

Interpreting the Bible:

An Overview of Hermeneutics



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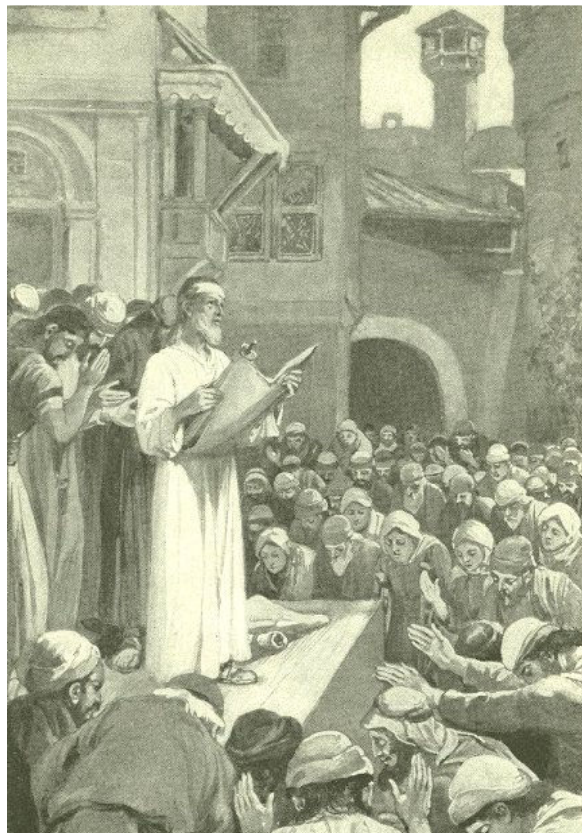
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PREFACE

This document consists of a number of overlapping studies and resources (of uneven quality and degree of difficulty) that pertain to the interpretation of the Scriptures, with a particular focus on the more detailed aspects of text analysis (exegesis). These selected materials adopt a more traditional perspective intended to serve as background reading material for students who live in areas where it is not easy to access the internet or to obtain hard copy books. All of the following chapters, except chapters 9-12 (including exercises for practice), are derived from the internet (*WorldWideWeb*) and have been lightly edited, reformatted, and somewhat revised. After a general introduction to the subject, chapters 3-6 are more basic sections that persons who are not very familiar with the subject of biblical interpretation and related subjects might do well to begin with. This is very much a work-in-progress and thus could be improved in many respects. All corrections and suggestions for revision therefore are most welcome (erwendland@gmail.com).

Note: the page numbers for chapters 11-14 are incorrect due to a formatting problem.
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Ezra reads and interprets the Law of God (Nehemiah 8:1-8)
<http://www.bibleexplained.com/other-early/Nehe/ne08.html>

1. Hermeneutics in General

Hermeneutics (/hɜːrməˈnjuːtɪks/) [1] is the theory and methodology of interpretation, [2][3] especially the interpretation of biblical texts, wisdom literature, and philosophical texts. [4][5]

Modern hermeneutics includes both verbal and non-verbal communication [6][7] as well as semiotics, presuppositions, and pre-understandings. Hermeneutics has been broadly applied in the humanities, especially in law, history and theology.

Hermeneutics was initially applied to the interpretation, or exegesis, of scripture, and has been later broadened to questions of general interpretation. [8] The terms "hermeneutics" and "exegesis" are sometimes used interchangeably. *Hermeneutics is a wider discipline which includes written, verbal, and non-verbal communication. Exegesis focuses primarily upon the word and grammar of texts.*

Hermeneutic, as a singular noun, refers to some particular method of interpretation (see, in contrast, double hermeneutic).

1.1 Etymology

Hermeneutics is derived from the Greek word *ἐρμηνεύω* (*hermeneuō*, "translate, interpret"), [9] from *ἐρμηνεύς* (*hermeneus*, "translator, interpreter"), of uncertain etymology (R. S. P. Beekes (2009) suggests a Pre-Greek origin). [10] The technical term *ἐρμηνεία* (*hermeneia*, "interpretation, explanation") was introduced into philosophy mainly through the title of Aristotle's work *Περὶ Ἑρμηνείας* ("Peri Hermeneias"), commonly referred to by its Latin title *De Interpretatione* and translated in English as *On Interpretation*. It is one of the earliest (c. 360 B.C.) extant philosophical works in the Western tradition to deal with the relationship between language and logic in a comprehensive, explicit and formal way.

The early usage of "hermeneutics" places it within the boundaries of the sacred. [11] A divine message must be received with implicit uncertainty regarding its truth. This ambiguity is an irrationality; it is a sort of madness that is inflicted upon the receiver of the message. Only one who possesses a rational method of interpretation (i.e., a hermeneutic) could determine the truth or falsity of the message. [12]

Folk etymology places its origin with Hermes, the mythological Greek deity who was the 'messenger of the gods'. [13] Besides being a mediator between the gods and between the gods and men, he led souls to the underworld upon death.

Hermes was also considered to be the inventor of language and speech, an interpreter, a liar, a thief and a trickster. [13] These multiple roles made Hermes an ideal

representative figure for hermeneutics. As Socrates noted, words have the power to reveal or conceal and can deliver messages in an ambiguous way. The Greek view of language as consisting of signs that could lead to truth or to falsehood was the essence of Hermes, who was said to relish the uneasiness of those who received the messages he delivered.

1.2 In religious traditions

1.2.1 Talmudic hermeneutics

Summaries of the principles by which Torah can be interpreted date back to, at least, Hillel the Elder, although the thirteen principles set forth in the Baraita of Rabbi Ishmael are perhaps the best known. These principles ranged from standard rules of logic (e.g., a fortiori argument [known in Hebrew as *kal v'chomer*]) to more expansive ones, such as the rule that a passage could be interpreted by reference to another passage in which the same word appears (*Gezerah Shavah*). The rabbis did not ascribe equal persuasive power to the various principles. [14]

Traditional Jewish hermeneutics differed from the Greek method in that the rabbis considered the *Tanakh* (the Jewish biblical canon) to be without error. Any apparent inconsistencies had to be understood by means of careful examination of a given text within the context of other texts. There were different levels of interpretation: some were used to arrive at the plain meaning of the text, some expounded the law given in the text, and others found secret or mystical levels of understanding.

1.2.2 Vedic hermeneutics

Vedic hermeneutics involves the exegesis of the Vedas, the earliest holy texts of Hinduism. The Mimamsa was the leading hermeneutic school and their primary purpose was understanding what Dharma (righteous living) involved by a detailed hermeneutic study of the Vedas. They also derived the rules for the various rituals that had to be performed precisely.

The foundational text is the Mimamsa Sutra of Jaimini (ca. 3rd to 1st century BCE) with a major commentary by Śabara (ca. the 5th or 6th century CE). The Mimamsa sutra summed up the basic rules for Vedic interpretation.

1.2.3 Buddhist hermeneutics

Buddhist hermeneutics deals with the interpretation of the vast Buddhist literature, particularly those texts which are said to be spoken by the Buddha (Buddhavacana) and

other enlightened beings. Buddhist hermeneutics is deeply tied to Buddhist spiritual practice and its ultimate aim is to extract skillful means of reaching spiritual enlightenment or nirvana. A central question in Buddhist hermeneutics is which Buddhist teachings are explicit, representing ultimate truth, and which teachings are merely conventional or relative.

1.2.4 Biblical hermeneutics

Biblical hermeneutics is the study of the principles of interpretation of the Bible. While Jewish and Christian biblical hermeneutics have some overlap, they have distinctly different interpretive traditions.

The early patristic traditions of biblical exegesis had few unifying characteristics in the beginning but tended toward unification in later schools of biblical hermeneutics.

Augustine offers hermeneutics and homiletics in his *De doctrina christiana*. He stresses the importance of humility in the study of Scripture. He also regards the duplex commandment of love in Matthew 22 as the heart of Christian faith. In Augustine's hermeneutics, sign has an important role. God can communicate with the believer through the signs of the Scriptures. Thus, humility, love, and the knowledge of signs are an essential hermeneutical presupposition for a sound interpretation of the Scriptures. Although Augustine endorses some teaching of the Platonism of his time, he corrects and recasts it according to a theocentric doctrine of the Bible. Similarly, in a practical discipline, he modifies the classical theory of oratory in a Christian way. He underscores the meaning of diligent study of the Bible and prayer as more than mere human knowledge and oratory skills. As a concluding remark, Augustine encourages the interpreter and preacher of the Bible to seek a good manner of life and, most of all, to love God and neighbor. [15]

There are traditionally four different types of biblical hermeneutics: literal, moral, allegorical (spiritual), and anagogical.[16]

Literal

Encyclopædia Britannica states that literal analysis means "a biblical text is to be deciphered according to the 'plain meaning' expressed by its linguistic construction and historical context." The intention of the authors is believed to correspond to the literal meaning. Literal hermeneutics is often associated with the verbal inspiration of the Bible. [17]

Moral

Moral interpretation searches for moral lessons which can be understood from writings within the Bible. Allegories are often placed in this category.

Allegorical

Allegorical interpretation states that biblical narratives have a second level of reference that is more than the people, events and things that are explicitly mentioned. One type of allegorical interpretation is known as typological, where the key figures, events, and establishments of the Old Testament are viewed as “types”. In the New Testament this can also include foreshadowing of people, objects, and events. According to this theory, readings like Noah’s Ark could also be understood by using the Ark as a “type” of Christian church that God expected from the start.

Anagogical

This type of interpretation is more often known as mystical interpretation. It purports to explain the events of the Bible and how they relate to or predict what the future holds. This is evident in the Jewish Kabbalah, which attempts to reveal the mystical significance of the numerical values of Hebrew words and letters.

In Judaism, anagogical interpretation is also evident in the medieval Zohar. In Christianity, it can be seen in Mariology. [17]

1.3 Modern hermeneutics

The discipline of hermeneutics emerged with the new humanist education of the 15th century as a historical and critical methodology for analyzing texts. In a triumph of early modern hermeneutics, the Italian humanist Lorenzo Valla proved in 1440 that the Donation of Constantine was a forgery. This was done through intrinsic evidence of the text itself. Thus hermeneutics expanded from its medieval role of explaining the true meaning of the Bible.

However, biblical hermeneutics did not die off. For example, the Protestant Reformation brought about a renewed interest in the interpretation of the Bible, which took a step away from the interpretive tradition developed during the Middle Ages back to the texts themselves. Martin Luther and John Calvin emphasized *scriptura sui ipsius interpres* (scripture interprets itself). Calvin used *brevitas et facilitas* as an aspect of theological hermeneutics. [18]

The rationalist Enlightenment led hermeneutists, especially Protestant exegetists, to view Scriptural texts as secular classical texts. They interpreted Scripture as responses to historical or social forces so that, for example, apparent contradictions and difficult passages in the New Testament might be clarified by comparing their possible meanings with contemporary Christian practices.

19th- and 20th-century hermeneutics emerged as a theory of understanding (*Verstehen*) through the work of Friedrich Schleiermacher (Romantic hermeneutics [19] and methodological hermeneutics [20]), August Böckh (methodological hermeneutics [21]), Wilhelm Dilthey (epistemological hermeneutics [22]), Martin Heidegger (ontological hermeneutics, [23] hermeneutic phenomenology, [24][25] and transcendental hermeneutic phenomenology [26]) Hans-Georg Gadamer (ontological hermeneutics), [27] Paul Ricœur (hermeneutic phenomenology), [28] Walter Benjamin (Marxist hermeneutics), [29] Ernst Bloch (Marxist hermeneutics), [30][29] Jacques Derrida (radical hermeneutics, namely deconstruction), [31][32] Richard Kearney (diacritical hermeneutics), Fredric Jameson (Marxist hermeneutics), [33] and John Thompson (critical hermeneutics).

Regarding the relation of hermeneutics with problems of analytic philosophy, there has been, particularly among analytic Heideggerians and those working on Heidegger's philosophy of science, an attempt to try and situate Heidegger's hermeneutic project in debates concerning realism and anti-realism: arguments have been presented both for Heidegger's hermeneutic idealism (the thesis that meaning determines reference or, equivalently, that our understanding of the being of entities is what determines entities as entities) [34] and for Heidegger's hermeneutic realism [35] (the thesis that (a) there is a nature in itself and science can give us an explanation of how that nature works, and (b) that (a) is compatible with the ontological implications of our everyday practices). [36]

Schleiermacher (1768–1834)

Friedrich Schleiermacher explored the nature of understanding in relation not just to the problem of deciphering sacred texts but to all human texts and modes of communication. The interpretation of a text must proceed by framing its content in terms of the overall organization of the work. Schleiermacher distinguished between grammatical interpretation and psychological interpretation. The former studies how a work is composed from general ideas; the latter studies the peculiar combinations that characterize the work as a whole. He said that every problem of interpretation is a problem of understanding and even defined hermeneutics as the art of avoiding misunderstanding. Misunderstanding was to be avoided by means of knowledge of grammatical and psychological laws. During Schleiermacher's time, a fundamental shift occurred from understanding not merely the exact words and their objective meaning, to an understanding of the writer's distinctive character and point of view. [\[37\]](#)[\[38\]](#)

Dilthey (1833–1911)

Wilhelm Dilthey broadened hermeneutics even more by relating interpretation to historical objectification. Understanding moves from the outer manifestations of human action and productivity to the exploration of their inner meaning. In his last important essay, "The Understanding of Other Persons and Their Manifestations of Life" (1910), Dilthey made clear that this move from outer to inner, from expression to what is expressed, is not based on *empathy*. Empathy involves a direct identification with

the *Other*. Interpretation involves an indirect or mediated understanding that can only be attained by placing human expressions in their historical context. Thus, understanding is not a process of reconstructing the state of mind of the author, but one of articulating what is expressed in his work.

Dilthey divided sciences of the mind (human sciences) into three structural levels: experience, expression, and comprehension.

- Experience means to feel a situation or thing personally. Dilthey suggested that we can always grasp the meaning of unknown thought when we try to experience it. His understanding of experience is very similar to that of phenomenologist Edmund Husserl.
- Expression converts experience into meaning because the discourse has an appeal to someone outside of oneself. Every saying is an expression. Dilthey suggested that one can always return to an expression, especially to its written form, and this practice has the same objective value as an experiment in science. The possibility of returning makes scientific analysis possible, and therefore the humanities may be labeled as science. Moreover, he assumed that an expression may be "saying" more than the speaker intends because the expression brings forward meanings which the individual consciousness may not fully understand.
- The last structural level of the science of the mind, according to Dilthey, is comprehension, which is a level that contains both comprehension and incomprehension. Incomprehension means, more or less, *wrong understanding*. He assumed that comprehension produces coexistence: "he who understands, understands others; he who does not understand stays alone."

Heidegger (1889–1976)

In the 20th century, Martin Heidegger's philosophical hermeneutics shifted the focus from interpretation to existential understanding as rooted in fundamental ontology, which was treated more as a direct — and thus more authentic — way of being-in-the-world (*In-der-Welt-sein*) than merely as "a way of knowing."^[39] For example, he called for a "special hermeneutic of empathy" to dissolve the classic philosophic issue of "other minds" by putting the issue in the context of the being-with of human relatedness. (Heidegger himself did not complete this inquiry.)^[40]

Advocates of this approach claim that some texts, and the people who produce them, cannot be studied by means of using the same scientific methods that are used in the natural sciences, thus drawing upon arguments similar to those of anti-positivism. Moreover, they claim that such texts are conventionalized expressions of the experience of the author. Thus, the interpretation of such texts will reveal something about the social context in which they were formed, and, more significantly, will provide the reader with a means of sharing the experiences of the author. The reciprocity between text and context is part of what Heidegger called the hermeneutic circle. Among the key thinkers who elaborated this idea was the sociologist Max Weber.

Gadamer (1900–2002) et al.

Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutics is a development of the hermeneutics of his teacher, Heidegger. Gadamer asserted that methodical contemplation is opposite to experience and reflection. We can reach the truth only by understanding or mastering our experience. According to Gadamer, our understanding is not fixed but rather is changing and always indicating new perspectives. The most important thing is to unfold the nature of individual understanding.

Gadamer pointed out that prejudice is an element of our understanding and is not *per se* without value. Indeed, prejudices, in the sense of pre-judgements of the thing we want to understand, are unavoidable. Being alien to a particular tradition is a condition of our understanding. He said that we can never step outside of our tradition — all we can do is try to understand it. This further elaborates the idea of the hermeneutic circle.

Bernard Lonergan's (1904–1984) hermeneutics is less well known, but a case for considering his work as the culmination of the postmodern hermeneutical revolution that began with Heidegger was made in several articles by Lonergan specialist Frederick G. Lawrence.^[41]

Paul Ricœur (1913–2005) developed a hermeneutics that is based upon Heidegger's concepts. His work differs in many ways from that of Gadamer.

Karl-Otto Apel (b. 1922) elaborated a hermeneutics based on American semiotics. He applied his model to discourse ethics with political motivations akin to those of critical theory.

Jürgen Habermas (b. 1929) criticized the conservatism of previous hermeneutists, especially Gadamer, because their focus on tradition seemed to undermine possibilities for social criticism and transformation. He also criticized Marxism and previous members of the Frankfurt School for missing the hermeneutical dimension of critical theory.

Habermas incorporated the notion of the lifeworld and emphasized the importance for social theory of interaction, communication, labor, and production. He viewed hermeneutics as a dimension of critical social theory.

Andrés Ortiz-Osés (b. 1943) has developed his symbolic hermeneutics as the Mediterranean response to Northern European hermeneutics. His main statement regarding symbolic understanding of the world is that meaning is a symbolic healing of injury.

Two other important hermeneutic scholars are **Jean Grondin** (b. 1955) and **Maurizio Ferraris** (b. 1956).

Mauricio Beuchot coined the term and discipline of analogic hermeneutics, which is a type of hermeneutics that is based upon interpretation and takes into account the plurality of aspects of meaning. He drew categories both from analytic and continental philosophy, as well as from the history of thought.

Two scholars who have published criticism of Gadamer's hermeneutics are the Italian jurist **Emilio Betti** and the American literary theorist **E. D. Hirsch**.

Marxist hermeneutics

The method of **Marxist hermeneutics** has been developed by the work of, primarily, Walter Benjamin and Fredric Jameson. Benjamin outlines his theory of the allegory in his study *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiele*^[29] ("Trauerspiel" literally means "mourning play" but is often translated as "tragic drama").^[42] Fredric Jameson draws on Biblical hermeneutics, Ernst Bloch,^[43] and the work of Northrop Frye, to advance his theory of Marxist hermeneutics in his influential *The Political Unconscious*. Jameson's Marxist hermeneutics is outlined in the first chapter of the book, titled "On Interpretation"^[44] Jameson re-interprets (and secularizes) the fourfold system (or four levels) of Biblical exegesis (literal; moral; allegorical; anagogical) to relate interpretation to the Mode of Production, and eventually, history.^[45]

Objective hermeneutics

Karl Popper first used the term "**objective hermeneutics**" in his *Objective Knowledge* (1972).^[46]

In 1992, the Association for Objective Hermeneutics (AGOH) was founded in Frankfurt am Main by scholars of various disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. Its goal is to provide all scholars who use the methodology of objective hermeneutics with a means of exchanging information.^[47] In one of the few translated texts of this German school of hermeneutics, its founders declared:

Our approach has grown out of the empirical study of family interactions as well as reflection upon the procedures of interpretation employed in our research. For the time being we shall refer to it as objective hermeneutics in order to distinguish it clearly from traditional hermeneutic techniques and orientations. The general significance for sociological analysis of objective hermeneutics issues from the fact that, in the social sciences, interpretive methods constitute the fundamental procedures of measurement and of the generation of research data relevant to theory. From our perspective, the standard, nonhermeneutic methods of quantitative social research can only be justified because they permit a shortcut in generating data (and research "economy" comes about under specific conditions). Whereas the conventional methodological attitude in the social sciences justifies qualitative approaches as exploratory or preparatory activities, to be succeeded by standardized approaches and techniques as the actual scientific procedures (assuring precision, validity, and objectivity), we regard

hermeneutic procedures as the basic method for gaining precise and valid knowledge in the social sciences. However, we do not simply reject alternative approaches dogmatically. They are in fact useful wherever the loss in precision and objectivity necessitated by the requirement of research economy can be condoned and tolerated in the light of prior hermeneutically elucidated research experiences.^[48]

1.4 Applications

1.4.1 Religion and theology

The understanding of a theological text depends upon the reader's particular hermeneutical viewpoint. Some theorists, such as Paul Ricœur, have applied modern philosophical hermeneutics to theological texts (in Ricœur's case, the Bible). Mircea Eliade, as a hermeneutist, understands religion as 'experience of the sacred', and interprets the sacred in relation to the profane.^[61] The Romanian scholar underlines that the relation between the sacred and the profane is not of opposition, but of complementarity, having interpreted the profane as a hierophany.^[62] The hermeneutics of the myth is a part of the hermeneutics of religion. Myth should not be interpreted as an illusion or a lie, because there is truth in myth to be rediscovered.^[63] Myth is interpreted by Mircea Eliade as 'sacred history'. He introduces the concept of 'total hermeneutics'.^[64]

1.4.2 Sociology

In sociology, hermeneutics is the interpretation and understanding of social events through analysis of their meanings for the human participants in the events. It enjoyed prominence during the 1960s and 1970s, and differs from other interpretive schools of sociology in that it emphasizes the importance of both context^[67] and form within any given social behaviour.

The central principle of sociological hermeneutics is that it is only possible to know the meaning of an act or statement within the context of the discourse or world view from which it originates. Context is critical to comprehension; an action or event that carries substantial weight to one person or culture may be viewed as meaningless or entirely different to another. For example, giving the "thumbs-up" gesture is widely accepted as a sign of a job well done in the United States, while other cultures view it as an insult.^[68] Similarly, putting a piece of paper into a box might be considered a meaningless act unless it is put into the context of democratic elections (the act of putting a ballot paper into a box).

Friedrich Schleiermacher, widely regarded as the father of sociological hermeneutics believed that, in order for an interpreter to understand the work of another author, they must familiarize themselves with the historical context in which the author published their thoughts. His work led to the inspiration of Heidegger's "hermeneutic

circle" a frequently referenced model that claims one's understanding of individual parts of a text is based on their understanding of the whole text, while the understanding of the whole text is dependent on the understanding of each individual part.^[69] Hermeneutics in sociology was also heavily influenced by German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer.^[70]

1.5 Criticism

Jürgen Habermas criticizes Gadamer's hermeneutics as being unsuitable for understanding society because it is unable to account for questions of social reality, like labor and domination.^[71]

Murray Rothbard and Hans Hermann-Hoppe, both economists of the Austrian school, have criticized the hermeneutical approach to economics.^{[72] [73]}

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2. Specific Hermeneutics

Biblical hermeneutics is the study of the principles of interpretation concerning the books of the Bible. It is part of the broader field of hermeneutics which involves the study of principles of interpretation for all forms of communication, nonverbal and verbal.^[1]

While Jewish and Christian Biblical hermeneutics have some overlap and dialogue, they have distinctly separate interpretative traditions, see also Christianity and Judaism.

2.1 Talmudical hermeneutics

Talmudical hermeneutics refers to Jewish methods for the investigation and determination of the meaning of the Hebrew Bible, as well as rules by which Jewish law could be established. One well-known summary of these principles appears in the Baraita of Rabbi Ishmael.

Methods by which the Talmud explores the meaning of scripture:

- grammar and exegesis
- the interpretation of certain words and letters and apparently superfluous and/or missing words or letters, and prefixes and suffixes
- the interpretation of those letters which, in certain words, are provided with points
- the interpretation of the letters in a word according to their numerical value (see Gematria)
- the interpretation of a word by dividing it into two or more words (see Noṭariqon)
- the interpretation of a word according to its consonantal form or according to its vocalization
- the interpretation of a word by transposing its letters or by changing its vowels
- the logical deduction of a *halakah* from a Scriptural text or from another law

The rabbis of the Talmud considered themselves to be the receivers and transmitters of an Oral law as to the meaning of the scriptures. They considered this oral tradition to set forth the precise, original meanings of the words, revealed at the same time and by the same means as the original scriptures themselves. Interpretive methods listed above such as word play and letter counting were never used as logical proof of the meaning or teaching of a scripture. Instead they were considered to be an *asmakhta*, a validation of a meaning that was already set by tradition or a homiletic backing for rabbinic rulings.

2.2 Christian biblical hermeneutics

Until the Enlightenment, Biblical hermeneutics was usually seen as a form of special hermeneutics (like legal hermeneutics); the status of scripture was thought to necessitate a particular form of understanding and interpretation.

In the nineteenth century it became increasingly common to read Scripture just like any other writing, although the different interpretations were often disputed. Friedrich Schleiermacher argued against a distinction between "general" and "special" hermeneutics, and for a general theory of hermeneutics applicable to all texts, including the Bible. Various methods of higher criticism sought to understand the Bible purely as a human, historical document.

The concept of hermeneutics has acquired at least two different but related meanings which are in use today. Firstly, in the older sense, Biblical hermeneutics may be understood as the theological principles of exegesis which is often virtually synonymous with 'principles of biblical interpretation' or methodology of Biblical exegesis. Secondly, the more recent development is to understand the term 'Biblical hermeneutics' as the broader philosophy and linguistic underpinnings of interpretation. The question is posed: "How is understanding possible?" The rationale of this approach is that, while Scripture is "more than just an ordinary text," it is certainly "no less than an ordinary text." Scripture is in the first analysis "text" which human beings try to understand; in this sense, the principles of understanding any text apply to the Bible as well (regardless of whatever other additional, specifically theological principles are considered).

In this second sense, all aspects of philosophical and linguistic hermeneutics are considered to be applicable to the Biblical texts, as well. There are obvious examples of this in the links between 20th-century philosophy and Christian theology. For example, Rudolf Bultmann's hermeneutical approach was strongly influenced by existentialism, and in particular by the philosophy of Martin Heidegger; and since the 1970s, the philosophical hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer have had a wide-ranging influence on Biblical hermeneutics as developed by a wide range of Christian theologians. The French-American philosopher René Girard follows a similar trail.^[2]

Diverse interpretations

Biblical scholars have noted the diversity of interpretations by Protestants and to a lesser extent by Catholics.

Protestants. In his forward to R. C. Sproul's *Knowing Scripture*, J. I. Packer observes that Protestant theologians are in conflict about biblical interpretation.^[3] To illustrate the diversity of biblical interpretations, William Yarchin^[4] pictures a shelf full of religious books saying different things, but all claiming to be faithful interpretations of the Bible.^[5] Bernard Ramm observed that such diverse interpretations underlie the "doctrinal variations in Christendom."^[6] A mid-19th century book on biblical interpretation observed that even those who believe the Bible to be "the word of God" hold "the most discordant views" about fundamental doctrines.^[7]

Catholics. The Catholic Church asserts the “capital importance of biblical interpretation” and Catholic scholars recognize some “diversity in the Bible.” This allows for an “openness” of interpretation as long as it stays within the Catholic Church’s theological Tradition.^[8] So it is that “theological factors set the parameters” for interpreting the Scripture that Catholics believe to be the “word of God.”^[9] Such parameters disallow the “widely differing interpretations” that make it possible for Protestants to prove “almost anything” by the Bible.^[10]

Theological hermeneutics as traditional Christian Biblical exegesis

This form of theological hermeneutics in the mainstream Protestant tradition considers Christian Biblical hermeneutics in the tradition of explication of the text, or exegesis, to deal with various principles that can be applied to the study of Scripture. If the canon of Scripture is considered as an organic whole, rather than an accumulation of disparate individual texts written and edited in the course of history, then any interpretation that contradicts any other part of scripture is not considered to be sound. Biblical hermeneutics differs from hermeneutics and within traditional Protestant theology, there are a variety of interpretive formulae. Such formulae are generally not mutually exclusive, and interpreters may adhere to several of these approaches at once. These formulae include:^[11]

2.2.1 Theological Group of Principles

The **Historical-grammatical** principle is based on historical, socio-political, geographical, cultural and linguistic / grammatical context.

Alternate, mutually-exclusive, models of history:

The **Dispensational model** or The **Chronometrical Principle**: "During different periods of time, God has chosen to deal in a particular way with man in respect to sin and man's responsibility."

The **Covenantal model**: "We differentiate between the various contracts that God has made with his people; specifically their provisions, their parties and their purposes."

The **New-Covenantal** model: The Old Testament Laws have been fulfilled and abrogated or cancelled with Christ's death, and replaced with the Law of Christ of the New Covenant, although many of the Old Covenant laws are reinstated under the New Covenant.

The **Ethnic Division Principle**: "The word of truth is rightly divided in relation to the three classes which it treats, i.e. Jews, Gentiles and the Church."

The **Breach Principle**: Interpretation of a certain verse or passage in Scripture is aided by a consideration of certain breaches, either breaches of promise or breaches of time.

The **Christo-Centric Principle**: "The mind of deity is eternally centered in Christ. All angelic thought and ministry are centered in Christ. All Satanic hatred and subtlety are centered at Christ. All human hopes are, and human occupations should be, centered in Christ. The whole material universe in creation is centered in Christ. The entire written word is centered in Christ."

The **Moral Principle**

The **Discriminational Principle**: "We should divide the word of truth so as to make a distinction where God makes a difference."

The **Predictive Principle**

The **Application Principle**: "An application of truth may be made only after the correct interpretation has been made"

The **Principle of Human Willingness in Illumination**

The **Context Principle**: "God gives light upon a subject through either near or remote passages bearing upon the same subject."

Sub-divided Context/Mention Principles:

The **First Mention Principle**: "God indicates in the first mention of a subject the truth with which that subject stands connected in the mind of God."

The **Progressive Mention Principle**: "God makes the revelation of any given truth increasingly clear as the word proceeds to its consummation."

The **Comparative Mention Principle**

The **Full Mention Principle** or The **Complete Mention Principle**: "God declares his full mind upon any subject vital to our spiritual life."

The **Agreement Principle**: "The truthfulness and faithfulness of God become the guarantee that he will not set forth any passage in his word that contradicts any other passage."

The **Direct Statement Principle**: "God says what he means and means what he says."

The **Gap Principle**: "God, in the Jewish Scriptures, ignores certain periods of time, leaping over them without comment."

The **Threefold Principle**: "The word of God sets forth the truths of salvation in a three-fold way: past - justification; present - sanctification/transformation; future - glorification/consummation."

The **Repetition Principle**: "God repeats some truth or subject already given, generally with the addition of details not before given."

The **Synthetic Principle**

The **Principle of Illustrative Mention**

The **Double Reference Principle**

Figures of Speech Group of Principles:

The **Numerical Principle**

The **Symbolic Principle**

The **Typical Principle**: "Certain people, events, objects and rituals found in the Old Testament may serve as object lessons and pictures by which God teaches us of his grace and saving power."

The **Parabolic Principle**

The **Allegorical Principle**

2.2.2 Techniques of hermeneutics

In the interpretation of a text, hermeneutics considers the original medium^[12] as well as what language says, supposes, doesn't say, and implies. The process consists of several steps for best attaining the Scriptural author's intended meaning(s). One such process is taught by Henry A Virkler, in *Hermeneutics: Principles and Processes of Biblical Interpretation* (1981):

Lexical-syntactical analysis: This step looks at the words used and the way the words are used. Different order of the sentence, the punctuation, the tense of the verse are all aspects that are looked at in the lexical syntactical method. Here, lexicons and grammar aids can help in extracting meaning from the text.

Historical/cultural analysis: The history and culture surrounding the authors is important to understand to aid in interpretation. For instance, understanding the Jewish sects of the Palestine and the government that ruled Palestine in New Testament times increases understanding of Scripture. And, understanding the connotations of positions

such as the High Priest and that of the tax collector helps us know what others thought of the people holding these positions.

Contextual analysis: A verse out of context can often be taken to mean something completely different from the intention. This method focuses on the importance of looking at the context of a verse in its chapter, book and even biblical context.

Theological analysis: It is often said that a single verse usually doesn't make a theology. This is because Scripture often touches on issues in several books. For instance, gifts of the Spirit are spoken about in Romans, Ephesians and 1 Corinthians. To take a verse from Corinthians without taking into account other passages that deal with the same topic can cause a poor interpretation.

Special literary analysis: There are several special literary aspects to look at, but the overarching theme is that each genre of Scripture has a different set of rules that applies to it. Of the genres found in Scripture, there are: narratives, histories, prophecies, apocalyptic writings, poetry, psalms and letters. In these, there are differing levels of allegory, figurative language, metaphors, similes and literal language. For instance, the apocalyptic writings and poetry have more figurative and allegorical language than does the narrative or historical writing. These must be addressed, and the genre recognized to gain a full understanding of the intended meaning.

Howard Hendricks, longtime professor of hermeneutics at Dallas Theological Seminary, set out the method of observing the text, interpreting the text, applying the text in his book, *Living By the Book*. Other major Christian teachers, such as Charles R. (Chuck) Swindoll, who wrote the foreword, Kay Arthur and David Jeremiah have based their hermeneutics on the principles Howard teaches.

In his book *God Centered Biblical Interpretation* (1999), Vern S. Poythress, Professor of New Testament Interpretation at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, presented a hermeneutical technique based on the pattern of "speaker, discourse, and hearer".^[13] According to Poythress, the study of the Bible must acknowledge all three aspects: God as the speaker, the Bible as His speech, and the people to whom He speaks. Thus, context plays a primary role in Poythress's study of Biblical teachings. He lists three general concepts to understand about any passage of Scripture:

Original time and context: This includes the personal perspective of the writer, the normative perspective of the text itself, and the situational perspective of the original audience.

Transmission and its context: Understanding the transmission of Scripture includes contemplating the message being sent through the text, taking into account the concerns of individual writers/translators as well as its broader role in the unraveling narrative of history.

Modern context: Poythress calls interpreters to understand Scripture as "what God is saying now" to the individual as well as to the modern church.^[14]

David L. Barr states there are three obstacles that stand in the way of correctly interpreting the biblical writings: We speak a different language, we live approximately two millennia later, and we bring different expectations to the text.^[15] Additionally, Barr suggests that we approach the reading of the Bible with significantly different literary expectations than those in reading other forms of literature and writing.

2.2.3 Roman Catholic principles of hermeneutics

The Catholic Encyclopedia lists a number of principles guiding Roman Catholic hermeneutics in the article on Exegesis (note: the Catholic Encyclopedia was written in 1917 and does not reflect the changes set forth by the encyclical *Divino afflante Spiritu* published by Pius XII in 1943, which opened modern Catholic Biblical scholarship) :

Historico-grammatical interpretation - The meaning of the literary expression of the Bible is best learned by a thorough knowledge of the languages in which the original text of Scripture was written, and by acquaintance with the Scriptural way of speaking, including the various customs, laws, habits and national prejudices which influenced the inspired writers as they composed their respective books. John Paul II said that: "A second conclusion is that the very nature of biblical texts means that interpreting them will require continued use of the historical-critical method, at least in its principal procedures. The Bible, in effect, does not present itself as a direct revelation of timeless truths but as the written testimony to a series of interventions in which God reveals himself in human history. In a way that differs from tenets of other religions [such as Islam, for instance], the message of the Bible is solidly grounded in history."^[16]

Catholic interpretation - Because the Catholic Church is, according to Catholics, the official custodian and interpreter of the Bible, Catholicism's teaching concerning the Sacred Scriptures and their genuine sense must be the supreme guide of the commentator. The Catholic commentator is bound to adhere to the interpretation of texts which the Church has defined either expressly or implicitly.

Reverence - Since the Bible is God's own book, its study must be begun and prosecuted with a spirit of reverence and prayer.

Inerrancy - Since God is the principal Author of Sacred Scripture, it can be claimed to contain no error, no self-contradiction, nothing contrary to scientific or historical truth (when the original authors intended historical or scientific truth to be portrayed). Minor contradictions are due to copyist errors in the codex or the translation. Catholics believe the Scripture is God's message put in words by men, with the imperfections this very fact necessarily implies. Catholic hermeneutics strongly supports inerrancy when it comes to principles but not, for example, when dealing with Evangelists' orthographic

mistakes. According to Pope John Paul II, "Addressing men and women, from the beginnings of the Old Testament onward, God made use of all the possibilities of human language, while at the same time accepting that his word be subject to the constraints caused by the limitations of this language. Proper respect for inspired Scripture requires undertaking all the labors necessary to gain a thorough grasp of its meaning."^{16]}

Patristics - The Holy Fathers are of supreme authority whenever they all interpret in one and the same manner any text of the Bible, as pertaining to the doctrine of faith or morals; for their unanimity clearly evinces that such interpretation has come down from the Apostles as a matter of Catholic faith.

Pope Benedict XVI has indicated in *Verbum Domini*, the post-synodal apostolic exhortation on the Word of God, that "Christianity...perceives in the words the Word himself, the Logos who displays his mystery through this complexity and the reality of human history". He encourages a "faith-filled interpretation of Sacred Scripture". He emphasizes that this manner of interpretation, "practiced from antiquity within the Church's Tradition...recognizes the historical value of the biblical tradition". It "seeks to discover the living meaning of the Sacred Scriptures for the lives of believers today while not ignoring the human mediation of the inspired text and its literary genres". *Verbum Domini* #44.

2.2.4 Eastern Orthodox hermeneutical principles

God is real and is incarnated in our Lord Jesus Christ. Everything pertaining to the Scriptures must be understood Christologically. Jesus Christ, the incarnate Second Person of the Holy Trinity, is the center of all that we as Christians do, and being Himself the very Truth, He is the only gate through which we may enter into understanding of the Bible, both Old and New Testaments (though not all that is contained in the Old Testament is directly relevant for Christians). The Bible ultimately is about Christ and assists us in our union with Him.

Only the pure in heart "shall see God." That is, our spiritual state has a direct bearing on our interpretation of the Scriptures. As St. Athanasius said, "One cannot possibly understand the teaching of the saints unless one has a pure mind and is trying to imitate their life." Because the Scripture is a book inspired by the Holy Spirit and given through holy men, one's own holiness is directly relevant to the ability to interpret the book correctly. Unlike any other book, the Bible's words are "spirit and life," and so we must live spiritually in order to drink from this spiritual well. Clearly, prayer and spiritual discipline are necessary in order to understand Scripture properly.

Understanding of the Scripture comes with living its contents. As the quote from St. Athanasius illustrates, one must both have a pure mind and be trying to imitate the saints' lives in order to understand their teaching, a dual principle which applies most of all to the teaching of the saints in the Bible. This life is particularly expressed in terms of living out the commandments and attempting to imitate Christ's life of the Gospel.

The primary end of Scriptural hermeneutics is that of the whole Christian life, *theosis* (deification/divinization). That is, our purpose in attempting to understand the Bible must not be merely for academic inquiry but rather must be in order to become fully divinized human beings, soaked with the life of God, participating in His divine energies, growing to the fullness of the stature of Christ. We interpret Scripture in order to become by grace what Christ is by nature, to "become god."

Only within the community of the Church can the Bible be understood. It was written by the Church, in the Church and for the Church. Thus, it is a "family document" which is the highest point of Holy Tradition, taken with faith alongside the writings of the Fathers, the Liturgy, the Icons, the Lives of the Saints, and so on.

The Scripture is a witness to the truth, not an exhaustive tome on Christian living. Nowhere in the words of Scripture itself can we find the teaching that it is all-sufficient for Christian life. What we as Orthodox Christians do must always be consonant with the Scriptures, but explicit mention of a practice or teaching in the Scripture is not a requirement for its inclusion in the life of the Church. The Apostle Paul himself mentions the reality of unwritten sources of Church Tradition being equally in force for the believer in II Thessalonians 2:15, that these traditions to which we must "stand fast and hold" may be "by word or by our epistle." Examples of practices not explicit in Scripture are making the Sign of the Cross, triple immersion for baptism, and having monasticism. St. Basil the Great even says that without maintaining the unwritten traditions of the Church, we "mutilate the Gospel" (*On the Spirit* 66).

We must respect the integrity of the canon of the Bible as given to us in the Church's Tradition. Searches for other texts written by apostles or prophets may be interesting and of scholarly merit, but they are not part of the hermeneutical project within the Church. Or conversely, attempts to debunk the authorship or authenticity of the books in the canon are also outside the Church's life. If we were to find a verifiable "new" work by St. Paul or to discover that Moses did not in fact write Genesis, neither finding would have any bearing on the canon. It is what it is.

We must use every resource at our disposal in interpreting the Scripture to bring ourselves and others to the knowledge of the truth. Certainly, there must be spiritual discernment in knowing how to use those resources, but at least theoretically, anything can be used to come to know the truth better as it is revealed in Holy Writ.

We must have humility when approaching Scripture. Even some of the Church's greatest and most philosophically sophisticated saints stated that some passages were difficult for them. We must therefore be prepared to admit that our interpretations may be wrong, submitting them to the judgment of the Church.

We may make use in a secondary fashion of the resources of academic scholarship, whether logic, archaeology, linguistics, et cetera. These resources can be helpful in

terms of illuminating our understanding of Scripture, but they must always be given only secondary prominence in the project and always only in conjunction with all these other hermeneutic principles. Primary must always be our life in the Church, living, studying and knowing the Bible within that vivified and salvific Holy Tradition.^[17]

2.2.5 Trajectory hermeneutics

Trajectory hermeneutics or **redemptive-movement hermeneutics** (RMH)^{[18][19][20]}

This is a hermeneutical approach that seeks to locate varying 'voices' in the text and to view this voice as a progressive trajectory through history (or at least through the Biblical witness); often a trajectory that progresses through to the present day. The contemporary reader of Scripture is in some way envisaged by the Biblical text as standing in continuity with a developing theme therein. The reader, then, is left to discern this trajectory and appropriate it accordingly.

William J. Webb employed such a hermeneutic, in his *Slaves, Women & Homosexuals*. Webb shows how the moral commands of the Old and New Testament were a significant improvement over the surrounding cultural values and practices. Webb identified 18 different ways in how God dealt with his people moving against the current of popular cultural values. While for Webb the use of this hermeneutic moves to highlight the progressive liberation of women and slaves from oppressive male/bourgeois dominance, the prohibition of homosexual acts consistently moves in a more conservative manner than that of the surrounding Ancient Near East or Graeco-Roman societies. While Paul does not explicitly state that slavery should be abolished, the trajectory seen in Scripture is a progressive liberation of slaves. When this is extended to modern times, it implies that the Biblical witness supports the abolition of slavery. The progressive liberation of women from oppressive patriarchalism, traced from Genesis and Exodus through to Paul's own acknowledgement of women as 'co-workers' (Rom. 16:3), sets a precedent that when applied to modern times suggests that women ought to have the same rights and roles afforded as men. Historically, the Biblical witness has become progressively more stringent in its views of homosexual practice and the implications of this are not commented upon by Webb.

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External links

- Biblical Interpretation and Application Reading Room. Extensive online resources for contemporary biblical hermeneutics (Tyndale Seminary)
- Issues in Hermeneutics by Prof. Herman C. Hanko
- Bibliology and Hermeneutics Course featuring audio and video resources from an Evangelical perspective
- Basic Rules for New Testament Exegesis
- Rev.Dr. Jose Puthenveed, "Psy bible Interpretation of The Bible Passages through tools of Psychology " A Website Interpreting Biblical passages (Sunday Homlies) using Psychology and Biblical scholarship, Website
- BiblicalStudies.org.uk Offers detailed bibliographies and numerous scholarly articles on various aspects of biblical hermeneutics.
- Hermeneutics - A Guide To Basic Bible Interpretation, By Darryl M. Erkel (Evangelical)
- Exegetical Hermeneutics Methods (Evangelical and Reformed)
- Inductive Hermeneutics Methods (Logic based)
- The Journal of Inductive Biblical Studies
(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biblical_hermeneutics)

2.4 Biblical criticism

(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biblical_criticism)

Biblical criticism is the scholarly "study and investigation of biblical writings that seeks to make discerning judgments about these writings".^[1] *Viewing biblical texts as being ordinary pieces of literature, rather than set apart from other literature, as in the traditional view*, it asks when and where a particular text originated; how, why, by whom, for whom, and in what circumstances it was produced; what influences were at work in its production; what sources were used in its composition; and what message it was intended to convey. It will vary slightly depending on whether the focus is on

the Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, the letters of New Testament or the canonical gospels. It also plays an important role in the quest for a historical Jesus.

It also addresses the physical text, including the meaning of the words and the way in which they are used, its preservation, history and integrity. Biblical criticism draws upon a wide range of scholarly disciplines including archaeology, anthropology, folklore, linguistics, Oral Tradition studies, and historical and religious studies.

2.4.1 Background

Biblical criticism, defined as the treatment of biblical texts as natural rather than supernatural artifacts, grew out of the rationalism of the 17th and 18th centuries. In the 19th century it was divided between the higher criticism, the study of the composition and history of biblical texts, and lower criticism, the close examination of the text to establish their original or "correct" readings. These terms are largely no longer used, and contemporary criticism has seen the rise of new perspectives which draw on literary and multidisciplinary sociological approaches to address the meaning(s) of texts and the wider world in which they were conceived.

A division is still sometimes made between historical criticism and literary criticism. Historical criticism seeks to locate the text in history: it asks such questions as when the text was written, who the author/s might have been, and what history might be reconstructed from the answers. Literary criticism asks what audience the authors wrote for, their presumptive purpose, and the development of the text over time.

Historical criticism was the dominant form of criticism until the late 20th century, when biblical critics became interested in questions aimed more at the meaning of the text than its origins and developed methods drawn from mainstream literary criticism. The distinction is frequently referred to as one between diachronic and synchronic forms of criticism, the former concerned the development of texts through time, the latter treating texts as they exist at a particular moment, frequently the so-called "final form", meaning the Bible text as we have it today.

2.4.2 History

Both Old Testament and New Testament criticism originated in the rationalism of the 17th and 18th centuries and developed within the context of the scientific approach to the humanities (especially history) which grew during the 19th. Studies of the Old and New Testaments were often independent of each other, largely due to the difficulty of any single scholar having a sufficient grasp of the many languages required or of the cultural background for the different periods in which texts had their origins.

Hebrew Bible/Old Testament

Modern biblical criticism begins with the 17th century philosophers and theologians—Thomas Hobbes, Benedict Spinoza, Richard Simon and others—who began to ask

questions about the origin of the biblical text, especially the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Old Testament, i.e., Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy). They asked specifically who had written these books; according to tradition their author was Moses, but these critics found contradictions and inconsistencies in the text that they concluded made Mosaic authorship improbable. In the 18th century Jean Astruc (1684–1766), a French physician, set out to refute these critics. Borrowing methods of textual criticism already in use to investigate Greek and Roman texts, he discovered what he believed were two distinct documents within Genesis. These, he felt, were the original scrolls written by Moses, much as the four Gospel writers had produced four separate but complementary accounts of the life and teachings of Jesus. Later generations, he believed, had conflated these original documents to produce the modern book of Genesis, producing the inconsistencies and contradictions noted by Hobbes and Spinoza.

Astruc's methods were adopted by German scholars such as Johann Gottfried Eichhorn (1752–1827) and Wilhelm Martin Leberecht de Wette (1780–1849) in a movement which became known as the higher criticism (to distinguish it from the far longer-established close examination and comparison of individual manuscripts, called the lower criticism); this school reached its apogee with the influential synthesis of Julius Wellhausen (1844–1918) in the 1870s, at which point it seemed to many that the Bible had at last been fully explained as a human document.

The implications of "higher criticism" were not welcomed by many religious scholars, not least the Catholic Church. Pope Leo XIII (1810–1903) condemned secular biblical scholarship in his encyclical *Providentissimus Deus*;^[2] but in 1943 Pope Pius XII gave license to the new scholarship in his encyclical *Divino afflante Spiritu*: "textual criticism ... [is] quite rightly employed in the case of the Sacred Books...Let the interpreter then, with all care and without neglecting any light derived from recent research, endeavor to determine the peculiar character and circumstances of the sacred writer, the age in which he lived, the sources written or oral to which he had recourse and the forms of expression he employed".^[3] Today the modern Catechism states: "In order to discover the sacred authors' intention, the reader must take into account the conditions of their time and culture, the literary genres in use at that time, and the modes of feeling, speaking and narrating then current. For the fact is that truth is differently presented and expressed in the various types of historical writing, in prophetic and poetical texts, and in other forms of literary expression".^[4]

New Testament

The seminal figure in New Testament criticism was Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694–1768), who applied to it the methodology of Greek and Latin textual studies and became convinced that very little of what it said could be accepted as incontrovertibly true. Reimarus's conclusions appealed to the rationalism of 18th century intellectuals, but were deeply troubling to contemporary believers. Baron d'Holbach (1723-1789) - "Ecce Homo -The History of Jesus of Nazareth, a Critical Inquiry" (1769), the first Life of Jesus

described as a mere historical man, published anonymously in Amsterdam. George Houston translated the work into English—published in Edinburgh, 1799, London, 1813, and New York in 1827—for which "blasphemy" Houston was condemned to two years in prison. In the 19th century important scholarship was done by David Strauss, Ernest Renan, Johannes Weiss, Albert Schweitzer and others, all of whom investigated the "historical Jesus" within the Gospel narratives. In a different field the work of H. J. Holtzmann was significant: he established a chronology for the composition of the various books of the New Testament which formed the basis for future research on this subject, and established the two-source hypothesis (the hypothesis that the gospels of Matthew and Luke drew on the gospel of Mark and a hypothetical document known as Q). By the first half of the 20th century a new generation of scholars including Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann, in Germany, Roy Harrisville and others in North America had decided that the quest for the Jesus of history had reached a dead end. Barth and Bultmann accepted that little could be said with certainty about the historical Jesus, and concentrated instead on the kerygma, or message, of the New Testament. The questions they addressed were: What was Jesus's key message? How was that message related to Judaism? Does that message speak to our reality today?

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1948 revitalized interest in the possible contribution archaeology could make to the understanding of the New Testament. Joachim Jeremias and C. H. Dodd produced linguistic studies which tentatively identified layers within the Gospels that could be ascribed to Jesus, to the authors, and to the early Church; Burton Mack and John Dominic Crossan assessed Jesus in the cultural milieu of first-century Judea; and the scholars of the Jesus Seminar assessed the individual tropes of the Gospels to arrive at a consensus on what could and could not be accepted as historical.

Contemporary New Testament criticism continues to follow the synthesising trend set during the latter half of the 20th century. There continues to be a strong interest in recovering the "historical Jesus", but this now tends to set the search in terms of Jesus' Jewishness (Bruce Chilton, Geza Vermes and others) and his formation by the political and religious currents of first-century Palestine (Marcus Borg).

2.4.3 Methods and perspectives

The critical methods and perspectives now to be found are numerous, and the following overview should not be regarded as comprehensive.

Textual criticism

Textual criticism (sometimes still referred to as "lower criticism") refers to the examination of the text itself to identify its provenance or to trace its history. It takes as its basis the fact that errors inevitably crept into texts as generations of scribes reproduced each other's manuscripts. For example, Josephus employed scribes to copy his *Antiquities of the Jews*. As the scribes copied the *Antiquities*, they made mistakes.

The copies of these copies also had the mistakes. The errors tend to form "families" of manuscripts: scribe *A* will introduce mistakes which are not in the manuscript of scribe *B*, and over time the "families" of texts descended from *A* and *B* will diverge further and further as more mistakes are introduced by later scribes, but will always be identifiable as descended from one or the other. Textual criticism studies the differences between these families to piece together a good idea of what the original looked like. The more surviving copies, the more accurately can they deduce information about the original text and about "family histories".

Textual criticism uses a number of specialized methodologies, including eclecticism, stemmatics, copy-text editing and cladistics. A number of principles have also been introduced for use in deciding between variant manuscripts, such as *Lectio difficilior potior*: "The harder of two readings is to be preferred".^[5] Nevertheless, there remains a strong element of subjectivity, areas where the scholar must decide his reading on the basis of taste or common-sense: Amos 6.12, for example, reads: "Does one plough with oxen?" The obvious answer is "yes", but the context of the passage seems to demand a "no"; the usual reading therefore is to amend this to, "Does one plough *the sea* with oxen?" The amendment has a basis in the text, which is believed to be corrupted, but is nevertheless a matter of judgement.^[6]

Source criticism

Source criticism is the search for the original sources which lie behind a given biblical text. It can be traced back to the 17th-century French priest Richard Simon, and its most influential product is Julius Wellhausen's *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels* (1878), whose "insight and clarity of expression have left their mark indelibly on modern biblical studies".^[7] An example of source criticism is the study of the Synoptic problem. Critics noticed that the three Synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke, were very similar, indeed, at times identical. The dominant theory to account for the duplication is called the two-source hypothesis. This suggests that Mark was the first gospel to be written, and that it was probably based on a combination of early oral and written material. Matthew and Luke were written at a later time, and relied primarily on two different sources: Mark and a written collection of Jesus's sayings, which has been given the name *Q* by scholars. This latter document has now been lost, but at least some of its material can be deduced indirectly, namely through the material that is common in Matthew and Luke but absent in Mark. In addition to Mark and *Q*, the writers of Matthew and Luke made some use of additional sources, which would account for the material that is unique to each of them.

Form criticism and tradition history

Form criticism breaks the Bible down into sections (*pericopes*, stories) which are analyzed and categorized by genres (prose or verse, letters, laws, court archives, war hymns, poems of lament, etc.). The form critic then theorizes on the pericope's *Sitz im Leben* ("setting in life"), the setting in which it was composed and, especially,

used.^[8] Tradition history is a specific aspect of form criticism which aims at tracing the way in which the pericopes entered the larger units of the biblical canon, and especially the way in which they made the transition from oral to written form. The belief in the priority, stability, and even detectability, of oral traditions is now recognised to be so deeply questionable as to render tradition history largely useless, but form criticism itself continues to develop as a viable methodology in biblical studies.^[9]

Redaction criticism

Redaction criticism studies "the collection, arrangement, editing, and modification of sources", and is frequently used to reconstruct the community and purposes of the authors of the text.^[10] It is based on the comparison of differences between manuscripts and their theological significance.^[11]

Canonical criticism

Associated particularly with the name of Brevard S. Childs, who has written prolifically on the subject, canonical criticism is "an examination of the final form of the text as a totality, as well as the process leading to it".^[12] Where previous criticism asked questions about the origins, structure and history of the text, canonical criticism addresses questions of meaning, both for the community (and communities—subsequent communities are regarded as being as important as the original community for which it was produced) which used it, and in the context of the wider canon of which it forms a part.^[1]

Rhetorical criticism

Rhetorical criticism of the Bible dates back to at least Saint Augustine. Modern application of techniques of rhetorical analysis to biblical texts dates to James Muilenburg in 1968 as a corrective to form criticism, which Muilenburg saw as too generalized and insufficiently specific. For Muilenburg, rhetorical criticism emphasized the unique and unrepeatable message of the writer or speaker as addressed to his audience, including especially the techniques and devices which went into crafting the biblical narrative as it was heard (or read) by its audience. "What Muilenburg called rhetorical criticism was not exactly the same as what secular literary critics called rhetorical criticism, and when biblical scholars became interested in "rhetorical criticism", they did not limit themselves to Muilenburg's definition...In some cases it is difficult to distinguish between rhetorical criticism and literary criticism, or other disciplines". Unlike canonical criticism, rhetorical criticism (at least as defined by Muilenburg) takes a special interest in the relationship between the biblical text and its intended audience within the context of the communal life setting. Rhetorical criticism asks how the text *functions* for its audience, including especially its original audience: to teach, persuade, guide, exhort, reproach, or inspire, and it concentrates especially on identifying and elucidating unique features of the situation, including both the

techniques manifest in the text itself and the relevant features of the cultural setting, through which this purpose is pursued.^[13]

Narrative criticism

Narrative criticism is one of a number of modern forms of criticism based in contemporary literary theory and practice—in this case, from narratology. In common with other literary approaches (and in contrast to historical forms of criticism), narrative criticism treats the text as a unit, and focuses on narrative structure and composition, plot development, themes and motifs, characters, and characterization.^[14] Narrative criticism is a complex field, but some central concerns include the reliability of the narrator, the question of authorial intent (expressed in terms of the context in which the text was written and its presumed intended audience), and the implications of multiple interpretation—i.e., an awareness that a narrative is capable of more than one interpretation, and thus of the implications of each.^[15]

Psychological criticism

Psychological biblical criticism is a perspective rather than a method. It discusses the psychological dimensions of the authors of the text, the material they wish to communicate to their audience, and the reflections and meditations of the reader.

Socio-scientific criticism

Socio-scientific criticism (also known as socio-historical criticism and social-world criticism) is a contemporary form of multidisciplinary criticism drawing on the social sciences, especially anthropology and sociology. A typical study will draw on studies of contemporary nomadism, shamanism, tribalism, spirit-possession, and millenarianism to illuminate similar passages described in biblical texts. Socio-scientific criticism is thus concerned with the historical world *behind* the text rather than the historical world *in* the text.^[16]

Postmodernist criticism

Postmodernist biblical criticism treats the same general topics addressed in broader postmodernist scholarship, "including author, autobiography, culture criticism, deconstruction, ethics, fantasy, gender, ideology, politics, postcolonialism, and so on". It asks questions like: What are we to make, ethically speaking, of the program of ethnic cleansing described in the book of Joshua? What does the social construction of gender mean for the depiction of male and female roles in the Bible?^[17]

In textual criticism, postmodernist criticism rejects the idea of an original text (the traditional quest of textual criticism, which marginalized all non-original manuscripts), and treats all manuscripts as equally valuable; in the "higher criticism" it brings new perspectives to theology, Israelite history, hermeneutics, and ethics.^[18]

Feminist exegesis

Feminist criticism of the Bible utilizes the same means and essentially strives for the same ends as feminist literary criticism. It is therefore made up of a variety of peoples, including, but not limited to, Jews, people of color, and feminist Christians such as Elisabeth Fiorenza.

2.4.4 Notable biblical scholars

- Kurt Aland (1915-1994): biblical scholar; principal editor of the *Nestle-Aland - Novum Testamentum Graece* for the Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft and *The Greek New Testament* for the United Bible Societies; founder of the *Institut für neutestamentliche Textforschung* (Institute for New Testament Textual Research) and the Bible Museum Münster in Germany.
- William Albright (1891–1971): Professor at Johns Hopkins University and the founder of American biblical archaeology
- Albrecht Alt (1883–1956): prominent in early debates about the religion of the biblical patriarchs; he was also an important influence on the generation of mid-20th century German scholars like Martin Noth and Gerhard von Rad
- Jean Astruc (1684–1776): early French biblical critic, who adapted source criticism to the study of Genesis
- Margaret Barker (born 1944): maintains that the polytheistic practices of the First Jewish Temple survived and influenced gnosticism and early Christianity
- Walter Bauer (1877–1960): redefined the parameters of orthodoxy and heresy with his multiregional hypothesis for the origins of early Christianity
- Ferdinand Christian Baur (1792–1860): explored the secular history of the primitive church
- Rudolf Bultmann (1884–1976): New Testament scholar who defined an almost complete split between history and faith, called demythology
- D. A. Carson (born 1946): Canadian New Testament scholar of the Gospel of John
- John J. Collins (1946–): Irish scholar of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Second Temple Judaism; he has worked extensively on Jewish messianism and apocalypticism
- Frank Moore Cross (1921–2012): American biblical scholar and Harvard professor notable for his interpretations of the Deuteronomistic History, the Pentateuch, and the Dead Sea Scrolls, as well as his work in Northwest Semitic Epigraphy
- William G. Dever (1933–): American biblical archaeologist, known for his contributions to the understanding of early Israel
- Baron d'Holbach (1723–1789): leading French/German encyclopedist, published anonymously in Amsterdam in 1769 "Ecce Homo: The History of Jesus of Nazareth, a Critical Inquiry", the first Life of Jesus describing him as a mere historical man. Translated into English by George Houston and published by him in Edinburgh, 1799, London, 1813, (for which "blasphemy" Houston was condemned to two years in prison), and New York, 1827

- Johann Gottfried Eichhorn (1752–1827): applied source criticism to the entire Bible, decided against Mosaic authorship
- Alvar Ellegård (1919–2008): linguist who reordered the chronology of New Testament texts and a proponent of the "Jesus Myth Theory"
- Bart D. Ehrman (1955–): University of North Carolina professor, who has examined issues of textual corruption and authorship in New Testament and Early Christian texts
- Israel Finkelstein (1949–): Israeli archaeologist and Professor at Tel Aviv University, an advocate for re-dating remains previously ascribed to King Solomon to the rule of the Omrides
- Johann Jakob Griesbach (1745–1812): pioneered the Griesbach hypothesis, which supports the primacy of the Gospel of Matthew
- Hermann Gunkel (1862–1932): father of form criticism, the study of the oral traditions behind the text of the Pentateuch
- Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826): United States President. Author of the Jefferson Bible, a reconstruction of the New Testament that excludes all miraculous references.
- Niels Peter Lemche (1945–): biblical scholar at the University of Copenhagen associated with biblical minimalism, which warns against uncritical acceptance of the Bible as history
- Bruce Metzger (1914–2007): biblical scholar sometimes referred to as "the dean" of New Testament textual criticism and wrote the definitive *The Text of the New Testament*(Oxford University Press, 1964)
- Martin Noth (1902–1968): developed tradition history and scholar on the origins of the Pentateuch and the Deuteronomistic History
- Thomas Paine (1737–1809): English American philosopher. Author of *The Age of Reason*. Documents various discrepancies of the Bible, applying the logic that it was written by man, not by some divine providence.
- Rolf Rendtorff (1925–): German critic who advanced an influential non-documentary hypothesis for the origins of the Pentateuch
- Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834): German theologian and philosopher whose theoretical hermeneutics underlie much of modern biblical exegesis
- Albert Schweitzer (1875–1965): German theologian who was a pioneer in the quest for the historical Jesus
- John Van Seters (1935–): American Hebrew Bible scholar who favors a supplementary model for the creation of the Pentateuch
- Baruch Spinoza (1632–1677): Dutch philosopher, who collected discrepancies, contradictions, and anachronisms from the Torah to show that it could not have been written by Moses
- David Friedrich Strauss (1808–1874): German critic who published influential work on the historical origins of Christian beliefs, most notably in his *Das Leben Jesu*

- Thomas L. Thompson (1939–): outspoken critic of William Albright's conclusions about archaeology and the historicity of the Pentateuch
- Daniel B. Wallace (1952–): professor of New Testament Studies at Dallas Theological Seminary and the founder of the Center for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts, which is digitizing all known Greek manuscripts of the New Testament via digital photographs.
- Julius Wellhausen (1844–1918): German biblical critic and popularizer of a four-source documentary hypothesis
- Wilhelm Martin Leberecht de Wette (1780–1849): early German contributor to higher criticism and the study of Pentateuchal origins
- Joseph Wheless (1868–1950): American lawyer who traced origins of the scriptures, examining original Hebrew and Greek meanings, and the translations into Latin and English
- R. N. Whybray (1923–1997): critiqued the assumptions of source criticism underlying the documentary hypothesis
- N. T. Wright (born 1948): a retired Anglican bishop and current professor of New Testament and Early Christianity at the University of St. Andrews, Wright is known for the New Perspective on Paul and his *Christian Origins and the Question of God* series.^{[33][34]}

2.4.5 Notes

1. Harper's Bible Dictionary, 1985
2. Fogarty, page 40.
3. Encyclical *Divino afflante Spiritu*, 1943.
4. Catechism of the Catholic Church, Article III, section 110 Archived August 16, 2014, at the Wayback Machine.
5. Johann Jakob Griesbach (1745–1812) published several editions of the New Testament. In his 1796 edition, he established fifteen critical rules, including a variant of Bengel's rule, *Lectio difficilior potior*, "the hardest reading is best." Another was *Lectio brevior praeferenda*, "the shorter reading is best," based on the idea that scribes were more likely to add than to delete. "*Critical Rules of Johann Albrecht Bengel*". *Bible-researcher.com*. Archived from the original on 13 February 2010. Retrieved 2010-03-16.
6. David J. A. Clines, "Methods in Old Testament Study", section *Textual Criticism*, in *On the Way to the Postmodern: Old Testament Essays 1967–1998, Volume 1* (JSOTSup, 292; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), pp. 23–45.
7. Antony F. Campbell, SJ, "Preparatory Issues in Approaching Biblical Texts," in *The Hebrew Bible in Modern Study*, p.6. Campbell renames source criticism as "origin criticism".
8. "*This site is temporarily unavailable*". Retrieved 29 January 2016.
9. Yair Hoffman, review of Marvin A. Sweeney and Ehud Ben Zvi (eds.), *The Changing Face of Form-Criticism for the Twenty-First Century*, 2003

10. Religious Studies Department, Santa Clara University.
11. Redaction Criticism.
12. Norman K. Gottwald, "Social Matrix and Canonical Shape", *Theology Today*, October 1985.
13. "Rhetorical Criticism of the Hebrew Bible". Retrieved 29 January 2016.
14. Johannes C. De Klerk, "Situating biblical narrative studies in literary theory and literary approaches", *Religion & Theology* 4/3 (1997).
15. Christopher Heard, "Narrative Criticism and the Hebrew Scriptures: A Review and Assessment", *Restoration Quarterly*, Vol. 38/No.1 (1996) Archived 2007-11-30 at the Wayback Machine.
16. Frank S. Frick, *Response: Reconstructing Israel's Ancient World*, SBL Archived October 5, 2007, at the Wayback Machine.
17. David L. Barr, review of A. K. M. Adam (ed.), *Handbook of Postmodern Biblical Interpretation*, 2000
18. David J. A. Clines, "The Pyramid and the Net", *On the Way to the Postmodern: Old Testament Essays 1967–1998*, Volume 1 (JSOTSup, 292; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998).
19. Catherine M. Murphy, *The Historical Jesus For Dummies*, For Dummies Pub., 2007. p 14 Google Link
20. Catherine M. Murphy, *The Historical Jesus For Dummies*, For Dummies Pub., 2007. p 14, 61-77
21. John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, Yale University Press, 2009.
22. Maureen W. Yeung, *Faith in Jesus and Paul: a comparison*, Volume 147, Mohr Siebeck Pub, 2002. pp 54-56
23. Blue Butler Education, *Historical Study of Jesus of Nazareth: An Introduction*
24. N. S. Gill, *Discussion of the Historical Jesus* Archived 2007-03-16 at the Wayback Machine.
25. Bart D. Ehrman, *Jesus: Apocalyptic Prophet of the New Millennium*, Oxford, 1999. pp 90–91.
26. John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, Doubleday, 1991. v. 1, pp 174–175, 317
27. Stanley E. Porter, *The Criteria for Authenticity in Historical-Jesus Research: Previous Discussion and New Proposals* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000).
28. Gerd Thiessen & Dagmar Winter, *The Quest for the Plausible Jesus: The Question of Criteria* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 2002).
29. James R. Edwards, *The Hebrew Gospel & the Development of the Synoptic Tradition*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2009. pp 1-118
30. Catherine M. Murphy, *The Historical Jesus For Dummies*, For Dummies Pub., 2007. p 14
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33. "ntw2 - School of Divinity, University of St Andrews". Retrieved 29 January 2016.
34. "N.T. Wright Page - An Unofficial Website Dedicated to Professor N. T. Wright". Retrieved 29 January 2016.

2.4.5 Further reading

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2.4.6 External links

- David J. A. Clines, "Possibilities and Priorities of Biblical Interpretation in an International Perspective", in *On the Way to the Postmodern: Old Testament Essays 1967–1998*, Volume 1 (JSOTSup, 292; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), pp. 46–68 See Section 6, Future Trends in Biblical Interpretation, overview of some current trends in biblical criticism.
- Philip Davies, review of John J. Collins, "The Bible after Babel: Historical Criticism in a Postmodern Age", 2005 Reviews a survey of postmodernist biblical criticism.
- Allen P. Ross (Beeson Divinity School, Samford University), "The Study of Textual Criticism" Guide to the methodology of textual criticism.
- Yair Hoffman, review of Marvin A. Sweeney and Ehud Ben Zvi (eds.), *The Changing Face of Form-Criticism for the Twenty-First Century*, 2003 Discusses contemporary form criticism.
- Exploring Ancient Near Eastern Civilizations on the Internet Introduction to biblical criticism
- Library of latest modern books of biblical studies and biblical criticism

SEE ALSO:

<https://probe.org/hermeneutics/>

3. Evangelical Biblical Hermeneutics

(http://www.forananswer.org/Top_General/Hermeneutics.htm)

3.1 An Introduction

Skeptics often ask me, "If the Bible is God's Word, why are there so many different interpretations of what He supposedly said?"

Those who accept the Bible as the Word of God believe that God has spoken to us unambiguously. We believe that there is only one "right" interpretation of any given Biblical passage - the meaning God intended when He "breathed" His word into the human author. If this view is correct, it follows that of the many "different interpretations" skeptics refer to, there must be only one that is valid. That is, while a particular passage may have many *applications*, it must have only one *meaning* - the one the author (through inspiration of the Holy Spirit) intended.

How, then may we determine the proper interpretation of Scripture? The science of Biblical Hermeneutics - in all its varied "schools" - seeks to provide a methodology to answer that question.

Biblical hermeneutics is the science that teaches the principles and methods of interpreting the Word of God. Proper hermeneutics provide us tools to help ensure that we are basing our interpretations on the truth as God has revealed it, while avoiding error to the greatest degree possible.

Using sound hermeneutic principles is not optional for the true disciple of Christ. The Apostle Paul enjoins us to "be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). The purpose of this paper is to provide a brief introduction to some basic hermeneutical principles - principles that we strive to adhere to in the commentaries on this website. A short bibliography and links to resources for additional research are provided at the end of this paper.

3.2 The Bible Affirms its Own Clarity

The Apostle Peter reminded his readers that some things in the writings of the Apostle Paul are "hard to understand" (2 Peter 3:15-16). We must therefore admit that not all parts of Scripture are able to be easily understood. However, it would be a grave error to conclude that all Scripture is obscure or that it requires years of study to adequately interpret it. The Bible itself - directly and indirectly - proclaims that it is written in such a way that believers, regardless of their education or mental acumen, may read and understand its pages. Indeed, Peter himself in the passage just quoted, does not say the difficult passages in Paul's letters are *impossible* to understand - only "hard."

Moses tells the people of Israel:

And these words I command you this day shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise" (Deuteronomy 6:6-7 RSV).

The clear implication is that all the people of Israel were able to understand Moses' words clearly. They would have to, if they were to teach these words to their children, and if they were to discuss them on a regular basis. The Psalmist says: "The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple" (Psalms 119:130 RSV). This should be a great encouragement to all believers - for if the "simple" (those who lack intellectual ability and sound judgment) can be made wise by God's Word, it must first be understandable by them.

Some may wish to introduce 2 Peter 1:20 at this point: "No prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation" (NIV). Those who advocate that proper interpretation of Scripture is the sole province of the Church, or an anointed class of specially gifted leaders, press this verse as proof against individual interpretation by ordinary believers. The context of this verse argues against such a view. Peter has just made reference to the Transfiguration, which confirmed for those present the exalted status of the Son of God. He says that his readers may be even *more* sure of Christ's exaltation because they have the "prophetic word" (verse 19) - that is, written Scripture. He then explains why they may be more sure, even beyond a divine vision such as Peter was graced to see. The prophecy of Scripture - the declaring forth and recording of God's Word - is not a matter of the prophet's own "interpretation" of what God intended, but rather was the very Word of God Himself: "no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (verse 21). Thus, it is the creation of Scripture that is in view here, not the subsequent interpretation of it.

The New Testament writers often state it is the moral state of the reader, not the intellectual state, that prevents clear understanding of Scripture (cf., 1 Corinthians 2:14; 2 Corinthians 3:14-16; 4:3-4; Hebrews 5:14; James 1:5-6, etc.). Paul affirms the clarity of his words to the church at Corinth: "We write you nothing but what you can read and understand" (2 Corinthians 1:13). It is helpful to keep in mind that Paul's letters were read to the entire church - to all present, even Greeks with little understanding of Jewish culture and unbelievers. Scripture is able to be understood by all - by unbelievers who read it sincerely seeking salvation, and by believers who read it seeking God's help in understanding it. This is because in both cases the Holy Spirit combats the influence of sin which otherwise would make the wisdom of God appear obtuse to the natural man (1 Corinthians 2:14).

3.3 Cultural / Historical Perspective

When attempting to interpret Scripture, it is important to remember that the Bible was written in a specific culture - the ancient Jewish or "Semitic" culture of the near East. Our culture - the post-Modern Western culture - is vastly different from that of the authors of Scripture; we will sometimes find deep differences in what we take to be "givens" in a specific area of knowledge and what the Biblical writers took as their "givens." The Biblical writer's history, culture, customs, environment, and language are diverse and removed from our culture and way of life.

We will find that great gaps exist between eastern and western culture; therefore we need some help in bridging these gaps. We, as westerners, will find ourselves separated from the Bible culturally, geographically, historically and especially by language.

On the other hand, we believe God's Word to be universal in meaning and application. We believe the Holy Spirit will reveal all truth to us, particularly with regard to the Bible. Many in the New Testament churches did not understand the Hebrew of the Old Testament, yet the Apostles expected them to understand the truth of the Old Testament scriptures when translated into Greek. Does this mean that we may safely ignore the cultural, historical, and language differences between us and the Biblical writer? I don't believe it does, any more than we may rely on the Holy Spirit to teach us to speak or read or use logic. The Holy Spirit inspired the Biblical authors and illuminates God's Word to those who earnestly seek its truth, but interpretation is properly the responsibility of individual Christians.

Paul describes the one who "rightly divides" the Word of Truth as a "workman;" thus proper interpretation comes through effort. Paul is writing to Timothy who was apparently gifted as a teacher, and certainly the Holy Spirit provides the church gifted teachers to help us better understand God's Word, but Scripture is quite clear that we are all to read, study, and meditate upon God's Word (cf., 1 Timothy 4:13; Proverbs 4:2; Psalm 1:1-3) - and this can only be done if we are prepared to be "workmen" and to test the things our teachers teach us against the pure measure of Scripture (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

3.4 What This Text Means to Me...

The view that all one must do is pray and read the Bible, and the Holy Spirit will provide the proper interpretation, or the view that one's own, idiosyncratic interpretation of Scripture is just as valid as that any other ("what this text means to *me*...") renders the interpretation non-falsifiable. That is, if I say that the Holy Spirit provided me with *the* interpretation, or *my* interpretation, it is impossible for anyone to demonstrate that I have wrongly divided the Word. The "truth" I have arrived at is self-contained and ultimately incommunicable to you. You will have to "experience" the same personal revelation, and even then, we will may wonder if our two experiences really were identical, or if there were subtle differences that may affect our interpretation. This

hermeneutic methodology (or really *lack* of methodology) provides ample opportunity for me to twist Scripture to my own destruction, and to that of any others who would follow my interpretation (2 Peter 3:16).

The noble-minded Bereans in Acts 17 diligently searched the Scriptures, seeking to learn if the Gospel Paul was preaching to them was true. We may be certain that they held a common view - an "orthodox" interpretation of the Scriptures they read - by which they measured what Paul was saying. This interpretation, if contemporary Rabbinic writings are any measure, was a careful application of principles like the ones we shall be considering.

It may be helpful at this point to consider the definition of some terms and concepts that pertain to hermeneutics.

3.5 Some Definitions

Revelation: The act of God the Holy Spirit unveiling or uncovering truths that man through his own intellect, reason, and investigation cannot discover for himself.

Inspiration: The act of the Holy Spirit superintending the writing of the truths that God wants man to know. I use the term "superintending" to indicate that God uses the personality, experience, vocabulary, and writing style of the author. Inspiration is divine guidance, not dictation. By superintending the Biblical authors, God ensures that His revelation is recorded accurately and without error.

Illumination: The act of the Holy Spirit to convict the reader of the truth of Scripture and lead the reader to an "extra-exegetical" understanding of the general truth of God's Word.. By "extra-exegetical," I don't mean to imply that the Holy Spirit is not involved in the process of exegesis (the interpretation of a given passage), but that illumination is properly understood to be an aspect of the convicting role of the Spirit, to soften the heart. God speaks to us through His written Word. The Holy Spirit helps us to know that what we are reading is indeed God's Word.

Interpretation: The prayerful application of Scriptural principles by which the illuminated student of God's Word comes to an understanding of Scripture that corresponds as closely as humanly possible to the inspired meaning. The Holy Spirit reveals general truths about God; the student, convicted of these general truths, applies hermeneutic principles to arrive at the proper meaning of specific passages.

3.6 Schools of Biblical Interpretation

Through the centuries, people have recognized the value in using principles for interpretation. But, humans being the way we are, have developed a number of

different principles and methodologies. Here's a brief summary of the more popular hermeneutic "schools:"

The Allegorical Schools of Interpretation: This method of interpretation developed among the Hellenized Jews and Christians who were strongly influenced by Platonic philosophies. Clement of Alexandria and Origen are two early church "fathers" who viewed Scripture, particularly the Old Testament, as being symbolic rather than literal.

The allegorical school teaches that beneath each verse of scripture (beneath the obvious) is the "real" meaning of the passage. Hidden in each sentence or statement is a symbolic spiritual meaning.

The Roman Catholic Church allegorizes some passages of Scripture. For example, the Catholic Church views the bread and wine of Melchizedek in the Book of Genesis, the manna in the wilderness, and the oil in the diet of Elijah, as allegorical "types" of the Catholic Mass.

This method of interpretation was rejected by all of the Reformers. Luther called it a scourge. Calvin called it Satanic. Those holding to the principles of the Reformation generally regard this method of interpretation as undermining the power and impact of the literal Word. That is not to say that the Reformers rejected all allegorical interpretations, but argued instead that allegorical or symbolic passages were contained in clearly defined contexts, such as the Book of Revelation.

The Devotional Schools of Interpretation: The devotional schools emphasize the edifying aspects of the scriptures and their interpretation, with the goal of developing one's spiritual life.

This method often advocated the reading of the scriptures as a means of obtaining a mystical experience. The Bible is said to be useful for devotion and prayer, but need not be studied. Critics of the devotional school argue that while the Bible is uniquely able to spiritually edify and is the primary means by which God conforms us to the image of His Son, this school's methodology can lead to idiosyncratic interpretations which have little to do with the truth of Scripture.

The Liberal Schools of Interpretation: Theological liberalism is prevalent today. Liberal theologians do not accept the Bible as the infallible Word of God and reject the verbal inspiration of the Bible.

This is not the place to provide a thorough critique of liberalism in Bible Studies and its various critical methods (Source, Form, Historical Critical, etc.). I note here, however, that once one abandons the verbal inspiration of the Bible, one's own intellect becomes the determining factor in questions of truth. Relativism is the inevitable result, which,

when extrapolated to its logical conclusion, is unable to prove anything with certainty, let alone one's preferred liberal interpretation.

The Literal Schools of Interpretation: The literal method of interpreting the Bible is to accept the literal rendering of each sentence unless by virtue of the nature of the sentence or phrase or a clause within the sentence renders it impossible. For instance, figures of speech or fables of allegories do not admit to being of a literal interpretation.

The spirit of literal interpretation is that we should be satisfied with the literal interpretation of a text unless very substantial reasons can be given for advancing beyond the literal meaning.

When the New Testament writers refer to the Old Testament scriptures, they interpret those passages literally. The writings of the earliest Church Fathers (Ignatius of Antioch, Irenaeus, and Justin Martyr) indicate that they took Scripture literally, unless the context clearly militated against it. Thus, we have Biblical and extra-Biblical evidence that in the earliest days of Christianity, a literal interpretation of Scripture was displayed.

In case you haven't guessed, this is only school of interpretation that I believe has a Biblical basis, and as such, it is the foundation of the hermeneutical principles I attempt to follow in my own study of God's Word.

3.7 The Principles of Biblical Interpretation

There are certain principles that will help us to accurately handle the Word of Truth. These principles are embedded in the scripture itself. We do not need to go beyond the boundaries of the Bible to discover these laws and maxims that are used to determine the meaning of scripture. The Bible interprets itself (scripture interprets scripture).

3.7.1 Principle #1: The Literal Interpretation Principle

We take the Bible at face value. We generally take everyday things in life as literal or at face value. This is a common sense approach. Even symbols and allegories in the Bible are based on the literal meaning of the scripture; thus the literal meaning is foundational to any symbolic or allegorical meaning.

The golden rule of interpretation is: "When the plain sense of the scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense." Therefore, take every word at its primary, usual, meaning, unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and fundamental truths, clearly indicate otherwise.

3.7.2 Principle #2: The Contextual Principle

D.A. Carson has been quoted as saying, "A text without a context is a pretext for a proof text." By "proof text," of course, Carson means the abuse of a single verse or phrase taken out of context to "prove" a particular view. The word "text" is derived from the Latin word, which means to "weave." The context is that which accompanies the text. The Word of God is a perfect unit. The scriptures cannot be broken; they all hang together, a perfect unity. We must look and consider the verses immediately before, after, and around the passage. We must consider the book of the Bible and the section of the Bible in which the passage occurs. The Bible must be interpreted within the framework of the Bible.

3.7.3 Principle #3: The Scripture Interprets Scripture Principle

We may rest assured that God did not reveal an important doctrine in a single, ambiguous passage. All essential doctrines are fully and clearly explained - either in the immediate context, or somewhere else in the Bible. This principle is best illustrated by what is known as "topical Bible study." There are two essential 'rules' for applying this principle: 1) The context of the two passages must be the same; and 2) The plain passage must be used to guide our interpretation of a less clear passage - not the other way around!

3.7.4 Principle #4: The Progressive Revelation Principle

The Word of God is to be understood from the Old Testament to the New Testament as a flower unfolding its petals to the morning sun. God initiated revelation, but He did not reveal His truths all at one time. It was a long and progressive process. Therefore, we must take into account the then-current state of revelation to properly understand a particular passage. For example, an interpretation of a passage in Genesis which assumed a fully delineated view of the "new Covenant" would not be sound. As the saying goes, "The Old Testament is the New Testament concealed, and the New Testament is the Old Testament revealed."

3.7.5 Principle #5: The Accommodation Principle

The Bible is to be interpreted in view of the fact that it is an accommodation of Divine truths to human minds: God the infinite communicating with man the finite. The Bible was written in three languages: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. The Bible was also created in space, in time, and in history so that man could understand it. The truths of God made contact with the human mind at a common point, the Bible, to make God (and, indeed, all of reality) knowable. We must be careful, then, not to push accommodating language about God and His nature to literal extremes. God does not have feathers and wings (e.g., Psalms 17:8); nor is He our literal Father in the same sense our earthly father is.

3.7.6 Principle #6: The One Interpretation Principle

Every verse in the Bible has only one interpretation, although that verse may have many applications. The one correct interpretation is that which mirrors the intent of the inspired author.

3.7.7 Principle #7: The Harmony of Scripture Principle

No part of the Bible may be interpreted so as to contradict another part of the Bible. The Christian presupposes the inerrancy and harmony of Scripture as a necessary result of a perfect Creator God revealing Himself perfectly to Mankind. Proper application of hermeneutical principles will resolve apparent conflicts. The key here, of course, is the word "proper," for exegetical fallacies can easily result from a zealous but ill-informed attempt to "save" Scripture from an apparent contradiction.

3.7.8 Principle #8: The Genre Principle

Genre is a literary term having to do with the category or "genus" of literature under consideration. Proper interpretation must take the general literary category of any given passage into consideration. Are we dealing with poetry or prose? Are we dealing with history or prophecy? It is important that when we interpret the Word of God, we understand as much as possible the author's intent. For example, if the author is writing history - the genre of the Pentateuch of Moses - it would not be proper to interpret a single reference (such as the speech of Balaam's ass) as a poetic personification, unless a variety of contextual markers compelled us to do so.

Here are some books of the Bible and their respective genres:

Psalms - Poetry

Proverbs - Wise Sayings

Isaiah - History and Prophecy

The Gospels - Biography and History

The Epistles - Teaching and Doctrine

Revelation - Eschatology and Prophecy

3.7.9 Principle #9: The Grammatical Principle

The Bible was originally written in three languages: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. While we have several highly accurate translations of the Bible in English, all translation involves a certain amount of interpretation on the part of the translator. Thus, the study of word meanings, grammar, and syntax of the original languages is important for a proper understanding of Scripture. This doesn't mean that every student of the Bible must learn Hebrew or Greek. There are a number of tools available - lexicons, Bible dictionaries, detailed exegetical commentaries - that can provide a deeper understanding of crucial passages.

3.7.10 Principle #10: The Historical Background Principle

The Bible was composed in a specific culture at a particular point in time. While they are universal in application, the truths in the Bible can most fully be realized only when taking the surrounding culture and history into account. For example, when Jesus is called "the first fruits" (1 Corinthians 15:20), we may have some understanding of this title from the Old Testament, but a study of Jewish religious practice in the first century can provide a deeper understanding of why Paul chose *this* title in *this* passage, as opposed to another title with the same general meaning of "first."

The exegetical commentaries on this website generally follow the "Grammatico-Historical" method of interpretation. As its name implies, this method of interpretation focuses attention not only on literary forms but upon grammatical constructions and historical contexts out of which the Scriptures were written. It is solidly in the "literal schools" of interpretation, and is the hermeneutical methodology embraced by virtually all evangelical Protestant exegetes and scholars. It embraces each of the ten principles enumerated above and rejects the "fallacies" listed below.

Unfortunately, each of the principles of interpretation we have considered may be abused in various ways. Fortunately, the remedy for the resulting misinterpretation is generally as simple as recognizing which principle has been abused and the proper reapplication of that principle to the passage in question. Here are some common exegetical fallacies resulting from the misuse of hermeneutic principles.

3.8 Exegetical Fallacies

3.8.1 Taking Figurative Language Literally

When Jesus says that He is the "door," few would take Him literally. Some, however, take figurative language, such as Jesus "sitting at the right hand of the Father," to mean that the Father has a literal right hand (and thus, a physical body). The phrase "at the right hand" was a figurative expression in Semitic cultures in Biblical times, signifying a position of authority. It did not mean that the one exalted literally sat next to the one doing the exalting. The Literal Interpretation Principle does not mean that we woodenly take every word in the Bible literally, but rather that we approach it as we would any other book, taking figurative phrases, hyperbole, poetic personifications, and other figures of speech into account in our interpretation.

3.8.2 Over-Contextualizing

Some view Jehovah's declaration that He does not "know" of any other gods in Isaiah 44:8 as limited to the immediate context. Since Jehovah is here engaging in a polemic against idol-worship, some would suggest that Jehovah is really saying that He knows of no idols who are real gods - but leaves open the possibility of other subordinate gods

who are not idols. While we must safeguard against taking words or phrases out of context, there is no warrant for taking an absolute statement and confining it to immediate context. Jehovah says He knows of no other gods. He says this in the context of chastising those who worship idols, but this context does not limit His statement, any more than the Great Commission is limited to the disciples who heard Jesus speak it.

3.8.3 Allowing the Implicit to Explain the Explicit

Jesus is called "firstborn" on several occasions in the New Testament. In Colossians 1:15, He is called the "firstborn of all creation." Many non-Trinitarians see in these verses evidence that the Son of God was a created being - the first creation of Jehovah. Trinitarians point to verses like John 1:3 and Colossians 1:16, which state that the Son pre-existed all things. Non-Trinitarians argue that we should interpret these verses in light of Jesus as "the firstborn." Thus, "all things" must mean "all other things." Trinitarians argue that the "firstborn" passages must be viewed in light of John 1:3 and Colossians 1:16, and thus must be a figurative title. The term translated "firstborn" has a figurative as well as a literal connotation. Even if taken literally, non-Trinitarians typically do not believe that the Son of God was literally born, and thus they believe that it *implies* the creation of the Son in some fashion. John 1:3 and Colossians 1:16, on the other hand, *explicitly* state that the Son existed before all things, and indeed that all things came into existence through Him. Allowing the implicit to explain the explicit - the possible to explain the certain - is not a sound interpretive principle. *Scripture indeed interprets Scripture*, so long as clarity explains ambiguity, and not the other way around.

3.8.4 Modern Day Revelation

Some groups claim that God continues to reveal Himself in various ways to an elite cadre of spiritually mature and/or gifted individuals. Some, like Latter Day Saints, believe that this modern day revelation has produced new scriptures. When contradictions between these "revelations" and the Bible are pressed, these groups often respond that God's revelation is progressive, and thus may accommodate new or revised doctrines for the modern era. But progressive revelation may never be used to overthrow the principle of the harmony of Scripture. God may have chosen to reveal Himself gradually to humanity, but He does not contradict Himself.

3.8.5 Harmonization by Denial

The Bible declares that Jesus was a man (John 1:14; 1 Timothy 2:5; etc.). It also calls Him God (John 1:1; 20:28; etc.). God says in Hosea 11:9 that He is not man. Non-Trinitarians that hold to the principle of the harmony of Scripture, believe these verses present an apparent contradiction, and they resolve this contradiction by denying the fully Deity of Christ. They either favor grammatical arguments that remove the

attribution of "God" to Jesus, or they argue that He must be a lesser divinity and not true God. It is certainly exegetically valid to deny what Scripture does not explicitly or implicitly affirm. However, to deny what Scripture affirms both explicitly and implicitly is not a sound hermeneutical methodology. If we truly believe in the sufficiency of Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16), we should allow Scripture to shape our theology (or, in this case, our Christology) in such a way that Scripture is harmonized by complete affirmation of its teaching. Thus, when Scripture tells us the Christ is both Man and God, we should allow these truths to shape our view of Christ's nature, rather than deny one or the other.

3.8.6 Problems Relating to Literary Genre

To properly take genre into consideration, we must first understand the genre in its historical context. In most cases, this is not difficult. However, some genres - such as "proverbs" - offers some considerable challenge. A proverb is not a promise - those who approach the book of Proverbs in this fashion are likely to be disappointed when the expected promise is not fulfilled. Further, as D.A. Carson notes, Proverbs 23:3-4 seem to offer contradictory advice: "Do not answer a fool according to his folly ... Answer a fool according to his folly." (*Exegetical Fallacies*, pp. 137-138). Careful exegesis is necessary to resolve this and other apparent contradictions, and such exegesis depends in no small part on the proper understanding of genre.

