and the eschatological/apocalyptic worldview characteristic of most New Testament authors. The former operates with an atemporal ontological distinction between the world of being and the world of becoming. The latter moves along temporal lines in which the present is headed towards the future inauguration of the eternal reign of God. Yet not all Jews and Christians found the tension insurmountable. The author of the *Wisdom of Solomon* managed to combine Middle Platonism with a pronounced eschatology, although it was not apocalyptic. Similarly, Origen found it possible to work with Middle Platonism and Christian eschatology, even if some later found his eschatology objectionable. We should not therefore posit the two as impossible contradictories, but as two systems which stand in varying degrees of tension. I will offer four examples: two of these are commonly recognized, although disputed (Hebrews and John); two are more controversial (1 Corinthians and Colossians).

The Corinthians. The earliest significant influence of Platonic views appears to come from members of the Corinthian community who were influenced by Platonizing interpretations of Genesis 1–2 emanating from Jewish circles. The clearest example is in 1 Cor. 15:44-49 where Paul's eschatological orientation leads him to argue

against the Corinthians' understanding of Gen. 1:26-27 and Gen. 2:7. The latter became the focal point of the controversy. Paul quotes it, but reverses the order of clauses c and b (1 Cor. 15:45). Nor was his reversal accidental, as his explanation makes clear: 'The spiritual is not first, but the natural'. Since Paul's comments are polemical in nature, the Corinthians appear to believe otherwise. The most likely explanation of the Corinthians' position is that they identified the spiritual with the human in Gen. 1:26-27 and the natural with the human in Gen. 2:7. Paul's christological eschatology leads him to identify the natural with Adam and the spiritual with Christ. The closest analogy to the Corinthians' view is that of Philo, who makes a Platonic distinction between the intelligible human of Gen. 1:26-27 who is in the image of God and the sense-perceptible human of Gen. 2:7 who is molded. For example, after citing Gen. 2:7 in *On the Creation of the World*, he comments: 'Through this statement he indicates that there is an enormous difference between the *anthropos* who has now been molded and the *anthropos* in the image of God who previously came into being...' (*Opif.* 134–35; cf. also *Leg.* 1:31–32; *Plant.* 18–19; *Det.* 83). It is probably the influence of this type of Platonizing exegesis which values the immortal soul and denigrates the corruptible body that led the Corinthians to deny the resurrection.¹⁴

Hebrews. Until the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, virtually all New Testament scholars recognized a strong Platonic perspective in Hebrews. The scrolls, however, have led to a reappraisal of the influence of Platonism, beginning with a famous essay of C.K. Barrett.¹⁵ Today, the relationship between the vertically oriented Platonism and the horizontally oriented apocalypticism within the letter is debated.¹⁶ It appears to me that both perspectives are undeniably present. I can best illustrate this in two texts which use the

¹⁴ For details and bibliography, see G.E. Sterling, "Wisdom among the Perfect": Creation Traditions in Alexandrian Judaism and Corinthian Christianity', *NovT* 37 (1995), pp. 355–84.

¹⁵ C.K. Barrett, 'The Eschatology of the Epistle to the Hebrews', in *The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology* (ed. D. Daube and C.H. Dodd; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), pp. 363–93.

¹⁶ Two important representatives in recent discussions are J.W. Thompson (1982), who argues for a Platonic background, and L.D. Hurst, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: Its Background of Thought* (SNTSMS, 65; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), who argues against it in favor of apocalyptic traditions.

famous Platonic metaphor of 'shadow' (*Rep.* 7:515a-b), but in slightly different ways. The first is in the discussion of the tabernacle in chapter eight when the author refers to the priests on earth 'who serve in a shadowy copy (ὑποδείγματι καὶ σκιᾷ) of the heavenly (tabernacle)' (8:5). Although some have challenged the Platonism of this statement in recent years, several factors lead me to conclude it is present: the use of the Platonic image ('shadow'), the earthly/heavenly contrast, and the citation of Exod. 25:40 as a textual basis for the distinction. Interestingly, Philo of Alexandria makes the same Platonic distinction from the same text (*Leg.* 3:102-103; *Q.E.* 2:82). It may have been a well known interpretation in some circles. The second text uses identical imagery, but juxtaposes it with an eschatological perspective which operates temporally: 'For the law has a shadow (σκιάν) of the good things to come, not the very image of the things (οὐκ αὐτὴν τὴν εἰκόνα τῶν πραγμάτων)...' (10:1). Once again the imagery of the contrast is Platonic: 'shadow' (*Rep.* 7:515a-b) versus 'image' (*Crat.* 439a). As with the earlier text, the author considers the Mosaic cult and law to be but a shadowy reflection. What is surprising is that the reality ('image') is situated temporally rather than ontologically. I suggest that the audience and author both accept the Platonic distinction, but that the author adds the eschatological twist in keeping with his christological understanding of history. In this way, I think that the dynamics between author and community are similar to those between Paul and the Corinthians.