3.8.7 Misunderstanding Proper Application of Grammar

A wide range of fallacies can result from a misunderstanding or misuse of grammatical tools. For example, a simplistic approach to "word studies" can produce a number of problematic interpretations. A common misuse of lexicons or Bible dictionaries is to assume that the "literal" or "original" meaning of a word pertains in a given context. Jehovah's Witnesses, for example, defend the rendering of the Greek word *kolasis* in Matthew 25:46 found in their *New World Translation* (NWT) with what may be termed an "etymological fallacy." The NWT translates *kolasis* as "cutting off." While *kolasis* originally had this meaning in classical Greek times, by the 1st Century, *kolasis* had taken on the meaning "punishment," which is why the majority of English translations render *kolasis* this way. Witnesses confuse the original meaning of *kolasis* with the common meaning in the contemporary setting. Some Witnesses may cite older lexicons in favor of the NWT translation, but no modern lexicon provides "cutting off" as a valid translation of any 1st Century text, and a careful examination of the older lexicons reveals that they were dependent on *classical* Greek texts, not texts contemporary with the New Testament.

While word studies are important to proper interpretation, we must be careful to use them as a part of an overall methodology that takes all aspects of the text - including then-current word usage - into account.

3.8.8 Historical Fabrication

The reconstruction of Biblical history presents a whole host of opportunities for interpretive fallacies. The interpretations of the New Testament offered by scholars such as those in the Jesus Seminar depend largely on theoretical reconstructions of various "communities" in the early years of the Christian Church. While the reconstructions may originate from deductions based on certain passages of Scripture, they soon become intertwined with the interpretation of other passages to such a degree that it is difficult to separate the theoretical reconstruction from the interpretation. This fallacious approach to Scripture is true whether the reconstruction in question is the result of liberal Historical Criticism run amok, or the superficial attempts by Non-Trinitarians to portray "Biblical Monotheism" as anything but *monothesis*. The problem is that we have almost no access to the history of 1st Century beliefs outside the New Testament. Some speculation based on extra-canonical texts is certainly possible, but it is a fallacy to think that speculative reconstruction has any force in informing our interpretation of Scripture.

3.9 Overview of Hermeneutics

The Bible contains 66 books, written in three languages over 1,500 years by dozens of authors writing in numerous genres for diverse audiences. Scripture is clear enough that anyone can grasp the essentials of the faith. At the same time, extensive reading leads to riddles: Why does Moses apparently condone polygamy and slavery? What is a denarius? Who is Apollyon? Why do the apostles care about meat that is offered to idols?

3.10 The Requirements for Interpretation

Skill in interpretation is needed to gain the most from the Bible. When Scriptures are read in the church, leaders can answer questions and orient listeners to its great themes. Still, people rightly desire to read and understand the Bible for themselves (Jer. 31:31–34; 1 John 2:27).

Interpretation of the Bible requires technical skill and spiritual receptivity. Though all God's people have a significant ability to read and understand the great teachings of the Bible in their own language (see Deut. 6:6–7; Ps. 1:1–2; 19: 7; 119:130; 1 Cor. 1:2; Eph. 3:4; Col. 4:16), there also remain more detailed and precise questions about meaning that sometimes require technical knowledge of Greek and Hebrew, as well as of Scripture's historical, cultural, and intellectual backgrounds. Here interpretation resembles the reading of dense poetry or constitutional documents. Interpretation is also an art, mastered not by rigid adherence to procedures but by long practice conducted under tutors. Interpretation is also a spiritual task. To read the Bible is not to dissect a lifeless text that only contains marks on a page. As people read Scripture, Scripture reads them, questions them, reveals their thoughts

(Heb. 4:12)—and it leads to a Person, not just truths. All Scripture points to Jesus' death and resurrection, to forgiveness, and to personal knowledge of God through him.

To profit from Scripture, one must take the right posture. At one extreme, the skeptic questions and judges whatever he or she reads. At the other, the overconfident believer, convinced that he has mastered biblical or systematic theology, ignores or explains away whatever fails to support his system. Interpreters should come to Scripture humbly, expecting to learn and be corrected, willing to observe Scripture closely and accept whatever they find. All Scripture is breathed out by God (2 Tim. 3:16), so every word counts. If a biblical narrator mentions something as seemingly insignificant as a character's hair, this detail will probably be important—as the hair of Esau, Samson, and Absalom shows!

Interpreters also need skills. The remainder of this article explains the skills necessary to read the Bible in context, to find the main point of a passage, to develop a theme, and to apply Scripture.

3.10.1 Knowing the Context

It is a truism that one must read the Bible in context, but the truism hides a distinction. "Context" can refer to the historical or the literary context. The *literary context* includes the words, sentences, and paragraphs preceding and following a passage. The literary context locates a passage within the larger purposes of a book. Readers should ask why a particular passage is *here* and not elsewhere, how it builds upon prior passages, and how it prepares for the next. The disciples once said to Jesus, "Increase our faith" (Luke 17:5). Absent a context, it seems like a godly request (which it may be in some contexts). But here the disciples say it after they hear a difficult command and before Jesus tells them they merely need the faith of a mustard seed. Considering this context, some interpreters have seen "Increase our faith" as an excuse, not a godly request.

One should also locate a passage in *the context of its entire book*. Paul's statement "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God ..." (Rom. 12:1) stands at a hinge in Romans. Paul had just finished recounting God's mercies in Romans 3–11. His "therefore" summons readers to see that God's abundant mercies lead them into heartfelt service.

The *historical context* includes knowledge of the culture, economy, geography, climate, agriculture, architecture, family life, morals, and social structure of the Bible's actors, authors, and readers. Over the centuries, climate and topography hardly vary, but other factors shift more. For example, Israel was poor and weak under Samuel and Saul, strong and rich under David and Solomon.

Historical contexts help readers make sense of passages like Deuteronomy 22:8, which says a builder “shall make a parapet” around the roof of a new home, lest someone fall from it and “bring the guilt of blood” upon the house. A parapet is a retaining wall around the edge of a flat roof. Since Israelites worked, ate, and slept on their roofs, parapets kept reckless boys and restless sleepers from tumbling off. The law taught Israel how to preserve life and to love neighbors.

Again, in Luke 11:27–28 a woman called out to Jesus, “Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts at which you nursed.” The woman’s mind-set explains her odd-sounding speech. In antiquity, women gained honor by marrying a great man or bearing great children. The woman praised Jesus by praising his mother—only a great woman could bear such a great son. Jesus nudges her in another direction: “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.” In other words, a woman finds greatness in discipleship more than in matrimony or maternity.

Interpreters must read carefully to recognize both obvious and hidden riddles. Some matters are less clear than they seem. Do contemporary readers know precisely what judges, elders, and talents are? Study resources include a study Bible, and also, in increasing depth, a Bible dictionary, an encyclopedia, and scholarly commentaries. The quality of sources, not the quantity, is paramount.

Background studies permit more accurate study of a text’s line of thought. The genre of the passage must be noted, since narrative, law, prophecy, visions, wisdom literature, and epistles all have distinct modes of operation, with subtypes within each genre. To simplify, however, the most basic distinction in terms of genre is between *narrative* and *discourse*.

3.10.2 Interpreting Narratives

Narratives can be long or short, complex or simple. They can be distinguished as speech stories, reports, and dramatic narratives. A speech story sets up a significant teaching, usually delivered near the end. Consider Jesus’ encounters with a centurion (Matt. 8:5–13) and with Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1–10). Reports briefly describe battles, travels, or minor kings. They lack drama and reveal their secrets through patterns. For example, taken together, the reports of Solomon’s reign show gold slowly becoming more prominent, and more highly valued, than wisdom. Solomon spent more on his palace than on the temple, and his adherence to the law steadily declined (1 Kings 4–11). Readers can draw conclusions as they read the reports in canonical perspective.

Many narratives feature complex characters and dramatic tension. To interpret narrative, one must note the story’s time and place, its characters, and their interests. Soon conflict develops, leading to a crisis, then resolution. The reader should enter the story as if he or she were there, especially at the dramatic climax—

when Abraham's knife is poised, when David strides toward Goliath. The resolution follows—the angel calls out, the stone finds its mark. Narratives convey moral, spiritual, and theological truths (1 Cor. 10:11), but one must first look for God's action. He is the prime character in biblical narratives. Readers should ask therefore how God reveals himself, and how he fulfills his covenant promises, in this or that particular story.

The main point of a narrative typically appears in the climax-resolution nexus. The narrator or a character in the story will often reveal that central truth. Dialogue discloses character and motivation (e.g., Luke 15:28–32). In the Abraham-Isaac account, both Abraham and the narrator say that the Lord will provide, and he does (Gen. 22:8, 14). In the David-Goliath narrative, David says, “The battle is the LORD's, and he will give you into our hand,” and he does (1 Sam. 17:45–49). The main point in these narratives is not “Abraham obeyed a hard command and believers should, too,” or “David was brave and Christians should be, too.” The lessons are that “the Lord provides” and “the battle is the Lord's” (and then, also, that he is certainly worthy of trust!). The stories' characters go on quests, face choices, and respond to God faithfully or unfaithfully—but the Lord is the main agent, and believers, unbelievers, and bystanders are always responding to him. In the process they show how people tend to respond, for good or ill, and Bible readers should imitate their good responses and avoid their mistakes.

3.10.3 Interpreting Discourse

In discourse, which is the other main type of text in the Bible, the search for the main point (not necessarily the point that most interests the reader) remains central as well. This is true whether the text is poetry, prophecy, or an epistle. The point commonly appears first or last in a passage. (Whole books also have themes that are stated first or last; see Matt. 28:18–20 and Rom. 1:16–17.) Many Psalms reveal their theme at once: “Bless the LORD, O my soul” (103:1; cf. 42:1; 107:1). Passages in the Epistles sometimes start with the main point and then elaborate on it. James, for instance, says straight off that not many should aspire to be teachers (3:1a) because they face stricter judgment (3:1b) and because the tongue is beyond control (3:2–8). Other passages build to a climax, as in Jesus' teaching on the law, “You therefore must be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect” (Matt. 5:48). On numerous occasions, writers repeat the main point. The author of Judges says twice that “Everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (17:6; 21:25). Paul tells the Corinthians three times to be content in their assigned calling (1 Cor. 7:17, 20, 24). Careful students of Scripture will reread a passage, both to find the main point and to observe the way the biblical authors think. Illustrations, elaborations, and answers to foes are best understood by seeing how they serve the principal lesson.

This is not to say that the main point should be considered the only point or the only important point. For example, though Romans 1:16–17 is the overall theme of

Romans, literally hundreds of other theological and ethical truths are taught throughout the pages of this letter. The individual parts are best understood in light of how they contribute to the whole.

3.10.4 Tracing Specific Themes throughout the Bible

Interpreters also need to learn how to search through Scripture to collect its comprehensive teaching on various specific themes. Students can start topical studies by reading passages listed in their Bibles' cross-references. Concordances are valuable, but they can mislead if readers simply limit their scope to verses that use a particular word. Students of the Bible must locate concepts, not just words, to develop a theme. For example, a concordance search on "pray/prayer/praying" would turn up only one verse in John's Gospel (John 17:9), but several other verses tell how to "ask" God for various things, and those verses also teach a number of particular lessons about prayer. Ideas also unfold progressively within the OT, into the NT, and sometimes even within a single book. Wise interpreters still locate every verse in its context and ask how the original audience understood it. For great topics such as work, marriage, or the love of God, it helps to note what the Bible says within the frame of each of the four great epochs: creation, fall, redemption, and restoration.

3.10.5 Applying God's Word

Biblical application chiefly requires careful prayer and meditation, but one must realize that application is more than following commands. Applying Scripture means accepting and fulfilling God-given duties, seeking a godly character, pursuing goals that the Lord blesses, and seeing the world his way. This produces four questions readers can ask themselves that often lead to helpful application: What should I do? Who should I be (or who should I realize that I am, in Christ)? Where should I go? How can I see?

People also apply the Bible when they let it lead them to Christ. After the fall, the Lord promised a redeemer. Every good prophet, priest, king, and judge points to one who would perfectly fulfill their roles, and every false leader causes the reader to cry out for one who would be true. (For further development of this idea throughout the OT, see *History of Salvation in the Old Testament: Preparing the Way for Christ*.) From the start of the Gospels, Jesus is portrayed as Son of God and Son of Man. Each phase in the Gospel accounts leads toward the climax in the crucifixion and its resolution in the resurrection. Each epistle interprets that great event until Scripture ends in Revelation's songs of praise to the Lamb and the Lion, the King of kings and Lord of lords, contemplated, trusted, and adored. Thus interpretative skills must lead beyond conceptual knowledge to a Person, and a vital relationship with him.

3.11 Interpreting the Bible: A Historical Overview

Is there any benefit to reading the Bible as it was understood by previous generations of Christians? Yes, certainly, because the Bible was written for them as well as us. God spoke to them through the Bible as he does to us today, and the spiritual gift of teaching was given to individuals then as it is now. Therefore when we read the biblical interpretations of previous generations, going all the way back to the earliest days of the church, we can often gain insight and perspectives that we might otherwise overlook because of the cultural biases of our own time.

However, before we seek to benefit from the interpretations of previous generations, it is helpful to have a broad overview of the dominant methods of biblical interpretation from various periods in church history.

The earliest followers of Christ interpreted the Hebrew Scriptures (the OT) as Jesus taught them—as a book of anticipations pointing to Christ himself. He was the long-promised Messiah, the Redeemer who would reverse the effects of the primal fall and restore the world to pristine holiness. Jesus taught that the OT spoke of him. To his critics he said, “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me” (John 5:39). The Gospel accounts suggest that Jesus understood the OT from a Christocentric, typological perspective; he is repeatedly cast as the fulfillment of the Scriptures. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus made it clear that his views did not contradict Moses, but he had come to invest the Law and the Prophets with their proper and full meaning (Matt. 5:17). Two themes run through Jesus’ teaching: (1) the Law was the perfect revelation of God to humanity, and (2) Jesus came to fulfill the Law by meeting its exacting demands for a righteous standing before God.

This approach to the OT is how the earliest writers of the Christian Scriptures (the NT) approached their own writings. They spoke of the OT in the same way that Jesus had: as a book not merely telling the pre-Christian history of Israel but telling that history in a way that had present and future significance for Christians. The OT was the original sacred book of the church, giving assurance that Jesus was the promised and anointed one predicted by the prophets.

3.11.1 Marcion

Not everyone in the early church grasped the concept of continuity between the two Testaments, as evidenced by Marcion, who taught in Rome between A.D. 140 and 160. He argued that the OT was vastly inferior to the writings of the apostles, most notably Paul. He adopted a literal approach to interpretation, but his dualistic grid discounted the OT, which he believed set forth a different God from the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, and was not to be read in the churches. His approach pitted

law against grace, and the OT God against a God of love. The wider church, however, soon recognized Marcion's innovations as a mistake.

3.11.2 Justin Martyr and Irenaeus

In reaction to Marcion, other Christian teachers formulated a more orthodox way of approaching the sacred writings. Justin Martyr (c. A.D. 100–165), an early defender of Christianity, argued that the difference between the OT and NT is only a matter of degree. The OT anticipated and foretold events, and was superseded by the NT writings because they represented the fulfillment of earlier anticipations. Thus, Justin Martyr, particularly in his *Dialogue*, stressed a messianic continuity and utilized a literal-historical approach to interpretation.

However, it was Irenaeus (c. A.D. 130–200) who gathered the threads of interpretation more systematically. Though his approach to the OT was more literal than that of his predecessors, he also saw a typological meaning in the text. In Irenaeus's view the Scriptures are like "treasure hidden in a field" (Matt. 13:44) in that the literal was also the typological: the Bible is full of prefigurements, especially of the Messiah. Irenaeus also championed ideas that are still generally accepted by modern interpreters: (1) exegesis should pay careful attention to context; (2) unclear or obscure texts should be interpreted by clearer ones; and (3) a nonliteral reading of some passages may be warranted. Irenaeus held that the true meaning of the Scriptures is the interpretation of the apostles as presented in the NT and is embodied in the Rule of Faith (that is, the established and widely accepted understanding of the main doctrines of Scripture) as preserved through the teachings of the church.

3.11.3 Clement and Origen

Christian teachers in Alexandria, such as Clement (c. A.D. 150–215) and Origen (c. 185–254), were profoundly influenced by the work of Philo (a Jewish philosopher who wrote, and thought, in Greek; d. 50) and Plato's philosophy of Idealism. Clement and Origen read the Bible as having multiple levels of meaning. The surface meaning was literal, but it often hid a deeper, spiritual meaning. They held the Bible to be verbally accurate, and in this manner the integrity of the text was preserved; but where the literal meaning was obscure, this was thought to suggest a more profound, allegorical meaning. To Origen, who systematized this newer approach, the literal or simple meaning of the text was for those who could not grasp the intricate nature of languages (i.e., figures of speech, mysterious sayings), while the deeper meaning was for the learned or more spiritual. Using the body-soul-spirit analogy, he argued that the Bible should be interpreted literally, morally, and mystically. As a result, the historical meaning of Scripture was devalued. The deep meaning of the text could be separated from the literal meaning, resulting in theological speculation. This approach, therefore, was marked by subjectivity,

depending more upon the insight of the interpreter rather than seeking consistency with other established doctrines of Scripture. Though Origen never contradicted the Rule of Faith, he did in fact speculate beyond it.

3.11.4 Theodore, Jerome, and Augustine

Later teachers such as Theodore of Mopsuestia (c. A.D. 350–428), Jerome (c. 342–420), and Augustine (354–430) criticized the allegorical method of the Alexandrians as being arbitrary and nonrational. These teachers argued that the Scriptures are to be interpreted in both a literal and a Christocentric sense. They insisted that their method was not the same as the allegorical approach, because it was rooted in the text of Scripture itself. They refused to disconnect the literal, historical meaning of the text from its spiritual meaning. Jerome, though initially a proponent of allegorization, later embraced the literal-historical approach to Scripture without abandoning the deeper spiritual meaning of the text that had been championed by Theodore and others. Jerome insisted that scriptural texts should be read in a historical context, something the allegorical approach had de-emphasized.

The greatest theologian of the early church was Augustine. He championed a literal, historical approach to reading the Bible, insisting that a proper understanding must begin with the mind of the writer, which required knowing the biblical languages and paying attention to context. The fourfold approach to Scripture that he put forth (see below) was widely used, and abused, in the Medieval era.

3.11.5 Medieval Churchmen

The Medieval church gradually became enamored of the allegorical method of interpretation, which was used to buttress church dogma that lacked a strong basis in Scripture. Medievalists developed a fourfold approach to interpreting the Bible: the *literal*, showing what God did; the *allegorical*, showing what at surface level God hid; the *moral*, revealing what believers should do; and the *mystical*, or *anagogical*, showing the heavenly life in which, for Christians, things will end. In effect, the method obscured the true meaning of the Bible by imposing arbitrary meanings on it. Theology took precedence over careful literal-historical exegesis.

In the high Middle Ages, the great scholastic Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) embraced the literal-historical (as opposed to allegorical) approach. In his skillful hands the proper approach to the Bible was an exegetical method that assumed the primacy of the literal meaning of the text. To Aquinas, multiplying levels of meaning in a single text was confusing in that it would blunt the force of any biblical argument; further, he thought that a parabolic sense of Scripture could be part of its proper meaning. He recognized that the intended meaning of a text is contained in words, and words can be used both literally (in a narrow sense, excluding images and metaphors) and figuratively.

3.11.6 The Reformers

The Protestant Reformers of the sixteenth century reacted against the misuse of the Bible in Late Medieval theology. They insisted that authority rested not in the leaders or fathers of the church but in a proper understanding of the text derived from correct methods of literary interpretation. Reformers starting with John Wycliffe (c. 1330–1384) insisted on a grammatical-historical approach to the Bible. The German reformer Martin Luther (1483–1546) broke with the nonliteral, allegorical approach that was dominant in his training and returned to the patristic emphasis on the centrality of Christ in the Scriptures. He was adamant that the Bible be approached not through fanciful allegories or merely to support established dogma but through ordinary language and literal, historical, and grammatical exegesis. A proper understanding of the Bible should be the product of such interpretation of the scriptural texts and should lead to healthy theology and a robust Christian life.

The most prolific expositor of Scripture, as well as the first major systematizer of Protestant theology, was John Calvin (1509–1564). Calvin stressed Scripture over theology and saw theology as the fruit resulting from the proper interpretation of Scripture. He was a skilled linguist who approached the Bible from the viewpoint of its historical veracity, literal interpretation, and contextual analysis. He often interpreted prophetic texts in a typological manner (as looking forward to Christ), yet he strenuously opposed arbitrary allegorization, which he believed undermined the certainty and clarity of Scripture. Some assign to Calvin the designation “the founder of modern grammatical-historical exegesis,” which is confirmed by the continued popularity of his commentaries and the way in which modern interpreters still interact with him as a sober, accurate exegete.

3.11.7 The Enlightenment

In the generations following Calvin, the role of tradition in biblical interpretation was increasingly limited by a growing emphasis on the individual interpreter, a trend seen in the rise of the Enlightenment. (The Renaissance led to two great movements: the *Protestant Reformation*, which emancipated the Bible from ecclesiastical imprisonment, and the *Enlightenment*, which carried forward the attack on authority structures to ridicule the authority of the Bible, birthing the Modern era.) The essence of the Enlightenment was a rejection of the biblical doctrine of the utter brokenness of humanity and a belief that the human mind was capable of arriving at truth when unhindered by external authorities such as the church, tradition, or the Bible.

To many Enlightenment thinkers, the Bible became an untrustworthy book created by churchmen to keep minds captive under the threat of punishment. Thus, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, university scholarship embraced the

intellectual and philosophical assumptions of the Enlightenment, turning its full force against the veracity of the Scriptures. The Bible became viewed as a parched landscape with an occasional oasis. At best, it merely contained truth; it was not itself truth. The lasting effects of this approach have contributed to the dissolution of the Christian worldview, at least in Western industrialized nations.

3.11.8 The Heirs of the Reformation: Evangelical Protestantism

However, from the Reformation until today, the large central core of the Protestant church worldwide has held to an “evangelical” view of Scripture, rejecting the skepticism of post-Enlightenment Naturalism and Rationalism, and continuing to believe in the complete truthfulness and reliability of the Bible. In answer to the attacks of rationalism, evangelicals have shown that there is no contradiction between full trust in the Bible and intellectual integrity. With respect to proper biblical interpretation, they have appreciated the various understandings of Scripture held by previous generations but have also sought to correct previous misunderstandings by developing more precise standards for right interpretation (see “Interpreting the Bible: An Introduction”). This Study Bible is written from within this broad post-Reformation evangelical Protestant tradition.

(<https://www.esv.org/resources/esv-study-bible/article-interpreting/>)

3.12 Summary & Conclusion

Understanding the Bible

If you have ever had a prolonged discussion with a [“Christian cult” member] or New Ager over a passage of Scripture, you might relate to an experience that I had recently. I sat down with someone who had obviously spent considerable time in the Bible, who stated a desire to know God’s truth and was willing to work diligently to please God, sacrificing both time and money. However, when it came to determining what the Bible taught concerning how we might please Him and what we must do to be saved, we found little we could agree upon. At times it felt as if we were reading two completely different texts.

The problems I encountered were the result of different rules of interpretation. These rules are part of a discipline known as hermeneutics, which many consider to be both an art and a science. The rules that one uses to interpret Scripture play a vital role in determining the meaning of a passage, and thus, our understanding of God and ourselves. Does John 1:1 refer to Jesus as the co-creator of the universe, existing with God the Father eternally, indeed, being of the same essence as the Father? Or is Jesus’ divinity somehow inferior to the divinity of God the Father, a view that some [so-called

“Christians”] hold? The way we interpret this passage will be determined by the rules of interpretation we bring to our study. It is obvious that both interpretations cannot be correct. When John wrote the words for his Gospel, and specifically for the first chapter, he had one meaning in mind. He may not have understood all of the implications of what he was writing, nor could he have imagined all of the applications possible in future contexts. However, via the inspiration of the Holy Spirit John’s words were to communicate a specific truth about God.

There are three good reasons why we have difficulty understanding the biblical text. First, we are separated from the historical events written about by thousands of years of history. Second, we live in a dramatically different culture, and third, the biblical texts were written in foreign languages. These obstacles to understanding can be daunting to those who want quick and easy comprehension of the Bible. They also make it possible for others to place their own agenda over the text, knowing that few will take the time to uncover what the writer’s original intent might have been.

Our goal should be to exegete, or draw meaning from the Scriptures, rather than to impose meaning onto them. Jehovah’s Witnesses have decided that Jesus cannot be God; they claim that it is an irrational doctrine. As a result, they have worked hard at interpreting direct references to His deity as something else. In Hebrews 1:6 the angels are told to worship Jesus. Since the Witnesses at one time taught that Jesus was an angel, they translate the word found in the passage as obeisance rather than worship. More like a gesture of respect than the worship of the one true God. Unfortunately, they have to misquote a reference work in order to justify their translation. Their New World Translation has changed numerous passages in order to keep their doctrines intact.

[Below] we will review some of the principles of hermeneutics that have been accepted by the majority of conservative Protestants for many years. Our goal in doing so is that we may be able to rightly divide the Word of truth.

God’s Communication Link

One of the first steps to correctly interpreting Scripture is being aware of what the Bible says about itself and understanding how it has come down to us through the centuries.

Rather than causing a complete text about Himself and His creation to simply appear, God chose to use many individuals, over thousands of years to write His words down. God has also revealed something of Himself in nature. General revelation, in the world around us, gives us an indication of God’s glory and power. However, without special revelation, the specific information found in the Bible, we would be lacking the

redemptive plan that God has made available through Jesus Christ. The Bible clearly claims to have revealed information about God. Deuteronomy 29:29 declares that, “The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law.” In 1 Corinthians 2:12-13 the writer adds that, “We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.”

The unique nature of the Bible is made clear by Paul in 2 Timothy 3:16. Paul tells Timothy that “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.”

None of the original writings, or *autographa*, still exist. Nevertheless, textual criticism has confirmed that the transmission of these writings have been very accurate. The accuracy of the Old Testament documents are attested to by the Dead Sea Scrolls which gives us copies of parts of the Old Testament almost a thousand years closer to the original texts than previously available. The dependability of the New Testament is confirmed by the availability of a remarkable volume of manuscripts which were written very near the time of the original events.

Once we appreciate what God has done to communicate with us, we may begin to apply the principals of interpretation, or hermeneutics, to the text. To be successful this process must take into account the cultural, historical, and language barriers that limit our understanding of the original writings. There are no shortcuts to the hard work necessary to accomplish this task.

Some have wrongly argued that knowledge of the culture and languages of biblical times is not necessary, that the Holy Spirit will interpret the text for us. The role of the Holy Spirit is to illumine the believer in order to accept and apply what is found in Scripture. The Bible says that the natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit (1 Cor 2:14). The Greek word for “accept” means “to take something willingly and with pleasure.” The key role of the Spirit is not to add information to the text, or to give us special translating abilities, but to soften our hearts in order to receive what is there.

The goal of this process is to be mature in Christ. The Bible is not an end, it is a means to becoming conformed to the image or likeness of Christ.

What Is a Literal Interpretation?

Prior to the Protestant Reformation in the 1500s, biblical interpretation was often dominated by the allegorical method. Looking back to Augustine, the medieval church believed that every biblical passage contained four levels of meaning. These four levels were the literal, the allegorical, the moral, and the eschatological. For instance, the word Jerusalem literally referred to the city itself; allegorically, it refers to the church of Christ; morally, it indicates the human soul; and eschatologically it points to the heavenly Jerusalem.(1) Under this school of interpretation it was the church that established what the correct meaning of a passage was for all four levels.

By the time of the reformation, knowledge of the Bible was scarce. However, with a new emphasis on the original languages of Hebrew and Greek, the fourfold method of interpretation was beginning to fade. Martin Luther argued that the church shouldn't determine what the Scriptures mean, the Scriptures should govern what the churches teach. He also rejected the allegorical method of interpreting Scripture.

Luther argued that a proper understanding of what a passage teaches comes from a literal interpretation. This means that the reader must consider the historical context and the grammatical structure of each passage, and strive to maintain contextual consistency. This method was a result of Luther's belief that the Scriptures are clear, in opposition to the medieval church's position that they are so obscure that only the church can uncover their true meaning.

Calvin agreed in principle with Luther. He also placed great importance on the notion that "Scripture interprets Scripture," stressing that the grammar, context, words, and parallel passages found in the text were more important than any meaning we might impose on them. He added that, "it is the first business of an interpreter to let the author say what he does say, instead of attributing to him what we think he ought to say.(2)

Another approach to interpretation is letterism. While often ignoring context, historical and cultural setting, and even grammatical structure, letterism takes each word as an isolated truth. A problem with this method is that it fails to take into account the different literary genre, or types, in the Bible. The Hebrew poetry of the Psalms is not to be interpreted in the same way as is the logical discourse of Romans. Letterism tends to lead to legalism because of its inability to distinguish between literary types. All passages tend to become equally binding on current believers.

If we use Jesus as our model for interpreting Scripture we find that He treated the historical narratives as facts. Old Testament characters and events are talked about as if they actually existed and happened. When making applications from the Old Testament

text, Jesus used the normal, rather than allegorical meaning, of the passage. Jesus condemned the Scribes and Pharisees for replacing the original intent of the Scriptures with their own traditions. Jesus took a literal approach to interpretation which took into account the literary type of the passage.

Paul tells Timothy that he is to do his “best to present himself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.” Having the right method of interpretation is a critical precursor to accomplishing this admonition.

Applying the Hermeneutic Process

Next, we will look at how one might approach a specific text. A first step should be to determine the literary genre of the passage. A passage might be legal, narrative, polemic, poetry, wisdom, gospel, logical discourse, or prophetic literature, each having specific guidelines for proper interpretation. For instance, the wisdom literature found in Proverbs is to be seen as maxims or general truths based on broad experience and observations. “They are guidelines, not guarantees; precepts, not promises.(3)

Now, it would be helpful to identify the use of figurative language in the passage. Various forms of Hebrew poetry, simile, metaphor, and hyperbole need to be recognized if the reader is to understand the passage’s meaning. Hyperbole, for example, uses exaggeration to make a point. John says that the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written if everything about Jesus’s life was written down (John 21:25). John is using figurative speech. His point is that there were many things that Jesus did that weren’t recorded.

The Hebrew language of the Old Testament is filled with examples of figurative text. Judges 7:12 claims that “The Midianites, the Amalekites and all the other eastern peoples had settled in the valley, thick as locusts. Their camels could no more be counted than the sand on the seashore.” Were there actually billions of camels in the valley, or is this an overstatement for the sake of making the point that there were many camels present? Interpreting a passage begins by looking for the plain literal meaning of the text, but if there are obvious contradictions of known facts we look for a figure of speech. Clues for interpreting a figure of speech are usually found in the immediate context.

After a passage’s literary type is determined and figures of speech are identified, we can begin to focus on the content of a section of Scripture. Four levels of study are recommended. Word studies come first. Words are the building blocks of meaning, and by looking at the root origin or etymology of a word; its historical development over

time; and the meaning of the word at the time of its use in Scripture we can gain insight into a passage's meaning.

Much is to be gained by focusing on the verbs and conjunctions within a text. In the Greek language, verbs have a tense, a mood, a voice, and a person. For instance, Ephesians 5:18 says to not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit. Does "be filled" mean a one-time event? Do we accomplish this via hard work? Actually, the passive voice and present tense of the Greek word used translates better as "be kept being filled in Spirit." It implies an ongoing process that God performs as a result of our submission to Him, not as a result of our personal efforts.

Connective words like "and" or "for" are important when reading long or difficult passages. The word "for" introduces a reason for a preceding statement. In Romans 1:15-17 Paul says that he is eager "to preach the gospel . . . **for** I am not ashamed . . . **for** it is the power of God for salvation . . . **for** in it the righteousness of God is revealed." And, in Romans 8, "for" occurs 15 times.

Other techniques for studying words include looking at synonyms, antonyms, and cross references. Cross-references might be verbal, parallel (using the same words), or conceptual (using the same idea).

Continuing the Hermeneutic Process

Syntax is the way in which words are grouped together within phrases, clauses, and sentences. Two types of phrases are prepositional, like "in Christ" and "from God our Father," and participial, such as "speaking the truth in love" or "making peace." There are dependent clauses like "when we pray for you" and independent clauses such as "we always thank God." There are simple and compound sentences, simple ones having only one independent clause, compound ones having at least two.

Why do we need to know about syntax? Because without it we have no valid assurance that our interpretation is the meaning God intended to convey. Since God used languages that function within normal grammatical rules, knowing these rules is necessary in order to discern the meaning of a text.

The next level of study should be context. First locate the beginning of an idea and its topic sentence. Start with the paragraph, and then consider the chapter and the entire book. Determine who is being addressed, who is speaking, and what the occasion is. Hebrews chapter six has been interpreted in a number of different ways depending on how one answers these questions. Since the book was written to Jewish believers, deals with Christian maturity, and begins by exhorting the reader to leave elementary

teachings and press on to maturity, many feel that the passage deals with Jewish believers tempted to return to Temple worship and the Jewish community. It warns not of the loss of salvation, but the negative impact on their Christian life if they return to the Jewish community and worship. In other words, they cannot start over if they ruin their testimony among the Jews.

Finally, ignoring the cultural context of a passage is one of the greatest problems in Bible interpretation. By culture we mean the behavior of a people as reflected by their thoughts, beliefs, social forms, speech, actions, and material artifacts. If we ignore culture, we often wrongly read into the Bible our twentieth century ideas. Knowledge of the religious, economic, legal, agricultural, architectural, and domestic practices of biblical times will decrease the likelihood of misinterpreting difficult passages.

God's plagues on Egypt is one example of how cultural knowledge can help us to understand a text. The specific plagues sent by God spoke directly against the Egyptian gods. Turning the Nile into blood invalidated the protection of Isis, a goddess of the Nile, as well as Khnum, a guardian god of the Nile. The plague of frogs defied the Heqet, the goddess of birth who had the head of a frog. The plague of gnats ridiculed Set, god of the desert. Other plagues mocked Re, a sun god; Hathor, goddess with a cows head; Apis, the bull god; Sekhmet, goddess with power over disease, as well as others. God was communicating very clearly with the Egyptian people concerning His role as the creator and sustainer of the universe.

Reference works like Bible dictionaries, concordances, word study books, and commentaries are available to assist us in our study of the Bible. The goal of this process is to apply God's Word to our lives, but we must first have accurate knowledge of what God's Word means. Understanding precedes application.

As Psalm 19:1 explains, "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands." Paul, in Romans 1:20 says, "...since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse."

Notes

1. Henry A. Virkler, *Hermeneutics: Principles and Processes of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1981), p. 63.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 67.

3. Roy B. Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation: A Practical Guide to Discovering Biblical Truth* (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1991), p. 132.

(<https://probe.org/hermeneutics/>)

In conclusion, the interpretation of Scripture will never be an exact science. The beliefs we bring to the text - our theological presuppositions - will inevitably color our interpretation to some degree. In fact, "pretended neutrality" - the attribution of bias to one's opponent while implying that one is theologically neutral - though common in apologetic circles, is an exegetical fallacy as potent as any other. By applying the principles briefly delineated in this paper (and expanded in the resources, below), we can minimize the possibility of error and bias. We can never eliminate our presuppositions (nor should we, if they are Scripturally sound), but we can "test all things" - including our interpretations - and "hold to what is good (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

After centuries of the most rigorous scrutiny, the Bible is still the most widely read book in the world. The God of the Scriptures has preserved his divine Word—recorded in human language and illumined by the Spirit. This Word reveals the Savior of the world to the hungry hearts who affectionately embrace him and walk in his ways. Some may argue that the Bible is not true, yet the Holy Scriptures will remain an eternal testimony to God's truthfulness long after the last critic is silenced. While not perfect, the long history of interpretation by those who read the Bible as God's Word in previous centuries is still a storehouse of great riches for modern readers. Because the Bible uses ordinary language and teaches through concepts and experiences common to all human life, interpreters of previous centuries often were accurate in their understanding of vast parts of Scripture. For those who will read the Bible in the light of this long tradition (yet correcting and supplementing that tradition's inadequacies), it promises to reveal the truth of a divine Redeemer and to instruct us in walking humbly before him in reverence and awe.

Some helpful related links:

[The Holy Spirit and Hermeneutics](#)

Biblical Studies Foundation, Daniel B. Wallace, Th.M., Ph.D.

[Biblical Hermeneutics](#)

Andrew Kulikovsky

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Sproul, R.C. 1977. *Knowing Scripture*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press.

4. Questions concerning Hermeneutics

4.1 "What is biblical hermeneutics?"

Answer: Biblical hermeneutics is the study of the principles and methods of interpreting the text of the Bible. Second Timothy 2:15 commands believers to be involved in hermeneutics: "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who . . . correctly handles the word of truth." The purpose of biblical hermeneutics is to help us to know how to properly interpret, understand, and apply the Bible.

The most important law of biblical hermeneutics is that the Bible should be interpreted literally. We are to understand the Bible in its normal or plain meaning, unless the passage is obviously intended to be symbolic or if figures of speech are employed. The Bible says what it means and means what it says. For example, when Jesus speaks of having fed "the five thousand" in Mark 8:19, the law of hermeneutics says we should understand *five thousand* literally—there was a crowd of hungry people that numbered five thousand who were fed with real bread and fish by a miracle-working Savior. Any attempt to "spiritualize" the number or to deny a literal miracle is to do injustice to the text and ignore the purpose of language, which is to communicate. Some interpreters make the mistake of trying to read between the lines of Scripture to come up with esoteric meanings that are not truly in the text, as if every passage has a hidden spiritual truth that we should seek to decrypt. Biblical hermeneutics keeps us faithful to the intended meaning of Scripture and away from allegorizing Bible verses that should be understood literally.

A second crucial law of biblical hermeneutics is that passages must be interpreted historically, grammatically, and contextually. Interpreting a passage historically means we must seek to understand the culture, background, and situation that prompted the text. For example, in order to fully understand Jonah's flight in Jonah 1:1–3, we should research the history of the Assyrians as related to Israel. Interpreting a passage grammatically requires one to follow the rules of grammar and recognize the nuances of Hebrew and Greek. For example, when Paul writes of "our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ" in Titus 2:13, the rules of grammar state that *God* and *Savior* are parallel terms and they are both in apposition to *Jesus Christ*—in other words, Paul clearly calls Jesus "our great God." Interpreting a passage contextually involves considering the context of a verse or passage when trying to determine the meaning. The context includes the verses immediately preceding and following, the chapter, the book, and, most broadly, the entire Bible. For example, many puzzling statements in Ecclesiastes become clearer when kept in context—the book of Ecclesiastes is written from the earthly perspective

“under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 1:3). In fact, the phrase *under the sun* is repeated about thirty times in the book, establishing the context for all that is “vanity” in this world.

A third law of biblical hermeneutics is that Scripture is always the best interpreter of Scripture. For this reason, we always compare Scripture with Scripture when trying to determine the meaning of a passage. For example, Isaiah’s condemnation of Judah’s desire to seek Egypt’s help and their reliance on a strong cavalry (Isaiah 31:1) was motivated, in part, by God’s explicit command that His people not go to Egypt to seek horses (Deuteronomy 17:16).

Some people avoid studying biblical hermeneutics because they mistakenly believe it will limit their ability to learn new truths from God’s Word or stifle the Holy Spirit’s illumination of Scripture. But their fears are unfounded. Biblical hermeneutics is all about finding the correct interpretation of the inspired text. The purpose of biblical hermeneutics is to protect us from misapplying Scripture or allowing bias to color our understanding of truth. God’s Word is truth (John 17:17). We want to see the truth, know the truth, and live the truth as best we can, and that’s why biblical hermeneutics is vital.

(<https://www.gotquestions.org/Biblical-hermeneutics.html>)

4.2 "What is good biblical exegesis?"

Answer: *Exegesis* means “exposition or explanation.” Biblical exegesis involves the examination of a particular text of scripture in order to properly interpret it. Exegesis is a part of the process of hermeneutics, the science of interpretation. A person who practices exegesis is called an exegete.

Good biblical exegesis is actually commanded in scripture. “Study [be diligent] to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). According to this verse, we must handle the Word of God properly, through diligent study. If we don’t, we have reason to be ashamed.

There are some basic principles of good exegesis which serious students of the Bible will follow:

4.2.1 The Grammatical Principle

The Bible was written in human language, and language has a certain structure and follows certain rules. Therefore, we must interpret the Bible in a manner consistent with the basic rules of language.

Usually, the exegete starts his examination of a passage by defining the words in it. Definitions are basic to understanding the passage as a whole, and it is important that the words be defined according to their original intent and not according to modern usage. To ensure accuracy, the exegete uses a precise English translation and Greek and Hebrew dictionaries.

Next, the exegete examines the syntax, or the grammatical relationships of the words in the passage. He finds parallels, he determines which ideas are primary and which are subordinate, and he discovers actions, subjects, and their modifiers. He may even diagram a verse or two.

4.2.2 The Literal Principle

We assume that each word in a passage has a normal, literal meaning, unless there is good reason to view it as a figure of speech. The exegete does not go out of his way to spiritualize or allegorize. Words mean what words mean.

So, if the Bible mentions a “horse,” it means “a horse.” When the Bible speaks of the Promised Land, it means a literal land given to Israel and should not be interpreted as a reference to heaven.

4.2.3 The Historical Principle

As time passes, culture changes, points of view change, language changes. We must guard against interpreting scripture according to how our culture views things; we must always place scripture in its historical context.

The diligent Bible student will consider the geography, the customs, the current events, and even the politics of the time when a passage was written. An understanding of ancient Jewish culture can greatly aid an understanding of scripture. To do his research, the exegete will use Bible dictionaries, commentaries, and books on history.

4.2.4 The Synthesis Principle

The best interpreter of scripture is scripture itself. We must examine a passage in relation to its immediate context (the verses surrounding it), its wider context (the book it’s found in), and its complete context (the Bible as a whole). The Bible does not contradict itself. Any theological statement in one verse can and should be harmonized with theological statements in other parts of scripture. Good Bible interpretation relates any one passage to the total content of scripture.

4.2.5 The Practical Principle

Once we've properly examined the passage to understand its meaning, we have the responsibility to apply it to our own lives. To "rightly divide the word of truth" is more than an intellectual exercise; it is a life-changing event.

(<https://www.gotquestions.org/Biblical-exegesis.html>)

4.3 "What is the difference between exegesis and eisegesis?"

Answer: Exegesis and eisegesis are two conflicting approaches in Bible study. Exegesis is the exposition or explanation of a text based on a careful, objective analysis. The word exegesis literally means "to lead out of." That means that the interpreter is led to his conclusions by following the text.

The opposite approach to Scripture is eisegesis, which is the interpretation of a passage based on a subjective, non-analytical reading. The word eisegesis literally means "to lead into," which means the interpreter injects his own ideas into the text, making it mean whatever he wants.

Obviously, only exegesis does justice to the text. Eisegesis is a mishandling of the text and often leads to a misinterpretation. Exegesis is concerned with discovering the true meaning of the text, respecting its grammar, syntax, and setting. Eisegesis is concerned only with making a point, even at the expense of the meaning of words.

Second Timothy 2:15 commands us to use exegetical methods: "Present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth." An honest student of the Bible will be an exegete, allowing the text to speak for itself. Eisegesis easily lends itself to error, as the would-be interpreter attempts to align the text with his own preconceived notions. Exegesis allows us to agree with the Bible; eisegesis seeks to force the Bible to agree with us.

The process of **exegesis** involves 1) **observation**: what does the passage say? 2) **interpretation**: what does the passage mean? 3) **correlation**: how does the passage relate to the rest of the Bible? and 4) **application**: how should this passage affect my life?

Eisegesis, on the other hand, involves 1) **imagination**: what idea do I want to present? 2) **exploration**: what Scripture passage seems to fit with my idea? and 3) **application**: what does my idea mean? Notice that, in eisegesis, there is no examination of the words of

the text or their relationship to each other, no cross-referencing with related passages, and no real desire to understand the actual meaning. Scripture serves only as a prop to the interpreter's idea.

To illustrate, let's use both approaches in the treatment of one passage:

2 Chronicles 27:1-2

"Jotham was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem sixteen years. . . . He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father Uzziah had done, but unlike him he did not enter the temple of the LORD."

4.3.1 Eisegesis

First, the interpreter decides on a topic. Today, it's "The Importance of Church Attendance." The interpreter reads 2 Chronicles 27:1-2 and sees that King Jotham was a good king, just like his father Uzziah had been, except for one thing: he didn't go to the temple! This passage seems to fit his idea, so he uses it. The resulting sermon deals with the need for passing on godly values from one generation to the next. Just because King Uzziah went to the temple every week didn't mean that his son would continue the practice. In the same way, many young people today tragically turn from their parents' training, and church attendance drops off. The sermon ends with a question: "How many blessings did Jotham fail to receive, simply because he neglected church?"

Certainly, there is nothing wrong with preaching about church attendance or the transmission of values. And a cursory reading of 2 Chronicles 27:1-2 seems to support that passage as an apt illustration. However, the above interpretation is totally wrong. For Jotham not to go to the temple was not wrong; in fact, it was very good, as the proper approach to the passage will show.

4.3.2 Exegesis

First, the interpreter reads the passage and, to fully understand the context, he reads the histories of both Uzziah and Jotham (2 Chronicles 26-27; 2 Kings 15:1-6, 32-38). In his observation, he discovers that King Uzziah was a good king who nevertheless disobeyed the Lord when he went to the temple and offered incense on the altar—something only a priest had the right to do (2 Chronicles 26:16-20). Uzziah's pride and his contamination of the temple resulted in his having "leprosy until the day he died" (2 Chronicles 26:21).

Needing to know why Uzziah spent the rest of his life in isolation, the interpreter studies Leviticus 13:46 and does some research on leprosy. Then he compares the use of illness as a punishment in other passages, such as 2 Kings 5:27; 2 Chronicles 16:12; and 21:12-15.

By this time, the exegete understands something important: when the passage says Jotham “did not enter the temple of the LORD,” it means he did not repeat his father’s mistake. Uzziah had proudly usurped the priest’s office; Jotham was more obedient.

The resulting sermon might deal with the Lord’s discipline of His children, with the blessing of total obedience, or with our need to learn from the mistakes of the past rather than repeat them.

Of course, exegesis takes more time than eisegesis. But if we are to be those unashamed workmen “who correctly handle the word of truth,” then we must take the time to truly understand the text. Exegesis is the only way.

(<https://www.gotquestions.org/exegesis-eisegesis.html>)

4.4 "Why is it important to study the Bible in context?"

Answer: It's important to study Bible passages and stories within their context. Taking verses out of context leads to all kinds of error and misunderstanding. Understanding context begins with four principles: literal meaning (what it says), historical setting (the events of the story, to whom is it addressed, and how it was understood at that time), grammar (the immediate sentence and paragraph within which a word or phrase is found) and synthesis (comparing it with other parts of Scripture for a fuller meaning). Context is crucial to biblical exegesis in that it is one of its most important fundamentals. After we account for the literal, historical, and grammatical nature of a passage, we must then focus on the outline and structure of the book, then the chapter, then the paragraph. All of these things refer to "context." To illustrate, it is like looking at Google Maps and zooming in on one house.

Taking phrases and verses out of context always leads to misunderstanding. For instance, taking the phrase "God is love" (1 John 4:7-16) out of its context, we might come away thinking that our God loves everything and everyone at all times with a gushing, romantic love. But in its literal and grammatical context, “love” here refers to *agape* love, the essence of which is sacrifice for the benefit of another, not a sentimental, romantic love. The historical context is also crucial, because John was addressing believers in the first century church and instructing them not on God’s love per se, but on how to identify true believers from false professors. True love—the sacrificial, beneficial kind—is the mark of the true believer (v. 7), those who do not love do not belong to God (v. 8), God loved us before we loved Him (vv. 9-10), and all of this is why we should love one another and thereby prove that we are His (v. 11-12).

Furthermore, considering the phrase "God is love" in the context of all of Scripture (synthesis) will keep us from coming to the false, and all-too-common, conclusion that God is *only* love or that His love is greater than all His other attributes, which is simply not the case. We know from many other passages that God is also holy and righteous, faithful and trustworthy, graceful and merciful, kind and compassionate, omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient, and many, many other things. We also know from other passages that God not only loves, but He also hates.

The Bible is the Word of God, literally "God-breathed" (2 Timothy 3:16), and we are commanded to read, study, and understand it through the use of good Bible study methods and always with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to guide us (1 Corinthians 2:14). Our study is greatly enhanced by maintaining diligence in the use of context because it is quite easy to come to wrong conclusions by taking phrases and verses out of context. It is not difficult to point out places that seemingly contradict other portions of Scripture, but if we carefully look at their context and use the entirety of Scripture as a reference, we can understand the meaning of a passage. "Context is king" means that the context often drives the meaning of a phrase. To ignore context is to put ourselves at a tremendous disadvantage.

<https://www.gotquestions.org/context-Bible.html>)

4.5 "What are some different methods of Bible study?"

Answer: There are several different Bible study methods we can use to study in an organized or systematic way. For the purpose of this article, we will classify them into two broad categories: Book Studies and Topical Studies. Before discussing the different types of Bible study methods, it is important to recognize that all of them have certain things in common and must follow certain hermeneutic rules or principles in order to avoid misinterpreting what the Bible says. For example, whatever type of Bible study method we use, it is important that the study carefully takes into consideration the context of the subject or verse being studied, both within the immediate context of the chapter or book itself and within the overall context of the Bible. Our first goal must be to understand what the original or intended meaning of the passage is. In other words, what was the human author's intended meaning, and how would his original audience have understood what he wrote? This principle recognizes that the Bible was not written in a vacuum, but is an historical document written at a specific point in history with a specific audience in mind for a specific purpose. Once the true meaning of the passage is understood, then we should seek to understand how it applies to us today.

4.5.1 Book Studies

This Bible study method focuses either on a complete book in the Bible or specific part of a book, such as a specific chapter, a range of verses, or a single verse itself. With chapter and verse-by-verse methods and with the study of an overall book, the principles and goals are the same. For example, in order to do a thorough book study, we must necessarily also study the context of individual chapters and verses. Likewise, in order to correctly study a particular verse, we need to also study the overall message of the chapter and book that verse is found in. Of course, whether it is on the individual verse level, or a complete book study, we must always consider the overall context of the whole Bible as well.

4.5.2 Topical Studies

There are many varieties of topical studies that we can do. Some examples include biographical studies, where we study all the Bible says about particular person; word studies, where we study all the Bible says about a particular word or subject; and geographical studies, where we learn all we can about a particular town, country, or nation mentioned in the Bible. Topical studies are important for understanding all the Bible teaches on a particular subject or topic. We must be careful, though, that the conclusions drawn from a topical study do not come from taking verses out of their original context in order to imply a meaning that could not be supported by doing a verse study or book study. Topical studies are helpful in systematically organizing and understanding what the Bible teaches on specific subjects.

In studying the Bible, it is really quite beneficial to use different Bible study methods at different times. Sometimes, we might want to devote extended time to do a book study while at other times we can benefit greatly from doing some type of topical study. Whichever type of study we are doing, we must follow these basic steps:

1-**Observation**: what does the Bible say?

2-**Interpretation**: What does the Bible mean? and

3-**Application**: How does this biblical truth apply to my life, or how is this passage relevant today?

No matter what method of Bible study we do, we must be careful to rightly divide the Word of God so that we are workmen that need not be ashamed (2 Timothy 2:15).

(<https://www.gotquestions.org/Bible-study-methods.html>)

4.6 "What is inductive Bible study?"

Answer: Inductive Bible study is an approach to God's Word focusing on three basic steps that move from a general overview to specifics. Through these three steps, we apply inductive reasoning, which is defined as the attempt to use information about a specific situation to draw a conclusion. The steps are **observation** (what does it say?), **interpretation** (what does it mean?), and **application** (what does it mean for my life?). Inductive Bible study is a valuable tool in understanding and applying the principles of God's Word. Inductive Bible study can be done on many different levels. The shorter version is good for a brief devotional. The more extensive study is wonderful for digging deeper into the mind and heart of God.

A sample verse to illustrate the method is **2 Samuel 9:1**: "David asked, 'Is there anyone still left of the house of Saul to whom I can show kindness for Jonathan's sake?'" As we observe this verse and ask ourselves "what does it say?", we see that David simply wants to know if there are any living relatives of Saul's that he may be kind to for Jonathan's sake. Whether or not there are any relatives or why David is asking are to be determined in the next step. The first step of observing the verse is generally confined to a simple understanding of what the verse is saying. At this first step, there may be words or phrases that are unfamiliar to us, in which case checking different Bible translations is helpful.

The second step—interpretation (what does it mean?)—requires a more in-depth examination than the first step. At this step, we want to be careful to find the meaning of the verse in its context. For our sample verse, as we look into the background of the incident we find that the relationship between David, God's anointed future king of Israel, and Jonathan, son of King Saul, was very close. Jonathan had saved David's life when Saul was pursuing him (1 Samuel 20). David had described their relationship as "extraordinary" and he mourned Jonathan's death greatly (2 Samuel 1:25-27). In this context, we see David wanting to do something nice for any of his relatives who might still be alive. His love and loyalty were still strong even though Jonathan had been out of his life for some time. David did not sit passively and wonder about this; he took action and searched for these people.

The third step in inductive Bible study is the practical application of the principles (what does it mean to me?). Among the ways we can apply our sample verse to our own lives is to see David's action as one of love and loyalty. We might ask ourselves: How loyal am I to my earthly friends and my heavenly Friend? Am I casual and passive about the

relationships? Or am I willing to go out of my way to honor them? What can I do this week to let them know that I love them? Based on my detailed research, what did God communicate to me? Has He given me any commands, warnings, promises, or encouragement? Part of the application process is asking ourselves where we go from here. How can we use what we have learned from the passage in the future? A crucial part of any Bible study is asking God to implement the principles into our lives and praying for His wisdom as we go forward with this knowledge.

It is important to note that, while inductive Bible study or any other method is helpful to Christians as we delve into God's Word, ultimately it is the Spirit of God who opens the Scriptures to us because He has first opened our hearts to Truth. It is the Spirit who interprets spiritual truth to those who are spiritual. The natural man does not and cannot understand spiritual truth (2 Corinthians 2:12-14). So before attempting any Bible study method, we must be sure we have the Holy Spirit living in our hearts (1 Corinthians 6:19) through faith in Christ as Lord and Savior.

(<https://www.gotquestions.org/inductive-Bible-study.html>)

4.7 "What is a Bible concordance, and how do I use it?"

Answer: A Bible concordance can be a helpful tool for studying the Bible. A concordance contains an alphabetical index of words used in the Bible and the main Bible references where the word occurs. A Bible concordance is useful in locating passages in the Bible. If you can remember just one word in a verse, you can often find what you're looking for.

Most Bible publishers place a short concordance among the back pages of the Bible. Longer, more thorough concordances, such as *Young's Analytical Concordance*, are available separately. If a concordance contains *all* the words in the Bible (including *a*, *an*, and *the!*), it is called an "exhaustive" concordance. The classic exhaustive Bible concordance is *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*.

Several Bible concordances are found online and are available to use free of charge. You can also buy paper copies of most concordances. Underneath each word entry, you will see a listing of references where the word occurs. For example, in the concordance of the *NIV Study Bible*, below the word *warrior* are the references Exodus 15:3; 1 Chronicles 28:3; and Proverbs 16:32. Next to each reference is a short phrase from the verse containing the word. Next to the Exodus 15:3 entry, for example, is the phrase "The Lord is a w." (the *w* being an abbreviation for the word *warrior*).

Concordances are translation-specific; that is, different concordances are based on

different translations of the Bible. A concordance for the NASB will not help you find much in the ESV, simply because those two translations use different English words. A parallel Bible, such as the KJV-NIV, will usually have two concordances in the back—one for the KJV and one for the NIV.

A good concordance will also help with original language study. In *Strong's*, for example, each English word is assigned a number that corresponds to the original Greek or Hebrew word. The Old Testament (Hebrew) words are numbered 0001—8674; the New Testament (Greek) words are numbered 0001—5624. *Strong's* includes Hebrew and Greek dictionaries at the back of the concordance, allowing you to easily look up the meaning of the original word behind every word in the Bible.

Why use a concordance?

- A concordance is a helpful tool when doing a word study. Using an exhaustive concordance, you can locate every occurrence of the word in the Bible and gain helpful insight into what it means.
- A concordance is helpful in learning the definitions of Greek, Hebrew, or Aramaic words.
- A concordance is helpful when trying to locate a Bible verse, but you can't remember the chapter and verse.

How does a Bible concordance work? Perhaps you remember a verse about Noah finding *grace* in the eyes of the Lord, but you can't remember where it is found. You can look up *grace* in a concordance in order to discover the reference. Here is an excerpt from the entry for *grace*:

GRACE

Genesis 6:8, But Noah found **g.** in the eyes of the... H2580

Genesis 19:19, Behold now, thy servant hath found **g....** H2580

Genesis 32:5, my lord, that I may find **g.** in thy sight... H2580

You notice the verse you're looking for is Genesis 6:8, the one that mentions Noah. While you're at it, you can look up other instances of the same Hebrew word translated "grace." Notice that Genesis 19:19 and Genesis 32:5 have the same reference number in the right column. Those two verses use the same Hebrew word (numbered H2580).

Then you can look up the definition of the Hebrew word translated “grace” by using the reference number. At the back of the concordance, you will find this entry for H2580:

“H2580 *chēn* from H2603 *chanan*; graciousness, i.e. Subjective (kindness, favor) or Objective (beauty): — favour, grace(-ious), pleasant, precious, (well-)favoured.”

A Bible concordance, whether online or in print, is a valuable resource for any student of the Bible. It is a basic tool and is often one of the most used in Bible study.

(<https://www.gotquestions.org/Bible-concordance.html>)

4.8 "What is a study Bible?"

Answer: A study Bible is simply a Bible with explanatory notes printed along with the text of Scripture. Many Bibles have footnotes with cross-references or very brief notes that may clarify the definition of a word, but a study Bible has much more extensive notes and may also include maps, charts, illustrations, and photos. A study Bible is like a Bible and commentary all in one.

The Geneva Bible was one of the first English Bibles to have extensive notes. Because the notes were Calvinist in nature, those who opposed that theological position objected to it. This led King James I of England to authorize a translation of the Bible without any explanatory notes.

Perhaps one of the most influential study Bibles of more recent times is the Scofield Reference Bible, first published in 1909 by Oxford University Press. It was revised in 1917. The author of the study notes was C. I. Scofield, and the notes promoted dispensational and fundamentalist theology. This study Bible was the Bible of choice for a generation of Christians in the United States. (*However, its dispensational views need to be corrected.*)

In more recent years, the number of study Bibles has ballooned. Now, many study Bibles include not only explanatory notes but also devotional thoughts and points of application. There also seem to be study Bibles with every imaginable kind of emphasis. Some are quite broad in scope, like the Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible, which highlights the various cultural practices that may give light to a passage of Scripture. The Apologetics Study Bible addresses issues that skeptics may raise. The Archeological Study Bible provides archeological information that will help the reader understand the

ancient text. Others narrow the scope of their notes, targeting them for women or men or students or members of the armed services. There is even a study Bible for African-American couples.

Many popular religious personalities have also produced study Bibles. The NIV Study Bible is recommended because it is filled with expository notes and commentary. On the opposite end of the theological spectrum, Joel and Victoria Osteen have produced a study Bible filled with devotional and “inspirational” thoughts. Sometimes these may be called “devotional Bibles.” (*However, this study Bible cannot be recommended; much better is the Life Application Bible.*)

There can be some dangers to using a study Bible. If the study Bible is done by an orthodox, evangelical scholar (or, better yet, a team of orthodox, evangelical scholars), then it can be helpful to the reader. However, many study Bibles are produced by teachers or groups who are less than orthodox. Putting their notes in a study Bible may give those notes a level of credibility they do not deserve. A study Bible that focuses on a small subset to which the reader belongs (such as men or African-American couples) may give the impression that the Bible is really “all about me.” Although the Bible has something to say to every subset of the population, it is really all about God. (On the other hand, a study Bible of this sort might be a gateway for someone who is a member of one of these subsets to actually read the Bible for the first time.) Finally, even the most in-depth study Bible is going to be brief and selective in what it includes. One would do well to consult a variety of evangelical commentaries for multiple lines of evidence on how to interpret a given passage.

In summary, the reader must carefully evaluate any study Bible he chooses to use. One must not forget that the notes are not inspired, and some notes are more accurate than others.

(<https://www.gotquestions.org/study-Bible.html>)

4.9 "What is a Bible commentary?"

Answer: A Bible commentary is a series of notes explaining the meaning of passages of Scripture. A commentary may explain the language used in a section of text. Or it may discuss the historical background. Almost all commentaries attempt to explain the passage in terms of some system of theology. In other words, the commentary is an explanation of how the Bible fits together and what it means. Since a Bible commentary is written by human authors, it will reflect the beliefs and perspective of those writers.

Some Bible commentaries are arranged like a book, with long sections of text. Others are arranged like an outline, where each individual section is distinct from the rest. A few Bible commentaries are centered on some particular theme. Some study Bibles, such as the John MacArthur Study Bible or the Ryrie Study Bible, come with extensive notes; such editions of the Bible are essentially a commentary printed side-by-side with the text.

Commentaries are widely used in personal Bible study. The advantage of a Bible commentary is that one can quickly gain perspective on the text's meaning, as understood by the commentary's author. One caution concerning Bible commentaries is that they should not be used *instead of* personal study; rather, they are designed for use *in addition to* personal study. Since the commentary itself is not Scripture, it's important for a reader to weigh what he reads against other sources, as well as his own Spirit-led analysis. As the products of fallible people, commentaries are not necessarily correct in every word.

Got Questions Ministries is in the process of building a comprehensive, free, searchable online Bible commentary. You can find this at www.BibleRef.com. The emphasis of BibleRef is *context*: the importance of understanding each verse of the Bible in terms of its overall setting, related verses, history, and so forth.

(<https://www.gotquestions.org/Bible-commentary.html>)

4.10 "How should the different genres of the Bible impact how we interpret the Bible?"

Answer: The Bible is a work of literature. Literature comes in different genres, or categories based on style, and each is read and appreciated differently from another. For example, to confuse a work of science fiction with a medical textbook would cause many problems—they must be understood differently. And both science fiction and a medical text must be understood differently from poetry. Therefore, accurate exegesis and interpretation takes into consideration the purpose and style of a given book or passage of Scripture. In addition, some verses are meant figuratively, and proper discernment of these is enhanced by an understanding of genre. An inability to identify genre can lead to serious misunderstanding of Scripture.

The main genres found in the Bible are these: law, history, wisdom, poetry, narrative, epistles, prophecy and apocalyptic literature. The summary below shows the differences between each genre and how each should be interpreted:

Law: This includes the books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy. The purpose of law is to express God's sovereign will concerning government, priestly duties, social responsibilities, etc. Knowledge of Hebrew manners and customs of the time, as well as a knowledge of the covenants, will complement a reading of this material.

History: Stories and epics from the Bible are included in this genre. Almost every book in the Bible contains some history, but Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Acts are predominately history. Knowledge of secular history is crucial, as it dovetails perfectly with biblical history and makes interpretation much more robust.

Wisdom: This is the genre of aphorisms that teach the meaning of life and how to live. Some of the language used in wisdom literature is metaphorical and poetic, and this should be taken into account during analysis. Included are the books of Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastes.

Poetry: These include books of rhythmic prose, parallelism, and metaphor, such as Song of Solomon, Lamentations and Psalms. We know that many of the psalms were written by David, himself a musician, or David's worship leader, Asaph. Because poetry does not translate easily, we lose some of the musical "flow" in English. Nevertheless, we find a similar use of idiom, comparison and refrain in this genre as we find in modern music.

Narrative: This genre includes the Gospels, which are biographical narratives about Jesus, and the books of Ruth, Esther, and Jonah. A reader may find bits of other genres within the Gospels, such as parable (Luke 8:1-15) and discourse (Matthew 24). The book of Ruth is a perfect example of a well-crafted short story, amazing in its succinctness and structure.

Epistles: An epistle is a letter, usually in a formal style. There are 21 letters in the New Testament from the apostles to various churches or individuals. These letters have a style very similar to modern letters, with an opening, a greeting, a body, and a closing. The content of the Epistles involves clarification of prior teaching, rebuke, explanation, correction of false teaching and a deeper dive into the teachings of Jesus. The reader would do well to understand the cultural, historical and social situation of the original recipients in order to get the most out of an analysis of these books.

Prophecy and Apocalyptic Literature: The Prophetic writings are the Old Testament

books of Isaiah through Malachi, and the New Testament book of Revelation. They include predictions of future events, warnings of coming judgment, and an overview of God's plan for Israel. Apocalyptic literature is a specific form of prophecy, largely involving symbols and imagery and predicting disaster and destruction. We find this type of language in Daniel (the beasts of chapter 7), Ezekiel (the scroll of chapter 3), Zechariah (the golden lampstand of chapter 4), and Revelation (the four horsemen of chapter 6). The Prophetic and Apocalyptic books are the ones most often subjected to faulty eisegesis and personal interpretation based on emotion or preconceived bias. However, Amos 3:7 tells us, "Surely the Sovereign LORD does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets." Therefore, we know that the truth has been told, and it can be known via careful exegesis, a familiarity with the rest of the Bible, and prayerful consideration. Some things will not be made clear to us except in the fullness of time, so it is best not to assume to know everything when it comes to prophetic literature.

An understanding of the genres of Scripture is vital to the Bible student. If the wrong genre is assumed for a passage, it can easily be misunderstood or misconstrued, leading to an incomplete and fallacious understanding of what God desires to communicate. God is not the author of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33), and He wants us to "correctly [handle] the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). Also, God wants us to know His plan for the world and for us as individuals. How fulfilling it is to come to "grasp how wide and long and high and deep" (Ephesians 3:18) is the love of God for us!

(<https://www.gotquestions.org/Bible-genres.html>)

4.11 "What are the different forms of biblical literature?"

Answer: One of the most intriguing facts about the Bible is that, while it is God's communication (Matthew 5:17; Mark 13:31; Luke 1:37; Revelation 22:18-19), human beings were part of the writing process. As Hebrews 1:1 says, "God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways." The "various ways" include different literary genres. The Bible's human writers used different forms of literature to communicate different messages at different times.

The Bible contains historical literature (1 and 2 Kings), dramatic literature (Job), legal documents (much of Exodus and Deuteronomy), song lyrics (The Song of Solomon and Psalms), poetry (most of Isaiah), wisdom literature (Proverbs and Ecclesiastes), apocalyptic literature (Revelation and parts of Daniel), short story (Ruth), sermons (as recorded in Acts), speeches and proclamations (like those of King Nebuchadnezzar in

Daniel), prayers (many Psalms), parables (such as those Jesus told), fables (such as Jotham told), and epistles (Ephesians and Romans).

The different genres can overlap. Many of the psalms, for example, are also prayers. Some of the epistles contain poetry. Each type of literature has unique characteristics and should be approached with due consideration. For example, Jotham's fable (Judges 9:7–15) cannot be interpreted the same way as the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1–17). Interpreting poetry, with its reliance on metaphor and other poetic devices, is different from interpreting historical narrative. Please see our article on interpreting genres.

Second Peter 1:19–20 says that “men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” Using today's terminology, the Bible's managing editor was the Holy Spirit of God. God put the mark of His authorship on each of the 66 books of the Bible, no matter what the literary genre. God “breathed” the written words (2 Timothy 3:16–17). Because mankind has the ability to understand and appreciate various forms of literature, God used many genres to communicate His Word. The reader of the Bible will discover a common purpose that unifies the parts of the collection. He will discover motifs, foreshadowing, repeated themes, and recurring characters. Through it all, he will find that the Bible is the world's greatest literary masterpiece—and the very Word of very God.

<https://www.gotquestions.org/biblical-literature.html>)

4.12 "What is biblical typology?"

Answer: Typology is a special kind of symbolism. (A symbol is something which represents something else.) We can define a type as a “prophetic symbol” because all types are representations of something yet future. More specifically, a type in scripture is a person or thing in the Old Testament which foreshadows a person or thing in the New Testament. For example, the flood of Noah's day (Genesis 6-7) is used as a type of baptism in 1 Peter 3:20-21. The word for type that Peter uses is figure.

When we say that someone is a type of Christ, we are saying that a person in the Old Testament behaves in a way that corresponds to Jesus' character or actions in the New Testament. When we say that something is “typical” of Christ, we are saying that an object or event in the Old Testament can be viewed as representative of some quality of Jesus.

Scripture itself identifies several Old Testament events as types of Christ's redemption, including the tabernacle, the sacrificial system, and the Passover. The Old Testament tabernacle is identified as a type in Hebrews 9:8-9: "the first tabernacle . . . which was a figure for the time then present." The high priest's entrance into the holiest place once a year prefigured the mediation of Christ, our High Priest. Later, the veil of the tabernacle is said to be a type of Christ (Hebrews 10:19-20) in that His flesh was torn, (as the veil was when He was crucified) in order to provide entrance into God's presence for those who are covered by His sacrifice.

The whole sacrificial system is seen as a type in Hebrews 9:19-26. The articles of the "first testament" were dedicated with the blood of sacrifice; these articles are called "the patterns of things in the heavens" and "figures of the true" (verses 23-24). This passage teaches that the Old Testament sacrifices typify Christ's final sacrifice for the sins of the world. The Passover is also a type of Christ, according to 1 Corinthians 5:7, "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us." Discovering exactly what the events of the Passover teach us about Christ is a rich and rewarding study.

We should point out the difference between an illustration and a type. A type is always identified as such in the New Testament. A Bible student finding correlations between an Old Testament story and the life of Christ is simply finding illustrations, not types. In other words, typology is determined by Scripture. The Holy Spirit inspired the use of types; illustrations and analogies are the result of man's study. For example, many people see parallels between Joseph (Genesis 37-45) and Jesus. The humiliation and subsequent glorification of Joseph seem to correspond to the death and resurrection of Christ. However, the New Testament never uses Joseph as a model of Christ; therefore, Joseph's story is properly called an illustration, but not a type, of Christ.

<https://www.gotquestions.org/typology-Biblical.html>)

4.13 "How can I recognize and understand biblical symbolism?"

Answer: The language of the Bible is rich with metaphor. The biblical writers used familiar, everyday objects to symbolize spiritual truth. Symbols are quite common in the poetic and prophetic portions of the Bible. By its very nature, poetry relies heavily on figurative language; when Solomon calls his bride "a lily among thorns" (Song of Solomon 2:2), he is using symbols to declare the desirability and uniqueness of the Shulamite. Prophecy, too, contains much figurative imagery. Isaiah often used trees and forests as symbols of strength (e.g., Isaiah 10:18-19; 32:19). Daniel saw "a goat with a prominent horn between his eyes" who "came from the west . . . without touching the

ground" (Daniel 8:5), and we interpret this as a kingdom (Greece) and its king (Alexander the Great) who speedily conquered the world.

Jesus' teaching was full of symbolism. He presented Himself as a Shepherd, a Sower, a Bridegroom, a Door, a Cornerstone, a Vine, Light, Bread, and Water. He likened the kingdom of heaven to a wedding feast, a seed, a tree, a field, a net, a pearl, and yeast. There are dozens, if not hundreds, of other symbols in the Bible.

Note that a literal interpretation of the Bible allows for figurative language. Here's a simple rule: if the *literal* meaning of a passage leads to obvious absurdity, but a *figurative* meaning yields clarity, then the passage is probably using symbols. For example, in Exodus 19:4, God tells Israel, "I carried you on eagles' wings." A literal reading of this statement would lead to absurdity—God did not use real eagles to airlift His people out of Egypt. The statement is obviously symbolic; God is emphasizing the speed and strength with which He delivered Israel. This leads to another rule of biblical interpretation: a symbol will have a non-symbolic meaning. In other words, there is something real (a real person, a real historical event, a real trait) behind every figure of speech.

Here are a few symbols used in the Bible:

Old Testament

Walk with God: To "walk" with someone is to live in fellowship and harmony with him. Since God can only live in a way that reflects His holy character, to "walk with God" is to live according the path He has laid out, to obey Him.

Genesis 5:22; 6:9; Deuteronomy 10:12; Joshua 22:5; 1 Kings 8:23; Micah 6:8

Dust, stars, sand: The Bible often uses these metaphors to represent the number of descendants God promised to Abraham. This would include Abraham's *physical* descendants (Jews and Arabs) as well as Abraham's *spiritual* progeny (those who live by faith, Galatians 3:7).

Genesis 13:16; 15:5; 26:4; 28:14; 32:12; Exodus 32:13; Isaiah 48:19; Jeremiah 33:22; Hebrews 11:12

Flowing with milk and honey: God often referred to Canaan as "a land flowing with milk

and honey." An abundance of milk and honey was symbolic of lush, fertile farmland, plenty of water, and rich grass for dairy animals and flowers for bees. Milk and honey were two of the most prized foods in Old Testament times, and a land "flowing" with them would be very desirable.

Exodus 3:8; 17; 13:5; 33:3; Leviticus 20:24; Numbers 13:27; 14:8; 16:13, 14; Deuteronomy 6:3; 11:9; 26:9, 15; 27:3; 31:20; Josh. 5:6; Song of Solomon 4:11; 5:1; Isaiah 7:22; Jeremiah 11:5, 32:22; Ezekiel 20:6, 15

Circumcised hearts: Physical circumcision was the sign of the covenant between God and His chosen people, the Jews. It was, of course, an external alteration. What God really wanted, though, was an internal alteration—a *spiritual* circumcision, as it were. To have one's *heart* circumcised was to fully identify with Him. It is not enough to obey His Word on the outside; we must be characterized by His Word on the inside.

Deuteronomy 10:16; 30:6; Jeremiah 4:4; 2:28-29

Cedars of Lebanon: In Israel, large trees were hard to come by and very valuable. The cedars in Lebanon grow up to 130 feet tall with trunks up to eight feet in diameter. They were valued for their resin, which Egyptians used in mummification, and wood, which was used to build ships. The cedars are used symbolically in the Bible to represent strength and stature or pride.

Judges 9:15; 2 Kings 19:23; Psalm 29:5; 72:16; 104:16; Song of Solomon 5:15; Isaiah 2:13; 14:8; 37:24; Hosea 14:5-6; Zechariah 11:1

Hearts of stone or flesh: A heart of stone is emblematic of a spiritually dead heart that cannot respond to God's grace. God promises to remove our heart of stone and replace it with a living, loving heart that can follow Him.

Ezekiel 11:19; 36:26

Ephraim and Judah: In the divided kingdom, the ten tribes in the north were many times collectively called "Ephraim" after the most prominent tribe living there. The tribes in the south were often referred to as "Judah" after the most prominent southern tribe. This particular figure of speech, in which a part is substituted for the whole, is called metonymy.

Isaiah 7:9, 17; 9:21

New Testament

Ramah and Rachel: Ramah was a small town about five miles from Jerusalem. Rachel was one of Jacob's wives buried near Bethlehem (Genesis 35:19). Ramah mourning and Rachel weeping in the book of Jeremiah are symbols of the sadness experienced when Judah was conquered by Babylon and sent into exile. Matthew quotes Jeremiah and furthers the metaphor, applying it to Herod's massacre of the babies in Bethlehem. Ramah becomes a symbol of Bethlehem, and Rachel becomes a symbol of the grieving mothers there.

Jeremiah 31:15; Matthew 2:18

Shaking the dust off one's feet: In New Testament times, a devout Jew would shake the dust off his feet when he left a Gentile city to symbolically cleanse himself of ungodly practices. Jesus told His disciples to do the same if a Jewish household or village rejected the message of the Messiah.

Matthew 10:14; Mark 6:11; Luke 9:5

Whitewashed tombs: A whitewashed tomb is a stone crypt that is clean and well kept on the outside but filled with bones and death. Jesus used this image as a symbol to represent hypocrites—religious people who do not follow God in their hearts.

Matthew 23:27; Luke 11:44

Capstone: A capstone is one of the top stones on a wall. Metaphorically, it is the finishing touch or the crowning achievement. Jesus used this symbol of Himself.

Mark 12:10; 1 Peter 2:6-7

Slave/servant of Christ: The New Testament writers use the idea of being a slave or servant of Christ to symbolize our responsibility to do the will of Christ and not be self-serving. It is sometimes juxtaposed with its alternative of being a slave to sin; a believer is set free from sin and is now led by the Spirit. An indentured servant, after fulfilling his obligation to his master, could volunteer to stay and serve his master for life—a picture of how we serve Christ willingly.

Romans 1:1; Galatians 1:10; Colossians 1:7; 1 Timothy 4:6; Titus 1:1; James 1:1; 2 Peter 1:1; Jude 1:1; Revelation 1:1

Animals

Serpent: Snakes are mentioned many times in the Bible, and never in a positive light. In Genesis and Revelation, the serpent symbolizes Satan. The serpent of Eden is described as crafty—an idea Jesus reiterates in Matthew 10. In Hebrew, the noun for “serpent” is related to the verb for “divining and fortune-telling.”

Genesis 3:1, 14; 49:17; Numbers 21:6; Deuteronomy 32:33; Job 26:13; Psalm 58:4; 91:13; 140:3; Proverbs 23:32; 30:19; Isaiah 14:29; 65:25; Matthew 10:16; 23:33; Luke 10:19; Revelation 12:9, 14, 15; 20:2

Lion: Lions in the Bible can represent power. A lion devours prey and lies down without fear. The Bible compares God (Hosea 5:14), Jesus (Revelation 5:5), and even Satan (1 Peter 5:8) to a lion.

Genesis 49:9; Numbers 23:24; 24:9; Deuteronomy 33:20, 22; 1 Chronicles 12:8; Job 4:10, 11; 10:16; 28:8; 38:39; Psalm 10:9; 91:13; 104:21; Proverbs 19:12; Ecclesiastes 9:4; Isaiah 5:29; 11:6, 7; Jeremiah 2:15, 30; 4:7; 12:8; Ezekiel 1:10; 19:2, 3; 19:6; Daniel 7:4; 2 Timothy 4:17; Revelation 4:7; 9:17; 10:3

Dog: Dogs in Bible times were not cherished family pets. They were mongrels who ran wild and scavenged. Jews often referred to Gentiles as “dogs”—not a complimentary epithet. Jesus' interaction with the Syro-Phoenician woman in Matthew 15 shows how He ministered to the “dogs” and the children, both.

Exodus 11:7; Deuteronomy 23:18; 1 Samuel 17:43; 24:14; 2 Samuel 16:9; Job 30:1; Psalm 22:20, 16; 59:6; 68:23; Proverbs 26:11; 26:17; Ecclesiastes 9:4; Isaiah 56:11; Jeremiah 15:3; Matthew 7:6; 15:27; Philippians 3:2; Revelation 22:15

Sheep: Sheep are herd animals who are amazingly dependent on a shepherd for their well-being. And they are the animal most used by God to symbolize His followers. Jesus is the Good Shepherd, and we are the sheep who recognize His voice, follow Him, and rely on Him for our safety and provision.

Numbers 27:17; 1 Kings 22:17; 2 Chronicles 18:16; Psalm 23:1; 44:11, 22; 49:14; 74:1; 78:52; 95:7; 119:176; Isaiah 53:6, 7; Jeremiah 23:1; 50:6; Ezekiel 34:11, 12; 34:17; Matthew 9:36; 10:6; 26:31; John 10:11, 16, 26

We interpret the Bible literally, but this does not mean we ignore symbols and metaphorical language. God's written communication to the world is a richly textured literary masterpiece and makes full use of the tools of language, including symbolism, metaphor, simile, and motif.

(<https://www.gotquestions.org/biblical-symbolism.html>)

4.14 "Does the Bible contain allegory?"

Answer: An allegory is a story in which the characters and/or events are symbols representing other events, ideas, or people. Allegory has been a common literary device throughout the history of literature. Allegories have been used to indirectly express unpopular or controversial ideas, to critique politics, and to rebuke those in power (e.g., George Orwell's *Animal Farm* and Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*). Other times, allegory is used to express abstract ideas or spiritual truths through an extended metaphor, making the truth easier to grasp (e.g., John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* and Hannah Hurnard's *Hinds' Feet on High Places*).

The Bible contains many instances of allegory used to explain spiritual truths or to foreshadow later events. The clearest examples of allegory in Scripture are the parables of Jesus. In these stories, the characters and events represent a truth about the Kingdom of God or the Christian life. For example, in the Parable of the Sower in Matthew 13:3–9, the seed and different types of soil illustrate the Word of God and various responses to it (as Jesus explains in verses 18–23).

The story of the Prodigal Son also makes use of allegory. In this story (Luke 15:11–32), the titular son represents the average person: sinful and prone to selfishness. The wealthy father represents God, and the son's harsh life of hedonism and, later, poverty represents the hollowness of the ungodly lifestyle. When the son returns home in genuine sorrow, we have an illustration of repentance. In the father's mercy and willingness to receive his son back, we see God's joy when we turn from sin and seek His forgiveness.

In the parables, Jesus teaches abstract spiritual concepts (how people react to the gospel, God's mercy, etc.) in the form of relatable metaphors. We gain a deeper understanding of God's truth through these stories. Other examples of biblical allegory, as a literary form, include the vision of the dragon and the woman in Revelation 12:1–6; the story of the eagles and the vine in Ezekiel 17; and many of the proverbs, especially those written in emblematic parallelism.

Some of the traditions and ceremonies instituted by God in the Bible could be considered “non-literary allegories” because they symbolize spiritual truths. The act of animal sacrifice, for example, represented that our sins deserve death, and each substitute on the altar prefigured the eventual sacrifice of Christ, who would die for His people. The institution of marriage, while serving great practical purposes, is also a symbol of the relationship between Christ and the Church (Ephesians 5:31–32). Many of the ceremonial laws of Moses (regarding clothing, foods, and clean and unclean objects) represented spiritual realities such as the need for believers to be distinct in spirit and action from non-believers. While these examples may not be considered allegories individually (since an allegory requires multiple symbols working together), the religious system of the Old Testament (and parts of the New) can be seen as a broad allegory for man’s relationship with God.

Interestingly, sometimes significant historical events, which appear at first glance to contain no deeper meaning, are interpreted allegorically later to teach an important lesson. One instance of this is Galatians 4, where Paul interprets the story of Abraham, Hagar, and Sarah as an allegory for the Old and New Covenants. He writes, “For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman. His son by the slave woman was born according to the flesh, but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a divine promise. These things are being taken figuratively: The women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar. Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother” (Galatians 4:22–26). Here, Paul takes actual, historical people (Abraham, Hagar, and Sarah) and uses them as symbols for the Law of Moses (the Old Covenant) and the freedom of Christ (the New Covenant). Through Paul’s allegorical lens, we see that our relationship with God is one of freedom (we are children of the divine promise, as Isaac was to Sarah), not of bondage (we are not children of man’s bondage, as Ishmael was to Hagar). Paul, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, could see the symbolic significance of this historical event and used it to illustrate our position in Christ.

Allegory is a beautifully artistic way of explaining spiritual matters in easily understood terms. Through the Bible’s allegories, God helps us understand difficult concepts through a more relatable context. He also reveals Himself as the Great Storyteller, working through history to foreshadow and carry out His plan. We can rejoice that we

have a God who addresses us in ways we can understand and who has given us symbols and allegories to remind us of Himself.

(<https://www.gotquestions.org/Bible-allegory.html>)

4.15 "What is wrong with the allegorical interpretation method?"

Answer: The allegorical (or spiritualizing) method of interpretation was prominent in the church for about 1,000 years until it was displaced during the Reformation. The Reformers sought the “plain meaning” of Scripture.

Allegorical interpretation looks for a deeper, spiritual meaning within the text. While not necessarily denying that the text has a literal meaning or that the historical incidents reported are true, allegorical interpreters will look for a deeper symbolic meaning. Some examples may be helpful:

The Song of Solomon is often interpreted allegorically as referring to the love that Christ has for the church.

In the Scofield Reference Bible, C. I. Scofield interprets Genesis 1:16 allegorically. While not denying the plain meaning of the verse regarding creation, he finds a deeper spiritual (he calls it typological) meaning. The greater light/sun is Christ, and the lesser light/moon is the church, reflecting the light of Christ, and the stars are individual believers.

In his *Portraits of Christ in Genesis*, M. R. DeHaan says that Adam is a type of Christ because Adam was put to sleep, his side was opened—he was wounded and his blood was shed—and from that wound his bride was taken. In the same way, Christ died, had His side pierced, and from that ordeal His Bride, the church, is produced. Just as Adam said that Eve was bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh (Genesis 2:23), so the church is the body, flesh, and bone of Christ (see Ephesians 5:30).

Perhaps the most famous instance of allegorical interpretation is Origen’s explanation of the Parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10. In the allegorical view, the man who is robbed is Adam, Jerusalem is paradise, and Jericho is the world. The priest is the Law, and the Levites are the Prophets. The Samaritan is Christ. The donkey is Christ’s physical body, which bears the burden of the wounded man (the wounds are his sins), and the inn is the Church. The Samaritan’s promise to return is a promise of the second coming of Christ.

We need to recognize that allegory is a beautiful and legitimate literary device. John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* was written as an allegory of the Christian life. In this story, almost every action and character is intended to have a deeper, spiritual meaning. To interpret Bunyan's story literally would be to miss the point completely.

Really, there is little difference between allegorical, typological, and symbolic interpretation. They all look for a deeper meaning behind what would seem to be a literal reading of the Bible's text. However, these methods should not be set in opposition to "literal interpretation," because every interpreter recognizes that some passages of the Bible are intended to be taken symbolically, typologically, or allegorically. For instance, Ecclesiastes 12:1–7 speaks of a dilapidated estate, but this is an allegory for the ravages of age and time upon the human body. All Christians would agree that the Old Testament sacrifices are symbolic for the greater sacrifice of Christ. When Jesus says, "I am the vine and you are the branches" (John 15:5), no one expects to find leaves and clusters of grapes sprouting from their arms. Even those who insist on a literal interpretation of the book of Revelation still expect "the Beast" to be a man, not an animal (see Revelation 13:4).

To insist upon a literal reading for a passage of Scripture that was intended to be taken in a symbolic manner is to miss the meaning of the text. For instance, at the Last Supper Jesus says of the bread and wine, "This is my body. . . . This is my blood" (Luke 22:19–20). Jesus' hearers in the room were partaking of a Passover meal in which every item on the menu was interpreted symbolically. For them to suddenly think that Jesus was speaking literally regarding these two elements is completely foreign to the context. Metaphor is a recognized literary device in use today and in the time of Christ. Jesus could have just as easily said, "This represents my body and my blood," but in the context of the Passover, such directness was not necessary.

The problem with the allegorical method of interpretation is that it seeks to find an allegorical interpretation for *every* passage of Scripture, regardless of whether or not it is intended to be understood in that way. Interpreters who allegorize can be very creative, with no control based in the text itself. It becomes easy to read one's own beliefs into the allegory and then think that they have scriptural support.

There will always be some disagreement about whether certain texts are to be taken literally or figuratively and to what degree, as evidenced by disagreements over the book of Revelation, even among those who have high regard for Scripture. For a text

to be interpreted allegorically or figuratively, there needs to be justification in the text itself or something in the cultural background of the original readers that would have led them to understand the text symbolically. The goal of every interpreter who has a high view of Scripture is to discover the *intended* meaning of the text. If the intended meaning is simply the literal communication of a historical fact or the straightforward explanation of a theological truth, then that is the inspired meaning. If the intended meaning is allegorical/typological/symbolic/figurative, then the interpreter should find some justification for it in the text and in the culture of the original hearers/readers.

(<https://www.gotquestions.org/allegorical-interpretation.html>)

4.15 "Are the miracles in the Bible to be taken literally?"

Answer: Yes, the miracles of the Bible are to be taken literally, just as all Scripture is to be taken literally except those portions which are clearly intended to be symbolic. An example of symbolism is Psalm 17:8. We are not literally apples in God's eye, nor does God literally have wings. But the miracles are not symbolic happenings; they are real events that actually happened. Each of the miracles in the Bible served a purpose and accomplished something that couldn't be accomplished in any other way.

The earliest and most profound miracle of all was that of creation. God created everything *ex nihilo*—from nothing—and each succeeding miracle reinforced His incredible power. The book of Exodus is filled with miraculous events God used to bring about His will. The plagues on Egypt, beginning with the water of the Nile being turned to blood (Exodus 7:17) through the death of the firstborn of Egypt (Exodus 12:12), were literal events that eventually caused Pharaoh to free the Israelites from bondage. If the plagues did not happen, why did Pharaoh let the people go? And if the plague of the death of the firstborn was not real, then God did not move through Egypt that night killing the firstborn, nor was there any necessity for the Israelites to sprinkle blood on their doorposts. Then the foreshadowing of the shed blood of Jesus on the cross is voided, which puts the crucifixion itself into doubt. Once we begin to doubt the reality of any miracle, we have to discount everything the Bible says came about as a result of the miracle, which puts all of Scripture in doubt.

Among the best-known Old Testament miracles is the parting of the Red Sea (Exodus 14), during which Pharaoh and much of his army were drowned. If the miracle is symbolic, then how do we know what parts of the rest of the story are literal? Did the Israelites really leave Egypt? Did Pharaoh's army really follow them, and, if so, how did the Israelites escape? Psalm 78 is one of the many passages where God reminds the

Israelites of the miracles He performed in releasing them from the Egyptian bondage. God's mighty miracles proved to the surrounding nations that the Lord is the one, true God. The pagan idols of wood and stone were capable of no such things. Only the God of miracles deserves worship.

In the New Testament, Jesus performed numerous miracles beginning with His first one at the wedding in Cana where He turned water into wine (John 2:1-10). His most spectacular miracle, of course, was the raising of Lazarus after he had been dead four days (John 11). All the miracles He did were to prove that He was indeed who He said He was—the Son of God. When He calmed the storm in Matthew 8, even the disciples were astonished: "The men were amazed and asked, 'What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!'" (v. 27). If Jesus' miracles were not real, then the gospel accounts of Jesus' healings were just nice stories, and those people remained afflicted by diseases, calling into doubt His compassion (Matthew 14:14; 10:34; Mark 1:41). If He didn't really feed thousands of people with a few loaves and fishes, those people remained hungry and Jesus' words "I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill" (John 6:26) have no meaning at all. But Jesus did heal, He did create food for thousands, He did turn water into wine, and He did raise Lazarus from the dead. John 2:23 tells us that many believed in Him because of the miracles.

All the miracles had a purpose—to prove that God is like no one else, that He has complete control of creation because He is its source, and to convince us that if He can do all these miraculous things, nothing in our lives is too hard for Him to handle. He wants us to trust Him and know that He can do miracles in our lives as well. If the miracles did not occur, then how can we trust anything the Bible tells us, especially when it tells us eternal life is available through Christ? When we begin to call any part of Scripture into doubt, all of God's marvelous plan is suspect, and we open the door for the lies and distortions which are Satan's plan to destroy our faith (1 Peter 5:8). The Bible is to be read and understood literally, including the miracles.

(<https://www.gotquestions.org/miracles-literal.html>)

4.16 "Can / Should we interpret the Bible as literal?"

Answer: Not only *can* we take the Bible literally, but we *must* take the Bible literally. This is the only way to determine what God really is trying to communicate to us. When we read any piece of literature, but especially the Bible, we must determine what the author intended to communicate. Many today will read a verse or passage of Scripture

and then give their own definitions to the words, phrases, or paragraphs, ignoring the context and author's intent. But this is not what God intended, which is why God tells us to correctly handle the Word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15).

One reason we should take the Bible literally is because the Lord Jesus Christ took it literally. Whenever the Lord Jesus quoted from the Old Testament, it was always clear that He believed in its literal interpretation. As an example, when Jesus was tempted by Satan in Luke 4, He answered by quoting the Old Testament. If God's commands in Deuteronomy 8:3, 6:13, and 6:16 were not literal, Jesus would not have used them and they would have been powerless to stop Satan's mouth, which they certainly did.

The disciples also took the commands of Christ (which are part of the Bible) literally. Jesus commanded the disciples to go and make more disciples in Matthew 28:19-20. In Acts 2 and following, we find that the disciples took Jesus' command literally and went throughout the known world of that time preaching the gospel of Christ and telling them to "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved" (Acts 16:31). Just as the disciples took Jesus' words literally, so must we. How else can we be sure of our salvation if we do not believe Him when He says He came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10), pay the penalty for our sin (Matthew 26:28), and provide eternal life (John 6:54)?

Although we take the Bible literally, there are still figures of speech within its pages. An example of a figure of speech would be that if someone said "it is raining cats and dogs outside," you would know that they did not really mean that cats and dogs were falling from the sky. They would mean it is raining really hard. There are figures of speech in the Bible which are not to be taken literally, but those are obvious. (See Psalm 17:8 for example.)

Finally, when we make ourselves the final arbiters of which parts of the Bible are to be interpreted literally, we elevate ourselves above God. Who is to say, then, that one person's interpretation of a biblical event or truth is any more or less valid than another's? The confusion and distortions that would inevitably result from such a system would essentially render the Scriptures null and void. The Bible is God's Word to us and He meant it to be believed—literally and completely.

<https://www.gotquestions.org/Bible-literal.html>)

4.17 "What is biblical literalism?"

Answer: Biblical literalism is the method of interpreting Scripture that holds that, except in places where the text is obviously allegorical, poetic, or figurative, it should be taken literally. Biblical literalism is the position of most evangelicals and Christian fundamentalists. It is the position of Got Questions Ministries as well. (See "Can/Should we interpret the Bible as literal?")

Biblical literalism goes hand-in-hand with regarding the Word of God as inerrant and inspired. If we believe in the doctrine of biblical inspiration—that the books of the Bible were written by men under the influence of the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 3:16–17; 2 Peter 1:20–21) to the extent that everything they wrote was exactly what God wanted to say—then a belief in biblical literalism is simply an acknowledgement that God wants to communicate to us via human language. The rules of human language then become the rules of interpreting Scripture. Words have objective meaning, and God has spoken through words.

Biblical literalism is an extension of the literalism that we all use in everyday communication. If someone enters a room and says, "The building is on fire," we don't start searching for figurative meanings; we start evacuating. No one stops to ponder whether the reference to "fire" is metaphorical or if the "building" is an oblique reference to 21st-century socio-economic theories. Similarly, when we open the Bible and read, "The Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left" (Exodus 14:22), we shouldn't look for figurative meanings for *sea*, *dry ground*, or *wall of water*; we should believe the miracle.

If we deny biblical literalism and try to interpret Scripture figuratively, how are the figures to be interpreted? And who decides what is and is not a figure? Were Adam and Eve real people? What about Cain and Abel? If they are figurative, where in Genesis can we start saying the people are literal individuals? Any dividing line between figurative and literal in the genealogies is arbitrary. Or take a New Testament example: did Jesus really say to love our enemies (Matthew 5:44)? Did He say it on a mountain? Was Jesus even real? Without a commitment to biblical literalism, we might as well throw out the whole Bible.

If biblical literalism is discarded, language becomes meaningless. If "five smooth stones" in 1 Samuel 17:40 doesn't refer to five aerodynamic rocks, then what in the world did David pick out of the stream? More importantly, if words can mean anything we assign

to them, there are no genuine promises in the Bible. The “place” that Jesus said He is preparing for us (John 14:3) needs to be literal, or else He is speaking nonsense. The “cross” that Jesus died on needs to be a literal cross, and His death needs to be a literal death in order for us to have salvation. Hell needs to be a literal place—as does heaven—if we are to have anything to be saved from. Jesus’ literal resurrection from a literal tomb is as equally important (1 Corinthians 15:17).

To be clear, biblical literalism does not ignore the dispensations. Commands given to Israel in the theocracy do not necessarily apply to the New Testament church. Also, biblical literalism does not require that *every* passage be concrete and not figurative. Idioms, metaphors, and illustrations are all a natural part of language and should be recognized as such. So, when Jesus speaks of His flesh being “food” in John 6: 55, we know He is speaking figuratively—“food” is an obvious metaphor. We follow the rules of language. We are alert to metaphors and the signals of similes, *like* and *as*. But unless a text is clearly intended to be figurative, we take it literally. God’s Word was designed to communicate, and communication requires a literal understanding of the words used.

(<https://www.gotquestions.org/biblical-literalism.html>)

4.18 "What is biblical numerology?"

Answer: Biblical numerology is the study of numbers in the Bible. Two of the most commonly repeated numbers in the Bible are 7 and 40. The number 7 signifies completion or perfection (Genesis 7:2-4; Revelation 1:20). It is often called “God’s number” since He is the only One who is perfect and complete (Revelation 4:5; 5:1, 5-6). The number 3 is also thought to be the number of divine perfection: The Trinity consists of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The number 40 is often understood as the “number of probation or trial.” For example: the Israelites wandered for 40 years (Deuteronomy 8:2-5); Moses was on the mount for 40 days (Exodus 24:18); 40 days were involved in the story of Jonah and Nineveh (Jonah 3:4); Jesus was tempted for 40 days (Matthew 4:2); there were 40 days between Jesus’ resurrection and ascension (Acts 1:3). Another number repeated in the Bible is 4, which is the number of creation: North, South, East, West; four seasons. The number 6 is thought to be the number of man: Man was created on the 6th day; man labors 6 days only. Another example of the Bible using a number to signify something is the number 666, the number of the Antichrist in Revelation chapter 13.

Whether or not the numbers really do have a significance is still debated in many circles.

The Bible definitely seems to use numbers in patterns or to teach a spiritual truth. However, many people put too much significance on “biblical numerology,” trying to find a special meaning behind every number in the Bible. Often a number in the Bible is simply a number. God does not call us to search for secret meanings, hidden messages, and codes in the Bible. There is more than enough truth in the words and meanings of Scripture to meet all our needs and make us “complete and thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16).

(<https://www.gotquestions.org/Biblical-numerology.html>)

For more questions and their answers, see this website:

https://www.gotquestions.org/questions_Bible.html

5. Issues in Biblical Hermeneutics

<https://www.biblicaltraining.org/library/introduction/biblical-hermeneutics/robert-stein>

5.0 Biblical Hermeneutics—Oral Course by Dr. Robert Stein

Links below along with text transcriptions.

INTRODUCTION

1. Introduction - Introduction to the class

THE HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH BIBLE

2. Early Beginnings - Early beginnings to the present
3. Hermeneutical Issues - Hermeneutical issues involved in translation
4. Various Issues – Various issues involved with translation

THE GOAL OF INTERPRETATION

5. An Introduction to Hermeneutics - Part 1
6. An Introduction to Hermeneutics - Part 2
7. Vocabulary for Interpretation - Part 1
8. Vocabulary for Interpretation - Part 2
9. Vocabulary for Interpretation - Part 3
10. The Role of the Holy Spirit
11. The Miraculous in Scripture

GENRE

12. G. B. Caird, The Language and Imagery of the Bible.
13. Proverbs
14. Prophecy - Part 1 – The genre and language of prophecy.
15. Prophecy - Part 2 – Further examples of prophecy
16. Prophecy - Part 3 – Prophecy and the beginning discussion of Mark.
17. Poetry - Part 1 – Prose and poetry, and examples from the Old Testament.
18. Poetry - Part 2 – Types of Poetry in the Bible
19. Idioms
20. Exaggeration - Part 1
21. Exaggeration - Part 2
22. Parables - Part 1 – Introduction to parables
23. Parables - Part 2 – Interpretation of parables
24. Narrative - Part 1 – Allegory and historical narrative
25. Narrative - Part 2 – Clues to interpreting historical narrative
26. Epistles - Part 1 – Understanding the letters in the New Testament. How words are used.
27. Epistles - Part 2 – How sentences are to be understood
28. Treaties and Law – The genre of covenant
29. Songs – Psalms
30. The Canon of Scripture – The books that make up the Bible

5.1 An Introduction to Hermeneutics - Part 1

We want to begin today with an introduction to Hermeneutics proper. We looked last week at the translation of the Bible into the English language and that's kind of a survey of how we got our English Bible but also introduces various hermeneutical issues.

Hermeneutics is a word that frightens a lot of people. That's unfortunate. It's unnecessary and it actually is the transliteration of a Greek verb, *hermeneu*, which means to interpret, to explain. A form of the verb is found in Luke 24:27 where the RSV says, "27: Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He - that is Jesus - interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures."

The NIV reads, 27: And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He – Jesus - explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

Interpreted, explains is the way of translating that Greek word. Now in Acts 14:12, there is an interesting passage where Paul and Barnabas come to the city of Lystra and he heals a crippled man – Paul does – and the people go absolutely bonkers, "The gods have visited us!" And we read in Acts 14:12: "12: Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes, because he was the chief speaker."

Now I kind of wondered about that because Paul was the preacher, he did the miracle. And yet they called Barnabas, the chief God Zeus and they called Paul, Hermes. But Hermes was the interpreter of the gods. He was the one who interpreted – *hermeneu* – the message of the gods to humanity so Paul is therefore assumed to be interpreter and is attributed the name, Hermes.

For a lot of people, Hermeneutics is very very complicated. Texts are very difficult to explain and read. I don't think Hermeneutics should be a difficult subject. People have understood what people have been reading and have been saying for thousands of years. Communication has gone on long before anybody took a course in Hermeneutics. There must be something that is pretty down to earth about Hermeneutics. And we will try to be very simplistic in some ways. We may err on that side but let us get basic and then as complications arise we will worry about those but let us try to deal with Hermeneutics in a basic manner.

Now in all communication there must be present three basic components. In all communication, oral or written, anyway like that. There has to be three components. There has to be an author, a text and a reader. All three have to be present if there is communication that takes place.

Now linguists use the same root and they talk about an encoder, the code and the decoder. Alright, the encoder, the one who puts the code in, the author. The code or the text that they are writing. And the decoder, the reader who is trying to understand.

In radio, we can talk about a sender - the speaker - , the message and we talk about the receiver as other alternatives. Now I was born and raised in New Joisey and we like to use

the alliteration to help. And so in New Jersey we talk about the whiter, the whiting and the weeder and we have nice alliteration that way.

Now various people, since there are three components have argued that each of these components is what determines the meaning. Some argue for the author being the determiner of meaning, others for the text, others, the reader.

Now let us look at who or what it is that determines the meaning of a text. Some argue that it is the text that determines the meaning. For instance you all have heard Billy Graham says, "The Bible says" or "Pastor says" – "Our text says" ... What they are saying however is not what this argument is for because Billy Graham could be saying just as readily if he is preaching from Romans, he could say "The Bible says." He could say "Our text says," or he could say "Paul tells us in our text" and he means the same by all of this.

That's not what is going on in this particular viewpoint. The viewpoint here is rather that the text in and of itself conveys meaning. Its autonomous. It is as if there was never an author. It is as if a text comes to you dropped from heaven without any relationship in time and space to anything without any person being involved in it. It just comes to you in this way. It is an autonomous text to ask about what Paul was thinking. It is totally irrelevant.

The text is an end in itself. It is as if it magically appeared without author, without circumstances, without any particular time and place. In the 1930s through the 1960s and into the 70s, there was a movement that was called, the New Criticism.

This view argued for the autonomy of the text. When one read text, one didn't ask about authors. One says, what does the text in front of you mean? In and of itself it has its own meaning. An author by the name of Young writes, concerning this period, "the New Critics" of the New Criticism almost all insist that the proper end of literary study is the work itself conceived as an independent object.

These premises assume that a literary work exist independently of the interests and purposes, whether conscious or unconscious of the author or of the responses to our experiences of the work on the part of any particular reader or collection of readers in any given time and space.

So if you talk about reader, text, author, it is the text that gives it meaning. It is the text that means something. Totally apart from author – irrelevant. You don't talk about authors. It is irrelevant who wrote it. You don't talk about authors. It's irrelevant who wrote it. It is just there a text in front of us.

Another one writes – not the intention of the author – not the author, which is supposed to be hidden behind the text. Not the historical situation common to the author and his original readers. Not the expectational feelings of these original readers. Not even their understanding of themselves as historical and cultural phenomena. What must be appropriated is the meaning of the text itself considered in a dynamic way as the directional thought opened by the text.

Now as I said, when Billy Graham says, “The Bible says,” he means, John the author means the following. This view looks at texts as art isolated from their author. If you came to a chess game and you wanted to understand what is going on, you just look at the chessboard. It is irrelevant what the author was doing – what the players were doing before – it is irrelevant how the moves got to this point. What you have there is now the chessboard with the men at various places on the chessboard now try to understand it this way. Texts are to be seen this way.

If you are in a Bible study and you are studying the book of Galatians and you are come to a passage that is very difficult, if by some miracle the apostle Paul entered in the door and said to you “What I meant by Galatians 3 here is ...” – this approach would say, “That is very interesting but it is irrelevant. Long ago you lost control of this text. It is a work of art now. It is isolated. It has nothing to do with what you said at the time.”

If the text isolated as an independent entity. It is a work of art. It has nothing to do with what people meant in the past. Now the biggest problem I have in this is trying to understand what meaning is and what a text is. Meaning is a construction of thought. In the three – threesome – of communication, authors can think, readers can think. They construct. They can construct a meaning.

But texts are inanimate objects. Ink, paper can’t think. A piece of stone and engravings on that stone. They can’t think. Because texts are inanimate, they simply can’t mean anything. To mean something you must have the ability to think and reason and since they can’t think and reason, they cannot mean.

Now can they convey meaning? Yes. But they can’t mean. They are simply inanimate. So to treat them and say, what does this text mean, you have to say, “If there is any construction of meaning here or meaning, it doesn’t come from the ink. It doesn’t come from the papyrus. It doesn’t come from the steel with its letters in it. It comes from someone who is either reading it. They can construct some meaning. Or it comes from the person who did the engraving.”

But the stone, the paper, the papyrus, the ink, grooves can’t think. They are inanimate. It seems fairly simplistic this way to me but I don’t understand how so many people can say, “The text means this.” The text can’t mean anything.

If you have attended the universities in the 60s, 70s and 80s, this would have been a dominant way of understanding and interpreting literature. This was the way in academic circles. Since then a new approach has come on the scene and this concentrates on the reader and assumes that it is the reader that gives meaning to a text.

Now sometimes they talk about implied readers, competent readers, intended readers, tentative readers, ideal readers, real readers – we are just talking about a reader. The guy, the gal who reads the text. That’s the person we are talking about. The argument here is that person as they read the text give meaning to it until the reader comes and looks at the text, it is dead – can’t do anything. Now the reader gives it meaning. That doesn’t mean they learn the meaning. Doesn’t mean they decipher the meaning. It doesn’t mean they discover the

meaning. It doesn't mean they ascertain the meaning. They give the meaning. They supply the meaning to the text.

Now according to this view if people come up with different meanings, what it means for me is different from what it means for you, no problem. Because since you give the meaning to the text, the text can have multiple meanings. And they may have contrary meanings.

If you hear an expression like - not so popular as it was before 1990 – a Marxist reading of the text or a feminist reading of a text, a Complementarian reading of a text, an Arminian reading of a text, a Calvinist reading of a text, what frequently is meant by this is that these people with their theological viewpoints give this meaning to the text in front of them.

Now a lot of people who maybe Calvinists and so forth, [Hard to Hear] will read it and say, "No. The meaning is already there. I am just interpreting it. But this particular usage - its irrelevant if it is there. I am giving it that meaning." And they are the ones who are giving the meaning to the text.

A man by the name of Ziesler in Expository Times, 1994 says, and he gives a grading analogy that you will want to remember, "To put it crudely there is a question of whether the text, any text is a window or a mirror."

You are going to carry through with the analogy, it is a good analogy. "Does it – the text – in some way facilitate our own illumination, like a mirror – you look at it and we are illumined by it. Or does it give us access to another world - do we see through it like a window to different world? It is far more fruitful to accept their mirror-like nature and concentrate on how we read them. The text are a language through which we generate meaning. There is therefore no such thing as a single meaning of a text which simply has to be uncovered. The role of the reader is more active than that. Furthermore any reader has a perfect right to say of any text, 'This speaks to me in the following way regardless whether that way agrees or disagrees with the way scholars or other scholars receive the text.' The text in other words functions much like an inkblot. You look the inkblot and you see meaning. Someone else might look at that inkblot, they see different meaning. But it is the reader who gives meaning to it."

Go out sometime when there are clouds in the sky, you and look up and say, "Well. This is what I see" and someone says "Well, this is what I see," and you are both right. You give meaning to the cloud. That cloud means according to how you view it. In this particular view, you are the determiner of meaning. And since you determined it, there is no absolute to compare it to, so others read it and find a different meaning, fine. Isn't it wonderful?

Like in the Bible study where, you have a Bible study and a passage and four different say, "Well. What it means to me is this."

Another says "Well it means this is something else."

“Well. What it means to me is the following.”

And you are the Bible study leader and you say the following, “Isn’t it wonderful how rich the Bible is that it can have all these meanings?”

“Of course if the Bible has all these meanings it doesn’t have any of them.”

Now this is the approach that is dominant today. I don’t know if any of you took literature recently in the universities. This is not foreign. This is very much a dominant approach. It is a dominant approach in Biblical studies today. And a lot of evangelicals have been buying into this far more than I would then to see. I am very nervous about this.

Now the traditional approach is that it is the author who is the determiner of meaning. It is what the author consciously willed to say in the text that they are seeking after. Thus the meaning of Romans is what Paul intended by these words when he wrote Romans. And that if Paul were alive and told us what it meant, that would settle it for us. We know what the meaning is, now let us see what the implications for that are today.

The text means what Paul says it means. Now this is the common approach we have in studying the Bible and in studying any book. For instance why if you are studying Galatians and having problems do you go to Romans instead of Ernest Hemingway’s For Whom The Bell Tolls.

Now you say that is absurd. Well. Wait a minute. Why? Because Paul also wrote Romans. That’s right isn’t it? In other words, the author of Romans thinks more like the author of Galatians because He is dealing with the same issues in the same time, in the same place, and you say Amen.

As a result of that if you want to know what Galatians means, Romans will help you. But that’s assuming you want to know what the author of Galatians means. If you are dealing with the book of Acts and you are confused about something where do you go? You go to Plato’s Republic? Where do you go to the Gospel of Luke, which was written by the same man, who no doubt at the same time was thinking very much like the other were.

So that common sense approach that we have, when you are reading Acts you go to Luke, when you are reading Paul, you go to another letter of Paul. If you are reading John, you may go to First John. The common sense approach is all based on the idea that you want to know what the Biblical author meant by this and you go as closely as you can elsewhere to that Biblical author and if the Biblical author wrote something else, you go to them.

That’s a pretty common sense approach. The Bible then is not in all literature is not to be treated as some isolated form of Art, but it is a form of communication. And in Communication we want to know what an author meant. All this time so far this evening, you have been trying to understand what Robert Stein means by the words he is saying. And

when the exam comes, you want to explain what Robert Stein means. You might say, “Well. Dr. Stein this is the meaning I just gave to what you said.”

In communication we want to understand what the other person is referring to. Now to say that something is no longer communication but a work of art, that takes some thought in doing. How do you judge for instance a good translation of the Bible.

Do you like this translation because these translators gave a good meaning that you like to the text. [Hard to Hear] people say that “I like what this Bible says.” Well. Is it true? Is it correct?

As soon as you raise that question you say, “Does the translation accurately reflect what the author meant in this passage and explain that well for you.” That is the way you have to judge a Bible translation. All that assumes that you want to deal with what the author meant by the text.

Does our translation reflect accurately what Paul meant by this? Would Paul for instance say this accurately reflects what I am saying. Then you say “Well, we are looking for author meaning here.” Or are we saying “It is totally irrelevant if Paul would like this translation.” Then you have kind of reader approach. But when you get down to common sense, that doesn’t make sense in a translation in a Bible. So sometimes you have to say, “Well, you get to another level called art and now you are just interested in looking at the art. So you should not judge texts as the communication but as art. Like you go in a museum and you look at paintings and is it really matter what the author meant by the painting or do you just look at it and you read into it your meaning. You should do the same with the Bible.” – Reader approach.

Now in the 1980s and 90s, this was a major issue and it is still a major issue, and its still a major issue. In the nomination of supreme court judges, whatever the hoopla was about Robert Bork and Clarence Thomas’s nomination, there was a basic issue and what was at stake was the issue of who determines the meaning of this text we call the Constitution.

Do the judges give it meaning? And that was Blackmun, the former justice Blackmun’s attitude toward it. He said that “It is arrogance to think that we could find out what the original authors and framers of the Constitution meant.” Or is that the responsibility of the Supreme Court judges – not to say what they want to read into the text, but what the original framers of the Constitution and those who approved it meant by these words.

Big struggle today and it is not a very simple issue for – at stake here. I think it is a simple issue but it is a very controversial one. Long ago James Madison said if the sense in which the Constitution was accepted and ratified by the nation be not the guide in expounding it, there can be no security for a faithful exercise of its power. How would you like to be a Jew and appear before 9 Nazi Supreme Court judges who gave meaning to the text? It’s kind of scary.

Furthermore what does a supreme court nominee swear to uphold to be supreme court judge? Does he swear, "I swear to uphold the meaning I give to this Constitution." Now practically I think there would be a lot of Americans who would be very upset with that and we would never get through. But this is the approach if you think the author(?) or the judges give it meaning, then you have a reader approach view to the Constitution.

On the other hand, Bork and Thomas all argue "No. What we do is to interpret what the Founders of the Constitution meant and we can know that. We can know what they had in mind and then we could try to see the implications that flow out of this for the particular situation at hand. It is not just the Bible. It is not just the law. But that's struggling with this issue. A few years ago, maybe five or six now, Michelangelo's paintings in the Vatican - Sistine were redone. I think there was a large grant from an organization in Japan for the redoing of that.

Michelangelo did these in the 1500s. For how many centuries didn't they have electric lights in that place and how did they light them up? With candles. You know after several hundred years that can affect the ceilings. And there were various earthquakes - pieces breaking. There was moisture coming in. So they re-did the whole Sistine Chapel. Do any of you remember what happened when they opened it up?

There was a huge outcry. An uproar in the Art community. They said, "You have changed it. The colors are too bright." Michelangelo had much more somber colors. Now the question was whether 400 years of candles burning made brighter colors more somber or whether they were that way and the new re-doing of it used brighter colors. But so what? Is it an issue? Who cares? Well you say, "Wait a minute. This is Michelangelo's art." "Well. This is the way I as the restorer want to reinterpret or to interpret this art." And all of us say, "No. I didn't come here to see your reinterpretation. I wanted to see Michelangelo." Comes up in Art.

There is a composer by the name of Gilbert Kaplan who concentrates on the directing of Gustav Mahler's work. In a particular work of Mahler, in the original manuscript, there comes a place where there is an E-flat that every conductor changes to an F because an E-flat does not harmonize with it. They all think what he really wanted to do is have an F here, not an E-flat. So they change it. When he conducts it, there is a dissonant E-flat.

[Hard to Hear] This is in his manuscript. This is what he intended. We are doing Mahler's work and we ain't have to play it that way. He also surprised everyone because there was a particular work of Mahler that was usually a work that took about 12 or 13 minutes and it was kind of a funeral dirge. When he conducts it, it only takes 8 minutes. Now it's kind of a polka that they are doing in some ways.

Does it matter? If Mahler were present and you asked him, "Is it a dirge or a polka? Does that really matter how you direct it?" If you say "Yes" then you are dealing with an author controlled meaning.

Art, music, law – major issue. It is the issue you have to face because lots of people will start saying this is the way I read it and I don't read it the way you read it. Is there something out there that is an absolute that we must submit to? I am jumping ahead to something but let me make a comment.

Much of this movement gained strength and impetus in the 70s. It was the rebellion against authority that manifested it in its marches – a rebellion against governmental authority and in other areas it's a rebellion against any kind of authority. "I'm not going to have Paul sit over me when I read a text. I am going to do what I want." And it is a rebellion against authority here too. It is maybe not as clear as what was going on in the marches in Washington and so forth, but it is a generation that does not like authority to which they have to submit to in some way. And I am not a theologian to get into this argument now – whether this is a reflection of sin or likewise. It is there.

Now let us talk a little bit about the whole idea that writings are works of art. That is very debatable. How do you define a work like Romans? When does it become art? Now it is clear, when the Romans got that letter and read it, it was communication and you were trying to find out what does Paul mean here? Paul would not have said, "Well. Whatever meaning you gave is fine with me." He intended it as communication.

Now somehow something magical is supposed to happen and the Bible now becomes art. Well how does this take place? Well supposing you have something that lasted for 2,000, 3,000 years. People still read it. Then it becomes art after it has been around a long time. What do you do in a class in 20th century English literature? Don't treat that as art? Don't treat it as literature as such? You treat it as communication.

And also ok, let us forget about having to be old. If it is something that lots of people read that is no longer communication, it is literature or art. Well. In my generation the greatest literary artist in the world is Mickey Spillane. In yours it maybe John Grisham. [Hard to Hear] Shakespeare [Hard to Hear] even past. Very subjective. Very subjective.

I would suggest again that the idea that the author is the controller of meaning is the natural way of communication. In fact, supposing someone here wanted to argue the other side. That person, he or she could not argue with me, except on the basis that our argument is dominated by what the author means as the determiner of the meaning. You can't communicate otherwise. Communication requires that what the two communicators are speaking, that is what you want to know and that's what determines the meaning. So there is a sense in which to even discuss the issue, you have to first basically agree that at least in communication of – in conversation – what the author means is what we are getting at. And we have to say no, but when we get to art or literature, it is a different rule. You can't communicate, you can't debate apart from this presupposition.

A man by the name of E.D. Hirsh spoke heavily on this issue. He was asked to review a work – a book written by somebody in which the thesis was that the author was the determiner of text meaning. He reviewed the book and he got a letter from the author complaining terribly.

“You completely misunderstood me.” And E.D. Hirsch wrote back. “Thank You. E.D. Hirsch.”

In other words he wanted his work to be understood by what he meant. He didn't allow for an author to determine the meaning. Now there are some objections to the idea that the author is the determiner of meaning and a very famous one is called the Intentional Fallacy.

Any of you take literature at the university? Come across the intentional fallacy. That expression ring a bell?

This was an expression coined by William K. Wimsatt Jr. and Monroe Beardsley in 1954 and what they argued was this. You cannot know what the experiences the author was when they were writing these texts. You cannot relive their experiences. They are beyond us. We cannot go through what the author was going through when they wrote. And that's absolutely right. You cannot relive the experiences that Paul was going through when he wrote. That's why you need to read the C.S. Lewis article for next week. Very important article. Delightful article. You must read it for next week.

We cannot relive the innermost feelings, the motives and so forth. They are not accessible to us. But the question is when you read a text, are you trying to relive the experiences of the author or are you trying to understand what the author meant by the text he gave to you and that you have in front of you. That is different. We are not trying to relive how the text came into being. We are trying rather to understand what the author meant by the words he has given to us or she has given to us – a Biblical author would be a “he” of course.

If you went to a theatre and all of a sudden, the movie was cut off and there was a sign on the theatre which says, “Please move immediately to the nearest exit and leave. There is a fire in the theatre.” How many of you are trying to experience what the author meant as they were writing that sign. What - [Hard to Hear] was just interested in what they were conveying.

If you heard somebody drowning in the lake and saying, “Help me! Help me!” Are you saying “I would love to go through those experiences.” Or you can just say, “He needs help. I am going out there to help him.” Most of the times we are not interested in going through feelings that gave rise to this. Are you really concerned over the fact that one of the reasons Paul was so upset when he wrote Galatians was that he had a terrible problem with athlete's foot? No.

We are not interested in reliving the experiences of the authors. Well you know maybe we are. Maybe we would like to, but we have no access to and we might as well simply accept that's not available to us. That is very different thought because what is not available in that is available with regard to what they mean. We have their words and what their words are doing will reveal to us what they are trying to express.

Now a second objection here in the intentional fallacy is that the author may have been incompetent to express what they intended. What teacher has not had some student get a

paper and come back and say “What I really meant was ...” Yeah. But you didn’t say it. You may, like I did that one time, try to correspond to my wife, with my wife, said that I would meet her at a certain restaurant in one town and I went to another town with the same kind of restaurant. I was incompetent in trying to express what I was thinking.

So is it possible that Biblical authors may have had some thoughts in their mind, but in the expression of that they were incompetent? Yeah. Ok. Sure – hypothetically sure – what is intriguing to me is so many of the authors that raise that point, never think that they are incompetent in expressing the problem. They simply assume that they are fairly competent.

On most times you try to express something, write something, say something, you are fairly competent in expressing what you have on your mind. There may be exceptions to that but those are by far the exceptions, not the rule. So most writers seem to be quite competent. Now if you think about someone like the apostle Paul, he is a fairly intelligent person. So is Luke. My general impression would be they would be quite competent in expressing what they have on their minds. But now I have a bias that comes in at that point and that is that I am a Christian – an evangelical Christian who believes that they are inspired by God in what they are writing. And if inspiration comes in at any point, my assumption would be, it would be coming right in at this point – that what they want to express, God through His spirit enables them to well inadequately at least, so that what they mean can be conveyed adequately to their readers. So for me that objection that a person can be incompetent – it is not a big point for me because, I think most people can and if you believe in inspiration there is something here that goes over that problem to say the least.

Now another objection that some people raise is kind of radical historicism, and saying well, how can you really understand what somebody in the Old Testament, living in a period of sandals, animal sacrifices is saying? We are in the world of jet engines, intercontinental flights, computers, atomic weapons and the like – How can they? – help me understand the way they think.

Well it’s a real problem. I think it is. I think many people read the Bible as if it were written yesterday to someone. And we lose sight of the fact that we have to go back into time and culture and try to understand what they are talking about. A number of years ago, I watched a television program on public television and it involved an anthropologist who had just come after five years in New Guinea.

He had gone into a remote place in New Guinea and lived those years with a stone age people. Stone age – no metal tools, lived like stone age people – and he began the program by saying “You just can’t understand the way they think. It is just impossible for us to understand how they think.”

And then for the next 55 minutes, he explained to us how they think. Well, what he meant was, there is a difficulty in understanding of the cultures. And that is true. And we should not lose sight of them. But to say it is impossible, well, the anthropologist understood it is not impossible because he spent 55 minutes explaining it. If you really believed it, he would say, “And the result is that there is no sense in my trying to explain it to you.” Short program.

There are some other things that I think draw us together in understanding other people writing at other times. And that is our common humanity. The fact is they are human beings made in the image of God just like we and the basic needs that exist are really not different. Technology may change but we still have a need for hope.

The assurance of life everlasting – of love. Of something that allays the fear of death. Of food, clothing and warmth and fellowship. That basic humanity, I think allows us to understand people who lived in other cultures, times and places. After all we are not trying to understand how frogs think but of others who are made in the image of God this way.

So these - I think – these objections should not be minimized. Having said that however we shouldn't make them insurmountable. They are objections, yes to be sure, but they are not insurmountable objections.

Text has meaning in and of itself – semantic autonomy.

The reader determines the meaning, gives the text its meaning.

The author gives the meaning – we want to know what the author meant.

Those are the three components. I will argue for author oriented meaning in class.

(<https://www.biblicaltraining.org/library/introduction-hermeneutics-i/biblical-hermeneutics/robert-stein>)

5.2 An Introduction to Hermeneutics - Part 2

We are going to look at the different roles of the people involved in these three components. Let us then look at the role of an author. What does an author do in the communication process? Texts don't just magically appear in history.

It is not like people walk along the Nile and see papyrus sprouts there and all of a sudden before their eyes, they begin to peel and form into scrolls and magically words appear on it. Or you are walking in the country and you see a flock of sheep or some goats up there and their skin begins to peel off and all of a sudden, again letters appear on [Hard to Hear] Or you look at a stone and it becomes clear and grooves start appearing in it. Communication takes place somehow.

No. If you are going to have a text, that means that someone, somewhere, sometime wanted to communicate. An author willed a meaning. A thinking person wanted to communicate something –whether they used papyrus, whether they used the clay tablet, stone – whatever they used is irrelevant. Whether they wrote right to left, left to right, up or down – all that is irrelevant. What is important is that some person, some time in history wanted to write something.

Now that is something that is a historical fact of the past. What it means then is that what the author wanted to say in this text can never change. It is past. It is always there. It can never change. Meaning cannot change because the meaning of the past is simply part of the past and you cannot change the past.

An author may decide to repudiate what they meant. But they can't change what they meant. I wrote something in my 1st edition of *The Method and Message of Jesus' Teaching About The Term Abba Father* and later on I no longer believed that. But I couldn't say, these words mean something differently now. Too late right. It is history. What you can do is publically recant in class. You say, "I made something – it was wrong in that point. Here is what I mean now." Or you can write a 2nd edition.

I was fortunate and was able to write a 2nd edition and I recanted and repented and did homage to whoever needed it and you can change. You can change your views but you can't change the meaning of the text that is in the past, because the text is locked in the history. So meanings are locked forever in history. You can't change them.

So when Paul writes to the Ephesians in Ephesians 5:18, "Do not get drunk with wine ..." what he meant back then is the exactly the same as it means now. It can never change. "Be not drunk with wine..."

Now what Paul meant back then with wine, we will talk about a little later in the semester is not what we call wine. It is a mixture of water and wine. Usually around 2, 3 parts water, 1 part wine. That is what he meant by it. Then we know that ... I will tell you how we know that another time.

So he says, "Be not drunk with wine". Now imagine a situation. Paul comes to visit unexpectedly, the church in Ephesus. He comes and visits them and he finds them all drunk. And Paul says, "Didn't you get my letter? I said 'Be not drunk with wine...'" And one of the deacons says "That is right brother Saul, brother Paul. We don't touch that stuff anymore. We switched to beer since then."

Now how would Paul respond? Would he say "Oh. That is alright. If it was wine I would be really ticked off, but don't worry about beer."

No. No. Well. What would he have said? "Well I meant that too."

Now wait a minute. He didn't say beer and wine. He just said wine. But do you believe that he also meant beer? Or did he simply mean that wine or is there something about his command "Be not drunk with wine" that has implications in it that are unstated that he may or may not have been aware of.

Alright supposing he came in one of our churches and he found us drunk with whisky. But he say "Well. I just meant beer. What by the way, what is whisky?" And you explain, "Well whisky is a kind of thing that we get from wheat and then we distill is so that it becomes - the alcohol content goes from say 10% to about 50%."

He says, "Oh. You know wine, we dilute it, so we get from 12% down to 3 or 4%. But you concentrate it to 50%."

Well. I didn't know about whisky, but that's exactly the thing that I am talking about. You see what he says is not "Be not drunk with wine but if other things can bring the same thing about it doesn't bother me," but "Be not drunk with wine and those kind of things like wine."

In other words there is a principle here, so that whisky is included. Vodka is included. Gin is included. Bourbon is included. I say is a little silent because of Baptists traditions with bourbon. Alright now what he is saying is a principle – I'll use the expression a pattern of meaning that contains more in it than simply the meaning wine itself.

Sure. I think most people would say "Well, yeah of course he meant 'Be not drunk with beer, Be not drunk with whisky.'" Now so far we have said "Be not drunk with whisky" fits "Be not drunk with wine." Beer fits. Beer he would have been aware of. Beer was a beverage at that time. Whisky, he wouldn't have been. Bourbon, he wouldn't have and the others because those are 1700s, distilled and so forth and so on.

Can we interpret that way and then say "Be not overcome with too many Big Macs from McDonald?" I am a cashew nut fan. There is no such thing as a half-can of cashew nuts. It is all or nothing. It is kind of a drug for me.

Now, does he mean, *stinopi* – intoxicated – with cashew nuts. Well wait a minute. What is it about the wine that he is talking? "Be not drunk..." Do not come into a stupor where you no longer think correctly. What is intoxication? I would think, things that bring about an intoxication fit, but cashews don't do that. I can still think real clearly. Upset stomach. Things like that but, no, my mind has not gone yet.

And so what you have to say is then "What is the pattern that he is talking about in something like?" I would say maybe what he means if you want to break it down into the pattern or principle – paradigm – something like that. It would be something like this.

Don't take into your body, substances that cause you to lose control of your thinking and your doing. Something like that. Now is caffeine something that does that? That might be easily debatable. Does it affect the mind so that you no longer control what you are doing or does it control other physical aspects of your body more?

I don't drink coffee or something like that. I drink caffeine-less pop so I ... its not that. See what you are wrestling with is "Does it fit within this pattern?" Something for instance that cause you to overeat I don't think fit.

So it is not like these commands or these teachings are endless and they are just a kind of an amorphous amoeba that you throw anything in. There is a principle here. You have to arrive at that principle and you say now coming out of that principle what are some of the implications that Paul might not have been aware of.

He wasn't aware of the kind of alcoholic beverages that we have today. But let me ask another one. Would there ... is it possible that he is talking about something has

implications for narcotics? Morphine? Cocaine? Marijuana? Are those similar in the kinds of things they do? Ok. Then I think... Yeah. Then they fit here?

It is not like all of these are just an amorphous mass you could make them be anything you want. You have to arrive at the principle and say, "Now what other implications are there that fit this principle that Paul might now have been aware of?"

There are all sorts of commands that we have like that, that a person may not be aware of that flow through this. For instance, Mark 5:21-48(= Matthew 5:21+) has a list of what we call the antithesis.

"You have heard it said of old, thou shall not..." Alright – then Jesus said "But I say..."

Now I don't think what Jesus is saying "I don't care if you do that but I'm going to give you a different – a totally different – command." I think what He is doing is bringing out an implication of that. For instance,

"You have heard it said of old, you shall not commit adultery. But I tell you, if you look on a woman to lust, you have committed adultery already with her in your heart."

My understanding of that is that in this principle or pattern "thou shall not commit adultery" are implications which involve looking on a woman to lust. There would be implications I think with regard to pornography and things of this nature that flow from that pattern.

"You have heard it said, you shall not kill" but Jesus ... If you want to know the implications of that, it means you can't hate a person, because if you hate them you are already beginning on that path of violating that commandment. And so what Jesus is doing is the very thing we have done with Paul's command about be not drunk with wine. We are looking for implications that flow out of the principle and pattern of that particular saying or teaching and I think the best way I would understand Matthew 5:21 and following is this particular way.

How many of you have a 12,10, 11 year old son? Alright. Christmas time, grandma comes and grandpa gives your son named Trevor. He gives Trevor a \$50 dollar bill for Christmas and Trevor knows exactly what he wants to do with it.

With tax for \$49.69 is this game down at Target that he is been lusting after since Thanksgiving. He is going to use that \$50 dollars from Grandma down at Target. You know that however and you say, "Travis. I don't think Grandma and Grandma want you to go down to Target and buy that game." I think they want you to use it this summer at camp. And so I am telling you don't go down to Target and spend the money on that game.

Well. You go off to school and you come home that night and Travis is playing with that game. And you say to Travis, "Travis, didn't I tell you, you should not go down to Target and buy that game."

And Travis responds, “Oh. I didn’t go down to Target. I went to Wal-Mart. It was \$2 cheaper.”

How do you respond? Do you say well it is different then? It could be. Maybe there is something about Target you are boycotting or something like that. But most probably you meant, “I don’t want you to buy that game,” and even though you meant every possible store, you meant that and he knew that.

So that when we give teachings we don’t list every hypothetical. You wouldn’t say, “I don’t want you to go down to Target, Walgreens, K-mart ... I don’t want you to go down to *Toysrus* and list every hypothetical one in the world. If you list one, either have – the understanding is there. So there is an implication there that even though it was not stated, you meant it. And Travis knew it. So that when we speak there are implications to what we say many times as parents, that our children, you know, like Travis – probably – a good kid wouldn’t do this, but might look for, what’s not mentioned, how can he get around it, but would violate the command itself and the implications.

So when we say something like this there are frequently implications like this that we expect the person to carry through and understand so that an author often times includes in their meaning, implications they may not have even been aware of, but are nevertheless there

Sometimes you talk about these implications as unconscious meanings that the author might not have been thinking of or in our conversations somebody might not [Hard to Hear] be thinking of.

I use the word ... I will talk about something like that a little later. Now let me just stop here for a minute and deal with an issue. Some people say, “Yeah. Dr. Stein but isn’t God the author of Scripture?” All this emphasis on Paul or Luke or Mark – Isn’t God the ultimate author of Scripture?” That sounds real devout. A popular way of speaking. But is it an accurate way of speaking?

When you look at Paul’s letters, I have yet to see one of them that starts out “God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. To the Church at Corinth.” It starts out with Paul. No ... No book of our Bible claims God as its immediate author. The divine meaning of the text is that meaning which God has conveyed through his authoritative spokespeople – the prophets of the Old Testament, the gospel writers, Paul and others in the New Testament. To understand therefore what God means, we must understand what God’s inspired authors mean.

And I found too much in my own life that those who have an ultimate meaning that God intended that Paul doesn’t – I don’t think have God’s meaning at all, because what God meant is what the Apostles meant. They are his spokespeople. When they speak, they speak with divine authority and it is that meaning that they are intending to find. That’s what we are assigned to look at. What does God’s authoritative author mean by this?

Another question: When we talk about interpreting the Bible literally – during the Reformation, the Reformers argued strongly that we are not interested in allegorical

meaning or something, we want the literal meaning of the text. But now, the Reformers knew that there are a lot of things in the Bible that would be figurative. Parables, exaggerated language and what they meant is the way I am going to define literal meaning of the text.

The literal meaning of the text is what the authors meant by the words. That's the literal meaning of the text. And I would say yes, that's what we are after. After the literal meaning of the text when you interpret it like the Reformers – the author's meaning.

But the literal meaning of "If your right hand offend you, cut it off. If your right eye offends you, pluck it out." The literal meaning of that text is what the authors meant by that and what they meant by that is something fairly simple: there is no sin worth going to hell for. Better to repent even if it is as painful as plucking out the right eye or tearing off a right arm and going through that pain of repentance and entering life than not doing that and perishing. That we take very literally. But the imagery? No. No.

What the author meant by these things – that we take literally and that's the literal meaning of the text. Later on when we talk of historical narrative, that sometimes in the Bible, we have actually two authors. For instance Peter preaches at Pentecost – what is the meaning of that text? Who gives the meaning to that text? Well. If you want to know what the meaning of the text is in our definition at this point, it is what Luke means to convey by Peter's speech to Theophilus. But you also have another author and that is Peter himself and you can investigate this to understand what Peter meant.

And sometimes they are identical. They are never contradictory in my understanding. They are frequently complementary. When you get to the Gospels, you have Jesus' teachings. You could try to understand the text in light of what Jesus meant and we will talk about the study of the subject matter of the Biblical text. Or we can seek to understand what the Biblical author, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John meant by these words. Those are authoritative words as far as I am concerned but we will talk primarily of the meaning of the evangelist of that text as the meaning of the text. We will then talk about the investigation of the subject matter to find out what the Son of God who is inspired of God in His teaching also meant. But the text meaning is primarily what the writer, the penner, not the speaker, but the writer of that text means.

We are going to now talk about the role of a text. In the communication process, what function does a text have in the issue of communication? Again texts are a collection of symbols, written in various ways and one thing about authors is that when they write, they write surprisingly enough to be understood. You might not always think that, but that's what they intend to do.

Very few people write not wanting to be understood. Now there is an exception to that and that is in time of war, people write codes in order that those who they want to understand and they can communicate with, but those who they do not want to understand what they/you are saying will not because they do not understand the code.

And there is all sorts of famous examples of codes and code breaking. For instance the deciding battle in the second World War in the Pacific was the Battle of Midway. And American cryptographers had broken the Japanese Enigma Code just in time. And they found out that they were planning a major battle at the island of Midway, attempting to lure out the American Navy, and they prepared accordingly and the battle [Hard to Hear] the war took place at that point because there were four major Japanese aircraft carriers that were sunk and from then on the Japanese fleet was always not in aggressive offensive mode but in a defensive mode.

In a similar way the British had broken through the German code through the help of Polish cryptographers and the Germans till the end of the war never knew that. They simply could not believe that their code-work was being broken because of the machine involved in that regard. The possibilities of breaking that were just astronomical and it caused some very interesting problems, for instance the British broke a code in which the Germans were preparing an air raid to bomb the city of Coventry and Churchill was informed of this.

Should we warn the people? There is a moral dilemma. If we warn the people, then the Germans will know we have broken their code. So for the sake of hiding that secret, the city of Coventry was bombed and only later at the end of the war to the complete surprise of the Germans, recognized that their - were told that the German code had been broken.

On the other hand, the Germans had broken the British code too at times, so you almost wonder why don't you just share with one another and stop going through all of this problem. But in codes you don't want people to understand. People do not write codes. No author writes a book saying, I don't want anybody to understand what I am saying. As a result when somebody writes, they use the principle of share-ability by abiding by the norms of the language.

And the French used the word, *lingua*, to explain this – the norms of language. In other words, they used words in accordance with how those words are understood by their audience. They use grammar in accordance to the way grammar is used. They use verb tenses and clauses as they would be understood. There is a sense in which the author may wish to write anything they want, but when they write this to their reader, they become in a sense the servants of their reader because they must use language as their readers will understand it.

For instance in writing the Stein text, there are a number of times I could have used other kinds of language, but I didn't think some of that technical terminology would be shareable and I thought there are other simple English terms that can be used. Why don't we use them instead? So there was a sense in which I was placing myself in your place saying how will you read this text? Shareability so that texts are always written in light of how the audience would understand that.

Now the norms of language or the *lingua* involves such things as looking up a word. If I use the word, love, there are [Hard to Hear] a number of possible meanings for this. It could

mean deep emotion. It could mean sexual relationship. It could mean the end of a letter. It could mean a score of zero in tennis. It could mean fond affection.

The possibilities you could look up in a dictionary. You say when Stein uses this word love, because he wants to be understood, he is using it in a shareable manner, it has to be one of these twelve ways. Now therefore love can't be mean potatoes. You say "Well why not?" Well if I want to be understood, I have to use it in the way an audience would understand.

Now there are sometimes when a biblical writer uses a word in a way that is not normal. For instance in John 2, John has Jesus saying, "Destroy this temple in three days and I will raise it." Now John knows that that is [Hard to Hear] what Jesus means by the temple is not in norms of language and so he explains it and says "By this He meant, His body".

So I can use words in ways that are not found in the dictionary but if I want to be communicative, I have to explain it that way. If I don't explain it it's a dictionary definition – one of those possibilities. Now what an author does – or what we do when we communicate is to provide not isolated words but words in a context and so the word love can be explained in different ways.

For instance I remember at a faculty/student seminary retreat when I was teaching at Bethel Theological Seminary, John Cionca, one of my colleagues in the faculty – we were going to play some tennis and two new students said to us "Why don't we play doubles? Would you mind if we play doubles with you? Dr. Cionca and Dr. Stein?" And so I said John, "Yes. Why don't we and John, let us love them." Now John knew that I meant let us not let them win a game. Let us beat them 6-0, 6-0."

But the word love in different contexts have different meanings. When Jesus says to His disciples, "Let us love one another," that meaning is very different than Hugh Heffner's mansion when he says let us love one another. The possibilities are limited. The context allows you to zero in on what is meant in that way, so the norms of language, the possibilities. The context provides the norms of the utterance or if you want to use French, the parole in which you get to the specific particular meaning and once again, share-ability is what allows you to communicate.

You know in the English words that I am using, that it has to follow one of the normal meanings in the definitions of those words. As far as finding share-ability, the norms of language, the best help in the norms of language is a dictionary. Or since we are seminary graduates and we are dealing with graduate work, we call it a lexicon because other people don't know that word. We want to be educated and use a more refined word.

The norms of utterance? The way to get at that is most helpful tool here is a grammar. How are verbs in these constructions used this way? And for us, we have a different form of grammatical importance. Word order is very important for us. In Greek, word order is quite irrelevant. If I say Bob loves Joan, the only one possible meaning. If I say Joan loves Bob, one possible meaning.

Now in Greek, doesn't matter where you put those words. If you say Bobus loves Joanine, the endings on those say one is the object, one is the subject. And whatever order you want to put it in, put it in a blender and mix it up any way you want. Doesn't matter. The norms of language are different for different languages so that primarily for the individual words, dictionary is helpful – main tools.

For the norms of the [Hard to Hear] how they are used in combination, grammars are more important. Now another thing about a text is that it provides for us a huge storehouse of information. The Bible is like a great mountain full of gems and precious metals and you can mine them for all sorts of reasons. What we want to do then is to find out information sometimes. Is it perfectly alright to study the Bible to learn about things. That's different however and we should not confuse that with the learning – studying the Bible to learn about the meaning of the text. So what we can do and this will become most apparent in a historical text.

Reading Acts. You can read Acts as a mine to learn information about the early church. What was their view of baptism? What was the role of the Holy Spirit in all of this? Who were the leading apostles? What was the missionary strategy of the apostles Paul? What was the Roman law about the citizenry – citizenship and so forth? You can study Acts for all of that information.

None of that involves a studying of Acts for what the meaning is. If you take any historical passage, you can study it for its information, but if you want to learn the meaning of historical narrative – Acts, the Gospels, Exodus, Judges, Samuel, 1st Chronicles and so forth – then you say, the author, I – the author, whoever it may – John, Mark, Matthew, Luke have told you this story about – and I give the story – and because.

Now you are not interested in information per se but meaning and such. Why did the author teach this story? That's meaning. What the author uses and the material he is talking about, that's the subject matter and there are all sorts of examples of that. In the text I talk about the example of Jesus crossing the Sea of Galilee when a storm comes up. Well you know you could preach about the shape of the Sea of Galilee. You can talk about why storms come up so surprisingly in the Sea of Galilee. You can talk about the kind of fishing boat they used. When Jesus was sleeping on a pillow in front of the boat, what does that mean exactly? And you can show pictures of the particular kind of boat that must have been used that was discovered about 10 years ago in the Sea of Galilee when the Sea of Galilee had a drought.

They discovered this mud covered boat dating back to the time of Jesus. You describe it. That's all subject matter. What Mark doesn't say – "I am telling you this story about Jesus crossing the Sea of Galilee because some day he may find one of these archaeological relics and I want to explain that to you. Its not what... You can show your slides by the way of the Sea of Galilee when you are preaching a sermon. That's subject matter.

But now if you ask the question, why did Mark tell this story? There is something about the end of the verse where he talks about Jesus' stilling the storm and the disciples say "Who is this man that even the winds and the waves obey Him? I want to tell you about this man,

Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God, verse 1 in chapter 1 because He is Lord of nature Himself. He can stand up and tell the storms ‘Be still’. There is no one like Him. He is the Son of God.”

So the meaning versus the subject then. Lots and lots of subject matter in the text. Now what about the role of the reader? What is the first thing that a reader must do? The first thing a reader must do is to find out about the literary form that is being used. What kind of form do we have here because let us face it, different forms have different ways of conveying that meaning. For example, do you interpret poems the way you do historical accounts? No.

Would you interpret Romans ex-verse by verse exegesis – the same way you would do the symbolism of Revelation? How do you know for instance how to interpret the story about the rich man and Lazarus? Some people say “Well. This must be a real story.” Its not a real story. It’s a parable. Well how do you know it’s a parable? Well because Luke introduces this the same way he does other parables.

“There was a certain man who ...”

“There was a man who had two sons ...”

“There was a judge ...”

“There was a certain rich man ...”

And He introduces it and you know this is a parable and the point is what is the parable? You don’t interpret by saying well, “You know this indicates that you can see between Heaven and Hell because this man was in Hell and he was able to see in Heaven.” That’s part of the parable and you interpret a parable differently than you do a narrative as such. So you need to understand the literary form that’s being used and we are going to talk about 7 or 10, 12 specific literary forms and deal with the rules governing them.

One of the big problems we have is that the writers and the readers knew about this. We don’t. They knew things about prophesy and poetry and proverbs that we really don’t know today. We have lost in a 2-3,000 thousand years in between – these materials. So we need to learn those forms and the rules governing them.

What we want to do then is also learn what the author means by these particular symbols. We talked about implications and let me talk a little about implications. We will define these shortly. But at first, who determines the implications of a text?

Question was raised during break time. Well – do we give these texts implications? For instance, when Paul says, “Be not drunk with wine”, do we say there is an implication and give to this text and implication – this also means whisky, vodka, beer and the like. I think there is a distinction here we must be careful of. Who controls the meaning of a text? Who determines it? If it’s the author, then the author controls the implications. And therefore all these implications are thereby the author. He determines it. We discover them. We don’t create them. They are there already.

When Paul said “Be not drunk with wine”, the minute he penned that to the Ephesians, he meant also “Be not drunk with whisky”. He wasn’t aware of it, but it fits the pattern and you would say, he wasn’t thinking of it but, yeah, that’s what it means. That’s what it means.

We discover them and much of good preaching today is to discover the implications of authors meaning. What are the implications of this for today? For instance if you talk about “Thou shall not steal” – alright or “Give to Caesar the things that are Caesars,” what are the implications of this with regard to income tax and the like? What are the implications about this about deductions and claims that we do on our income tax form? The implications of this are what are most necessary for many times our sharing with the congregation.

We are going to look at another word and we will look up the word significance. We will define these more fully in just a few minutes. Implications are determined by the author. Significance is how you give credence or credibility to what the author says. Implications and meaning are determined by the author. You determine significance. Implications are our mental understanding of what the author meant. Significance involves not the mind but the will.

Simply put, once you know the meaning and its implications, your yes, your no is the significance. What you do with regard to the significance of a text, your yes or no, your volitional response – that is your doing – you are master. You are king, you are queen here. When it comes to meaning and implications, the author is king.

A term that we will not use in our text is the word application. Now the reason for that is that application is a combination of two things. Our definitions are essentially elements in regard to our nuclear structure. Compounds or combinations.

So water is not an element. It consists of two elements – hydrogen and oxygen. When we talk about the application of a text to our lives, we are combining two things. We are combining, the implications of that text that are especially relevant for us and the responding to that. But since they are two elements forming a compound, we don’t want to inter-mix those two. We will leave these as separate entities. Implications, significance - application combines those two. So we will not deal with them in our definitions as such.

(<https://www.biblicaltraining.org/library/introduction-hermeneutics-ii/biblical-hermeneutics/robert-stein>)

5.3 Hermeneutical Issues Involved in Translation

5.3.1 There is no one-to-one correspondence between languages

We want to talk about the philosophy of Bible translation. C. H. Dodd made the statement – he was involved in the RSV -, “The first axiom the art of translation is that there is no such thing as an exact equivalence of meaning between words in different languages.” Languages are a part of culture and no two cultures are the same, so we

have a problem. For instance, the word “spirit” in English has a number of possibilities. The norms of language for that word can have a variety of understandings. You can talk about a ghost, you can talk about the Holy Spirit, you can talk about the soul, or something like that, you can talk about alcoholic spirits and the like. In German there is a word, “geist” and there is an overlapping of these, but they are not identical. You can’t talk about an alcoholic “geist.” In Greek you have the word, “duma,” talking about the spirit of man, talking about the Holy Spirit, but you can’t talk about alcoholic “duma.” So, what you have is the realization that there is overlapping of words, but identical synonyms and all of the possibilities you just can’t find. So when you go from one language to another, you have a problem.

Let me give you an example of that. In 1975 my family and I went to Germany and we spent our sabbatical in Heidelberg. My oldest two children, Julie and Keith, attended Bundson Gymnasium that year. How do you translate that in English? They spent the year at the Bundson Gym, played basketball and soccer and all those things. Gymnasium is the name of the school, it was an academic thing. What grade were they in? They were in fifth and sixth grade. Then why do you say they went to Bundson Junior High? A little problem. This junior high, so to speak, went from fifth grade to 13th grade. Why don’t you just say, they went to high school? Well, there is another problem. That is, when a student in Germany graduates from fourth grade, grades one to four are “grundschule,” foundation school. They all go there. But after that, they go to one of three kinds of schools. They go to “fachschule,” beginning in fifth grade, where they learn a trade, electrician, carpentry, things of that nature. They can go to “middleschule,” where they learn how to be in business and economics, or they can go to “gymnasium,” in which you study only for the university. There is another problem here. There were three gymnasiums in Heidelberg. There was a science gymnasium with majors in biology, science, chemistry, physics, math. There was another one which was a modern language gymnasium and there was a classical language gymnasium. They went to the modern language gymnasium.

Now, do you understand where my children went? There is no English equivalent. What do you do to simply translate that? You put, “They went to Bundson Gymnasium with a footnote with a large paragraph explaining it: gymnasiums are schools in Germany where after fifth grade students go to prepare for university, goes from grades five to 13. Or, you try to find an equivalent. That’s the problem.

A Biblical problem like that is found in Matthew, chapter 1, beginning at verse 18. In 1:18 we read, “Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way, when his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and not willing to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered this, behold an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy

Spirit. She will bear a son, you will call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins. All this took place to fulfill what was written by the prophet: "Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son and his name shall be called "Immanuel" which means, "God with us." When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took his wife, but knew her not until she had borne a son. And he called his name Jesus."

What is the relationship of Joseph and Mary? In verse 18 they are betrothed. Verse 19, Joseph is the husband thinking of divorcing her. Verse 20, Mary is his wife. And in verse 24, Mary is again referred to as his wife. Now, are they engaged? Are they married? What is going on here? And the answer is, "Yes." There is no English word. Joseph and Mary in the culture of that day had entered into a legally binding engagement in which they were considered husband and wife, although the sexual consummation had not yet taken place. To break that engagement, you had to divorce her. So you can't say they are engaged, simply using English words, because engagement for a lot of American young people think of is kind of like going steady. It is not going steady, it is a legally binding situation in which you can only break through divorce. And if she has a sexual relationship with someone else, this is adultery. So it is a different culture, a different relation. How do you translate that? A problem. How do you translate to Eskimos in Northern Canada that he is like a sheep led to the slaughter? There aren't sheep up there. What do you say? He was led like a four-footed animal whose skin people peel to make clothing? Do you say, "He is led like a seal pup to the slaughter?" How do you convey to a different culture something that is different in your culture? And the Bible has problems that way.

Do you see the difficulty? Some people get so exasperated and say, "They will never understand." That is not true. That is to over-exaggerate the problem. You can explain and people can understand. You understand what kind of school my son Keith and my daughter Julie went to. You understand the relationship of Joseph and Mary. The problem is when you try to translate this, there are often not good English equivalent words that you can use. So this is the major problem.

5.3.2 Marks of a Good Translation

1. Be based on the best manuscripts

If you are going to have a translation, what are the qualities that we want to find in such a translation? The first thing to note is that a translation can never be better than the text they use. So what you want to do is to base your translation on the best Greek and Hebrew manuscripts that are available. When Tyndale translated the New Testament he used for his Greek text a printed edition by a man named Erasmus. Erasmus was a leading Renaissance scholar, a brilliant man. A publisher came to Erasmus and said to him, "They are producing a Greek translation in Spain, a polyglot of various translations

of various languages. And the publisher said to Erasmus, "I think there is a big market for a Greek printed text. Can you produce one and beat the Spanish product?" And so Erasmus worked on it, he went in 1516 to the library in Basel and he had four Greek manuscripts that he found, dating from the 12th to the 14th century. He used those four Greek manuscripts to produce this Greek text, which later became so popular, it was called "the textus receptus," the text everybody receives and uses. Some interesting things. None of those four Greek manuscripts had the last six verses of the Book of Revelation. So what he did was get a Latin vulgate and translated the Latin into Greek for those last verses. Needless to say, he has the translation that in part is not found in any Greek manuscript of the Book of Revelation that has ever been seen before.

Since that time, we have come across some 5,500 additional Greek manuscripts in part or in whole. Since that time we have come across fragments and whole manuscripts that are up to 1,000 years older than the one used in Erasmus's Greek text. That Greek text was the one Tyndale used and the revision of that was the one the King James version translators used.

Since the King James Version has come out, what we have now are thousands of additional manuscripts, some of which are much, much older. What should we do with these additional manuscripts? Should we just say, "Get rid of them, they just cause problems." There is a sense that ignorance is bliss, right? If we only had four, it would be a lot easier. Now you have 5,000 of in the deal, it is much more difficult.

Most of the New Testament translations today are based on the best of these Greek manuscripts. One of them is the Codex Vaticanus named because it was found in the Vatican library. The other one is a Codex Sinaiticus. Generally those are the two best old manuscripts that we have that are somewhat complete. Those two are at least 800 years older than the best manuscript that Erasmus had available for the Textus Receptus. If you are going to now make use of these older Greek manuscripts, it is going to be clear that some times you will see changes in them, different than in the manuscripts that were available and became part of the work of Erasmus.

Most, as I say, modern translations make use of the best Greek and Hebrew manuscripts. The glaring examples of the contrary is the New King James version. That does not. It refuses to accept these older Greek manuscripts and leaves what the King James has as a result.

If you have a Bible, I want you to turn with me to 1John chapter 5 verse 7. Like the King James version, this new King James version reads this way: Verse 6 is as follows: This is he who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ. Not only by water, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness because the Spirit is truth." Verse 7 in the King James version: "For there are three who bear witness in heaven, the Father, the

Word and the Holy Spirit and these three are one.” If you have the New American Standard, verse 7, does it have that, “there are three that bear witness”? It does not have it. Is there a footnote or something like that? The New International version, 5:7, doesn’t have that, right? Other translations? The English Standard, it doesn’t. What do we do with this?

Let me say that when the King James version was translated, the Greek text of Erasmus had those words in the Greek text. Let me tell you a little about that particular verse as it is now found, verse 7. Of all the Greek manuscripts in the world, there are only four that have that expression in 1 John about the three that bear witness, the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one. One is a 12th century manuscript and it is written in the margin in a modern hand,. Other than the 12th century, after the 12th century, it is not in the text itself, it is on the side of the text and in a later hand. We know that from styles and so fourth. There is an 11th century manuscript which has it, but again, it is not in the text, it is in the margin, written in a hand similar to 17th century. There is a 14th and 15th century manuscript and there again, it is not in the text, it is in the margin, written in a 17th century hand. Erasmus was not going to include this in his Greek text because it was not in any of the manuscripts that he was using. He said to somebody, “If you could show me one Greek manuscript that has it in, I will include it. “ There is a Greek manuscript , it dates from, listen carefully, the 16th century, and it has it in, the only one that has it in the text. And most scholars are convinced that it was written just for Erasmus, to make sure he would put it in.

Now, what do you do if you are responsible for a translation of the Word of God, do you leave it in like the King James has? Or do you not have it in? You say, there is a warning in Revelation about anybody who takes out of the Bible these verses, but read that warning. It also says about adding into it. Are we taking something out that is there, or are we not allowing anybody to add something that was not there? All the other manuscripts on that passage that are earlier, do not have anything, not even in the margin. But what is really interesting is that in the 2nd, 3rd, 4th centuries, the church debated the issue of the nature of God and they hammered out the formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity. The Nicene Creed comes out of Nicaea. They wrestled with the nature of God. Isn’t it interesting that never once, all of those who argued for the Trinity quoted this verse. Wouldn’t you think, if you were trying to prove the Trinity and this was in your Bible, you would quote it? They never found it. It was not in their Bible. It came into the Bible later, centuries after those conferences.

So, do we allow it in or put it in? Or do we say, “No, no-one can add to the Word of God and we are not going to allow this to be added to it.” I assume it is the latter. When the new King James version came out, I was teaching at Bethel Theological Seminary and one of the editors came out and gave everybody, the faculty and students, a copy of this after chapel address and then there was a time for questions. And he said, “Are there any questions?” My colleague in New Testament , Berkeley Michelson had his

hand up and he said, "Yes, why did you include 1 John 5:7?" The editor said, "The editorial staff really felt that we should not include it, but the publisher said that if we don't include it, the translation won't sell," which is a "noble reason" [sarcasm] for adding something to the Bible. In other translations, this is not a major problem. This is one. Same thing when you get to the issue of the woman taken in adultery, John 7:53 to 8:11. If you look at that, most translations will either put it in the footnote or they will put brackets around it and they will say, "The earliest Greek manuscripts that we have don't have this." John 16:9-20, same thing. Most translations will eliminate that or put it in brackets and say, "Some manuscripts add this," etc.

So what we are dealing here with is the issue of textual criticism, and the average lay person really does not know enough about textual criticism. The average pastor doesn't know much about textual criticism. The average New Testament scholar like me, I don't know much about textual criticism. So it is an area where we feel uneasy and you have some dogmatic people who have a direct line to the Lord, making pontifical statements about this, which really does not show any humility at all. When you don't know enough about something and you are dogmatic about it, it tends to be arrogant. Whenever you preach, you have to exegete where your congregation is, where do they live? Some churches, this would not be a big issue if you said the early Greek manuscripts don't have it, it seems to be a later edition. Okay, what do you mean? What are you taking out of my Bible? If you have the latter congregation, let's just say, it takes a lot more explaining to deal with that.

Fortunately, none of these begin a book of the Bible. So, by the time you get to Mark 16, you've been with the congregation long enough that they have either a trust for you or suspicion. If they have suspicion, you can't help that. But they develop a trust if they see you have a real love for the Lord, you have a great reverence for the Word of God, and you are not going to allow anybody to add something to it. Then they might say, "I'm not really sure, I don't quite agree with him, but he loves the Lord and he wouldn't say something like this if he didn't believe it." Or, if you are dealing with John, you have seven chapters to prepare your congregation for that.

Somebody says to me, "I'm only going to read the King James version, I don't care what you say." I would say, "Why don't you get a New King James version. Some of the words we don't use anymore are explained a little better there." And they would feel more comfortable with it. And I would say, "Fine." If a person won't read a different translation, whatever one they will read, unless it's a Jehovah's Witness kind of thing, I'll get it for them and say, "You read this." What we want is the use of the best Greek and Hebrew texts available.

Since the discoveries at Qumran, we have discovered Hebrew manuscripts that are 1500 years, 1300 years older than the oldest manuscript that was available at the time. The oldest was something like 900 A.D., 11 manuscripts of the prophets. They only go

back to 300, 400 B.C. some of them. Wouldn't it be absurd not to use manuscripts that much closer to the original? It is not quite as mechanical as this, but simply this way. Here we are today, 2002, and here we have the Biblical author, say the prophet Isaiah at 600 B.C. Would you like to base your manuscript evidence on manuscripts that date from 1600 or 300 B.C. All things being equal, isn't the tendency down here for more spelling errors to creep in than up there? It is not quite that simple, but it is still relevant to see in this way. With Greek manuscripts, there are a number of issues. For instance, if you have Mark, the original Mark. Here you have a copy that dates 600. Here you have a copy dating 1200. This one is based on a 500 copy. This one is based on a 300 copy. So this is essentially 600 years later, but its predecessor is earlier. So you talk about families and traditions and the like. It gets to be a whole art at which I'm not really much of an expert. Generally I think you would say, the older they would be, the more that they would tend to be less effected by changes and errors that have occurred. The older they are, the more opportunity for that.

2. Be based on the latest knowledge of language and culture

Second issue: We want the translation to be based on the latest knowledge of the languages and culture. Since 1611, the date of King James, there has been considerable knowledge that has increased with regard to various translations. We know, for instance, that a lot of the Bible consists of poetry and we can recognize that poetry. Up to the 1700s, no-one knew Biblical poetry. They didn't understand or talk about poetry and how we interpret poetry different than other works. But we have learned a lot since that time. We want to be careful about what we have learned during that time and apply all of that knowledge to our particular text. We want a translation that is accurate and we can say, "Of course that is true." Sometimes people take liberties in translation, like the Living Bible. In John 21:2 they translated, "A group of us were there, Simon Peter, Thomas the twin, Nathaniel from Cana and Gallilee, my brother James and I and two other disciples." The Greek text doesn't say "James and I." It says, "The sons of Zebedee." The translator of the Living Bible thought, and he may be right, that John was the writer of this Gospel. But even if he is right, that is not what the text is saying, it says "the sons of Zebedee." So you should put in "the sons of Zebedee." You want an accurate translation.

3. Be accurate

You have to realize too that just producing an accurate translation in manuscript form does not mean that it comes out accurate in printed form. There are some notorious goofs this way. For instance, in 1631 Barker and Lewis who were printers, printed the King James version. It was a nice translation, a nice copy of the King James version. A little problem: In the seventh commandment they left out a word, and so it read, "Thou shalt commit adultery." They were taken to court, fined, went out of business. In 1653, Paul asked the question, "Know ye not that" and they had a little word change, "the

unrighteous shall enter the kingdom of God,” rather than “righteous.” In 1716 in Ireland, 8,000 copies of a Bible were printed and they discovered no word was left out, nor incorrect word, no letters added, just two letters were reversed. So in the story of the woman taken in adultery, Jesus says to her, “Sin on more” instead of “Sin no more.” You have the famous printers’ Bible where David in Psalm 119 complains, “Princes have persecuted me without a cause” and it came out, “Printers have persecuted me without a cause.” In 1682 in Deuteronomy 24:3 it talks about if the latter husband hate his wife and the “h” dropped out. If the latter husband “ate” his wife... In 1795, Mark 7:27: “Let the children first be killed” instead of “filled”... You can have all sorts of interesting problems.

Before the New American Standard came into our pew Bibles at the seminary, we had a King James pew Bible. Some guy, I don’t remember which pastor, preached on 1 Timothy 6, and a lot of people used the pew Bible and they did not realize that it read a little differently. Instead of reading, “There is great gain in godliness with contentment.” Everybody who had the pew Bible had “There is great pain in godliness with contentment.” He was preaching on that verse and there were chuckles going on, and I felt so sorry for the guy. You had to laugh. Here was a Bible that said a very negative thing about godliness and he was preaching on it. On the other hand, you can be very accurate and not have a very readable Bible. For instance, I think the New American Standard Bible is probably the most useful Bible for verse-by-verse reading and analysis in English. But it is a miserable Bible to try to read large sections. It has accuracy, but very, very awkward reading. In the American Standard Bible, 2 Cor 10:13 is very awkward, whatever it might mean. You want a translation that is understandable.

4. Be understandable

Understandable sometimes does not mean accurate. If you look at the Living Bible, it is always understandable. Even when the Biblical writer is not clear, the Living Bible will be clear. There is no question about it. And it will always be orthodox, so that makes people very happy in many ways. But you sometimes have a compromise here of whether you sacrifice understandability for accuracy or vice versa. It should be contemporary.

5. Be contemporary

There are a lot of changes happening in the English language since the King James version. The King James has all sorts of words that don’t mean the same or we don’t know what in the world they mean anymore. For instance, in the King James we come to 1 Corinthians 13: “The greatest of these is charity.” Now most people who read English today do not think that that word means love. It is a synonym for it. They think of alms for the poor or something like that. Charity has a different connotation 400 years or so after the King James version. How many of you know what a besom is in

Isaiah 14:23 is. They did in King James' day. It is a broom. I don't have any problem with that. In Nehemiah 13:26 it refers to an outlandish woman. What they mean is a foreigner. We don't use the word "outlandish" in that way. In Acts 13:34, respecting persons is very positive in some ways, or it can be negative, it is not always clear. I trow not, I believe, Luke 17:9, one that always drove me crazy as a young Christian. I had just come to know the Lord and was a baby Christian. After a few months I read in Romans 1:13 where Paul says to the Romans, "I would have come to you sooner, but I was let hitherto." I said, "If he was let, why didn't he go?" I could not figure it out. In 1611 the word "let" meant to hinder, just the opposite of what we understand. We only understand the word "let" in this sense when you play tennis and someone serves and there is a "let" that hinders the game from proceeding. Other than that, it is totally different.

You can't have a translation use words that no-one understands or understands differently than they do now. "He waxed strong." What kind of car wax were they using? "He wist not to wit or to know. The word "ghost" has negative connotations, so when we talk about the Holy Ghost, it brings up something different in American minds instead of the Holy Spirit. "Suffer the little children to come unto me." Let those little rascals suffer a little before they come to me. It means to allow. Words have changed. If somebody comes into your church (James 2:3) "in gay clothing." In the last 50 years that word has been used totally differently, we don't use it like that anymore.

The result is that since there is changing words, we have to recognize that language has to be brought up. For many centuries the English language was quite stable. It was controlled by two things: The Bible and Shakespeare. Now the language has no great issues that are controlling it. And language is changing drastically and so quickly. So words mean the opposite before you know it. My father, when you want to talk about somebody as being a really good person, he's a real square guy. All sorts of differences. The fact that language changes so quickly means that translations will continually have to be revised. The fact that language changes so slowly allowed the King James version to continue on for many, many, many decades and centuries, in fact.

6. Be universal

To understand this, let me point out that if you get to the universal language, when you do a translation, you have to understand what your target group is and be careful. The New English Bible, when it first came out, I liked to read it. It reads very smoothly. If I had to read through the Old Testament quickly, I think I would use the New English Bible. It reads well. But the problem with the New English Bible is that it is too British. So in your church Sunday, if you were reading something like this, people would not understand it. I Cor 16:5+. Paul says "I shall come to Corinth after passing through Macedonia, for I am traveling by way of Macedonia, and I may stay with you, perhaps

even for the whole winter. Then you could help me on my way wherever I go next. I do not want this to be a flying visit. I hope to spend some time with you if the Lord permits." Stated beautifully. Then he goes on, "But I shall remain at Ephesus until whitsuntide." The New English Bible has changed that: "I shall stay in Ephesus until Pentecost." That is more universal, people can understand that.

You have to also realize that in Mark 2:23 again we have a misunderstanding that takes place in American culture. "One Sabbath, he, Jesus, was going through the cornfields. And his disciples as they went began to pluck ears of corn." The average American, what is he thinking of? He is thinking of maize. But for the British it is barley or wheat. Corn means grain. The American looks at it, going through the cornfields of Iowa, shucking ears. It is totally misunderstood in the American culture. You have different kinds of weights, pounds, a farthing and my favorite is the Mary Poppins translation of Luke 12:6: "Are not sparrows five for 2-pence?" I can't handle it. But my favorite one would be to read this in the middle of Eastern Kentucky or somewhere like that and reading the story in John 21:6. "Sometime later Jesus showed himself to his disciples once again by the Sea of Tiberius and in this way, Simon Peter and Thomas the twin were together with Nathaniel of Cana and Galilee. The sons of Zebedee and two other disciples were also there. Simon Peter said, "I'm going out fishing. "We will go with you" said the others. So they got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. Morning came and there stood Jesus on the beach. But the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. He called out to them, "Friends, have you caught anything? They said, "No." He said, "Shoot the nets to starboard and you will make a catch." The British know what "starboard" is, whether it is right or left probably, or something, backwards or forwards, something like that. It is a very British type of translation. The revision of this subsequently removes some of that to make it more accessible.

If you are ever in the market simply for the British people, you can do that. But if you want an English translation that is universal for all English-speaking people in the world, you have to make sure that there are on that committee Canadian translators, American translators, British translators, South African translators, Australian translators. Because something that may seem perfectly good English may be a horrendous idiom in the other culture. So, to be universal, you want to take all that involved. A lot of the translations are sensitive to that. The Revised English is somewhat surprising. Again, it reads wonderfully in many ways, including all of a sudden getting across something like coinage or different weights and the like.

7. Be dignified

I think another thing you want in a translation is that it should be dignified. I don't mean that you remove things for political correctness that some people don't like. But I think you don't want to be unnecessarily harsh simply for the effect it may take. For instance, in the earliest translations of the Living Bible, there is a story about how

David fled from Saul and Saul is asking Jonathan about David and Jonathan says to Saul, "David asked me if he could go to Bethlehem to take part in a family celebration" Jonathan replied. "His brother demanded that he be there, so I told him he could go ahead." Saul boiled with rage. "You son of a bitch" he yelled at him. Grandma and Grandpa are gone for the rest of the hour. There is no way you are going to get over that. The message is lost. Meanwhile, Johnny from junior high says, "Mom, I like that translation. Could you get that Bible for me" or something like that. You don't want to be crude simply for shock effect or something like that. Another example of that is the cotton patch version of the New Testament. That is a really nice, nitty gritty, down-to-earth Southern translation. There are a number of places where Paul is asked in a dialogue with a hypothetical appointment: "Shall we sin that grace may abound? God forbid. Let it not be." Here you would read, "Shall we continue in sin that Grace may abound? Hell, no!" Johnny has another translation he wants, making him a Bible student or something like that.

8. Avoid a theological bias

Avoiding a theological bias is maybe more easily said than done. There are some notorious biased translations. I think for instance of the Jehovah's Witness Bible that just avoids translating things in order to maintain its anti-acceptance of Jesus as deity. When I got the New Testament version of the Jerusalem Bible, I liked it very much. I read lots and lots of Paul's letters, really fine translations. It is a Roman Catholic translation and I thought, I wonder how they translate Matthew 1:25 where the Greek text says, "And Joseph did as the angel of the Lord said and took Mary his wife, but knew her not until she brought forth her first born son." The word "know" is a beautiful Biblical word that the Bible uses to describe the sexual relationship. In other words, Joseph marries Mary, but they have no sexual consummation of that until the birth of Jesus. The implication of course is that the birth of Jesus, they live a normal husband and wife relationship. When you read then of the brothers and sisters of the Lord, they are the sons and daughters of Joseph and Mary. But there are Roman Catholics saying, "Are you for the perpetual virginity of Mary" which by the way is not simply a Roman Catholic view. I remember reading in the synoptic Gospel commentary of Calvin where he argues fairly strongly for that. In this particular translation, it read, "He did what the angel of the Lord said and though he knew not Mary, she brought forth her firstborn son." If you can find a place where that particular construction in Greek is translated, "though he knew her not" even though he knew her not until..., I can show you 10,000 on the other side for every one. It is not the normal way, it is theological bias that came in there.

When I was in Minnesota, one of the big mega churches in the area was doing a study as to what Bible they wanted to have for their pews. They asked me to be part of the study, and I was. They compared the RSV, the New International version and some of the others that they compared. The King James was one and the Life. They asked a

number of questions and one of the questions they asked was this: Which translation has the highest Christology? What does that have to do with the translation? Translation is which translates the Christological passages best? Suppose you have the Stein translation, which translates this way: "And she gave birth to her firstborn son and laid him in a manger. He was very God of very God, the second person of the Trinity, pre-existent for all eternity." That is a high Christology. It is a false translation, though. God does not need our help, by the way. Just let the Bible say what it says, and we will be alright. We do not have to help the Bible. What you want to say is, which translates those passages most accurately? And that is the most important.

(<https://www.biblicaltraining.org/library/hermeneutical-issues/biblical-hermeneutics/robert-stein>)

5.4 Vocabulary for Interpretation

Meaning: The meaning of a text is that pattern of meaning the author willed to convey by the words or shareable symbols he/she used.

We are going to make one change here. I would add, the meaning of a text is that pattern of meaning which the author consciously willed to convey by the words or shareable symbols he used.

And later on we are going to talk a little more about the distinction between consciously and unconsciously. At the present stage just leave consciously - add consciously to that definition. What the author consciously willed to convey. The pattern of meaning the author consciously willed to convey. Later on we will talk about meanings that some people attribute to the sub-consciousness of the author which the author was totally oblivious of and we want to use conscious to eliminate that possibility.

Again the author, notice wills the meaning. The text is present by the shareable symbols and the reader is present by the shareable nature of the symbol. So all three entities are present. The author, text, reader, they are all there. The author may not be aware of all the implications in that pattern, but they are consciously willed by the author.

The meaning of a text is that pattern of meaning which the author willed to convey by the words – consciously willed to convey by the shareable symbols.

There is a sense in which that's not a good division because I am using meaning twice in it: pattern of meaning to explain meaning. I could use something like, the paradigm that the author wills instead of pattern of meaning. But I think for most people, the pattern of meaning is a little more helpful than paradigm or principle or something of that nature.

Implications: Those meanings in a text of which the author was unaware but which nevertheless legitimately fall within the pattern of meaning which he willed. Implications as such. Let me give an example of this. I will give it in the text. Let me use it again because it is meaningful for me and also for Martin Luther. ...

Significance refers to how a reader responds to the meaning of a text. Ok. Now, implications are determined by the author. We discover them and it is a mental kind of discovery. Significance is something we are masters of. We are masters here.

Meaning and Implications, the author is master. The reader here is the master of significance. And this involves not so much the mental, but the volitional. Not the mind, but the heart. It is our decision as to what to do with the meaning and its implications. It involves yes or no. I will or I won't.

Sometimes people use the term, meaningfulness, but I won't use that for significance, because we are using meaning here again in a different way but the meaningfulness of something, sometimes people refer to that and we would use the word significance because it is a different root altogether. How you and I respond to a meaning of a text. The volitional aspect, the decision of what we need to do. The decision as to what we will do.

You hear a Gospel message, talk about the need of repentance, the specific meaning of repentance for you and what that entails may be different than someone else but the significance is yes or no. Will you or won't you? Obedience or disobedience? Significance, we are the masters of significance.

Subject matter – this refers to the "stuff" talked about in the text. The stuff talked about ... and there's lots of stuff in the text. The Bible is just a vast world of subject matter. If you study the Bible for anything but meaning, you are dealing with the subject matter. You want to study the Bible and learn about marriage in Biblical times the Pharisees, Genesis 1 to 3, Hebrew poetry, the history of the life of Jesus, Paul's conversion, the history of Judah in the 6th century, military tactics of war in Joshua, Judges, I mean you can do any of this material.

That's subject matter. You are not interested so much in the meaning of the subject matter, but the subject matter itself. And you can learn about all sorts of things in the Bible that way. And by the way, a lot of people study the Bible for its subject matter. When you want the meaning, all you have to do is put this in front: "I have told you this..." about marriage, about Jesus, etc. because and now you are dealing with the meaning of that subject matter. I, the Biblical author have told you this information because...

You have a paper like that in which you are going to deal with the meaning of an account. Not the information about it, not what happened. You want to learn about the life of Jesus, ok. Its fine. But if you want to know the meaning you say “Why does the Biblical writer tell me this about Jesus?” I have told you this because ... and then you are dealing with meaning. Lots of subject matter being discussed. And the temptation many times is to study the Bible for its subject matter, especially when we are dealing with historical passages of Scripture.

One of the things you have to remember is, there is a difference between a description and prescription. You may read things in the Bible that describe, but do not prescribe. In other words, you may read about marriage customs - about marriage in the Bible, in the form of marriage. That is descriptive. It doesn't mean that the Biblical writer is prescribing this kind of a custom. So we have to be careful between what is the Bible prescribing and teaching us to do and what it is simply describing in some way.

You can read parts of the book, the Old Testament, you can read about Samson. A lot of that is descriptive stuff. It is not prescribing these for us in some ways. So subject matter alright, now understanding. Understanding refers to the correct mental grasp of something. Correct mental grasp of what the author meant. It is mental. The minute it leaves the mind it becomes something else. But a correct mental grasp and next week we are going to talk about whether an unbeliever can have grasp of the author's meaning or must one have the Spirit to do so.

But understanding as we are defining it is a correct mental grasp. If you and I have a correct understanding of a Biblical text, they are identical. Our understandings. Yours may be more complete than mine. Mine may even be more fragmentary. But they are the same.

A correct mental grasp means you understand what the author intends and if you understand that correctly and I understand it correctly, we have the same understanding. Let me go to the next definition because here is where things change.

Interpretation is the verbal or written expression of our understanding of the author's meaning. At this point it is most likely that our interpretations will be different. Our understandings may be correct, but our interpretations can be very different. Listen carefully.

Let me say that in another way. Alright, now. Is what I am saying now the second time – the interpretation is different – but is it describing the same thing? Sure. Let me give you another example. I am trying to express my understanding, but I am using different examples. But the understanding being explained in both examples are the same.

Translations, an author may be working for a thought for thought translation team. He may also be working for a word for word translation team.

He comes to the same text, he has the same understanding. But he words the one differently than he does the other. The understanding is the same – the understanding of the author, assuming it is correct. The wording, the verbalization may be different. So understanding will be mental and it is – if it is correct – the same.

Interpretation is verbal and will tend to vary and be different among different people. Jesus said, the Kingdom of God is like ... Does He have another parable that begins that way? Well it's the same Kingdom. Did He somehow change His understanding of it? No, I think he had the same understanding but the interpretation is different so that an interpretation may vary. Different interpretations – they don't have to be identical can convey the same meaning or understanding. Meaning – the understanding [Hard to Hear] meaning. The understanding in the mind – not verbalized yet. Interpretation, the verbalization of that.

And one of the things that of course interesting is that the minute you express your understanding, it is no longer your understanding. It is your interpretation. The minute it leaves your mind and it forms words or vocal sounds and explanation, it is now an interpretation. But they can vary. So you can interpret a Biblical text and you can interpret the exact ways as someone else – very unlikely. You could have the same exact understanding, quite possible, but your interpretations tend to be different. Tend to express it differently.

Mental acts - the experiences that a writer goes through, when writing. The mental acts are those experiences that a person has that they are going through when they write. You know it is at this point that I would like us to turn attention to the C.S. Lewis article, "Fernseed and Elephants".

I had you read this because of its relevance to mental acts. He has a lot of great things to say. He writes so well. I think it is kind of fun to read somebody that is enjoyable. He has a number of things to say to a critics, when people for instance talk about the Bible being full of myths, he said, "I spent all my life as a professor at Oxford, teaching studying myths, how many have you read?" because the Gospels are not like this.

And we will later on talk about the difference of the word myth being understood as a genre and the Gospels and the Bible are not myths. It's a genre. I mean where do you come across in Jesus' life, a one eyed monster, a unicorn or something like that. You don't. Myths are like that. Some people mean by myths, not historically true. But that's no longer a genre, that's a historical judgment.

And you have perfectly the right to say that “the Gospels are not historically true”. I think you are totally wrong in this, but you might say that. But you can’t say they are myths, because now you are using a term of genre – a literary form – and they don’t have that literary form. A good distinction here, [Hard to Hear] later goes on and talks about to the sheep of which he is – the shepherds rather of which he is one of the sheep and he ends the book in a very humble way.

Such are the reactions of one believing laymen to modern theology. It is right you should hear them. You will not perhaps hear them very often again. Your parishioners will not often speak to you quite frankly. Once the layman was anxious to hide the fact that he believed so much less than the vicar. He now tends to hide the fact that he believes so much more. Missionary to the priest of one’s own church is an embarrassing role though I have a hard feeling that if such mission work is not soon undertaken, the future history of the church of England is likely to be short.

And if you see what’s happening to the Church of England especially in the English speaking world of America, Canada, Australia, England, he is quite right. If there is any hope it comes from the Anglican Church in Africa which is still very – for the most part faithful to the Word of God and coming back to “you taught us the Bible, let us tell you what you have been teaching us,” and see what happens.

And what’s really important as far as I am concerned is on page 114 and 15. This changed my life. When I read this, I put this book down and I said, “Well. That simply means that 75% of all doctoral dissertations are rubbish.” It was kind of scary. But I think he is right. Listen to him. The 2nd full paragraph,

“Until you come to be reviewed yourself you would never believe how little of an ordinary review is taken up by criticism in the strict sense; by evaluation, praise, or censure, of the book actually written. Most of it is taken up with imaginary histories of the process by which you wrote it. The very terms which the reviewers use in praising or dispraising often imply such a history. They praise a passage as 'spontaneous' and censure another as 'labored'; ...

What the value of such reconstructions is I learned very early in my career. I had published a book of essays; and in the one into which I had put most of my heart, the one I really cared about and in which I discharged a keen enthusiasm, was on William Morris. And in almost the first review I was told that this was obviously the only one in the book in which I had felt no interest. Now don't mistake. The critic was, I now believe, quite right in thinking it the worst essay in the book; at least everyone agreed with him. Where he was totally wrong was in his imaginary history of the causes which produces its dullness.

Well, this made me prick up my ears. Since then I have watched with some care similar imaginary histories both of my own books and of books by friends whose real history I knew. Reviewers, both friendly and hostile, will dash you off such histories with great confidence; will tell you what public events had directed the author's mind to this or that, what other authors had influenced him, what his overall intention was, what sort of audience he principally addressed, why - and when - he did everything.