The Colossians. The shadow imagery appears in another New Testament document. The Colossian heresy is one of the most difficult problems of New Testament exegesis. The key evidence that it might have some basis in Platonism is in two phrases from the second of four warnings (2:8):

Watch out lest someone take you captive
through philosophy (διὰ τῆς φιλοσοφίας)
and empty deception

according to the tradition of humans,
according to the elements of the cosmos (κατὰ τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου)
and not according to Christ.

In each of the two pairs of clauses following the warning, the author cites a phrase from the Colossians and qualifies it with a matching pejorative. As we have already pointed out, the first set of clauses suggests that the Colossians are appealing to 'philosophy'. The third

warning provides a couple of specific hints about the identification of the philosophy: 'Therefore do not let anyone judge you in what you eat and drink or with respect to a feast or a new moon or a Sabbath celebration. These things are a shadow (σκιᾷ) of what is to come, the reality (σῶμα) belongs to Christ' (2:16-17). This statement presupposes that the readers are familiar with an allegorical reading of the LXX along Platonic lines, since the author has no need to explain it. As with the Corinthians, the closest parallel is a statement of Philo of Alexandria who exhorted those who read the story of Babel literally 'not to stop with these things, but to go on to figurative readings; realizing that the words of the oracles are like certain shadows of the realities (σκιᾶς τινὰς ὡσανεὶ σωμάτων), but the meanings which are revealed are the true and underlying entities' (*Conf.* 190). The second clause of Col. 2:8 suggests that the Colossians are appealing to a system which includes 'the elements of the cosmos'. These appear to refer to the basic four or five elements; however, 2:20 suggests that the Colossians also understand these to mean elemental spirits. I think that the Colossians knew a system which correlated the elements with elemental spirits. The best example we have of such a system is Philo's demonology/angelology where he—in keeping with Middle Platonism—presents a *scala naturae* which posits a direct correspondence between the elements and their *genera*. The agreement in Philo's presentation in *Gig.* 6-18, *Plant.* 12-14, and *Somn.* 1:133-45 with Calcidius, *Com. in Tim.* 127-36 suggests that both the Jewish author and his later Christian counterpart drew on a Middle Platonic handbook. The Colossians apparently knew either some Greek-speaking Jews from outside the community or some Greek-speaking Jews who had become members of the Christian community who had introduced the community to an allegorical reading of the Scriptures which incorporated a Middle Platonic demonology.¹⁷

John. A final example occurs in the hymnic prologue of John. The language of the prologue clearly echoes the language of the creation story of Genesis 1. One of the echoes is the verb shift between the chaotic primeval world ('the earth was [ἦν]...') [LXX Gen. 1:2]) and the orderly created world ('let there be...and there was [γεννηθήτω...]

¹⁷ For details and bibliography, see G.E. Sterling, 'A Philosophy according to the Elements of the Cosmos: Philo of Alexandria and Colossian Christianity', in *Philon d'Alexandrie et le langage de la philosophie* (ed. C. Lévy; Turnhout: Brepols, forthcoming).

ἐγένετο] [LXX Gen. 1:3 κ.τ.λ.]). The prologue, however, goes beyond this to make a clear distinction between the eternal Logos and the temporal creation: 'In the beginning was (ἦν) the Logos and the Logos was (ἦν) with God and the Logos was (ἦν) God. He was (ἦν) in the beginning with God. Everything became (ἐγένετο) through him and not one thing became (ἐγένετο) without him.' The shift in tenses is not accidental: it is maintained throughout the prologue (the Logos was [1:1, 2, 3, 9, 10, 15, 18] versus the world became [1:3, 6, 10, 14, 17]) and possibly in the main text itself (8:24, 28, 58; 13:19). This shift is reminiscent of Plato's famous question 'whether the cosmos always was (ἦν), having no beginning, or became (γένεσθαι), having begun from a certain beginning' (*Tim.* 28b). Middle Platonists such as Philo of Alexandria use this grammar to make the same distinction between the two worlds that the prologue of John makes (*Opif.* 12; *Post.* 30; *Gig.* 42).