Now I must record my impression; then distinct from it, what I can say with certainty. My impression is that in the whole of my experience not one of these guesses has on any one point been right; that the method shows a record of 100 per cent failure. You would expect that by mere chance they would hit as often as the miss. But it is my impression that they do no such thing. I can't remember a single hit. But as I have not kept a careful record my mere impression may be mistaken. What I think I can say with certainty is that they are usually wrong. “

Now think if trying to reconstruct what was going through an author's mind – the mental acts of an author – if you are a contemporary of the author, raised in the same culture, had the same language, the same education, maybe even know the author and when you try to reconstruct the mental experiences of that author, you are almost always wrong.

What is the likelihood that you will be able to reconstruct the mind of the Biblical author, 2,000 years ago whose language was very different, Greek, whose culture was different, whose way of thinking was different and say you can reconstruct what was going through their minds. Or going back 3,000 years to a culture which was a different language, Hebrew and perhaps even more distinct differences from ours. What is the likelihood that you can reconstruct what was going through Isaiah's mind or Matthew's mind when they wrote?

Let it sink in. Remember he is dealing with contemporaries who knew him and his friends and tried to reconstruct what was going through their minds and what led them to write these things. You find people today writing about what was going through the Biblical author's mind and what the struggles, the community was going through.

Now sometimes, a biblical text will tell you, I am writing this because or he says what is happening in the church community. He doesn't mean that. That's no longer a mental act. That's part of understanding the text itself. But when the text is silent about these things and trying to reconstruct what was going on, if C.S. Lewis is right, there is no way. There is no way. Do you know what was going through my mind when I wrote, A Basic Guide To Interpreting The Bible?

Who cares? Alright. Leave that aside right? You say well, how would I know? Ok. How would you know that? We can understand what the Biblical author is trying to convey because we have his text. Can we know their experiences? Not unless they tell it and then it is part of the text itself. Much of the Biblical interpretation involves, trying to reconstruct what was going through the author's mind. I had come to the place where I had simply said, it is not possible.

I don't know how to shake what C.S. Lewis [Hard to Hear] in that article. When I put that down I began to think and it sank in. I realize that the job we have as interpreters are not trying to reconstruct what was going through Paul's mind when he wrote, but we are to try to understand what Paul meant by the words that he gave to us. And so I simply think [Hard to Hear] mental axe, yeah wonderful to know what was going Paul's mind when he wrote. But we don't have any access to it.

The C.S. Lewis article bears re-reading and I think any student who goes into doctoral work in Biblical study needs to take very seriously that article. It's a very popular article, but we should not let its popularity - the level of its popularity - and also the simplicity of what he is saying pass us by without seriously absorbing what he is saying here. It has great implications in that regard.

Alright couple more, norms of language. The norms of language are the range of meanings allowed by the words or the verbal symbols of a text. The best tools for the norms of language would be a dictionary that helps us understand the meanings of words and the like and try to understand.

But there are a lot of expressions even that - can mean several things. The love of my wife. Is that my love for Joan or Joan's love for me? The love of my wife. The norms of language permit either. "The love of Christ controls me" (2 Cor. 5:14). Paul's love for Christ or Christ's love for Paul? I think here he means Christ's love for him.

Now there is a great debate in Biblical studies when it talks about the faith of Christ. Is it Christ's personal faith or the faith of which Christ is the object?

My wife and I, we were driving one rainy night on a road that we had never been on before and we came to a sign that warned us that all vehicles over 12 feet must leave at the next exit. I said "Oh. Nuts. Joan we have to get off at the next exit." She said why? I said "All cars over 12 feet have to get off." And she said, "Every car is over 12 feet."

I thought, yeah, that's right. So if I'd have realized that it didn't mean that our car, because it was over 12 feet had to get off, but if we had a car that was 12 feet high, we would have to get off because there is probably a bridge coming. You see the norms of

language permit either. And as we drove the road got narrow and narrower. And they didn't meet higher, they meant wide.

The norms of language permitted either. Unfortunately if you were a 12 foot or more wide truck, it was kind of late to learn it when that road got narrow because there was no way of getting out. All they had to put was 12 feet wide, but they didn't. The norms of language though [Hard to Hear] 12 feet wide, high are wrong. The norms of language [Hard to Hear]

The context, "narrowing of the road" made it very clear later on what the sign intended, so the norms of language, the possibilities. Words have all sorts of possible meanings. And here is where a dictionary is helpful. If you want to know the possibilities in language, the word has to fit. One of those that's found in the dictionary. If you want to use a word in a way that has never been used before that's not a dictionary definition. If you want to be understood then you have to have an explanation and the Bible does that at times.

When it refers to Jesus saying, "destroy this temple in three days, and I will raise it up." John says to his readers because the word temple is being used very unusually here, "This he spoke about His body." So ... He is talking about His body as a temple. But that's not within the norms of language. So John explains that to the readers so they will be able to understand that. The possibilities.

And here as I say a dictionary is be very helpful. Now, the norms of utterance becomes the specific meaning that the author meant. What does he mean? Does he mean Christ's love for us or our love for Christ? Now how do authors help us to go from the norms of language to the norms of an utterance? What do they provide?

A context. Sure. So the language allows us to narrow it down. If you want to look at the word love, and somebody uses the word love in a statement, you know that can't mean hamburgers unless they define it, because that's not one of the possible meanings of love. The only possibilities of love would be ... the 12, 14, I don't know how many – would be listed in a dictionary. Those are the possibilities. It has to be one of those, because people using the word love want to be understood.

And if they want to be understood it has to fit the norms of language. Always know that. But if there are 12 or 14 possible meanings, how do you get from the 12, 14 to the one? Well, now you have a context in which is provided - the rest of the sentence is the most helpful. Then the paragraph in which that sentence is found and the chapter and so forth and so on. So we have here then the norms of language, the possibilities. Here is where have a dictionary most helpful to the norms of utterance.

When I try to find out the specific meaning of a word, I start with the norms of language, I look up a dictionary or the lexicon if we want. Then if I want to go to the norms of utterance, the most useful tool for me here is a concordance. Where I can find where that same author uses that word elsewhere. Because most probably, the way he uses the word elsewhere will help me understand the word here, especially if it is used in the next sentence or the previous sentence or something like that. So a concordance is very helpful for the norms of an utterance.

Two Definitions

Literary genre - The literary form used by the author and the rules that govern that form. Literary genre – okay. The various rules governing that genre. Very important. We will look at that not so much next week. We will allude to it next week, but the following week after next, we will start dealing with various genres and we will be spending a lot of time on different literary genres. How to approach and understand these genres, the rules governing that.

Then finally the **context**. Now the context is defined here differently that most of us think of a context. Usually we would say the context of the words preceding and following the text. But wait a minute, words in a text have no meaning. Authors have meaning. So the context is defined here as the willed meaning an author gives to the literary material surrounding the text.

Because [Hard to Hear] the context is the willed context of the author and the meaning that the author gives and attributes to that context. Now here is the totality of a hermeneutical vocabulary. You need to know these meanings and in the long run the most valuable part of the course will be a mastery of this vocabulary and you are having a conceptual basis of that when you talk about hermeneutics, you can refer to what people are saying in this vocabulary.

What you have to do is to say now I know they are using this word, but what they are really referring to – and then put it in your conceptual framework so that you can understand what they are talking about. Please remember, our definitions are precise. Others have different kinds of definitions. That's fine, but what we have to do now is to use our understandings so that we can translate what they are saying into our vocabulary.

(<https://www.biblicaltraining.org/library/vocabulary-interpretation-i/biblical-hermeneutics/robert-stein> <https://www.biblicaltraining.org/library/vocabulary-interpretation-ii/biblical-hermeneutics/robert-stein>)

6. Eight Rules of Biblical Interpretation

"And so we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation." [2 Peter 1:19,20 NAS]

We can't have a "sure word" about the meaning of Scripture (or anything else) unless we have a sure method to interpret the words.

The following eight rules are the center of all grammatical interpretation. They have been accepted and used by scholars from Socrates to the present. While my hope is that they will be used to "rightly divide the word of truth" of the Holy Bible, they are equally applicable to legal, historical, and other such language.

Since the Bible teaches that God is not the author of confusion [1 Cor. 14:33], how can the many disagreements today between Christians and the proliferation of the cults be explained since all, or nearly all, claim to use the Bible as the basis of their doctrines? Nearly all false doctrines taught today by Christians and cultists alike can be traced to the distortion of the meaning of Biblical words. These eight rules are prayerfully offered in the hope that they may help many come to the truth of what God says in His Word.

The Rev. Guy Duty said in his book *Divorce & Remarriage*:

"When two interpretations are claimed for a Scripture, the construction most in agreement with all the facts of the case should be adopted. When all the facts of an interpretation are in agreement they sound together in harmony, like notes in a chord.

Biblical interpretation is more than knowing a set of rules, but it cannot be done without the rules. So, learn the rules, and rightly apply them...." (*Divorce & Remarriage*, Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1967)

Here are the eight rules:

1. The rule of **DEFINITION**: What does the word mean? Any study of Scripture must begin with a study of words. Define your terms and then keep to the terms defined. The interpreter should conscientiously abide by the plain meaning of the words. This quite often may require using a Hebrew/English or Greek/English lexicon in order to make sure that the sense of the English translation is understood. A couple of good examples of this are the Greek words "allos" and "heteros". Both are usually translated as "another" in English – yet "allos" literally means "another of the same type" and "heteros" means "another of a different type."
2. The rule of **USAGE**: It must be remembered that the Old Testament was written originally by, to and for Jews. The words and idioms must have been intelligible to them – just as the words of Christ when talking to them must have been. The majority of the

New Testament likewise was written in a milieu of Greco-Roman (and to a lesser extent Jewish) culture and it is important to not impose our modern usage into our interpretation. It is not worth much to interpret a great many phrases and histories if one's interpretations are shaded by pre-conceived notions and cultural biases, thereby rendering an inaccurate and ineffectual lesson.

3. The rule of **CONTEXT**: The meaning must be gathered from the context. Every word you read must be understood in the light of the words that come before and after it. Many passages will not be understood at all, or understood incorrectly, without the help afforded by the context. A good example of this is the Mormon practice of using 1 Cor. 8:5b: "...for there be gods many and lords many..." as a "proof text" of their doctrine of polytheism. However, a simple reading of the whole verse in the context of the whole chapter (e.g. where Paul calls these gods "so-called"), plainly demonstrates that Paul is not teaching polytheism.
4. The rule of **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**: The interpreter must have some awareness of the life and society of the times in which the Scripture was written. The spiritual principle will be timeless but often can't be properly appreciated without some knowledge of the background. If the interpreter can have in his mind what the writer had in his mind when he wrote – without adding any excess baggage from the interpreter's own culture or society – then the true thought of the Scripture can be captured resulting in an accurate interpretation.

Oliver Wendell Holmes said, "Our only interest in the past is for the light it throws upon the present."

5. The rule of **LOGIC**: Interpretation is merely logical reasoning. When interpreting Scripture, the use of reason is everywhere to be assumed. Does the interpretation make sense? The Bible was given to us in the form of human language and therefore appeals to human reason – it invites investigation. It is to be interpreted as we would any other volume: applying the laws of language and grammatical analysis.

As Bernard Ramm said:

"What is the control we use to weed out false theological speculation? Certainly the control is logic and evidence... interpreters who have not had the sharpening experience of logic... may have improper notions of implication and evidence. Too frequently such a person uses a basis of appeal that is a notorious violation of the laws of logic and evidence." (*Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, Boston: W. A. Wilde, 1956)

6. The rule of **PRECEDENT**: We must not violate the known usage of a word and invent another for which there is no precedent. Just as a judge's chief occupation is the study of previous cases, so must the interpreter use precedents in order to determine whether they really support an alleged doctrine. Consider the Bereans in Acts 17:10-12

who were called "noble" because they searched the Scriptures to determine if what Paul taught them was true.

7. The rule of **UNITY**: The parts of Scripture being interpreted must be construed with reference to the significance of the whole. An interpretation must be consistent with the rest of Scripture. An excellent example of this is the doctrine of the Trinity. No single passage teaches it, but it is consistent with the teaching of the whole of Scripture (e.g. the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are referred to individually as God; yet the Scriptures elsewhere teach there is only one God).
8. The rule of **INFERENCE**: An inference is a fact reasonably implied from another fact. It is a logical consequence. It derives a conclusion from a given fact or premise. It is the deduction of one proposition from another proposition. Such inferential facts or propositions are sufficiently binding when their truth is established by competent and satisfactory evidence. Competent evidence means such evidence as the nature of the thing to be proved admits. Satisfactory evidence means that amount of proof which would ordinarily satisfy an unprejudiced mind beyond a reasonable doubt. Jesus used this rule when he proved the resurrection of the dead to the unbelieving Sadducees in Matt. 22:23-33.

cf: Discernment — the act or process of exhibiting keen insight and good judgment.

Learning these eight rules and properly applying them will help keep any interpreter from making errors and will hopefully alleviate many of the disagreements unfortunately present in Christianity today. However, these eight principles are no substitute for the Holy Spirit which will, if you let Him, guide you in the truth [John 14:26]. If you receive Christ into your heart, God will give you the Holy Spirit freely as a gift [Acts 2:38]. I urge you, if you have not already done so, to examine the claims and the work of Jesus Christ and to receive Him as your Savior.

This paper will close with some words from King Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, excepting our Lord Jesus Christ:

"A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels: to understand a proverb, and the interpretation." [Prov. 1:5,6]

(<http://www.apologeticsindex.org/5846-biblical-interpretation-rules>)

7. Principles of Biblical Interpretation

(<https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-6-principles-biblical-interpretation>)

7.0 Introduction

When it comes to making claims about what the Bible means, sometimes we hear comments from Christians or non-Christians like the following: “Well, that’s just your interpretation.” “The Bible can be made to say anything you want.” “You can’t really understand the Bible. It is full of contradictions.” “No one can understand the true meaning of *anything anyone* says.” Or, someone sitting in a Bible study might say, “This is what the Bible means to me.” All of these types of comments are about principles of biblical interpretation also called in theological jargon *hermeneutics*. Welcome to our postmodern world. Pilate’s question lives on: “What is truth? (John 18:38).”

Some issues that we as Christians face regarding the topic of biblical interpretation include: How does divine inspiration and human authorship affect biblical interpretation? What does a text mean? What are some general principles of interpretation? How do we interpret the Old Testament? How do we interpret the New Testament? These are all critical questions for us to consider as we seek to become better interpreters of God’s word, the Bible.

7.1 What Does a Text Mean?

The last lesson looked at the topic of inspiration and found that the Bible is both a human book and a divine book. There are certain implications of this for biblical interpretation. The first is that the human authors had a specific historical audience, context and purpose. These authors used their own language, writing methods, style of writing and literary form of writing. The divine authorship of the Bible gives it its unity and the ultimate source of all interpretation is from God. In the book of Genesis Joseph was asked about the meaning of some divinely given dreams and he replied, “Don’t interpretations belong to God? (Gen 40:8).

So let’s just start with the most basic question. What does a text mean? The answer to this question is that *a text means what the author intended it to mean*. If there is only one thing you learn from this lesson this is it. For a simple example, if you wrote a letter with some statements in it that are a little ambiguous, then what does the letter mean? Does it mean what you intended it to mean or how the readers interpret it? Of course it means what you intended it to mean. The true meaning of a text resides in the authorial intent of the text. This leads us to the first primary and fundamental principle of interpreting the Bible.

7.2 General Principles of Biblical Interpretation

Principle 1: *Interpretation must be based on the author's intention of meaning and not the reader.* This means we must get into the author's context, historically, grammatically, culturally and the literary forms and conventions the author was working in. To be able to do this some good Bible study tools are needed since we are 2000 years or more removed from the biblical authors and their context is very different than ours. The first tool that any one should get is a good study Bible with notes that explain historical and cultural background information. Most major Bible translations come in editions with these types of notes but by far the NET Bible with its over 60,000 notes surpasses them all. Get the most extensive Study Bible that goes with the translation you use. After this, good evangelical commentaries are essential tools to study the Bible but make sure to look at a couple to get a variety of perspectives. When someone in a Bible study states what the verse means to him, we need to redirect and clarify that the meaning is what the author intended. After that the question then is how that historical meaning applies to us today. The second principle of biblical interpretation should also be considered foundational.

Principle 2: *Interpretations must be done in the context of the passage.* What does the following mean? "It was a ball." Well, the answer depends on the context. Consider the following sentences: The baseball umpire saw the pitch drift to the outside and said, "it was a ball." We went to the dance last night, in fact it was so formal "it was a ball." As I was walking along the golf course I spotted something small and white in the tall grass, "it was a ball." I had so much fun at the game night, "it was a ball." In each case the word *ball* means something different. Therefore, *context determines meaning!* The nearest context must given the most weight in interpretation. First, there is the near context of the sentence, then the paragraph, then the section and then the book and even author. The interpreter should look at all these circles of context to be able to correctly assess the meaning.

Far too often people try to interpret a verse by itself in isolation without looking at the context itself. For example, consider the verse Revelation 3:20 which is sometimes used as an illustration for evangelism. Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me (Rev 3:20; NASB).¹ If this is all you looked at, it would be easy to understand the verse in terms of someone asking Jesus into his or her life for the first time. But the context in the preceding verse (v. 19) is talking about discipline of those whom Jesus loves, which would most naturally refer to believers. Also, in looking at the larger paragraph the passage is to a church (Rev 3:14, 22). The verse is really addressed to believers who need to repent from their sin and return to fellowship with God.

Principle 3: *Interpret the Bible literally (or normally) allowing for normal use of figurative language.* Take the plain meaning of the text at face value. When the literal does not make sense you probably have a figure of speech. For example, Isaiah 55:12 states the trees of the field will clap their hands. Since trees do not have hands or clap this must be a figure of speech. Look for words such as “like” or “as” which can also communicate a figure of speech. Figures of speech and illustrations give the Bible a powerful and colorful means of expression. They are an important part of the normal expression of language.

Principle 4: *Use the Bible to help interpret itself.* Interpret difficult passages with clear ones. This is sometimes called the law of non-contradiction. Because the Bible is God’s word, and God is true, the Bible will not contradict itself. For example, there are clear passages that teach the doctrine of eternal security, that once a person is truly saved he or she cannot lose salvation (John 5; Rom 8). Some passages in the Bible are very hard to interpret like Hebrews 6:4-6.² So I would let the overall and clear theology of the Bible influence me that a very hard passage like Hebrews 6 is not teaching that someone can lose his salvation. Also, use the New Testament to help interpret the Old Testament. This recognizes the progressive nature of revelation, that is the Bible is giving more revelation on topics over time. But one must start by interpreting the Old Testament text in its context before a New Testament consideration is made.

Principle 5: *Interpretation must be distinguished from application.* While there is one interpretation that is historical, there are many applications that can be carried over to our modern context. Build an application bridge from the interpretation to the timeless principle and then to the application now. For example in John 12, Mary anoints Jesus with very expensive oil. The historical context records a historical event. The interpretation relates only to what Mary did to Jesus. What about us today? An application might be that we are willing to give sacrificially for the Lord’s work and give Jesus acts of worship as Mary did. Or when Jesus states the principle in Matt 7 to love one’s enemies it is a general command that I might apply specifically by loving a worker who undermines me or a neighbor who offends me.

Principle 6: *Be sensitive to distinctions between Israel and the church and Old Covenant and New Covenant eras/requirements.* Promises made to Israel in the Old Testament cannot automatically be transferred to the church in which we are a part. For example, the land promises were given to Abraham and his descendants (Gen 12:7) but that does not include me, a Gentile Christian. Christians are not under the requirements of the Mosaic law (Rom 6:14). For example, in Lev 19:19 there is a command “you must not wear a garment made of two different kinds of fabric.” This was a binding command

under the Mosaic law but not under the terms of the New Covenant. It is true that certain Old Testament commands repeated in the New Testament are still binding, but this is made clear by their repetition in the New Testament. The church was formed in Acts 2 with the descent of the Holy Spirit and most direct statements to and about the church occur after that. Also, there is a future for national Israel (cf. Rom 11) in which many Old Testament promises will yet be fulfilled and certain practices of the church age will come to an end at the second coming of Jesus (such as the Lord's supper 1 Cor 11:26).

Principle 7: *Be sensitive to the type of literature you are in.* The Bible contains many different types of literature: law, narrative, wisdom, poetry, gospel, parable, epistle, and apocalyptic. Each of these types of literature has specific features that must be considered when interpreting a text. Some of these will be examined in the next section. For now we need to understand that where we are in the Bible makes a big difference on how we interpret and apply it.

7.3 Interpreting the Old Testament

Narrative Literature: Much of the Old Testament contains narrative literature. First, the passage needs to be interpreted in its historical context and then applications can be drawn from the characters and events. In the book of Judges, only one verse is given to the judge Shamgar. It reads, "After Ehud came Shamgar son of Anath; he killed six hundred Philistines with an oxgoad³ and he too delivered Israel" (Judges 3:31). Why did God include this passage? Yes, it records an historical event. Also, the verse teaches God's delivering power can come in an unexpected way, not with a mighty army but with one man wielding an oxgoad.

Law: Realize that Christians are not under the law as a legal system (Rom 6:14) but that we are to fulfill the principles that stand behind the law of loving God and loving one's neighbor (cf. Matt 22:37-40)? Sometimes the teaching is carried directly into the New Testament (e.g., Do not murder, etc). Other times, the New Testament takes a text and applies a principle from it. For example, "You must not muzzle your ox when it is treading grain" (Deut 25:4). Paul takes this verse, which refers to feeding a work animal and applies the principle of the Christian worker being worthy of tangible support. Paul states, "Elders who provide effective leadership must be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard in speaking and teaching. For the scripture says, '**Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain,**' and, 'The worker deserves his pay'" (1 Tim 5:17-18, cf. 1 Cor 9:9). In general, if the Old Testament command in the law

is not repeated in the New Testament, look for the principle behind the statement in the law and then try to apply that.

Wisdom Literature: Realize that much of the proverbial type of wisdom in the Old Testament is general truth based on observations but not absolute truths or promises. Two good examples are seen in the following: “A gentle response turns away anger, but a harsh word stirs up wrath” (Prov 15:1). Another one is, “Train a child in the way that he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it” (Prov 22:6). Christians should not take these types of proverbial statements as promises of what will always happen but rather patterns that are generally true outcomes based on observation. A gentle answer will not always prevent an angry outburst but it is much more likely to than a harsh one. Christian parents who have a child who has gone astray from the faith may have done their best to train the child the right way but the child did not take it.

Poetry: Realize that poetry often has a greater use of figurate language than narrative or law. Also, Hebrew poetry’s main characteristic is parallelism. For example, Psalm 24 says, “The Lord owns the earth and all it contains, the world and all who live in it. For he set its foundation upon the seas, and established it upon the ocean currents. Who is allowed to ascend the mountain of the Lord? Who may go up to his holy dwelling place?” (Ps 24:1-3). Here we have three sets of pairs in side by side fashion with the second reference restating the basic idea of the first. The phrase “the earth and all it contains” is amplified by the phrase “the world and all who live in it”. The phrase “he sets its foundation upon the seas” is rephrased “established it upon the ocean currents.” The question of who is allowed to ascend to the mountain of the Lord is restated “Who may go up to his Holy Dwelling place?” Most English Bible translations will format poetry using indentation, which helps show the parallel ideas.

7.4 Interpreting the New Testament

Gospels: Understand that each writer has a *specific audience* for whom he is writing, and that he has selected his material for them. Matthew was written for a Jewish audience. Mark was written for a Roman audience. Luke was written for a Greek audience. John was written for a universal or Gentile audience. This can help us see nuances or explain differences between accounts. For example, in Matthew 19:1-12 and Mark 10:1-12 Jesus teaches on the hard topic of divorce. Both gospels state that a man who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. Mark alone though adds the point that if a woman divorces her husband and marries another she commits adultery against him. Why is this difference there? It probably has to do

with the audience. Matthew is writing to a Jewish culture in which a woman could not divorce her husband while Mark is writing to a Roman audience in which one could.

Read the gospels not only *vertically*, that is, understanding what is said in each individual account, but also *horizontally*, that is, considering why one account follows another. For example, see Mark 2-3:6; what do these various accounts have in common? One can notice that they are all different stories that relate to the conflict that Jesus had with the Jewish leadership. Mark 3:6 reads, “So the Pharisees went out immediately and began plotting with the Herodians as to how they could assassinate him.” The stories are grouped in a way that gives an explanation as to why Jesus was rejected as strongly as he was.

Lastly, recognize that the gospels are in a transitional stage between Old and New Covenants. Jesus lived in the context of Judaism prior to the birth of the church. For example, Jesus is keeping the Old Testament prescribed feasts in many of his journeys to Jerusalem. Also, he is introducing changes that will be inaugurated with the start of the New Covenant. For example, in Mark 7 Jesus declared all foods clean which was a change from the Old Testament dietary laws.⁴

Parables.⁵ Parables are a form of figurative speech. They are stories that are used to illustrate a truth. There are parables in different parts of the Bible but Jesus was the master of them and many are found in the gospels (e.g., Matt 13, Mark 4, Luke 15). How then should we interpret the parables? *First, determine the context that prompted the parable.* Parables always arise out of a context. For example the Pharisees disdain for Jesus eating with tax collectors and sinners prompts Jesus to tell a parable about how God loves a lost sinner who repents (Luke 15). *Second, understand the story’s natural meaning which is often taken from real life situations in first century Palestine.* *Third, ascertain the main point or truth the parable is trying to give and focus on this.* Only interpret the details of the parables if they can be validated from the passage. Many details are there only for the setting of the story. For example, what is the main point of the mustard seed parable? Jesus stated: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. It is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest garden plant and becomes a tree, so that the wild birds come and nest in its branches” (Matt 13:31-32). The parable is an illustration of the kingdom of heaven which starts small but grows to be very large in size. This seems to be the main point. The birds and the branches are probably there only to illustrate how large the tree has become.

Acts. Recognize that Acts is a theologized history of the early church. Acts tells what the church was doing from the human side of things and what God was doing from the

divine side of things. For example, consider these passages on the early growth of the church which refer to the same event but from two different perspectives. “So those who accepted his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand people were added” . . . (Acts 2:41) “And the Lord was adding to their number everyday those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47). Here we see what God is doing in and through the church. Also, we need to recognize that the church starts in Acts 2 with the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The baptism of the Spirit, the filling of the Spirit, church planting and gospel outreach characterize the events of the book. In addition, some events in Acts are descriptive of what happened not proscriptive of what is necessarily expected in the modern church. For example, Samaritan believers did not receive the Holy Spirit in Acts 8 upon faith in Jesus. They had to wait for Peter and John to get there. When Paul was bitten by a viper in Malta, yet he miraculously lived (Acts 28:1-5). These are descriptions of what happened and are not necessarily normative of what happens in the church today. So it probably would not be a good idea to start snake handling services!

The book of Acts is also a book of transitions. First there are key transitions in biography. This is especially true as the book focuses more on the ministry of Peter in the first portions of the book then shifts to Paul. There is also a transition in ministry focus from the Jews to the Samaritans and to the Gentiles. Lastly there is a geographical transition starting in Jerusalem taking the gospel outward into Samaria, Asia Minor, Europe and eventually Rome. In Acts 1:8 Luke gives us a rough outline of the progression emphasizing the progress of the gospel. “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the farthest parts of the earth.”

Epistles. Since the New Testament epistles are directed to churches and individuals in the church, they most directly apply to us today. Most commands given in the epistles are general enough in nature that we need to obey them, or in the case of promises we can claim them. For example in 1 Corinthians 15 there is a promise given for immortal bodies and eventual victory over death. These promises are not just for those in the local Corinthian church but the universal church of God.

In the epistles, pay special attention to logical connectors/conjunctions to explore relationships of clauses and sentences. Look for these types of words: “for,” “therefore,” “but,” etc. For example Hebrews 12:1 reads, “Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, we must get rid of every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and run with endurance the race set out for us.” The word *therefore* points back to the previous chapter in which Old Testament saints were held up as people who

had given a good testimony or witness of faith. The phrase “cloud of witnesses” then would naturally refer back to the people of the preceding chapter. In another example the author of Hebrews writes, “So since we are receiving an unshakable kingdom, let us give thanks, and through this let us offer worship pleasing to God in devotion and awe. *For* our God is indeed a devouring fire” (Heb 12:28-29). Here the word *for* sets up a subordinate idea giving the reason we as Christians should offer worship in devotion and awe to God.

Revelation. Revelation is the one book in the New Testament that is one of the hardest to interpret. There are several reasons for this. First, there are substantially different interpretative approaches on the overall timing of the book. Some see most of it as purely historical. Some see most of it as yet future. Second, there are many Old Testament allusions in Revelation. Allusions are phrases and references to the Old Testament without an explicit statement by John that he is quoting the Old Testament. So when John refers to the Old Testament he generally does not tell you he is doing so. Third, there is a greater use of symbolic language in Revelation than in other parts of the Bible. Revelation is in a form of literature known as apocalyptic.⁶

How can one get started? First, the book of Revelation promises a blessing to the one who reads it (Rev 1:3). So we should read it even if we do not completely understand everything. The basic thrust of Revelation’s message is clear. Jesus is coming again and will defeat the forces of evil. We can be assured of this. Other interpretative helps that can be given would be to interpret the seven churches as seven historical churches in existence in the first century A.D (Rev 2-3). [Millennialists] interpret chapter 4 onward as primarily future events from our perspective (Rev 1:18-19).⁷ [They] follow a generally chronological view of the book from chapter 4 sequencing the bowls, trumpets and seals, second coming of Jesus, millennial kingdom and eternal state. [*Amillennialists interpret these chapters from a non-chronological standpoint as providing readers/hearers with series of varied perspectives on the New Testament Age, which will come to an end when Christ returns for the Final Judgment and a glorious transformation of his universal Church of believers.*] [In any case,] use a study Bible with a good set of notes to help frame common interpretations and Old Testament backgrounds. Lastly, become a student of the book and keep working at it.

¹ The NET Bible gives a translation rendering that helps to alleviate this confusion. **“Listen! I am standing at the door and knocking! If anyone hears my voice and opens the door I will come into his home and share a meal with him, and he with me” (Rev 3:20).**

² “For it is impossible in the case of those who have once been enlightened, tasted the heavenly gift, become partakers of the Holy Spirit, ⁵ tasted the good word of God and the miracles of the coming age, ⁶ and then have committed apostasy, to renew them again to repentance, since they are crucifying the Son of God for themselves all over again and holding him up to contempt (Heb 6:4-6 NET).

³ An oxgoad is simply a long stick with a pointed end that was used to prod animals into walking.

⁴ He [Jesus] said to them, "Are you so foolish? Don't you understand that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him? ¹⁹ For it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and then goes out into the sewer." (This means all foods are clean.)(Mark 7:18-19 NET).

⁵ Adapted from Roy Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation* (Colorado Springs: Victor, 1991) 194-226.

⁶ A scholarly definition of Apocalyptic: “a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another supernatural world” J.J. Collins “Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre,” *Semeia* 14 (1979), 9. Revelation focuses on the future and spiritual world to a much greater degree than other portions of the New Testament and it is communicated in visions and symbolic language.

⁷ Revelation 1:19 gives a basic chronological outline of the book. “Therefore write what you saw, what is, and what will be after these things” (Rev 1:19 NET). (past: what you saw (Chapter 1:9-20); present: what is (Chapters 2-3); and future: what will take place after these things (Chapters 4-22:5).

7.5 Summary & Conclusion

Understanding the Bible

If you have ever had a prolonged discussion with a [“Christian” cult member] or New Ager over a passage of Scripture, you might relate to an experience that I had recently. I sat down with someone who had obviously spent considerable time in the Bible, who stated a desire to know God’s truth and was willing to work diligently to please God, sacrificing both time and money. However, when it came to determining what the Bible taught concerning how we might please Him and what we must do to be saved, we

found little we could agree upon. At times it felt as if we were reading two completely different texts.

The problems I encountered were the result of different rules of interpretation. These rules are part of a discipline known as hermeneutics, which many consider to be both an art and a science. The rules that one uses to interpret Scripture play a vital role in determining the meaning of a passage, and thus, our understanding of God and ourselves. Does John 1:1 refer to Jesus as the co-creator of the universe, existing with God the Father eternally, indeed, being of the same essence as the Father? Or is Jesus' divinity somehow inferior to the divinity of God the Father, a view that Jehovah's Witnesses hold? The way we interpret this passage will be determined by the rules of interpretation we bring to our study. It is obvious that both interpretations cannot be correct. When John wrote the words for his Gospel, and specifically for the first chapter, he had one meaning in mind. He may not have understood all of the implications of what he was writing, nor could he have imagined all of the applications possible in future contexts. However, via the inspiration of the Holy Spirit John's words were to communicate a specific truth about God.

There are three good reasons why we have difficulty understanding the biblical text. First, we are separated from the historical events written about by thousands of years of history. Second, we live in a dramatically different culture, and third, the biblical texts were written in foreign languages. These obstacles to understanding can be daunting to those who want quick and easy comprehension of the Bible. They also make it possible for others to place their own agenda over the text, knowing that few will take the time to uncover what the writer's original intent might have been.

Our goal should be to exegete, or draw meaning from the Scriptures, rather than to impose meaning onto them. Jehovah's Witnesses have decided that Jesus cannot be God; they claim that it is an irrational doctrine. As a result, they have worked hard at interpreting direct references to His deity as something else. In Hebrews 1:6 the angels are told to worship Jesus. Since the Witnesses at one time taught that Jesus was an angel, they translate the word found in the passage as obeisance rather than worship. More like a gesture of respect than the worship of the one true God. Unfortunately, they have to misquote a reference work in order to justify their translation. Their New World Translation has changed numerous passages in order to keep their doctrines intact.

In this [summary] we will review some of the principles of hermeneutics that have been accepted by the majority of conservative Protestants for many years. Our goal in doing so is that we may be able to rightly divide the Word of truth.

God's Communication Link

One of the first steps to correctly interpreting Scripture is being aware of what the Bible says about itself and understanding how it has come down to us through the centuries.

Rather than causing a complete text about Himself and His creation to simply appear, God chose to use many individuals, over thousands of years to write His words down. God has also revealed something of Himself in nature. General revelation, in the world around us, gives us an indication of God's glory and power. However, without special revelation, the specific information found in the Bible, we would be lacking the redemptive plan that God has made available through Jesus Christ. The Bible clearly claims to have revealed information about God. Deuteronomy 29:29 declares that, "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law." In 1 Corinthians 2:12-13 the writer adds that, "We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words."

The unique nature of the Bible is made clear by Paul in 2 Timothy 3:16. Paul tells Timothy that "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness."

None of the original writings, or *autographa*, still exist. Nevertheless, textual criticism has confirmed that the transmission of these writings have been very accurate. The accuracy of the Old Testament documents are attested to by the Dead Sea Scrolls which gives us copies of parts of the Old Testament almost a thousand years closer to the original texts than previously available. The dependability of the New Testament is confirmed by the availability of a remarkable volume of manuscripts which were written very near the time of the original events.

Once we appreciate what God has done to communicate with us, we may begin to apply the principals of interpretation, or hermeneutics, to the text. To be successful this process must take into account the cultural, historical, and language barriers that limit our understanding of the original writings. There are no shortcuts to the hard work necessary to accomplish this task.

Some have wrongly argued that knowledge of the culture and languages of biblical times is not necessary, that the Holy Spirit will interpret the text for us. The role of the Holy Spirit is to illumine the believer in order to accept and apply what is found in Scripture. The Bible says that the natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit (1

Cor 2:14). The Greek word for “accept” means “to take something willingly and with pleasure.” The key role of the Spirit is not to add information to the text, or to give us special translating abilities, but to soften our hearts in order to receive what is there.

The goal of this process is to be mature in Christ. The Bible is not an end, it is a means to becoming conformed to the image or likeness of Christ.

What Is a Literal Interpretation?

Prior to the Protestant Reformation in the 1500s, biblical interpretation was often dominated by the allegorical method. Looking back to Augustine, the medieval church believed that every biblical passage contained four levels of meaning. These four levels were the literal, the allegorical, the moral, and the eschatological. For instance, the word Jerusalem literally referred to the city itself; allegorically, it refers to the church of Christ; morally, it indicates the human soul; and eschatologically it points to the heavenly Jerusalem.(1) Under this school of interpretation it was the church that established what the correct meaning of a passage was for all four levels.

By the time of the reformation, knowledge of the Bible was scarce. However, with a new emphasis on the original languages of Hebrew and Greek, the fourfold method of interpretation was beginning to fade. Martin Luther argued that the church shouldn’t determine what the Scriptures mean, the Scriptures should govern what the churches teach. He also rejected the allegorical method of interpreting Scripture.

Luther argued that a proper understanding of what a passage teaches comes from a literal interpretation. This means that the reader must consider the historical context and the grammatical structure of each passage, and strive to maintain contextual consistency. This method was a result of Luther’s belief that the Scriptures are clear, in opposition to the medieval church’s position that they are so obscure that only the church can uncover their true meaning.

Calvin agreed in principle with Luther. He also placed great importance on the notion that “Scripture interprets Scripture,” stressing that the grammar, context, words, and parallel passages found in the text were more important than any meaning we might impose on them. He added that, “it is the first business of an interpreter to let the author say what he does say, instead of attributing to him what we think he ought to say.(2)

Another approach to interpretation is letterism. While often ignoring context, historical and cultural setting, and even grammatical structure, letterism takes each word as an isolated truth. A problem with this method is that it fails to take into account the

different literary genre, or types, in the Bible. The Hebrew poetry of the Psalms is not to be interpreted in the same way as is the logical discourse of Romans. Letterism tends to lead to legalism because of its inability to distinguish between literary types. All passages tend to become equally binding on current believers.

If we use Jesus as our model for interpreting Scripture we find that He treated the historical narratives as facts. Old Testament characters and events are talked about as if they actually existed and happened. When making applications from the Old Testament text, Jesus used the normal, rather than allegorical meaning, of the passage. Jesus condemned the Scribes and Pharisees for replacing the original intent of the Scriptures with their own traditions. Jesus took a literal approach to interpretation which took into account the literary type of the passage.

Paul tells Timothy that he is to do his “best to present himself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.” Having the right method of interpretation is a critical precursor to accomplishing this admonition.

Applying the Hermeneutic Process

Next, we will look at how one might approach a specific text. A first step should be to determine the literary genre of the passage. A passage might be legal, narrative, polemic, poetry, wisdom, gospel, logical discourse, or prophetic literature, each having specific guidelines for proper interpretation. For instance, the wisdom literature found in Proverbs is to be seen as maxims or general truths based on broad experience and observations. “They are guidelines, not guarantees; precepts, not promises.(3)

Now, it would be helpful to identify the use of figurative language in the passage. Various forms of Hebrew poetry, simile, metaphor, and hyperbole need to be recognized if the reader is to understand the passage’s meaning. Hyperbole, for example, uses exaggeration to make a point. John says that the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written if everything about Jesus’s life was written down (John 21:25). John is using figurative speech. His point is that there were many things that Jesus did that weren’t recorded.

The Hebrew language of the Old Testament is filled with examples of figurative text. Judges 7:12 claims that “The Midianites, the Amalekites and all the other eastern peoples had settled in the valley, thick as locusts. Their camels could no more be counted than the sand on the seashore.” Were there actually billions of camels in the valley, or is this an overstatement for the sake of making the point that there were many camels present? Interpreting a passage begins by looking for the plain literal

meaning of the text, but if there are obvious contradictions of known facts we look for a figure of speech. Clues for interpreting a figure of speech are usually found in the immediate context.

After a passage's literary type is determined and figures of speech are identified, we can begin to focus on the content of a section of Scripture. Four levels of study are recommended. Word studies come first. Words are the building blocks of meaning, and by looking at the root origin or etymology of a word; its historical development over time; and the meaning of the word at the time of its use in Scripture we can gain insight into a passage's meaning.

Much is to be gained by focusing on the verbs and conjunctions within a text. In the Greek language, verbs have a tense, a mood, a voice, and a person. For instance, Ephesians 5:18 says to not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit. Does "be filled" mean a one time event? Do we accomplish this via hard work? Actually, the passive voice and present tense of the Greek word used translates better as "be kept being filled in Spirit." It implies an ongoing process that God performs as a result of our submission to Him, not as a result of our personal efforts.

Connective words like "and" or "for" are important when reading long or difficult passages. The word "for" introduces a reason for a preceding statement. In Romans 1:15-17 Paul says that he is eager "to preach the gospel . . . **for** I am not ashamed . . . **for** it is the power of God for salvation . . . **for** in it the righteousness of God is revealed." And, in Romans 8, "for" occurs 15 times.

Other techniques for studying words include looking at synonyms, antonyms, and cross references. Cross-references might be verbal, parallel (using the same words), or conceptual (using the same idea).

Continuing the Hermeneutic Process

Syntax is the way in which words are grouped together within phrases, clauses, and sentences. Two types of phrases are prepositional, like "in Christ" and "from God our Father," and participial, such as "speaking the truth in love" or "making peace." There are dependent clauses like "when we pray for you" and independent clauses such as "we always thank God." There are simple and compound sentences, simple ones having only one independent clause, compound ones having at least two.

Why do we need to know about syntax? Because without it we have no valid assurance that our interpretation is the meaning God intended to convey. Since God used

languages that function within normal grammatical rules, knowing these rules is necessary in order to discern the meaning of a text.

The next level of study should be context. First locate the beginning of an idea and its topic sentence. Start with the paragraph, and then consider the chapter and the entire book. Determine who is being addressed, who is speaking, and what the occasion is. Hebrews chapter six has been interpreted in a number of different ways depending on how one answers these questions. Since the book was written to Jewish believers, deals with Christian maturity, and begins by exhorting the reader to leave elementary teachings and press on to maturity, many feel that the passage deals with Jewish believers tempted to return to Temple worship and the Jewish community. It warns not of the loss of salvation, but the negative impact on their Christian life if they return to the Jewish community and worship. In other words, they cannot start over if they ruin their testimony among the Jews.

Finally, ignoring the cultural context of a passage is one of the greatest problems in Bible interpretation. By culture we mean the behavior of a people as reflected by their thoughts, beliefs, social forms, speech, actions, and material artifacts. If we ignore culture, we often wrongly read into the Bible our twentieth century ideas. Knowledge of the religious, economic, legal, agricultural, architectural, and domestic practices of biblical times will decrease the likelihood of misinterpreting difficult passages.

God's plagues on Egypt is one example of how cultural knowledge can help us to understand a text. The specific plagues sent by God spoke directly against the Egyptian gods. Turning the Nile into blood invalidated the protection of Isis, a goddess of the Nile, as well as Khnum, a guardian god of the Nile. The plague of frogs defied the Heqet, the goddess of birth who had the head of a frog. The plague of gnats ridiculed Set, god of the desert. Other plagues mocked Re, a sun god; Hathor, goddess with a cows head; Apis, the bull god; Sekhmet, goddess with power over disease, as well as others. God was communicating very clearly with the Egyptian people concerning His role as the creator and sustainer of the universe.

Reference works like Bible dictionaries, concordances, word study books, and commentaries are available to assist us in our study of the Bible. The goal of this process is to apply God's Word to our lives, but we must first have accurate knowledge of what God's Word means. Understanding precedes application.

As Psalm 19:1 explains, "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands." Paul, in Romans 1:20 says, "...since the creation of the world God's

invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.”

Notes

1. Henry A. Virkler, *Hermeneutics: Principles and Processes of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1981), p. 63.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 67.

3. Roy B. Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation: A Practical Guide to Discovering Biblical Truth* (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1991), p. 132.

(<https://probe.org/hermeneutics/>)

In conclusion, biblical passages must be interpreted according to the intention of the author and in the context in which the statement is made. Interpretation must be distinguished from application. One must be sensitive to what type of literature one is in and how this may or may not apply to a believer in the church age. Interpreting the Bible is sometimes hard work but it's always worth the cost. David reminds us of the value of God's word, "They are of greater value than gold, than even a great amount of pure gold; they bring greater delight than honey, than even the sweetest honey from a honeycomb" (Ps 19:10).

7.6 Discussion Questions

What types of interpretations have you heard where you questioned the method of interpretation?

What would happen to interpretation if the church used reader centered interpretations as opposed to an author centered interpretations?

How does the Holy Spirit help us in interpreting the Bible (1 Cor 2)?

If the Holy Spirit is guiding us in interpretation why do godly Christians have differing interpretations on various passages?

What is our relationship, if any, to the Old Testament Commandments/Law?

Why are only 9 of the 10 commandments repeated in the New Testament? The Sabbath command is the one of the ten commandments that is not there.

How does the distinction between the church and Israel affect application of the Old Testament?

How do you know if something is symbolic or not?

7.7 Review: Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics: Foundations and Principles of Evangelical and Biblical Interpretation

7.7.1 Introduction

Graeme Goldsworthy's most recent publication, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics* (https://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=Gospel-Centered+Hermeneutics), works to apply biblical theology to the discipline of hermeneutics with the goal of arriving at a biblical, theistic, and presuppositional approach to interpreting the Bible. After a brief introduction, the book is presented in three parts followed by an epilogue, bibliography, index of names, and index of Scripture references. By way of brief introduction and personal commentary, if you are tired of the perplexing neutrality of most books on hermeneutics, then you may be pleasantly surprised by the clear, confessional, Christ-exalting treatment of this topic by Goldsworthy. Since this reviewer is enthusiastic about the book, the goal of this review will be to let Goldsworthy speak for himself in the context of summary and explanation.

In the introduction, the author sets before his readers the basic goal of the book, the basic goal of hermeneutics, the author's own expression concerning a center for biblical theology, and the essential epistemological state required for "gospel-centred" hermeneutics. With regard to the major underlying goal of the entire volume, Goldsworthy states that he hopes "to commend the much neglected role of biblical theology to hermeneutical practice . . . [and] to show how the method of biblical theology provides a basic tool in any biblical research, and how it functions as the matrix for understanding the relatedness of the whole Bible to the person and work of Jesus" (15, italics mine). In the statement of his goal, we can discern the author's concern both for the unity of the Bible and the source of that unity as it applies to biblical interpretation. It should be noted that this is a bold statement in the context of the preceding centuries of higher-critical presuppositions, especially as it relates to Old Testament studies, that work to discern the pieces without regard for (and oftentimes in denial of) the essential unity of the Bible.

In the statement of his goal (see above), the author alludes to what he considers to be the center of biblical theology and, therefore, the unifying principle of Scripture. For

Goldsworthy, this center is the "person and work of Jesus." As such, he argues from a trinitarian perspective that "Our knowing God [the Father] centers on Jesus, the Word of God who has come in the flesh, and on the Bible, the Spirit-inspired, written word of God that is the true testimony to this incarnate word" (16). Hermeneutics is, therefore, the work of interpretation that aims at "a right understanding of what God says to us in his word" (16). It is, in other words, "concerned with the practical application of Scripture alone" (49).

It is not insignificant that Goldsworthy also argues from the presuppositional perspective that the word of God cannot be properly interpreted unless the interpreter is first justified. That is to say, one cannot properly interpret the Bible as good news unless he or she has first been converted and so, "Our ability to interpret Scripture must be saved, justified and sanctified through the gospel" (16). "Hermeneutical conversion takes place when one becomes a believer. The Bible will never be the same again to us because we, as believers, have made a quantum shift from unbelief and the rejection of God's word to faith and trust in that word, and submission to it" (18). And finally, "If Christ truly is our Lord and Saviour, then he is the Lord and Saviour of our hermeneutics" (19).

7.7.2 Part I: Evangelical Prolegomena to Hermeneutics (chapters 1-4)

The first major section of the book is styled as a "prolegomena" or introduction to the discipline of biblical interpretation. According to Goldsworthy, "The purpose of Part I is to consider the grounds and basic assumptions, along with their justification, of evangelical belief and biblical interpretation" (21). From one perspective, this is perhaps the most important section in the book. If the reader does not appreciate the presuppositional stance outlined by Goldsworthy in these first few chapters, then it is likely that the remaining material presented in Parts II and III will not be as significant in terms of how it may shape one's hermeneutical presuppositions and methods. For this reason, in this review, Part I will receive the greatest amount of attention.

Goldsworthy is unashamedly presuppositional in his approach to biblical interpretation. In fact, he argues that "Neutrality and complete objectivity are the presuppositional myths of the modern secular outlook, and they are also the assumptions, sometimes unexamined, of many Christian thinkers" (21). As noted above, Goldsworthy's presuppositional stance is rooted in biblical theology and the center of his biblical theology is Jesus. It is the person and work of Jesus that, for Goldsworthy, is able to unify and comprehend the diversity found in Scripture. This presuppositional element is so central to the work of the book that it is restated dozens of times in a variety of

forms, as here, where it is stated that, "Evangelicals have always believed that, although there is great diversity in the Bible, there is a discernible and essential unity to its message. At the heart of evangelicalism is the belief that the gospel of Jesus Christ is the definitive revelation to mankind of God's mind, and the defining act of human history. The person and work of Jesus provide us with a single focal point for understanding reality" (21, italics mine). In other words, hermeneutics is the collision of exegesis and biblical theology in a presuppositional spiral.

In chapter 1, descriptions and definitions of hermeneutics are set forth in a more formal manner. According to the author, "Hermeneutics is about communication, meaning and understanding" (24) and "The function of hermeneutics could be stated as the attempt to bridge the gap between the text inside its world and the readers/hearers inside their world" (27). Additionally, in this first chapter, Goldsworthy proceeds to detail a number of the various gaps that exist between the Bible and its reader: language, culture, history, literature, textual (text criticism), intended (original) audience (pp. 28-30). The remainder of the chapter deals with issues related to the communication process: the communicator, the communication, the receiver. In the end, Goldsworthy wants his readers to be aware of the theological dimensions of hermeneutics for Christians. The communicator is God [the Father] and the communication is both the written word, the Bible, and the incarnate word, Jesus Christ. The receivers and proclaimers of this communication are his covenant people. At the end of chapter 1 (pages 37-38), there are three helpful charts that summarize issues related to hermeneutics in the categories of (1) communicator, (2) communication, and (3) receivers and proclaimers. It is worth noting that in the Bible section under communication, Goldsworthy lists 10 items, a number of which are related to his underlying concern for the relevance of biblical theology in hermeneutics: 1. What is the Bible?, 2. How was it produced?, 7. What is its unity and central message?, 9. What are its canonical limits?

In chapter 2, Goldsworthy details the presuppositions that support his hermeneutics in the context of concerns related to our postmodern culture. By way of summary, Goldsworthy notes that in our postmodern culture, the locus of authority and thus interpretation has shifted from the author (communicator) and the text (communication) to the audience (receiver). Thus, "Confidence in rationality is gone and the metanarrative (the big picture of a unified reality) is rejected . . . The author and the text cease to be the creators of meaning and it is left to the reader to create the meaning in the text" (40). It is tempting to say more here given the significance of this statement and the influence of this reality on the American evangelical church. Given the scope of this review, however, it is perhaps best to refrain and move on to the presuppositions outlined by Goldsworthy.

The definition of a presupposition used in this book is borrowed from John Frame (*The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1987, 45). As such, "A presupposition is a belief that takes precedence over another and therefore serves as a criterion for another. An ultimate presupposition is a belief over which no other takes precedence" (39). Goldsworthy formulates his presuppositions with reference to the reformation doctrines of sola (meaning "alone" in Latin). There are four presuppositions of this type outlined in this chapter:

- "The principle of 'grace alone' points us to the ontological priority of God" (47).
- "The principle of 'Christ alone' points us to the soteriological and hermeneutical priority of the gospel of Christ" (48).
- "The principle of 'Scripture alone' points us to the phenomenological and material priority of Scripture" (49).
- "The principle of 'faith alone' points us to the ontological inability of the sinner and the epistemological priority of the Holy Spirit." (50).

Perhaps the most provocative statement in this chapter appears in the context of the discussion of Christ alone as one of the four main hermeneutical presuppositions. Though a bit long, it is worth including in this review since it represents such an important component of Goldsworthy's thought in this book. It is stated that, "If the biblical story is true, Christ is the only saviour for humankind and there is room for no other way to God.

If the story is true, Jesus Christ is the interpretative key to every fact in the universe and, of course, the Bible is one such fact. He is thus the hermeneutic principle that applies first to the Bible as the ground for understanding, and also to the whole of reality. Interpreting reality correctly is a by-product of salvation. Thus we must assert that the person and work of Jesus Christ are foundational for evangelical hermeneutics . . . Christ interprets all facts, since all things were created in him, through him and for him ([Col. 1:16](#)). As the one mediator between God and man ([1 Tim. 2:5](#)), Christ mediates the ultimate truth about God in all things and thus about the meaning of the Bible" (48).

According to the statement included in the paragraph above, Christ is not only the presuppositional and hermeneutical key for a proper understanding of the Bible, but for all of reality. In this book, the presupposition of Christ alone is applied to hermeneutics through the lens of biblical theology. However, according to Goldsworthy's statement above, this same presuppositional center would apply to apologetics, missions, work, raising children, and spending money. As it applies specifically to hermeneutics, however, "How can we unpack the notion that the gospel is the power of God for hermeneutical salvation? What are the hermeneutics of Christ? The question may be

stated as the relationship of the three major dimensions of communication to Jesus Christ. According to the gospel the real link between the communicator, the message and the receivers is the incarnated God/Man, thus: Jesus is God, the infallible communicator; Jesus is the Word, the infallible message; Jesus is the God/Man, the infallible receiver" (56). At this point, the presuppositional agenda (and center) set forth in the book should be crystal clear. It is, once again, the application of Christology to hermeneutics through biblical theology.

In chapter 3, Goldsworthy continues to develop the issue of the significance of Christ alone as an evangelical presupposition for hermeneutics. As the title of this volume suggests, hermeneutics of this sort are characterized as Gospel-Centered with the person and work of Christ at that center. At this point it will be important to include the author's definition of the Gospel. According to Goldsworthy, "The gospel is the event (or the proclamation of that event) of Jesus Christ that begins with his incarnation and earthy life, and concludes with his death, resurrection and ascension to the right hand of the Father. This historical event is interpreted by God as his preordained programme for the salvation of the world" (58). Conversely, "If something is not what God did in and through the historical Jesus two thousand years ago, it is not the gospel. Thus Christians cannot 'live the gospel', as they are so often exhorted to do. They can only believe it, proclaim it and seek to live consistently with it. Only Jesus lived (and died) the gospel. It is a once-for-all finished and perfect event done for us by another" (59). This last statement is important because it begins to speak with reference to the significance of our own hermeneutical presuppositions and how those emerge in our preaching and teaching. It also begins to highlight the necessity for the second part of this book where a history of interpretation is undertaken.

For Goldsworthy, the fact that Christ is the mediator means that the gospel is the hermeneutical norm of Scripture. Thus, "Interpreting the Bible by the Gospel involves the conscious decision to work at the relationships of all parts of the Bible to the gospel" (62) and "the ultimate interpretation of the meaning of everything is found only in Christ. This includes every text of the Bible" (63, italics mine). These statements derive from Goldsworthy's interpretation of texts such as [Luke 24:25-27, 44](#), and [John 5:39](#).

In the final chapter of Part I (chapter 4), Goldsworthy sketches a brief biblical theology of interpretation. Since Christ is the hermeneutical center of the Bible, the next logical question is how do all the various biblical parts relate to Christ? How do the parts relate to the whole? For Goldsworthy, the discipline of biblical theology is specially suited to answering this question and, in this chapter, he sets out to present this unity through the canon. If, for Goldsworthy, Christ is the hermeneutical center of biblical theology,

then redemptive (or salvation) history is the framework within which this reality is expressed. As such, beginning with Genesis 1-3, continuing through Revelation, and including the Pentateuch, wisdom, the prophets, the Gospels, Acts, and the epistles, the gospel-centered approach is applied to the various genres and sections of the Christian canon. It should be noted that, in the opinion of this reviewer, this is perhaps the least developed chapter in the book, especially with regard to the discussion of redemptive history as it relates to the formation and the final form of the canon. If the locus of meaning is the text, then the text sets forth, shapes, and uses redemptive history. The final form of the canon should control our approach to redemptive history.

7.7.3 Part II: Challenges to Evangelical Hermeneutics (chapters 5-12)

Following the prolegomena of Part I, Part II provides the reader with a brief history of interpretation from the early church (Alexander and Antioch) to modern evangelicalism. The trajectory of this survey also includes the medieval church, Roman Catholicism (including Thomas Aquinas), the enlightenment and liberalism (including Schleiermacher), and certain modern hermeneutical influences such as philosophical hermeneutics, historical criticism, and literary criticism. The presentation of data acknowledges its dependence upon secondary literature. Additionally, this survey is intentionally focused to "concentrate on the evidence for the invasion of non-biblical philosophical frameworks into the interpretative process" (91). Perhaps the most interesting chapter, from the perspective of the modern reader, would be chapter 12, the eclipse of the gospel in evangelicalism. In this chapter, Goldsworthy provides an interesting assessment of the hermeneutical problems that exist in the modern evangelical church, perhaps the primary audience of a book like this. For this reason, it is an important chapter for readers, especially for those who preach and teach in the church, to consider.

One of the themes that Goldsworthy traces through this section of the book (it appears in the other two sections as well) is that of the moralistic or exemplary use of the Bible, especially the Old Testament (No one would deny that there are moral, ethical, and exemplary portions and uses of the Bible. Here, the author is simply speaking about the moralistic or exemplary misuse of texts without hermeneutical sensitivity). Back in Part I, Goldsworthy noted that one of the first misuses of the Gospel as the hermeneutical center of the Bible is the confusion between the Gospel itself and the so-called "fruit" of the Gospel. For example, he states, "When we confuse the fruit of the gospel in the Christian life for the gospel itself, hermeneutical confusion is introduced.

The focus easily turns to the life of the believer and the experience of the Christian life. These can then become the norms by which Scripture is interpreted. Instead of interpreting our experience by the word, we start to interpret the word by our experience" (59). And so, early on in a treatment of the sub-apostolic age (92-94), Goldsworthy observes "that very early in Christian history there occurred a concentration on the exemplary and ethical Christ, rather than on the substitutionary and redemptive Christ. This slippage anticipates the reversal of the roles of justification and sanctification in medieval Catholicism" (92-93). Additionally, this same observation may help us to understand the origin of the so-called new perspective on Paul as well as a number of other common misuses of the Old Testament in the modern evangelical church.

7.7.4 Part III: Reconstructing Evangelical Hermeneutics (chapters 13-19)

In this final section, Part III (chapters 13-19), the question is asked, "what," therefore, "can be the shape of contemporary evangelical hermeneutics?" (181) given certain biblical theological presuppositions and the numerous problems arising from understanding the complexity of interpretation from church history. Goldsworthy expresses concern for "our ability to argue the case for Christianity rationally in a postmodern world" (181-182) and that we become "sensitive to the pitfalls and errors of biblical interpretation into which we have fallen, so that we may seek to reform our ways" (182). As such, Goldsworthy works to develop how gospel-centered hermeneutics integrates with the literary, historical, and theological dimensions of the text through a contemporary re-evaluation of the reformation principles of interpretation (described above, and again below).

First, in chapter 13, Goldsworthy works to re-articulate the significance of presuppositionalism (as found in Augustine, Anselm, and the Reformers) as opposed to fideism (resulting in mysticism or existential theology) and empiricism (resulting in evidentialism and higher-critical skepticism). He also argues for the humanistic principle of *ad fontes* (translated "to the source" from Latin) which becomes the reformational principle *sola scriptura* (translated "scripture alone" from Latin). In this context, four hermeneutical principles are set forth (see page 185, constituting a summary derived from Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966, 74-81). These four principles are: (1) the sole content of Scripture is Christ and this constitutes the unity of Scripture; (2) Scripture authenticates itself and is thus the sole authority for faith and life; (3) Scripture interprets itself and provides its own meaning; and (4) Christ is Lord of the Scripture.

In chapter 14, the literary dimension of the Bible (including linguistics, speech-act theory, and double-agency discourse) is discussed in the context of gospel-centered hermeneutics. Ultimately, according to Goldsworthy, the "whole canon of Scripture" (200) provides the literary context for each individual unit of text and this reality suggests the importance of the metanarrative, or overarching narrative plot, to provide hermeneutical controls in interpretation. The significance of the combination of the (final form?) of the canon and redemptive history in the context of hermeneutics was discussed back in chapter 4. And, as before, the relationship between these two important hermeneutical concepts requires further attention.

In chapter 15, Goldsworthy works to provide readers with a theology of history. Given the current climate in Old Testament studies regarding the nature and scope of historiography and even the definition of history, this is not an easy task. In light of this context, Goldsworthy states that, "An evangelical philosophy of history is a theology of history" (218, italics mine) and, according to the author, such a theology must begin with the gospel. A number of the more important elements for a gospel-centered theology of history as presented in this chapter include:

- The gospel event is both the high-point and the end-point of biblical history, not the mid-point (221). Later, he states, "The end of history is the cross" but "The cross is also the beginning of a new history" (228).
- "History cannot be understood without God's word to interpret it . . . There are no wordless events in revelation" (222).
- "Redemption is in the event by which God reconstructs an acceptable human history while judging the unacceptable. The doctrine of justification by faith involves the substitution of God's righteous history in Christ for our fallen and condemned histories of rebellion" (223).
- "God's plan from all eternity was the new creation and a people created and redeemed in Christ. The blueprint of creation and all of history is the gospel" (223).

This chapter concludes with a number of helpful guidelines for the evangelical preacher, especially as it relates to our understanding of the purpose and use of biblical narrative. The reader is encouraged to carefully consider the admonitions contained in those few pages.

Chapters 16 and 17 deal with the theological dimensions associated with gospel-centered hermeneutics. Chapter 16 treats the relationship(s) between the Old and New Testaments and Chapter 17 deals with the relationship between the disciplines of biblical and systematic theology as it applies to hermeneutics. With regard to the latter,

the relationship exists within the context of the hermeneutical spiral. Thus, "It is not possible to do biblical theology without first having some pre-understanding of the Bible which amounts to the doctrine of scripture" (259).

Chapter 16 is perhaps one of the most important chapters in the book. It deals with understanding the relationship between the Old and New Testaments as the key to a proper biblical theology which, in turn, is the key to a proper biblical hermeneutic. According to Goldsworthy, the unity of the Bible is rooted in the so-called metanarrative, or single overarching story that spans both testaments, from creation in the Old Testament to new creation in the New Testament (234-237). This line of unity is further strengthened by the central point in that line, Jesus Christ as the hermeneutical center (237-242; referring to [John 5:39](#), for example).

Finally, Goldsworthy identifies typology as the method for understanding the diversity and controlling our understanding of the unity of the biblical canon (242-257). He states, "The key to this comprehensive typological interpretation is not ingenuity or wild imagination, but the controlled analysis of the theological significance of the texts in the Old Testament, and the clarifying of their significance in light of the corresponding theological function of Christ and his gospel. One important implication of this perspective is that it emphasizes that the primary application of all texts is in Christ, not in us or in something else" (256-257).

Chapter 18 covers the topic of the gospel and contextualization, the bridging of the cultural gap between the author and the original audience and our current cultural context. In this chapter, Goldsworthy constructs a biblical theology of contextualization (see 285-286 for a summary) and then spends a significant portion of the chapter discussing how contextualization relates to modern Bible translation, both dynamic and formal equivalency (288-295). In the end, Goldsworthy argues for formal equivalency as the preferred form of translation technique.

Finally, in chapter 19, Goldsworthy summarizes what he considers to be the hermeneutics of Christ. "He is set forth as the Word of God, the truth, and the final interpretation of the Old Testament Scriptures" (296). Thus, the goal of redemptive or salvation history is the gospel. "The ministry of Jesus the fulfiller has immense hermeneutical significance, since it draws together all the variety of themes and events in the Old Testament that foreshadow the fullness of God's purposes" (303).

The implicit force of this statement is that we will ultimately preach and teach in the same way that we theologically and hermeneutically approach the text. In other words, this "hermeneutical significance" appears, for good or ill, in our preaching and teaching.

He states, for example, that "The hermeneutics of the cross are the hermeneutics of repentance and submission to the crucified Lord. Any attempt to reduce the message of the Bible to morality and the mere imitation of Jesus ignores the centrality of the cross. Yet this moralizing is where so much evangelical application of the Old Testament texts leads us. The work of Christ should be the magnet that draws our interpretative applications of all texts to the gospel" (304).

7.7.5 Summary

The contribution of Goldsworthy in this volume is the application of biblical theology to hermeneutics. As the title suggests, the center of biblical theology is identified as the person and work of Jesus Christ presented to us as the gospel event in Scripture. The diversity of Scripture, particularly the challenge of the relationship between the two testaments, is unified by this gospel, controlled by redemptive history, and understood typologically. The author also argues that the premodern principles of the reformers stand firm, especially as it applies to the doctrine of Scripture.

This reviewer enthusiastically recommends *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics* for both personal and classroom use. Note, however, that it is not a book best handled with casual reading. Rather, it is the type of book that must be approached with a certain level of hermeneutical angst and a willingness to perceive one's own hermeneutical shortcomings. It is also the type of book that should be read more than once, perhaps annually for a decade or so. I conclude by expressing my sincere thanks and gratitude to the author for all of his hard work for our benefit.

Graeme Goldsworthy / Downers Grove: IVP, 2007 – Review by Miles Van Pelt, Associate Professor of Old Testament, Reformed Theological Seminary, Jackson, MS

<http://www.reformation21.org/shelf-life/gospelcentered-hermeneutics-foundations-and-principles-of-evangelical-and-biblic-1.php>

8. Exegesis—General

Exegesis (/ˌɛksəˈdʒiːsɪs/; from the Greek ἐξήγησις from ἐξηγεῖσθαι, "to lead out") is a critical explanation or interpretation of a text, particularly a religious text. Traditionally the term was used primarily for work with the Bible; however, in modern usage "biblical exegesis" is used for greater specificity to distinguish it from any other broader critical text explanation.

Exegesis includes a wide range of critical disciplines: textual criticism is the investigation into the history and origins of the text, but exegesis may include the study of the historical and cultural backgrounds for the author, the text, and the original audience. Other analyses include classification of the type of literary genres present in the text and analysis of grammatical and syntactical features in the text itself.

The terms exegesis and hermeneutics have been used interchangeably.

8.1 Usage

One who practices exegesis is called an *exegete* (/ˌɛksəˈdʒiːt/; from Greek ἐξηγητής). The plural of exegesis is *exegesises* (/ˌɛksəˈdʒiːsɪz/). Adjectives are exegetic or exegetical (e.g., exegetical commentaries). In biblical exegesis, the opposite of exegesis (to draw out) is eisegesis (to draw in), in the sense of an eisegetic commentator "importing" or "drawing in" his or her own purely subjective interpretations into the text, unsupported by the text itself. Eisegesis is often used as a derogatory term.

8.2 Mesopotamian commentaries

The earliest examples, and also one of the largest corpora of text commentaries from the ancient world, comes from first-millennium-BCE Mesopotamia (modern Iraq). Known from over 860 manuscripts, the majority of which date to the period 700–100 BCE, most of these commentaries explore numerous types of texts, including literary works (such as the Babylonian Epic of Creation), medical treatises, magical texts, ancient dictionaries, and law collections (the Code of Hammurabi). Most of them, however, comment on divination treatises, in particular treatises that predict the future from the appearance and movement of celestial bodies on the one hand (Enūma Anu Enlil), and from the appearance of a sacrificed sheep's liver on the other (Bārûtu).

As with the majority of the thousands of texts from the ancient Near East that have survived to the present day, Mesopotamian text commentaries are written on clay tablets in cuneiform script. Text commentaries are written in the East Semitic language of Akkadian, but due to the influence of lexical lists written in Sumerian language on cuneiform scholarship, they often contain Sumerian words or phrases as well.

Cuneiform commentaries are important because they provide information about Mesopotamian languages and culture that are not available elsewhere in the cuneiform record. To give but one example, the pronunciation of the cryptically written name of Gilgamesh, the hero of the Epic of Gilgamesh, was discovered in a cuneiform

commentary on a medical text.^[1] However, the significance of cuneiform commentaries extends beyond the light they shed on specific details of Mesopotamian civilization. They open a window onto what the concerns of the Mesopotamian literate elite were when they read some of the most widely studied texts in the Mesopotamian intellectual tradition, a perspective that is important for “seeing things their way.”^[2] Finally, cuneiform commentaries are also the earliest examples of textual interpretation. It has been repeatedly argued that they influenced rabbinical exegesis. See Akkadian Commentaries and Early Hebrew Exegesis

The publication and interpretation of these texts began in the mid-nineteenth century, with the discovery of the royal Assyrian libraries at Nineveh, from which ca. 454 text commentaries have been recovered. The study of cuneiform commentaries is, however, far from complete. It is the subject of on-going research by the small, international community of scholars who specialize in the field of Assyriology.

8.3 Bible commentaries

A common published form of biblical exegesis is known as a Bible commentary and typically takes the form of a set of books, each of which is devoted to the exposition of one or two books of the Bible. Long books or those that contain much material either for theological or historical-critical speculation, such as Genesis or Psalms, may be split over 2 or 3 volumes. Some, such as the Four Gospels, may be multiple- or single-volume, while short books such as the deuterocanonical portions of Daniel, Esther, and Jeremiah (i.e. Book of Susanna, Prayer of Azariah, Bel and the Dragon, Additions to Esther, Baruch and the Epistle of Jeremiah), or the pastoral or Johannine epistles are often condensed into one volume.

The form of each book may be identical or allow for variations in methodology between the many authors who collaborate to write a full commentary. Each book's commentary generally consists of a background and introductory section, followed by detailed commentary of the book in a pericope-by-pericope or verse-by-verse basis. Before the 20th century, a commentary would be written by a sole author, but today a publishing board will commission a team of scholars to write a commentary, with each volume being divided out among them.

A single commentary will generally attempt to give a coherent and unified view on the Bible as a whole, for example, from a Catholic or Reformed (Calvinist) perspective, or a commentary that focuses on textual criticism or historical criticism from a secular point of view. However, each volume will inevitably lean toward the personal emphasis of its author, and within any commentaries there may be great variety in the depth, accuracy, and critical or theological strength of each volume.

8.4 Christianity

The main Christian exegetical methods are historical-grammatical, historical criticism, revealed, and rational.

The historical-grammatical method is a Christian hermeneutical method that strives to discover the Biblical author's original intended meaning in the text.^[3] It is the primary method of interpretation for many conservative Protestant exegetes who reject the historical-critical method to various degrees (from the complete rejection of historical criticism of some fundamentalist Protestants to the moderated acceptance of it in the Catholic Church since Pope Pius XII),^[4] in contrast to the overwhelming reliance on historical-critical interpretation, often to the exclusion of all other hermeneutics, in liberal Christianity.

Historical criticism also known as the historical-critical method or higher criticism, is a branch of literary criticism that investigates the origins of ancient texts in order to understand "the world behind the text".^{[5][6]} This is done to discover the text's primitive or original meaning in its original historical context and its literal sense.^[7]

Revealed exegesis considers that the Holy Spirit inspired the authors of the scriptural texts, and so the words of those texts convey a divine revelation. In this view of exegesis, the principle of *sensus plenior* applies — that because of its divine authorship, the Bible has a "fuller meaning" than its human authors intended or could have foreseen.

Rational exegesis bases its operation on the idea that the authors have their own inspiration (in this sense, synonymous with artistic inspiration), so their works are completely and utterly a product of the social environment and human intelligence of their authors.

8.4.1 Catholic

Catholic centres of biblical exegesis include:

- the École Biblique of Jerusalem founded in 1890 by the Dominican order's Marie-Joseph Lagrange. The school became embroiled in the modernist crisis, and had to curtail its New Testament activities until after Vatican II
- the Pontifical Biblical Institute of Rome, a division of the Jesuit Gregorian University, has influenced Catholic exegesis through teaching and through the Pontifical Biblical Commission

8.4.2 Protestant

For more than a century, German universities such as Tübingen have had reputations as centers of exegesis; in the USA, the Divinity Schools of Chicago, Harvard and Yale became famous.

Robert A. Traina's book *Methodical Bible Study*^[8] is an example of Protestant Christian exegesis.

8.5 Judaism

Traditional Jewish forms of exegesis appear throughout rabbinic literature, which includes the Mishnah, the two Talmuds, and the midrash literature.

Jewish exegetes have the title *mefarshim* מפרשים (commentators).

8.5.1 Midrash

The Midrash is a homiletic method of exegesis and a compilation of homiletic teachings or commentaries on the Tanakh (Hebrew Bible), a biblical exegesis of the Pentateuch and its paragraphs related to the Law or Torah, which also forms an object of analysis. It comprises the legal and ritual Halakha, the collective body of Jewish laws, and exegesis of the written Law; and the non-legalistic Aggadah, a compendium of Rabbinic homilies of the parts of the Pentateuch not connected with Law.

Biblical interpretation by the Tannaim and the Amoraim, which may be best designated as scholarly interpretations of the Midrash, was a product of natural growth and of great freedom in the treatment of the words of the Bible. However, it proved an obstacle to further development when, endowed with the authority of a sacred tradition in the Talmud and in the Midrash (collections edited subsequently to the Talmud), it became the sole source for the interpretation of the Bible among later generations. Traditional literature contains explanations that are in harmony with the wording and the context. It reflects evidence of linguistic sense, judgment, and an insight into the peculiarities and difficulties of the biblical text. But side by side with these elements of a natural and simple Bible exegesis, of value even today, the traditional literature contains an even larger mass of expositions removed from the actual meaning of the text.

Halakha and Aggadah

In the halakhic as well as in the haggadic exegesis the expounder endeavored not so much to seek the original meaning of the text as to find authority in some Bible passage for concepts and ideas, rules of conduct and teachings, for which he wished to have a biblical foundation. The talmudical hermeneutics form *asmachta* is defined as finding hints for a given law rather than basing on the bible text. To this were added, on the one hand, the belief that the words of the Bible had many meanings, and, on the other, the importance attached to the smallest portion, the slightest peculiarity of the text. Because of this move towards particularities the exegesis of the Midrash strayed further and further away from a natural and common-sense interpretation.

Midrash

Midrash exegesis was largely in the nature of homiletics, expounding the Bible not in order to investigate its actual meaning and to understand the documents of the past but to find religious edification, moral instruction, and sustenance for the thoughts and feelings of the present. The contrast between explanation of the literal sense and the

Midrash, that did not follow the words, was recognized by the Tannaim and the Amoraim, although their idea of the literal meaning of a biblical passage may not be allowed by more modern standards. The above-mentioned tanna, Ishmael b. Elisha said, rejecting an exposition of Eliezer b. Hyrcanus: "Truly, you say to Scripture, 'Be silent while I am expounding!'" (Sifra on Lev. xiii. 49).

Tannaim

Tannaitic exegesis distinguishes principally between the actual deduction of a thesis from a Bible passage as a means of proving a point, and the use of such a passage as a mere mnemonic device – a distinction that was also made in a different form later in the Babylonian schools. The Babylonian Amoraim were the first to use the expression "Peshat" ("simple" or face value method) to designate the primary sense, contrasting it with the "Drash," the Midrashic exegesis. These two terms were later on destined to become important features in the history of Jewish Bible exegesis. In Babylonia was formulated the important principle that the Midrashic exegesis could not annul the primary sense. This principle subsequently became the watchword of commonsense Bible exegesis. How little it was known or recognized may be seen from the admission of Kahana, a Babylonian amora of the fourth century, that while at 18 years of age he had already learned the whole Mishnah, he had only heard of that principle a great many years later (Shab63a). Kahana's admission is characteristic of the centuries following the final redaction of the Talmud. The primary meaning is no longer considered, but it becomes more and more the fashion to interpret the text according to the meaning given to it in traditional literature. The ability and even the desire for original investigation of the text succumbed to the overwhelming authority of the Midrash. It was, therefore, providential that, just at the time when the Midrash was paramount, the close study of the text of the Bible, at least in one direction, was pursued with rare energy and perseverance by the Masorites, who set themselves to preserving and transmitting the pronunciation and correct reading of the text. By introducing punctuation (vowel-points and accents) into the biblical text, in the seventh century, they supplied that protecting hedge which, according to Rabbi Akiva's saying, the Masorah was to be for the words of the Bible. Punctuation, on the one hand, protected the tradition from being forgotten, and, on the other, was the precursor of an independent Bible science to be developed in a later age.

8.5.2 Mikra

The Mikra, the fundamental part of the national science, was the subject of the primary instruction. It was also divided into the three historic groups of the books of the Bible: the Pentateuch, the Prophets, and the Hagiographa, called in traditional Hebrew attribution the Torah (the Law or Teaching), the Nevi'im (the Prophets) and the Kethuvim (the Writings) respectively. The intelligent reading and comprehension of the text, arrived at by a correct division of the sentences and words, formed the course of instruction in the Bible. The scribes were also required to know the Targum, the Aramaic translation of the text. The Targum made possible an immediate

comprehension of the text, but was continuously influenced by the exegesis taught in the schools. The synagogues were preeminently the centers for instruction in the Bible and its exegesis. The reading of the biblical text, which was combined with that of the Targum, served to widen the knowledge of the scholars learned in the first division of the national science. The scribes found the material for their discourses, which formed a part of the synagogue service, in the second division of the several branches of the tradition. The Haggadah, the third of these branches, was the source material for the sermon.

Jewish exegesis did not finish with the redaction of the Talmud, but continued during ancient times, the Middle Ages and the Renaissance; it remains a subject of study today. Jews have centres for exegetic studies around the world, in each community: they consider exegesis an important tool for the understanding of the Scriptures.

8.6 Indian philosophy

The Mimamsa school of Indian philosophy, also known as *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā* ("prior" inquiry, also *Karma-Mīmāṃsā*), in contrast to *Uttara Mīmāṃsā* ("posterior" inquiry, also *Brahma-Mīmāṃsā*), is strongly concerned with textual exegesis, and consequently gave rise to the study of philology and the philosophy of language. Its notion of shabda "speech" as indivisible unity of sound and meaning (signifier and signified) is due to Bhartrhari (7th century).^[9]

8.7 Islam

Main articles: Tafsir and Esoteric interpretation of the Quran

Tafsir (Arabic: تفسير, *tafsīr*, "interpretation") is the Arabic word for exegesis or commentary, usually of the Qur'an.^[10] An author of tafsīr is a *mufassir* (Arabic: مُفسِّر, *mufassir*, plural: Arabic: مفسرون, *mufassirūn*).

Tafsir does not include esoteric or mystical interpretations, which are covered by the related word *Ta'wil*. Shi'ite organization Ahlul Bayt Digital Islamic Library Project cites the Islamic prophet Muhammad as stating that the Qur'an has an inner meaning, and that this inner meaning conceals an even deeper inner meaning, in support of this view.^[11] Adherents of people for Sufism and Ilm al-Kalam pioneered this thought.

8.8 Zoroastrianism

Zoroastrian exegesis consists basically of the interpretation of the Avesta. However, the closest equivalent Iranian concept, zand, generally includes Pahlavi texts which were believed to derive from commentaries upon Avestan scripture, but whose extant form contains no Avestan passages. Zoroastrian exegesis differs from similar phenomena in many other religions in that it developed as part of a religious tradition which made little or no use of writing until well into the Sasanian era. This lengthy period of oral transmission has clearly helped to give the Middle Persian Zand its characteristic shape and has, in a sense, limited its scope. Although the later tradition makes a formal distinction between "Gathic" (*gāhānīg*), "legal" (*dādīg*), and perhaps "ritual" (*hādag-mānsrīg*) Avestan texts, there appear to be no significant differences in approach

between the Pahlavi commentary on the Gathas and those on dādīg texts, such as the *Vendīdād*, the *Hērbedestān* and the *Nērangestān*. Since many 19th and 20th century works by Zoroastrians contain an element of exegesis, while on the other hand no exegetical literature in the strict sense of the word can be said to exist, the phenomenon of modern Zoroastrian exegesis as such will be discussed here, without detailed reference to individual texts.^[12]

8.9 Secular context

Several universities, including the Sorbonne in Paris,^[13] Leiden University,^[14] and the *Université Libre de Bruxelles* (Free University of Brussels),^[15] put exegesis in a secular context, next to exegesis in a religious tradition. Secular exegesis is an element of the study of religion.

At Australian universities, the exegesis is part of practice-based doctorate projects. It is a scholarly text accompanying a film, literary text, etc. produced by the PhD. candidate.^[16]

See also

- Allegory in the Middle Ages
- Archetype
- Biblical criticism
 - Form criticism
 - Radical criticism
 - Redaction criticism
 - Source criticism
 - Tradition criticism
- Biblical literalism
- Biblical software
- Biblical studies
- Close reading
- Gloss (annotation)
- Gymnobilism
- Icon
- Literal and figurative language
- Peshar
- Semiotics
- Symbol
- Typology (theology)

Footnotes

1. BM 54595 (CCP 4.2.R). See T. G. Pinches, “Exit Gištubar!”, *The Babylonian and Oriental Record*, vol. 4, p. 264, 1889.

2. Sheldon Pollock, "Future Philology? The Fate of a Soft Science in a Hard World", *Critical Inquiry* 35/4, pp. 931–961, here p. 954.
3. Elwell, Walter A. (1984). *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House. ISBN 0-8010-3413-2.
4. The Biblical Commission's Document "The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church" Text and Commentary; ed. Joseph A. Fitzmyer; Subsidia Biblica 18; Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1995. See esp. p. 26, "The historical-critical method is the indispensable method for the scientific study of the meaning of ancient texts."
5. Soulen, Richard N.; Soulen, R. Kendall (2001). *Handbook of biblical criticism (3rd ed., rev. and expanded. ed.)*. Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press. p. 78. ISBN 0-664-22314-1.
6. <https://depts.drew.edu/jhc/>
7. Soulen, Richard N. (2001). *Handbook of Biblical Criticism*. John Knox. p. 79.
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9. See also chapter 3.2 in Peter M. Scharf, *The Denotation of Generic Terms in Ancient Indian Philosophy* (1996)
10. "al-Baydawi's "Anwar al-Tanzil wa Asrar al-Ta'wil" with Frontispiece". *World Digital Library*. Retrieved 28 February 2013.
11. Ahlul Bayt Digital Islamic Library Project, The Teachings of the Qur'an.
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14. "Organisatie". *leidenuniv.nl*.
15. "Centre interdisciplinaire d'étude des religions et de la laïcité – CIERL". *ulb.ac.be*.
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8.10 Hermeneutic circle

(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hermeneutic_circle)

The **hermeneutic circle** (German: *hermeneutischer Zirkel*) describes the process of understanding a text hermeneutically. It refers to the idea that one's understanding of the text as a whole is established by reference to the individual parts and one's understanding of each individual part by reference to the whole. Neither the whole text nor any individual part can be understood without reference to one another, and hence, it is a circle. However, this circular character of interpretation does not make it impossible to interpret a text; rather, it stresses that the meaning of a text must be found within its cultural, historical, and literary context.

8.10.1 History

Friedrich Schleiermacher's approach to interpretation focuses on the importance of the interpreter *understanding* the text as a necessary stage to interpreting it. Understanding involved repeated circular movements between the parts and the whole. Hence the idea of an interpretive or hermeneutic *circle*. Understanding the meaning of a text is not about decoding the author's intentions. It is about establishing real relationships between reader, text, and context.^[1] Even reading a sentence involves these repeated circular movements through a hierarchy of parts–whole relationships. Thus, as we are reading this sentence, you are analysing single words as the text unfolds, but you are also weighing the meaning of each word against our changing sense of the overall meaning of the sentence you are reading, or perhaps misunderstanding, or maybe this sentence is reminding you of, or clashing with, another view about interpretation you have, in the past, advocated or disparaged. Hence we are brought to the sentence's larger historical context, depending on its location, and our own circumstances.

Wilhelm Dilthey used the example of understanding a sentence as an example of the circular course of hermeneutic understanding. He particularly stressed that meaning and meaningfulness were always contextual. Thus the meaning of any sentence cannot be fully interpreted unless we know the historical circumstances of its utterance. And this means that interpretation is always linked to the situation of the interpreter, because one can only construct a history from the particular set of circumstances in which one currently exists. Thus Dilthey says: "Meaningfulness fundamentally grows out of a relation of part to whole that is grounded in the nature of living experience."^[2] For Dilthey, "Meaning is not subjective; it is not projection of thought or thinking onto the object; it is a perception of a real relationship within a nexus prior to the subject-object separation in thought."^{[2][3]}

Martin Heidegger (1927) developed the concept of the *hermeneutic circle* to envision a whole in terms of a reality that was situated in the detailed experience of everyday existence by an individual (the parts). So understanding was developed on the basis of "fore-structures" of understanding, that allow external phenomena to be interpreted in a preliminary way.

Another instance of Heidegger's use of the hermeneutic circle occurs in his examination of *The Origin of the Work of Art* (1935–1936). Here Heidegger argues that both artists and art works can only be understood with reference to each other, and that neither can be understood apart from 'art,' which, as well, cannot be understood apart from the former two. The 'origin' of the work of art is mysterious and elusive, seemingly defying logic: "thus we are compelled to follow the circle. This is neither a makeshift or a defect. To enter upon the path is the strength of thought, to continue on it is the feast of thought, assuming thinking is a craft. Not only is the main step from work to art a circle like the step from art to work, but every separate step that we attempt circles this circle. In order to discover the nature of the art that really prevails in the work, let us go to the actual work and ask the work what and how it is."^{[3]:18}

Heidegger continues, saying that a work of art is not a simple thing (as a doorknob or a shoe is, which do not normally involve aesthetic experience), but it cannot escape its "thingly character," that is, being part of the larger order of things in the world, apart from all aesthetic experience.^{[3]:19} The synthesis of thingly and artistic is found in the work's allegorical and symbolic character, "but this one element in a work that manifests another, this one element that joins another, is the thingly feature in the art work".^{[3]:20} At this point, however, Heidegger raises the doubt of "whether the work is at bottom something else and not a thing at all." Later he tries to break down the metaphysical opposition between form and matter, and the whole other set of dualisms which include: rational and irrational, logical and illogical/allogical, and subject and object. Neither of these concepts is independent of the other, yet neither can be reduced to the other: Heidegger suggests we have to look beyond both.^{[3]:27}

Hans-Georg Gadamer (1975) further developed this concept, leading to what is recognized as a break with previous hermeneutic traditions. While Heidegger saw the hermeneutic process as cycles of self-reference that situated our understanding in a *a priori* prejudices, Gadamer reconceptualized the hermeneutic circle as an iterative process through which a new understanding of a whole reality is developed by means of exploring the detail of existence. Gadamer viewed understanding as linguistically mediated, through conversations with others in which reality is explored and an agreement is reached that represents a new understanding.^[4] The centrality of conversation to the hermeneutic circle is developed by Donald Schön, who characterizes design as a hermeneutic circle that is developed by means of "a conversation with the situation."^[5]

Paul de Man, in his essay "Form and Intent in the American New Criticism," talks about the hermeneutic circle with reference to paradoxical ideas about "textual unity" espoused by and inherited from American criticism. De Man points out that the "textual unity" New Criticism locates in a given work has only a "semi-circularity" and that the hermeneutic circle is completed in "the act of interpreting the text." Combining Gadamer and Heidegger into an epistemological critique of interpretation and reading, de Man argues that with New Criticism, American Criticism "pragmatically entered" the hermeneutic circle, "mistaking it for the organic circularity of natural processes."^[6]

For **postmodernists**, the hermeneutic circle is especially problematic. Not only do they believe one can only know the world through the words one uses to describe it, but also that "whenever people try to establish a certain reading of a text or expression, they allege other readings as the ground for their reading".^[7] For postmodernists, in other words, "All meaning systems are open-ended systems of signs referring to signs referring to signs. No concept can therefore have an ultimate, unequivocal meaning".^[8]

8.10.2 Critique

Judith N. Shklar (1986) points out the ambiguity in the meaning and function of the "circle" as a metaphor for understanding. It seems to imply a center, but it is unclear whether the interpreter him/herself stands there, or whether, on the contrary, some

"organizing principle and illuminating principle apart from him [is] there waiting to be discovered."^[9] Furthermore, and more problematic for Shklar, "the hermeneutic circle makes sense only if there is a known and closed whole, which can be understood in terms of its own parts and which has as its core God, who is its anchor and creator. Only the Bible really meets these conditions. It is the only possibly wholly self-sufficient text."^[9] A further problem relates to the fact that Gadamer and others assume a fixed role for tradition (individual and disciplinary/academic) in the process of any hermeneutic understanding, while it is more accurate to say that interpreters have multiple and sometimes conflicting cultural attachments, yet this does not prevent intercultural and/or interdisciplinary dialogue. Finally, she warns that, at least in social science, interpretation is not a substitute for explanation.

Heidegger (1935–1936)^{[3]:18} and Schockel (1998)^[10] respond to critics of this model of interpretation who allege it is a case of invalid reasoning by asserting that *any* form of reflection or interpretation must oscillate between particular and general, part and whole. It does not 'beg the question' because it is a different approach than formal logic. While it does imply presuppositions, it does not take any premise for granted. Schokel suggests a spiral as a better metaphor for interpretation, but admits that Schleiermacher's influence may have 'acclimatized' the term.

Notes

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5. Schön 1983:^[page needed]
6. de Man 1983: 29
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9. Shklar, Judith N. "Squaring the Hermeneutic Circle." *Social Research*. 71 (3), 2004, pg. 657–658 (Originally published Autumn 1986).
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 - *Schön, Donald Alan (1983). *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think In Action*. New York: Basic Books. ISBN 0-465-06874-X.*
 - *Wæver, Ole (1996). "The rise and fall of the inter-paradigm debate". In Steve Smith; et al. *International Theory: Positivism and Beyond*. Cambridge: Cambridge U. P.*
- (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hermeneutic_circle)

9. EXEGESIS—A Specific “Literary” Approach, with a view towards translation

9.1 A ten-step exegetical methodology

We will now consider one specific methodology that lends itself to a *LiFE* (“Literary Functional Equivalence”) approach. It is offered merely as a general suggestion as to how a text analysis might be carried out in ten steps. It will be applied to Matthew 25:31–46, a passage that is basically narrative in nature, but exhibits a number of literary, even poetic, characteristics. Obviously, various modifications could be made to the ten steps in terms of composition and order of arrangement, and perhaps several steps could be combined into one. (For a somewhat different presentation of these steps applied to the book of Obadiah, see Wendland 2004b, chap. 7; cf. Wilt & Wendland 2008:chs. 8-10). Even so, all of the critical factors mentioned would somehow need to be included within any comprehensive exegetical study.

This set of procedures is designed to prepare the ground for a subsequent *LiFE*-style translation, which would already have been anticipated as the analysis is being carried out. As we have already seen, a *LiFE*-style translation is one that aims to extract more of the vital artistic essence from a given biblical document and then articulate this “soul” of the text within a specific TL version, whether intuitively in response to one’s creative gift or in accordance with some specific compositional guidelines. One should be ready to apply what is learned during the exegetical stage to the preparation of an artistic-rhetorical translation, whether to a greater or lesser extent, in accordance with the principle of relevance and the *Brief*, in particular, its primary TL-oriented *Skopos*.

The following exercise will be carried out as a cooperative and interactive, question-driven venture. After an initial explanation of each step, the process of analysis is started according to a recommended procedure or through a series of questions for investigation. The student is required to complete a study of the discourse for that particular step, either according to the outlined procedure, or using another method that is more familiar. The object of the exercise is not simply to mechanically follow a given technique of discourse analysis but to experiment, whenever possible, with different procedures during the process of discovering a practical methodology that one is confident about applying on a regular basis. The ultimate goal is to derive from a close exegetical study the information and insights that will prove useful for translating the text at hand more accurately, appropriately, and acceptably in another language. *Now let us examine Matthew 25:31–46 in a literal English translation (RSV) and in the original language. The RSV will be given first, in an unformatted form, and the formatted Greek text next. Read the passage through several times in order to familiarize yourself with its content. Make a mental note of any aspect of discourse form or content that strikes a special chord. At least one of your readings should be aloud – of the Greek text in particular. Why is an oral articulation of this passage helpful, even necessary, for understanding it (consider its textual setting)? Which structural features are thereby highlighted?*

³¹ When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. ³² Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, ³³ and he will place the sheep at his right hand, but the goats at the left. ³⁴ Then the King will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; ³⁵ for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶ I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’ ³⁷ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see thee hungry and feed thee, or thirsty and give thee drink? ³⁸ And when did we see thee a stranger and welcome thee, or naked and clothe thee? ³⁹ And when did we see thee sick or in prison and visit thee?’ ⁴⁰ And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.’ ⁴¹ Then he will say to those at his left hand, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; ⁴² for I was hungry and you

gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’
⁴⁴ Then they also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see thee hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to thee?’ ⁴⁵ Then he will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me.’ ⁴⁶ And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.

I

- 31 Ὄταν δὲ ἔλθῃ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου
ἐν τῇ δόξῃ αὐτοῦ καὶ πάντες οἱ ἄγγελοι μετ’ αὐτοῦ,
τότε καθίσει ἐπὶ θρόνου δόξης αὐτοῦ·
32 καὶ συναχθήσονται ἔμπροσθεν αὐτοῦ πάντα τὰ ἔθνη,
καὶ ἀφορίσει αὐτοὺς ἀπ’ ἀλλήλων,
ὥσπερ ὁ ποιμὴν ἀφορίζει τὰ πρόβατα ἀπὸ τῶν ἐρίφων,
33 καὶ στήσει τὰ μὲν πρόβατα ἐκ δεξιῶν αὐτοῦ,
τὰ δὲ ἐρίφια ἐξ εὐωνύμων.
- 34 τότε ἐρεῖ ὁ βασιλεὺς τοῖς ἐκ δεξιῶν αὐτοῦ,
Δεῦτε οἱ εὐλογημένοι τοῦ πατρός μου,
κληρονομήσατε τὴν ἡτοιμασμένην ὑμῖν βασιλείαν
ἀπὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου.
- 35 ἐπείνασα γὰρ καὶ ἐδώκατέ μοι φαγεῖν,
ἐδίψησα καὶ ἐποτίσατέ με, □□
ξένος ἦμην καὶ συνηγάγετέ με,
36 γυμνὸς καὶ περιεβάλετέ με,
ἠσθένησα καὶ ἐπεσκέψασθέ με,
ἐν φυλακῇ ἦμην καὶ ἤλθατε πρὸς με.
- 37 τότε ἀποκριθήσονται αὐτῷ οἱ δίκαιοι λέγοντες,
Κύριε, πότε σε εἶδομεν πεινῶντα καὶ ἐθρέψαμεν,
ἢ διψῶντα καὶ ἐποτίσαμεν;
38 πότε δέ σε εἶδομεν ξένον καὶ συνηγάγομεν,
ἢ γυμνὸν καὶ περιεβάλομεν;
39 πότε δέ σε εἶδομεν ἀσθενοῦντα
ἢ ἐν φυλακῇ καὶ ἤλθομεν πρὸς σε;
- 40 καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ βασιλεὺς ἐρεῖ αὐτοῖς,
Ἄμην λέγω ὑμῖν,
ἐφ’ ὅσον ἐποιήσατε ἐνὶ τούτων
τῶν ἀδελφῶν μου τῶν ἐλαχίστων,
ἐμοὶ ἐποιήσατε.

II.

- 41 Τότε ἐρεῖ καὶ τοῖς ἐξ εὐωνύμων,
Πορεύεσθε ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ [οἱ] κατηραμένοι εἰς τὸ πῦρ τὸ αἰώνιον
τὸ ἡτοιμασμένον τῷ διαβόλῳ καὶ τοῖς ἀγγέλοις αὐτοῦ.
- 42 ἐπείνασα γὰρ καὶ οὐκ ἐδώκατέ μοι φαγεῖν,
ἐδίψησα καὶ οὐκ ἐποτίσατέ με,
43 ξένος ἦμην καὶ οὐ συνηγάγετέ με,
γυμνὸς καὶ οὐ περιεβάλετέ με,
ἀσθενῆς
καὶ ἐν φυλακῇ καὶ οὐκ ἐπεσκέψασθέ με.
- 44 τότε ἀποκριθήσονται καὶ αὐτοὶ λέγοντες,
Κύριε, πότε σε εἶδομεν πεινῶντα

	ἢ διψῶντα	b'
	ἢ ξένον	c'
	ἢ γυμνόν	d'
	ἢ ἀσθενῆ	e'
	ἢ ἐν φυλακῇ καὶ οὐ διηκονήσαμέν σοι;	f'
45	τότε ἀποκριθήσεται αὐτοῖς λέγων, Ἄμην λέγω ὑμῖν, ἐφ' ὅσον οὐκ ἐποιήσατε ἐνὶ τούτων τῶν ἐλαχίστων, οὐδὲ ἐμοὶ ἐποιήσατε.	E'
46	καὶ ἀπελεύσονται οὗτοι εἰς κόλασιν αἰώνιον, οἱ δὲ δίκαιοι εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον.	A'

9.1.1 Step 1: Study the cotext

Step 1 is to investigate the wider linguistic setting of the passage to be analyzed and note any points of continuation, correspondence, and/or contrast.

Before beginning a detailed study of the focal text itself, one must scrutinize its surrounding discourse cotext, both immediate and remote, in order to determine any close connections with the passage under consideration. It is also necessary to confirm the structural integrity and unity of the passage, in particular, the features that demarcate it as a discrete and self-standing compositional unit. Especially important in this respect is the cotext that occurs *prior* to the text under examination, since certain aspects of it are likely to have some influence upon the overall development of the author's current discourse.

Do you think Matthew 25:31–46 is an independent pericope and thus worthy of a section heading, or not? Cite some textual evidence in support of your conclusion.

What links this passage with the preceding pericope and what separates the two?

A discourse analysis of the major section of Matthew's Gospel covering chapters 24 – 25 reveals the following: First of all, we observe that the 25:31–46 pericope appears to form the final section of a tripartite, seven-sectioned **A-B-A'** ring composition. After an initial narrative opening, or *aperture* (in 24:1–3; see 26:1 for the next major aperture), Christ begins his paraenetic instruction concerning the end of the age by describing some of the salient signs of “those days.” His words unfold a subtle blend of key events that will occur during the prophetic times of both the messianic and also the eschatological ages (24:4–31//unit **A**).

This semi-narrative prediction suddenly breaks off at 24:32 (“So from the fig tree learn this parable”), and the discourse shifts into a parabolic mode with a series of five dramatic object lessons. One hortatory passage reinforces another in stressing the need for people to get ready for a day of decision (segments 24:32–35, 36–44, 45–51; 25:1–13, 14–30 of unit **B**).

An apparently resumptive section **A'** (25:31–46) then appears, the seventh portion of the larger discourse begun in chapter 24. This vividly climactic unit appears to continue the eschatological account where **A** left off; namely, with the Son of Man's coming from heaven in glory, accompanied by his angels and in the presence of all humanity (24:30–31; cf. 25:31–32). The contrastive judgement dialogue scene ends with the consignment of the wicked to “eternal punishment,” a theme that marks the ending of several of the preceding parables (e.g., 24:51, 25:30), a case of structural closure (*epiphora*). Thus the ambiguity of genre (i.e., is it history and/or parable? – see section 3.6.2) may be a deliberate rhetorical device intended to focus not so much on the individual details of the eschatological event but on the certainty of its occurrence and the need to prepare in advance. The text has clearly been constructed to produce a structural and rhetorical peak in this third and final section, especially with its summary

conclusion regarding the great separation between “the righteous” and the rest (25:46). Such a perspective is supported by the similar passage at the end of the first major discourse of Christ in Matthew’s Gospel, in 7:24–27 (the parable of the wise and foolish builders), which also manifests a binary structure and is ethically toned as well as thematically contrastive.

What do you think of this proposed A-B-A' structural arrangement of the larger discourse of which Matthew 25:31–46 is a part? Do you have any revisions to suggest?

Is the middle, parabolic section (B) clearly distinct?

What are the implications of this sort of literary segmentation of the biblical text for translation?

If such a textual arrangement is valid, and helpful for understanding Christ’s teaching here, how can its relevance be expressed or made apparent in a contemporary Bible translation?

Major text-critical issues should also be studied as part of the “cotext” at this initial stage of the analysis. In such an investigation one considers the principal variants or alternative readings which may apply at different points in the passage. Any special problem areas must be identified and a tentative resolution arrived at *before* the text itself is examined in detail as an integral unit of discourse. Preliminary decisions in this regard may be reviewed and revised later in light of the text-analysis procedures that follow.

With respect to the original Greek text of Matthew 25:31–46 there do not seem to be any outstanding difficulties. Metzger’s *Textual Commentary* (1994) and Omanson’s *A Textual Guide* (2006) do not list a single point of contention here. Carlton’s *Translator’s Reference Translation* (2001) notes two minor variants, but neither one has much manuscript support or is supported by the various versions.

According to Carlton (*ibid.*), a number of manuscripts have the adjective “holy” in 25:31 used as a modifier of “angels.”

How important is this addition?

How might a copyist have introduced the word “holy” here (see Luke 9:26)?

Why, in light of Matthew 16:27, is the reading without “holy” probably the correct one – that is, over and above the external manuscript evidence?

Regarding 25:41, Carlton (*ibid.*) says that a few manuscripts specify “the Father” as having prepared the fire of punishment for the devil and his angels.

What might have caused this addition (see v. 34)?

If “the Father” is left out of your translation, is it clear to most readers who prepared the fire?

Many might conclude that the speaker, Christ, is the agent. This ambiguity thus turns out to be a major translational issue rather than a minor textual one. How would you deal with it in YL?

9.1.2 Step 2: Specify the literary genre

Step 2 is to identify the principal text type and subtypes along with their associated stylistic features and functional implications.

A prior read-through of the pericope or book designated for analysis should give one an indication of the text’s primary genre (discourse type), plus any minor genres incorporated within it. This involves specifying the major communicative purpose for which the text was prepared in light of a given sociocultural setting or interpersonal situation. It also involves identifying any typical literary features that mark this kind of composition. The text type may be the same as, similar to, or different from what precedes or follows it in the surrounding discourse.

The genre may be compound or mixed – that is, composed either sequentially or simultaneously of two or more distinct literary categories, some of which may be clearly secondary in importance. Each distinct (sub)genre will normally manifest a distinctive style and function, with the primary genre often modifying the communicative aim of any secondary ones included within it.

We see an example of this sort of combination at the beginning of Paul’s letter to the Galatians.

What is the function of Paul’s personal narrative testimony in Galatians 1:11 – 2:14?

Does this section end at 2:14 or is there another possible terminus? Explain your conclusion.

This step in the analysis includes an identification of all the individual compositional features and stylistic devices that serve both to constitute and also to distinguish, or mark, the primary genre and its subtypes. Any credible analysis of the structure and rhetoric of a given literary work must begin with the notion of genre, for the conventions of a given genre are normally reflected both in the macro- and microstylistic features of the text, whether oral or written. The genre of Matthew as a whole may be specified most generally as a *biographical narrative*.

How would you define the term “narrative”? Compare your definition with one from a dictionary or handbook on literature.

What are the primary characteristics of a narrative discourse?

In the case of Matthew, why is it necessary to qualify the designation of narrative with biographical – what does this suggest about the story that is being told?

Why is it important to keep this qualification in mind as we read this (or any) of the Gospels?

Matthew’s narrative is also dramatic in nature – that is, it features an internal plot that guides the selection and presentation of characters and events. A plot normally moves gradually towards some major peak in the depiction of the life of the chief character(s), followed by a much shorter resolution.

Where does the major peak of Matthew’s narrative occur? Why do you say so?

How does this compare with the plots of the other Gospels?

Many analysts prefer to specify the discourse type of a work like Matthew even more precisely in an effort to better account for its structure, content selection, and style. For example, some would say that Matthew also exhibits the characteristics of an *apology*, that is, a formal defense of the person of Christ and/or the Christian religion. Evaluate this opinion with an argument either for or against it.

Several questions confront us as we attempt to further specify the nature of the Matthew 25:31–46 pericope. Is it presented as a historical or a parable text? Some scholars classify the discourse as *prophetic history* – that is, as nonfiction that incorporates certain apocalyptic features within an eschatological temporal setting (cf. Dan. 7:13–14). Others point to the prominent comparative element that is introduced with the metaphor of the sheep and goats in verse 32, the imagery of which then implicitly colors the remainder of the text. These scholars view this pericope as a parable that appears to function as a climax – the significant seventh occurrence! – in the sequence of Christ’s “parables of separation,” all of which (7:24–27; 13:24–30 [explained in 36–43]; 13:47–50; 24:45–51; 25:1–13; 25:14–30; 25:31–46) are oriented towards the final judgement.

How would you label the Matthew 25:31–46 passage – as factual prophetic history or as an illustrative parable?

Would your classification make any difference in how you eventually translate this text in YL?

For example, does a parable in your oral or written tradition present any formal markers (e.g., introductory or concluding formulae, special tense-aspect markers, or distinctive particles of participant reference) to indicate that it is a non-historical discourse?

What difference does it make to one’s understanding of this pericope whether it is construed as historical or fictional?

If the text is not marked with regard to genre in your translation, how will the audience be likely to interpret it?

Is an explanatory note needed to clarify this issue? If so, how would you word it?

9.1.3 Step 3: Find the points of major disjunction

Step 3 is to note all “break points” in the text, that is, places where one or more prominent shifts in form or content occur.

Breaks, or points of disjunction (major) and transition (minor), are created within a literary text whenever there is a notable change or content modification with respect to time, place, topic, personal participants, central participant, speaker, addressee, text type (genre), and/or sequence of events. Where several of these indicators of shifting co-occur, such as a variation in place and time or speaker and subject, the break is more prominent, hence better substantiated. Normally a new paragraph begins at that point—or a new section, if the disjunction is greater in terms of the number of breaks manifested. Thus, an adjacent pair of disjunctions create between them a “chunk” of text, that is, a conceptual or thematic unit consisting of a variable number of sentences that manifest a perceptible, memorable coherence based on time, place, topic, discourse type, and/or communicative purpose. Other, supporting signals of disjunction within a literary text are the formal markers of a new topic or a digression (e.g., NP-fronting, nominalization, use of an independent pronoun), characteristic discourse formulae and transitional expressions (e.g., conjunctions or phrases of aperture like “And it came to pass,” “In that day,” “Thus says the LORD,” and “After this,” or of closure like “oracle of Yahweh,” “Selah,” and “Amen”),¹ and concluding summary statements that typically signal the end of a complete unit of discourse (e.g., “Then they will know that I am the LORD” and “And [X] his son succeeded him as king” and “To him be the glory forever!”).

Where would you posit break points (new paragraph units) in connection with the Matthew 25:31-46 pericope?

Finding the breaks is not very difficult to figure out for this text, but the exercise will help you practice this aspect of discourse analysis in preparation for more difficult passages.

List the verses at which you would begin a new paragraph as well as the shift(s) that occur at that point, along with any supporting text-break markers. Write your choices in the blank spaces of the diagram that follows. (More lines are provided than you will need.) The first and last segments, which are the outer boundaries of this pericope, have been done for you.

verse number	type of shift(s) that occur as the preceding verse moves to this one
25:31	new central participant explicitly identified – “the Son of Man”; shift from parable to prophecy; a different setting and dramatic situation is established.

¹These are not completely predictable markers. For example, note the position of “amen” in Rev. 7:12 and what the twofold mention of “amen” serves to mark.

26:1	shift from direct speech to narrative report; introductory transitional margin (“When Jesus had finished”); a change in the topic to be developed in subsequent verses.

9.1.4 Step 4: Plot the patterns of formal and conceptual repetition

Step 4 is to record and posit the significance of any obvious patterns of linguistic reiteration within the discourse: phonological, lexical, syntactic, and textual.

Repetition may be exact (*replication*) or synonymous to varying degrees (*recursion*). The device occurs in oral as well as written discourse and may be of many different formal and semantic types, extending for textual spans that may be long or relatively short within a given composition. Recursion includes contrasts as well as similarities and may be manifested in parallel expressions as well as by intertwined and overlapping instances. Repetition is normally the most prominent, hence obvious, characteristic of any literary discourse. The more repetition that occurs and the more exact it is in nature, the more poetic a text is regarded.

Why is exact repetition especially important for those who are aurally apprehending a text, and what are the implications of this for Bible translation at large and translation technique in particular?

The individual instances of repetition will often create larger, sometimes overlapping patterns of formal structure and thematic significance within a passage. These may link up with the surrounding context on either side of the pericope under study. Such replication or recursion thus physically organizes and demarcates a text, both externally, on the boundaries of structural units, as well as internally by creating varied patterns of formal cohesion, including variable spans of participant reference. All this contributes to the text's distinct thematic meaning and communicative purpose, certain areas or aspects of which may also be foregrounded by reiteration as a marker of *prominence*.² By coordinating the key repetition patterns of a text with its major shifts in form and/or content (step 3) the analyst is able to make a preliminary proposal of the principal paragraph-level or strophe-level breaks within the discourse at large.

The main contours of the recursive patterns of the Matthew 25:31–46 pericope are shown in the diagram of the Greek text that was displayed at the beginning of section 3.6. There are two larger “panels” of constituent structure, I and II, each of which consists of five sub-units (A, B, C, D, and E). As it turns out, each of the internal elements of II (B'–E') contrasts with and serves as an effective counterfoil to those of the initial and corresponding unit I (B–E).

Can you discern this arrangement of the text in the SL text?

If not, refer to an interlinear version and make a copy of this display, including the letters that indicate the text's structural organization, using an English translation.

The parallelism of panels I and II serves to reinforce both the dual and also the polar nature of the heavenly trial scene: Only two clearly defined groups are in the dock, and these are strongly antithetical in terms of character and hence also of the judgement that each group receives. (Notice that the only negatives of this passage, eight of them, occur in panel II.) One group, the one “on the right,” is publicly vindicated and lauded by the Lord; the other “on the left” is just as incisively repudiated and condemned.

Is this great division, or contrast, clear to you in the structure of the text?

Does the special format reveal this more clearly?

Would such an arrangement be too difficult or complicated for your typical TL audience to interpret? If so, can you propose any modifications that would simplify the format, but still highlight the text's contrastive nature?

The repeated subsections of this larger structure (a–f and a'–f') may have further suggested to the original audience the absolute certainty of the Lord's judicial process as well as the legal precision whereby it is conducted. In addition, this carefully organized structure possibly may have been composed as an *isomorphic*, aural reflection that depicts the perfectly measured justice of the verdict and the corresponding righteousness of the Judge – as well as the great moral divide that now distinguishes, and will ultimately separate forever, two fundamentally antithetical ways of life (see Psalm 1).

Will the associations listed above be apparent to people of your cultural and literary setting when they read this passage? Explain why, or why not.

In a tightly constructed pattern of similarities such as we see in Matthew 25:31–46, one must also consider any prominent variations or differences in terms of their possible rhetorical implications.

Consider and comment on the following disparities and their possible semantic implications:

1. Note the obvious condensation that appears in the response to the king from the defendants on his left (compare panels D' and D above). It is tempting to view this as a verbal reflection of the

²Anne Garber Kompaore points out that in directive discourse “the most thematic referent will have the highest frequency of pronominal references. The least thematic referent is the least likely to have any pronominal references” (2005:8; see also Kompaore 2004). On the importance to Bible translators of analyzing the patterns of participant reference in Hebrew discourse, see de Regt, 1999. Such a more detailed linguistic study could be profitably carried out during step 6 of our set of analysis procedures.

very lack of concern for the disadvantaged and needy that such people had just been found guilty of.

2. The Son of Man is referred to as speaking to “the righteous” in his judicial capacity as “king” in verses 34 and 40 (i.e., an inclusio within panel I), whereas he is not referred to in this way in the corresponding verses 41 and 45. This suggests that the unrighteous did not recognize or respect the Son’s royal authority and thus treated the lesser of his subjects accordingly.
3. The Lord, on the other hand, honors the righteous by calling them “my brothers” (v. 40); significantly the unrighteous are not so addressed in the parallel passage (v. 45). The notion of brotherhood certainly distinguishes the ethical attitude and actions of those mentioned in panel I, in sharp contrast to their counterparts in II, who could not even perceive a brother, let alone respond to the obvious needs of one (cf. Matt. 7:12).
4. It is obvious that segment A' of panel II is located out of its expected place. What might be the reason for this shift of position in terms of the larger narrative structure?

Which of the preceding observations do you think is the most significant for understanding this text?

Would it be helpful to point out any of these interpretive possibilities in marginal notes for this passage? Explain why or why not in relation to your own current or proposed Bible translation setting.

9.1.5 Step 5: Discover and evaluate the artistic and rhetorical features

Step 5 is to identify the chief artistic devices and rhetorical techniques within the whole text, especially at points of special concentration, and then to determine their local or global textual significance.

As steps 3 – 4 demonstrated, the internal break points and major recursive patterns reveal formal linguistic structures of different sizes in a literary text. Any biblical pericope will also manifest various kinds of poetic or prosaic stylistic technique. This compositional feature makes an added contribution to the pericope’s wider esthetic appeal and rhetorical impact, both on the local and global level of functional significance. A great diversity of Hebrew and Greek literary devices may be included here: figures of speech (*tropes*), comparative or contrastive elements of imagery, ellipsis and other types of condensation, word plays (paronomasia), alliteration and assonance, rhythm and rhyme, artful redundancy and conceptual expansion, syntactic relocation front or back, rhetorical and deliberative questions, irony and sarcasm, humor, paradox, enigma, and a balanced or patterned strophic/paragraph structure.

Such stylistic techniques are generally introduced for the purpose of polishing and persuasion, that is, with respect to a text’s form (artistry) and function (rhetoric). Therefore, these features need to be examined in relation to the salient patterns of repetition and the shifts in content previously noted as a way of indicating more overtly where structural boundaries and areas of focal, or foregrounded, meaning appear within the discourse (e.g., the emotive *climax*, thematic *peak*, *end-stress*, or *closure*). One’s initial conclusions in this regard are often supported or confirmed at places where these devices appear to be especially concentrated through *reiteration*, *juxtaposition*, or *incorporation*.

Comment on the special meaning and function (including any possible positional significance) of each of the following literary features that occur in Matthew 25:31–46. Refer to the UBS *Translator’s Handbook for Matthew* and/or some other reliable exegetical commentary or study Bible for additional assistance. For each literary feature, also identify a possible equivalent in YL. The first one has been done for you as an example of what to do here. Feel free to comment on any other rhetorical feature that you happen to notice in this text as you carry out the analysis.

Literary feature + verse no.	Identification of the feature	Function within the discourse
"in his glory," "throne of his glory" (v. 31)	repetition of the key term "glory" together with the reference to "his"	highlights the magnificent nature of this judgement scene and of its central character – the Son of Man – at the very beginning of the pericope
"as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats" (v. 32)		
"on his right...on (the) left" (v. 33)		
"inherit...(the) kingdom" (v. 34)		
"from (the) foundation of (the) world" (v. 34)		
"naked" (v. 36)		
"you came to me" (v. 36)		
"the righteous" (v. 37)		

<p>“when...and when...and when” (vv. 37–39)</p>		
<p>“truly I tell you” (v. 40)</p>		
<p>“one of my brothers, the (very) least” (v. 40)</p>		
<p>“from me” (v. 41)</p>		
<p>“the cursed (ones)” (v. 41)</p>		
<p>“also they” (v. 44)</p>		
<p>“neither to/for me you did (it)” (v. 45)</p>		
<p>“into eternal punishment...into eternal life” (v. 46)</p>		

9.1.6 Step 6: Do a complete discourse analysis

Step 6 is to prepare a detailed linguistic study of all verses within the pericope and propose an inclusive *topical-thematic summary*.

The preceding investigations of genre, textual demarcation, recursion, and the artistic and rhetorical features prepare the ground for a more systematic analysis of the chief linguistic properties of the passage at hand. Step 6 usually reveals some additional aspects of the passage's literary character as well. Such a study of the discourse as a whole may be carried out in different degrees of detail, ranging from a simple overview of the main clause constituents (S, V, O, etc.) as they occur in sequential combination to a full syntactic structural breakdown (kernel, colon) of the entire text.

The aim of such an analysis is to determine what the specific *grammatical constructions* (morphological and syntactic) chosen by the author to convey his content contribute to the expression of the text's overall meaning and function. The analyst considers, for example, the order of syntactic constituents within a clause, tracing the sequential reference to key participants in the text, the relationship of dependent clauses to each other and to independent clauses within sentence units (foreground-background), complexes of possessive constructions, sequences of prepositional phrases, juxtapositions of event nouns, and use of the passive voice, of nonfinite verbal forms (participles, infinitives), and of tense-sequence patterns. The analyst also seeks to discern what is distinctive (*marked* or non-normal usage) within the microstructure of any passage and what is the implied literary significance of this.

Two methods of analysis will be illustrated in the rest of this section. The first involves a simple literal charting of clause units as they occur in the progression of the discourse. In order to do such an analysis you will need to refer to the Greek text or an interlinear version, which often reveals patterns and parallels that are not apparent in any translation, whether literal or idiomatic. The following, for example, is a display of the lexical constituents of Matthew 25:31–34 (Note that English words used to render one Greek word are connected by hyphens). Complete the chart for verses 35–40. When finished, compare your chart with those of other members of the class as a joint discussion exercise.

Ref.	LINK	Pre-Verb 1 (2)	VERBAL	Post-verb 1 (3)	Post-verb 2 (4)*
31a	Now when		he-comes	the Son of Man	in the glory his
31b	then		he-will sit	and all the angels on (the)-throne	with him, of-glory his;
32a	and		they-will-be- assembled	before him	
32b	and		he-will-separate	them	all the nations, from-one another
32c	just-as	the shepherd	he-separates	the sheep	from the goats,
33a	and		he-will-set	the sheep	on (the)-right-his,
33b	but		-----	the goats	on (the)-left.
34a	Then		he-will-say	the king on (the)-right-his:	to the-(ones)
34b			"Come	the blessed-ones	of Father my,
34c			inherit	the prepared for-you From (the)- foundation	kingdom Of-(the)-world."
35a					
35b					
35c					
35d					

35e

35f

36a

36b

36c

36d

36e

36f

37a

37b

37c

37d

37e

38a

38b

38c

38d

39a

39b

40a

40b

40c

40d

* The numbers in parentheses simply indicate additional syntactic constituents that may be filled sequentially in either “pre-verb” or “post-verb” position. Obviously, the more distinct fillers there are, the more marked the clause is at that point. The term “verbal” includes finite verbs as well as predicative non-finite forms, such as participles, infinitives, and gerunds used verbally within a clause.

What can such a linguistic charting tell us about the text before us? Any noun, full pronoun, or noun phrase that occurs before the main verb (or an object/comment before a subject/topic in a non-finite or verbless clause) is potentially significant and normally marks something of interest or importance within the discourse (see also step 5).

Does that hold true on the chart above, for example at verse 32c? Discuss any other examples of this nature that you find.

Who are the chief participants of this discourse? Do you notice anything special about how any one of them is referred to in the text?

Does a single participant stand out as the main character of the account? If so, how is this person and discourse role marked linguistically?

Anything unusual – that is, anything falling outside a normal (*unmarked*) NT Greek pattern – should be examined for its possibly special semantic significance within the text, e.g., ellipsis, expansion of information within a phrase, or repetition. (The same heuristic principle applies when a Hebrew text is being charted.)

Do you notice any instances of these marked phenomena in your chart?

Consider the various transitional expressions that appear, including any non-default conjunctions: What can these tell you about the construction of the discourse? (An example is *τότε* ‘then’ at v. 34a.)

A chart like the one above can also be used to more systematically reveal the repetition of key words and semantic fields that form the basis for the theme or sub-theme that synthesizes the semantic essence of a particular paragraph (or larger) unit within the discourse. The salient elements in any thematic statement derived from such a study may also be highlighted by the various marked linguistic structures and literary devices that have already been mentioned (e.g., fronting of subject or object). These thematic summaries, which may be condensed further as section headings within the biblical text, are usually generated intuitively after a careful analysis of the discourse, but scholars are currently developing more explicit principles and procedures for elucidating the nature of “theme” (and “rheme”) as well as theme-shifting in literary texts.³

Which prominent notions appear already in the small text portion charted above? Study the entire pericope of Matthew 25:31–46 and identify the three or four most important thematic ideas, based on conceptual recursion and stylistic marking.

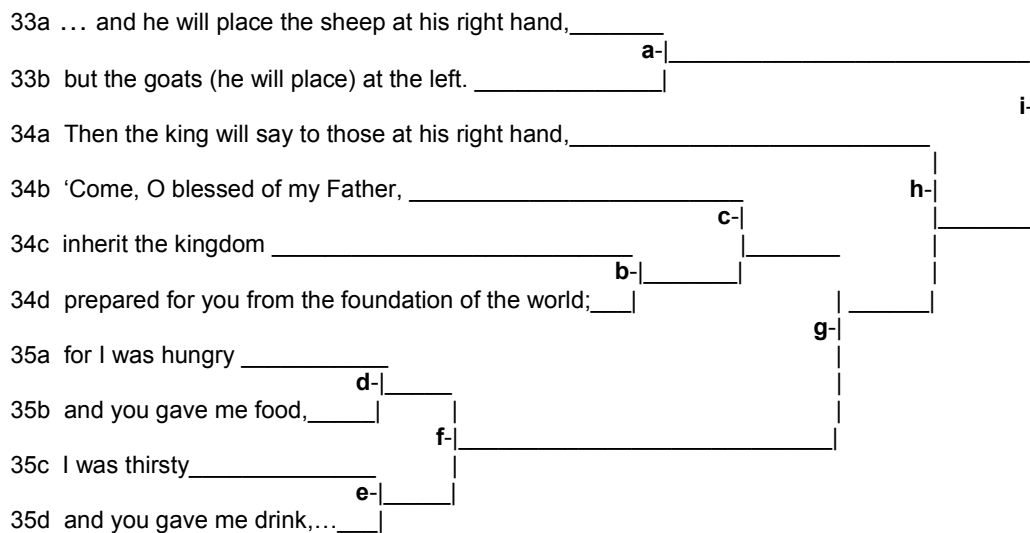
Next, compose a thematic summary for this portion of the book. Then condense your summary into an appropriate set of section headings for the unit. (You may decide that only one section heading is needed.) Compare your proposal to those of other Bibles and record any major differences.

If you have time, complete a constituent charting of the remainder of the pericope – that is, through verse 46 – and comment on any item in your chart that is noteworthy. (This type of systematic study provides a framework within which to integrate the results of steps 1 – 5.)

The second method of discourse analysis is a more detailed type of *syntactic-semantic* study. It is illustrated below with reference to Matthew 25:33–35b. This kind of analysis is useful in certain cases, as when dealing with a particularly difficult passage (which the following is not).

³ See, for example, Floor 2004, which may be accessed in a pdf file on the website of the Centre for Bible Interpretation and Translation in Africa (<http://academic.sun.ac.za/as/cbta/>). Floor (2004:v) defines the notion of **theme** as the “developing and coherent core or thread of a discourse in the mind of the speaker-author and hearer-reader, functioning as the prominent macrostructure of the discourse. The information structure, with its topics and focus structures and its strategies, can be used as a tool to identify and analyse themes. These categories and strategies together are called theme traces when they occur in marked syntactic constructions or in other prominence configurations like relexicalisation, end-weight, and repetition of macrowords. Theme traces are defined with the following wording: A theme trace is a clue in the surface form of a discourse, viewed from the perspective of information structure, which points to the cognitive macrostructure or theme of a text. This clue is in the form of (1) a marked syntactical configuration, be it marked word-order or marked in the sense of explicit and seemingly ‘redundant’, all signaling some thematic sequencing strategy, or (2) some recurring concept(s) signaling some prominence and coherence.”

For another important collection of literary-oriented cognitive linguistic studies of theme see Louwse and van Peer 2002.



The various semantic relationships between clause units may be specified as follows (the *base* is the clause that occurs first in a symmetrical pairing, or is the principal clause of an asymmetrical pair; 33a is of course connected to the last clause of v. 32, and 35d to the next clause in v. 35):

- | | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| a = base-contrast | b = base-attribution | c = base-addition |
| d = circumstance-base | e = circumstance-base | f = base-addition |
| g = command-reason | h = base-content | i = base-sequential time |

This diagramming technique in effect forces the analyst to examine the text more carefully in terms of its sequence of meaningful relationships.⁴ In all probability, there will be differences of opinion as to how to classify the various paired relationships; for example, are *d* and *e* better viewed as “circumstance-base” or as “base-sequential time”? There will also be differences of opinion as to how to link them up in a hierarchical structure that incorporates the entire passage under consideration. The aim is not to seek the single “correct” answer in each and every case, but simply to become more aware of the possibilities for interpreting the text and the different types of evidence that supports one option over against another. It is especially important to observe the higher-level (rightmost) connections since these provide overall sense and coherence to the section as a whole and consequently need to be clearly reflected in any translation (e.g., at *g* where two major text constituents are joined by the relation of command-reason).

⁴ For further explanation of this method, see Wendland 2002, sections 3.3–3.4. Levinsohn (2006b) recommends a more pragmatic approach to the interpretation of Greek (presumably also Hebrew) conjunctions. Thus the connective $\gamma\alpha\rho$ at the beginning of v. 35 serves “to signal that what follows strengthens a preceding assertion” and does not necessarily indicate the semantic relations of explanation, grounds, or reason. If no marking of such a relationship of reinforcement is included in a translation (e.g., by omitting any conjunction as in the CEV), the original inferential connection between the discourse constituents (in this case, v. 34 and vv. 35ff.) is weakened or even lost. Similarly, the conjunction $\delta\grave{\epsilon}$ signals “that what follows marks progression (development)” in the discourse; $\kappa\alpha\iota$ signals “that what follows is to be associated with what precedes, without specifying how”; and $\omicron\upsilon\tilde{\nu}$ signals “that what follows is a resumption (in most instances) and advancement of the same theme line as before” (Levinsohn 2006b:18). Clearly, further research is needed in this area so that the primary implications inherent in these conjunctions can be reproduced in translation, whether by corresponding conjunctions (if available) or some other device, e.g., tail-head repetition, word-order variations, deictic particles, etc.

Evaluate the semantic relationships shown above and suggest any modifications or corrections that you feel are needed.

How would you mark the structural relationship indicated at point g so that it is clearly evident in YL?

Why is this transition of special importance in the discourse?

Now try to make your own diagram of the logical links between constituent clauses in verses 44–46. Discuss your individual results in class.

An even more detailed *semantic structure display* can be prepared after or in place of the preceding text analysis. This sort of display is similar to the syntactic-semantic diagram illustrated above but goes further in that it attempts to make all implicit information explicit, including the hierarchically arranged logical connections that relate individual *propositions* on different levels of compositional organization.⁵ But for most purposes in the normal translation setting, such precision will not be necessary: a simple topical outline will suffice. This should be formulated in any case after the linguistic analysis of step 6 in order to prepare any section headings that will be needed. Consider, for example, the following outline for the pericope of Matthew 25:31–46:

Drama of the Last Judgement

- a. Introduction: The Son of Man enacts his judgement:
“the sheep” are separated from “the goats” (31–33)
- b. The king invites and commends “those on his right” (34–36)
- c. ‘The righteous’ query their commendation and the king responds (37–40)
- d. The king condemns and accuses “those on his left” (41–43)
- e. The left query their condemnation and the king responds (44–45)
- f. Conclusion: the king’s judgement is carried out (46)

How well does the above outline express what you feel are the essential theme and sub-themes of Matthew 25:31–46?

Based on your own linguistic and literary analysis of the text, do you wish to propose any changes to this outline, whether to remove a certain heading, re-word one, or add another?

What do you begin to notice about the larger organization of Matthew 25:31–46? Point out any salient correspondences or contrasts of thematic significance.

Compare this outline with the section heading(s) that you proposed earlier. Do any modifications seem necessary in light of the additional discourse analysis that you have carried out? If so, explain where and why.

9.1.7 Step 7: Investigate the referential framework

Step 7 is to study all key concepts, technical terms, images, and symbols along with their interrelationships in light of the text’s ancient Near Eastern sociocultural and religious setting.

Having examined the basic lexical, syntactic, and semantic shape of the discourse during the previous steps, in this seventh step we focus upon the distinctive content of the pericope and its main individual constituents, that is, the principal lexical clusters, key thematic and associated concepts (whether

⁵ SIL International has published a number of helpful New Testament analyses of this nature, a recent example being *A Semantic and Structural Analysis of James* by George and Helen Hart (2001).

literally or figuratively expressed), any cultural symbols, plus all prominent semantic fields, or *mental spaces*, that the text evokes or alludes to (see Stockwell 2002, chap. 7). In short, the analyst must carefully think through the entire passage and all that it either presupposes or implies, especially in light of its ancient Near Eastern background.

We may distinguish here between *key concepts* and *technical terms*. Key concepts (e.g., “law,” “righteousness,” “grace,” “evil”) tend to be more abstract and thus may allow for a variable translation, in keeping with the context and lexical collocation. Technical terms (e.g., “sacrifice,” “tabernacle,” “angel,” “synagogue,” “centurion,” “wine”) are more specific or concrete and are normally rendered the same way throughout the Bible. Most of the important items of vocabulary in Matthew 25:31–46 are technical terms, but two key concepts appear in the first and last verses of this pericope: ‘glory’ (δόξα) in verse 31 and ‘eternal’ (αἰώνιον) in verse 46.

How would you translate ‘glory’ and ‘eternal’ in the Matthew 25 passage?

Can you think of other contexts in which you would use different terms (e.g., in 2 Cor. 3:7 where ‘glory’ has reference to the face of Moses and in Rom. 16:26 where ‘eternal’ has reference to God rather than to eternal life and eternal punishment as it does in Matt. 25:41)?

But before one can come to grips with the wider referential world of the discourse, it is necessary to do an adequate background study of its situational context. This refers to the entire nonverbal *extralinguistic* setting in which the biblical document as a whole was authored, transmitted, received, and responded to (i.e., the political, economic, educational, artistic, sociocultural, philosophical, religious, and ecological milieu). How might the contemporary communication environment have influenced what was written (or not written), and how might it have affected the manner of writing?

At times it is possible to posit a particular setting of communication for a distinct pericope within a given book. Is that true for Matthew 25:31–46? Explain why or why not. The hypothetical situational context for this passage will be considered as we do our analysis of its crucial terms and concepts.

There is one important theological expression at the very beginning of this pericope.

What is this expression? To whom does this title refer?

What special significance is attached to this title in the Old and New Testaments?

Do a word study of this expression, using your study Bible, Translator’s Handbook, Bible dictionary, and/or lexicon. Determine how it is to be understood here in Matthew 25:31.

Compare it to the following passages: Ezekiel 2:1; Daniel 7:13, 8:17; Mark 8:29–31; Revelation 1:13.

By linking “the Son of Man” with “all the angels,” “sitting on the throne of his glory,” and “all the nations” (vv. 31–32a), Matthew evokes a certain *scenario* in the minds of the original audience. He has set a great stage (in literary narrative terms) for the twofold action that follows: first the “gathering,” then the “separating.” Who is doing the judging here (cf. Isa. 4:2) – what would have been the normal Jewish expectation? In this case, the royal Judge is earlier identified as the one who is speaking these words. And who is that?

Is the same judgement scene conceptually apparent to the consumers of your translation today?

Does it make any difference? If so, what can be done either within the text or alongside the text to help people to visualize, understand, and appreciate the momentous event that is taking place here, as recorded by Matthew?

The magnificent royal throne-room scene shifts for a moment to a rural pastoral setting with the reference in verse 32 to a shepherd separating the sheep from the goats.

In literal terms with reference to an ancient Palestinian setting what practice is being carried out here?

How does this apply figuratively to the future situation that the Son refers to?

What symbolic associations were connected with sheep and goats by people living in the time of Christ? What connotations do these animals have in your social setting and oral or literary tradition?

What is the significance of “the right” and “the left” sides in ancient Near-Eastern culture? How does this compare with the meaning of “the right” and “the left” in your culture?

At verse 34 a seemingly new participant enters the text; namely, the king. To whom does this refer and how do you know?

What does kingly imagery evoke in the minds of people who live in your sociocultural setting?

How can you make this reference to the *antecedent* “Son of Man” clear for your readers and hearers? What would a literal rendering of this messianic title mean to average non-Christians?⁶

Where does the conceptual metaphor RULING IS SHEPHERDING (see section 2.1) originate in the Bible? Cite several key passages in this regard.

In the New Testament, Christ shifts the notion of RULING IS SHEPHERDING to LEADING (or CARING FOR) IS SHEPHERDING.

What’s the difference? Cite several key passages to this effect.

Do such concepts transfer well to your language and culture? If not, do you need to qualify them within the translated text or paratextually? Explain.

What would the collocation of the three phrases “blessed of my father,” “inherit...the kingdom,” and “from the creation of the world” suggest to Christ’s original audience?

Is this different from what it suggests to people who hear this promise today in YL? In other words, which people, at the time of Christ, considered themselves to be the “blessed”?

Why would perhaps even the disciples be shocked by Christ’s announcement? (Recall who are gathered there before the throne in v. 32a.)

Note the sorts of activities and individuals mentioned in verses 35–36.

How are corresponding persons and deeds viewed within the context of your culture?

To whom does Christ refer when he says “one of the least of these brothers of mine”? Why are such people singled out?

With whom are they being contrasted in general ancient Near-Eastern society?

Who then are “the righteous” of verse 37? What characteristics are associated with righteous people in your society?

Who are the “cursed” of verse 41?

What image does Christ conjure up for his audience when he says “eternal fire”?

Who “curses” people in your culture? Is it some evil person, such as a hateful individual or even a sorcerer?

⁶ In Chichewa the literal expression “Son of Man” (*mwana wa munthu*) refers either to the child of an African or, idiomatically, to some extraordinary fellow, a man who has just performed a strange or extraordinary feat (cf. *mwana wa mkazi* “child of a woman”).

Does a curse normally result in death or injury (according to popular belief)? In other words, could this passage be misunderstood in YL? If so, what kind of an explanatory footnote would clarify the intended meaning?

What would Christ’s listeners think about the devil and his angels? Would they tend to fear them or not, and why?

How would their feelings and attitudes compare with those of people today in your religious setting?

What contrasting images did the phrases “eternal punishment” and “eternal life” in verse 46 evoke for the members of Christ’s audience or readers of Matthew’s Gospel?

How might this differ for the readers of your translation?

Do non-Christians know or use such expressions? If so, what do they mean by them?

9.1.8 Step 8: Connect the cross-textual correspondences

Step 8 is to look for prominent intra- and intertextual references and allusions that are embedded within the discourse, whether explicit or implicit.

From a literary as well as a thematic perspective, it is important to record all significant, topically related concepts and propositions that derive from either previously mentioned material within the same composition (*intratextual*) or from other texts (*intertextual*) that were likely to have been known to the original audience. The apparent purpose for such citations, paraphrases, allusions, and echoes (moving down from the most to the least noticeable within the text) then need to be ascertained. That is, were they used for reinforcement, validation, foregrounding, contrast, or further *logical-rhetorical development*? The same goes for any important cultural or religious symbols that may be discerned within the text, whether explicitly mentioned or only alluded to (cf. step 7).

Assuming that these different types of culturally based meaning were recognized by the original readers and hearers of the text at hand, the question arises, How can such semantic relevance be made apparent to our target audience today?

Are standard cross-references effective for most people?

Would there be a more helpful way of pointing out significant intra- and intertextual references? Explain.

Look up the Scripture passages listed below and make a note of what sort of information has been alluded to “behind” the text of Matthew 25:31–46. Suggest what might be the rhetorical function of this rather heavy intra- or intertextual conceptual linkage. In other words, what special aspect of denotation or connotation is being appealed to and applied within the cognitive framework of Matthew’s judgement scene in this passage? The first two references have been complete as examples of how to proceed in digging beneath the surface of the discourse for elements of additional implicit meaning.

verse	cross-reference	corresponding element(s)	their significance within Matthew 25:31–46
31	Daniel 7:13–14; Zechariah 14:5	“Son of Man”	Matthew’s text (including v. 32) clearly alludes to Daniel’s Messianic vision, thus forging a crucial identity of reference involving “the Christ” – past and present.

31	Matthew 19:28	“on his (my) glorious throne”	Matthew 19:28 says that Christ’s followers (those who have left all for him) will also participate with him in judging the nations.
31	Matthew 13:37–43; 16:27; 24:31	“the (his) angels”	
32	Ezekiel 34:17; Micah 4:3; Malachi 3:18	???	
34	Matthew 18:23; 22:2; 27:11, 29, 37	“the king”	
34	Matthew 5:3–11; 23:38; 24:46	“blessed”	
34	Matthew 19:29	“inherit”	
34	Matthew 13:35	“the creation of the world”	

35–36	Isaiah 58:7	???	
40	Matthew 12:48–50; 23:8	“brothers”	
41	Isaiah 66:24; Matthew 5:22, 18:8	???	
46	Matthew 1:19; 5:6, 10, 20; 6:1; 13:43; 23:28	“the righteous”	
46	Matthew 7:14; 18:8; 19:16; Daniel 12:2	“eternal life” + ???	

Note that some of these expressions are exactly the same in two or more passages:

What is the standard translation procedure that applies if the sense is the same in these places?

What if the sense is significantly different (e.g., “blessed” in Matt. 21:9 and 23:39)?

What can we do with those allusions that are clearly recognizable (by a biblically literate reader), but where the wording is not exactly the same?

9.1.9 Step 9: Determine the functional and emotive dynamics

Step 9 is to ascertain the main communicative functions and primary speech acts of the text, along with their associated emotive and connotative elements.

This is another way of examining the biblical text as a whole: It zeroes in on its individual and conjoined pragmatic (interpersonal) properties, again with the possibility of applying different degrees of specificity and shading. It builds upon the genre study of step 2 as well as our investigation of the text's rhetorical devices in step 5 and also benefits from the knowledge gained when carrying out the manifold discourse analysis of step 6. First, in step 9, the main communicative functions of the discourse are determined (e.g., informative, expressive, imperative, relational, esthetic, and ritual), and then the more specific *speech acts* as they occur in sequence, either in a monologue sequence or a dialogue exchange (e.g., speech acts that encourage, comfort, rebuke, condemn, appeal, certify, authorize, and inform). In addition, any strong connotative elements (i.e., emotional and attitudinal overtones) that are expressed during the act of "speaking" need to be taken note of, for these non-semantic elements also need to be represented, *if possible*, in a *LiFE*-like translation.

Study the verses listed below and identify the principal speech act that is represented in each, as well as any strongly felt emotions or attitudes which the speakers seem to be expressing along with their words. Certainly in any oral presentation of this pericope (and any other one composed primarily of direct discourse) vocal qualities would have to be represented as an integral part of the text. In some languages certain non-semantic lexical features must also be included in order to properly reproduce these personal, attitudinal aspects of human speech (e.g., exclamations or interjections, honorific or pejorative terms, and deictic particles), without which the text would sound very flat and unnatural. The first example has been completed as an illustration of the analytic method desired.

verse	primary speech act	accompanying attitude(s) and emotion(s)
25:34	invitation	sincerity, delight, enthusiasm
25:35		
25:37		
25:40		
25:41		
25:43		
25:44		

25:45		
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No matter how the text of Matthew 25:31–46 is classified in terms of genre, it is clear that the point of the end times discourse is not primarily *informative* – to reveal and explain the earth-shaking events that will transpire at the end of time. Rather, it is *imperative* – intended through Christ’s visionary account to motivate here-and-now ethical behavior. Thus what we have is not simply a descriptive narrative intended to instruct the audience; instead, it is a vivid pastoral appeal calculated to encourage attitudes and actions that befit “the righteous” who enter into eternal life (25:46). This identification of the central communicative purpose leads us to a consideration of certain prominent rhetorical features that help set the scene and animate the Lord’s graphic portrayal of his post-*parousia* judgement activity.

By virtue of the naturally prominent narrative device of *end stress*, the burden of this private instruction to his disciples would seem to be Christ’s dramatic exhortation to put their professed faith into practice as a life-long habit of acts of loving assistance on behalf of “the least” of the Lord’s brothers (25:40, 45; cf. 22:34–40). This is where real “kingdom of heaven” work begins (25:1, 14), and this is the evidence which Christ the king will testify for – or against – in the judgement. Thus “salvation” for the righteous is initiated in this earthly life, being manifested by selfless deeds of “service” (25:44). This implicit encouragement (or warning, as the case may be), though set within a particular historical setting, is timeless in its persuasive relevance and potential application to any individual or audience in attendance.

Would you agree that this pericope builds up to a *peak of intensity* at the very end in terms of both form and content?

How do verse 40, 45, and 46 relate thematically to each other?

What are some of the key emotive elements that contribute to this progression of intensification?

Is this development apparent in your translation? If not, what can be done, whether textually or paratextually, to call attention to it?

It is interesting to observe that this deceptively simple account reflects aspects of all three of the so-called “species” of classical Greco-Roman rhetoric: The surface of the text reveals certain *judicial* as well as *epideictic* concerns; that is, it seeks to influence the audience with regard to a right versus wrong legal standard as well as an honorable versus dishonorable value system. However, the message’s real import is *deliberative* in nature: it is intended to convince listeners concerning the expediency of specified beneficial behavior in contrast to detrimental actions in view of a future day of public reckoning.

Give an example of a passage or expression within this pericope that conveys each of these rhetorical motivations.

- a. **Judicial** – a precise judgement of right or wrong: _____
- b. **Epideictic** – an appeal to what is praiseworthy or shameful: _____
- c. **Deliberative** – a concern for the beneficial as opposed to what is harmful: _____

The artfully composed discourse structure of this challenging pericope is obviously being used as a persuasive (rhetorical) device. The literary style is thus enhanced as a means of shaping and sharpening the intended message so that it will have the greatest possible impact, upon *listeners* in particular. It may thus be viewed as a macrotextual equivalent of the “A, and what’s more, B; not only A, but B” type of parallel patterning that characterizes biblical poetry (with discourse panel I of the Greek text displayed at the beginning of section 3.6 corresponding to “A” and panel II to “B”). As our examination of the original text would indicate, this passage could be classified as an instance of *oratorical prose*,

being marked by stylistic features such as rhythmic utterances, alliteration, balanced syntactic patterns, figurative language, conclusion-focused interrogatives, and incorporated direct speech.

The question now is, To what extent can this prominent artistic and rhetorical dimension be reproduced in a contemporary translation? This leads to the final step in preparing the ground for a *LiFE*-style translation.

9.1.10 Step 10: Coordinate form-functional matches

Step 10 is to collect, categorize, and prioritize all potential correspondences between the SL and TL, and then prepare a provisional translation of the pericope or complete book.

This final stage involves a selective listing of all *form-functional matches* – whether confirmed, pending, or just possible – that have been identified during the preceding steps. This would be based on a prior survey of all distinctive and frequently used artistic and rhetorical features of the TL that are available for rendering those of the biblical document. If *both* textual form and function can be matched across languages, so much the better; often, however, the function of a particular SL device will have to be reproduced by a different TL form. The aim is to keep the divergence in such cases as small as possible, even though at times only a complete *reformulation* will do. The compositional inventory might well include suggested biblical texts and representative samples to which the designated TL literary/oratorical genres and their related stylistic features could apply.

These different devices then need to be classified and catalogued for future reference. An electronic “dictionary file,” database, or some other categorized retrieval system should be created and continually updated with new and revised artistic and rhetorical data entries as the project continues. Even as the exegetical procedures are being conducted with reference to the biblical text, translators can begin to consider their possible translational implications. Important questions and issues that pertain to form (style, structure), content, and function should be thought of in terms of how they might be handled in the TL, especially from a *LiFE* perspective.

Step 10 is probably the hardest of all the steps to carry out because it requires that translators begin to think in the TL even as they are analyzing SL language forms. It is perhaps best to carry it out in two separate stages: one with an emphasis upon inventorying the chief SL literary forms and their assumed communicative functions, and the other with a corresponding emphasis on discovering close literary/oratorical equivalents in the TL, in keeping with the particular genre of literature in focus.

Following the analysis of a biblical text according to the set of procedures considered up to this point, the initial translation of it may be done in several ways. A relatively literal rendition would be the easiest to get the compositional process moving. This literal draft can later be enlivened by appropriate literary devices in a relevant, functionally equivalent manner. The opposite approach would be to have a literary artist compose a complete genre transformation at the outset, that is, prepared intuitively according to the closest functional model text type in the TL oral or written tradition. This draft could then be sharpened exegetically with reference to the SL text at a later time. Many variations of these two approaches might be applied instead, depending on what is most efficient and effective for the translation team. In most cases, however, the first draft should be prepared by a single experienced translator, rather than by a team trying to patch concepts and texts together as a committee.

What operational procedures does your translation team or committee follow to carry out its work, from researching the target language and literature/orature through the initial draft stage and on to polishing the final pre-publication document?

Do you have any practical revisions or modifications to suggest with respect to the preceding ten steps of analysis?

What can be done to stimulate and encourage the vernacular creativity and resourcefulness of translators when rendering the biblical text?

This is often a rather difficult thing to do, even in the case of gifted verbal artists. Could it be that they are intimidated by the critical eyes of biblical scholars or pastors on the review committee who may be prejudiced in favor of some other, more foreignized translation? If so, what can be done to resolve the situation?

9.2 A case study

The following is a case study pertaining to the development of several Chichewa Bible translations (Malawi). As you read through it and the *LiFE* example at the end, compare it with the situation in your language and translation setting, either past or present. Be prepared to discuss any noteworthy similarities or differences that become apparent.

The magnificent structure, artistry, and rhetoric of many biblical texts often turns out to sound quite the opposite in a translation, whether ancient or modern. This is true of the 1923 Chichewa version, *Buku Lopatulika*. In terms of verbal style, expression of content, and typographical format, this translation speaks with a very heavy “foreign accent.” In places it is almost unintelligible to ordinary listeners. The 1998 idiomatic “popular-language” version (*Buku Loyera*), which was prepared by trained mother-tongue translators, is a great improvement. But even though its language is natural and very understandable overall, in a number of places, including the passage under consideration, this modern version still fails to reproduce the dynamic style and full persuasive force of the original.

More recently, some experimental efforts have been undertaken to produce a text that more adequately represents the oft-missing literary dimension in Chichewa. While a *LiFE* translation is not to be thought of as *the* ideal, it is one viable option among the others available with reference to a specific audience and religious setting. The downside to a *LiFE* translation is that in trying to duplicate the vital artistry and rhetoric of the original text, certain of its microstructural features will certainly be lost. However, the benefit in terms of greater communicability and acceptability for a particular target group is a significant factor that may well make it worth the extra effort necessary to produce such a translation.

In YL, what would some of the most important of these losses be in terms of the Matthew pericope, and why are such deficits probably unavoidable during the translation process?

How might these losses be compensated for by certain gains through the use of literary forms that more closely duplicate the biblical text’s communicative functions, including its prominent rhetorical effects?

One of the first things to consider in preparing a *LiFE* version is the issue of *genre equivalence*. Is there a TL genre available that can serve as a close, if not exact, functional equivalent for Christ’s last judgement discourse – a dramatic narrative parable that manifests a prominent oratorical style? As it so happens, there *is* such a flexible literary form in Chichewa; namely, the *ndakatulo* genre of lyric poetry, which functions well to translate highly emotive, rhetorically toned passages of the Scriptures. In fact, all of the stylistic features that were listed earlier as being noteworthy with respect to Matthew’s Greek text are very prominent also in the *ndakatulo* mode of dramatic composition.

In addition, the narrative macrostructure itself is quite common in the Chichewa oral tradition. A common form of storytelling involves the use of what may be termed *parallel image sets* in which human attributes are objectified, with traditional narrative characters being used to portray certain important positive and negative values. First, one model of behavior is presented, then the other by way of contrast – quality for quality. There is a similar parallel image set in our Matthew 25:31–46 judgement passage: the first positive, leading to a blessed outcome, and the second negative, resulting in disaster. Each of these is reflected off the other to heighten the thematic and moral point of the passage as a whole. This wedding of a dynamic rhetorical style with a familiar narrative structure has the potential for creating a great impression on any Chewa listening audience.

The medium of *hearing* must be stressed. It is highly probable that this pericope in Greek was initially composed with an oral-aural manner of communication in mind. The entire text is eminently recitable

(or chantable) due to its verbal recursion, parallel patterning, rhythmic sequences, euphony, and an incremental climactic development. As a result, this passage is most memorable, hence transmittable as well. Bible translators need to seriously consider this aspect of the discourse as they re-present the text in the TL in order that it be as easily and effectively conveyed to hearers as the original was.

This necessitates, in turn, a *reader-friendly display* of the discourse on the printed page. The text must be formatted as a sequence of meaningful *utterance units* combined within clearly delineated narrative “paragraphs.” One possibility would be to follow the Greek text as set out at the beginning of section 3.6, using a balanced and terraced sequence of corresponding segments in the vernacular (either with or without the accompanying letters along the right margin). If that technique is felt to be too sophisticated or complicated, however, some simplification could be introduced. The goal of such an integrated procedure (sound connected closely with sight) is to enhance the general readability, hearability, and intelligibility of the whole passage, including its interconnected parts.

A sample translation of Matthew 25:34–36, composed in the *ndakatulo* lyric style and manifesting a more natural printed format, is set out below, together with a relatively literal back-translation into English. This particular version has been stylistically reduced in its verbal dynamism, however, that is, limited in terms of its vividness of expression and rendered more prosaic in nature. This was done to prevent the form of the text from overshadowing or detracting somewhat in any way from the solemn content that is being communicated. Nevertheless, several graphic ideophones (shown in boldface) that appeal to the drama of the original setting have been included (used only in the first, connotatively positive panel. This experimental rendition represents the ultimate in terms of functional equivalence. It is intended to satisfy a specific need for a clearly defined contemporary audience, for example, to provide a version to be used by a youth drama group in a public performance. How effective would a translation like this be in such a situation? That can be determined only after a thorough program of audience-testing has been carried out and the results carefully evaluated.

<p><i>Tsono Iyeyo ngati Mfumu</i> <i>adauza akudzanja lamanja:</i> <i>Bwerani kunotu inu</i> <i>odalitsidwa ndi Atate anga.</i> <i>Lowani mu ufumuwu</i> <i>umene adakukonzerani Iyedi,</i> <i>chilengedwere dziko lapansili.</i> <i>Paja Ine ndidaali ndi njala,</i> <i>inu nkundipatsa chakudya.</i> <i>Ndidaali kumva ludzu,</i> <i>inu nkundipatsa chikho pha.</i> <i>Ndadaali mlendo, balamanthu,</i> <i>inu nkundilandira kwanuko.</i> <i>Ndidaali wamaliseche Ine,</i> <i>inu nkundibveka bwino.</i> <i>Ndinkadwala mpaka kumanda tswii,</i> <i>inu nkumandizonda ndithu.</i> <i>Ndidaali mange mu ndende,</i> <i>inu nkumadzandichezetsa.</i></p>	<p>So this one, just like a king, told those at his right hand: Come right here you people blessed by my Father. Enter into this kingdom which He actually prepared for you, since the creation of this very world. You know, I was hungry, right away you gave me some food. I was feeling thirsty, right away you gave me a cup, full up. I was a stranger, arriving all of a sudden, right away you received me into your home. I was naked, I was, right away you dressed me up well. I was so sick I could have gone to the grave straight, indeed, you kept coming to see how I was. I was bound up in prison, You would keep on visiting me.</p>
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No matter how dynamic or idiomatic a translation is, however, it can never reproduce in the TL the full communicative value of an excellently composed literary source text – not if the closest possible content equivalence also remains a matter of priority (cf. section 7.2.2). A poetic re-creation can perhaps handle most aspects of the textual or stylistic richness, but like any rendering, it too often fails with regard to the implicit level of communication and the great amount of contextual information that is normally presupposed by the original.

What can be done to redress this regrettable loss of significance? Of course, various *supplementary helps* can be pressed into service: illustrations, cross-references, footnotes or marginal notes, section headings, a key-term glossary, concordance, and so forth. But even these will ultimately fall short to a greater or lesser degree due to a lack of adequate background knowledge on the part of most receptors,

a situation that is usually exacerbated as a result of intercultural differences and even outright contradictions.

Explanatory footnotes (or sound-marked asides in an audio version) offer perhaps the best means of supplying such information, including the major extralinguistic implications and applications that arise from the passage at hand (see section 7.1.3). A footnote would be needed, for example, with regard to the concept of a post-death divine judgement, which is alien to African religious beliefs. (The African view is that a person is judged progressively, based on traditional social norms and contemporary mores; the result of this indigenous public verdict is manifested in the afterlife only in terms of how one is ultimately regarded and revered as an ancestral spirit.) A footnote would also be needed to explain why sheep were so highly regarded in the ancient Near East, including their religious symbolism, as distinct from goats. Sheep are little known in south-central Africa, except on large, foreign-owned commercial farms. Goats, on the other hand, are very common and have a largely negative connotation similar to that of Bible times, but with rather different contextual associations. In the Scriptures, goats are connected with sin in general; in Bantu societies, with illicit sexual relations in particular.

Finally, what is the pragmatic relevance of rhetoric in relation to discourse structure as far as Bible translation is concerned? The answer depends on the type of translation that is being produced and how crucial the values of appropriateness and acceptability are to it. When the goal is greater contemporary communicative value, then the dimension of *effectiveness* will be somewhat more important to achieve than *efficiency*. In other words, the conceptual “cost” in terms of the relative ease of text processing will be less important than a potential “gain” with regard to cognitive and emotive contextual effects such as relative impact, appeal, artistry, aurality, and memorability. To be sure, Bible translators always want to be “on the right side” as they re-signify the biblical text within the framework of another language and culture, but such a critical judgement can be determined only in relation to a particular audience or constituency who need to hear the Word proclaimed to them in a manner that closely resembles that of the original setting of communication. This includes, to the extent possible, the dramatic content as well as the dynamic style and structure of the Scriptures as they were first written, proclaimed, and have subsequently been transmitted to us by the extant textual witnesses.

For reflection, research, and response:

1. What do you think of the Chichewa poetic-prose version given above? Compare it with Peterson’s contemporary English rendition of Matthew 25:34–36, presented below as originally formatted. Does either version seem to go too far in certain respects, whether exegetically or stylistically? Pick out some of the chief literary features that appear in these dynamic translations and give a brief evaluation, keeping the respective audiences in mind.

Then the King will say to those on his right, “Enter you who are blessed by my Father! Take what’s coming to you in this kingdom. It’s been ready for you since the world’s foundation. And here’s why:

I was hungry and you fed me,
I was thirsty and you gave me a drink,
I was homeless and you gave me a room,
I was shivering and you gave me clothes,
I was sick and you stopped to visit,
I was in prison and you came to me.”

Then those “sheep” are going to say, “Master, what are you talking about? When did we ever see you hungry and feed you, thirsty and give you a drink? And when did we ever see you sick or in prison and come to you?” Then the King will say, “I’m telling you the solemn truth: Whenever you did one of these things to someone overlooked or ignored, that was me – you did it to me.”

2. Now, reconsider Peterson’s version, *The Message*, in light of what its aims are, as expressed in the following excerpt from his preface. What do you think about his assessment of the biblical text in view of these aims (Peterson 2003:8)?

In the Greek-speaking world of that day, there were two levels of language: formal and informal. Formal language was used to write philosophy and history, government decrees and

epic poetry....But if the writing was routine – shopping lists, family letters, bills, and receipts – it was written in the common informal idiom of everyday speech, street language.... In order to understand the Message right, the language must be right – not a refined language that appeals to our aspirations after the best but a rough and earthy language that reveals God’s presence and action where we least expect it....The goal is not to render a word-for-word conversion of Greek into English, but rather to convert the tone, the rhythm, the events, the ideas, into the way we actually think and speak. (Peterson 2003:8)

In what sense could the writings of the New Testament be considered “routine”? To what extent could the discourse of Christ and his apostles be regarded as “street language”? Base your answer on the text studies that we have already carried out. Can an argument be made for a third level of language in the NT – somewhere between formal and informal? Which body of writings greatly influenced the Greek structure and style of the NT? How great was this OT (LXX) influence? Discuss these issues in class. In particular, consider how our conclusions concerning these matters would affect our approach to and philosophy of Bible translation.

3. Prepare your own *LiFE* translation of Matthew 25:34–36 (or the entire passage, if your instructor prefers). First of all, specify your target audience and the purpose for which you are preparing your translation. Then, with these criteria in mind, create a literary rendering, to the degree that is appropriate. Next, give a fairly literal English back-translation of your vernacular text. List the specific artistic and rhetorical devices that you used and tell why you used them. Finally, in class, present orally the several versions that have been produced; then critique them so that the class members can learn from one another about the different communicative possibilities that exist for a version of this nature.
4. Compare the method of charting the sequential clause-constituent order of a biblical text given in section 3.6.6 with the more detailed plan proposed by Dooley and Levinsohn (2001:43-48). What are the major similarities and differences? What can you learn from the method outlined by D&L that can make your discourse charting procedure a more informative and/or accurate exercise? Note: Dooley and Levinsohn also outline “A methodology for analyzing [participant] reference patterns” in (2001:127-134). If time and interest allow, this approach may also be studied to see how it can help us better understand the organization of a text, especially with reference to the important communicative aspects of structure and function that need to be reproduced in a translation. A good text to further practice these discourse analysis procedures on is Matthew 25:14-30, “the parable of the talents.”
5. In *deictic shift theory* a number of the hermeneutical concerns addressed in our analytic framework are combined. This theory posits “a speaking, writing or thinking ‘voice’ [that] represents a *deictic center*, which a reader can mentally project by adopting the *cognitive stance* that best accounts for the sense of coherence across a text” (Stockwell, in Semino and Culpeper 2002:78–9; see also Stockwell 2002:53–5). Changes in perspective are stimulated by *deictic shift devices* that may be perceptual (personal), spatial, temporal, relational (social), textual (medium-based), or compositional (structural) in nature. Areas of interest and importance within a text generally coincide with those points at which “the deictic centre has to be moved within the readerly projection.” These are marked in a printed text by paragraph breaks and other typographical devices.

Where does the major deictic shift occur in the Matthew 25:31–46 passage? What is your evidence for this? (Recall the earlier structural and stylistic analysis.) Do a greater number of these shifts occur at the onset of chapter 26 (in vv. 1–5), which is the start of a new principal unit of the Matthew narrative of Christ? Identify them. How can you assist the reader/hearer to keep track of these perceptual movements in your translation? (These may occur on several discourse levels, such as implied author – implied audience, Christ – disciples, and Son of Man – those on the right/left.)

6. In her basic typology of literature in translation, Katharina Reiss (2000:31–3) posits the *form-focused text*, which she describes as follows:

In these texts the author makes use of formal elements, whether consciously or unconsciously, for a specific esthetic effect....Therefore, the expressive function of language, which is primary in form-focused texts, must find an *analogous form* in the translation to create a corresponding impression, so that the translation can become a true equivalent.... This can be done by creating equivalents through new forms. Thus in a form-focused text the translator will not mimic slavishly (adopt) the forms of the source language, but rather

appreciate the form of the source language and be inspired by it to discover an analogous form in the target language, one which will elicit a similar response in the reader.

Discuss the preceding quotation in light of what you have learned about a *LiFE* approach: What are the main similarities and differences?

Do you think that a given biblical text is *form-focused* to the exclusion of other emphases, that is, a *content focus* and *appeal focus*? (These are the other principal categories Reiss posits, *ibid.*:26.) Explain.

To what extent is there a special focus on the structural and stylistic forms of the Matthew 26 pericope – and what is the implication of this for your vernacular translation of this text?

10 Text Types and Genres: Prose and Poetry in the Bible

Aim: In this lesson you will investigate some of the different text types and genres of literature that are found in the Bible. You will also learn how to define and distinguish the two principal literary text types, prose and poetry.

Goals: After working through this lesson you should be able to do the following tasks:

1. Describe what a text type is as distinct from a genre.
2. Define the four major literary text types found in the Scriptures and tell why it is important for Bible translators to recognize them.
3. Identify the main markers of poetry in the Bible.
4. Identify the main markers of prose in the Bible.
5. Distinguish prose from poetry in a given biblical text with respect to both form and function.
6. Describe some of the chief textual markers of prose and poetry in the oral and written literature of your language.
7. Identify the major communication functions of prose and poetry in your language.
8. Evaluate a number of Bible passages in terms of how they might best be rendered in your language – whether as prose, poetry, or a hybrid – in order to be acceptable to different audience groups.

Review:

Lesson 2 on the forms and functions of literature in the Bible, and the difference between literature and orature.

Read:

Chapter 3 in *Translating the Literature of Scripture* (Wendland 2004b).
Chapter 2 in *Analyzing Discourse* (Dooley and Levinsohn 2001).
Chapter 2 in *Hebrew Poetry in the Bible* (Zogbo and Wendland 2000).
“Introduction” of *Literary Forms in the New Testament* (Bailey and vander Broek 1992).
Chapters 1 – 2 of *Cracking Old Testament Codes* (Sandy and Giese 1995).

10.1 The importance of the concept of genre to Bible translators

The term *genre* means a distinct class, category, kind, or type of discourse as used in specific sociocultural settings. It has particular reference to verbal art forms, oral as well as written. The folktale, for example, belongs to a different genre than a proverb, or a riddle, or a legend. A hymn is similar to, but not the same as a psalm, and both of these are very different from a lullaby. Such genres provide listeners or readers with different frameworks and strategies (sets of social and verbal conventions) that they can use to identify and interpret a particular text. One genre differs from another in terms of its discourse structure, stylistic form, content, social function, and/or cultural setting of use. The more differences that there are, especially with respect to form, the easier it is to tell genres apart and use them correctly in speech and writing.

Every culture and language has its own inventory of genres and subgenres (cognitive text models) differing from the inventories of other languages and cultures. The proper use of these discourse types, or text models, and the expectations associated with them also differ to a greater or lesser extent. We will be using the concept of genre in order to distinguish and analyze the various kinds of literature found in the Bible. This perspective enables us to better understand the diverse texts of Scripture and then communicate them more effectively in the language into which we translate.

Is the story in Luke 16:19–31 of Lazarus and the rich man a parable or a historical account of events that really happened? What are some of the textual and contextual cues that lead you to favor one interpretation or the other?

Why would Luke 16:19–31 *not* be construed as a factual narrative used by Christ for the purposes of exemplification?

Does the cotext lend support to one or the other of the two options (e.g., Christ’s emphasis in 16:13–18 on a correct interpretation of the Mosaic law)?

Would it make a difference in your language? In other words, does a parable have certain stylistic and structural markers that distinguish it from history in your oral or literary tradition?

If you were to render Luke 16:19 with no introductory or transitional expression, would most people then understand what follows as some type of historical narrative?

As questions such as these suggest, the matter of genre is very important to Bible interpreters and translators alike. If the specific genre of a given biblical text is ignored or misconstrued, the passage will probably not be correctly communicated via translation. That is, it would not be perceived, understood, contextualized, and re-composed in another language in a relevant manner that is appropriate for its intended audience.

It must also be remembered that literary and oral genres are not isolated from each other. Rather, they are all related, though some are closer to one than to others while some are more remote, just as your relatives are to you and to one another. And just as there are certain key features that distinguish the members of your family from you (e.g., sex, age, and origin on your mother’s or father’s side), so there are assorted characteristics that distinguish one literary genre from another. These characteristics provide readers/listeners with certain expectations about a text and also a strategy for its interpretation when they recognize that it belongs to a particular genre.

For example, a sermon normally includes quite a bit of exhortation in the form of prohibitions, commands, encouragements, and warnings based on specific texts of Scripture. A prayer, on the other hand, does not usually manifest such features; rather, it consists of requests and appeals made directly to God, along with certain utterances of praise, penitence, profession, and/or thanksgiving, depending on the occasion. People might become confused or even upset if their pastor began to pray for the sick when they expected him to preach a sermon or – alternatively – following his sermon, if he started preaching again after saying, “Let us pray.” It would be just as disconcerting and non-communicative if the pastor preached his formal public sermon to a Sunday-school class of children.

It is important, therefore, to use the appropriate genre at the right time and place and for a suitable audience. The same is true when we translate the various genres of the Bible. There are four general procedures to keep in mind here – two that focus on the SL text and two others that focus on the TL text:

1. We must learn to accurately recognize and interpret the different types and subtypes of discourse to be found in the Scriptures, the Old as well as the New Testament.
2. We should be able to identify the various stylistic and rhetorical features that tend to be associated with any particular literary genre in the Bible.
3. We must be able to represent the SL genres and subgenres naturally, in terms of literary/oratorical form and also in a functionally equivalent way in the target language.
4. Finally, we must use a particular genre in a suitable TL cultural context; namely, the one suggested by the textual setting of the biblical passage that features the genre in question.

Genre relationships may be likened to the hierarchical classification of the words of a language (its vocabulary as listed in a dictionary or lexicon). Some words have a more general, inclusive meaning; others are more specific and referentially narrow in scope. The general category of “living creatures”

can be divided into two subclasses: plants and animals. There are different kinds of animals too: mammals, birds, fish, reptiles, and amphibians. Then in the class of mammals are many individual species: cattle, elephants, goats, lions, dogs, and so forth. There are different kinds of dogs: Doberman, Alsatian, Rotweiler, poodle, collie, and many more.

Which types of dogs (or other common domestic animal in your culture) are distinguished by specific names in your language?

On what basis, if any, is this categorization made?

Which features differentiate one dog from another?

In any sort of a classification, including that of literature, some terms (and what they refer to) are more closely related than others. Some are more general (e.g., mammal), while others are more specific (e.g., cow, pig, dog). It is important to distinguish a general category from a specific one if one is to use a language correctly. Other languages and cultures may classify these entities and their relationships differently.

Does the bat, for example, belong to the category of birds or of mice in your language? What is the apparent reason for this?

What about a tomato – is it a fruit, a vegetable, or some other type of food? Would it be classified differently from an apple or an onion? Explain.

How about a psalm – how would you classify that – as a song or a prayer or something else – and why? Would your classification change if you think of a psalm in terms of your own language categories? Explain. What are the implications here for Bible translators?

For reflection, research, and response:

1. How can you best translate the term “genre” in your language? Give a typical sentence in YL that uses this particular term (along with a back-translation into English).
2. Does the closest correspondent of genre in YL differ in meaning from the English word? Explain any variations in sense or usage.
3. How does a proverb in English differ from a riddle in terms of its form, content, and function? Do the same differences apply in YL for the most closely corresponding terms?
4. What are the most important oral and/or written genres in the social and cultural life of your people? Explain why, with examples.
5. How can a better understanding of genres help you to be a more effective Bible translator? Give a practical example to illustrate the point.
6. Discuss in class some issues raised by the Lazarus parable (Luke 16:19–31). Do these issues apply only to this particular parable or to others as well? Explain the importance of these issues for the practice of hermeneutics and Bible translation in YL.
7. Name several specific features that distinguish a dog from a goat – in English and in YL. What are some of the characteristics that differentiate a sheep from a goat? Why is it harder to distinguish this second pair of mammals? Are there any special positive or negative connotations that are associated with any of these animals in your cultural setting? Which one is more important or well liked and why? Carry out the same sort of comparative evaluation for a horse and a cow.
8. Give a good example of how some important animate or inanimate thing is classified differently and/or evaluated differently in your language and culture than it is in Western culture.
9. How would you translate the word “literature” in YL? Do you have a generic word for it or only terms for specific types of literature such as *history*, *folktale*, or *royal praise poetry*? Give a classification of some of the main kinds of verbal art in YL.

10. Do the vernacular terms that you just mentioned apply *only* to written works or *only* to oral works or to *both* oral and written works with no difference? Do you know any local experts in literary matters who can answer questions such as these? Have you tried to find out what sort of local experts with regard to vernacular verbal arts are available to your translation project? If not, how might you go about locating such essential resource persons and involving them in your work?
11. Have you ever witnessed a situation where someone used a certain genre of literature or orature at the wrong time, place, or occasion? Or perhaps employing the wrong mode or medium of communication? For example, the person may have spoken the text instead of singing it. Describe what happened and what effect it had on the readers/hearers.

10.2 Four primary text types

Analysts often posit four major text types that are very general in nature.⁷ They are described below in terms of the principal discourse features that distinguish each from the other. These text types provide a broad framework that helps us recognize and interpret the various major categories of literature in the Bible, whether they happen to be poetic or prosaic. This fourfold classification is based upon the work of Robert Longacre in the field of discourse analysis (see Dooley and Levinsohn 2001:8–9). It is a general, universal method of classification, that is, an *etic* system which can be applied more or less to any language by offering analysts a set of basic text types to look for and work from. (This is different from an *emic* classification of categories to be found in a particular language.) An *etic* classification helps us get started in the analysis of a given literature or literary type; later it can be revised and refined later as more and more vernacular texts and genres are studied in terms of their content, form, and communicative function in specific sociocultural situations.

Longacre's four main types of discourse – narrative, expository, hortatory, and procedural – may be defined by the presence (+) or absence (–) of two principal diagnostic features: (1) whether or not the text manifests a definite *time sequence* of events and (2) whether or not there is a particular *agent focus*, that is, a person or group of persons who are essentially or especially involved in the events being described. The four *etic* text types may be diagrammed as follows (from Dooley and Levinsohn 2001:8):

<i>diagnostic features</i>		Agent Focus	
		+	–
Time Sequence	+	NARRATIVE	PROCEDURAL
	–	HORTATORY	EXPOSITORY

In a *narrative* text such as the story of David and Goliath in 1 Samuel 17, we find a chronological sequence of primary events. This *event line* is normally marked for past or present time. The events, whether historical or fictitious, are usually told from a first or a third person perspective (point of view), and they feature one or more *agents* (the main characters or participants) and *scenes* (places where the reported events take place). When dialogue (direct speech) is incorporated into the account, a second person perspective (singular or plural) is added. A narrative text answers such questions as what happened, who said what to whom, and how, when, where, and why the main events occurred.

⁷Although the terms *genre* and *text type* are often used interchangeably (also in this workbook), at times it is useful to differentiate them: *Genre* refers to the various literary types that one finds in a particular language (e.g., *mizmor*, *shir*, *mashal* in Hebrew, or *parabolee* in Greek, or *ndakatulo* in Chewa); in other words, genre is an *emic* (language-specific) term. *Text type*, on the other hand, refers to a literary category that one can expect to find in any of the world literatures (e.g., prose, poetry, proverb, narrative); thus it is a more general, or *etic*, term.

In an *expository* text, the primary features of a narrative are reversed. An example of an expository text is Paul’s *didactic* depiction of the sinful state of humanity in Romans 1:18–32, where there is no special concern about time – how one event is related chronologically to another – and no particular agent in focus. Such a text tends to be more impersonal and is used for explanation, description, or instruction, with a particular emphasis upon its principal subject matter. It features *logical* relationships between its constituent clauses, sentence units, and paragraphs, such as cause-effect, reason-result, condition-consequence, and means-purpose.

The next two text types, *procedural* and *hortatory*, have mixed features. In a *procedural* text there is an emphasis upon a time-based sequence of events, stages, or progressive steps; however, no particular person or agent is in focus. The discourse is goal- or result-oriented and often its chief purpose is to tell how something is done or made. Other procedural texts indicate what should take place in the accomplishment of a particular objective, or in the carrying out of some legal obligation, or in the correct observance of a ceremony (e.g., the sacred rituals on the Day of Atonement in Lev. 16). Most procedural texts are *prescriptive* since the series of individual actions or steps must occur or be carried out in a certain way for the desired results to occur.

As for the *hortatory* text type, it is strongly person-centered and intended to influence the thinking, speech, emotions, and/or behavior of those to whom it is addressed. For example, a behavioral appeal may be made to reinforce, to forbid, modify, or to encourage some activity relating to morality. However, there is no special emphasis upon establishing or following a temporal sequence of events. The speaker or writer seeks to persuade the readers/hearers to adopt some belief, opinion, point of view, set of values, or course of action which may reflect the perspective of a larger group or indeed the society as a whole (e.g., Eph. 5:21 – 6:9). Hortatory discourse, also called *normative* discourse, tends to include many explicit (variously mitigated) or implicit commands in the form of *prescriptions* (“do!”) or *proscriptions* (“don’t do!”).

Another way of describing the four primary discourse types is to use the parameters of time (+/– chronological framework) and the amount of direction, or prescription, that is manifested in the text.

Briefly define each discourse type according to the framework shown in the figure below and explain how one type differs from another (adapted from Salisbury 2002:88).

	nonprescriptive	prescriptive
chronological framework	<u>Narrative</u>	<u>Procedural</u>
no chronological framework	Expository	<u>Hortatory</u>

Of course, there is always a certain degree of inconsistency or overlapping when attempting to apply this sort of an etic system to the literary discourse of a given language. For example, Ephesians 6:10–17, the Christian Armor text, may be analyzed in different ways and from several perspectives. It is primarily a hortatory appeal (“Put on ...!”), but it incorporates a certain amount of exposition in the description of the pieces of armor. Some commentators even feel that a rough set of unfolding spiritual procedures is also involved. Thus in many cases a biblical pericope may be classified as mixed, consisting of two or more discourse types in varied proportions – not *this-or-that*, but *both-and*. The preceding classification serves simply as a point of reference from which to begin the analysis, which must then be refined and specified as more study is applied to the text in question.

For reflection, research, and response:

1. Try to define in your own words the four general text types described above, making whatever adjustments or additions are needed in order to communicate these concepts effectively in YL.
2. Which discourse type is the most difficult to define or describe in YL? Why is this? Which type is the most common in YL, whether oral or written? Which is the least common?

3. Study the following passages: Ezekiel 12:3–6; 12:7; 12:11–15; 48:30–35; Daniel 3:4–6; 3:7; 3:14–15; Galatians 2:1–14; Titus 2:1–10; 3:3–8; and Revelation 13:11–17; 22:17–19. In your opinion, which of the four discourse types (narrative, procedural, expository, or hortatory) does each of them best exemplify. To answer, use the three parameters of chronological sequence, agent focus, and +/– prescription (direction).
4. The hortatory category can be divided into several subtypes. (Some analysts may prefer to see them as independent groupings.) Following Kompaore (2004:17), for example, we might distinguish according to the “orientation of the *volitive* focus – either on the speaker or on another person.” In the case of the former, termed *commissives*, the speaker makes an explicit commitment to do something, as when making a promise or taking an oath. In the case of *directives*, on the other hand, the speaker conveys his or her desire that the addressee (or some third party) think or do something, as in prayers, instructions, requests, commands, and precepts. Cite a biblical text that you feel is either primarily commissive or directive. What stylistic and rhetorical features distinguish such texts in YL? Can they be used in Bible translation? Explain, giving a typical example or two.
5. The following steps may be used as a guide for analyzing a hortatory text (adapted from Levinsohn 2006a):
 - a. Identify any sentences of the text that provide the external *message framework* (i.e., its introduction or conclusion).
 - b. Identify any exhortations that only function as *attention getters* (e.g., “behold”, “you see”, “indeed”).
 - c. Classify each remaining sentence as hortatory (directive: e.g., command, appeal, encouragement, warning, rebuke) or as *supportive* material (e.g., topic-introducer, establishment of author’s authority/credibility, situational/background information, explanatory, consequential, or in some other way persuasive and motivational discourse).
 - d. If an expository paragraph is used to present supportive information, identify its thesis and how that thesis is supported.
 - e. When a hortatory or expository thesis is supported by motivational material other than consequences, is the style typically *inductive* (with the supportive material preceding the thesis), *deductive* (with the supportive material following the thesis) or a combination of the two (e.g., an *inclusio* with theses both preceding and following the supportive material)?
 - f. Outline or diagram the entire text with regard to the various distinctions (mentioned above) that you identified within it. For example, it is often helpful to distinguish the predicted consequences from other types of support material.
 - g. Think through how the different aspects of the exhortation will need to be expressed in YL, noting those functional elements in particular that must be marked in some way in translation.

These procedures may be illustrated and applied as follows (Levinsohn 2006a:4):

When the LORD gives commands to the people of Israel through Moses, he typically uses deductive style.

For example, Exodus 20:5:

5a HORT. THESIS: You shall not bow down to them or worship them;
5b supportive: for (kîy) I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God.

Similarly, when David appeals to God in Psalm 54, he uses deductive style:

1–2 HORT. THESIS: Save me, O God, by your name and vindicate me by your might. Hear my prayer, O God; listen to the words of my mouth.
3 supportive: for (kîy) strangers attack me and ruthless men seek my life; they give no thought to God. Selah.

When the daughters of Zelophehad present a request to Moses, in contrast, they use inductive style (Num. 27:3–4):

- 3-4a supportive: Our father died in the desert. He was not among Korah's followers, who banded together against the LORD, but he died for his own sin and left no sons. Why should our father's name disappear from his clan because he had no son?
- 4b HORT. THESIS: Give us property among our father's relatives.

Similarly, when the LORD speaks to Moses in Exodus 3:7-10, he uses inductive style:

- 7-9 supportive: I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land... Now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them.
- 10 HORT. THESIS: And now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.

Now analyze accordingly David's instructions to Solomon (1 Chr. 22:7-13, NIV):

⁷ David said to Solomon: "My son, I had it in my heart to build a house for the Name of the Lord my God. ⁸ But this word of the Lord came to me: 'You have shed much blood and have fought many wars. You are not to build a house for my Name, because you have shed much blood on the earth in my sight. ⁹ But you will have a son who will be a man of peace and rest, and I will give him rest from all his enemies on every side. His name will be Solomon, ² and I will grant Israel peace and quiet during his reign. ¹⁰ He is the one who will build a house for my Name. He will be my son, and I will be his father. And I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel forever.' ¹¹ Now, my son, the Lord be with you, and may you have success and build the house of the Lord your God, as he said you would. ¹² May the Lord give you discretion and understanding when he puts you in command over Israel, so that you may keep the law of the Lord your God. ¹³ Then you will have success if you are careful to observe the decrees and laws that the Lord gave Moses for Israel. Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or discouraged."

Finally, prepare an idiomatic rendering of this exhortation in YL: How would a king/chief traditionally instruct his son like this in your cultural setting? Can the text format be used to more clearly delineate the hortatory theses from the supporting material? Explain how you would do this.

6. Which discourse types are exhibited in the book of Jonah and which stylistic markers lead you to this conclusion? Notice that one type may be included within another. Give a good example of this in Jonah. How does your classification of the discourse affect your interpretation of the text – its primary communicative purpose in particular?
7. Find your own examples of the four principal discourse types in the Bible – at least one of each kind. Make notes on some of the difficulties you encounter when trying to apply this system of classification. Do you have any suggestions for overcoming these difficulties?
8. How would you define "description" in relation to the other four types? Does descriptive discourse need to be added as a separate type, or can it be included as a subgenre of one of the others (e.g., expository)? What are the pros and cons of each alternative? How would you define description in terms of the threefold grid of +/- agent focus, +/- time sequence, +/- prescription?
9. The following systematization of four generic text types comes from Gavins and Steen (2003:79), with a few minor modifications. How does it compare with the one proposed above? Which perspective do you prefer and why? Or can you forge some sort of combined, hybrid classification that is more appropriate for the literature/orature of YL?
 - a. **Narratives** exhibit a marked use of semantically (content-based) causal relations.
 - b. **Arguments** exhibit a marked use of pragmatically (setting-based) causal relations.
 - c. **Descriptions** exhibit a marked use of semantically additive relations.
 - d. **Expositions** exhibit a marked use of pragmatically additive relations.

Gavins and Steen define these text types as follows (ibid.:81):

In *narrative*, there is a causal chain of specific events in reality, which is presented by the producer of the message as relatively independent of that producer. In *argumentation*, there is an assumption of a causal connection between situations or events in a logical premise, and it is understood that this is not an objective connection between two specific events that have already taken place....In *description*, the additions to the previous utterances in a message are relatively independent of the sender: they are about specific properties of the topics and based on the semantics of the connections between sentences. In *exposition*, by contrast, the additions consist of utterances that are more dependent on the sender: they may involve the background knowledge a sender has about that topic which needs to be made explicit for the addressee, so that the addressee can understand previous utterances better.