There are other New Testament texts which use Platonic language and thought, for example, 2 Cor. 4:16–5:10 which combines Platonic and apocalyptic categories of thought and language. These point to the attraction Platonism had for early Christians, an attraction which would develop into a lasting contribution at a later date. I think that there are numerous reasons why first- and second-century Christians found Middle Platonism inviting. First, it offered a sense of the transcendent which naturally appealed to their understanding of faith. Secondly, within this transcendence Platonists developed a hierarchy of being. Most importantly, they found ways to bridge the gap between the intelligible and sense-perceptible worlds. While solutions varied, they all posited an intermediary. Early Christians found this intermediary extremely useful for christological reflection. Thirdly, the Platonic definition of 'end of the goods' as 'likeness to God' aligned with early Christian morality and spirituality. Fourthly, this was coupled with Middle Platonic demonology which posited an ascent of the soul, a view which has continually appealed to mystics. The appeal of philosophical ontology/metaphysics was not, however, limited to these larger conceptual frameworks. It could also become quite specific.

Prepositional Metaphysics. Hymns or texts which use liturgical language in the New Testament often make use of the common philosophical practice of expressing causality through prepositions. Willy Theiler gave the name 'metaphysics of prepositions' to the

practice of using prepositions to denote different causes.¹⁸ The discussion goes back to Aristotle, who distinguished material, formal, efficient, and final causes (*Ph.* 194b–95a; cf. also *Metaph.* 933a–b). Middle and Neoplatonists regularly aligned three prepositional phrases with corresponding causes (αἰτιαί). Aetius preserves the clearest formulation of the Middle Platonic position: 'Plato held there were three causes. He says: "by which (ὑφ' οὗ), out of which (ἐξ οὗ), to which (πρὸς ὃ)". He considers the by which (ὑφ' οὗ) to be the most important. This was that which creates, that is the mind' (*Placita* 11:2). The first is Aristotle's efficient cause; the second is his material cause; and the third is the Stagirite's formal cause. Others expanded the list (e.g. Seneca, *Ep.* 65:8–10). The tendency to increase the causes led Heinrich Dörrie to posit the existence of a rival interpretation which collapsed causes to a single principle, even though multiple prepositional phrases continued to be used, especially 'out of which (ἐξ οὗ), in which (ἐν ᾧ), for which (εἰς ὃ)'.¹⁹ He called this the 'Stoic-Gnostic series'. Jewish interpreters such as Philo of Alexandria exploited the Platonic series openly (*Q.G.* 1:58; *Cher.* 124–27; *Prov.* 1:23).²⁰ Did early Christians?

There are a number of texts in the New Testament which use 'prepositional metaphysics' (e.g. John 1:3–4; Rom. 11:36; 1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:16–17; Heb. 1:2). Interestingly, there is not a consistent pattern. christological hymns tend to collapse all prepositional phrases into christological statements. For example, consider the hymn in Col. 1:16–17:

For in him (ἐν αὐτῷ) all things in heaven and on earth were created...
all things have been created by him (δι' αὐτοῦ) and for him (εἰς αὐτόν).
He is before all things (πρὸ πάντων)
and in him (ἐν αὐτῷ) all things exist.

The same happens when the phrases are used in doxologies addressed to God, for example, Rom. 11:36. There are, however, exceptions such as 1 Cor. 8:6:

¹⁸ W. Theiler, *Die Vorbereitung des Neuplatonismus* (Berlin/Zürich: Weidmann, 1964), pp. 17–34.

¹⁹ H. Dörrie, 'Präpositionene und Metaphysik: Wechselwirkung zweier Prinzipienreihen', *MH* 26 (1969), pp. 217–28.

²⁰ For details and bibliography, see D.T. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus of Plato* (PhilAnt, 44; Leiden: Brill, 1986), pp. 171–74.

But for us there is one God, the Father,
 out of whom (ἐξ οὗ) are all things and for whom (εἰς αὐτόν) we exist,
 and one Lord, Jesus Christ,
 through whom (δι' οὗ) are all things and through whom (δι' αὐτοῦ) we
 exist.

In this instance, there is a distinction between the source (God) and the agent of life (Christ). Early Christians extended such metaphysical usages to include soteriological applications. So the author of Ephesians writes: 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ (ἐν Χριστῷ), just as he chose us in him (ἐν αὐτῷ) before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love'. The Paulinist continues: 'He predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ (διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) for him(self) (εἰς αὐτόν)...' (Eph. 1:3-5; cf. also Col. 1:19-20). Once again we find a distinction. It appears that early Christians were aware of the philosophical use and adapted it as the occasion demanded. There is, however, a good deal of work which needs to be done in this area.²¹

Hellenistic Philosophy. A final area of research for students of the New Testament is Hellenistic philosophy itself. Our knowledge of Hellenistic philosophy is still more limited than we would prefer (see below). We need editions and translations of particular authors, detailed analyses of specific texts, as well as larger comparative analyses of themes. New Testament scholars have already made a contribution to the field by contributing a number of text and translation projects (Attridge 1976; Malherbe 1977; Fitzgerald and White 1983), yet there is a great deal of work which remains. For example, we now have a collection of the fragments of Eudorus, a pivotal figure in the emergence of Middle Platonism in Alexandria; however, they are buried in a somewhat obscure Italian journal.²² We need a collection with an English translation. We also need an edition and English translation of Hierocles, the second-century CE Stoic who wrote an elementary handbook. Surprisingly, there is still no English

²¹ See now G.E. Sterling, 'Prepositional Metaphysics in Jewish Wisdom Speculation and Early Christological Liturgical Texts', *The Studia Philonica Annual* 9 (1997), pp. 219-38.

²² C. Mazzarelli, 'Raccolta e interpretazione delle testimonianze e dei frammenti del medioplatonico Eudoro di Alessandria', *Rivista de Filosofia Neoscolastica* 77 (1985), pp. 197-209, 535-55.

translation of Maximus of Tyre, even though several have discussed undertaking it.²³ We also have no English translation for von Arnim's collection of early Stoic material or of Stobaeus, although the length of both of these makes the lacunae understandable.

DIFFICULTIES

The above examples have already indicated some of the difficulties in using Hellenistic philosophy. It is, however, important to deal with them more directly and fully. I will only touch on the most crucial.

Hellenistic Philosophy. The task of comparing two different bodies of literature requires control of both. While access to the world of New Testament scholarship is relatively easy, entrance into the world of Hellenistic philosophy is more daunting. Yet it requires the same care and attention to nuance as New Testament documents do. In fact, as the complexities of the material and sophistication of the authors rise, so must the sophistication of the interpreters. This means that we must spend a significant amount of time reading philosophical texts until we can read them with precision. As an entree into this world I have provided a chart of the major philosophical figures at the end of this chapter. The chart is designed as a pedagogical tool, not an exhaustive listing of philosophical schools or philosophers within those schools. I have used the following criteria for inclusion. First, I have only included philosophical schools/traditions which have direct relevance for the New Testament. I have not thought it important to include the Cyrenaic, Dialectical, Eretrian, or Megarian schools whose spheres of influence were largely limited to the early Hellenistic world. Secondly, I have included philosophers on the basis of their importance for the tradition he or she represents and the potential relevance of the author for students of the New Testament. My goal is to provide a guide for locating figures whose views or contributions are of interest to students of the New Testament. I have placed an asterisk beside the name of those who served as scholiarchs of recognized schools. Thirdly, I have only included figures whose primary allegiances are to a specific philosophical tradition. This means that I have omitted writers like Philo of Alexandria and Lucian

²³ There is an old English translation based on the Latin tradition: T. Taylor, *The Dissertations of Maximus Tyrius* (1804; repr. Thomas Taylor Series, 6; Rome: Prometheus Trust, 1994).

of Samosata, even though their works are significant for understanding the period.