10. The Scripture passages that we have considered here in section 4.2 are all prose texts. But the four general text types may also be found in poetic form in the Bible. What sort of poetic text type is Psalm 1? What are your reasons for saying so? How would you classify Psalm 23? 106? 119?

10.3 Some additional features of discourse types

As you may have discovered by now, certain text types are often embedded within other types. This is particularly true in the case of narrative discourse, especially the kind that contains a lot of direct speech, whether monologue or dialogue. Thus a narrative account may contain significant portions of description, admonition, or instruction. Similarly, letters, such as we find in the New Testament Epistles, often consist of several different discourse types combined to form the whole.

Embedding may cause some uncertainty as to how to classify the larger text. For example, is a parable a special kind of narrative with a hortatory bit added on at the end, or is it a hortatory discourse containing a large embedded narrative? And what about a parable such as the weeds in a wheat field (Matt. 13:24–30), in which the teaching, imperative, or application is not given explicitly but is only implied? Some analysts might classify it according to its form (as a narrative), while others would classify it by its function (as a hortatory text) – in the latter case the embedded narrative comprises nearly all of it! Of course, each language is different from another, and translators will undoubtedly have to take both form and function into consideration as they search for the closest natural correspondent of a biblical text in the TL. The most crucial consideration for them is not classification but communication, and how to represent a particular passage most effectively for the specific audience in mind.

It is usually possible to determine the primary text type of a longer discourse by examining the main linguistic and literary characteristics that it exhibits overall. But it is more important to distinguish the different individual text types that are combined *within* the larger pericope: where one begins and the other ends, where there is structural and/or thematic overlapping, how they all relate to one another, as well as the purpose for each one's inclusion within the composition as a whole. The text's major and minor communicative functions must then be reproduced along with its semantic content during the process of Bible translation.

Other variable features that help us to distinguish one text type from another include *linkage*, *central person*, and *orientation*. Linkage refers to the semantic connections (whether chronological or logical) that prevail between the main segments of a discourse. Central person is a grammatical category that designates the main actor or speaker of the text, whether represented in the first, second, or third person. Orientation indicates the primary personal focus of the text, whether the doer of the action (agent), the receiver of the action (patient), the hearer of the discourse (audience), or no special individual or group at all. In this last case the content or theme of the text is of utmost importance.

Longacre (cited in Dooley and Levinsohn 2001:9) calls attention to two additional features that pertain to his four general text types. The first is *projection*, which helps to distinguish texts that refer to a set of actions or circumstances that have already happened (– projection) from texts that deal with a situation that has not yet occurred (+). In the latter case, the temporal reference tends to focus upon something that is contemplated, anticipated, predicted, or enjoined (i.e., what people are called upon to

do in the future). Projection, or forward orientation, is a prominent feature of predictive discourse, often found in the prophetic literature, whether a complete text or only a portion of one.

The second additional feature is *tension*, which refers to a discourse that includes some sort of conflict, trial, dispute, enigma, or uncertainty that needs to be resolved. A writer or speaker often uses tension as a means of holding the attention and interest of the audience. This is most obvious in dramatic narratives that are built around a plot. Here, the main character faces an opponent, test, challenge, or some other obstacle. Such discourse evokes tension that usually reaches a high point (an eventive peak or emotive climax) during the account, after which the tension is lessened or removed in some way. Other types of text can also incorporate a certain amount of tension. In the case of procedural discourse, the instructions may build up in an explicit way towards the intended result or a final outcome; in hortatory discourse the argument or appeal may be constructed so as to rise to a peak of intensity or impact.

The five features of linkage, central person, orientation, temporal projection, and tension are summarized in the following diagram:

<i>prose text type features</i>	NARRATIVE	PROCEDURAL	EXPOSITORY	HORTATORY
linkage	chronological	chronological	logical	logical
central person	first or third	indefinite or third	Nonspecific	second
orientation	agent/patient	patient	theme/content	addressee
temporal projection	accomplished or current	current or projected	non-specified	projected
tension	normally + climax	+ result – tension	+ argumentation – tension	+ argumentation +/- tension

While these different stylistic characteristics apply to most prose texts of the Bible, certain exceptions and variations do occur at times, depending on the specific nature of the discourse and the purpose for which it was written. For example, when a predictive prophecy includes an element of narration, more verbs will of course occur in the future tense (sometimes also in the dramatic present), rather than in the past. An example of this is Yahweh’s predictions concerning the battle of Gog in Ezekiel 38–39. On the other hand, an expository text normally includes some features of argumentation, as in Romans 1, where Paul appears to build up to a little climax in his conclusion at verses 24–25.

If an exposition consists of pure description, however, there will not usually be any sort of an argument or peak, as is the case in Ezekiel’s serene vision of the divine temple in Ezekiel 40 – 48. Note, however, that this closing section of Ezekiel does include one chapter that is not primarily descriptive.

Which one is that, and how does it serve as a concluding climax for the book as a whole?

How does your understanding of 43:10–12 affect your evaluation of the function of the descriptive discourse that prevails in these chapters?

In lesson 3 we studied the principal *functions* of communication, including informative, expressive, affective, relational, and esthetic. These have to do with the general reasons for which a text may be composed and the effect the author intends to have on the primary readership (or audience), as nearly as this can be posited on the basis of available textual and contextual evidence. Such communicative

goals, or intentions, may also be applied to the four major text types that we have been discussing here, but only when they are considered in relation to a particular passage of Scripture and its context of use. A narrative, for example, may be classified as being primarily *informative* in one case (Acts 26:9–18), *affective* in another (Gal. 1:13–23), and *relational* in yet another (1 Cor. 11:23–25).

In order to be more precise in our investigation of a particular discourse of the Bible, we may apply the methods of *speech-act analysis* (see section 1.6.2.1). This is a pragmatic approach (i.e., studying verbal discourse in relation to its interpersonal context and social setting) that focuses on what an author intends to *do* with a text during communication – that is, what goal he hopes to achieve in the original context of writing his text. A given directive discourse, for example, that seeks to influence the attitudes and/or behavior of people may be described as the writer’s aiming to instruct, advise, encourage, strengthen, console, warn, rebuke, or condemn his hearers or readers. Thus a wide range of attitudes and emotions may also be conveyed: compare Paul’s forceful reproof in Galatians 1:6–10 with the warm affection that he expresses in Philippians 1:3–11.

These major and minor text types will generally correspond or differ in various degrees with respect to their primary function as we move from one language, culture, and set of indigenous genres to another. For example, no traditional Chewa song was ever used as a *personal* confession of one’s sins such as we have in Psalm 51; a *corporate* lament, however, was often used in this way; namely, as part of a public ceremony pleading to the ancestors for rain in a time of drought (cf. Ps. 106). Similarly, in a Chewa sociocultural setting the letter format would not be employed in order to preach a sermon or present a theological essay, such as the one presented in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

A Chewa proverb (*mwambi*) is normally employed either to instruct the young about proper behavior or to make a point as elders are engaged in some serious public debate or argument. A biblical proverb, on the other hand, may be used for the former purpose (as in the book of Proverbs, e.g., 26:11) but not usually for the latter – that is, in an argumentative discourse (though there are exceptions, e.g., 2 Pet. 2:22). Another difference is that texts called proverbs are conceived of and classified differently in the biblical literature. In Hebrew, for example, the literary category of *māshāl* includes not only the graphic and condensed, typically two-part saying called a “proverb” in English or Chichewa, but also a much more extensive didactic passage, such as Ezekiel 17:2–10. In Greek, on the other hand, the term *parabolê* is normally used to designate the figurative story termed a parable, but it may also refer to a very short wise saying such as Luke 4:23.

For reflection, research, and response:

1. Where would you fit the subcategory of description in the chart shown in section 4.3? How then would you classify the passage found in Daniel 7:1–14? Where would that fit on the chart? Does a text like this require a special type of discourse in YL? Explain.
2. Under which of the four basic text types would you classify *legislative passages* such as those in the Pentateuch (e.g., Exod. 20–23)? Why do you say so? What about *wisdom directives* in the book of Proverbs? Again, give a reason for your answer. Do you have texts like these in YL? If so, describe the different kinds that are common in the oral or written tradition of your people.
3. Which of the four text types are embedded in Luke 20? Give the verses that apply to each type that you specify.
4. List the aspects of textual projection and tension that you find in Luke 19.
5. Find another text from the Gospels in which you detect some emotive tension that leads to a definite high point in the account. Specify the verses where this climax in tension occurs and mention any special linguistic or literary markers that would be needed in YL in order to distinguish such a passage.
6. Pick what you feel is the primary text type of the following pericopes, and then tell what appears to be the main communicative function or intention of each one: Revelation 4; Philemon; Hebrews 11; Jude; Matthew 5:3–12; 14:1–12; 18:15–20; 24:15–28; 25:31–46; Luke 1:1–4; 3:23–38; 10:2–12; 20:34–38.
7. Go back to the passages that you considered in question 6 and specify the verses where you detect a peak in the action and/or climax in the emotive tension of some kind. Perhaps you will not find a high

point at all, or it may be that more than one peak or climax is present. Give reasons why you have specified these particular places in the text.

8. How would you define a proverb in YL – what are the stylistic features that characterize this genre? Where, when, and why is this genre used? Give an example to illustrate what you mean.
9. Consider the following formulae or discourse-specific utterances (quoted from the NRSV). These formulae are of the kind that often helps us recognize a particular literary genre. Specify the genre in each case. Then choose its Scripture reference from the passages listed below the bulleted list.

- ___ These are the descendants of Esau...
- ___ To what should I compare the kingdom of God?
- ___ The word of the Lord came to me:
- ___ To the exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia...
- ___ How lonely sits the city that once was full of people!
- ___ Happy is everyone who fears the Lord
- ___ Then I saw another beast that rose out of the earth
- ___ The wise woman builds her house, but the foolish tears it down
- ___ The churches of Asia send greetings
- ___ [T]he people of Aram shall go into exile to Kir, says the Lord. Thus says the Lord:
- ___ And now, O priests, this command is for you.
- ___ On that day the branch of the Lord shall be beautiful and glorious
- ___ Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep.
- ___ ...son of Enos, son of Seth, son of Adam, son of God.
- ___ In the first book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus did
- ___ You are beautiful as Tirzah, my love, comely as Jerusalem
- ___ Slaves, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling
- ___ This shall be the ritual for the leprous person at the time of his cleansing:
- ___ In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people.
- ___ Let the day perish in which I was born
- ___ Grace to you and peace from God our Father
- ___ Rehoboam slept with his ancestors and was buried in the city of David
- ___ What shall I do with you, O Ephraim?
- ___ Now a bishop must be above reproach, married only once
- ___ Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida!
- ___ The Israelites again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord

a. 1 Timothy 3:1
e. 1 Corinthians 16:21
i. Acts 1:1
m. Philemon 3
q. Luke 13:20
u. Revelation 13:11
y. Luke 3:38

b. Leviticus 14:2
f. Job 3:3
j. Song of Songs 6:4
n. 2 Chronicles 12:16
r. Malachi 2:1
v. Proverbs 14:1
z. Amos 1:5–6

c. Genesis 36:1
g. Luke 18:2
k. 1 Peter 1:1
o. Judges 10:6
s. Lamentations 1:1
w. Matthew 11:21

d. Isaiah 4:2
h. Ezekiel 35:1
l. Psalm 128:1
p. Ephesians 6:5
t. John 10:7
x. Hosea 6:4

10.4 What is the difference between prose and poetry?

In some literary or oral traditions, the difference between prose and poetry is relatively clear-cut and easily specified.⁸ This is normally the case where the various kinds of poetry are strictly defined in terms of fixed linguistic or literary categories, such as meter, rhyme, regular line length (syllable count), and verses (several lines grouped together). Certain types of poems may be designated by particular technical terms (e.g., *sonnet*, *choric ode*, *epic*, *hymn*). However, in the case of other world literatures, perhaps most of them, including Biblical Hebrew, the distinction between prose and poetry is quite a bit more flexible and depends more on a particular concentration or combination of what may be termed *poetic*, as opposed to *prosaic* stylistic features.

Carefully read texts I and II below. Notice the stylistic differences between them.

What are the most obvious features that immediately catch your attention?

Which passage is written as prose and which as poetry?

Why do you think so in each case? (Give some reasons or the linguistic signals that you look for when distinguishing prose from poetic texts.)

I

But Sisera fled away on foot to the tent of Jael,
the wife of Heber the Kenite;
for there was peace
between Jabin the king of Hazor
and the house of Heber the Kenite.

And Jael came out to meet Sisera, and said to him,
“Turn aside, my lord, turn aside to me; have no fear.”
So he turned aside to her into the tent,
and she covered him with a rug.
And he said to her, “Pray, give me
a little water to drink; for I am thirsty.”

So she opened a skin of milk
and gave him a drink and covered him.
And he said to her,
“Stand at the door of the tent,
and if any man comes and asks you,
'Is any one here?' say, No.”

But Jael the wife of Heber took a tent peg,
and took a hammer in her hand,
and went softly to him
and drove the peg into his temple,
till it went down into the ground,
as he was lying fast asleep from weariness.
So he died.

And behold, as Barak pursued Sisera,
Jael went out to meet him, and said to him,
“Come, and I will show you the man
whom you are seeking.”
So he went in to her tent;
and there lay Sisera dead,

⁸Stockwell (2002:34) says, “In genre studies, a hierarchy has been suggested as follows:

- *mode* prose, poetry, drama, conversation, song...
- *genre* comedy, tragedy, gothic, surrealism...
- *subgenre* mock-epic, comic opera, airport fiction, war novel, political memoir...
- *type* sonnet, ballad, email, one-act play, short story...
- *register* reporting language, letter-writing, narrative, lyricism....”

with the tent peg in his temple.

So on that day God subdued Jabin
the king of Canaan before the people of Israel.
And the hand of the people of Israel
bore harder and harder on Jabin the king of Canaan,
until they destroyed Jabin king of Canaan.

II

Most blessed of women be Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, of tent-dwelling women most blessed. He asked water and she gave him milk, she brought him curds in a lordly bowl. She put her hand to the tent peg and her right hand to the workmen's mallet; she struck Sisera a blow, she crushed his head, she shattered and pierced his temple. He sank, he fell, he lay still at her feet; at her feet he sank, he fell; where he sank, there he fell dead. Out of the window she peered, the mother of Sisera gazed through the lattice: "Why is his chariot so long in coming? Why tarry the hoofbeats of his chariots?" Her wisest ladies make answer, nay, she gives answer to herself, "Are they not finding and dividing the spoil? – A maiden or two for every man; spoil of dyed stuffs for Sisera, spoil of dyed stuffs embroidered, two pieces of dyed work embroidered for my neck as spoil?" So perish all thine enemies, O LORD! But thy friends be like the sun as he rises in his might. And the land had rest for forty years.

One of the texts above is the RSV translation of Judges 4:17–24, the other of Judges 5:24–31.

Which is I and which is II? Can you tell without looking it up in your Bible?

Which text is the prose passage and what are three features that indicate this to you?

Which is the poetry passage and what three stylistic devices are the evidence of this?

Try to identify a climax (emotive or action peak) in each of the two texts. Give reasons for your choice (i.e., mention specific stylistic markers).

Poetry characteristically emphasizes the *oral-aural* sound qualities of a text and the "sight" of one's inner eyes, that is, the *visual* dimension, through figurative, evocative, and imaginative devices. In Biblical Hebrew (and in many other literatures), poetic discourse manifests many of the following devices:

- **parallelism** (i.e., short, balanced A and B lines forming a sequence of parallel pairs)
- **condensation** (e.g., ellipsis of elements in the B parallel line or omission of conjunctions)
- **rhythmic cadence** of word accents and/or syllable counts (a kind of meter)
- **concentrations of figures of speech** (especially simile and metaphor)
- **word order variations** (e.g., divergence from prosaic V-S-O, more chiasmic constructions)
- **word plays** (puns) and **sound plays** (alliteration, assonance)
- **lexical repetition** (both exact and synonymous, random and structured)
- **intensified language**, occasionally exclamatory
- **rhetorical questions** and **deliberative questions**
- **specialized vocabulary** including technical liturgical or archaic words and poetic word pairs
- **direct speech** as the preferred mode of text presentation
- **allusion** and **symbolism** (especially characteristic of religious discourse)

We will be looking at these poetic devices more closely in another lesson. For now, describe the ones that you may have learned about during your previous biblical or language studies. The first three features are probably the most diagnostic of Hebrew poetry. Would you agree? If not, which three features would you propose – and why?

In addition to a greater frequency, density, and intensity of usage with respect to the preceding stylistic characteristics, Hebrew poetry is also distinguished by a significant reduction in the incidence of two narrative features: (1) the *narrative construction* (waw-consecutive or wayyiktol sequential structure); and (2) the *prose particles*; namely, the sign of the direct object ('eth), the definite article (h-), the relative clause marker ('asher), and the inseparable prepositions (m-, l-, k-, b-). In contrast, Hebrew prose discourse features a higher concentration of these narrative characteristics along with a reduction in the number and variety of the poetic devices.

For reflection, research, and response:

1. Study the B text above with reference to the Hebrew text or an interlinear version. If this is not possible, look it up in a literal English version such as the NASB or the RSV. Then answer this and the following questions. First of all, reformat the passage (Judg. 5:24–31) as poetry. That is, on a separate piece of paper set out the poetic lines in parallel fashion down the page.
2. What stylistic or structural criteria indicate beginning of a new poetic unit (strophe) at Judges 5:24?
3. How is Jael distinguished as the heroine of text B? How does this compare with her treatment in the prose text (A)? Who is the anti-heroine of the poetic version? Note the significance of where she appears within the discourse. Where is she mentioned in the prose text? What is the rhetorical and historical implication of this omission?
4. How are the parallel lines of Judges 5:24 related to each other? In what ways does the second line augment, intensify, specify, or heighten the first line? Can you find a chiasmus in this verse, that is, A – B :: B' – A'? How does this passage compare with 4:19? What are the differences?
5. Point out the *word order shifts* that create parallel expressions in 5:25. Point out the *asyndeton* (lack of conjunctions) that gives this verse its compact, condensed quality.
6. Evaluate the reformatted text of 5:24–27 below (RSV). (Compare it with the original Hebrew if possible.) Does it help display the poetic dynamics of this passage more precisely? Give reasons for your judgement and make any suggestions for improvement that come to mind.

Most blessed of women be Jael,
the wife of Heber the Kenite,
of tent-dwelling women most blessed!

He asked water and she gave him milk,
she brought him curds in a lordly bowl.
She put her hand to the tent peg
and her right hand to the workmen's mallet;
she struck Sisera a blow,
she crushed his head,
she shattered and pierced his temple.
He sank,
he fell,
he lay still at her feet;
at her feet he sank,
he fell;
where he sank,
there he fell
dead!

7. In the vivid poetic description of Judges 5:26 you can see the shocking events take place before the eyes of your imagination. How does this differ from the prose account of 4:21? For example, observe the synonyms that are used. If you can read the Hebrew text, note which lexical concept is repeated; then refer to 5:22 where this same word appears. In what connection? How is the meaning of verse 26 intensified if listeners recall what was said in verse 22? Such intratextual connections are common in biblical poetry.
8. What prominent poetic device is manifested in Judges 5:27? What is the function of this device in this context? Compare the prose account of this incident (4:21). What difference in the facts of the account do you observe? What is the poet trying to do by giving his impression of this climactic scene? Does the

tempo of the poetic discourse in verses 26–27 seem fast or slow? What is it that evokes this impression, and what purpose does it serve here?

9. Consider the scene that is told so poetically in Judges 5:28–30. Where is the corresponding account in the prose text of chapter 4? How do you explain this in terms of the two types of discourse that we have here? For example, what is the overall communicative purpose of each of these two texts?
10. What type of questions do we find in verses 28 and 30? How do they heighten the dramatic irony of the scene that the poet is painting for us? What sort of emotions does the text evoke here?
11. What is the meaning of Judges 5:29? Consult several different versions, including the original Hebrew text if you can. What common poetic characteristic is illustrated in this passage? What do you think of the CEV's rendering, "She and her wisest women gave the same answer"?
12. Notice all the repetition in Judges 5:30. What appears to be its special poetic function at this point?
13. What potential problem do you see in Judges 5:31a–b as far as pronominal usage is concerned? Such shifting back and forth (*enallage*) is another common feature of Hebrew poetry. Can you use pronouns this way in YL? Explain.
14. Notice the position of the divine name YHWH in this verse. Can you suggest any special reason for this utterance-final placement of the vocative?
15. If you can read the Hebrew, point out the play on words (pun) in the first line of Judges 5:31. Also fill out the ellipsis of line 2 (see the CEV).
16. How does the NRSV translate the original "the ones loving him" in the second line of Judges 5:31? Evaluate this rendering in terms of its accuracy and poetic effectiveness.
17. What prominent simile is present in verse 31? What is its point of similarity?
18. Is the final line of verse 31 written in prose or poetry? What are the linguistic or literary indicators that show this? Note the contrastive style that is evident in the text. What is the structural significance of such a shift at this point? That is, who speaks these final words of the chapter?
19. Observe how the prose narrative account ends in Judges 4:23–24. Notice all the repetition that is found here too (even a chiasmus). But what are the features that make this passage sound prosaic, not poetic as in 5:31a–b? What is the special function of this repetition in the narrative at large?
20. Evaluate the style of the RSV in the A and B passages reproduced in section 4.4. Propose two revisions of a literary nature to the translation of each text, based on the preceding study.
21. Can you render the style of Judges 5 effectively as poetry in YL? Will a poetic text in YL convey a similar dramatic effect (with rhetorical impact and esthetic appeal)? Explain, with reasons. If not, how will you distinguish the different nature and purpose of these two chapters, Judges 4 and 5? Keep in mind what Nida (2003:81) said about this passage of Scripture: "[Judges 5] is highly sophisticated dramatic poetry, as fine as Homer produced."
22. Adele Berlin (cited in Doyle 2003:168) summarizes the essence of biblical poetry as follows: "[T]he combination of likeness and difference is the essence of the relationship between parallel lines in biblical poetry." To this Brian Doyle adds (*ibid.*): "One can agree with her that parallelism of one form or another lies at the core of biblical poetic composition. It is equally fair to say, however, that virtually every stylistic technique in biblical poetry boils down to some sort of parallel repetition based on one or other degree of similarity and difference." Do you agree with these sentiments? If not, explain why not. If you do agree, give a good example of similarity combined with difference in Judges 5.
23. Does a "close" linguistic-literary analysis like the one carried out above help or hinder the serious Bible translator? Give some reasons for your opinion.

As we have seen in Judges 4 – 5, a given biblical text may be classified or interpreted as being more or less poetic (or prosaic) on the basis of the relative amounts of the structural and stylistic features present as well as their distribution in the discourse. But some uncertainty and indeterminacy – hence also

scholarly controversy – occurs in some other texts, for example, in a number of prophetic and wisdom texts.

On what basis is poetry distinguished from prose in Jeremiah 47 – 50 and Ecclesiastes 1 by the NRSV text layout?

How would you classify these two passages? Explain why in each case.

Problems of classification also arise in connection with certain epistolary passages (e.g., 1 Cor. 13, Phil. 2:6–11, Col. 1:1–20), including those that quote poetry from the Septuagint. For example, how poetic is Hebrews 1:5–13 in Greek? What purpose could poetry serve in such quotations? Even in texts that are predominantly narrative in nature, distinctive poetic inserts occur for the purpose of highlighting, as in many of the crucial speeches of Genesis (e.g., 1:26; 2:23; 3:14–19; 4:23; 8:22; 9:6, 25–26; 12:2–3). In such cases it is not so much the form or classification that is important for interpreters, but rather the function, especially where the poetically heightened style of discourse is being used to achieve greater emotive expression or to foreground or emphasize a particular portion of the text. What might the function be in the several Genesis passages cited earlier?

The chart below is a summary of the principal types of literature found in the Old Testament. The middle of the chart indicates the overlapping that is manifested by text types that may be either more poetic or more prosaic in style. But even here there may be some significant variations, as in the case of *didactic wisdom* passages. Discuss the chart's different terms in class, especially the unfamiliar ones. Then try to prepare a set of corresponding terms in your language – as close as you can come for now. You will have a chance to revise your list as you proceed through this workbook.

PROSE	<p>Report (sequential recording [+/- description] of events, persons, places, e.g., Ezek. 40 – 48; also <i>letters</i> and <i>decrees</i>, e.g., Ezra 6 – 7; minimum form = <i>genealogy</i>, e.g., Gen. 36, or a <i>census</i>, e.g., 1 Chr. 23 – 27)</p> <p>Law (formal commands, ritual or architectural instructions, covenantal language)</p> <p>Exposition (explanation of meaning, e.g., Gen. 41; Esth. 9:26–28)</p> <p>Exhortation</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Blessing, encouragement (if you act righteously, the LORD will prosper you)</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Cursing, admonition (if you act badly, the LORD will punish you, Deut. 28)</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Argument +/- appeals (the prophetic indictments of Malachi)</p> <p>Prayer (a more formalized exhortation, coupled with appeals to Deity, 1 Kgs. 8; includes the category of <i>confession</i> as in Neh. 9)</p> <p>Narrative (historical, dramatic [+plot], parable, prose visionary report)</p>
Prosaic	Prophecy
Poetry	<p>Apocalyptic visions (decorative and distant salvation oracles; special diction; symbolic and visionary; text requiring a hermeneutical key) <i>In terms of its poetic qualities, didactic wisdom verse fits here.</i></p> <p>Salvation oracles (divine promises of blessing, restoration, fruitfulness)</p> <p>Judgement decrees (divine predictions of punishment for sin/impitence)</p> <p>Wisdom Verse (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes)</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Proverbial (minimal length; concise and concentrated mnemonic microform)</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Didactic (longer length; parabolic, sapiential, instructional, enigmatic poetry)</p> <p>Lyric Verse (Psalms, Song of Songs)</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Lament (appeal for protection, rescue, healing, and other kinds of help)</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Eulogy (praise for the attributes and actions of a person or God)</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Thanksgiving (grateful acknowledgment of blessings or help received)</p>
POETRY	

Do you have any modifications to suggest for the preceding chart? There is a problem involving the relative generality of some of these categories and their relationship to the prose ⇔ poetry continuum. For example, prophetic oracles of salvation or judgement normally include passages of exposition and/or exhortation. The chart here is merely an example and the stimulus for a more precise consideration and class discussion of some of the main classificatory issues involved

How does the preceding classification compare with the different literary genres found in the New Testament? (Remember that NT genres tend to be more prosaic than poetic in nature.)

Which terms or categories do you need to modify in order to describe the writings of Christ's apostles? Are there any you need to add?

In anticipation of the next section, mention the types of literature or orature in your language that are the closest functional equivalents to those listed in the above chart.

10.5 Investigating the prose and poetry of the target language

Learning to recognize and interpret the different text types and genres of the Bible and being able to distinguish poetic from prosaic passages is just half of what skilled translators need to know. The second half is just as important, though it is often neglected. The aim in this section is to suggest a way to discover and describe the TL's diverse literary resources so that they may be pressed into service when rendering the text of Scripture, especially for a more stylistically dynamic and functionally corresponding version. The TL was already investigated to a certain degree in the course of answering the questions of some of the previous lessons. But now we will consider genres and styles with the aim of finding some formal and functional equivalents – or at least close translational matches – for those present in the original text (see Zogbo and Wendland 2000, chap. 3).

To carry out such a study in the literature of a vernacular, it is necessary to collect a considerable number of diverse texts. A broad selection of representative examples must also be transcribed and printed out for group consideration. All sorts of texts should be gathered – oral and written, religious and secular, in various styles by different authors and/or orators, and in the major dialect that has been agreed upon for use in the translation. Be sure to also investigate the compositional technique of skilled radio performers – narrators, debaters, teachers, preachers, and poets. Why would the radio be a good source of models for translators (cf. Wendland 2004a, 2005)? Simply because these rhetors and artists often write out their performances, at least in outline form, for oral presentation to a vast, invisible, diverse audience. Even if they do nothing in writing, they must still prepare their discourse in their minds ahead of time. For this reason an accomplished and popular broadcasting style often combines effective features from both the oral and written modes of communication, which is what Bible translators must also endeavor to do. Why is that so?

The following questions should be asked by the translation team or their research assistants with regard to collected texts as they begin their investigation.

- a. What is the social *occasion* and physical, temporal, and spatial *setting* where this text was or will be spoken, written, recited, or sung? Will it be in public or private, inside or out of doors, at a certain time of year or day, in a particular type of publication, on a secular or religious occasion, in sad or happy or neutral circumstances (funeral, wedding, childbirth, year-end, harvest-time, new moon festival, etc.)?
- b. What is the text's *communicative purpose*? Is it intended to teach, warn, encourage, entertain, predict the future, initiate the youth, give some history, or simply help pass the time? Is it to give comfort, express the speaker's deepest feelings, attitudes, or opinions in an implicit way, celebrate a royal occasion or communal festival, or some combination of these?

- c. Does any sort of *formula* begin or end the text? For example, a formula characteristic of Chichewa oral narrative is *Padangotere, dziko likadali ndi mphonje* “It just happened that way, when the earth was still very young” (lit., “it still had a fringe” like a garment); another is *Aphike chidzungu gwa! Chimwala wisu! Chathera pomwepo!* “Cook a big pumpkin – it comes out rock hard! A big stone – soft as mush! It [my tale] has ended right here!”
- d. What is the text’s *speaker and addressee orientation*? Are the speaker and addressee referred to as first, second, or third person, impersonal, singular or plural, active or passive? For example, in Nyanja a “how-to” text or a proverb is normally encoded with a third singular impersonal speaker and a second person singular addressee, while a folk narrative or a historical text would be a third singular personal speaker and second person plural addressees.
- e. What is the text’s *discourse organization and verb usage*? For example, a text may be primarily situated in the past, present, future, or some other time setting (e.g., perfect), and the events recorded in chronological or a-chronological order (as in a description or a royal praise poem). Special tenses and verb forms may be used (e.g., the *narrative sequential tense* in Chichewa historical reports or in other types of oral narrative). Other special linguistic markers may occur to help distinguish a certain genre (e.g., conjunctions; verbal affixes; particles that indicate modality such as “can,” “must,” “should,” “may”; conditionality words; interjections signifying truth; emphasis words; and ideophones to inject drama and humor into the account).

The preceding are merely some suggested general questions given for the purpose of illustration. They need to be made more specific, revised where necessary, and expanded to suit the local setting of communication. (There are more investigative queries below.) All variations due to differences in dialect, place, age group, and sex must also be noted, including the specific production frame of reference that has been agreed upon for a particular Bible translation project. After a number of potentially useable vernacular genres have been identified, the process of comparison may begin; namely, searching for form-functional equivalents and trying them out (perhaps in modified form) on actual TL audiences in order to determine their suitability for use in the Scriptures.

Remember: a *LiFE* approach always begins with the source text and the essential form-content-functional significance found there, but it must end with the target language and a search for the closest, most relevant communicative correspondents with respect to the primary audience. Just as much time and effort needs to be devoted to the literary genres and associated stylistic features of the TL as is given to a study of the SL in relation to the biblical text to be translated.

For reflection, research, and response:

1. Review the main features that characterize a narrative text type. List the different kinds of narrative discourse that are in your language, both oral and written. Give the vernacular names that designate these TL-specific genres. Give their equivalent in English or French, if you can.
2. Describe each of the narrative genres you just listed in terms of form (its main stylistic features), content (the main topics that this genre deals with), function (what the communicative purposes of this genre primarily are), and setting (where and when it is used).
3. Give examples of some specific biblical narratives that could be translated by means of these TL genres.
4. How close is the match between the SL narrative types and your TL genres with respect to the primary mode of transmission and reception that is envisioned for your translation of the Bible, whether written or oral? Do certain adjustments need to be made? If so, what are the most important of these? It may be necessary to conduct further research and testing in the TL in order to fully answer this question.
5. If time allows, repeat the steps outlined in exercises 1 – 4 for the other three discourse types in YL: procedural, expository, and hortatory (+/– description). They could be investigated on some other occasion, if necessary. The main thing is to master the procedure first with respect to narrative discourse, which is the most familiar. Then it can be applied at a future time to the other types on the basis of what has been learned in class about narrative.

6. Return now to the two selections from Judges 4 and 5 that were considered earlier. Translate Judges 4:17–24 idiomatically in YL in keeping with the narrative genre that seems most suitable, including the normal stylistic features that would be used in a historical discourse of this type.
7. Earlier you were asked whether Judges 5 could be rendered as poetry in YL. Let us assume that this can be done. Pick an appropriate vernacular genre and try it out on Judges 5:24–31 as a test case. What are some of the specific stylistic features that make it possible for people to recognize this passage as being poetry in YL? Are there certain poetic devices that would not be appropriate to use in the Scriptures? List which ones (if any) and why. What are the main problems that you encountered in this translation exercise? Are these problems mainly SL or TL related? Explain.
8. Describe the following passages in terms of each one's social occasion and physical setting, purpose or goal, the occurrence of formulae, speaker and addressee orientation, discourse organization and verb usage (see the earlier bulleted list): Exodus 1:9–10; 3:7–10; 5:7–9; 6:20–23; 12:1–5; 13:14–15; 15:21; 22:1; 23:14–15; 25:31–32; 32:31–32; 33:12–13; 34:6–7, 11–14. (The course instructor may select some of these to be done or assign specific passages to different members of the class.)
9. Now examine the following passages from Genesis and consider how they might best be rendered in YL – whether as prose, poetry, or a mixture of the two – in order to be acceptable to different audience groups: Genesis 1:1 – 2:3; 2:10–14, 23; 3:14–19; 4:23–24; 5:6–32; 9:1–17; 10:21–31; 11:1–9; 14:1–16; 17:9–14; 20:1–18; 25:7–11, 23; 27:27b–29, 39–40; 37:1–36; 41:17–36; 46:8–27; 49:2–27. In each case give a reason for your decision. If you are able to specify a particular genre or style in YL, do so and then indicate which formal and/or functional features of the original text call for that genre as its closest literary equivalent. Also point out several features of the TL genre or style that would be close functional matches for the corresponding devices of the SL text.
10. If time allows, members of the class may translate several of the preceding Genesis passages, either completely or only in part, keeping a particular audience and type of translation in mind. These drafts may then be discussed and critically evaluated by the group as a whole.
11. Carry out a study of Exodus 14 and 15:1–18 like the one you did of Judges 4 – 5 in section 4.4. (You may consult Zogbo and Wendland 2000:3–6 for assistance.) Follow these steps: List five major structural and/or stylistic differences between the two chapters, citing specific examples. Describe the two chapters' different communication goals and how they relate to each other in the book of Exodus. Cite three examples that demonstrate that Exodus 14 is needed as a frame of reference in order to correctly understand chapter 15. Explain how Exodus 15:13–18 relates to the rest of the song of Moses. Suggest how 15:19 and 15:20–21 relate to chapter 14 and 15:1–18 in terms of discourse function (e.g., compare 15:1 and 15:21).
12. Have you ever done any research on the style of radio performers who are poets or orators? Do you know of any such broadcasters whose programs you can easily listen to? Do you think that it would be worth the effort to investigate this possibility as a means of finding an appropriate writing style for your translation? Explain.
13. The American poet Robert Frost once said, "Poetry is that which is lost in translation." What did he mean by that? Is it true? Does this necessarily apply to every translation? What might translators do to falsify this assertion? The theory of cognitive poetics claims that "poetry exploits, for esthetic purposes, cognitive (including linguistic) processes that were initially evolved for non-esthetic purposes.... Quite a few (but by no means all) central poetic effects are the result of some drastic interference with, or at least delay of, the regular course of cognitive processes, and the exploitation of its effects for esthetic purposes." (Reuven Tsur, in Semino and Culpeper 2002:281). To what extent do you agree with this theoretical perspective? If you do agree, give an illustration of it from Judges 5. If you disagree, tell why.
14. Read Isaiah 11 carefully. What might "get lost in translation" when working with this passage? Note the potential text-critical benefit of a literary approach. When you have finished reading through the text, suggest some ways in which you might lessen the loss in artistry and rhetoric as you translate it into YL. Graham Ogden points out some artistic features in the less familiar second half of this chapter, Isaiah 11:11–16 (n.d, cited with permission):

Isaiah 11.11–16 is a clear and discrete unit of text. It is marked by some quite special features and it is these I want to highlight. It treats the matter of Yahweh bringing the remnant back from dispersion to Jerusalem. “The opening line begins: “In that day the Lord will extend his hand a second time...” Although some commentators suggest that שְׁנִיָּתָא (second time) be omitted in light of the opening verb יוֹסִיף (to repeat an action), there is evidence from Qumran indicating that MT is the correct text. Reference to a “second time” points to a future action based upon or parallel to a former act, a “first time.” That former act, the first time, is described in the final line of the section: “...as happened...in the day of his coming up from the land of Egypt.” Thus the final line answers the question, what was the first time God acted? It indicates that the second Exodus (v. 11), the return of the Diaspora, is a repeat performance of the first Exodus (v. 16). In this way, the final line actually completes the first. As an *inclusio*, verses 11 and 16 provide an example of a highly sophisticated sectional marker.

However, the *inclusio* is even more finely crafted, and it is this feature that I wish to draw to your attention. The crafting becomes clear when we look at the second and the second last lines of the unit. Here the Hebrew text of both lines reads literally, “...the remnant which is left of his people, from Assyria...” Added to the repeated form of the two lines is yet another feature which may well be unique in the book. It is the elaborate play on the three root letters ש, א, and ר ... The line reads שְׁאֵר עֲמוֹ אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁאֵר מֵאַשּׁוּר (sh'ar 'ammo 'asher yishsha'er me'ashshur). The alliteration produced by these repeated sounds is a very powerful one, adding yet another feature to the *inclusio*. These structural and rhetorical features serve to draw greater attention to the content, the fact that a remnant does have a future. Proof that there will be a second Exodus lies in the past, in the first Exodus. What God has done in the past he will repeat.

The clever development of a phrase built around those three consonants is witness to the poetic skills of Isaiah. Obviously it will be more than a challenge for translators to reach the same level of sophistication in their literary presentation. *Although modern translators would probably never be able to match the sophistication of the inclusio in this section, it might help them to strive for a higher degree of artistry if they appreciate what Isaiah managed to achieve* [emphasis added]. Even if a small measure of semantic value has to be sacrificed, it might well be possible to achieve some kind of sound resemblance and in so doing to achieve the kind of highlighting that the original text intends.

Ogden adds the following caveat with regard to the goal of preparing practical textual aids for Bible translators: “A Handbook for Translators is only doing part of its job if it deals merely with the text yet fails to *excite* the translator. Pointing to the poetic genius of an author or editor should help translators appreciate more of the beauty of the language of the text and challenge them to do a much better job in their own rendering of it.”

Do you agree with this sentiment? If so, can you think of another Scripture passage that really “excited” you as you analyzed it so that you tried to re-create the intended impact and appeal of the original text – over and above its propositional content? Note the local and global significance of the sonic structure of Isaiah 24:16b. How would you reproduce this impressive sound effect in YL?

15. In the Psalms is the addressing of God a case of poetics, pragmatics, or both? With reference to this issue, Andy Warren-Rothlin (2003:7) asks,

If HBO [Biblical Hebrew] culture does lay significant stress on greeting (more than EUR [European] culture; less than WALs [West African Languages]), and if HBO greetings are prototypically optatives and blessings, what are we to make of the four בָּרַךְ -phrases which divide the Psalter into five books, and what of the many Psalm introits in הַלְלֵהוּ ‘Praise!’, הוֹדֵהוּ ‘Acknowledge!’, שִׁירָה ‘Sing!’, and בְּרַכְהוּ ‘Bless!’? Does the Psalmist in fact “greet” God? And if so, in any form at all, should this not be reflected in translations intended for a culture as “greeting-oriented” as WA?...[T]he very high occurrence of most of these modal forms in the Psalter should lead us to expect to find the interjection “please” used frequently in English translations. In fact, we find that, among the better-known modern versions, only CEV uses “please,” and that only eight times! Even if, as in some WALs, the only equivalents available are rather “heavy” expressions, should we not find ways to incorporate the tone of entreaty, lest the desperate cries of the Psalmist, like those of a

blind beggar screaming to Jesus to help him, get sanitised into the lilting cadences of a “Kyrie eleison”?”

How would you answer the explicit and implicit questions that Warren-Rothlin raises here in relation to a translation of the Psalter in YL? Do you have any additional insights to offer on this, or any other pragmatic-poetic, translational issue? How does this example call attention to the importance of a thorough, systematic study of the TL language and literature/orature *prior to* Bible translation?

16. Evaluate the following proposals (from Kompaore 2008) for helping translators to deal with similar text-types, genres and biblical themes in their work. Would this method work in your situation? Do you have any additions or modifications to suggest to this text-specific translation approach?

Thematic and text type classification of Biblical texts can also be effectively used in order to facilitate both more accurate and more rapid translation work. It is already a common practice to have translators work on narrative texts together, on Biblical law, on prophetic literature, and on wisdom literature. In each genre, one finds similar discourse structure, similar expressions and themes. A translator can rely on his memory and his experience in the translation of each book within the same genre.

However, I believe we can do better in helping the translator deal with repetitive themes and text types, especially those text types that do not form large blocks of material but which are scattered throughout Bible. For instance, recently, I was helping a translator deal with oath and vow texts. It seemed to me a good idea for us to look at a number of oath and vow texts, examine their structure and context in order to develop a good and consistent translation. However, the only way to do this was to look for Bible dictionary entries, do a concordance search on key words, or find and read through monographs on the topic. This requires a fair amount of time for research, and access to good Biblical studies libraries, which is not the case for the ordinary hardworking translator who feels compelled to produce a certain number of verses each day.

The ideal strategy would be to have a few people collect data and do the research necessary and then to develop software based on this research that would allow the translator to examine all oath and vow texts consecutively, and to either do a first draft translation of each text in sequence, or at later stage, to check the consistency of the translation. A person using such a tool would be able to check not only the same expressions, but also similar expressions, similar discourse structure, and similar themes in light of the context of each oath. Not only would it facilitate accuracy in translation, it will speed up the process of translation of oaths and vows; the translator would not be obligated to rethink how to translate an oath, trying to remember what passage it was where he had last translated the last oath. Everyone also knows how time-consuming it is to go over the entire Bible and correct inconsistencies in a translation.

Other text type categorizations that would be useful for more accurate, consistent, and speedy translations are:

- types of volitive speech such as laws, counsel, requests and prayers, and exhortation
- types of prophetic passages, both salvational and judgmental
- poetic inserts in narrative material
- types of genealogical notices

...In addition to text type classifications, thematic categorization within the Biblical text would also prove quite useful. Translators can already use cross references in a Bible, which alert the reader of passages of a similar theme, but what I am thinking of would simplify the research and even allow for consecutive translation of passages of the same theme.

...Translating the book of Psalms is a long and arduous affair. However, it need not be if translation proceeded according to text type and theme. Many commentaries take the pains to identify the genre of each Psalm, and most Psalms could be thus classified rather easily and quickly. However, as a translator works through the Psalms, again he is most likely to start with Psalms 1 and continue through to the end. He is not likely to take the time to group together Psalms of the same genre and theme and then translate

them out of order. But if he were able to do so, he would translate together the psalms mostly likely to have the same and similar expressions, and probably move ahead much more quickly.

...For instance, I went through the entire Psalms and codified each Psalm according to text type using the criteria of major communication function...:

- Didactic (Instruction),
- Judgment (Retribution, this includes both the act of deliberating judgement as well as the events that take place as a result of the judgment – destruction of enemies, etc.)
- Confidence (Trust)
- Request (Petition)
- Lament
- Thanksgiving
- Praise
- Promise
- Wish

All of these categories can also be found as a sub category within a number of Psalms. In fact several are more frequent as a subcategory than as a major text type, such as:

- Lament – referring to a complaint to God about certain painful circumstances
- Confidence
- Promise – including oaths, prophetic prediction,
- Wish - These include jussive (or subjunctive) types of structures.

...There are also other secondary categorizations which can be useful for the translator such as:

- Pardon (repentance and forgiveness)
- Blessing (i.e. God's blessing humans)
- Temple (including any reference to being in God's presence, as well as different terms used for God's abode)
- Bad behaviour (could be further subcategorized, such as Arrogance, Idolatry, Enemy)
- Good behaviour (a useful subcategory is Innocence)
- Good attributes (This label is used to group together terms such as loyalty, compassion, justice, etc. most often used to describe God's character)
- Acts of God (grouping together any display of God's power, in particular in natural circumstances)
- Fragility (referring to the fragility of human existence)
- Direction (including requests for or statements of God's guidance in our lives. A subcategory could be labelled Law)
- Historical Recall
- Election (including the act of choosing a king or a people)
- Royalty
- Help (or Salvation, with subcategories of Protection and Restoration)

- Distress (grouping together passages describing one's personal distress depression, and suffering.
- Vows and Oaths
- Figurative reference to animals and plants.

This is not an exhaustive list, and it certainly is still under construction, but it needs to be constrained to the primary categories that can group together more than passages, keeping in mind the goal to facilitate translation.

17. Which topics or exercises of this lesson were especially difficult and therefore in need of additional instruction, explanation, and/or practice with selected examples from the Bible? Your suggestions for improvement and critical comments are welcome in this regard; these may also be used as the basis for a group discussion on the subject of genre-based Scripture translation

11 Analyzing and Translating Biblical Poetry

Aim: In this lesson you will further explore the nature and purpose of biblical poetry – in particular, that which is found in the Old Testament, but also in some important passages of the New Testament. You will learn to recognize the main genres of Hebrew poetry and how to apply this knowledge when preparing a *LiFE* translation in your language.

Goals: After working through this lesson you should be able to do the following tasks:

1. Specify the major forms and functions of biblical poetry.
2. Describe five different genres of psalms.
3. Identify several important kinds of biblical prophecy as well as wisdom verse.
4. Examine some examples of poetry in the New Testament.
5. Discover poetic features (or genres) in your language which match those of the Bible.
6. Analyze and translate several longer passages of Scripture by the *LiFE* method.
7. Make a comparison of your version with others and prepare a revised common text.

Review:

Lesson 4 and the notion of “text types,” or “genres,” and the difference between prose and poetry in the Bible as well as in your own literary/oral tradition.

Read:

Sections 3.1.2.1 and 7.1 – 7.12 in *Translating the Literature of Scripture* (Wendland 2004b)
Chapters 1 – 4 in *Hebrew Poetry in the Bible* (Zogbo and Wendland 2000)
Chapters 7 – 12 in *Cracking Old Testament Codes* (Sandy and Giese 1995)
Chapters 2 – 5 in *Analyzing the Psalms* (Wendland 2002)
Prayer, Praise, and Protest (Wilt 2002b; perhaps obtainable through your consultant)
Chapter 9 in *Scripture Frames and Framing* (Wilt and Wendland 2008)

11.1 The major stylistic forms of biblical poetry

In section 4.4 we briefly surveyed some compositional devices that characterize the poetry of the Scriptures. We will now examine these features in greater detail so that we are better able to distinguish poetic from prosaic texts in the Bible. Many of these stylistic techniques may be found in prose passages, but either they are used differently there or they do not occur with the same frequency. We also need to determine *why* poetic texts are used, that is, what some of the principal functions of poetry in biblical discourse are. The functions of poetry will be discussed in section 5.2.

The main stylistic characteristics of Hebrew poetry are described in sections 5.1.1 – 5.1.7, where they are organized into seven general categories. Since they are defined and illustrated here only briefly, students are referred to the books listed at the beginning of lesson 5 for a fuller description. (We will spend a bit more time with the less familiar features.) In some cases, the Hebrew text must be consulted, especially for the devices based on sound. The challenge to *LiFE* translators in such cases is to see whether they can, perhaps through the use of a different phonological device, somehow duplicate their textual purpose, beauty, and impact in the TL.

Another general point to note is that the poetry of Scripture is almost always represented in the form of *direct speech*. It is either God, the biblical author, or some narrative character such as Jacob, Moses, or David who speaks the poetic text in question. Alternatively, the passage has been composed to be uttered aloud (recited, chanted, perhaps even sung), as is the case for the Psalms. When translating such passages, then, they must always be tested as they are being *spoken aloud* in the TL – for naturalness, effectiveness, and phonic appeal.

11.1.1 Parallel phrasing

Parallelism is probably the most prominent and important characteristic of Hebrew poetry. Fortunately, it is a feature that can often be reproduced, with similar poetic effect to a large extent, when translating into another language. This technique involves composing a text in the form of paired, comparatively short, rhythmic lines called *cola*. (The plural form is *cola*, the singular is *colon*, the two together are referred to as a *bicolon*.) These lines, here designated as A or B (plus C or D in the case of a less common third or fourth line), are closely related to each other semantically, and often with regard to certain formal aspects as well (e.g., similar length, vocabulary, sounds, word forms or word order, and grammatical constructions). At times, especially in the Psalms, two common religious or poetic terms are put together – one in the A line, the other in the B line – to form a *word pair*, for example, “heavens” and “earth” in Psalm 96:11, “sun” and “moon” in Psalm 121:6, “Zion” and “Jerusalem” in Amos 1:2, “Judah” and “Israel” in Psalm 76:1.

The main hermeneutical implication of such parallel phrasing is that the pair of lines must always be interpreted together as a single unit of meaning within the text, not as isolated segments. Most obvious are the coupled poetic lines that occur adjacent to each other, one after the other – A + B. However, other sets of corresponding lines may be separated from one another, normally serving to mark discourse boundaries in lyric texts as in Psalm 8:1 and 8, and 98:4a and 6b (see section 5.1.7).

In addition to having formal linguistic parallels, the poetic lines of a bicolon are usually related to each other in one of four main ways: That is, line B functions to complement line A by means of a relationship of (1) similarity, (2) contrast, (3) cause-effect, or (4) addition. Examples of each of these types are given below (using, except where noted, the NIV, which is a relatively literal version). Another feature to watch out for in these parallel lines is *heightening*, in which the B line is often found to be more specific, intensive, graphic, rhetorically marked, or semantically significant than A (see section 5.1.5).

1. Similarity

An example of *similarity* is in Psalm 61:1 (NIV; compare the GNT rendering):

A: Hear O-God my-cry; [3 words in Hebrew]
B: heed my-prayer! [2 words]

The 3 + 2 word (accentual) pattern that we see here is the *second* most common kind of pairing found in the Psalms; it is often associated with laments. A balanced 3 + 3 bicolon is the most common, but there are many variations within a range of from one (long) to six words. (Hebrew word counts and syntactic word orders may be roughly discerned by consulting an interlinear Bible based on the Masoretic text.) In Psalm 61:1, syntactic parallelism accompanies and reinforces the semantic similarity: Line A is composed of Verb + Vocative + Object, and line B of Verb + Object (with the Vocative left implicit). Such synonymous parallelism often manifests a certain heightening of meaning in the B line; in Psalm 61:1, we note that line B is somewhat more specific in its appeal than A (“cry” => “prayer”).

Try to find another example of parallel similarity in which line B gives evidence of one or more elements that are more intensive or vivid than their correspondents in line A.

Refer to an exegetical commentary in order to determine the nature and possible purpose of this heightening.

2. Contrast

A clear example of *contrast* is in Psalm 145:20 (NIV; compare the GNT rendering):

A: The LORD watches over all who love him,
B: But all the wicked he will destroy.

A paired contrast is sometimes arranged in the form of a chiasmus, as here, perhaps as a way of emphasizing the opposing (antithetical) elements. Line A of Psalm 145:20 is composed of Verb + Subject + Object, and line B of Object + Subject-Verb:

A: Watching Yahweh DO-all-those-loving-him [3 words; DO = direct object marker]
B: and-DO all-the-wicked-ones he-will-destroy [3 words]

What are the two contrasts present in this verse? (Normally, there are at least two per bicolon.)

Find and analyze another good example of contrastive parallelism in the Psalms.

3. Cause-effect

Examples of *cause-effect* are seen in Psalm 116:2 and 119:11. Several different types of cause-effect relations can link a line A and line B, but two common types are illustrated by these verses:

Because he turned his ear to me,
I will call on him as long as I live. (Ps. 116:2)

I have hidden your word in my heart
that I might not sin against you. (Ps. 119:11)

Try to specify the logical connection between the two lines after comparing the NIV rendering with the original Hebrew.

Which bicolon do you think is means-purpose and which reason-result? Perhaps, based on the Hebrew text, you wish to propose a different relationship between the A and B lines. If so, explain your interpretation.

At times, distinct causal relationships occur *within* a poetic line because two or more verb (predicative) ideas are involved, as is the case in the B line below:

For the sake of your name, O LORD,
forgive my iniquity,
though it is great. (Ps. 25:11; i.e., *reason + appeal + concession*)

Furthermore, two (or more) complete bicola may be closely connected with each other, for example:

Test me, O LORD, and try me,
examine my heart and my mind; (Ps. 26:2, *similarity*)
for your love is ever before me,
and I walk continually in your truth. (Ps. 26:3, *addition*)

Here verse 3 (as a whole) is linked to verse 2 by the relationship of *appeal + reason*, which is a very common pairing in the Psalter. The sequence of such bicola forms a hierarchy of interdependent semantic relationships throughout a given psalm (see Wendland 2002:98–107; see also section 3.6.3 in this workbook). A careful analysis of the relationships that link bicola enables the reader/analyst/translator to more fully explore the Psalter's depths of meaning, including not only its referential content but also the connotations of personal attitudes, emotions, and motivations.

Examine the colon connections of Psalm 139:23–24. What similarities and differences do you find?

Find another pairing of cause-effect lines in the Psalms, but one with a linkage that differs from the types illustrated above.

4. Addition

An example of *addition*, the fourth type of relationship that can join a line B (the complement) to a line A (the base), is in Psalm 14:1a:

The fool says in his heart,
"There is no God."

There are several different types of paired addition relations.

How does Psalm 1:1 (below) differ from Psalm 14:1a in the way its complementing line B relates to line A? Which bicolon is base-alternative and which is base-content?

Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked
or stand in the way of sinners
or sit in the seat of mockers. (Ps. 1:1)

Observe that Psalm 1:1 is an instance of three lines in parallel, a *tricolon* (A + B + C). When such a combination appears – or, alternatively, just a single unpaired line (a *monocolon*) – it may serve as a point of emphasis within the psalm.

What might be the reason for the tricolon in this case?

Do you notice any special heightening in the C line, that is, in comparison with lines A and B? (You may need to consult a commentary or the UBS Handbook on Psalms.)

Find another good example of additive parallelism in the Psalms and explain how the poetic lines are cumulatively related to each other – that is, how line B (+/- C) complements A to make the sum of overall significance (A + B) greater than the meanings of the individual lines.

11.1.2 Sound effects

Poetry is composed with the intention that it be recited aloud and usually in public. Therefore it features various sound techniques in order to enhance the oral-aural articulation of the text in the ears of its audience and thereby also increase its memorability. Qvale (2003:173) describes the poetic construction process and its product as follows:

[E]ach individual line has its rhythmic character, and...this is not only determined by the metrical pattern, but also by phonetic nuances, by [aural] associations and alliterations, by the length of words and rhythmic quality, by logical and emotive emphasis, by intonation, dramatic tempo, metrical and syntactic pauses, by repetition, parallels or contrasts in relation to the surrounding lines – by all this all at the same time.

These sound effects are created as part of the esthetic dimension of the text, but the skilled poet also uses them to highlight certain aspects of meaning within a given poem. Often this is done by means of some prominent phonological similarity or contrast between the A and B lines of a bicolon. These too are concrete instances of parallelism, even though they involve phonic form rather than content.

Three kinds of special audio effects are illustrated below (with reference to the Hebrew text, for which a literal rendering is provided):

1. rhythm
2. assonance/alliteration
3. puns

1. Rhythm

Rhythm is manifested by the regular recurrence of some perceptible, often predictable pattern of sound, though the pattern may be modified at any time to create some added impact. This can be a rather complicated subject in scholarly discussions, but here we will consider only the very basic technique of counting the major Hebrew words within the poetic line.

The rhythm of Hebrew poetry follows a system of free (i.e., roughly regular, but not fixed or predictable) *meter* composed of variable word-accent (word-stress) patterns. These patterns tend to be fairly uniform within a given poem so that any variations from the norm tend to be significant. Each *poetic word*, which may be extended by a Hebrew hyphen (*maqeph*, represented by the [=] sign), is considered to have one major beat (accent). The most common poetic line, as mentioned before, has three such accents. Four-beat or two-beat lines also occur relatively frequently, but

other types do not, so when they appear within a poem they may serve to emphasize the text at that point. The following is a sequential listing of the line-accents in Psalm 1:

[v. 1] 2+5+4+4, [v. 2] 4+4, [v. 3] 5+4+3+3, [v. 4] 2+2+2, [v. 5] 4+3, [v. 6] 4+3.

What is the most common poetic line length for the psalm as a whole?

Where does an obvious shift in the prevailing rhythm occur?

Can you see any significance for this – in other words, do the shorter (two beat) lines in verse 4 appear to serve as some sort of a marker? If so, what is it?

In the following literal rendition of Psalm 1:4, the short lines may represent a vocal reflection of the wind that suddenly and completely blows the wicked away:

not=so the-wicked,
for rather=like-the-chaff,
which=it-blows-away wind

In Judges 16:23, we observe a syllabic rhythm that slightly increases in length for climactic effect. This is coupled with an internal rhyming pattern that highlights the key terms (set in bold):

[He]-delivered **our-God** ['elohêynu] (2 words, 5 syllables)
into-**our-hand** [beyadênu] D.O.=**our-enemy** ['oyebênu], (2 words, 6 syllables)
and-D.O.=the-one-ravaging **our-land** ['artsênu], (2 words, 6 syllables)
and-who [he]-multiplied D.O.=**our-slain-ones** [chalalêynu]! (3 words, 7 syllables)

What is poetry doing in a narrative book of the Bible like Judges?

Note that GNT uses the verb “sang” to introduce the direct quotation here: “They sang, ‘Our god has given us victory over our enemy Samson!’ ” Is “sang” (for the Hebrew “saying”) appropriate as a translation here? Explain.

Check the context and explain why this passage is poetic in the original. Moffat translates the verse in this way:

Our God has now put
the foe into our hands,
who wasted our lands
and slew us in bands!

What do you think of this poetic rendition? Does it convey the same connotation, impact, and appeal for you as the original?

Render this verse in a *LiFE*-like manner in your language. Provide a literal back-translation into English for the purposes of class comparison and discussion.

2. Assonance and alliteration

Assonance is the close reiteration of vowel sounds, *alliteration* the reiteration of consonants. These devices are quite common in Hebrew poetry. They may be used either separately or together to mark certain key lines within a book, poem, or section.

Which of these devices occurs in the two lines below? Underline the repeated sounds.

Look these passages up and suggest what these “sound effects” may be intended to distinguish, highlight, or emotively color in each case.

shiyr hashiyriym 'asher lishlômôh • (Song. 1:1)

qâdôsh, qâdôsh, qâdôsh, yâhwêh tsebâ'ôth melô kol hâ-ârets kebôdô (Isa. 6:3)

rediy uwshebiy 'al-'aphâr betulat bat-bâbel (Isa. 47:1a)

When assonance and alliteration are combined within a verse or section (as in the preceding verse from Isaiah), they may function to focus upon certain concepts, actions, or characters that are being depicted. We hear this, for example, in Psalm 137:3, in the song (shir) that is used to insult “us” (-u- sound, with reference to the people of Israel in Babylon). Also observe the minor climax that occurs at this point in Psalm 137 to conclude the first strophe:

kiy sham she’êlunuw shôbêynu
 dibrêy–shiyw wetôlâlêynu simchâh
 shiyruw lanuw mishiyw tsiyyôn.

Notice, too, how the chiasmic arrangement of key vowels and consonants in the following line of Ecclesiastes 2:25 serves to heighten the rhetorical question and the internal disjunctive notion that it embodies. What can be done in YL to duplicate this poetic effect?

kiy miy yôkal⁹
 uwmiy yâchuwsh chuwts mimmeniy.

3. Puns

Puns (a form of word play) involves two words with similar sounds but different meanings. The words are played off each other for mutual reinforcement, or for contrastive effect (perhaps with a connotative touch of irony, criticism, or even humor). Listen, for example, to the word of judgement upon the apostates in Israel in Amos 5:5c: *hagilgâl gâlôh yigleh* “[the]-Gilgal going-into-exile he-will-go-into-exile.”

In Isaiah 5:7 there is a highly dramatic double word play:

And he looked for justice [mishpât], but he saw bloodshed [mispâh];
 for righteousness [tsedâqâh], but heard cries of distress [tse’âqâh].

Look up the context of Isaiah 5:7b. What does this special sound correspondence achieve?

Who is doing the looking in this case, whom is he looking at, and why?

Notice where in the poem this pun occurs – what is the significance of this textual location?

Now consider Esau’s pathetic complaint in Genesis 27:36, when he discovers his brother’s deception:

“Is his name not rightly called Jacob [ya’aqôb]?
 For he has deceived me [wayya’qêbeniy] these two times!
My birthright [bekôrâtiy] he took [lâqach],
 and look now he has taken [lâqach] my blessing [birkâtiy]!”

What effect does the chiasmic arrangement of key words achieve in these last two lines?

Most versions indicate that this passage is pure prose, but if it is, it certainly incorporates a number of poetic effects as a way of indicating the relative importance of these words within the dialogue as a whole. This is typical of biblical poetry – not simply “art for art’s sake,” but “art that plays a part,” that is, in highlighting, memorializing, or intensifying the intended meaning of the discourse.

Try to find another good example of such purposeful sound effects in the Psalter.

Read and discuss the following observation (from Scorgie, Strauss, and Voth 2003:203) about some well-known Bible translators of the past who gave serious attention to the

⁹ The appearance of a word that does not fit the iterative sound pattern of this verse, *yôkal* ‘the eater’, may be explained as a repetition that ties this verse to the preceding one, v. 24.

sound structure of the text. Does this apply to the translation that you are preparing? If not, why not?

An interesting and important detail about Luther's translation is that he wanted his Bible to be in *spoken* rather than in *bookish* or *written* German. Before any word or phrase could be put on paper, it had to pass the test of Luther's ear. It had to sound right. It is not surprising, as we will see, that the translators of the KJV had the same concern.

11.1.3 Figurative language

Skilled poets like to use vivid imagery and colorful language, especially when they are describing certain new or noteworthy objects, events, and personages in their poems. Figures of speech enable them to appeal to the imagination for a specific communicative purpose. Often figures and idioms are repeated or combined in the same passage of Scripture, or in adjacent passages, in order to heighten the descriptive outcome, usually with particular reference to some crucial theological or ethical subject. Any such figure adds another cognitive frame of reference (mental space) to interact conceptually with that of the religious topic being talked about.

Three common pairs of figures in Hebrew poetry are presented below (paired because of the similarity between them).

1. Metaphor and simile

Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow;
though they are red like crimson, they shall be like wool. (Isa. 1:18b–c)

See how the faithful city has become a harlot!...
Your silver has become dross, your choice wine is diluted with water! (Isa. 1:21a, 22)

2. Metonym and synecdoche

Your incense is detestable to me! (Isa. 1:13b)

Your hands are full of blood! (Isa. 1:15d)

3. Personification and anthropomorphism

They have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them! (Isa. 1:14b–c)

The Daughter of Zion is left like a shelter in a vineyard. (Isa. 1:8a)

These are figures that should already be familiar to you.

Explain how each is different from the other member of the pair, giving a brief definition of each figure. (To refresh your memory, see Zogbo and Wendland 2000:41–46 and Wendland 2002:139–153.)

Explain what each figure contributes to the poetic passage in each example in terms of its content, impact, feeling, and esthetic appeal.

Suggest how such vivid imagery might be effectively reproduced in YL.

All of the preceding examples come from the opening chapter of Isaiah. Most of them are exclamatory utterances. Note who is speaking: Yahweh is not pleased with his people, and his poetic language clearly and dramatically reveals his strong feelings throughout this oracle. God is a powerful, effective preacher as well as a poet, and his words ought to sound that way in translation. As Ryken (2002:247) says, "Poets speak the language of images because they want readers to experience the content of their utterance *as image and concretion*, not simply as an idea. The meaning that literature conveys is affective, imaginative, and experiential as well as ideational." Have you seriously thought of the poetry of Scripture in this way – and more, have you represented it as such in your translation? How important is this aspect of meaning in the Bible? Explain.

Figures of speech often occur in combinations as well as with other types of non-literal usage.

Find the metonyms amidst the metaphors of Isaiah 1:21–22.

Which of the figures of speech in the preceding examples might present a problem for translation into your language? Why?

Find another challenging set of images from the especially picturesque book of Isaiah and explain how you can reproduce them in a dynamic, *LiFE*-like manner in your language.

11.1.4 Condensed expression

Poets do not waste words when writing poetry; every word is purposeful and made to count. Often certain expected words or concepts are deliberately left out. That is, they are not explicitly expressed in the biblical text but are left implicit so that the reader or hearer must figure them out from the context. Usually this is not difficult, but it does require the listener's mind to be fully engaged with the text's meaning. Such a condensed, compact manner of expression is what gives poetry its typical rhythmic form and evocative content.

Therefore, it is necessary to dig more out of a poetic text than the words themselves actually say. The listener must work a little harder in order to derive the author's intended sense and significance. This includes the additional beauty, feelings, connotations, and cognitive associations that are connected with the subject at hand and render the text "rich," or "pregnant" with meaning – hence memorable as well. At times the poet must use a more condensed form of speech in order to maintain a certain rhythm or flow of discourse that is pleasing to the ear.

It was pointed out earlier that a normal poetic line of the Psalms and other lyric and sapiential discourse averages three "words" (lexical units), each of which manifests a single major accent. The lines of Hebrew *prophetic* poetry, however, tend to be somewhat longer, depending on the genre. Another feature of prophetic poetry is the insertion periodically of a contrastive prosaic passage to provide some historical or descriptive background or a detailed *visionary prediction* (see Isa. 6; Jer. 1:11–19; Ezek. 37; and Dan. 7).

Scholars often use the presence of not only parallelism, but also condensation (see section 4.4) as a diagnostic clue to determine whether a particular prophetic passage is more or less poetic in nature (and less or more prosaic). They look for the relative absence of the prose particles in a text of poetry, which in their consonantal and transcribed form are as follows: the sign of the direct object ('eth), the definite article (h-), the relative clause marker ('asher), the inseparable prepositions (m-, b-, k-, l-), and the conjunction waw before the B line of a bicolon (cf. 4.4). The more of these particles that are manifested in a passage, the more prosaic it is likely to be. However, this criterion must always be employed together with the other main characteristics of poetry in order to come to a reliable conclusion on the matter. (And even then, scholars do not always agree in certain ambiguous cases.)

There are three common, but quite different, kinds of condensation to be found in Hebrew poetry (although they are not the only ones). The first two, *verb gapping* and *pronominal reference*, are more formal in nature, while the third, *allusion*, involves a semantic contraction. Of course, it is often necessary to consult the Hebrew text itself or a good interlinear version in order to clearly discern such features in the biblical text.

1. Verb gapping

Do not take away my soul along with sinners,
my life with bloodthirsty men. (Ps. 26:9)

Your men will fall by the sword,
your warriors in battle. (Isa. 3:25)

Which verb is missing in the B line of the above passages?

Are they needed in YL? Explain why.

2. Pronominal reference

They cry out and Yahweh hears,
and from all their troubles he delivers them. (Ps. 34:17)

Check Psalm 34:16 to see what the referent of “they” in verse 17 is. Now look at verse 17 in the NIV and explain why the NIV translators felt it necessary to clarify this condensed reference.

It will not take place,
it will not happen. (Isa. 7:7b)

In Isaiah 7:7b what is the referent of the pronoun “it” in each line?

How do you know?

3. Allusion

Sons of man, until when my glory to shame,
you will love a delusion, you will seek a lie. (Ps. 4:2)

Psalm 4:2 makes no sense because of both allusion and ellipsis. Consult several modern translations to see how they have clarified such poetic condensation in the Hebrew text. Which wording would work best in YL?

Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean. (Ps. 51:7)

Check a commentary or study Bible to find out the condensed meaning that lies behind the figurative allusions of Psalm 51:7. How can you best express the meaning in YL?

Do you have a close form-functional equivalent to “hyssop”?

What about the notion of being “clean”? Explain.

Perhaps these words cannot be used due to their cognitive and emotive association with pagan traditional religious beliefs and practices. Is this true in your cultural setting? If so, what alternatives do you propose?

11.1.5 Emphatic devices

All literature is distinguished by a number of devices that signal and emphasize points of special prominence in the text, whether these have to do with form (discourse structure) or content (theme). They are common to both poetic and prosaic composition wherever there is direct speech or a text specifically written to be uttered aloud. Emphatic forms are therefore not in and of themselves diagnostic of poetry, but they serve to augment the rhetorical effect of the other more characteristically poetic features, such as parallelism. In this respect, then, they also help to mark boundaries and thematic peaks in the discourse arrangement of both poetry and poetic prose.

We have already called attention to a common characteristic of parallel expression; namely, the tendency for the B line to be stylistically heightened in some way (e.g., extra focus, intensity, specificity, immediacy, descriptive color, direct speech): “A, and what’s more B” or “not only A, but also B” or “not A, and not even B.” (This does not always happen, but the feature occurs often enough for one to be on the watch for it.) Point out the different ways in which the indented B lines emphasize the thought of line A in the following examples from Psalm 3:

O LORD, how many are my foes!
How many rise up against me!...
But you are a shield around me, O LORD,
my Glorious One, who lifts up my head....
Arise, O LORD!
Deliver me, O my God!
For you have struck all my enemies on the jaw;
you have broken the teeth of the wicked. (Ps. 3:1, 3, 7)

Listed below are several other techniques that provide special emphasis in Hebrew discourse: *intensifiers*, *exclamations*, *rhetorical questions*, *hyperbole*, *irony*, and *sarcasm*. These are seen especially in the prophetic literature and frequently in conjunction with imperative commands. Because they are quite obvious in their character and operation, they will just be noted and illustrated here. Some of these emphatic features are often very difficult to translate with similar impact in another language. This is true of hyperbole and irony in particular. As you study these examples, consider how you would render them with corresponding power and appeal in YL.

1. Intensifiers

Intensifiers, unlike exclamations (see below), are normally single words in Hebrew:

Surely (kiy) the joy of mankind is withered away! (Joel 1:12d)

Alas ('ahâh) for that day! For the day of the LORD is near... (Joel 1:15a)

See (hinniy), I am going to rouse them out of the places to which you sold them... (Joel 3:7a)

Blessed ('shrêy) is he whose transgressions are forgiven... (Ps. 32:1a)

Praise be (bâruwk) to the LORD, for he showed his wonderful love to me... (Ps. 31:21a)

Praise the LORD! (halluw-yâh)...Praise the LORD! (Ps. 146:1a, 10c)

We might also include in this category a number of familiar conventional formulae that function as semantic units, emphatically opening or closing a prophetic utterance. They also help establish the borders of poetic structures (see section 5.1.7). A good selection of these occurs in the prophecy of Amos:

"This is what the LORD says" (1:3)

"says the LORD" (1:5)

"declares the LORD" (2:11)

"Hear this word the LORD has spoken" (3:1)

"Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says" (3:11)

"Woe to you who" (5:18)

"The Sovereign LORD has sworn by himself – the LORD Almighty declares" (6:8)

"says the LORD your God" (9:15)

2. Exclamations

Exclamations are short, intensified utterances that serve to emotively heighten a certain aspect of the prophet's message, usually one of rebuke or condemnation:

Wake up you drunkards and weep! (Joel 1:5a)

Go to Bethel and sin! (Amos 4:4)

Fallen is Virgin Israel, never to rise again... (Amos 5:2)

Seek me and live! (Amos 5:4)

Away with the noise of your songs! (Amos 5:23)

What are some of the poetic devices included within these exclamations?

Would a literal translation cause any misunderstanding?

If so, how would you resolve the problem while preserving the intensity of the original text?

3. Rhetorical questions

Rhetorical questions (RQs) are question forms that do not expect an answer. They are a forceful expression of the speaker's attitude, opinion, and emotions with regard to a particular issue. At times they are simply a vigorous way to emphasize the known answer, often with added pragmatic (behavioral) implications. For example, the speaker may want to persuade the addressees to change their manner of thinking or acting. Thus RQs may serve as an indirect form of encouragement or, more likely, of criticism, reprimand, or the like. The more RQs that occur in a sequence, one after another, the more powerfully and insistently the speaker's psychological state and feelings are communicated.

The following are examples of sequential RQs in Jeremiah 8:4–5:

When men fall down, do they not get up?
When a man turns away, does he not return?
Why then have these people turned away?
Why does Jerusalem always turn away?
They cling to deceit; they refuse to return.

What did Yahweh desire to convey to his people by this sequence of RQs?

Can RQs be used in YL for this same purpose? If not, how would you convey the divine speaker's intentions with the same degree of force and emotion?

Observe that Jeremiah 8:4–22 (of which the above passage is a part) closes with another set of RQs, forming a literary-structural *inclusio*. But what difference in connotation and implication do you notice in verse 22, which is the concluding set of RQs?

Now look at the RQ in Jeremiah 8:12:

Are they ashamed of their own loathsome conduct?
No, they have no shame at all

How does this RQ differ from the ones above?

The utterance in Jeremiah 8:12 is called a *leading question* because it leads up to an explicit answer in the text. A leading question often serves to open or close a major discourse unit and announce its main theme.

Point out how this device operates in Psalms 15 and 121 and in Song of Songs 5:9–16.

Are you able to use questions in an introductory or preparatory way like this in your language? If not, what equivalent device might you substitute?

4. **Hyperbole**

Hyperbole is an obvious exaggeration that serves to emphasize and highlight a particular perspective or strong opinion. It is quite a common feature of biblical poetry, especially in the prophets. Hyperbole is not intended to be taken literally; rather, it foregrounds the topic that is being spoken about, usually with a certain amount of strong feeling and a particular attitude as well. The following are examples of hyperbole in the Psalter:

All night long I flood my bed with weeping and drench my couch with tears. (Ps. 6:6b)

Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear. (Ps. 27:3)

Though you test me, you will find nothing; I have resolved that my mouth will not sin.
(Ps. 17:3)

May they be blotted out of the book of life and not be listed with the righteous! (Ps. 69:28)

What is the meaning of each of these hyperboles in its context?

What sort of emotion or attitude is associated with each one?

Can they be translated literally in YL? If not, how must you render such expressions in order to preserve their connotative implications? Illustrate, using the passages cited above.

Note the special literary qualities of the following passage from 1 Samuel 18:7:

Saul has slain his thousands,
and David his ten thousands!

What is the deeper meaning of this lyric hyperbole?

What problem did this implicit but obviously emphatic meaning cause for David?

Such poetic insertions in a narrative always foreground the content of what is being said. The hyperbolic nature of the utterance serves to heighten its level of emotive expression and the effect upon an audience.

Explain how this is manifested in Genesis 4:23–24.

Is hyperbole a common feature in your literary tradition? If so, is it found primarily in prose, poetry, or both?

Does hyperbole need to be overtly marked in a special way? If so, explain how, and illustrate this using one or more of the passages considered above.

5. Irony and sarcasm

Irony and the similar device of *sarcasm* are perhaps the most difficult devices to recognize and then translate with equivalent effect in another language. Irony is frequently used to convey an indirect complaint or criticism, but this is only implied by the words that are actually uttered. The speaker says one thing but means something else; the underlying intent of the words does not match their overt content in the setting of use. There is usually some manner of contra-expectation involved: something happens or is spoken that seems out of place. Thus the listener(s) must search for relevance elsewhere in the speech situation.

Sarcasm is a more intense and forceful type of irony. The speaker clearly desires to ridicule, reprove, rebuke, warn, condemn, or verbally injure the addressee. In the tense debate between Job and his friends, irony and even sarcasm often appear, as in the following examples:

Doubtless you are the people, and wisdom will die with you! (Job 12:1)

If only you would be altogether silent – for you, that would be wisdom! (Job 13:5)

Will your long-winded speeches never end? What ails you that you keep on arguing?
(Job 16:3)

How you have helped the powerless! How you have saved the arm that is feeble! (Job 26:2)

Here Job is criticizing the faint “comfort” of his friends. Notice that the rhetorical questions, which abound in this debate, may have an ironic tone as well, as in the following example:

Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundations? Tell me if you understand.
Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! (Job 38:4–5a)

Thus Yahweh himself employs irony to help Job recognize his problem – that he is God and Job is a mere mortal. The aim is to correct Job’s point of view and to provide him with a glimpse of things from a divine perspective, which often differs radically from a human point of view.

How do you express the chiding tone of Yahweh’s questions in YL?

11.1.6 Shifting patterns

The category of *shifting patterns* includes a miscellaneous collection of linguistic forms that may be manipulated for particular rhetorical impact. Such a pointed shift is manifested in a poetic text whenever

the poet utilizes a deliberate departure from the norms of discourse in order to foreground a specific aspect of content or create some special artistic or emotive effect, perhaps also to help mark a new unit within the larger text (as discussed in section 5.1.7).

There are four types of shift that are exemplified below: *pronouns*, *word order*, *insertion*, and *style*. Once again it will be necessary to inspect the Hebrew text or an interlinear version, if possible, to see what is going on in each case.

1. Pronouns

Observe where a prominent pronominal shift (*enallage*) occurs here in Psalm 46; the pronouns change, but the personal referent remains the same:

- ⁸ Come and see the works of the LORD,
the desolations he has brought on the earth.
⁹ He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth;
he breaks the bow and shatters the spear,
he burns the shields with fire.
¹⁰ Be still, and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth.
¹¹ The LORD Almighty is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.

What discourse function does such a variation serve in this case?

Does a literal rendering work in your language? If not, do you have a functional equivalent that would serve the same purpose?

Observe the pronoun shift in the following passage from Joel 3:

- ¹⁶ The LORD will roar from Zion
and thunder from Jerusalem;
the earth and the sky will tremble.
But the LORD will be a refuge for his people,
a stronghold for the people of Israel.
¹⁷ Then you will know that I, the LORD your God,
dwell in Zion, my holy hill.
Jerusalem will be holy;
never again will foreigners invade her.

What purpose does this pronoun shift carry out in this case?

Is there any additional marking that you must use in YL to make this discourse boundary clear?

2. Word order

The normal *word order* for finite verb clauses in Hebrew prose is Verb + Subject + Object. For non-finite verb clauses it is Subject + Verb + Object. For verbless clauses it is Topic + Comment. Word order, along with other devices such as pronominalization, syntactic dependency relations, additional qualifying attribution, and varied transitional expressions, is used to establish as well as to modify the information structure of a discourse.

Where the default syntactic pattern is not observed, and the subject or object (or some other nominal constituent) is *fronted* to the beginning of a clause and before the main verb, or in some other way dislocated,¹⁰ one of two things is signaled: Either a new topic is introduced (or

¹⁰ At times, an element may be foregrounded (focused) by placing it at the end of the clause outside its expected position (termed back-shifting). In a recent insightful article, Stephen Levinsohn (2006b:14) has clarified what is going on in such cases: According to the "Principle of natural information flow" (Jan Firbas) non-verbal constituents that convey old, established information are placed before those that convey new, non-established information, with the most important piece of non-established information coming last in the sentence/clause. An example is found in 1 Cor. 2:7b – ἦν προώρισεν ὁ θεὸς πρὸ τῶν αἰώνων εἰς δόξαν ἡμῶν,

reintroduced) into the discourse (*topicalization*) or some information in the text is marked as being in focus (*focalization*), meaning that the information is somehow novel, more important, or topically contrastive in relation to the cotext.¹¹ The current topic is “given” and engages a listener’s attention throughout a sequence of utterances, while an element in focus manifests a higher level of cognitive salience, but usually for only a single sentence. The term *emphasis* may then be used in a specific sense to indicate the particular semantic stress or emotive intensity that is placed (e.g., through repetition) upon a given word or phrase within a clause unit. The wider context and perhaps also some special linguistic marking such as a distinctive intonational pattern or discourse particles, usually indicate what is in focus versus what is emphasized (see Dooley and Levinsohn 2001, chap. 11).

These rules for prose may or may not apply to poetry, however; there are other reasons for moving certain syntactic elements around within the short poetic clause (colon). Such reasons would be (1) for the sake of euphony (a pleasing sound), (2) for the sake of a flowing *rhythm*, or (3) to create topical focus by means of an *antithetical* chiasmus (especially in Proverbs). It requires a rather close and careful analysis to determine which function is being effected by the word order shift – a study that translators may have to leave to the commentators to sort out. But if translators can consult the Hebrew text, it is worthwhile to note any prominent departures from the syntactic norm (by means of a discourse chart, as described in section 3.6.6). Any such modification may prove to be supplementary evidence to support their interpretation of a point of special emphasis, a change in subject, a reinforcement of the basic theme of a passage, or a structural boundary (normally a new beginning).

Note the word order in Psalm 12:5a–b. What sort of syntactic constituent begins this verse?

“Because of the oppression of the weak and the groaning of the needy,
I will now arise,” says the LORD...

Check out the cotext of this verse and suggest what this front-shifting helps to mark in terms of the overall structure and/or the main theme or argument of Psalm 12.

Is word order used similarly to indicate focus in YL? If not, which devices are used instead? Illustrate with reference to Psalm 12:5a–b.

The following are literal renderings of Nahum 1:7a, 8a, 9a, and 11a:

Good (is) Yahweh, for a refuge in a day of trouble...
And with an overwhelming flood, an end (of Nineveh) he will make her place...
Whatever you (pl.) plot against Yahweh, an end (to it) he is bringing...
From you (Nineveh) he came forth, the one plotting against Yahweh evil...

literally, ‘which he ordained God before the ages for the glory of us’. The amazing fact that sinful mortals—those indwelt by God’s Spirit—will one day be glorified thus occurs last in the clause.

¹¹This is admittedly an inadequate, oversimplified treatment of a rather complex, though very important subject in the linguistic (and literary) analysis of biblical discourse. For more detailed studies, see Floor 2004, Lunn 2006, and Levinsohn 2006b. Over 30 years ago, K. Callow pointed out a threefold distinction in types of “prominence,” which refers “to any device whatever which gives certain events, participants, or objects more significance than others in the same context” (1974:50). We thus have topic, “‘This is what I’m talking about’...[which] contributes to the progression of the narrative or argument,” focus, “‘This is important, listen’...[which] picks out items of thematic material as being of particular interest or significance,” and emphasis, “‘which says to the hearer either, ‘You didn’t expect that, did you?’ or ‘Now, I feel strongly about this.’ In other words, emphasis has two different functions: it highlights an item of information which the narrator [author/speaker] considers will be surprising to the hearer, or else it warns the hearer that the emotions of the speaker are quite strongly involved” (1974:52). In cases where **two** syntactic constituents occur before the main verb, the **first** will be a new (or resumed) **topic**, while the **second** constitutes the information having some special contrastive or emphatic **focus** (Levinsohn 2006b:13).

Observe the front-shifted syntactic constituents within the wider context of each of the above passages from Nahum 1 and then consult different translations and perhaps the *Translator's Handbook on Nahum* (Clark and Hatton 1989).

Can you suggest why these particular features are positioned at the head of their respective clauses?

Is it to heighten a contrast, to spotlight a participant, to mark a strophic boundary, to emphasize an aspect of Nahum's primary theme, or to effect some combination of these?

How would you signal the distinct rhetorical functions that you find here in YL?

3. Insertion

Insertion is a poetic device that involves a very specific shift in Hebrew word order. It is patterned according to the formula A – X – B, where A–B is a standard grammatical construction that has an unexpected, seemingly misplaced or added element, X, inserted within it for special effect (especially for focus or emphasis). The included text may be a single word, a phrase, or an entire clause (colon). The following is an example (rendered literally):

For not you delight in sacrifice,
and (or) I would bring (it);
burnt offering not you take pleasure in. (Ps. 51:16 [v. 18 in the Hebrew text])

The added verb in the middle (וַיִּתְנַחֵם) falls outside the regular accent pattern of the surrounding A and B cola, but semantically it could apply to either line, which thus emphasizes its content. It also anticipates the climactic meaning of the next verse, verse 17 (v. 19 in the Hebrew text), which concludes the strophe.

In the next example the first and third lines are grammatically very similar, while the inserted middle line manifests some noticeable differences, including the shift from a third person to a second person singular pronoun (enallage). In this case, the absolute medial utterance reinforces the descriptive praises on either side of it.

There is no Holy One like YHWH,
indeed, there is no (One) besides you (sg.);
and there is no Rock like our God! (1 Sam. 2:2)

How could you reproduce this heightening effect in YL?

Can you retain the word order of the biblical text, or not? Explain your answer.

In Psalm 24:6, below, there is a double insertion, A – X + X' – B: The initial construct clause "This is (these are) the generation(s) of Jacob" is interrupted by two descriptive expressions that characterize the sort of persons who are being referred to. The verse may therefore be expressed prosaically as "The true descendants of Jacob are people who seek after God and long to come into his presence."

This [is the] generation of
the ones who pursue him [God],
the seekers of your [God's] face,
Jacob. Selah. (Ps. 24:6)

Notice how this verse is rendered in the standard English versions. Does any one of them get it right?

The NEB has: "Such purity characterizes the people who seek his favor, Jacob's descendants, who pray to him." Suggest any improvements to this rendition that come to mind.

How will this affect its translation into YL.

4. Style

The category of *style* covers a variety of distinctive cases – features that are difficult to classify anywhere else. The Hebrew poet or prophet may creatively employ his literary skills, his personal style, to inject some formal and/or semantic surprise into the text. Usually, he does this through a pronounced modification in the current referential content, an ordinary linguistic construction, the prevailing connotative tone, or the general communicative purpose. Style is not a gratuitous flourish, however, or simply an attempt to display one's artistic technique; rather, it is applied to serve the poet's message. Therefore, an analyst must always study the text from several different literary perspectives in order to determine a form's most likely communicative function.

Compare the two passages below and note the variations between them:

Therefore because-of-you they-have-withheld the-heavens their-dew
and-the-earth it-has-withheld its-crops. (Hag. 1:10)

and-the-ground it-will-produce its-crop
and-the-heavens they-will-drop their-dew. (Zech. 8:12)

Did you notice the chiasmus in the Haggai text? Could there be any special significance to this?

If Zechariah is quoting Haggai (as seems likely), what effect do his changes have on the specific meaning and rhetorical impact of these words?

In this case, the different situational settings and communication goals of the two prophets probably provide the explanation for this contrastive type of intertextuality.

Can you suggest any reason for these differences, based on changed religious and rhetorical circumstances (cf. the general order reflected in Deut. 28:11–12; see also Hag. 2:19)?

There is an unexpected utterance and a decided stylistic shift in the following text (Amos 9:1b–4):

Strike the tops of the pillars
so that the thresholds shake.
Bring them down on the heads of all the people;
those who are left I will kill with the sword.
Not one will get away,
none will escape.
Though they dig down to the depths of the grave,
from there my hand will take them.
Though they climb up to the heavens,
from there I will bring them down.
Though they hide themselves on the top of Carmel,
there I will hunt them down and seize them.
Though they hide from me at the bottom of the sea,
there I will command the serpent to bite them.
Though they are driven into exile by their enemies,
there I will command the sword to slay them.
I will fix my eyes upon them
for evil and not for good.

Where does the unexpected change in content and stylistic shift occur?

What is their apparent purpose?

Would a literal rendering in YL convey this effect? If not, what would do this in a subtle, but perceptible way?

Notice that the rhythmic pattern established by the prolonged sequence of concessive clauses is broken at the end of Amos 9:1b–4 with a summary statement featuring a strong anthropomorphism that reverses the usual application and connotation of this figure (cf. Pss. 33:18 and 34:15). Notice too that the closing mention of a sword of judgement echoes a similar utterance at the beginning,

thereby marking a partial inclusio for this strophe. Amos is full of these suddenly introduced, shocking pronouncements of judgement upon a people who were proud and complacent in their pious godlessness. Often a pointed *reversal in expectation* is expressed within the context, like the concluding refrain “yet you have not returned to me” in chapter 4. The prophet thus suggests that people who continually refuse to heed God’s call to repentance will one day, perhaps all too soon, hear his summons for punishment.

For reflection, research, and response:

1. Find another good example for each of the four categories of parallelism in the Psalms; namely, similarity, contrast, cause-effect, and addition. In any of your examples, does the B line seem to heighten the intended meaning in any way? Describe any instances of this that you find and suggest how you might duplicate the effect in translation.
2. How do the four lines (two bicola) of Psalm 121:1–2 relate in meaning to each other? What central idea is emphasized in the passage as a whole?

I lift up my eyes to the hills –
 where does my help come from?
 My help comes from the LORD,
 the Maker of heaven and earth. (Ps. 121:1–2)

3. Study the following strophe (Isa. 51:7–8) and indicate the sequential *semantic relations* between the poetic A and B lines. Then indicate the relations of the four bicola to each other. Make explicit (in parentheses) any instances of ellipsis that you find.

Hear me, you who know what is right,
 you people who have my law in your hearts:
 Do not fear the reproach of men
 or be terrified by their insults.
 For the moth will eat them up like a garment;
 the worm will devour them like wool.
 But my righteousness will last forever,
 my salvation through all generations.

4. Examine some of the many puns found in Micah 1:10–16 (see Zogbo and Wendland 2000:40–41). Pick out the one you consider to be the most significant for the meaning of the oracle as a whole. Tell why and propose a translation of this in YL.
5. Psalm 6:10b reads like this: “may-they-turn (יִשְׁבְּרוּ) may-they-feel-shame (יִשְׁבְּרוּ) suddenly!” What meaning does this word play emphasize? Notice where it occurs in Psalm 6. Can you preserve the pun in YL? If so, describe how you have done this.
6. Eco (2003:137) claims that “in translating poetry one should render as much as possible the effect produced by the sounds of the original text, even though in the change of language a lot of variations are unavoidable....[T]ry at least to preserve, let us say, rhythm and rhyme.” Assuming that this suggestion is valid with respect to good literary poetry, have you ever considered such a strategy when translating the poetry of the Bible? If not, why not? (The answer to this question may be quite simple or very complex.) If so, describe what you or your team have done to take this vital phonological factor into consideration, giving an example or two. How would you answer Eco’s question: “What does esthetically equivalent mean?” (ibid.)?