There are several limitations which must be kept in mind in handling philosophical texts in this period. First, the extant material is frustratingly fragmentary. For example, Stoicism is generally divided into three periods: the Old Stoa, the Middle Stoa, and the Late Stoa. We have important representatives for the Late Stoa in the works of Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius; however, we do not have a single treatise extant in its entirety from representatives of either of the first two periods—everything must be reconstructed from secondary citations and summaries. This is not unique: the same state of affairs holds true for the vast majority of works in Hellenistic philosophy. Secondly, our understanding of Hellenistic philosophy is still in flux, even in some important areas. For example, it was not until recent years that scholars recognized Middle Platonism as a distinct stage in the development of the Platonic tradition (Dillon 1977). Even though this stage is now widely recognized, the specific contours of Middle Platonism continue to be debated. The consequences of such shifts may be extremely important. For example, Harry Wolfson wrote his monumental two volume analysis of Philo's thought prior to the recognition of Middle Platonism. His basic method was to compare Philo to Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics.²⁴ He failed to recognize that Philo's understanding of Plato was shaped by Middle Platonic interpretations, which is now a presupposition of contemporary scholarship. This is another way of saying that an interpreter needs to know the history of the discussion within the philosophical tradition in order to use a concept properly. Thirdly, this period of philosophy is characterized by 'eclecticism'. By 'eclecticism' I do not mean a potpourri of incompatible concepts thoughtlessly thrown together, but rather the effort to combine what were considered different aspects of a larger unity of thought (Dillon and Long 1988). This means, however, that the task of using the views of a specific philosopher is often complex. Let me illustrate. Some philosophical figures are extremely difficult to place in a specific tradition. Was Pseudo-Cebes a Platonist, Stoic, Cynic, Neopythagorean, or simply eclectic? Was Dio Chrysostom a Stoic or a Cynic? Was Numenius a Neopythagorean with some Platonic leanings

²⁴ H.A. Wolfson, *Philo: Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (2 vols.; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2nd edn, 1948).

or a Pythagoreanizing Middle Platonist? A case can be made for each position, because the author uses material which points in more than one direction. Even when we do know the specific school loyalty of a philosopher, he or she may and probably did appropriate concepts from other philosophical traditions. The issue then arises whether the presuppositions underlying the concept are also brought over, or whether they are incompatible with the larger system of the author, thus forcing a change in the thought. For example, Philo of Alexandria cites the widely known Stoic understanding of the two principles in creation: active and passive (*Opif.* 8–9; cf. Diogenes Laertius 7:134). For the Stoics these are two complementary causes; however, for Philo, only the active principle (God) is a cause, the passive (matter) is an object set over against the active cause. Philo's Jewish monotheism has thus altered his use of technical philosophical concepts. Similarly, when Paul condemns the Gentile world and says that 'God delivered them over to a worthless mind to do the things which are not proper functions (ποιεῖν τὰ μὴ καθήκοντα)', he uses a technical Stoic term (e.g. Diogenes Laertius 7:107–109; Cicero, *Fin.* 3:17:20–22). However, it is difficult for me to believe that Paul accepted the anthropology which underlay the Stoic understanding of the term. I think rather that this is but another example of the ubiquity of Stoic language and concepts in the Roman world.

Greek-Speaking Judaism. There is another major paradigm issue. How did early Christians acquire their knowledge of Hellenistic philosophy? Did they learn it directly from pagans and then make their own applications? Or did they learn it indirectly through Greek-speaking Jews who had already made the appropriations? Or should we imagine a more complex situation in which early Christians sometimes adapted what they had themselves learned about Hellenistic philosophy and at other times used what they had learned in a Greek-speaking synagogue?

Let me illustrate the difficulty one often faces. One of the unique concerns of Luke–Acts is its emphasis on 'repentance' (μετάνοια). The author understands this as a turning to God involving a reformation of life (e.g. Acts 26:20). While the terms generally denote a sense of regret in the Greek world, there are several philosophical figures who use it to describe moral improvement (e.g. Pseudo-Cebes, *Tabula* 10:4–11:1–2; Dio Chrysostom 34:18–19; Plutarch, *Mor.* 26d, 27a, 204a, 551d, 712c). Some Second Temple Jewish authors found this to be a natural way to speak of conversion from paganism to

Judaism (*Jos. Asen.* 9:2; 15:6-8; 16:7 and Philo, *Virt.* 175-86). Did the author of Luke-Acts make the same appropriation, or simply apply what he had already learned in a synagogue? While both are possible, I am inclined to think the latter is more probable. The author was probably a Greek-speaking Jew (perhaps a God-fearer) who had a long-standing relationship with the synagogue. More importantly, the author's twofold understanding of the process as turning to the one true God and then living a reformed life (Acts 26:20) matches the presentation we have in Philo (*Virt.* 175-79, 180-86). Thus, while it is possible that the author of Luke-Acts directly appropriated the concept from moral philosophers, it is more likely that he simply applied to Christianity what he had earlier learned in Judaism.

The above example as well as those which I have cited earlier illustrate the complexities of the issue. I will offer a couple of principles as controls for exploring this question. First, we must weigh each instance independently. We can neither assume that Greek-speaking Judaism was the sole conduit of classical culture to early Christianity, nor that it had no role. Similarly, we should not assume that, if one author borrows a literary tradition from a Jewish source, that all New Testament authors did so. Social situations and contextual demands are too complex for such simplistic generalizations. Secondly, as we have seen, there are good reasons for believing that, in some cases, Christians inherited existing Jewish adaptations of Hellenistic philosophy. We should, however, weigh these on a sliding scale. *Certainty*—understood in historical terms—only exists when we can demonstrate that there are unique Jewish-Christian concerns, for example, when a tradition is anchored in an exegesis of a text from the Torah. We may posit *probability* if there is substantial agreement in the details, as is the case with *μετάνοια*. In a case where the material or perspective is common to both the Jewish and Greco-Roman sources, we may only speak of a *possibility*. Thirdly, possibilities do not mean, however, that we should automatically discount the role of Greek-speaking Judaism, since Greek-speaking Jewish adaptations of Hellenistic philosophy established a *precedent* for early Christians. In short, the synagogue not only provided early Christians with specific concepts, but demonstrated what could be done with Hellenistic thought and moral exhortation.

The best example of both processes is Paul of Tarsus. No one questions Paul's attachment to the synagogue in the early years of his

life. If we can believe the tradition of Acts 21:39—the fact that it runs counter to the tendency of Acts suggests that we can—Paul was a citizen of Tarsus. His citizenship in a Greek city would have required not only a primary education, but passing the *ephebeia*, and possibly advanced education. Since Tarsus was famous for philosophy (Strabo 14:5:13), especially for her Stoic philosophers (Dio Chrysostom 33:48 and Lucian, *Octogenarians* 21), and Paul's letters betray acquaintance with philosophy, it is possible that he received some advanced training in philosophy. This would at least explain why he is so adept at incorporating popular philosophy in his letters. It also suggests that Paul, like Philo of Alexandria, had the requisite training to create his own applications. While Philo's knowledge of Hellenistic philosophy is more profound than Paul's, the apostle has the more creative mind. In any case, whether we posit a genealogical or an analogical relationship, Greek-speaking Judaism is a *sine qua non* for understanding the early Christian use of philosophy (for details see Sterling forthcoming).

Parallels. These observations should warn us against the naive use of parallels. Each text must first be interpreted in its own right, not as a parallel to another text, that is, it must be contextualized literarily, historically, and socially. Years ago, Samuel Sandmel delivered a presidential address to the Society of Biblical Literature in which he warned against 'parallelomania'.²⁵ We need to remind ourselves of this in an age where we can search entire corpuses of texts electronically in a matter of a few minutes. The purpose of research is not to list analogous expressions of the same thought, but to understand the ancient texts. This means weighing differences as well as similarities. We must also remember that this is a bilingual tradition. Latin is especially important for the Late Stoa, although its value is hardly restricted to a single tradition. Finally, we need to remember the social location of the representatives. Professional philosophers were not typically in the same social position as artisans. We must ask how philosophy circulated in popular forms as early Christianity was far from elitist.