Compare Eco’s short list of sound effects with the longer list suggested by another experienced European literary translator, Per Qvale (2003:225): “Poetic qualities and paralinguistic and prosodic elements: the emotional qualities of the words and sounds, rhythm, tempo (reasonably detectable from the syntax, word length, punctuation); sounds, acoustic effects (assonance, alliteration, rhyme).”

7. Read through Isaiah 1 and find one more example of each of the six figures of speech listed in section 5.1.3. (These should be different from the examples cited earlier.) Isaiah 1 is one of the most colorful,

forceful, and passionate passages of Scripture. How difficult would it be to express these figures with the same intensity in your language? Point out any problems that you anticipate.

8. Read about “lexical features designed for special effects” in *The Theory and Practice of Translation* (Nida and Taber 1969:150). Point out those features that are important in the poetic discourse of YL. Give an actual example or two.
9. Identify the instances of ellipsis in Psalms 57:2, 103:9, 119:56, and 137:5. Then consult the NIV, NRSV, GNT, and CEV to see how each version filled in the gaps. Which do you think is correct in each case – and why? Did you discover any significant allusions in these passages? If so, describe the most important one, also indicating how you would deal with it in your translation.
10. Try to find examples in Obadiah of the various emphatic devices listed in section 5.1.5. Write out each of the utterances in which they occur and underline the emphatic expressions.
11. Explain the meaning and function of the emphatic device found in Amos 2:6. How would you translate this with rhetorical equivalence in YL?
12. What is the general idea that is accented by the series of rhetorical questions in Psalm 77:7–9? How do these verses relate in structure and content to the following strophe, 77:10–12?
13. How does repetition serve both an ironic and structural function in the book of Esther? Carefully compare 3:1 – 4:3 and 8:1–17. What do you find? Can you suggest a way of calling attention to this important literary feature in your translation other than by a note or cross-reference?
14. Find three examples of irony or sarcasm that Job’s friends use against him in their debate. Explain the criticism that underlies these remarks and suggest how they might be rendered with similar biting effect in YL.
15. Notice the patterns of pronominal reference to God in Psalm 23. There is a shift from third person to second and back again to third. These variations help to demarcate the psalm into three sections. Give verse numbers of these sections. How would you handle these shifts in YL?
16. Describe the prominent stylistic shift found in Amos 6:9–10. What is the rhetorical significance of this passage within chapter 6?
17. The poetic lament of 2 Samuel 2:33b–34 could be taken as an illustration of insertion, which as such forms a chiasmic construction: A – B = B – A. How does a recognition of this literary device help one to interpret the passage? Why does this snatch of poetry occur here within a narrative account? Does 2 Samuel 2:33b–34 pose any translational difficulty in YL? If so, how do you propose solving it?
18. Carefully read Isaiah 4:2–6 (quoted from the RSV below), then pick out and describe the different poetic features that you discover. Can you propose any thematic reason why all this poetic marking is employed here? Now consult other major English versions to see how this text has been formatted on the page. Comment on what you find with particular reference to the question of whether this text is more poetic or more prosaic in nature. Finally, translate this entire passage in a *LiFE*-like manner in YL.

In that day the branch of the LORD
shall be beautiful and glorious,
and the fruit of the land
shall be the pride and glory of the survivors of Israel.
And he who is left in Zion
and remains in Jerusalem
will be called holy,
every one who has been recorded
for life in Jerusalem,
when the Lord shall have washed away the filth
of the daughters of Zion
and cleansed the bloodstains
of Jerusalem from its midst
by a spirit of judgement
and by a spirit of burning.

Then the LORD will create
 over the whole site of Mount Zion
 and over her assemblies
 a cloud by day,
 and smoke and the shining
 of a flaming fire by night;
 for over all the glory
 there will be a canopy and a pavilion.
 It will be for a shade by day from the heat,
 and for a refuge and a shelter from the storm and rain.

19. At the end of his revealing study of word-order variations in Hebrew poetry, Lunn comes to the following conclusions (among others, 2006:275-276). Discuss these as a group, first of all with reference to what they mean for the *analysis* of biblical poetry, second in terms of their implications for Bible translation. Then apply these principles to the analysis and translation of Psalm 1 (to the extent possible), which has been reproduced below (in non-Masoretic lineation). Finally, evaluate your results and later compare these with Lunn's own analysis of this psalm (ibid.:195-200).
- It is primarily within the B-line of synonymous parallelisms that word-order variation as purely stylistic or rhetorical device, i.e., *poetic defamiliarisation*, is admissible.
 - Such variation is an optional not obligatory feature, and chiefly occurs where the A-line of the parallelism is *canonical*, that is, unmarked.
 - Where the A-line of a parallelism is marked, the B-line is equally marked. Only a small number of classifiable exceptions exist to this rule.
 - Gapping of clause constituents mostly occurs in the B-line of synonymous parallelisms.
 - Where the A-line is marked, gapping does not generally occur of the corresponding fronted constituent(s).
 - Any departure from the norms described above is a deliberate literary device which serves to set apart that particular unit as performing some higher-level text function, i.e., aperture, closure, or climax.

1 אֲשֶׁר־יִהְיֶה־אֵשׁ אֲשֶׁר |

לֹא הָלַךְ בַּעֲצַת רְשָׁעִים

וּבְדַרְךְ חַטָּאִים לֹא עָמַד

וּבְמוֹשָׁב לְצִים לֹא יָשָׁב:

2 כִּי אִם בְּתוֹרַת יְהוָה הִפְצִי

וּבְתוֹרָתוֹ יִהְיֶה יוֹמָם וּלְיָלֵלָה:

3 וְהָיָה כְּעֵץ שְׁתּוּל עַל־פְּלִי מַיִם

אֲשֶׁר פִּרְיוֹ | יִתֵּן בְּעֵתוֹ

וְעָלְהוּ לֹא־יִבּוֹל

וְכֹל אֲשֶׁר־יַעֲשֶׂה יִצְלִיחַ:

⁴ לֹא־כֵן הַרְשָׁעִים

כִּי אִם־כַּמֵּץ אֲשֶׁר־תִּדְפְּנוּ רִיחַ:

⁵ עַל־כֵּן | לֹא־יִקְמוּ רְשָׁעִים בַּמִּשְׁפָּט

וְחֹטְאִים בַּעֲרַת צְדִיקִים:

⁶ כִּי־יִדְרַע יְהוָה הַרְדֵּף צְדִיקִים

וְדַרְדֵּף רְשָׁעִים תֵּאבֵד:

11.1.7 Poetic structures

Just as sentences of prose are combined to form larger units having a single major topic and/or a unified structure called *paragraphs*, so also the lines (cola) and couplets (bicola) of Hebrew poetry connect with one another to form units at a higher level of textual organization. These segments may be termed *stanzas* if they are similar in size and structure, or *strophes* if they are not. Strophes, which are more variable in shape as they follow one another within a longer poem, are more common in the Hebrew corpus of lyrical, elegiac, and prophetic books than stanzas.

There are various ways of demarcating such structures in Hebrew poetry, and biblical scholars themselves often do not agree as to how a given poetic text ought to be divided into its constituent units. This subject can get rather technical, so in most cases one may simply consult the relevant *Translator's Handbook* (UBS) or *Exegetical Guide* (SIL), and/or some other reliable commentary that deals with these issues in relation to a particular book of the Bible. The disagreement of scholars is reflected in the different divisions that one often finds for a poetic passage in one of the standard translations. Nevertheless, translators must come to a decision on this matter, and in order to do so they may refer to several of these versions in search of the majority opinion on a particular division. The most helpful English Bibles in this regard are the NIV and GNT. The NRSV, NJB, and CEV may also lend evidence that favors one solution or arrangement of the text over another.

A translation team would certainly be wise to seek considerable external support – normally based on the general conventions of vernacular poetry or on the characteristics of specific TL genres – before deciding to compose poetic paragraphs that differ from the standard versions in English, French, or Spanish. However, there are some basic literary criteria that will help when evaluating and resolving differences of opinion, which will be summarized below.

But first the question needs to be asked, Why worry about this matter at all? Why not simply choose one recognized translation and mechanically follow it throughout – making paragraphs and larger divisions wherever that selected version does? Well, for one thing, as already noted, such an automatic policy may produce units that conflict somehow with natural poetic conventions in the TL. For example, the relatively small size of “normal” Hebrew strophes for a particular type of poetry such as a thanksgiving, lament, judgement speech, or divine oracle may differ from the length of corresponding paragraph units in TL poetry.

Second, one must recognize that the standard versions are by no means perfect in this regard – far from it. This is especially true of those translations (e.g., CEV) that tend to collapse, or fuse, certain poetic lines of the original text, perhaps in the interest of avoiding redundancy for content-oriented Western

readers. However, the feature of repetition may be a familiar and very desirable attribute in the case of vernacular poetry, and if it is, it should be retained.

Finally, we recall our basic literary premise that *form has meaning*, the larger text structures in particular. Therefore, this aspect of discourse too must be carefully investigated so that its significance may be re-presented in the TL text whenever and wherever possible.

The main principle to keep in mind when seeking to discover the structures of Hebrew poetry (and prose as well) is that there are definite linguistic and literary *markers* that help us to posit where a larger unit begins and ends (especially where it begins). This leads to the following heuristic: The more of these markers that converge in a particular passage, the surer the analyst can be that they are signaling an opening or closing boundary. Many of these indicators also serve to mark peaks within a section, especially in the middle or at its ending; this possibility needs to be investigated as well.¹² I have grouped these different stylistic signs into several larger categories below.

1. Markers of aperture (a new beginning)

- a. **Recursion** is by far the most important marker of discourse divisions in the biblical literature, prose as well as poetry, in both the Old Testament and also the New Testament. Exact lexical recursion (repetition) is the most diagnostic, but close similarity (or strong contrast) also counts, and to a lesser degree so do corresponding structures and common themes or motifs. In many cases, these types of recursion may be regarded as instances of “separated” (non-adjacent) parallelism (see section 5.1.1).

There are five main kinds of boundary-marking recursion though not all of them mark the beginning of a new unit (aperture). It is important that they be carefully distinguished from one another. (In the diagram below, a/a' = the reiterated material; X = the same discourse unit; Y = a different discourse unit; and Z = a third discourse unit.)

- i. **Inclusio** [a – X – a']: The significant recursions occur at the beginning and ending of the same structural unit.
- ii. **Exclusio** [X – a, Z a' – Y]: The significant recursions occur at the ending and the beginning of different units, with a distinct bounded section in the middle of these two.
- iii. **Anaphora** [a – X, a' – Y]: The significant recursions occur at the respective beginnings of different structural units, whether adjacent or separated in textual space.
- iv. **Epiphora** [X – a, Y – a']: The significant recursions occur at the respective endings of different structural units, whether adjacent or separated in textual space.
- v. **Anadiplosis** [X – a, a' – Y]: The significant recursions occur at the ending of one unit and the very beginning of the next, that is, at the border between the two units.

Now read Hosea 11, which follows. Identify its principal boundary-marking devices based on repetition – plus any other important discourse markers that you observe in the text. Some of the key reiterated expressions that serve as markers are highlighted in the passage for easier recognition, and the recommended strophic breaks have already been made.

While you are doing this assignment, notice the difference in the RSV and NRSV wordings for verse 7. Which of the two would the overall structure tend to support? Why do you come to this conclusion?

¹²For further background with regard to this type of poetic discourse analysis, see chap. 2 of Wendland 1995.

In what way(s) does the poetic structure support a major break after verse 11, not after verse 12, as the English versions have it?

After completing the first part of this assignment, consult several other translations (e.g., GNT, CEV, NJB, NIV) to see how they have demarcated this chapter. What differences do you notice? Which version best supports the arrangement below?

What boundary markers are available in YL to help distinguish these poetic units of structure?

- ¹ When **Israel** was a child, I loved him,
and out of Egypt I called my son.
- ² The more I called them,
the more they went from me;
they kept sacrificing to the Baals,
and burning incense to idols.
- ³ Yet it was I who taught **Ephraim** to walk,
I took them up in my arms;
but they did not know that I healed them.
- ⁴ I led them with cords of compassion,
with the bands of love,
and I became to them as one
who eases the yoke on their jaws,
and I bent down to them and fed them.
- ⁵ They shall return to the land of *Egypt*,
and *Assyria* shall be their king,
because they have refused to return to me.
- ⁶ The sword shall rage against their cities,
consume the bars of their gates,
and devour them in their fortresses.
- ⁷ My people are bent on turning away from me;
so they are appointed to the yoke,
and **none** shall remove it. (To the Most High *they call*,
but he does **not** raise them up at all. – NRSV)
- ⁸ How can I give you up, O **Ephraim!**
How can I hand you over, O **Israel!**
How can I make you like Admah!
How can I treat you like Zeboiim!
My heart recoils within me,
my compassion grows warm and tender.
- ⁹ I will not execute my fierce anger,
I will not again destroy Ephraim;
for I am God and not man,
the Holy One in your midst,
and I will **not** come to destroy.
- ¹⁰ They shall go after the LORD,
he will roar like a lion;
yea, he will roar,
and his sons shall come trembling from the west;
- ¹¹ they shall come trembling like birds from *Egypt*,
and like doves from the land of *Assyria*;
and I will return them to their homes, says the LORD.
- ¹² [12:1 in Hebrew] **Ephraim** has encompassed me with lies,
and the house of **Israel** with deceit;
but Judah is still known by God,
and is faithful to the Holy One.

- b. **Formulae** (conventional literary expressions) are especially common in the Hebrew prophets. They announce a message from Yahweh and can be used for emphasis (“intensifiers”) in poetic discourse (see section 5.1.5). They function most clearly to open a unit (i.e., they are markers of aperture). The longer the formula, the more important it is as a textual marker. This is the case

at the beginning of the book of Hosea: “The word of the LORD that came to Hosea son of Beeri during the reigns of Uzziah,…” The book of Amos includes the largest concentration of such formulae in relation to its size, marking units both large and small within the book (e.g., 3:1, 11, 12, 13). In this category are included certain common temporal (actually messianic or eschatological) formulae (e.g., “In that day,” as in Hos. 2:16, 21) and logical markers (e.g., **לָכֵן** ‘therefore’ to introduce a judgement or promissory speech, as in Hos. 2:6, 9, 14).

- c. **Shifts** in textual form, content, or function are a good indication that a new unit of poetry (or prose) is beginning. The various kinds of shifts include an overtly marked change in the speaker, addressee(s), setting (time, place), dramatic circumstances, interpersonal relationships, tone or atmosphere, point of view or perspective, topic under discussion, literary genre, main event sequence, or principal character. The more shifts that occur at a particular point in the discourse, the more significant the boundary that occurs there.
- d. **Intensifiers**, while not diagnostic in and of themselves, often occur at the beginning of a new poetic unit, thus strengthening one of the other three markers that may be already present. In this diverse category we find literary forms such as vocatives (especially divine names and praise epithets), imperatives, rhetorical or leading questions, exclamations, graphic figurative language, contrastive imagery, asyndeton (i.e., the absence of any conjunction or transitional expression), and utterances that express irony or hyperbole.

2. Markers of closure (a point of conclusion)

The literary indicators of closure are not as obvious as those that mark aperture. But they still need to be considered, because together the two make a more convincing case for a poetic division within the text. In other words, where the markers of aperture are not very strong or prominent, then one would look to the preceding verse in the text to see if any forceful signs of a closure are present. If they are, then one can be more confident about positing a structural boundary between the two verses.

Three prominent signals of closure, especially when occurring together, are: repetition, formulae, and intensifiers.

- a. **Repetition** – An ending of a unit may be indicated by the closing segment of a structural pattern of *epiphora*, *inclusio*, *exclusio*, or *anadiplosis*. (Note the types of repetition previously listed under “Markers of Aperture.”) They must be used in conjunction with each other in order to determine discourse boundaries since in many cases the textual evidence is debatable. The following summary may be helpful:

APERTURE is marked by *anaphora*, **CLOSURE** by *epiphora*, and **BOTH APERTURE AND CLOSURE** by *inclusio*, *exclusio*, and *anadiplosis*.

- b. **Formulae** that mark closure (sometimes of only a minor strophe-internal unit of structure) include prophetic speech expressions such as **נְאֻם יְהוָה** “oracle of Yahweh” (Hos. 11:11) and the similar discourse margin **אָמַר יְהוָה** “says Yahweh” (Am. 5:17). Can you think of any others?
- c. **Intensifiers** normally take the form of some kind of emphatic utterance that either summarizes, underscores, or in some other obvious way concludes the topic or argument that has been developed in the preceding text. Examples include a snatch of direct speech (Hos. 10:8); an exclamation (Hos. 4:6); a prediction (Hos. 9:17); a monocolon or condensed utterance (Hos. 11:9), especially one preceded by asyndeton (Hos. 7:7); graphic imagery (Hos. 13:8); and a key thematic or theological assertion (Hos. 5:15).

3. Markers of cohesion (bonds of connection)

The outer boundaries of a poetic text as indicated by markers of aperture and closure should always be supported by various connections that link together the inner parts of a segment, whether a strophe or larger unit. Such cohesion is both semantic and structural; that is, there will be ties of

content and ties of form throughout the same unit. The formal features include similarities of sound (rhythm, rhyme, alliteration); analogous, closely associated, or antithetical lexical items; corresponding syntactic constructions; elements of interconnected parallelism (intertwined bicola); and perhaps even larger patterns of text organization, either linear (e.g., a terraced progression) or concentric (e.g., an extended chiasmus).

Go back to Hosea 11 above and point out several of the markers of cohesion that bind together each of the four constituent strophes internally.

The linguistic terms *cohesion* and *coherence* are closely related and often confused. *Cohesion*, as just described, involves the formal connections (phonological, syntactic, structural) that bind a text into a unified whole. *Coherence*, on the other hand, refers to the *semantic* quality of a text by which it “hangs together” conceptually and makes sense as it is read or listened to. The reader/listener progressively develops a unified *mental representation* (scenario) of the content of a particular text as he or she interprets it on the basis of the different linguistic and literary forms that the author/speaker has used to compose that text. Such text-based conceptualization must always be coupled with a sufficient amount of situational, background information pertaining to the historical, environmental, and sociocultural setting of the passage under consideration. The diverse linguistic and literary devices of cohesion and coherence allow the process of contextualization and interpretation to take place, and direct it towards the author/speaker’s implied communicative goals for the text (see section 7.1). Therefore, it is important that suitable TL devices be found to retain the original discourse function in a translation. While the Hebrew forms will work well at times in another language, often additional vernacular literary techniques are needed in order to preserve the full connective effect.

The cohesion-producing devices of Hebrew poetry are literary markers, to be distinguished from purely linguistic markers.¹³ The more important ones are *refrain*, *overlap*, *chiasmus*, and *acrostic*.

a. **Refrain** (a repeated colon/bicolon)

An example of a refrain is in Psalm 46:7 and 11. It functions to divide Psalm 46 into two parts and also to highlight its conclusion. This is an instance of *end stress*, which is a common literary feature throughout the world. Is such a feature found also in the literary/oral tradition of YL?

The LORD Almighty is with us;
The God of Jacob is our fortress. (vv. 7, 11)

Find another bicolon in Psalm 46 that is similar to Psalm 46:7 and 11, though not exactly the same. What is the significance of its location – that is, in relation to the verses of the refrain?

Where do you find the short refrain “His love endures forever” in Psalm 136? What does its frequency suggest about the use of such a refrain during public worship?

There is another refrain in this psalm – not exactly the same in wording, but similar. Where is this refrain found, and what is the significance of its location within the psalm as a whole?

Find another psalm with a refrain. Point out where the refrain occurs and how it serves to demarcate the text into strophic segments.

¹³Linguistic markers include extended descriptive expressions, simple repetition and synonymous recursion, pronouns, deictic forms, lexical and conjunctive interrelationships (e.g., general-specific, part-whole, cause-effect), collocational expectations based on common semantic domains, inflectional usage (e.g., tense, concordial-agreement sequences, case relations), and of course patterns of intonation in the case of actual speech (e.g., rising > falling sequence, pause breaks) (see Dooley and Levinsohn 2001, chaps. 5–6).

b. **Overlap**

An example of conceptual overlapping is in Psalm 77 (quoted below from the RSV). There are various types of overlapping depending on their form and/or content as one colon leads to the next throughout a given unit, ranging from a single verse to a complete poem. One such structure is the “terrace” pattern of parallelism, which is manifested in an interestingly varied manner throughout Psalm 77. Its overlapping lexical items are highlighted here and also reformatted to better show the intended strophic structure:

- ¹ I cry aloud to God,
aloud to God, that he may hear me.
- ² In the day of my trouble I seek the Lord;
in the night my hand is stretched out without wearying;
my soul refuses to be comforted.
- ³ I think of God, and I moan;
I meditate, and my spirit faints.

Selah

- ⁴ Thou dost hold my eyelids from closing;
I am so troubled that I cannot speak.
- ⁵ I consider the days of old,
I remember the years long ago.
- ⁶ I commune with my heart in the night;
I meditate and search my spirit:
- ⁷ “Will the Lord spurn for ever,
and never again be favorable?
- ⁸ Has his steadfast love for ever ceased?
Are his promises at an end for all time?
- ⁹ Has God forgotten to be gracious?
Has he in anger shut up his compassion?”

Selah

- ¹⁰ And I say, “It is my grief
that the right hand of the Most High has changed.” [Then I thought, “To this I will appeal: the
years of the right hand of the Most High.”]
- ¹¹ I will call to mind the deeds of the LORD;
yea, I will remember thy wonders of old.
- ¹² I will meditate on all thy work,
and muse on thy mighty deeds.
- ¹³ Thy way, O God, is holy.
What god is great like our God?
- ¹⁴ Thou art the God who workest wonders,
who hast manifested thy might among the peoples.
- ¹⁵ Thou didst with thy arm redeem thy people,
the sons of Jacob and Joseph.

Selah

- ¹⁶ When the waters saw thee, O God,
when the waters saw thee, they were afraid,
yea, the deep trembled.
- ¹⁷ The clouds poured out water;
the skies gave forth thunder;
thy arrows flashed on every side.
- ¹⁸ The crash of thy thunder was in the whirlwind;
thy lightnings lighted up the world;
the earth trembled and shook.
- ¹⁹ Thy way was through the sea,
thy path through the great waters;
yet thy footprints were unseen.
- ²⁰ Thou didst lead thy people like a flock
by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

Give some reasons to support (or revise) the strophic structure of Psalm 77 as proposed by the RSV – that is, five strophes of three verses each and a final strophe of six verses.

There are three verses that do not seem to fit into the strongly cohesive overlapping lexical pattern: verses 10, 13, and 20. (Note the alternative NIV rendering of v. 10 above to the right.). It may be no accident that these passages express the great theological truths of this psalm.

Verse 20 would fit nicely in terms of content after verse 15. What might be a structural reason for the displacement of verse 20 to the end of the psalm?

Observe the double length of the final, climactic strophe, verses 16–20, which begins with a powerful theophany (God’s mighty manifestation mirrored in nature) and ends in a quiet, comforting conclusion to the entire prayer.

What needs to be done in your translation to reproduce these different structural and stylistic effects?

c. Chiasmus

The structure of a chiasmus was given earlier as $A - B = B' - A'$. This pattern may be extended, however, to form what is sometimes termed a “palistrophe,” “introversion,” or “reverse parallel structure,” which may be represented as $A - B - C \dots X \dots C' - B' - A'$, where X stands for additional, optional structural elements. (Usually, there are no more than seven in either direction.) This sort of a structure provides *cohesion* to the entire unit that it forms, both as a forward linear progression and also as a concentric arrangement with special emphasis at its center and often at the end as well. The core of a chiasmus often presents information of special thematic importance and/or pragmatic import (e.g., in the form of an imperative of exhortation or prohibition). But a chiasmic structure of this nature, remember, needs to be supported in some formal way so as to ensure its credibility or reliability, for example, by means of a significant recursion of lexical and/or grammatical features. The following is such an example, embracing the whole of Psalm 67 (NIV), a joyous song of thanksgiving:

A May God be gracious to us and bless us
A and make his face shine upon us,
a that your ways may be known on earth,
a your salvation among all nations.

B *May the peoples praise you, O God;
may all the peoples praise you.*

C May the nations be glad and sing for joy,

C' for you rule the peoples justly
and guide the nations of the earth.

B' *May the peoples praise you, O God;
may all the peoples praise you.*

a' Then the land *will yield* its harvest,
A' and God, our God, will bless us.
A' God *will bless* us,
a' and all the ends of the earth will fear him.

This chiasmic structure is established by the refrain in B and B'.

What significant aspect of meaning is introduced in the center (C'), and also at the end (a')? How can this be marked in YL?

Due to the flexibility of the Hebrew tense/aspect system in poetry, the verbs at the end may be interpreted as referring to either completed or incomplete action/time. There is a point of variation in the GNT and NRSV (cf. also the NIV above).

The land *has produced* its harvest; The earth *has yielded* its increase;

God, our God, has blessed us.
God *has blessed* us;
may all people everywhere honor him.
(GNT)

God, our God, has blessed us.
May God continue to bless us;
let all the ends of the earth revere him.
(NRSV)

A choice must be made here when re-presenting this verse in YL. How will you make that choice with regard to each line?

Which interpretation seems to fit the context and potential purpose of this thanksgiving song better – a past or a future reference, a statement of fact or a wish/prayer? Explain your decision. Accordingly, how you will handle this matter in YL.

c. **Acrostic**

An *acrostic* is a highly formalized type of poetry in which a composition's individual cola or short strophes/stanzas follow the order of the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. There must have been a reason for the use of such an elaborate literary structure. There are several possibilities.

- i. An acrostic may serve as an aid to the memory and/or to assist in the poem's composition and memorization.
- ii. An acrostic may serve as a pedagogical tool in the instruction of the young about biblical wisdom.
- iii. An acrostic may serve to reinforce the idea of perfection and completion that is a blessing to all the righteous who follow the will of Yahweh.
- iv. An acrostic may serve to convey the notion of an underlying divine order and coherence in a seemingly chaotic and disorganized world.

The last two suggestions apply to an acrostic poem's interpretation, and therefore both may not apply to the same example.

Which suggestion would better harmonize with the nature and purpose of the book of Lamentations, which features the acrostic form throughout?

Would such a formal device be effective in your translation? Explain why or why not (see Wilt 1993). If you have a different way of marking the acrostic form, describe what this is.

Psalms 34 is another good example of an acrostic wisdom poem. In most translations the reader is not informed that the text is structured in this manner. An exception is the NJB. Consult the NJB to see how it indicates the acrostic form.

If you know Hebrew, determine which letter of the alphabet has been left out of the sequence. Can you suggest a possible reason for this omission?

Verse 22 falls outside the acrostic framework, which might be of some special significance. Can you propose any reason for the omission in this case?

The center of an acrostic pattern also may express something noteworthy. In Psalm 34 that would be verse 11 and/or 12.

Do you notice anything important about either of these two verses?

How does "the fear of the Lord" (11) relate to the psalm's theme as a whole and, indeed, to the entire wisdom tradition of Israel's biblical sages?

How does this notion relate in turn to "long life" (v. 12)?

The question now is, *Why* should Bible translators pay so much attention to these poetic structures and the various literary markers of aperture, closure, and cohesion as they carry out their work? Why not simply adopt one recommended English version (or French or Spanish) with regard to these difficult

passages of poetry? Or perhaps we might examine two or three versions and selectively choose from among them which features to imitate. But then how do we decide in places where they do not agree among themselves as to how to demarcate the text into paragraphs and larger units? Should the translator just follow the majority opinion?

To be sure, some translation teams will not be able to do any better than this. But those translators with the necessary competence and training may desire to be more independent and creative in their work, especially if they are preparing a *LiFE* rendering. A version of this nature demands excellence in all respects – especially with regard to the form of the text as well as its content. For such translators the question becomes: What more can we do to improve and perfect the literary and rhetorical as well as the semantic quality of our text?

This goal does not stem from a desire to augment or embellish the original, but to more adequately represent what is already there in the biblical text. Or stated negatively, the goal is to prevent further literary loss with respect to esthetic appeal and rhetorical impact.

The structure of the Hebrew prophetic books in particular presents a rather serious problem to those who would simply allow their decisions to be guided completely by other translations, no matter how highly recommended they might be. This is because the standard versions in English only rarely agree in their segmentation throughout a given pericope. Commentaries, too, tend to differ from one another when proposing a textual arrangement for a given passage. Let us look at just one extended example: The NIV text below is a reformatted version of Hosea 5:1–7 (plus 5:8, which begins the next unit); notice that certain poetic features are highlighted and explanatory notes given on the right.

<p>¹ “Hear this, you priests! Pay attention, you Israelites! Listen, O royal house! This judgement is <i>against you</i>: You have been a snare at Mizpah, a net spread out on Tabor.</p>	<p>The parallel imperatives and vocatives signal an <i>aperture</i>. “Israel” is mentioned at the start of each strophe – <i>anaphora</i>.</p>
<p>² The rebels are deep in slaughter. [<i>And</i>] I [<i>myself</i>] will discipline all of them.</p>	<p>A Judgement announced (by God) against Israel (you). B Reason (indictment) specified figuratively B' Reason (sin) specified generally A' Judgement announced by God (I) against Israel (them)</p>
<p>³ I [<i>myself</i>] <i>know</i> all about Ephraim; Israel is not hidden from me. Ephraim, you have now turned to <i>prostitution</i>; Israel is corrupt.</p>	<p>A (Yahweh) <i>knows</i> Israel's sin [NB – <i>asyndeton</i>]. [In A–B–C Israel is referred to in 2d person.] B The sin is ritual and spiritual <i>prostitution</i>. C Israel is corrupt – general result. C' Israel is corrupt – specific result. [In C'–B'–A' Israel is referred to in 3d person.] B' The sin is ritual and spiritual <i>prostitution</i>.</p>
<p>⁴ “Their deeds do not permit them to return to their God. A spirit of <i>prostitution</i> is in their heart; they do not acknowledge [<i>know</i>] the LORD.</p>	<p>A' Israel does not <i>know</i> Yahweh [NB – <i>pun</i>].</p>
<p>⁵ Israel's arrogance testifies against them; the Israelites, even Ephraim, stumble in their sin; Judah also stumbles with them.</p>	<p>The place names signal <i>anaphora</i>, but “Judah” is new.</p>
<p>⁶ When they go with their flocks and herds to seek the LORD, they will not find him; he has withdrawn himself from them</p>	<p>The indictment against the people is now specified in graphic, figurative sacrificial terms, tinged with <i>irony</i>.</p>
<p>⁷ They are unfaithful to the LORD; they give birth to illegitimate children. Now their New Moon festivals will devour them and their fields.</p>	<p>IRONY: the people seek God in worship but he is gone! IRONY: infidelity produces illegitimacy.</p>
<p>⁸ “Sound the trumpet in Gibeah, the horn in Ramah. Raise the battle cry in Beth Aven; lead on, O Benjamin.</p>	<p>IRONY: God will not “eat” (accept) their sacrifices; they and all their produce will be “eaten” (destroyed).</p>
	<p>The imperatives and series of place names, coupled with a different vocative at the end and no mention of “Israel” clearly mark the onset of a new oracle in vv 8–15.</p>

Now, consult the various other translations that you have at hand and note the differences of opinion regarding the poetic discourse structure of this passage. Then come to your own conclusion as to how

to segment the text into strophic units. Also note any special translation problems that appear and suggest how you might handle them in your language.

Once the main principles of Hebrew poetic structure and rhetorical highlighting are learned, dealing with a passage like this becomes less difficult. As the discourse organization becomes clearer, so does one's perception of the operation of individual literary devices, all of which tend to work together to communicate the poet-prophet's message in a convincing and compelling manner – as they should, ideally, also work together in a translation.

The key strategy is to utilize these criteria *all together* as a means of identifying the structure, looking for patterns of *correspondence* and *convergence*, of *conjunction* and *disjunction*, of *correspondence* and *contrast*, which operate in textual interaction to point the analyst in a particular direction of interpretation that seems faithful to the original author's communicative intentions as well as credible in terms of both the textual context and also the external situational context.

Finally, it may be possible – at least in some publications designed for special audiences – to re-present some of the more important of these larger poetic structures in print. De Waard and Nida (1986:118) put the case clearly:

To do justice to the intricate structure [that may be presented by the biblical text], a translator is well advised to attempt by the formal arrangement to highlight these relationships and thus reproduce by [the printed] format an isomorphic equivalent of the formal and thematic structure.

As an example, the dramatic introduction to a new divine oracle in Amos 5:4b–6a (below) might be formatted as an *isomorphic equivalent* to better reveal its structural parallels and initial point of emphasis (to be coupled of course with a dynamic *LiFE* rendering of these words).

Seek me and live!
Do not worship at Bethel –
do not travel to Gilgal –
do not pilgrimage to Beersheba!
For sure, Gilgal will go into exile –
Bethel will be blown away!
Yes, seek the LORD and live!

As you study Amos 5:4b–6a, ask yourself,

Where does the main point of this text occur? Why do you think so?

What is the special meaning that is brought out by this structural device?

Would such formatting signal a similar thing in YL? If not, what would do so?

For reflection, research, and response:

1. Point out the refrain of Psalm 8 and explain its primary structural and thematic significance.
2. Two refrains – one major, the other minor – link Psalms 42 and 43 into a cohesive unit. (This suggests that in some early Hebrew prayer books or liturgical traditions the two formed a single psalm.) Write the words of these refrains and the verses in which they are found. How do these two refrains relate in content to the central core of both psalms, found in 42:8?
3. Study the elaborate overlapping pattern found in Micah 1:10–16. What is it that ties these verses together into a larger poetic unit? Explain the significance of three of the puns on place names that occur in this section. Point out the *epiphoric* (unit-ending) refrain that divides the first portion into two strophes: verses 8–9 and 10–12. The sudden reappearance of another first person singular pronoun divides the final portion into another two strophes: verses 13–14 and 15–16. To whom do the two “I” pronouns in this poem refer (at the beginning, and at the end)? Notice the shocking revelation that is given in the poem's final line, which is a good example of end stress.
4. Job may be classified as a well-formed poetic book despite its narrative beginning and end (which forms a structural inclusio around the whole contentious debate about righteousness and evil, blessing and judgement). It is interesting to observe the extended chiasmus that relates these two prose portions

to one another and at the same time creates a strong cohesive element within each section. Look up the passages listed below for each constituent of the chiasmus and summarize the main similarities or contrasts that you can find in each corresponding lettered element, for example, passage A' in comparison with A, B' in comparison with B, and so forth.

- A (1:1) _____
 B (1:2) _____
 C (1:3) _____
 D (1:4–5) _____
 E (1:6 – 2:10) _____
 F (2:11) _____
 G (2:12–13) _____
 G'(42:7–8) _____
 F' (42:9) _____
 E' (42:10) _____
 D' (42:11) _____
 C' (42:12) _____
 B' (42:13–15) _____
 A' (42:16–17) _____

Notice that at the core of this extended chiasmus, G' presents an important speech by Yahweh to Job's friends. Its significance is underscored by the fact that it is itself chiastically arranged as shown below. Explain how this divine utterance relates to the overall theme of Job. We also observe in this example how poetic features also occur in the important prose dialogues of Scripture. How will you re-present this formal aspect of meaning in your translation? Explain why.

- A My wrath is kindled against you and against your two friends;
 for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has.
 B Now therefore take seven bulls and seven rams, and go to my servant Job,
 and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and *my servant Job shall pray for you,*
 B' for I will accept his prayer not to deal with you according to your folly;
 A' for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has. (RSV)

5. Study the translation of Psalm 34 by Wilt (2002b:44–5). A small sample follows:

- Always, I will praise Yahweh.
 I will proclaim his greatness,
 Bragging of Yahweh,
 Urging others to join me.
 Come and join with me,
 You who have been oppressed ...

How has Wilt handled the acrostic form in English? Evaluate the effectiveness of this creative literary re-presentation. Would something like this work in YL? Explain why or why not and give an explanation of any alternative form that you can suggest to reproduce at least part of the significance of the acrostic form in the original text. *This Hebrew poetic form (structure) is too important to be simply ignored!*

Now compare Wilt's manner of handling acrostic poems with that of Boerger (1997), who makes use of end rhyme, alliteration, synonymy, word plays, word order, making implicit information explicit, and other literary devices in an effort to "extend naturalness" while maintaining the accuracy of her poetic renditions. The following is an excerpt of Boerger's translation of Psalm 111 (*ibid.*:40):

- Allelujah! Praise Yahweh, the almighty King!
 Bless him ! I thank him with all of my being,
 Commune with my righteous companions and sing.
- Dynamic his deeds in every detail,
 Eagerly studied in all they entail,
 For delight can be found in them all without fear.
- God's glory glows from his every endeavor,
 His heavenly holiness enduring forever.
- Incomparable marvels make us recall,
 Just, gentle, good Yahweh is Lord over all.

In his recent study of Hebrew alphabetic acrostics and their translation, Van der Spuy concludes that “an alphabetic acrostic translation is possible and that it preserves the essence of what the original poet strived to present. It contributes towards the cognitive, mnemonic, visual (even more when the letters are written as headings to each stanza) and aural (especially when the letters are mentioned as the poem is read) effectiveness, and it evokes a sense that it is one fully complete unit” (2008:531). Evaluate this from the perspective of your translation program as well as in the light of the following sample of Van der Spuy’s rendering of Psalm 145 “following the Latin alphabet, with the exception of less used letters,” i.e., C, X, Q and Z in Afrikaans (*ibid.*:529):

1. **A**ltyd wil ek u loof, my God en Koning, ek wil U verhoog sonder einde!
Forever I will praise your name, o King, I will exalt thee without end!
 2. **B**esing die lof van die Here, Ek (sic) wil U loof, vir tyd en ewigheid!
Sing the Lord’s praises, I will praise thee, I will always praise your name.
 3. **D**ie Here is groot, Hy moet sonder perke geprys word,
oor sy grootheid is daar geen twyfel nie.
The Lord is great, He has to be praised without end, his greatness is unquestionable.
 4. **E**en geslag prys u werde by die ander, hulle vertel van u magtige daede.
One generation praises your deeds in front of the other, they proclaim your mighty deeds.
6. Keeping in mind the different poetic structural devices of aperture, closure, and cohesion, prepare a discourse analysis of Isaiah 5. Do the following:
- a. Divide Isaiah 5 into constituent strophes and larger units of structure and point out the main markers of these divisions. Comment on how your analysis of the structure of this chapter helps you to better understand its content and purpose as a prophetic word from God to his people.
 - c. If there is a way you can reflect the textual organization of this passage in writing, try preparing a printed isomorphic equivalent of the Hebrew structure.
 - d. Finally, compare Isaiah 5:1–7 with Isaiah 27:2–6, which is another “song of Yahweh.” Note the similarities and differences. What is their significance? Should this literary (and theological) connection be noted in a paratextual note on Isaiah 27:2–6? If you think that this would be helpful, what would you say?
7. As we have already seen, poetic structures are also found in the New Testament, and not only in passages where OT poetry is quoted or recomposed (as in Luke 1 – 2). For example, Paul’s paeon to Christian love in 1 Corinthians 13 is clearly very lyrical in its style. Examine the formatted version of the first three verses below (from the NRSV) and pick out some of the more obvious poetic features. (The Greek text is included for those who are able to discern the literary devices that are not expressed in the English translation.)

If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels,
but do not have love,
 I am a *noisy gong*
 or a *clanging cymbal*.
 And if I have prophetic powers,
 and understand all mysteries
 and all knowledge,
 and if I have all faith,
 so as to remove mountains,
but do not have love,
 I am *nothing*.
 If I give away all my possessions,
 and if I hand over my body
 to be burned,
but do not have love,
 I gain *nothing*.

Ἐὰν ταῖς γλώσσαις τῶν ἀνθρώπων λαλῶ

καὶ τῶν ἀγγέλων,

ἀγάπην δὲ μὴ ἔχω,

γέγονα χαλκὸς ἤχων

ἢ κύμβαλον ἀλαλάζον.

καὶ ἐὰν ἔχω προφητείαν

καὶ εἰδῶ τὰ μυστήρια πάντα

καὶ πᾶσαν τὴν γνῶσιν

καὶ ἐὰν ἔχω πᾶσαν τὴν πίστιν

ὥστε ὄρη μεθιστάναι,

ἀγάπην δὲ μὴ ἔχω,

οὐθέν εἰμι.

κἂν ψωμίσω πάντα τὰ ὑπάρχοντά μου

καὶ ἐὰν παραδῶ τὸ σῶμά μου

ἵνα καυχῆσμαι,

ἀγάπην δὲ μὴ ἔχω,

οὐδὲν ὠφελοῦμαι.

8. Consider 1 Corinthians 12:14–20 (the RSV and Greek are below) in terms of its poetic features. Then format the text according to its patterned repetitions. Call attention to any other devices that you notice. What is their apparent purpose (both in specific respects and as a whole) in highlighting or embellishing the content of this section? Would these devices cause any translational difficulties in YL? Explain. How would you represent this text in YL – as more poetic or more prosaic? Why? Finally, translate the passage in a *LIFE* manner and give a close English back-translation.

¹⁴ For the body does not consist of one member but of many. ¹⁵ If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? ¹⁸ But as it is, God arranged the organs in the body, each one of them, as he chose. ¹⁹ If all were a single organ, where would the body be? ²⁰ As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.

¹⁴ καὶ γὰρ τὸ σῶμα οὐκ ἔστιν ἓν μέλος ἀλλὰ πολλά. ¹⁵ ἐὰν εἴπη ὁ πούς, "Ὅτι οὐκ εἰμι χεῖρ, οὐκ εἰμι ἐκ τοῦ σώματος, οὐ παρὰ τοῦτο οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τοῦ σώματος;" ¹⁶ καὶ ἐὰν εἴπη τὸ οὖς, "Ὅτι οὐκ εἰμι ὀφθαλμός, οὐκ εἰμι ἐκ τοῦ σώματος, οὐ παρὰ τοῦτο οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τοῦ σώματος;" ¹⁷ εἰ ὅλον τὸ σῶμα ὀφθαλμός, ποῦ ἡ ἀκοή; εἰ ὅλον ἀκοή, ποῦ ἡ ὄσφρησις; ¹⁸ νυνὶ δὲ ὁ θεὸς ἔθετο τὰ μέλη, ἓν ἕκαστον αὐτῶν ἐν τῷ σώματι καθὼς ἠθέλησεν. ¹⁹ εἰ δὲ ἦν τὰ πάντα ἓν μέλος, ποῦ τὸ σῶμα; ²⁰ νῦν δὲ πολλὰ μὲν μέλη, ἓν δὲ σῶμα.

9. De Waard and Nida (1986, chap. 6) discuss six *rhetorical processes*: repetition, compactness, connectives, rhythm, shifts in expectancies, and the exploitation of similarities and contrasts in the

selection and arrangement of the elements of a discourse (p. 86). How does this list of literary features relate to those that have been discussed here in section 5.1?

10. Read about “formal features designed for special effects” in *The Theory and Practice of Translation* (Nida and Taber 1969:147–8). Point out those features that are important also in the poetic discourse structures of YL. If possible, give an actual example of some of these devices as applied to some Bible passages of your choice.

11.2 The major functions of biblical poetry

Earlier we discussed some of the main general goals that individually or in combination initiate and also guide the interpretation process during a communication event, with special reference to verbal acts of literary or oral creation (section 1.3).

Can you recall a working definition for each of the following functions: referential, imperative, emotive, relational, ritual, expressive, metalingual, deictic, intertextual, textual, and poetic?

Our emphasis has been on the *poetic* function in which selected literary forms are used to create a special effect of some kind for the purpose of highlighting or enhancing the performance of one of the other primary aims of communication. The following is a more specific list of *operations* performed by various stylistic devices and rhetorical techniques during the formal composition or the conceptual processing of a literary text, the Bible in particular:

1. To broadly organize and arrange (i.e., give definition and coherence to the thematic structure of) a given poetic text
2. To spotlight within the text a set of selected theological truths, religious instructions, and moral imperatives that the author wishes to emphasize in particular
3. To forcefully impress upon listeners, by means of the very style of language that is used, the dignity and authority, the conceptual importance as well as ethical significance of the entire message being transmitted
4. To express with greater or lesser degrees of intensification the author/speaker’s emotions, moods, and attitudes, and to *evoke* corresponding feelings within the audience
5. To render the translation more memorable, hence also more memorizable and transmittable
6. To engage God’s people psychologically and spiritually more fully in a meaningful worship experience, especially via the familiar phatic (ritual) forms of liturgical language

What additional important discourse function does the expert use of stylistic forms carry out, whether in the original biblical text or in our modern translations? Can you think of any others?

It is a vital part of the translation task to attempt (at least) to reproduce in the TL a similar level of specific as well as general communicative significance as found in the SL text – including its connotative as well as denotative aspects. This is accomplished by selecting from the total inventory of vernacular linguistic and literary resources those that most closely match the biblical genre being translated in keeping with the designated method of translation (in our case, a *LiFE* rendition, more or less). As part of this exercise of determining functional correspondents in the TL, it is often necessary to differentiate several types of poetry, especially if these happen to be associated with disparate communication settings and purposes in the receptor culture. These diverse discourse types are designed to carry out different goals during the communication process (see section 5.3).

De Waard and Nida (1986:79–80) call attention to a number of *rhetorical functions* that are performed by “the effective exploitation of selection and arrangement of formal features...designed to produce

impact and appeal.” These rhetorical functions are paraphrased below in a somewhat modified arrangement (ibid.:80–5):

1. **wholeness** with regard to the dimensions of *completeness* and *unity* of the subject being presented in the text under consideration
2. **impact** that is created through the use of *novelty* and *appropriateness* in relation to the linguistic cotext as well as the extralinguistic context
3. **coherence** involving a suitable conceptual fit with the prevailing worldview, both ancient (biblical) and contemporary (considering also a local traditional religious perspective); with the current communicative setting; and with any other relevant oral or written texts, either from the Scriptures themselves or from some modern work (intertextuality)
4. **cohesion** marked not only by the internal connection of the constituent parts of a text, but also by their manifest progression towards a tangible goal
5. **focus** whereby new information is distinguished from old information in the text, topic is differentiated from comment, and foregrounded material is set off from that of the background
6. **emphasis** whereby some selected aspect or feature of the discourse is given special prominence within its particular context of occurrence
7. **appeal** deriving from the discourse’s esthetic dimension, that is, the beauty of linguistic forms as they are chosen and combined to form pleasing rhythms, syntactic patterns, phonic groupings, lexical collocations, and so forth

In section 2.3 we examined the four principal macrofunctions of the diverse artistic and rhetorical features found in literary discourse. These were:

1. **segmentation**: dividing the text up into structural units of different sizes
2. **disposition**: organizing and arranging the repeated elements into various textual patterns
3. **connection**: linking one part of the text with another and unifying the discourse as a whole
4. **projection**: giving prominence to selected marked portions of the complete text

How do these four macrofunctions relate to de Waard and Nida’s set of “rhetorical functions”?

Speech act analysis is yet another, more detailed way to explore the communicative purpose of a particular passage, or even a portion of one as we saw in section 1.6.2.1. Mention five common illocutions (discourse intentions) that are important in poetic discourse, and cite a Bible verse that illustrates each one.

For reflection, research, and response:

1. What significant repeated elements do you see when you compare Genesis 1:1 and 2:1–3? What is the structural function of this repetition? How can this function be highlighted in your translation?
2. Study Psalm 23 (reproduced below from the RSV, including several footnotes, which also need to be evaluated). Consult several other English versions and the original Hebrew text or an interlinear version, if possible. Then try to identify a specific poetic device that carries out each of the rhetorical functions of wholeness, impact, coherence, cohesion, focus, emphasis, and appeal. (You may need to choose a single device to represent several functions.)

¹ The LORD is my shepherd,
I shall not want;

² he makes me lie down in green pastures.
He leads me beside still waters;¹

³ he restores my soul.^a

He leads me in paths of righteousness^b for his name's sake.

⁴ Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,^c

I fear no evil;
 for thou art with me;
 thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.
⁵ Thou preparest a table before me
 in the presence of my enemies;
 thou anointest my head with oil,
 my cup overflows.
⁶ Surely^d goodness and mercy^e shall follow me all the days of my life;
 and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.^f

a. 23:3 [Or <i>life</i>] b. 23:3 [Or <i>right paths</i>] c. 23:4 Or <i>the valley of deep darkness</i> d. 23:6 Or <i>Only</i> e. 23:6 Or <i>kindness</i> f. 23:6 Or <i>as long as I live</i>

3. Now do a more detailed study of Isaiah 5:1–7 (RSV), presented below without any instructive formatting. Dividing it into strophes is your job. Analyze the structure and style of the passage, following the ten steps outlined in section 3.6. Step 7 is especially important because of its focus on the poetic devices. Then, try to specify some of the possible rhetorical functions for the main artistic features you identified.

¹ Let me sing for my beloved
 a love song concerning his vineyard:
 My beloved had a vineyard
 on a very fertile hill.
² He dugged it and cleared it of stones,
 and planted it with choice vines;
 he built a watchtower in the midst of it,
 and hewed out a wine vat in it;
 and he looked for it to yield grapes,
 but it yielded wild grapes.
³ And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem
 and men of Judah,
 judge, I pray you, between me
 and my vineyard.
⁴ What more was there to do for my vineyard,
 that I have not done in it?
 When I looked for it to yield grapes,
 why did it yield wild grapes?
⁵ And now I will tell you
 what I will do to my vineyard.
 I will remove its hedge,
 and it shall be devoured;
 I will break down its wall,
 and it shall be trampled down.
⁶ I will make it a waste;
 it shall not be pruned or hoed,
 and briers and thorns shall grow up;
 I will also command the clouds
 that they rain no rain upon it.
⁷ For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts
 is the house of Israel,
 and the men of Judah
 are his pleasant planting;
 and he looked for justice,
 but behold, bloodshed;
 for righteousness, but behold, a cry!

4. Read the case study entitled “Translating Poetry for Oral Presentation” by E. R. Hope in *Hebrew Poetry in the Bible* (cited in Zogbo and Wendland 2000:179–184), in which some of the outstanding features of Hebrew and African poetry are compared. The African devices noted are rhythm and meter, repetition,

refrain for audience response, metaphors, juxtaposition of ideas, and condensed style. Now answer the following questions:

- a. How does the African list compare with the features commonly found in the oral genre *love poetry* in YL? Do you need to add some features (e.g., ideophones) to compensate for those that are not present or common in your own poetic tradition?
 - b. After reading E. R. Hope's case study, evaluate the text of the English poem at the end. How do you like it? Can you suggest any possible improvements?
 - c. Try translating this poem in YL in a *LiFE*-like manner so as to make an effective oral (or sung!) presentation. Then give a literal back-translation of it into English. Point out some of the key poetic devices that you have employed and their rhetorical purpose in the text.
5. Study and then meaningfully reformat the passage below (1 Cor. 15:51–57 from the RSV, followed by the Greek text). Then suggest why this passage has been structured by Paul in such a clearly poetic fashion. What can you do in your translation to give people an indication of how (and why) the text is organized poetically in this fashion? How does the last verse, 15:58, relate to this poetic section?

51 Lo! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. 53 For this perishable nature must put on the imperishable, and this mortal nature must put on immortality. 54 When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." 55 "O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?" 56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁵¹ ἰδοὺ μυστήριον ὑμῖν λέγω·
πάντες οὐ κοιμηθησόμεθα,
πάντες δὲ ἀλλαγησόμεθα,

⁵² ἐν ἀτόμῳ,
ἐν ῥίπῃ ὀφθαλμοῦ,
ἐν τῇ ἐσχάτῃ σάλπιγγι·
σαλπύσει γάρ
καὶ οἱ νεκροὶ ἐγερθήσονται ἀφθαρτοὶ
καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀλλαγησόμεθα.

⁵³ δεῖ γὰρ τὸ φθαρτὸν τοῦτο ἐνδύσασθαι ἀφθαρσίαν
καὶ τὸ θνητὸν τοῦτο ἐνδύσασθαι ἀθανασίαν.

⁵⁴ ὅταν δὲ τὸ φθαρτὸν τοῦτο ἐνδύσῃται ἀφθαρσίαν,
καὶ τὸ θνητὸν τοῦτο ἐνδύσῃται ἀθανασίαν,
τότε γενήσεται ὁ λόγος ὁ γεγραμμένος,
Κατεπόθη ὁ θάνατος εἰς νίκος.

⁵⁵ ποῦ σου, θάνατε, τὸ νίκος;
ποῦ σου, θάνατε, τὸ κέντρον;

⁵⁶ τὸ δὲ κέντρον τοῦ θανάτου ἡ ἁμαρτία,
ἡ δὲ δύναμις τῆς ἁμαρτίας ὁ νόμος·

⁵⁷ τῷ δὲ θεῷ χάρις
τῷ δίδόντι ἡμῖν τὸ νίκος
διὰ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

11.3 Genres of poetry found in the Scriptures

Lesson 4 introduced the subject of genres, or conventional types, of literature, which are characterized by sets of different linguistic and literary features, by distinct communication goals, by diverse social settings of use, and consequently also by differing expectations which readers/hearers have about them. It was also noted there that the Bible, as literature, is full of variety in terms of the genres it contains and that translators need to recognize them in order to accurately analyze the original text and re-present it with equivalent literary quality, impact, and appeal in the TL.

The different genres of literature may be investigated from one of two perspectives: either from an insider's emic perspective (language-specific) or from an outsider's etic perspective (language in general). Where enough comparative language and sociocultural data exists, the local emic viewpoint is preferable, for that is more specific and precise in terms of characterizing the various genres and subgenres. However, where insider information is lacking, we are forced to adopt the external, more generalized viewpoint and work from there, in dependence on the textual context to help us categorize the distinct text types we encounter. This is the situation that we face in the case of the Hebrew Scriptures, and to a much lesser degree also in Greek. The NT literature is problematic not because of a lack of comparative data in Greek, but simply because the biblical writers did not slavishly follow Greek literary forms, but often adopted a mixed, or eclectic, writing style, combining certain Hellenistic features with those of their Semitic roots.

Here in lesson 5 we are concentrating on the different genres of poetry and will be dealing mainly with the Hebrew text. The following is a list of some of the designated emic poetic varieties. Look up each of the Scripture references cited (often psalm titles) and see if you can propose a definition of the specific genre that it illustrates, based on the form and content of the text itself, coupled with information derived from the surrounding cotext (the textual context):

- shiyr (Isa. 5:1; Ps. 30:1) _____
- mizmôwr (Pss. 23:1; 82:1) _____
- maskiyl (Pss. 32:1; 42:1) _____
- miktâm (Pss. 16:1; 60:1) _____
- shiggâyôwn (Ps. 7:1) _____
- qiynâh (Jer. 9:9; Ezek. 32:2) _____
- massa' (Nah. 1:1; Hab. 1:1) _____
- ne'um (Hos. 2:13; Amos 3:15) _____
- chiydâh (Judg. 14:14; Num. 12:8) _____
- birâkâh (Gen. 49:28; Exod. 32:29) _____
- qilâlâh (Deut. 23:5; Judg. 9:57) _____
- mi'êrâh (Prov. 3:33; Mal. 3:9) _____
- muwsâr (Ps. 50:17; Prov. 1:3) _____

Bible scholars today face considerable difficulties in the attempt to classify these Hebrew genres when they encounter texts such as Psalm 85:1 and Psalm 86:1 (the two psalm titles), or Jeremiah 9:19b, or Micah 2:4, or Ezekiel 17:2.

What problem do you notice in these passages with reference to the genre designations that are used?

A similar problem appears in the heading of Psalm 88. What is the difficulty there?

Now take the example of *mâshâl*: What kind of literary form does this genre designation refer to in the following passages?

- a. 1 Samuel 10:12 _____
- b. Psalm 69:11 _____
- c. Numbers 23:7–10 _____
- d. Isaiah 14:4–21 _____
- e. Ezekiel 17:2–10 _____
- f. Numbers 21:27–30 _____
- g. Psalm 78:2 _____
- h. Proverbs 10:1 _____

The Greek *parabolê* corresponds partially to the Hebrew *mâshâl*: Examples of the genre designation *parabolê* appear in Mark 4:30; Luke 6:39, 13:6; and Hebrews 9:9, 11:19.

What sort of diversity do you notice among these passages, even though the term *parabolê* is used in all them?

As you worked through the examples of the Hebrew genres given above, you perhaps came to the conclusion that it is not very satisfactory to use the Hebrew terms in the search for translation equivalents in the TL. This is not the fault of the original writers; it is a simple fact resulting from our relative ignorance of the initial communicative setting. The diversity of terminology does indicate that the Jews took their literature/orature seriously and were very creative in this respect. However, we are too far removed today from the original language and settings in which these terms were used to be able to understand them very well. For that reason we must depend on some sort of external, general system of classification in order to analyze the many potentially different poetic (and prose) genres that we find in the Scriptures, from beginning to end.

Four principal etic types (macrogenres) of biblical poetry may be proposed, although these often appear in mixed form or closely combined within a given text. They are as follows (compare this with the diagram given at the end of section 4.4):

1. **Lyric** – for panegyric, liturgical, expressive, and evocative proclamation (e.g., Psalms).
2. **Didactic** – for conveying moral instruction and religious information (e.g., Proverbs).
3. **Hortatory** – for pastoral reproof, criticism, consolation, and encouragement (e.g., Amos).
4. **Predictive** – for dramatic visions or oracles revealing future events +/- explicit warning for the wicked or comfort for the faithful (e.g., Ezek. 38 – 39).

Examine the following passages from Hosea. Which of the four etic types does each one most closely resemble? Then find another passage of the same type and give its reference:

- a. 7:1–10 = _____
- b. 11:8–9 = _____
- c. 14:4–7 = _____
- d. 14:8–9 = _____

Is it possible to convey these four poetic text types – along with some of their associated stylistic features and essential functional and contextual implications – by means of similar genres in the language of your translation?

If so, describe some of the categories that you would use. If not, how great would the loss be in terms of meaning equivalence, and how might this deficit of overall message significance be at least partially replaced or compensated for?

Do you have any literary forms that perform a similar communicative and rhetorical function in analogous social or religious settings even though they are different?

Literary analysts normally subdivide the preceding four general classes of poetry according to form and/or function. One subcategory, for example, is *epic*, in which segments of narrative are included; another is *drama*, in which segments of dialogue are included. We do not have to be concerned about all the details of classification at this stage; however, it would be helpful to be able to discern some of the basic structural categories and stylistic devices that are found in the three major types of OT poetry: lyric, hortatory, and didactic. These three kinds of poetic composition may be distinguished on the basis of content (especially characteristic vocabulary, e.g., liturgical, judicial, and sapiential) and also on the basis of purpose. The chart below presents nine purpose-oriented subtypes:

<u>Examples:</u> Psalms Song of Songs Job Joel Nahum Hosea Habakkuk Isaiah Ezekiel Proverbs Ecclesiastes		
LYRIC ←	HORTATORY	→ DIDACTIC
<u>Functions:</u> lament	warning	instruction
appeal	reproof	admonition
praise	blessing	encouragement

It is rather difficult at times to differentiate lyric, hortatory, and didactic on a strictly structural or stylistic basis, except to note that lyric verse tends to manifest regular parallelism and associated poetic features the most consistently, whereas hortatory and didactic verse periodically introduce sections of a more prosaic, even (semi-)narrative, nature (e.g., a personal account within a text that manifests a higher percentage of the prose particles and looser kinds of parallel construction, as in Ecclesiastes). There are of course exceptions to these general observations; Proverbs, for example, manifests a very tight type of binary parallelism, but the coupled bicola are not often linked together as clearly into larger strophic units.

We will examine each of the categories of lyric, hortatory, and didactic more closely in sections 5.3.1 – 5.3.3.

For reflection, research, and response:

1. Find a verse or passage that exemplifies each of the poetic functions in the preceding chart. Write out each of the nine examples that you have selected. Discuss these examples in class.
2. Translate the nine passages that you chose in the previous exercise into YL using the *LiFE* method. Then point out the most prominent TL artistic or rhetorical feature that you incorporated into your rendering of each text.

11.3.1 Poetry of the psalmists

In the Psalms we may distinguish five etic classes of lyric poetry based on their predominant function and manner of expression, including characteristic topically related vocabulary: *petition*, *thanksgiving*, *praise*, *instruction*, and *profession*. These functional types are often combined in various ways within a single text, which may be further differentiated into *individual* (“I”) and *communal* (“we”) psalms. Descriptions and examples of the five classes follow (quotations are from the NRSV):

1. **Petition** (lament) – appealing to God for help in a time of danger, testing, or need

Rescue me, O my God, from the hand of the wicked,
from the grasp of the unjust and cruel. (Ps. 71:4; see also Ps. 70)
2. **Thanksgiving** (eulogy) – thanking God for assistance or deliverance received during some past situation of deprivation, illness, trial, or threat.

He delivered me from my strong enemy,

and from those who hated me;
for they were too mighty for me. (Ps. 18:17; see also Ps. 30)

3. **Praise** (hymn) – praising the person, character, and behavior of God in terms of his greatness, goodness, and glory.

Praise the LORD!
How good it is to sing praises to our God;
for he is gracious... (Ps. 147:1; see also Ps. 100)

4. **Instruction** (homily) – teaching how to live a “God-fearing” life pleasing to Lord in thought, word, and deed, often in contrast to the wicked.

Fools say in their hearts, “There is no God.”
They are corrupt, they commit abominable acts;
there is no one who does good. (Ps. 53:1; see also Ps. 1)

5. **Profession** (creed) – expressing the psalmist’s complete trust in and dependence upon God as the unfailing provider and protector of his life and entire being.

God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear... (Ps. 46:1–2a; see also Psalm 23)

We see in the text of Psalm 54 below how these different goals of religious communication may be combined to form a coherent and unified lyric poem:

- ¹ Save me, O God, by thy name,..... PETITION
and vindicate me by thy might.
² Hear my prayer, O God;
give ear to the words of my mouth.
³ For insolent men have risen against me,.....[PROBLEM]
ruthless men seek my life;
they do not set God before them.
⁴ Behold, God is my helper;.....PROFESSION
the Lord is the upholder of my life.
⁵ He will requite my enemies with evil;
in thy faithfulness put an end to them.
⁶ With a freewill offering I will sacrifice to thee;THANKSGIVING
I will give thanks to thy name, O LORD, for it is good.
⁷ For thou hast delivered me from every trouble,.....PRAISE
and my eye has looked in triumph on my enemies.

Notice that an element designated the “problem” (“complaint”) simply states the basis for the petition (the cause for thanksgiving in cases where the psalmist’s appeal has been answered). Psalm 54 may be classified somewhat differently depending on whether the final word of praise for deliverance is viewed as being past, already accomplished (in which case it would be a psalm of thanksgiving), or whether it is being anticipated or hoped for (in which case it would be a psalm of petition).

The aim of a literary approach is not to discover the single “right answer” in terms of a formal classification of the text at hand. Rather, it is to encourage translators to think more precisely in terms of form and function, both as they analyze the biblical text and also while they are rendering the passage in their language. The psalms are certainly not nearly as similar in nature as many people think. There are many shades of compositional diversity, some hues obviously disparate and others less so. These differences in style and content may well have been associated with corresponding differences in the original interpersonal context, psychological mood, and communicative purpose. We cannot of course determine for sure what these situational influences may have been; our job is simply to re-create the text in a dynamic, yet appropriate manner so that it may serve in analogous religious settings and personal circumstances today. This means that both the semantic as well as the pragmatic significance of the psalm needs to be conveyed effectively in the TL, whether via an available genre of poetry or some other form of poetically heightened discourse. The goal is to ensure that the translated text carries

a level of impact and appeal, of rhetorical power and verbal beauty, which matches its emotively charged religious message.

Having recognized the five broad communicative classes of psalms, translators may consider several subcategories. For example, there are individual passages as well as larger strophes that may be labeled as exhibiting the subsidiary topical-functional notions of *repentance* (penitential), *remembrance* (historical), *retribution* (imprecatory), *royalty* (panegyric), and *liturgy* (liturgical). The following verses (quoted from the NRSV) illustrate these five subtypes. See if you can distinguish one from the other.

Our ancestors, when they were in Egypt,
did not consider your wonderful works;
they did not remember the abundance of your steadfast love,
but rebelled against the Most High at the Red Sea. (Ps. 106:7)

Let them be put to shame and dismayed forever;
let them perish in disgrace. (Ps. 83:17)

It is he who remembered us in our low estate,
for his steadfast love endures forever;
and rescued us from our foes,
for his steadfast love endures forever;
who gives food to all flesh,
for his steadfast love endures forever. (Ps. 136:23–25)

Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done evil in your sight,
so that you are justified in your sentence and blameless when you pass judgement. (Ps. 51:4)

Then he will speak to them in his wrath,
and terrify them in his fury, saying,
“I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill.” (Ps. 2:5–6)

The five examples above illustrate the subtypes of remembrance, retribution, liturgy, repentance, and royalty, in that order.

If you do not agree, present your own classification and rationale in a class discussion.

Surely it is possible, if translators have the necessary poetic competence and personal commitment, to convey the varied moods, emotions, attitudes, and overtones associated with these lyrical psalms in languages other than Hebrew. But those commissioned with this challenging literary and theological assignment first need to recognize what is actually present in the SL text in terms of overall semantic and pragmatic significance. They must also be aware of the full store of poetic resources available to choose from in their mother tongue. For example, are there any TL genres that match the Hebrew in terms of general communicative function? Are there specific literary/oratorical devices available in the TL to distinguish vernacular texts that are penitential, historical, imprecatory, royal, or liturgical in nature and purpose? Clearly, a great deal of research may be necessary in order to uncover such artistic features, if present, or to discover suitable literary functional equivalents. (For more on the subject of TL research, see section 7.2 and also section 4.5.)

Now we will look at another poetic praise text in the Old Testament. This one, the Song of Songs, is quite different in style, topic, and tone from the Psalter. The interpretation of this book can be rather complicated, depending on the levels of symbolism that one sees in the text, but there is no controversy over the nature of its poetry – composed as it is, almost completely of pure love lyrics.¹⁴ While it is usually not too difficult to find an equivalent genre in most target languages, the imagery may be quite a challenge to re-present, for the Song of Songs is a text which, in addition to its alternating speakers throughout, is characterized by vivid, rapidly changing images and diverse figures of speech, especially similes.

¹⁴Some scholars and commentators see an underlying analogy here that likens the loving, faithful, completely-devoted relationship between a God-fearing husband and wife to the relationship between the Lord and his reverent people. Be that as it may, the point is to render the powerful language, imagery, and feelings of the Song of Songs in a manner that adequately reflects the lyric diversity and emotive intensity of the original surface text.

The Song of Songs also features a great deal of lexical recursion, which gives considerable cohesion and unity to the whole and serves as a structural device as well, most notably through the repeated refrains, including several formulaic expressions that function as sectional boundary markers.

There are seven demarcating refrains in the Song of Songs. See if you can specify what these are by comparing the two references given at the beginning of each blank line below.

Which topics or key words do the two cited passages have in common?

(2:6, 8:3) _____

(2:9, 8:14) _____

(3:5, 8:4) _____

(1:5, 3:5) _____

(2:16, 6:3) _____

(4:16, 6:2) _____

(3:6, 8:5) _____

Now examine 2:6–9 and write down all the refrains identified above that you find in this passage:

The convergence of these refrains indicates a strong boundary somewhere in this section.

Between which two verses does this break occur? Why do you think so?

There is a great deal of descriptive imagery in the Song of Songs. Two representative passages are presented below, 5:10–16 and 6:4–9 (NIV).

- ^{5:10} My lover is radiant and ruddy,
outstanding among ten thousand.
- ¹¹ His head is purest gold;
his hair is wavy and black as a **raven**.
- ¹² His eyes are like **doves**
by the water streams,
washed in **milk**,
mounted like jewels.
- ¹³ His cheeks are like beds of **spice**
yielding perfume.
His lips are like **lilies**
dripping with **myrrh**.
- ¹⁴ His arms are rods of gold
set with chrysolite.
His body is like polished **ivory**
decorated with **sapphires**.
- ¹⁵ His legs are pillars of **marble**
set on bases of pure gold.
His appearance is like Lebanon,
choice as its **cedars**.
- ¹⁶ His mouth is sweetness itself;
he is altogether lovely. (Song 5:10-16)
- ^{6:4} You are beautiful, my darling, as **Tirzah**,
lovely as Jerusalem,
majestic as **troops** with banners.
- ⁵ Turn your eyes from me;
they overwhelm me.
Your hair is like a **flock of goats**

- descending from Gilead.
- 6 Your teeth are like a **flock of sheep**
coming up from the washing.
Each has its twin,
not one of them is alone.
- 7 Your temples behind your veil
are like the halves of a **pomegranate**.
- 8 Sixty queens there may be,
and eighty concubines,
and virgins beyond number;
- 9 but my dove, my perfect one, is unique,
the only daughter of her mother,
the **favorite** of the one who bore her.
The maidens saw her and called her blessed;
the queens and concubines praised her. (Song 6:4-9)

Would such imagery designating adult males and females convey the same overall effect if rendered literally in your language?

If not, what sort of adjustments would need to be made in order to recreate the same impact and appeal? (Consider the boldfaced similes and metaphors in particular.)

Note the type of parallelism manifested in these passages. Of what kind is it (see section 5.1.1)?

Compare chapters 5 – 6 of the Song of Songs in the NIV, NRSV, GNT, REB, and NJB. Do they identify the different speakers in the text? What differences do you observe? Can you posit a reason for these differences?

Do “speaker titles” help to reveal the discourse structure and interpersonal dynamics of each text, or not? Explain your answer.

Do you have a song genre that uses alternating singers in your tradition of verbal art forms? Could this genre be used to translate the Song of Songs with greater formal and functional equivalence? Explain. If this would be possible, give an example from chapters 5 – 6.

Do you use the device of identifying different speakers in the book of Job? If not, give your reasons.

There are also some brief semi-narrative snatches in the Song of Songs such as 3:1–4 (NIV), which is reformatted here to read like a personal stream-of-consciousness account:

All night long on my bed I looked for the one my heart loves. I looked for him but did not find him. I will get up now and go about the city, through its streets and squares. I will search for the one my heart loves. So I looked for him but did not find him.

The watchmen found me as they made their rounds in the city.

“Have you seen the one my heart loves?”

Scarcely had I passed them when I found the one my heart loves. I held him and would not let him go till I had brought him to my mother’s house, to the room of the one who conceived me.

Is this text prose or poetry? On what do you base your answer? What poetic features are in these verses?

Notice how the passage has been formatted in the NIV (and most other English translations).

Do you agree with the NIV’s arrangement of the text, or do you think that it would be more accurate to format it like a narrative? Explain your answer.

The Song of Songs is found in the Wisdom literature section of the Old Testament in our modern Bibles, and indeed it is regarded as such by many scholars. This is based on correspondences that seem to exist between its descriptive and semi-narrative passages and similar texts in the book of Proverbs (e.g., 5:15–20, 6:24–29, and 7:6–23). Also important is the wisdom text that appears as the book’s climax in 8:6–

7. Some would say that the book as a whole seeks to present a biblical perspective on sexual morality. Other scholars would class the Song of Songs along with the Psalms despite their clear differences.

What do the Song of Songs and Psalms have in common?

How would you classify Song of Songs according to the literary standards and conventions of YL?

Does that classification affect the way in which you must translate this book? Explain.

It may be noted at this point that the Hebrew Bible is traditionally divided into three categories:

1. **Torah:** Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy

2. **Prophets:**

The Former Prophets: Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings

The Latter Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel; Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

3. **Writings:** Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles

Is there any reason for the books of your OT translation to be ordered according to the sequence of the Jewish Bible? What would be the best reason for not doing this?

In what sense are the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings “prophetic” in nature?

How does this Hebrew sequence help explain the deeper significance of Christ’s words in Luke 24:44 (which is a metonym)?

Into which major groupings are the OT books of your translation arranged? What is the basis for this division?

Does your translation include an introduction explaining the major sections? If not, explain why this is not necessary or, alternatively, why it would be helpful for many readers.

For reflection, research, and response:

1. Find an additional example from the Psalms to illustrate each of the five main functions of petition, thanksgiving, praise, confession, and instruction. Write down the references along with the function exemplified by each.
2. Now find one passage from the Psalms to illustrate each of the five minor functional subcategories, that is, prayer-songs of: repentance, remembrance, retribution, royalty, and liturgy.
3. Identify the functional category of each verse of Psalm 3 (quoted below from the NIV) using the major and/or minor functions mentioned in exercises 1 and 2. If you have difficulty classifying any verses or individual lines, write a suggestion on the blank line as to how you would classify it in functional terms.

¹ O LORD, how many are my foes!
 How many rise up against me! _____

² Many are saying of me,
 “God will not deliver him.” _____

³ But you are a shield around me, O LORD;
 you bestow glory on me and lift up my head _____

⁴ To the LORD I cry aloud,
 and he answers me from his holy hill _____

⁵ I lie down and sleep;
 I wake again, because the LORD sustains me _____

⁶ I will not fear the tens of thousands
 drawn up against me on every side _____

⁷ Arise, O LORD!
 Deliver me, O my God! _____

Strike all my enemies on the jaw;
break the teeth of the wicked
⁸ From the LORD comes deliverance.
May your blessing be on your people

11.3.2 Poetry of the prophets

The poetry of the prophets differs from the lyric poetry of the Psalms with respect to stylistic form, semantic content, and communicative function. The passage given below is a good example of these differences.

Point out some of the ways in which the style of this text differs from Psalm 78:64–72.

Can you guess the biblical book from which the following text is taken?

¹³ When Ephraim saw his sickness,
and Judah his sores,
then Ephraim turned to Assyria,
and sent to the great king for help.
But he is not able to cure you,
not able to heal your sores.
¹⁴ For I will be like a lion to Ephraim,
like a great lion to Judah.
I will tear them to pieces and go away;
I will carry them off, with no one to rescue them.
¹⁵ Then I will go back to my place
until they admit their guilt.
And they will seek my face;
in their misery they will earnestly seek me.

The preceding text is Hosea 5:13–15 (NIV).

What are some of the stylistic markers that distinguish it as a separate unit of poetic discourse (a strophe) within chapter 5?

Study this passage in light of its textual context. Review the ten steps of discourse analysis in section 3.6 and point out the clear signals of aperture and closure that demarcate this as a distinct unit.

Hebrew poetic features such as lined parallelism, figurative language, and graphic imagery can be seen in Hosea 5:13–15 as we hear Yahweh through the mouth of the prophet Hosea reflect upon the sinfulness of his people Israel (*indictment*), then threaten, indeed forcefully promise, to punish them for their persistent wickedness (*judgment*). But in conclusion we learn of an unexpected reversal: the sinners repent and God relents (“goes back to his place”). This is a functional discourse pattern that is repeated throughout the prophetic literature, both within the scope of a single chapter and also as part of the compositional plan of an entire book (see Hosea 14). Note that v. 15 above functions as the *hortatory thesis* of this strophe as well as the whole of chapter 5, while all the rest is supportive material, consisting of various rebukes, warnings, and condemnation for the people’s wickedness (see section 4.2, exercise 5).

We notice some other stylistic variations as well. One major difference is that, as primarily divine proclamation (God to people), prophetic discourse tends to be more aggressively imperative or prescriptive and less petitionary or penitential (people to God), which is characteristic of the psalmic genres. In the prophetic books YHWH speaks with very strong feelings and desires both to and about his people. There are exceptions, of course: In the passage that follows Hosea 5:13–15 (6:1–3), Israel’s hypocritical (cf. 6:4ff.) prayer of repentance is recorded as part of the prophetic message. But while the prophets may be just as expressive or affective in places as the psalmists, the emotions and attitudes involved are somewhat different. They reflect their respective roles and the general subject matter of their discourses — the prophets, as covenant-mediators, being more judicial and hortatory, the psalmists

more liturgical and supplicatory in nature. Hosea certainly provides us with an intimate anthropomorphic glimpse of the inner “feelings” of God (as in chap. 11).

As can be seen in the short text above from Hosea 5:13–15, the prophetic preachers are greatly concerned with individual as well as corporate issues of sin and judgement, or repentance and forgiveness, along with their inevitable contrasting outcomes, whether denunciation or deliverance. The message of the various prophets is normally highly contextualized; in other words, God’s communication is very closely tied to the history and immediate life-setting of his chosen people, Israel – past, present, and future. The psalms, on the other hand, are more often timeless in reference, though they do of course reflect a certain historical, cultural, religious, and often even a highly personal setting. Furthermore, in the predictive passages of prophecy, there is usually a definite (albeit indeterminate) future referential aspect (whether national, messianic, or eschatological), which is not often found in the poetry of prayer, praise, and worship.

Prophetic poetry is also distinguished by its stylistic forms from the lyric poetry of the Psalms. Its distinctive features include the following: less strict parallelisms; longer and less regular poetic lines (cola); occasional prosaic insertions; a predominance of cause-effect relations; scatological and other types of shocking imagery; and the prevalence of criticism, rebuke, accusation, and warning.

Another notable feature of prophetic poetry is its explicit and emphatic marking of words spoken directly by God (see section 5.1.5). An *oracular formula* typically announces the onset of a new speech or thematic/pragmatic segment; less frequently a conventional prophetic phrase announces the close of such a unit. Even a medial passage of special importance may be similarly distinguished. Among these signals are familiar expressions such as “Hear the word of the LORD” (Isa. 10:1); “Go and say to...” (Isa. 7:3–4); “Thus says the LORD” (Isa. 44:6); “The word of the LORD that came to...” (Mic. 1:1); “This is what the LORD God showed me” (Amos 7:1); “On that day” (Hos. 2:16); “then you/they will know that...” (Ezek. 33:33); and “says the LORD God” (Amos 4:8). Such so-called *messenger speech* was a constant reminder to the audience that the prophets were spokesmen for God, not independent creators of the words of their oracles. Appropriate formulaic, discourse-marking equivalents in the TL must be discovered, or carefully created, and then appropriately placed in the translated text at positions that signal the beginning, ending, or peak point of a prophetic discourse segment, whether major or minor in its scope or prominence.

The various levels, or degrees, of *quotative embedding* that often occur with prophetic formulae also need to be formally marked in an appropriate, unambiguous manner. An example of a passage where such marking is needed is at the beginning of the book of Zechariah in 1:1–6 (NRSV), which is reformatted below to show the various levels of discourse embedding:

¹ In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came to the prophet Zechariah son of Berechiah son of Iddo, saying:

² The LORD was very angry with your ancestors. ³ Therefore say to them,
Thus says the Lord of hosts: Return to me, says the Lord of hosts, and I will return to you, says the Lord of hosts. ⁴ Do not be like your ancestors, to whom the former prophets proclaimed,
“Thus says the Lord of hosts, Return from your evil ways and from your evil deeds.”
But they did not hear or heed me, says the LORD. ⁵ Your ancestors, where are they?
And the prophets, do they live forever? ⁶ But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not overtake your ancestors? So they repented and said,
“The LORD of hosts has dealt with us according to our ways and deeds, just as he planned to do.”

How many levels of speech embedding do you see in the preceding text? Compare this with the same selection from the GNT:

¹ In the eighth month of the second year that Darius was emperor of Persia, the LORD gave this message to the prophet Zechariah, the son of Berechiah and grandson of Iddo. ² The LORD Almighty told Zechariah to say to the people,

“I, the LORD, was very angry with your ancestors, ³ but now I say to you, ‘Return to me, and I will return to you. ⁴ Do not be like your ancestors. Long ago the prophets gave them my message, telling them not to live evil, sinful lives any longer. But they would not listen to me or obey me. ⁵ Your ancestors and those prophets are no longer alive. ⁶ Through my servants the prophets I gave your ancestors commands and warnings, but they disregarded them and suffered the consequences. Then they repented and acknowledged that I, the LORD Almighty, had punished them as they deserved and as I had determined to do.’ ”

How many levels of embedding are shown here? What has the GNT done to reduce the number? Which text is easier to read and understand? Is there some loss of emphasis in the GNT text? If so, where does this occur?

Which format would work most effectively in YL? Or do you have another option, and why do you say so?

Does the use of indentation help to show the levels of quotation?

How about the use of quotation marks – single or double? Do most people perceive and understand the significance of these?

Is there anything else that might be done to make passages like this more readable and/or hearable in YL?

Another major diagnostic of prophetic discourse is the divine *pronouncement speech*. It should be carefully distinguished in any translation. Typically it falls into a two-part pattern. (The order of the two parts may fluctuate, as we will see.) First, there is a *declaration* from Yahweh, one that threatens a just punishment upon his people or the pagan “nations” for their wickedness or else promises deliverance and blessing for those who remain true to his covenantal principles (good deeds are usually not specified). Second, a corresponding *reason*, or set of reasons, normally supports this divine declaration. The wicked are condemned for their evil actions against God and man. The righteous, on the other hand, may be commended for their loyalty or encouraged to remain faithful to Yahweh, although they are more often simply promised blessings on the basis of their relationship with a merciful God.

The order of these two discourse functions, divine *decree* and judicial *rationale*, may vary from one text to another. Either one may appear first, and they also may alternate back and forth contrastively within the same oracle. An example of this is in Isaiah 30:12–22 (quoted below from the NIV, except for the format), which combines declarations of judgement with promises of deliverance:

¹² Therefore, this is what the Holy One of Israel says:	[FORMULA]
“Because you have rejected this message, relied on oppression and depended on deceit,	[REASON]
¹³ this sin will become for you like a high wall, cracked and bulging, that collapses suddenly, in an instant.	[PREDICTION OF JUDGEMENT]
¹⁴ It will break in pieces like pottery, shattered so mercilessly that among its pieces not a fragment will be found for taking coals from a hearth or scooping water out of a cistern.”	
¹⁵ This is what the Sovereign LORD, the Holy One of Israel, says:	[FORMULA]
“In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it.	[CONTRAST]
¹⁶ You said, ‘No, we will flee on horses.’ Therefore you will flee!	[REASON]
You said, ‘We will ride off on swift horses.’	

Therefore your pursuers will be swift!	[PREDICTION OF JUDGEMENT]
17 A thousand will flee at the threat of one; at the threat of five you will all flee away, till you are left like a flagstaff on a mountaintop, like a banner on a hill."	
18 Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you; he rises to show you compassion. For the LORD is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him!	[CONTRAST] [DIVINE ATTRIBUTES] [REASON]
19 O people of Zion, who live in Jerusalem, you will weep no more. How gracious he will be when you cry for help! As soon as he hears, he will answer you.	[PROMISE OF BLESSING] [DIVINE ATTRIBUTES]
20 Although the Lord gives you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, your teachers will be hidden no more; with your own eyes you will see them.	[CONTRAST] [PROMISE OF BLESSING]
21 Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it."	
22 Then you will defile your idols overlaid with silver and your images covered with gold; you will throw them away like a menstrual cloth and say to them, "Away with you!"	[PROMISE OF REGENERATION]

Note that in verses 15, 18, and 19 Yahweh, speaking through his prophet, inserts a significant point of *contrast* that constitutes an implicit call to repentance, such as is stated explicitly in Isa. 55:6-7 ("Seek the LORD...Let the wicked forsake his way..."). This then constitutes the text's *hortatory thesis* (i.e., "Repent, return to the LORD!"), while the rest of the discourse is *supportive material*, both warnings (e.g., v. 14) and predictions (e.g., v. 22). Note too that verses 19–22, which are formatted as prose in the NIV, are reformatted above as poetry.

Read through these lines carefully again and see if you agree that this is poetry. Give reasons for your opinion.

A more elaborate type of prophetic discourse is the *lawsuit pattern*, in which God accuses his people of various violations of the Mosaic Covenant and predicts that stipulated punishments will befall them. Hope of a reprieve may or may not be extended should they turn and repent. This formal sort of speech reflects both judicial proceedings and international treaty agreements. Most of the following five elements are included at some point or another in a divine lawsuit. After each component below, write the verse numbers of a passage from Isaiah 1 that illustrates it:

1. **Introduction**, in which Yahweh calls the audience to pay attention and also calls "heaven and earth" to act as witnesses to the truth of his indictment. Isaiah 1: _____
2. **Indictment**, presenting in detail God's case against his people (with or without a specification of a particular group and the evidence against them). Isaiah 1: _____
3. **Elaboration**, contrastively showing that the people have acted unfaithfully despite God's many attested acts of provision, protection, and deliverance on their behalf. Isaiah 1: _____
4. **Rebuke**, disparaging idolatry and highlighting the futility of worshiping false gods and/or the total inability of these "gods" to help the people. Isaiah 1: _____
5. **Warning** of punishment due to violations of the Sinaitic Covenant, at times including an explicit summons to repent and be forgiven (and prevent the disaster to come). Isaiah 1: _____

This warning of punishment may in fact specify various problems and difficulties that the people were already experiencing. The divine "plagues" normally pattern after the "covenantal curses" specified by

Yahweh for persistent acts of disobedience on the part of his people. A good example of this is in Haggai 1.

Note the various chastisements that the people were suffering and list cross-references to the verses where these have been predicted in Leviticus and Deuteronomy.

What provoked God to levy such afflictions?

What could the people do to stop them?

What happened when they did obey the words of Yahweh through his prophet Haggai?

You should now be able to outline the literary structure of Haggai 1. Note the different types of prophetic discourse that this passage incorporates. Point out the chapter's key verse (peak) and explain how it is distinguished in the text. Also, explain how you would highlight this same verse in a poetic manner in YL.

Sometimes the divine decree, especially a promise of salvation, arises from Yahweh's desire to defend his honor and glory, either in the eyes of his chosen people or of the Gentile "nations" in general. This is illustrated in Isaiah 41:17–21 (quoted below from the NIV), which seems to stem from an implicit lament on the part of the downtrodden in society:

17 "The poor and needy search for water, but there is none; their tongues are parched with thirst.	[LAMENT]
But I the LORD will answer them; I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them.	[REASSURANCE]
18 I will make rivers flow on barren heights, and springs within the valleys. I will turn the desert into pools of water, and the parched ground into springs.	[PROMISE OF FUTURE TRANSFORMATION]
19 I will put in the desert the cedar and the acacia, the myrtle and the olive. I will set pines in the wasteland, the fir and the cypress together,	
20 so that people may see and know, may consider and understand, <i>that the hand of the Lord has done this, that the Holy One of Israel has created it.</i>	[REASON] [CLIMAX]

Do you agree that there is a climax right at the end of this poetic structure?

Study the passage in its context and propose some literary reasons for your opinion, whether for or against this interpretation.

Wherever you feel the climax belongs, what stylistic devices will you use to mark it in YL?

Another prophetic discourse type that occurs from time to time is the *disputation*. A disputation generally consists of the three basic elements shown below, the first two of which may alternate back and forth to set up the third.

- T. **Thesis** – the theological position or moral principle that a prophet, speaking for Yahweh, advocates or defends.
- A. **Antithesis** – an overt or implicit expression of a counter-thesis or a reference to contrary ethical behavior manifested by the people.
- J. **Judgement** – an extended argument for Yahweh's perspective, which may be coupled with the appropriate motivation; namely, promises of blessing for obedience or bane for continued disobedience.

The book of Malachi manifests a recurrent cycle of this sort of tripartite judicial structure. An example is in 1:2–5:

2 "I have loved you," says the LORD.	T	
"But you ask, 'How have you loved us?'"	A	
"Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" the LORD says	J	a contrastive case study
"Yet I have loved Jacob, ³ but Esau I have hated, and I have turned his mountains into a wasteland and left his inheritance to the desert jackals."		prophetic prediction (1)
⁴ Edom may say, "Though we have been crushed, we will rebuild the ruins."		analogy (a defiant attitude)
But this is what the LORD Almighty says: "They may build, but I will demolish. They will be called the Wicked Land, a people always under the wrath of the LORD.		prophetic formula divine judgement (prediction) an implicit warning to the impious
⁵ You will see it with your own eyes and say, 'Great is the LORD – even beyond the borders of Israel!' "		prophetic prediction (2) contrastive appeal to faith potential blessing

Compare the printed format above with the format found in the NIV, which displays this passage as well as the rest of Malachi as pure prose.

Is the NIV format acceptable, or is there some advantage to setting the text out as poetic prose? Give reasons for your opinion.

Evaluate the view that this passage is more poetic than prosaic, as suggested by the format above. Would a poetic manner of speaking be used to express such an argument in YL? If not, what would be a suitable style of discourse to use?

Whatever your conclusion in this particular case, it is essential that translators pay special attention to the SL text types so that both the rhetorical impact and the pragmatic (life-related) implications of the message may be clearly and naturally reproduced in any TL translation. If this is not attended to, at least some measure of skewing will result for many readers, and through a less than accurate enunciation of the biblical text, even more hearers will be adversely affected as well.

Still another important type of prophetic discourse is apocalyptic speech. In Daniel 8:3–12a we find a typical example (below). See if you can find here all eight of the features of apocalyptic poetry that are listed below the following text (quoted from the NIV, but reformatted as poetry):

³ I raised my eyes and saw, and behold,
a ram standing on the bank of the river.
It had two horns; and both horns were high,
but one was higher than the other,
and the higher one came up last.

⁴ I saw the ram charging westward and northward and southward;
no beast could stand before him,
and there was no one who could rescue from his power;
he did as he pleased and magnified himself.

⁵ As I was considering, behold,
a he-goat came from the west
across the face of the whole earth,
without touching the ground;
and the goat had a conspicuous horn between his eyes.

⁶ He came to the ram with the two horns,
which I had seen standing on the bank of the river,
and he ran at him in his mighty wrath.