CONCLUSIONS

As long as this chapter is, I have not touched upon a number of relevant areas of research. For example, I have not attempted to

²⁵ S. Sandmel, 'Parallelomania', *JBL* 81 (1962), pp. 1-13.

explore some of the more obvious points of comparison: christological concepts such as the Logos, Paul's anthropology (e.g. conscience), Paul's ecclesiology (e.g. the community as a body), or specific virtues or vices. Although I have paid some attention to literary forms, I have not begun to exhaust the possibilities. Other literary forms include *chreai*, which play such a large role in the Synoptic Gospels, *symposia*, which are important to Luke, *epitomes*, which may have served as models for collections like the Sermon on the Mount (e.g. Hierocles, *On Duties*), and *gnomes/gnomologies* (e.g. *Gnomologium Vaticanum*) and doxographies (e.g. Arius Didymus and Aetius), which may have served as the source for many early Christians' knowledge of Hellenistic philosophy. I have also not attempted to deal with a number of significant issues of social history, such as the locale for Paul's public ministry and the entire issue of whether there were schools (e.g. the Pauline and Johannine schools). What I have tried to do is to underscore the importance of reading philosophical texts if we are to understand the New Testament. If I have said more about Paul than any other New Testament author, it is because his letters are the most obvious beginning point; however, it would be a mistake to stop with the Pauline corpus.

The relationship between Christian faith and theology on the one hand and philosophy on the other is extraordinarily complex. The divergent attitudes toward philosophy which surface in the New Testament continue to find echoes. For those who attempt to bring the human experience of God to articulation through critical reflection, philosophy is a natural resource; at least a number of New Testament writers thought so.²⁶

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²⁶ I wrote this chapter while doing research for a larger related project supported by the Institute for Scholarship in the Liberal Arts of the College of Arts and Letters at the University of Notre Dame. I want to express my appreciation for their support. John T. Fitzgerald was kind enough to read the manuscript for me. I greatly appreciate his suggestions.

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SIGNIFICANT HELLENISTIC PHILOSOPHERS
(FOURTH CENTURY BCE—SECOND CENTURY CE)

	Pythagoreans	Epicureans	Academics / Platonists	Peripatetics	Skeptics/Pyrrhonists	Cynics	Stoics
4th BCE							
	<p><i>Early Pythagoreanism</i></p> <p>Archytas of Tarentum (fl. c. 380)</p>		<p>Plato* (c. 429–347)</p> <p><i>Old Academy</i></p> <p>Speusippus* (c. 407–339)</p> <p>Xenocrates* (fl. 339–314)</p>			<p>Antisthenes (c. 445–c. 360)</p>	
	<p><i>The Golden Verses</i></p>	<p>Epicurus* (341–271)</p>	<p>Polemo* (fl. 314–c. 276)</p>	<p>Aristotle* (384–322)</p> <p>Theophrastus* (c. 370–c. 287)</p> <p>Demetrius of Phaleron (b. c. 350)</p>	<p>Pyrrhon of Elis (c. 365–c. 270)</p>	<p>Crates of Thebes (c. 365–c. 285)</p> <p>Hipparchia (Wife of Crates)</p> <p>Onesicritus (fl. 325)</p>	

3rd BCE							
		<p>Metrodorus of Lampsacus (c. 331–c. 278)</p> <p>Polyaenus of Lampsacus (fl. c. 300)</p> <p>Hermarchus of Mytilene* (fl. 315–c. 265)</p> <p>Colotes (fl. c. 310–260)</p>	<p>Crates* (fl. c. 275?)</p> <p>Crantor (fl. c. 275?)</p>	<p>Strato of Lampsacus* (fl. c. 287–c. 269)</p> <p>Lycos* (c. 302–c. 224)</p>	<p>Timon of Phlius (c. 320–230)</p>	<p>Bion of Borysthenes (c. 325–c. 255)</p> <p>Menippus of Gadara (fl. 300–250)</p> <p>Leonidas of Tarentum (fl. 300–250)</p> <p>Pseudo-Anacharsis (c. 300–250)</p> <p>Menedemus (fl. 3rd cent.)</p>	<p><i>Early Stoa</i></p> <p>Zeno of Citium* (334–262)</p> <p>Dionysius of Heraclea (c. 328–248)</p> <p>Aratus of Soli (c. 315–c. 239)</p> <p>Persaeus (c. 306–c. 243)</p> <p>Herillus of Carthage (fl. c. 270)</p> <p>Aristo of Chios (fl. c. 250)</p> <p>Cleanthes* (331–232)</p>
			<p><i>New Academy/ Middle Academy</i></p> <p>Arcesilaus* (fl. c. 273–c. 242)</p>				

		Siro (Cont. w/ Philodemus of Gadara) Amatinius (Cont. w/ Philodemus) Lucretius (c. 94-55)		Andronicus of Rhodes* (fl. c. 50)			
	Neo-pythagoreanism Nigidius Figulus (fl. c. 50)			Boethus of Sidon* (fl. 27 BCE-14 CE)		Arius the Stoic (= Arius Didymus?) (fl. 27 BCE-14 CE)	
			Eudorus of Alexandria (fl. c. 25)	Nicolaus of Damascus (64-post 6 CE)		Pseudo-Diogenes (1st BCE-2nd CE)	
1st CE							
	Apollonius of Tyana (fl. 1st cent.)		Pseudo-Timaeus (c. 25 BCE-100 CE) Thrasyllus (fl. 14-36)	Agrippa (fl. post Aenesidemus)	Demetrius (fl. 40-80)	Late Stoa Seneca (c. 4 BCE-65 CE)	
					Pseudo-Cebes (Allegiance uncertain) (1st cent.)		

							Cornutus (c. 20-post 65) Musonius Rufus (before 30-c. 102)
		Moderatus of Gades (c. 50-100)		Ammonius (*) (fl. c. 66)			
				Plutarch (c. 50-c. 120)			Dio Chrysostom (Or Stoic) (40-post 112) Pseudo-Socrates (1st cent.) Pseudo-Heraclitus (c. 1-150) Pseudo-Crates (c. 1-200)
2nd CE							
	Nicomachus of Gerasa (c. 50-150)		Theon of Smyrna (fl. c. 115-140) Calvenus Taurus (fl. c. 145) Apuleius (c. 123-post 161) Maximus of Tyre (c. 125-85)	Aspasius (c. 100-150)		Oenomaus of Gadara (c. 120)	Epictetus (c. 55-c. 135) Hierocles (fl. 100)
						Peregrinus Proteus (c. 100-165)	

Diogenes of Oenoanda (fl. 2nd cent.)	Numenius of Apamea (Or Neo- pythagore- an) (fl. 2nd cent.)		Demonax of Cyprus (fl. 2nd cent.)	
	Albinus (fl. c. 150)		Demetrius of Sunium (2nd cent.)	
	Alcinous (fl. c. 150)		Theagenes of Patras (2nd cent.)	
	Atticus (c. 150– 200)			Marcus Aurelius (121–180)
	Celsus (fl. c. 180)			
	Galen (c. 129–99)	Aristocles of Messana (fl. late 2nd cent.)	Theodorus (Cynulcus) (fl. late 2nd cent.)	
		Alexan- der of Aphrodi- sias (fl. c. 200)	Sextus Empiricus (fl. c. 200)	

JEWISH BACKGROUNDS

PAUL R. TREBILCO

INTRODUCTION

Any study of New Testament texts needs to be informed by an understanding of the Jewish world of the first century. Jesus and his disciples were a part of this world, many details of which feature in the texts, and the main agents of the spread of Christianity into the Gentile world were Jews who continued to see themselves as part of God's chosen people. What was that Jewish world like?

It is now recognized that there was considerable diversity within first-century CE Judaism. At any given time, Jews practised their religion in many different ways. The majority of the people did not belong to any particular group, but were zealous to live according to God's Torah and sought to be faithful to Judaism (see Sanders 1992: 448-51). Within Palestine itself there were different groups: Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, Zealots, some of which were far from unified, as well as a number of teachers and holy men, each with their band of followers. In addition, many Jews lived outside Palestine as a minority group in a Gentile city, spoke Greek rather than Hebrew or Aramaic, and may have only visited Jerusalem once in their lives, if at all. These Diaspora communities were far from uniform in practice and belief. This overall diversity is such that some scholars argue it is best to speak of 'Judaisms' in the plural in this period.¹

While there was considerable diversity within first-century Judaism, we can also identify a central core of beliefs and practices that the great majority of first-century Jews, who followed no particular party, held in common. Further, there was also broad agreement on these beliefs and practices among the various Jewish parties and groups, agreement at a deeper and more fundamental level than the variations of interpretation and practice which divided these groups. These

¹ See for example, J. Neusner, W.S. Green, and E. Fredrichs (eds.), *Judaisms and their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); see also Green in Neusner 1995: 1-10. On diversity in this period see for example Porton in Kraft and Nickelsburg 1986: 57-80; Dunn in Neusner 1995: 236-51.