⁷ I saw him come close to the ram,
and he was enraged against him
and struck the ram and broke his two horns;
and the ram had no power to stand before him,
but he cast him down to the ground
and trampled upon him;
and there was no one who could rescue the ram from his power.

⁸ Then the he-goat magnified himself exceedingly; but when he was strong, the great horn was broken, and instead of it there came up four conspicuous horns toward the four winds of heaven.

⁹ Out of one of them came forth a little horn, which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the glorious land.

¹⁰ It grew great, even to the host of heaven; and some of the host of the stars it cast down to the ground, and trampled upon them.

¹¹ It magnified itself, even up to the Prince of the host; and the continual burnt offering was taken away from him, and the place of his sanctuary was overthrown.

¹² And the host was given over to it together with the continual burnt offering through transgression; and truth was cast down to the ground, and the horn acted and prospered.

Eight common features of apocalyptic writing are exemplified in Daniel 8.

Below, on the line beside each one write the number of the verse in which that particular feature is used.

Which of these would be the most difficult to translate in YL, and why?

Visionary revelation: _____

Future Orientation: _____

Repeated elements: _____

Graphic imagery: _____

Elaborate symbolism: _____

Strong emotions: _____

Cosmic disruption: _____

Fierce warfare: _____

What are the characteristics of poetry and prose that you find mixed together in Daniel 8?

Do you agree with how the text as formatted above has been divided into three sections? If so, what are the structural markers that support this division? If not, what division would you propose and what is the evidence for your division?

In what sense is an apocalyptic text “prophetic”? What was the primary work of God’s prophets and how does that task relate to Daniel 8? What is the function of apocalyptic discourse in relation to the people of God? (Note the interpretation of this vision that is given in Dan. 8:19–26.)

Should a text of this type be translated in YL as prose or poetry or some combination? Is there any literary genre in YL for apocalyptic topics like this? If so, describe it.

For reflection, research, and response:

1. Identify some of the major characteristics of three different types of *prophetic oracle* listed below by listing the pertinent verses within the texts specified as references:

a. *Covenant lawsuit* in Isaiah 3:13–26:

summons _____, indictment (charges) _____, judgement (sentence) _____

b. “*Woe*” oracle in Habakkuk 2:6-8:

announcement of woe _____, prediction of punishment _____,
reason for this divine punishment _____

c. *Salvation oracle* in Amos 9:11-15:

future time setting _____, a radical change _____, covenantal blessings _____

Can any of these different types of discourse be marked in a special way to distinguish them in YL? If so, give an example or two

2. Search for a good example of a *judgement oracle* and of a *salvation oracle* from the same prophetic book (your choice of book). Then write out each text and label its functional components in the same manner as shown in section 5.3.2 for the passages from Isaiah. Try to identify the *hortatory thesis* (theses) for each passage, as well as in the texts considered in exercise 3 below. Do you need to mark such *directive* discourse in a special way in YL in order to make it stand out more strongly or explicitly? If so, tell how you will do this and give an example or two to illustrate the point.
3. What special type of prophetic *judgement speech* occurs in Isaiah 10:1–10? Do you have any genre similar to this in your literary or oral tradition? What is a dynamic functional equivalent of the term *Woe!* in YL? Note that a judgement oracle may be applied to an entire nation. Which nations are included under the divine indictment in Isaiah 13 – 23? Compare this with the judgement oracles found in Jeremiah 46 – 51 and Ezekiel 25 – 32. In which ways does the formal style of these “oracles against pagan nations” differ in Amos 1 – 2? What big surprises are found in Amos’s list of guilty nations? Is there any way to call attention to this special negative significance in your translation?
4. The first passage examined in the present section (5.3.2) was Hosea 5:13-15. How would you describe this text in terms of its *communicative function*? Now have a closer look at the passage with reference to its wider context: Walton proposes that “Israelite prophecy tended to come in four oracular categories that diverge from those found in Ancient Near Eastern prophecy: indictment, judgement, instruction, and aftermath” (2006:250). First of all, do you regard these four categories as separate oracles – or as components of the same kind of judgement oracle? Explain your answer.

Point out the verses that pertain to indictment, judgement, and instruction in Hosea chap. 5. Do you see any passage that expresses an aftermath or outcome of the Lord’s judgement? How about 6:1-3, does that seem to fit as an aftermath? Explain. But read 6:1-3 now in the light of 6:4-11 – do you need to revise your last answer. Why or why not?

Of what importance are such functional distinctions to the translator? For example, would an indictment need to be marked in some way to distinguish from a passage of judgement or of instruction? If so, how would this be done? What about a text dealing with the aftermath of God’s punitive activities – would that type of discourse need to be marked or transitioned to in a special way in your language? If so, how?

5. Study Ezekiel 6:1–4 and note the *levels of speech embedding* there. Compare this passage in the NRSV and GNT. Then write this text in YL as you would like to see it turn out. Use indentation and quotation marks in order to clarify the text for the readers. (An additional text for you to unravel in the same way and for the same purpose is Zech. 1:1–4.)
6. Find a passage from the book of Revelation that displays many typical features of the *apocalyptic* genre (similar to the sample from Daniel in section 5.3.2). Give the reference and note which apocalyptic characteristics occur. Is this passage composed of more prose or more poetry? What is the basis for your conclusion?
7. In an interesting study of orality and “writtenness” in ancient Near Eastern prophetic texts, Esteban Voith identifies three major characteristics of an oral style, namely: “the repetition of certain key terms...strong imagery and language...[and] action-oriented language” (2005:123). He then suggests that “most prophetic texts in the Hebrew Bible are ‘orally derived’ texts” (*ibid.*:124). Thus:

[E]ven though these texts are highly stylized written texts, they betray an oral context. The oral culture continued to have a large influence on the work of scribes at all times. ... [M]any

of these texts were originally performed orally, and thus were conceived orally. At some point in time—which shall remain I think forever a mystery—that performance was dictated to a scribe. Or, maybe a scribe was present at the oral performance and through some kind of ancient shorthand was able to write down the essence of the oral performance. ... (*ibid.*: *loc.cit.*)

If these assumptions are true, what implications do you see for both the analysis as well as the translation of these prophetic texts? Is there any special relevance to such findings for translating the Scriptures in your cultural setting? If so, specify what these are.

In a search for relevant communication techniques for the Scriptures, Voth then reverses the process of oral to written text transformation:

For many years I have considered that a key way to communicate the message of the Bible to young people in many parts of the world is through the medium of rap music. As best I can understand rap, it is a medium that uses semi-spoken rhymes that make use of a rhythmical musical background. (*ibid.*:127)

The following is a paraphrase of Isaiah 5:8-14 (CEV) composed in English rap style (*ibid.*:128):

You're In For Trouble!

You're in for trouble!
You take over house after house
Until there ain't no room left for us
In the hood, in our lives
I'll make this promise come true
Someone more powerful than you
Will make you pay for what you do Will make you pay for what you do

You're in for trouble!
You keep the party on
You keep the drinkin' on and on
Until your mind gets slow
And you don't care no more
You have played deaf and blind
For too long and too much
Now time has come to pay back
And you will do it in blood And you will do it in blood

How does this rap rendition strike you (from an English-speaking perspective)? Do you have any possible revisions to suggest – perhaps for a different dialect of English? Is it appropriate to “rap” the Scriptures for any particular audience in your cultural setting? Why or why not? Do you have a different oral genre to recommend for making the prophetic message come alive for youthful listeners? If so, briefly describe its main stylistic characteristics – and then compose Isaiah 5:8-14 in that genre in YL and provide an English back-translation.

11.3.3 Poetry of the sages

Wisdom literature is a category that covers a very wide range of themes, styles, and communicative purposes in the Hebrew Bible, including some obvious prose as well as poetry. This striking diversity is highlighted by the juxtaposition in our present Bibles of the book of Ecclesiastes (prolix, pessimistic, and largely prosaic) and the book of Proverbs (succinct, optimistic, and mostly poetic). Couple these two books with Job's ancient imagery, disputational techniques, and bombastic rhetorical flourishes and it is quite a mixed literary pot indeed.

What are we to make of this disparity? More importantly, how are we to deal with it in a vernacular translation?

Is there a traditional category of wisdom literature/orature extant in the culture of your TL community? If so, what are its specifically religious functions?

What sort of style characterizes the wise sayings, written or oral, of your society? Give an example.

While we cannot undertake a complete analysis of Ecclesiastes, Proverbs, and Job here, we will at least sample some representative passages of these three books in order to give translators a taste of the type of discourse that has come from the tongues and pens of Israel's wise men. To discover why this kind of discourse is called Wisdom literature, we will first examine the following representative texts to see what their subject matter and communication goal(s) have in common.

JOB

then he looked at **wisdom** and appraised it;
he confirmed it and tested it.
And he said to man,
"The **fear of the Lord** – that is **wisdom**,
and to shun evil is **understanding**." (28:27–28)

"You asked, 'Who is this that obscures my counsel **without knowledge**?'
Surely I spoke of things **I did not understand**,
things too wonderful for me to know."....

"My servant Job will pray for you,
and I will accept his prayer and not deal with you according to **your folly**.
You have not spoken of me **what is right**,
as my servant Job has." (42:3, 8b)

PSALMS

Blessed is the man
who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked
or stand in the way of sinners
or sit in the seat of mockers.
But his delight is in **the law of the LORD**,
and on his **law** he meditates day and night. (1:1–2)

The **fear of the LORD** is the beginning of **wisdom**;
all who follow **his precepts** have good **understanding**.
To him belongs eternal praise.
Praise the **LORD**!

Blessed is the man who **fears the LORD**,
who finds great delight in **his commands**. (111:10, 112:1)

Your hands made me and formed me;
give me understanding to learn your commands.
May those **who fear you** rejoice when they see me,
for I have put my hope in **your word**. (119:73–74)

PROVERBS

The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel:
for attaining **wisdom** and **discipline**;
for **understanding** words of insight;
for acquiring a disciplined and prudent life,
[for] **doing what is right** and just and fair;
for giving prudence to the simple,
knowledge and discretion to the young –
let the wise listen and add to their learning,
and let the discerning get guidance –
for **understanding** proverbs and parables,
the sayings and riddles of the wise.

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of **knowledge**,
but **fools** despise wisdom and **discipline**. (1:1–7)

Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain,
but a woman who **fears the LORD** is to be praised.
Give her a share in the fruit of her hands,
and let **her works** praise her in the city gates. (31:30–31)

ECCLESIASTES

For with much **wisdom** comes much sorrow;
the more **knowledge**, the more grief. (1:18)

Wisdom, like an inheritance, is a good thing
and benefits those who see the sun.

Wisdom is a shelter
as money is a shelter,
but the advantage of knowledge is this:
that **wisdom** preserves the life of its possessor. (7:11–12)

The end of the matter; all has been heard.

Fear God, and **keep his commandments**;
for that is the whole **duty** of everyone.

For God will bring every deed into **judgement**,
including every secret thing,
whether good or evil. (12:13–14)

Why, it might be asked, are these passages considered to be representative, and in what way are they textual pointers to the ancient sapiential tradition of Israel's wise men? It is due to their explicit theological instruction and straightforward moral content as well as their important structural positions in the respective books, for example, at the close of the centrally placed "wisdom poem" in Job (28:27–28, quoted above), at the beginning of the Psalter (Ps. 1:1–2), at the beginning and ending of Proverbs (1:1–7 and 31:30–31), and in several places in the book of Ecclesiastes including its distinctive conclusion (12:13–14).

Check these texts again and see if you agree with the preceding assessment.

What do you think of the following definition of wisdom (adapted from Salisbury 2002:451), which is a summary of how this central concept is manifested in the book of Proverbs?

In the Book of Proverbs "wisdom" is:

choice:	making <i>God-pleasing</i> decisions concerning the <i>way</i> we think, speak and behave.
knowledge:	knowing <i>what</i> is best to do or say
skill:	recognizing <i>how</i> best to do or say it
propriety:	appreciating <i>when</i> and <i>where</i> to do or say it (in the right circumstances).
an art:	succeeding in the art of living well (with peace).
a way of life:	building <i>God-fearing</i> character as its ultimate goal.

How does a definition like this relate to the message of the book of Ecclesiastes?

What is the difference in perspective in Ecclesiastes that makes it sound so different from Proverbs (cf. Prov. 1:2)? Can this difference in outlook be formally marked in YL? Explain.

It is clear that, despite some important formal and semantic elements which the wisdom books have in common, the literary style of these books differs considerably from one to the other and even within the same book. These variations in composition and tone – along with their associated communicative functions – need to be replicated in translation to the extent possible given the circumstances of production. Thus "wisdom" is also manifested in skillful ways of *verbal expression* such as we find in many passages of Scripture where the literary form complements and enhances the theological and moral content. It is this assumption that motivates a *LiFE* approach to Bible exegesis and translation. In the words of someone who ought to know: "The Teacher searched to find just the right words, and he wrote what was upright and true" (Eccl. 12:10).

Notice the blank lines (lettered A–H) following each of the eight passages below. On each line list some of the stylistic and topical characteristics of Wisdom literature that you observe in the respective texts.

First try to guess which book the passage comes from. (The references are given following the eighth one.) Indicate the principal communicative purpose of the text at hand and also suggest some of the salient speech acts that are included. Next, state how the content and purpose of each passage pertain in some way to the macrosubject of covenantal wisdom from the perspective of Biblical Hebrew.

Finally, point out any special difficulties that you expect to encounter when translating these texts into YL. You may wish to write your answers on a separate sheet of paper:

I am the most ignorant of men;
I do not have a man's understanding.
I have not learned wisdom,
nor have I knowledge of the Holy One.
Who has gone up to heaven and come down?
Who has gathered up the wind in the hollow of his hands?
Who has wrapped up the waters in his cloak?
Who has established all the ends of the earth?
What is his name, and the name of his son?
Tell me if you know!

A:

Woe to you, O land whose king was a servant
and whose princes feast in the morning.
Blessed are you, O land whose king is of noble birth
and whose princes eat at a proper time –
for strength and not for drunkenness.
If a man is lazy, the rafters sag;
if his hands are idle, the house leaks.

B:

Naked a man comes from his mother's womb,
and as he comes, so he departs.
He takes nothing from his labor
that he can carry in his hand.
This too is a grievous evil:
As a man comes, so he departs,
and what does he gain, since he toils for the wind?
All his days he eats in darkness,
with great frustration, affliction and anger.

C:

Why is life given to a man
whose way is hidden,
whom God has hedged in?
For sighing comes to me instead of food;
my groans pour out like water.
What I feared has come upon me;
what I dreaded has happened to me.
I have no peace, no quietness;
I have no rest, but only turmoil.

D:

Though the arrogant have smeared me with lies,
I keep your precepts with all my heart.
Their hearts are callous and unfeeling,
but I delight in your law.
It was good for me to be afflicted
so that I might learn your decrees.
The law from your mouth is more precious to me
than thousands of pieces of silver and gold.

E:

Blessed is the man who finds wisdom,
the man who gains understanding,
for she (wisdom) is more profitable than silver
and yields better returns than gold.
She is more precious than rubies;
nothing you desire can compare with her.
Long life is in her right hand;
in her left hand are riches and honor.
Her ways are pleasant ways,
and all her paths are peace.
She is a tree of life to those who embrace her;
those who lay hold of her will be blessed.

F:

Remember your Creator
in the days of your youth,
before the days of trouble come
and the years approach when you will say,
"I find no pleasure in them" –
before the sun and the light
and the moon and the stars grow dark,
and the clouds return after the rain;
when the keepers of the house tremble,
and the strong men stoop,
when the grinders cease because they are few,
and those looking through the windows grow dim.

G:

Man born of woman
is of few days and full of trouble.
He springs up like a flower and withers away;
like a fleeting shadow, he does not endure.
Do you fix your eye on such a one?
Will you bring him before you for judgement?
Who can bring what is pure from the impure?
No one!

H:

A = Proverbs 30:2–4
E = Psalm 119:69–72

B = Ecclesiastes 10:15–18
F = Proverbs 3:13–18

C = Ecclesiastes 5:15–17
G = Ecclesiastes 12:1–3

D = Job 3:23–26
H = Job 14:1–4

Perhaps the best-known genre in Wisdom literature/orature in all cultures is the *proverb*, though it is not necessarily the most important, especially in the biblical corpus. A good definition of *proverb* (patched together from a number of sources) is the following:

A proverb is a short, widely known sentence of folk wisdom which contains the teachings, truth, morals, and traditional views of society in a metaphorical, fixed, and memorable form and which is handed down from generation to generation. This literary form is characterized by shortness, sense, salt, and a bit of mystery (enigma). The Biblical Hebrew literary proverb is usually a self-contained, often elliptical sentence in the form of a bicolon, comprising at least one topic and one comment, which together express some kind of similarity, contrast, or consequence. It is pedagogically and rhetorically motivated, casting vivid imagery within a striking and memorable saying. This is achieved by the complex interplay between its several poetic features, such as sound patterns, rhythm, parallelism, repetition, figurative language, and paronomasia.

What are the five most important stylistic features of proverbs according to the lengthy definition above? Try to summarize.

How does this definition match the proverbs of your language? Are they different in some respects? Be specific.

Can the proverbial forms of YL be used to render those in the book of Proverbs? Try to give a good example of close correspondence with respect to both form and content.

Often translators find that even if the specific content of biblical proverbs does not match their own very closely, they can still use certain of their stylistic features when translating the biblical proverbs. Try to render any three passages of your choice from Proverbs 20:1–9 (quoted below from the NIV) so that they sound “proverbial” in YL:

- ¹ Wine is a mocker and beer a brawler;
whoever is led astray by them is not wise.
- ² A king's wrath is like the roar of a lion;
he who angers him forfeits his life.
- ³ It is to a man's honor to avoid strife,
but every fool is quick to quarrel.
- ⁴ A sluggard does not plow in season;
so at harvest time he looks but finds nothing.
- ⁵ The purposes of a man's heart are deep waters,
but a man of understanding draws them out.
- ⁶ Many a man claims to have unfailing love,
but a faithful man who can find?
- ⁷ The righteous man leads a blameless life;
blessed are his children after him.
- ⁸ When a king sits on his throne to judge,
he winnows out all evil with his eyes.
- ⁹ Who can say, “I have kept my heart pure;
I am clean and without sin”?

Read through the following pericope from Proverbs 3:1-7, which has been rendered in rhyming couplets.¹⁵ What do you think of this translation? Does the English style seem to fit the original genre? Can you suggest any improvements to it? Perhaps before making any critical remarks, you might like to try your own pen in a similar exercise using this same text.

- 1 My child, don't forget my instructions.
Always keep in mind my commandments.
- 2 They'll help you live for many years
And bring to you prosperity.
- 3 Keep showing loyalty and dependability.
Keep them adorning your neck with beauty.
Engrave them in stone in your memory.
- 4 Then God and all people will love you,
And they will think highly of you.
- 5 Completely trust the Lord inside.
Don't rely on your own insight.
- 6 Let Him guide you in all you do,
And He will make your paths smooth.
- 7 Don't think you're wise enough to get along.
Honor the Lord and refuse to do wrong.

Still another type of wisdom discourse that we should consider is *disputation* (discussed in section 5.3.2), because it is so common in the book of Job. A dispute always takes the form of *direct speech*, generally as part of an argument intended to persuade an addressee or audience to adopt a certain cognitive stance with regard to some issue or controversy, often concerning justice or injustice,

¹⁵ Contributed by Dan Vail, dvail@pactec.net; see also Vail 2005.

righteousness or wickedness. A disputation speech usually includes certain aspects of the opponent's position and then contrasts this with the counter-argument of the speaker, as in the following passages from Job.

Analyze the changing argument as you progress from one speaker to the other, and note the special literary and rhetorical techniques that are used to persuade the addressee.

JOB (chap. 7)

¹⁷ "What is man that you make so much of him,
that you give him so much attention,
¹⁸ that you examine him every morning
and test him every moment?
¹⁹ Will you never look away from me,
or let me alone even for an instant?
²⁰ If I have sinned, what have I done to you,
O watcher of men?
Why have you made me your target?
Have I become a burden to you?
²¹ Why do you not pardon my offenses
and forgive my sins?
For I will soon lie down in the dust;
you will search for me, but I will be no more.

Job's words here are an instance of **apostrophe**, a figure in which a speaker addresses an imaginary absent, or personified opponent. Even though no addressee is mentioned, to whom is Job speaking? Does this style of discourse cause any problems for translation into YL? If so, explain the difficulty. What is Job's point here? What is his complaint?

BILDAD (chap. 8)

² "How long will you say such things?
Your words are a blustering wind.
³ Does God pervert justice?
Does the Almighty pervert what is right?
⁴ When your children sinned against him,
he gave them over to the penalty of their sin.
⁵ But if you will look to God
and plead with the Almighty,
⁶ if you are pure and upright,
even now he will rouse himself on your behalf
and restore you to your rightful place.

Summarize Bildad's accusation against Job. What is the purpose of his rhetorical **questions**? What does he urge Job to do? Does his appeal to Job come out clearly in a literal translation in YL? If not, what must be done to clarify it?

JOB (chap. 9)

² "Indeed, I know that this is true.
But how can a mortal be righteous before God?
³ Though one wished to dispute with him,
he could not answer him one time out of a thousand.
⁴ His wisdom is profound, his power is vast.
Who has resisted him and come out unscathed?
⁵ He moves mountains without their knowing it
and overturns them in his anger....
²¹ "Although I am blameless,
I have no concern for myself;
I despise my own life.
²² It is all the same; that is why I say,
'He destroys both the blameless and the wicked.'

Job makes two **concessions** in this passage. What are they and how do you convey such "negative conditionals" in YL? Do debaters **quote themselves** when arguing in YL, as Job does in the last line? Does this assertion need to be marked more clearly in YL?

ZOPHAR (chap. 11)

² "Are all these words to go unanswered?
Is this talker to be vindicated?
³ Will your idle talk reduce men to silence?
Will no one rebuke you when you mock?
⁴ You say to God, 'My beliefs are flawless
and I am pure in your sight.'
⁵ Oh, how I wish that God would speak,
that he would open his lips against you
⁶ and disclose to you the secrets of wisdom,
for true wisdom has two sides.
Know this: God has even forgotten some of your sin.

Zophar asks more **rhetorical questions** (a mainstay of Hebrew argumentative discourse and debating technique). How does this correspond to your oral tradition? Next, Zophar quotes Job in order to use Job's own words against him. Is this a practice in your society? If not, what would be the equivalent?

Is it difficult to translate this sort of argumentation in YL? Do you have a special genre that is used for such public disputations or debates? If so, describe the form that it takes. Is it poetic or prosaic discourse?

Identify any expressions that sound similar to how people debate in your culture.

Point out three passages from the selections above that are especially problematic when translating into YL; explain the difficulty and suggest what you can do to express the content and intent of the speech more accurately as well as precisely.

There are several other types of Wisdom literature, but they will not be treated in this section because they are better classified as prose, not poetry (see sect. 6.2.3). But we should consider one more wisdom genre here, though minor and relatively rare, known as the *riddle*. At his wedding feast, Samson gave a well-known biblical example:

Out of the eater – something to eat;

Out of the strong – something sweet. (Judg. 14:14, NIV; for the answer, see Judg. 14:18)

A riddle is a short enigmatic saying that sometimes takes the form of a question that the audience has to answer. The point is to teach and/or test the listeners who have to think about their response. In the Bible there are only fragments of full riddles, which appear either as allusions or partial citations, and mainly in the book of Proverbs. The following is an example:

Death [*Sheol*] and Destruction [*Abaddon*] are never satisfied,
and neither are the eyes of man. (Prov. 27:20)

In this case, the original riddle might have been something like “What is it that eats and eats but is never satisfied?” – Answer: “*Sheol*” (or “*Abaddon*”), referring to death. In Proverbs 27:20 it is expressed in the form of a simple comparison, though the underlying concepts and implications are rather more complex in nature.

How would you bring out the force of Proverbs 27:20 in a pithy manner in YL?

For reflection, research, and response:

1. Pick out a strophe from the Song of Songs that seems to you to be one of the most beautiful instances of vivid poetic description in the entire book. Why do you think so? Would you have any difficulty translating this text in your language and cultural setting? Give it a try and make note of the SL problems that you encounter as well as some specific TL solutions that you discover.
2. What is the meaning of “fear of the LORD”? Do a collocational text study based on the wisdom passages given in section 5.3.3 (after further study in a Bible commentary or dictionary). How will you render this expression in YL? Can you use the same rendering in every context in which it occurs? Explain why or why not. Is there any literary relevance to this question? Compare with “Fear God...” in Eccl. 12:13.
3. Examine the following passages from the book of Proverbs and give a brief definition or description of the type of “wise saying” that you find. Mark with an asterisk (*) the ones for which a similar kind is found in YL. Give an example of each, if possible.

4:1 _____

4:23 _____

8:1 _____

14:21 _____

15:8 _____

16:16 _____

25:15b _____

26:4–5 _____

30:18–19 _____

4. Practitioners of a *LiFE*-style approach would affirm the following pair of recent recommendations with regard to translating the book of Proverbs:

If the goal in translating the book of Proverbs into African languages is academic or purely informational, then translators need not consider whether the shapes that biblical proverbs take within African languages sound like proverbs within that culture. But if the goal of translating Proverbs is that the biblical proverbs should be meaningful, powerful, compelling observations about life, which will transform those who hear them, then the translated proverbs must have a proverbial shape. In African cultures, which are permeated with proverbial sayings, a translation of proverbs will be successful to the extent that the biblical proverbs are assimilated into the language and become part of the cultural fabric of the society. (Miller 2005:144; cf. also Miller 2006)

[T]he translation of proverbs requires an appreciation of the fact that proverbs have an aesthetic quality in their form in the source text and a conscious awareness of the aesthetic techniques used in forming proverbs in the RL. Then the translator is in a much better position to remold foreign proverbs into meaningful and aesthetic forms in the RL. This is important because for proverbial speech, part of the meaning is in the form. Put another way: if a passage does not have a proverbial form, it will not have (as much) proverbial meaning. All this is not to take the place of careful exegesis of proverbs, but to provide the most attractive container for serving the fruits of exegesis. As translators consciously study RL proverb patterns, they will be better able to translate proverbs in a way that more closely matches RL proverb patterns, eliciting more appreciation from readers. (Unseth 2006b:169–170; cf. also Unseth 2006a)

Now put the preceding advice into practice by preparing a corresponding translation of each of the passages listed in exercise 3 above. Point out any special TL devices that you used when carrying out this goal.

5. What translational difficulties does the following passage from Ecclesiastes 1 present in relation to both style and content? Try to render this text in YL in a *LiFE* manner, while at the same time conveying a similar attitude and connotation. (You will have to give special attention to the key word “meaningless” – *chebel*; consult a good Bible dictionary or commentary on Ecclesiastes.) When you finish, give a literal back-translation into English and point out some of the literary-poetic features that you have used. Would you make any strophic divisions in this passage? If so, where, and why? If not, why not? What kind of parallelism appears predominantly in this text? Is there a reason for this?

² “Meaningless! Meaningless!”

says the Teacher.

“Utterly meaningless!

Everything is meaningless.”

³ What does man gain from all his labor

at which he toils under the sun?

⁴ Generations come and generations go,

but the earth remains forever.

⁵ The sun rises and the sun sets,

and hurries back to where it rises.

⁶ The wind blows to the south

and turns to the north;

round and round it goes,

ever returning on its course.

⁷ All streams flow into the sea,

yet the sea is never full.

To the place the streams come from,

there they return again.

⁸ All things are wearisome,

more than one can say.

The eye never has enough of seeing,

nor the ear its fill of hearing.

⁹ What has been will be again,
what has been done will be done again;
there is nothing new under the sun.

¹⁰ Is there anything of which one can say,
“Look! This is something new”?
It was here already, long ago;
it was here before our time.

¹¹ There is no remembrance of men of old,
and even those who are yet to come
will not be remembered by those who follow.

6. Analyze the stylistic features and meaning of the paired proverbial passage below (Prov. 26:4–5, NIV, with italics added), doing so in the context of its wider discourse structure. Is there a contradiction here? Explain, basing your answer on some helpful literary criteria. Then translate this text with a “sapiential” style in YL.

Do not answer a fool according to his folly,
or you will be like him yourself.
Answer a fool according to his folly,
or he will be wise in his own eyes.

7. Consider the following principle (quoted from Salisbury 2000:462) in relation to your translation of the proverbs of the Bible. How does your rendering measure up to this?

If we fail to present the proverb in a *proverbial form* in the TL,
it will lose some of its *power!* In other words:

It will have *less impact*;
it will have *less verbal appeal* (beauty);
it will be *less memorable*; and therefore,
it will be less likely to be used.

What’s more, if we paraphrase too much,
it will have a smaller range of applications.

8. Re-examine the eight wisdom texts in section 5.3.3 (A through H). Which one would be the most difficult to conceive of and translate into YL. Which one would be the easiest? Explain why. Is it a matter of content only or of stylistic form as well? Be specific. Now prepare a *LiFE* rendering of each of the two passages that you have selected – the hardest as well as the easiest.

11.3.4 Poetry in the New Testament

The text of Phil. 2:5–11, which is a distinctive epistolary passage presenting Paul’s apostolic instruction on the doctrine of Christ, is formatted in the RSV as prose:

⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. ⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Do you think the preceding text is prose or poetry? Give reasons for your conclusion.

Now consider this same passage formatted differently (as adapted from several versions):

Let the same mind be in you
that was in Christ Jesus:
He had the very nature of God,
but did not regard such equality
as a reality to be thus exploited.
Rather, he emptied himself,
assuming the nature of a slave,

becoming as human beings are.
 Having taken on true human form,
 he humbled himself more,
 to the point of accepting death –
 even death on a cross.

For this God also greatly exalted him,
 and gave him the Name
 that is above every name.

So then, at the name of Jesus
 all beings should bend the knee
 in heaven above and on earth,
 even in the underworld below.

And every tongue should proclaim –
 “Jesus the Christ, he is Lord!” –
 all to the glory of God the Father.

Is this a poetic text or a prose text that only looks like poetry because of the format? Which stylistic features of poetry can you find here?

Now consider the overall structure of this same passage from a different perspective. In the display below, the arrangement is based on some key instances of repetition within the text, including contrasts as well as close correspondences. (The instances of repetition are underlined.)

Have *this mind* among yourselves, which *is yours* in

A:	<u>Christ Jesus</u> , who, though he was in the form of <u>God</u> ,
	did not count equality with <u>God</u> a thing to be grasped,
	B: but emptied himself, taking the form of a <u>servant</u> ,
	C: being born in the likeness of <u>men</u> .
	D: And being found <u>in human form</u>
	E: he <u>humbled himself</u> and became obedient
	F: unto <u>death</u> ,
	F': even <u>death</u> on a cross.
	E': Therefore God has highly <u>exalted him</u>
	D': and bestowed on him <u>the name which is above every name</u> ,
	C': that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
	<u>(those) in heaven and on earth and under the earth</u> ,
	B': and every tongue confess that <u>Lord</u>
A':	is <u>Jesus Christ</u> , to the glory of <u>God the Father</u> .

By means of its inverted compositional arrangement, this lyrical pericope focuses in paradoxical, contrastive fashion on both the *deity* of Christ (A/A') and his supreme act of *human* self-humiliation; namely, his vicarious sacrifice on the cross (F/F'). It is “this mind” that Christians too are exhorted to have (v. 5), especially in their relations with one another. The text structure, as displayed above, serves to highlight the focal thematic points being conveyed. Notice too the intensification that occurs as the text moves from the first to the second (reversed) set of parallel components, for example, from “the form [nature] of God” in A to “the glory of God the Father” in A'; from “death” in F to “death on a cross” in F'. This is an example of discourse-level heightening (see the discussion of parallelism and heightening in the microstructure in section 5.1.1). We also observe that the boundary-marking parallel correspondences feature parallels that are the same or synonymous in meaning, while the internal units are contrastive in nature (antithetical: B–E/E'–B').

It cannot be denied that the Philippians 2 passage, if not actually composed in a Greek poetic meter, is about as close as prose can come to purely expressive lyric. In other words, it is a mixed, or hybrid, genre – “poetic prose.” The rhetorical effect is naturally more prominent in the original language and also when the text is expressively read, recited, or chanted aloud. The euphonious, balanced, and rhythmic literary form clearly contributes to the ultimate transmission of meaning here, not only in terms of this panegyric piece itself, but also with respect to the epistle as a whole. In fact, a good case could be made for viewing this segment as the thematic and stylistic epitome of the entire letter in that it represents the *ideal model* according to which all Christian behavior (as discussed elsewhere in the text) needs to be modeled and measured.

How does this crucial section of Philippians 2 as expressed in your local translation compare stylistically to the renditions above – as well as to the original text?

How close or comparable is the overall esthetic effect of the text as rendered in the vernacular version that you are translating or presently using?

What would a format like the one we just considered contribute to the overall meaning of this passage in your language? Suggest any needed modifications that come to mind.

To be sure, even the best human efforts will be found wanting from a literary or rhetorical point of view when weighed against such an excellent original. However, that does not absolve translators of the obligation to at least consider an attempt to reproduce certain aspects of the obvious poetic dimension in Philippians 2:5–11.

The next example is from one of the didactic discourses of Christ: Matthew 6:19–21. I have used the Greek text here for the benefit of those who can read it; others will have to consult a literal version in English (or some other language) and write out the text in order to visualize the key verbal correspondences and poetic parallels.

Μὴ θησαυρίζετε ὑμῖν ὅπου σὴς καὶ ὅπου κλέπται θησαυρίζετε δὲ ὑμῖν ὅπου οὔτε σὴς καὶ ὅπου κλέπται ὅπου γὰρ ἔστιν ἐκεῖ ἔσται	θησαυροὺς καὶ βρώσις διορύσσουσιν θησαυροὺς οὔτε βρώσις οὐ διορύσσουσιν ὁ θησαυρός σου, καὶ ἡ καρδιά σου.	ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, ἀφανίζει καὶ κλέπτουσιν· ἐν οὐρανῷ, ἀφανίζει οὐδὲ κλέπτουσιν·
Do <u>not</u> store up for yourselves where moth and where thieves	<i>treasures</i> and rust break in	on earth, destroy, and steal.
But store up for yourselves where moth and where thieves	<i>treasures</i> and rust do <u>not</u> break in	in heaven, do <u>not</u> destroy, and steal.
For where is there will be	your <i>treasure</i> , also your heart.	

As you study the above passage, select instances of the following ten literary features. Suggest how you might render them in a functionally equivalent manner in YL.

1. rhythm
2. rhyme
3. sound play
4. parallelism
5. metaphor
6. contrast/antithesis
7. allusion
8. end stress
9. deictic emphasis
10. break-up of a syntactic pattern

The following example, too, is so artfully patterned that it could well be regarded as an instance of Greek *poetic prose*.

Examine this passage, known as “the Beatitudes” (Matt. 5:3–10), and see whether you agree as to its lyrical qualities from the perspective of your language and literary tradition. If you cannot read the original text, consult an interlinear English version and then set out the passage on a separate sheet in the format you see below.

After studying it, list five different poetic features that you notice, listing them in their order of importance as you see it. Suggest how you might render these in an equally artistic and rhetorical manner in YL.

A Chichewa poetic translation of this passage is provided as an example of a *LiFE* version of this passage. Critically evaluate this rendering, based on the English back-translation.

I

Μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι,	[3]
ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.	
μακάριοι οἱ πενθοῦντες,	[4]
ὅτι αὐτοὶ παρακληθήσονται.	
μακάριοι οἱ πραεῖς,	[5]
ὅτι αὐτοὶ κληρονομήσουσιν τὴν γῆν.	
μακάριοι οἱ πεινῶντες καὶ διψῶντες τὴν δικαιοσύνην,	[6]
ὅτι αὐτοὶ χορτασθήσονται.	

II

μακάριοι οἱ ἐλεήμονες,	[7]
ὅτι αὐτοὶ ἐλεηθήσονται.	
μακάριοι οἱ καθαροὶ τῇ καρδίᾳ,	[8]
ὅτι αὐτοὶ τὸν θεὸν ὄψονται.	
μακάριοι οἱ εἰρηνοποιοί,	[9]
ὅτι αὐτοὶ υἱοὶ θεοῦ κληθήσονται.	
μακάριοι οἱ δεδιωγμένοι ἕνεκεν δικαιοσύνης,	[10]

ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.

*Ngodalatu anthuwo
odzichepetsa mu mtima,
popeza Ufumu wakumwamba,
indedi, aloweratu iwo kale.*

Surely how blessed are those people
[who are] humble at heart,
since the kingdom of heaven,
yes indeed, they've already entered in.

*Ngodalatu anthuwo
omvera chisoni m'mtima,
popeza Mulungu mwini,
inde, adzawasangalatsadi.*

Surely how blessed are those people
[who] feel sorrow in [their] heart[s],
since God himself,
yes, he will certainly give them joy.

*Ngodalatu anthuwo
ofatsa mtima kwambiri,
popeza adzapatsidwa dziko,
indedi, kuti likhale lawolawo.*

Surely how blessed are those people
[who are] most meek at heart,
since they will be given the land,
yes indeed, so it becomes their very own.

*Ngodalatu anthuwo
omva ludzu la chilungamo,
popeza Mulungu adzawamwetsa,
indedi, zofuna zao adzazithetsa.*

Surely how blessed are those people
[who] feel a thirst for righteousness,
since God will give them to drink,
yes indeed, their wants he'll put to an end.

*Ngodalatu anthuwo
ochitira anzao chifundo,
popeza Mulungu nawonso
chake chifundo adzawamvera.*

Surely how blessed are those people
[who] treat their fellows mercifully,
since God for his part too
his mercy he'll grant them.

*Ngodalatu anthuwo
oyera mtima koti mbee!
popeza onse oterewa, zoono,
Mulungu mwini adzamuona.*

Surely how blessed are those people
[who are] pure in heart so bright (ideophone)!
since all those of this type, truly,
God himself they will see.

*Ngodalatu anthuwo
obweretsa mtendere m'dziko,
popeza kuti Mulungu nayenso
indedi, ana ake eni adza'acha.*

Surely how blessed are those people
[who] bring peace in the land,
since in fact God he also,
yes indeed, his own children he'll call them.

*Ngodalatu anthuwo
amene amawazunza pansipo
kamba ka chilungamo chaocho,
popeza Ufumu wakumwamba,
indedi, ndi wao kwamuyayaya!*

Surely how blessed are those people
who are persecuted down here below
on account of that righteousness of theirs,
since the kingdom of heaven,
yes indeed, it's theirs forever (ideophone)!

How does the artistic and rhetorical patterning of this passage help to convey the content and purpose of Christ's message?

What can we do about such structures (and their effects) when translating the biblical text? Is there any alternative formatting technique or stylistic device that we might use?

What about doing nothing at all – is that a valid option? If so, what are the consequences as far as communication are concerned? How much *LiFE* will we have removed from the original text if we simply render this passage in a literal manner?

Now translate the second half of this pericope (vv. 7-10) so that it sounds like literature (orature) in YL.

In summary, we can say that a dynamic, more “mediated” manner of translating is generally needed to successfully communicate a literary, stylistically marked SL document in another language and culture. This is necessary not only to promote a fuller understanding and appreciation of the structure and significance of the original text, but also to prevent a misunderstanding of the author's rhetorical objective. Communication problems may occur either if translators simply render the biblical text literally (the proverbial path of least resistance), or if they paraphrase it too loosely. Content and intent (including purposeful artistic forms) are equally important in any translation of the Scriptures.

These are serious issues indeed – and they have considerable implications as far as the full “meaning potential” of an artfully composed pericope is concerned. The point is that translators can never let their guard down, so to speak, no matter how lackluster or unimportant a passage might look at first glance. Just about any text of Scripture can carry implicit structural and stylistic meaning hidden beneath a very familiar surface wording. The very purpose of this workbook, in fact, is to encourage us to probe below the surface and systematically analyze such texts from a diverse, coordinated literary perspective: The first step is to carefully examine the original document in order to more accurately determine what it actually says in terms of form, content, and communicative aim. We then endeavor to faithfully represent in our target language both the essential biblical content and as much as possible of its accompanying artistic and/or rhetorical significance. The goal is to translate in a creative, but also controlled manner so that more of the literary life of the author's intended message is reflected in the vernacular text. Even a pale reflection of this lively non-referential dimension of meaning is better than none at all.

For reflection, research, and response:

1. The Lord's Prayer (Matt. 6:9-13) manifests a number of artistic features. It may be divided into two strophes, based on the content and nature of the petitions and also the phonological patterning evident in each strophe. Point out as many of the poetic qualities as you can find in the Greek text below, or consult an interlinear version.

Πάτερ ἡμῶν ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς,

ἁγιασθήτω τὸ ὄνομά σου·

ἐλθέτω ἡ βασιλεία σου·
 γενηθήτω τὸ θέλημά σου,
 ὡς ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς·
 Τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον
 δὸς ἡμῖν σήμερον·
 καὶ ἄφες ἡμῖν τὰ ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν,
 ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀφήκαμεν τοῖς ὀφειλέταις ἡμῶν·
 καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμόν,
 ἀλλὰ ῥύσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ.

The following Chichewa “poetic” (*ndakatulo*) version of this passage is intended to be a contemporary *LiFE* rendering:

<i>Inu 'Tate wakumwamba, Dzina lanu lilemekezeke. Wanu Ufumu ukhazikike. Kufuna kwanu kuchitike, pano pansi ndi kumwambako.</i>	O Daddy in heaven, may your name be honored. Your kingdom may it be established. May your will be done, down here and there in heaven.
<i>Choonde tipatseni lero, 'Tate, kudya kokwanira moyo wathu. Machimo onse mutikhulukire, nafe tichite chimodzimidzinsu. M'zotiyesetsa tisagwemo ayi. Kwa Woipa uja, Mdani wathu, mutipulumutse nthawi zonsetu.</i>	Please, give us today, Dad, food sufficient for our life. Forgive all our sins, and we, let us do the same. Let us not fall at all into the things that test us. From that Evil One, our Enemy, deliver us at all times.
<i>Ndithudi, ufumu ndi mphamvu, ulemunso n'zanu kwamuyaya!</i>	To be sure, kingship and power, honor too is yours forever! ¹⁶

Point out some of the stylistic characteristics of the above rendering and then evaluate it. Finally, prepare your own *LiFE* version of Matthew 6:9–13.

2. Study the entire text of 1 Corinthians 13. As a whole, is it more poetic or prosaic in nature? Which artistic features do you find here? Why do you think that this pericope is structured in such an expressive, lyrical manner? (Consider also the content and intent of chapters 12 and 14.) On a separate paper, write out 1 Corinthians 13 in a poetic format, making any adjustments that you feel are necessary to give the text a more rhythmic sound when uttered aloud.
3. Find another poetic text in the NT – one not discussed above – and point out its various literary features, both *structural* (larger text arrangements) and *stylistic* (individual poetic devices). Why, in view of the surrounding context, has this passage been composed in this manner; in other words, what is its primary communicative function? Lastly, prepare a *LiFE* translation of this text in YL.

¹⁶Despite the absence of the traditional concluding doxology from the better-attested Greek manuscripts, it is included in the Chichewa text due to popular demand.

11.3.5 Practicing a methodology for literary-poetic text analysis

The twelve steps that follow are based on chapter 7 of *Translating the Literature of Scripture* (Wendland 2004b), which outlines a general methodology for examining non-narrative, especially poetic, texts. These steps are to be applied to complete textual units, whether an entire biblical book or a clearly defined portion of one, sometimes called a pericope. (Some guidelines for studying and translating *narrative* texts will be given in lesson 6; cf. Wilt & Wendland 2008:ch.8.)

Compare these twelve steps with the ten procedures given in section 3.6. Note any apparent differences and evaluate them in terms of your own preference.

Then summarize (or explain) each step in your own words in the spaces provided below; it may prove helpful for you to do this also in your own language.

Step 1: Study the complete textual, intertextual, and extratextual context

Step 2: Read the entire text aloud and determine its genre and subgenres

Step 3: Plot all occurrences of exact and synonymous repetition

Step 4: Find all instances of disjunction (“breaks”) occasioned by formulae and content shifting

Step 5: Isolate and record the obvious areas of special stylistic concentration

Step 6: Identify the major points of discourse demarcation (boundaries) and projection (peaks)

Step 7: Outline the structural-thematic organization of the entire pericope

Step 8: Prepare a complete semantic (word/symbol/motif) analysis, especially of the key concepts

Step 9: Identify any outstanding linguistic and literary features that remain

Step 10: Note the major speech functions and speech acts and their interaction in the discourse

Step 11: Search for all possible form-functional matches between the SL and TL

Step 12: Prepare a well-formatted, trial LiFE translation and test it against other versions

These twelve steps are only one suggested set of procedures for accomplishing the task of text exegesis in preparation for a *LiFE* translation. The exegete might prefer to rearrange the order of some of the steps and, for example, begin with step 2. Other steps could no doubt be added; for example, examining the most significant literary features could be set as a distinct exercise. The important thing is that the approach be precise, systematic, and comprehensive: Bible translation involves a careful *analytical* and *comparative* text-based process. It requires the close parallel examination of a number of different versions, literal and idiomatic, especially versions in related languages to see how others have understood and expressed the aspects of meaning presented by the same pericope. The different printed formats, too, need to be tested for accuracy and legibility.

It is particularly important to pay special attention to the formal and functional *differences* that appear among the several versions consulted. (Hopefully, there will *not* be major *semantic* disparities.) Translators must be able to specify not only what these differences are in terms of linguistic form but also what the stylistic or functional effect is on the respective texts. In many cases, the variation is simply a reflection of the languages involved or of different methods of translating, that is, whether more “foreignizing” or “domesticating” in nature. But at times the differences might be more serious. They may represent a partial (or even a complete) failure to convey the author-intended meaning (content + intent), which is always closely connected with textual form. At other times, less serious errors may be noted, such as a slight unintended addition, modification, or detraction with respect to the sense and significance of the biblical text. But even these, when repeated, can quickly build up to a rather large problem and so must be avoided.

Finally, it is important to extend this comparative method of text checking to the TL constituency, using various formal and informal testing methods (see section 7.2). In many local settings, this will require the development of *oral-aural assessment procedures* in addition to the written ones. How do people best perceive and understand the vernacular text? Is it when hearing it or reading it? The purpose of testing is to gain enough feedback – both corrective and also creative – from a variety of listeners and

readers so that when the translation is finally published, whether as portions or in its entirety, it will be met with the widest possible acceptance.

A rigorous comparative examination of texts, together with the response that is generated when testing early drafts with members of the target audience in various settings of use, will always reveal certain problems. But such information is an essential part of perfecting the text; without it, the necessary improvements will probably not be made. Perhaps during the testing process, some individuals will catch the *LiFE* vision and be inspired to try their hand (or tongue!) at “domesticating” the Scriptures in their own language and literary/oratorical tradition.

For reflection, research, and response:

1. “The first step in Bible translation is the determination of the text” (Scorgie, Strauss, and Voth 2003:31). How does this apply to your translation methodology and where does it fit in our twelve steps? How does your team deal with text-critical issues, especially where the textual footnotes of the major translations give different opinions? How would you go about establishing the original text of Job 19:23–29? Now translate this passage into YL in a way that matches the dramatic expression and emotive intensity of the original text.
2. How does a translation team prepare for translating a *LiFE* version? Evaluate and discuss the following procedures (adapted from Wendland 2004b, chap. 8) based on your own experience or as part of a strategy for translating a future *LiFE* version in your language.
 - a. **Collection** – gather as much TL data as possible in various genres, oral and written, secular and religious, standard and dialectal.
 - b. **Classification** – analyze and categorize the available material with respect to form, content, function, setting of use, and primary users.
 - c. **Comparison** – compare the TL stylistic resources with the inventory of literary and rhetorical features of the SL text, noting the major similarities and differences.
 - d. **Compensation** – devise innovative *LiFE* strategies for dealing with mismatches of form or function, especially the latter, in the effort to achieve communicative parity.
 - e. **Creation** – verbally reconstitute the essential message at the points of mismatch through informed intuition and insight, using the appropriate TL-based compensation strategies.
 - f. **Criticism** – evaluate the translation, especially where some creative work has been done, by means of an explicit comparison with the corresponding features of the original text.
3. Qvale (2003:62) emphasizes the importance of a translator’s ability to empathize with the original:

The translator ought to be receptive to all the qualities of the source text, and, through spiritual affinity with the author and a process of internalization, be able to access the author’s intention and grandeur and be armed for the hunt for a corresponding poetic expression...[T]he main thing is to have the translator’s most important hallmark: Empathy. Empathy is the key.

How does empathy pertain to *compensation* in exercise 2? How can a Bible translator today generate empathy with the original authors of Scripture? Make a suggestion or two.

4. Working in pairs (or teams) designated by the course instructor, apply the twelve steps in section 5.4 to a complete analysis and translation of Habakkuk 3. (A possible model of discourse analysis is found in Wendland 2004b, section 7.3.) To help you complete this exercise a variety of literary-structural notes on Habakkuk 3 are given below, but other reference material may also be used. Prepare a brief written report of your study and be ready to hand it in to your instructor along with your *LiFE*-style translation. Some of the reports may be selected for class presentation, if time allows.

A PLEA TO YAHWEH FOR DELIVERANCE¹⁷

¹⁷ The text of Habakkuk 3 that appears here is from the NJB, but somewhat altered and reformatted.

Title. A prayer of the prophet Habakkuk: with a tune as for dirges

Prayer

Yahweh, I have heard of your renown; 2
your work, Yahweh, inspires me with dread.
 Make it live again in our day,
 make it known in our time;
 in wrath remember mercy.

Theophany: Yahweh's approach

Eloah comes from Teman, 3
the Holy One from Mount Paran. [Pause]
 His majesty covers the heavens,
 and his glory fills the earth.
 His brightness is like the day, 4
 and rays flash from his hands,
 that is where his power lies hidden.

Pestilence goes before him, 5
and Plague follows close behind. 6
 When he stands up, he shakes the earth,
 with his glance he makes the nations quake.
 And the eternal mountains are dislodged,
 the everlasting hills sink down –
 his pathways from of old.

I saw the tents of Cushan in trouble, 7
the tent-curtains of Midian shuddering.

Yahweh's battle

Yahweh, are you enraged with the rivers, 8
are you angry with the sea,
that you should mount your chargers,
your rescuing chariots?

 You uncover your bow, 9
 and give the string its fill of arrows,
 You trench the earth with torrents. [Pause]
 The mountains see you and tremble, 10
 great floods sweep by,
 the abyss roars aloud,
 lifting high its waves.
 Sun and moon stay inside their dwellings, 11
 they flee at the light of your arrows,
 at the flash of your lightning-spear.

In rage you stride across the land, 12
in anger you trample the nations.

YOU MARCHED OUT TO SAVE YOUR PEOPLE, 13
TO SAVE YOUR ANOINTED ONE!

 You wounded the head of the house of the wicked,
 you laid bare his foundation to the very rock. [Pause]
 With your shafts you pierced the leader of his warriors 14
 who stormed out with shouts of joy to scatter us,
 as if they meant to devour some poor wretch in their lair.
 With your chargers you trampled through the sea, 15
 through the surging abyss!

Conclusion: human fear and faith in God

When I heard, I trembled to the core, 16
my lips quivered at the sound;
my bones became disjointed,
and my legs gave way beneath me.
 Yet calmly I await the day of anguish,
 which is dawning on the people now attacking us.

For the fig tree is not to blossom, 17
nor will the vines bear fruit;
the olive crop will disappoint,
and the fields will yield no food;
the sheep will vanish from the fold,
no cattle in the stalls.
But I shall rejoice in Yahweh, 18
I shall exult in God my Savior!
Yahweh the Lord is my strength, 19
he will lighten my feet like a doe's
and set my steps on the heights.

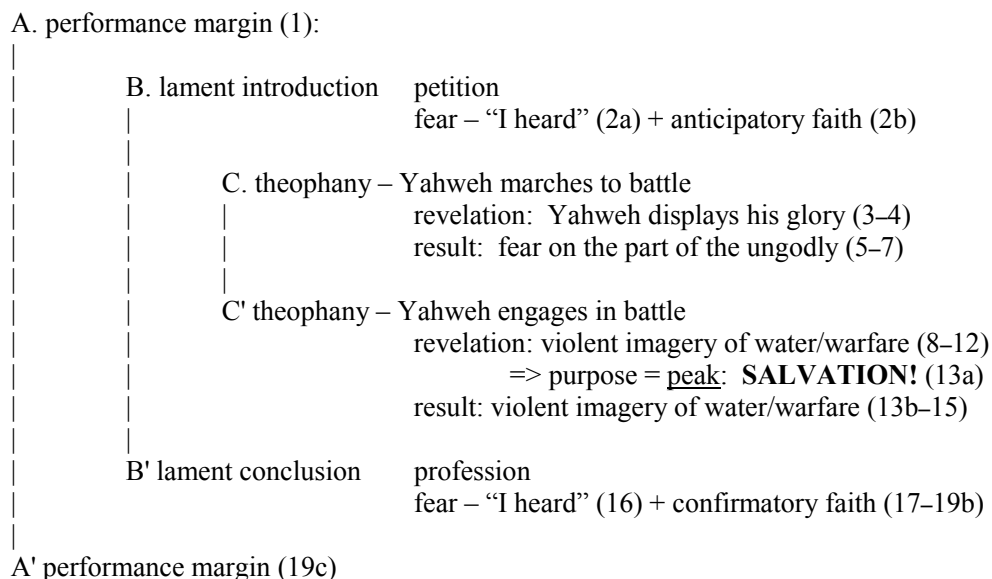
For the choirmaster; played on stringed instruments.

A schematic look at Habakkuk as a two-part whole, divided into seven major sections:

(Note the principal structural markers on the borders and the cohesive ties within each section.)

- I. A. **Superscription:** Introduction of the prophet and his message (1:1)
 - B. Habakkuk's first **complaint:** Why does injustice in Judah go unpunished by Yahweh? (1:2-4)
 - C. God's **response:** The fearsome Babylonians will punish Judah along with the rest of the nations of the world (1:5-11)
 - D. Habakkuk's second **complaint:** Why pick the wicked Babylonians to execute judgement upon Judah? (1:12-17)
 - E. Habakkuk rests his case (**transition**): How will God respond to me and I to him? (2:1)
- II. F. God's **response:** I will provide a vision pronouncing a verdict of condemnation upon proud, unrighteous Babylon (2:2-5)
 - G. A satiric **taunt** against Babylon: Five judicial "woes" declared against this unjust nation (2:6-20)
- H. The **prayer** of Habakkuk: A poem in praise of Yahweh's mighty deliverance of his people in the past, concluded by Habakkuk's faith-filled acceptance of the divine will (3:1-19)

The general structure of Habakkuk's prayer:



The central divine-prophetic “argument” of Habakkuk:

Prophetic hortatory discourse (rhetoric) often assumes a three-part progression: *problem* => *appeal* => *motivation*. In Habakkuk, these rhetorical constituents are expressed in dual form as follows:

- a. problem =
 - i the prevalence and predominance of evil in a world created and controlled by “God” (3:3);
 - ii the wicked continue to persecute the “righteous” followers of “the Sovereign LORD” (3:19).
- b. appeal =
 - i initial – to the ultimate justice of “the Holy One” (3:3), i.e., “Do something about it!”
 - ii final – to the “faith-fulness” of his righteous ones (2:4b), i.e., “Put your complete trust in the just judgement of Yahweh!”
- c. motivation =
 - i who our God is – the “Rock,” the “almighty LORD” (1:12b, 2:13, i.e., his theological credibility);
 - ii what he has done for his people as their eternal “Savior” (1:12a, 3:18, i.e., his historical reliability).

From conflict to resolution in Habakkuk, encoding a judicial theme:

<i>Habakkuk’s initial situation</i>	→	<i>his final situation</i>
he has no apparent answer (1:2a)	→	he has been answered (3:2, 16)
salvation is lost (1:2b)	→	salvation is assured (3:13, 18)
injustice goes unpunished (1:3a)	→	wickedness is defeated (3:8–12)
conflict is everywhere (1:3b)	→	he is at peace (3:16b)
no hope of justice (1:4)	→	restoration will come (3:2, 17–18)

INJUSTICE (man)	versus	JUSTICE (God)
Chapter I: 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 13b, 17		2*, 3*, 12, 13a, 13b*
Chapter II: 4a, 4b*, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 15, 17		7, 8, 10, 13, 16, 17
Chapter III: 13b, 14		12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 19

*The asterisk marks a conceptual reversal, i.e., human *justice*, divine *injustice* (so perceived)

Conceptual recursion within Habakkuk 3 and connections with chapters 1 – 2:

III: verse(s) strophe	<u>recursive concepts</u>	other, strophe-external references <u>inside</u> => CHAPTER 3 <= <u>outside</u>
2	Yahweh...Yahweh	8,* 18,* 19* 1:2*, 12*, 2:2*, 13, 14*, 16, 20*
	I heard your hearing	16*
	your deed	1:2*
	in midst of years...in midst of years	1:5*
	make him/it live	2:4
	make him/it know	2:14
	in trembling	7*, 16*
3–4	God...even the Holy One	18*
	he came	1:11, 12* 2:3

	his glory...and splendor		2:14
	it filled the earth		2:14
5-7	before him...before his steps		
	he saw...I saw	10*	1:3, 5, 13, 2:1*
	plague...pestilence		
	earth...mountains...hills...land 17, 20*	3, 9, 10, 12	1:6; 2:8, 14*,
	long ago...eternity...eternity		
8-10	rivers...rivers...sea...rivers...torrent of waters...the deep...waves (hands)	15*	1:14; 2:14*
	you rode...your riding things (chariots) he raged...your anger...your wrath 12		
	salvation	13*, 18*	
	uncovered it is uncovered		
11-13	sun...moon...light...flash...lightning		
	your arrows...your spear	9, 14	
	to save...to save	8, 18*	
	nations...your people	6, 7, 16	1:5, 6, 7, 17*, 2:5*, 8*, 10, 13, 16*
12-15	head...thigh...neck...head		
	your horses	8*	1:8
	the sea...the waters	8*	1:14; 2:14*
16	it trembled...I trembled	7*	
	my belly...my lips...my bones		
17-18	not...there is no...not...there is no		
	fig tree...fruit on the vines...crop of olives...fields...food...sheep...cattle		1:16
	I will rejoice...I will be glad		1:15
19	Yahweh my Lord	2*, 3*, 18*	
	he makes me walk upon	15*	

*The asterisks mark those terms with special structural or stylistic significance where they occur.)

Significant patterned parallelism at the close of the book (end-stress) – 3:17-18:

Though [the] fig tree	it does not blossom, and there is no grape
on the vines;	[though] it fails
the crop of olives,	and fields not
they produce food;	[though] he cuts off

from the fold flocks,
 and there is no
 cattle in the stalls;
 nevertheless I
 _____ in Yahweh
 _____ I will rejoice,
 _____ I will be joyful
 _____ in the God of

 my salvation.

Intertextuality in Habakkuk 3:

verses	topic-narrative motif	cross-references
2	<i>prologue</i> to the poetic-narrative revelation of the “deeds” of Yahweh, righteous in “anger” but great in mercy	Psalms 68:28; 77:5–12
3–4	Yahweh appears on the scene from the desert south/Sinai in all his splendor and might	Exodus 19:16–19; Judges 5:4a; Deuteronomy 33:2; Psalm 68:7–8
5–7	<i>rising action</i> : the effects of Yahweh’s advance are felt in the shocking/shaking of nations and nature	Exodus 15:13–16; 19:18; Judges 5:4–5; Psalm 18:7, 12; Psalms 77:18; 78:43–51
8–10	Yahweh vents his anger against the seas (= superiority over all pagan deities) as he rides to war on a chariot of clouds	Exodus 15:8; Psalm 18:9–12, 15; Psalms 68:4; 77:16–19; 89:9–10; Psalm 104:3–4
11–13	<i>climax</i> : Yahweh, armed with the weapons of nature, battles and completely routs the enemy to deliver his people and anointed one	Psalms 18:14; 68:7, 11–14, Psalms 68: 17–18; 74:13–14; Psalms 77:14–15, 17–18; Deuteronomy 32:23, 40–42
14–15	<i>denouement</i> : with a flashback to the prior time of oppression; all enemies, both natural and supernatural, are impressively defeated	Exodus 15:2–5, 9–10; Deuteronomy 32:43; Psalms 68:21; 77:19; 144:6–7
16–19	<i>conclusion</i> : a personal, meditative response to the narrative; patient and joyful hope for future deliverance and vindication	Deuteronomy 26:17–18; 32:13, Deuteronomy 32 – 33, 41 – 43; Deuteronomy 33:29; Joel 1:7–12; 2:23–24; Psalms 4:7; 18:32–33; 28:6; Psalms 31:7–8; 32:11; 35:9–10

The structural-thematic organization of Habakkuk’s psalm:

The semantic and logical relationships between the paired propositional utterances below from paired passages of Habakkuk are designated by *letters* that are explained in the box below the display (cf. Wendland 2002:ch.3). The twofold relations given in *italics* in the box are especially important for the psalm’s thematic development. Feel free to disagree with any of these interpretations and to propose alternatives that you feel fit the text and context better. Some variation in perspective is to be expected since poetry typically allows a certain range or flexibility in the expression of meaning. The aim of this exegetical exercise is to explore this range with a bit more precision *before* preparing to translate Habakkuk 3 in a *LiFE*-like manner in YL.

2:1

	O-Yahweh I-heard your-report ----a			
2	I-revere O-Yahweh your-work _____			
3	in-midst-of years renew-him -----b d-----			
4	in-midst-of years you-make-[him]-know_ ----c_			
5	in-trembling mercy you-remember_____			
<hr/>				
3:1	God from-Teman he-comes -----e			
2	even-the-Holy-One from-Mount=Paran (S) _ -----p			
3	it-covered heavens his-glory ----- f			--j"
4	and-his-praise it-filled the-earth ____ ----- n_			
4:1	and-brightness like-the-light it-is ----- g _____			
2	horns from-his-hand [are] to-him ----- h_			
3	and-there [is] a-covering of-his-power ____			
<hr/>				
				---r
5:1	before-him it-goes a-plague -----i			
2	and-it-followed a-pestilence to-his-steps_ -----o			
6:1	he-stood and-he-measured [the]-earth -----j_ -----			--s
2	he-looked and-he-startled [the]-nations____			
3	and-they-crumbled the-mountains-of=long-ago----k --- q_			--k"
4	they-sank the-hills-of eternity _____ ----l_			
5	the-ways-of eternity [are] to-him _____			
7:1	under iniquity I-saw the-tents-of Cushan -----m _____			
2	they-tremble the-curtains-of the-land-of Midian ____			
<hr/>				
8:1	at-rivers did-he-rage Yahweh?-----t			--i"
2	or against-the-streams [was] your-anger_ ----u			
3	or=against-the-sea [was] your-wrath_____ ---w			
4	when you-ride upon=your-horses----v _____ ----z			
5	your-chariots-of deliverance?_____			
9:1	uncovered it-is-uncovered your-bow---x			
2	oaths-of shafts [are] spoken (S) ____ ----y _____ d'			
3	[with]-rivers you-split=[the]-earth_____			
10:1	they-saw-you they-writhe [the]-mountains---a'			--j'
2	a-torrent-of waters it-overflowed_____ ----c' _____			
3	it-gave [the]-deep its-voice-----b' _____			
4	[on]-high his-hands it-lifted_____			
<hr/>				
11:1	sun moon it-stood [in-the]-high-abode-----f			
2	to-the-light-of your-arrows they-went ---e'_ ----i'			--k'
3	to-the-shine-of the-flash-of your-spear ____			
12:1	in-wrath you-march=[the]-earth-----g' _____			
2	in-anger you-thresh [the]-nations_____			
13:1	you-came-out for-the-deliverance-of your-people---h' _____			
2	for-the-deliverance-of your-anointed-one_____			--i" --k"
<hr/>				

3 you-crushed the-head from-the-house-of evil ---l' r'-- | j"- |
4 uncovered [from]-thigh unto-[the]-neck (S)-----o' |
14:1 you-pierced with-his-shafts [his]-head -----n' |
2 his-warrior[s] they-storm-out to-scatter-me---m' | --q' |
3 their-exultation as-[if]=to-devour [the]-poor |
in-the-secret-place |
15:1 you-trampled on-the-sea [with]-your-horses---p' |
2 the-surg-ing-of waters abundant
16:1 I-heard and-it-trembled my-belly-----s'
2 at-[the]-sound they-quivered my-lips_|-----u'
3 it-comes rot into-my-bones -----t'_|-----w'
4 and-beneath-me I-trembled |
5 which I-will-wait for-the-day-of distress-----v'_|
6 to-come-over on-[the]-people they-invade-us_|

17:1 though=[the]-fig-tree not=it-blossoms-----x'
2 and-there-is-no fruit on-the-vines |-----a"
3 [though]-it-fails [the]-produce-of=olive[s]-----y'_|--b"
4 and-fields not=it-produces food |
5 [though]-it-is-cut-off from -[the]-fold flock----z'_|---d'
6 and-there-is-no cattle in-the-stalls |
18 1 yet-I in-Yahweh I-will-rejoice-----c" | g"
2 I-will-exalt in-the-God-of my-deliverance |
19:1 Yahweh my-Lord [is] my-strength-----f" |
2 and-he-set my-feet like-the-deer's-----e"_|
3 and-upon my-high-places he-makes-me-tread_|

a = *reason-result*
b = base-restatement
c = base-addition
d = *grounds-request*
e = base-restatement
f = base-amplification
g = general-specific
h = base-location
i = base-restatement
j = base-amplification
k = base-restatement
l = base-description
m = base-restatement
n = base-addition
o = base-sequential
p = base-circumstance
q = reason-result
r = base-addition
s = *reason-result*
t = base-restatement
i" = base-addition

u = base-restatement
v = base-amplification
w = base-circumstance
x = base-sequential
y = means-result
z = base-sequential
a' = base-addition
b' = base-addition
c' = base-addition
d' = *reason-result*
e' = base-restatement
f' = *result-reason*
g' = base-restatement
h' = base-restatement
i' = base-addition
j' = base-sequential
k' = *means-purpose*
l' = base-addition
m' = base-circumstance
n' = base-addition
j" = *request-grounds*

o' = generic-specific
p' = means-result
q' = base-amplification
r' = *means-result*
s' = base-restatement
t' = base-restatement
u' = base-addition
v' = *result-reason* (?)
w' = *concession-contrarexpectation*
x' = base-amplification
y' = base-amplification
z' = base-amplification
a" = base-addition
b" = base-addition
c" = base-amplification
d" = *concession-contrarexpectation*
e" = base-restatement
f" = *means-result*
g" = base-addition
h" = *means-result*

12 Analyzing and Translating Biblical Prose

Aim: In this lesson you will further explore the nature and purpose of biblical prose – in particular, New Testament prose, but also some important prose passages of the Old Testament. Our main emphasis will be on learning and applying a methodology for recognizing and analyzing different types of prose passages in both the Bible and your language. The point is to search for TL models that will be the closest possible literary functional equivalents to the various prose genres and styles found in the Scriptures.

Goals: After working through this lesson you should be able to do the following tasks:

1. Describe the four major prose discourse types of the Bible.
2. Identify and analyze some of the main prose genres of the Old Testament.
3. Identify and analyze some of the main prose genres of the New Testament.
4. Learn and apply a methodology for investigating different types of prose discourse.
5. Identify prose genres and features in your language which match those of the Bible.
6. Analyze and translate selected prose passages of Scripture by the *LiFE* method.
7. Evaluate your version in comparison with others and prepare a revised common text.

Review:

Lesson 4 and the differences that we commonly find between prose and poetry texts, both in the Bible and in the target language of a given translation project.

Read:

Chapters 6 - 7 in *Translating the Literature of Scripture* (Wendland 2004b)
 Pages 23-37, 91-113 in *Literary Forms in the New Testament* (Bailey and vander Broek 1992)
 Chapters 4 - 6 in *Cracking Old Testament Codes* (Sandy and Giese 1995)
 Chapters 7 - 8 and 18 in *Analyzing Discourse* (Dooley and Levinsohn. 2001)
 Chapters 1 - 2 and 8 - 9 in *Discourse Features of New Testament Greek* (Levinsohn 2000)
 Chapter 10 in *Scripture Frames and Framing* (Wilt & Wendland 2008)

12.1 Reviewing the four major discourse types

The four principal discourse types found in the Scriptures (see section 10.2) are summarized in the following chart. They are found in both prose and poetry, though some are more common than others depending on the particular book that is being considered.

Universal (*etic*) categories of text type

<i>diagnostic features</i>		Agent Focus	
		+	-
Time Sequence	+	NARRATIVE	PROCEDURAL
	-	HORTATORY	EXPOSITORY

In our earlier discussion of these four types of discourse, it was noted that another feature that is helpful for distinguishing one from the other is the presence (+) or absence (-) of “direction,” or “prescription,” within the text.

How did we classify the four discourse types in this respect? Write either + or - as appropriate for the following types: Narrative __, Procedural __, Hortatory __, Expository __.

Four selections from Deuteronomy follow. Study them and on the line below each one write the name of the text type it exemplifies. Give reasons for your choices. Do you have similar prose types in YL?

¹ Next we turned and went up along the road toward Bashan, and Og king of Bashan with his whole army marched out to meet us in battle at Edrei. ² The LORD said to me, "Do not be afraid of him, for I have handed him over to you with his whole army and his land. Do to him what you did to Sihon king of the Amorites, who reigned in Heshbon." ³ So the LORD our God also gave into our hands Og king of Bashan and all his army. We struck them down, leaving no survivors. ⁴ At that time we took all his cities. There was not one of the sixty cities that we did not take from them – the whole region of Argob, Og's kingdom in Bashan. ⁵ All these cities were fortified with high walls and with gates and bars, and there were also a great many unwallled villages. ⁶ We completely destroyed them, as we had done with Sihon king of Heshbon, destroying every city – men, women and children. ⁷ But all the livestock and the plunder from their cities we carried off for ourselves. (Deut. 3:1–6, NIV)

Discourse type = _____

⁸ So at that time we took from these two kings of the Amorites the territory east of the Jordan, from the Arnon Gorge as far as Mount Hermon. ⁹ (Hermon is called Sirion by the Sidonians; the Amorites call it Senir.) ¹⁰ We took all the towns on the plateau, and all Gilead, and all Bashan as far as Salecah and Edrei, towns of Og's kingdom in Bashan. ¹¹ (Only Og king of Bashan was left of the remnant of the Rephaites. His bed was made of iron and was more than thirteen feet long and six feet wide. It is still in Rabbah of the Ammonites.) ¹² Of the land that we took over at that time, I gave the Reubenites and the Gadites the territory north of Aroer by the Arnon Gorge, including half the hill country of Gilead, together with its towns. ¹³ The rest of Gilead and also all of Bashan, the kingdom of Og, I gave to the half tribe of Manasseh. (The whole region of Argob in Bashan used to be known as a land of the Rephaites. ¹⁴ Jair, a descendant of Manasseh, took the whole region of Argob as far as the border of the Geshurites and the Maacathites; it was named after him, so that to this day Bashan is called Havvoth Jair.) (Deut. 3:8–14, NIV)

Discourse type = _____

³ You saw with your own eyes what the LORD did at Baal Peor. The LORD your God destroyed from among you everyone who followed the Baal of Peor, ⁴ but all of you who held fast to the LORD your God are still alive today. ⁵ See, I have taught you decrees and laws as the LORD my God commanded me, so that you may follow them in the land you are entering to take possession of it. ⁶ Observe them carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people." ⁷ What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the LORD our God is near us whenever we pray to him? ⁸ And what other nation is so great as to have such righteous decrees and laws as this body of laws I am setting before you today? ⁹ Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them. (Deut. 4:3–9, NIV)

Discourse type = _____

² You shall offer the passover sacrifice for the LORD your God, from the flock and the herd, at the place that the LORD will choose as a dwelling for his name. ³ You must not eat with it anything leavened. For seven days you shall eat unleavened bread with it – the bread of affliction – because you came out of the land of Egypt in great haste, so that all the days of your life you may remember the day of your departure from the land of Egypt. ⁴ No leaven shall be seen with you in all your territory for seven days; and none of the meat of what you slaughter on the evening of the first day shall remain until morning. ⁵ You are not permitted to offer the passover sacrifice within any of your towns that the LORD your God is giving you. ⁶ But at the place that the LORD your God will choose as a dwelling for his name, only there shall you offer the passover sacrifice, in the evening at sunset, the time of day when you departed from Egypt. ⁷ You shall cook it and eat it at the place that the LORD your God will choose; the next morning you may go back to your tents. ⁸ For six days you shall continue to eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a solemn assembly for the LORD your God, when you shall do no work. (Deut. 16:2–8, NRSV)

Discourse type = _____

Now we will take a little closer look at some of the more specific prose genres to be found in the Scriptures – first of all, some from the Old Testament and then some from the New. During this review, continually compare what we find in the Bible with the corresponding prose discourse types in YL. Note especially where there may be a lack of functionally equivalent forms in the language of your translation. These will have to be investigated in detail later on.

12.2 Identifying and analyzing Old Testament prose genres

To accommodate the four general text types more closely to literature as it actually appears in the Hebrew Scriptures, we will combine the procedural, hortatory, and expository categories into three major mixed groupings: *prophetic*, *legislative*, and *sapiential* writing. They are called “mixed” because the prose texts found in a given category – prophetic, for example – often feature literary composition that includes procedural, hortatory, and/or expository discourse. The narrative category likewise is not really distinct because all the dialogue that it normally incorporates may contain any of the other three types of discourse. Despite all this convergence and coalescence, it is still helpful to use the broad categories as one way to analyze and classify biblical prose passages. This is a “top-down” approach, moving from larger text structures to included subtypes and down to the various stylistic features that tend to characterize different kinds of discourse. Accordingly, in sections 6.2.1 – 6.2.4 the major genre distinctions of the Old Testament will be briefly defined and illustrated (including some practical exercises) with reference to prophetic, legislative, sapiential, and narrative literature.

12.2.1 Prophetic prose

Ordinary hortatory (technically termed “paraenetic”) prophecy stresses how God’s people are to respond to him in the here and now – that is, with sincere repentance and loyal obedience. Faith must have its effect on one’s life.

Apocalyptic prophecy, on the other hand, is always future oriented, focusing on the mighty acts that Yahweh is going to perform at some unspecified time in order to deliver his people from their powerful enemies. Prophecy of this nature was usually written in times of great national distress and physical persecution. As noted in chapter five, apocalyptic prophecy may be poetic or prosaic in style – or somewhere between.

What type of literature would you consider the text of Ezekiel 38 – 39 to be? Why do you say so?

In the spaces below, list examples from Ezekiel 38 – 39 to illustrate the eight features of apocalyptic poetry (see section 5.3.2):

Visionary revelation: _____

Future Orientation: _____

Repeated elements: _____

Graphic imagery: _____

Elaborate symbolism: _____

Strong emotions: _____

Cosmic disruption: _____

Fierce warfare: _____

In contrast to the passage from Daniel 8 that we examined in section 5.3.2, Ezekiel 38 – 39 (after its initial prophetic introduction in 38:1–2) reads more like a narrative – that is, a story with a *plot* composed

of events related by cause and effect with a climax and a final outcome at the end of the discourse. In fact, this Ezekiel pericope may be read like a drama having seven major “scenes,” each of which begins with the prophetic formula “This is what the Sovereign LORD says” (כֹּה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה). Write in the spaces below the verse numbers that cover each of these seven scenes. Give a short summary of each scene. (The first one has been done for you.)

38:3–9:	The LORD God predicts that he is going to forcibly use the wicked armies of Gog in order to attack his defenseless people in Israel
_____:	_____
_____:	_____
_____:	_____
_____:	_____
_____:	_____
_____:	_____
_____:	_____

The final scene in this prophetic drama is climactic – representing the high point of the entire discourse. This peak is marked as such at the very beginning by means of a small addition to the opening formula in Ezekiel 39:25. This passage is shown below as rendered in the NRSV, but in a poetic format.

²⁵ Therefore thus says the Lord God:
 Now I will restore the fortunes of Jacob,
 and have mercy on the whole house of Israel;
 and I will be jealous for my holy name.
²⁶ They shall forget their shame,
 and all the treachery they have practiced against me,
 when they live securely in their land
 with no one to make them afraid,
²⁷ when I have brought them back from the peoples
 and gathered them from their enemies' lands,
 and through them have displayed my holiness
 in the sight of many nations.
²⁸ Then they shall know that I am the LORD their God
 because I sent them into exile among the nations,
 and then gathered them into their own land.
 I will leave none of them behind;
²⁹ and I will never again hide my face from them,
 when I pour out my spirit upon the house of Israel,
 says the Lord GOD.

What is the addition to verse 25 and what is its significance here (i.e., the initial לָזָן)?

What would be the best way of representing the text in YL – as prose, poetry, or a mixture of both? Explain why you think so.

Translate the portion accordingly, giving also a back-translation into English. Make sure that your version is expressed with the same sort of verbal vigor and emotive impact as the original text.

Hebrew prophetic writing may contain a variety of other literary types or genres. Sometimes one genre is embedded within a larger, more inclusive style of composition. Examine the following passages from Jeremiah (be sure to look up the respective contexts) and tell what kind of writing each seems to most closely represent. Describe the text type as best you can in your own words. For each of these passages, tell whether it seems more poetic or prosaic (comparing the printed format in several major versions). Then discuss each passage from the perspective of your own cultural setting and how you would translate the text in a *LiFE*-like manner, whether as prose, poetry, or some combination of the two. What are some of the specific stylistic or rhetorical features that these instances of prophetic discourse would need to exhibit so that people can correctly identify their distinctive communicative functions in your language? You may have to use a separate piece of paper in order to comment fully on these passages.

Jeremiah 1

⁴ The word of the LORD came to me, saying, ⁵ “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.” ⁶ “Ah, Sovereign LORD,” I said, “I do not know how to speak; I am only a child.” ⁷ But the LORD said to me, “Do not say, ‘I am only a child.’ You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. ⁸ Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you,” declares the LORD. ⁹ Then the LORD reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, “Now, I have put my words in your mouth. ¹⁰ See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant.”

Your comments: _____

Compare the format of the NIV with that of the NRSV and other translations, with respect to Jeremiah 1 above.

Jeremiah 3

⁶ During the reign of King Josiah, the LORD said to me, “Have you seen what faithless Israel has done? She has gone up on every high hill and under every spreading tree and has committed adultery there. ⁷ I thought that after she had done all this she would return to me but she did not, and her unfaithful sister Judah saw it. ⁸ I gave faithless Israel her certificate of divorce and sent her away because of all her adulteries. Yet I saw that her unfaithful sister Judah had no fear; she also went out and committed adultery. ⁹ Because Israel's immorality mattered so little to her, she defiled the land and committed adultery with stone and wood. ¹⁰ In spite of all this, her unfaithful sister Judah did not return to me with all her heart, but only in pretense,” declares the LORD. ¹¹ The LORD said to me, “Faithless Israel is more righteous than unfaithful Judah.”

Your comments: _____

Jeremiah 8

¹ “At that time, declares the LORD, the bones of the kings and officials of Judah, the bones of the priests and prophets, and the bones of the people of Jerusalem will be removed from their graves. ² They will be exposed to the sun and the moon and all the stars of the heavens, which they have loved and served and which they have followed and consulted and worshiped. They will not be gathered up or buried, but will be like refuse lying on the ground. ³ Wherever I banish them, all the survivors of this evil nation will prefer death to life, declares the LORD Almighty.”

Your comments: _____

Jeremiah 13

¹ This is what the LORD said to me: “Go and buy a linen belt and put it around your waist, but do not let it touch water.” ² So I bought a belt, as the LORD directed, and put it around my waist. ³ Then the word of the LORD came to me a second time: ⁴ “Take the belt you bought and are wearing around your waist, and go now to Perath and hide it there in a crevice in the rocks.” ⁵ So I went and hid it at Perath, as the LORD told me. ⁶ Many days later the LORD said to me, “Go now to Perath and get the belt I told you to hide there.” ⁷ So I went to Perath and dug up the belt and took it from the place where I had hidden it, but now it was ruined and completely useless.

Your comments: _____

Jeremiah 17

²⁴ But if you are careful to obey me, declares the LORD, and bring no load through the gates of this city on the Sabbath, but keep the Sabbath day holy by not doing any work on it, ²⁵ then kings who sit on David's throne will come through the gates of this city with their officials. They and their officials will come riding in chariots and on horses, accompanied by the men of Judah and those living in Jerusalem, and this city will be inhabited forever. ²⁶ People will come from the towns of Judah and the villages around Jerusalem, from the territory of Benjamin and the western foothills, from the hill country and the Negev, bringing burnt offerings and sacrifices, grain offerings, incense and thank offerings to the house of the LORD. ²⁷ But if you do not obey me to keep the Sabbath day holy by not carrying any load as you come through the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day, then I will kindle an unquenchable fire in the gates of Jerusalem that will consume her fortresses.’ ”

Your comments: _____

Jeremiah 23

³⁷ This is what you keep saying to a prophet: ‘What is the LORD's answer to you?’ or ‘What has the LORD spoken?’ ³⁸ Although you claim, ‘This is the oracle of the LORD,’ this is what the LORD says: You used the words, ‘This is the oracle of the LORD,’ even though I told you that you must not claim, ‘This is the oracle of the LORD.’ ³⁹ Therefore, I will surely forget you and cast you out of my presence along with the city I gave to you and your fathers. ⁴⁰ I will bring upon you everlasting disgrace – everlasting shame that will not be forgotten.

Your comments: _____

Jeremiah 24

³ Then the LORD asked me, "What do you see, Jeremiah?" "Figs," I answered. "The good ones are very good, but the poor ones are so bad they cannot be eaten." ⁴ Then the word of the LORD came to me: ⁵ "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Like these good figs, I regard as good the exiles from Judah, whom I sent away from this place to the land of the Babylonians. ⁶ My eyes will watch over them for their good, and I will bring them back to this land. I will build them up and not tear them down; I will plant them and not uproot them. ⁷ I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the LORD. They will be my people, and I will be their God, for they will return to me with all their heart.

Your comments: _____

Jeremiah 25

¹⁵ This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, said to me: "Take from my hand this cup filled with the wine of my wrath and make all the nations to whom I send you drink it. ¹⁶ When they drink it, they will stagger and go mad because of the sword I will send among them." ¹⁷ So I took the cup from the LORD's hand and made all the nations to whom he sent me drink it: ¹⁸ Jerusalem and the towns of Judah, its kings and officials, to make them a ruin and an object of horror and scorn and cursing, as they are today; ¹⁹ Pharaoh king of Egypt, his attendants, his officials and all his people, ²⁰ and all the foreign people there; all the kings of Uz; all the kings of the Philistines (those of Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, and the people left at Ashdod); ²¹ Edom, Moab and Ammon; ²² all the kings of Tyre and Sidon; the kings of the coastlands across the sea; ²³ Dedan, Tema, Buz and all who are in distant places; ²⁴ all the kings of Arabia and all the kings of the foreign people who live in the desert; ²⁵ all the kings of Zimri, Elam and Media; ²⁶ and all the kings of the north, near and far, one after the other – all the kingdoms on the face of the earth. And after all of them, the king of Sheshach will drink it too.

Your comments: _____

Jeremiah 29

⁴ This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: ⁵ "Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. ⁶ Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. ⁷ Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper." ⁸ Yes, this is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: "Do not let the prophets and diviners among you deceive you. Do not listen to the dreams you encourage them to have. ⁹ They are prophesying lies to you in my name. I have not sent them," declares the LORD.

Your comments: _____

Note how the genre of the preceding passage is classified in Jeremiah 29:1. Does the discourse style match this particular genre? Explain.

What is the primary communicative function of this “letter” from the LORD?

All preceding texts from Jeremiah have been printed as block prose text, not even distinguishing the different speakers that may be found in a given section. This is not a helpful format because it greatly decreases the readability as well as intelligibility of the text.

Point out three good examples of such confusion in the preceding selections.

Do any of these passages sound more lyrical in nature?

If so, do you think a poetic, balanced-line arrangement would be easier to follow? Explain.

For reflection, research, and response

1. Find examples of five different types of prophetic prose in the book of Ezekiel. List their references and describe each style of writing, as you did above for the passages from Jeremiah. Then tell how you would translate each passage so that it presents the same purpose, impact, and appeal in YL.
2. What distinct features make a particular passage sound less like prose and more like poetry to you? Would you render any of the above passages from Jeremiah as poetry in YL? If so, demonstrate how this would be done, giving a back-translation also in English.

12.2.2 Legislative prose

Three closely interrelated “C”-words describe the legislative, or juridical, literature of the Old Testament: *covenant* + *cult* + *commandment*.¹⁸ As part of the framework of Yahweh’s formal covenant with the people of Israel, the Levitical priesthood was designated to administer the legal code of the cultic community, which was set apart through their observance of a host of commands pertaining to national governance, regular worship practices, and interpersonal religious relationships with both God and man (the so-called civil, ceremonial, and moral laws). Most of this legislative discourse is found in the Pentateuch, but it is often referred to elsewhere as “the law” (*tôrâh*), especially in the prophetic literature.

It is important for translators to remember that the key term *tôrâh* does not refer only to “laws” or “commandments” per se. What other types of discourse are included under this broad category according to the following passages from Genesis: 1:1–31; 3:14–19; 10:1–32; 12:2–3; 18:23–32; 31:49–50; 35:23–26; 41:17–32, and 49:1–28?

What word is used to render *tôrâh* in YL?

In view of the preceding text study, can you propose a more inclusive literary term, e.g., “instructions”? Explain.

These different law-oriented writings of the Hebrew Scriptures cannot be properly understood apart from an understanding of the Ancient Near Eastern concept of *covenant*. A covenant in such a context may be defined as a formal (usually public), binding, and mutually agreed-upon means of establishing a significant, long-term personal relationship between two parties, one that involves important reciprocal obligations or responsibilities as well as stipulated, oath-reinforced sanctions for “breaking” it (Foster 2005:16). In the Bible the central covenantal agreement is made between God and his chosen people (“Israel”) upon the initiation of the former, Yahweh, who is also the sole determiner of whether or not the human parties, whether individually or collectively, have kept their part of the agreement, the

¹⁸ The material presented in STEPS (Salisbury 2002) is especially helpful with the category of “Legal Texts” (see section 12 on the STEPS CD). A more detailed categorization of such “directive” discourse along with a methodology for analysis is found in Kompaore 2004, chap. 2.

sacred relational bond with their God. There are also several examples of purely human (man ↔ man) covenants in the Old Testament.

How do you best express the concept of *covenant* in your language?

Is there any corresponding institution in your culture? Which is the one that comes the closest?

Describe its major similarities and contrasts with the biblical practice of covenant.

The ritual of actually agreeing upon (in Hebrew, “cutting”) a covenant normally followed these four steps or stages:

	<u>Yahweh – Israel</u>	<u>Jacob – Laban</u>
1. Proposal to enter into a covenant relationship	Exod. 19:3–6	Gen. 31:43–44
2. Acceptance of the covenant proposal	Exod. 19:7–8	Gen. 31:45–46
3. Stipulations (commands) of the covenant	Exod. 20:1–23:33	Gen. 31:49–52
4. Formalization of mutual commitment	Exod. 24:3–8 Exod. 24:9–10	oath Gen. 31:53 meal Gen. 31:46, 54

Another, somewhat more formal, model of covenant agreement follows the ancient Near Eastern pattern for making a *treaty*. This seems to be the literary genre that was adopted to set forth Yahweh’s reiteration of his covenant with Israel as recorded in Deuteronomy. The following is a list of the key components of such a treaty and key examples of their realization in Deuteronomy:

1. Preamble (introductory information)	Deut. 1:1–5
2. Historical prologue (involving both parties)	Deut. 1:6 – 3:29
3. Relationship specified and encouraged	Deut. 4 – 11
4. Stipulations of the covenant	Deut. 12 – 26
5. Witnesses specified 26, 28,	Deut. 27:1–10; 30:19; 31:19, 21, 31:30; 32:1, 46
6. Curses for breaking the covenant	Deut. 27:11–16; 28:15–68
7. Blessings for keeping the covenant	Deut. 28:1–14

Covenant was thus the image that God used in relating himself personally to the people of Israel. Various sacrifices and offerings were also involved – those of commitment, thanksgiving, fellowship, or repentance – thus symbolizing this interpersonal religious bond in a concrete way (see, e.g., Deut. 27:5–7). It is especially when the sinfulness of the people or their violation of the laws of the covenant had to be dealt with that a blood sacrifice was required. It symbolized the *substitutionary death* needed for the expiation of guilt and the restoration of a right relationship with Yahweh. These offerings, multiplied on a daily basis, became a regular part of the ritual life of the Jews. It is important to understand their underlying motivating purpose: Yahweh in mercy desired to preserve an intimate relationship with his people and demonstrate this loving desire for fellowship. The many diverse laws of the OT were simply a detailed, but necessary means for stimulating and encouraging the close covenantal connection.

There are many different terms to express the general concept of *law* in Hebrew. At times, several of these terms are used together to emphasize the importance of the law in the religious life of God’s people. Genesis 26:5 is an example:

עֵקֶב אֲשֶׁר-שָׁמַע אַבְרָהָם בְּקוֹלִי וַיִּשְׁמֹר מִשְׁמֵרֹתַי מִצְוֹתַי חֻקֹּתַי וְתוֹרֹתַי:

because Abraham obeyed me and kept my requirements, my commands, my decrees and my laws

What words do you use in YL to express these four Hebrew legal terms: requirements, commands, decrees, laws? See also Psalm 19:7–9.

There are two basic kinds of laws, or commands, in the OT legislative literature. Examples of these two types follow. Try to define the difference between them.

Do not make any gods to be alongside me; do not make for yourselves gods of silver or gods of gold.
(Exod. 20:23)

If you make an altar of stones for me, do not build it with dressed stones, for you will defile it if you use a tool on it. (Exod. 20:25)

The first type, illustrated by Exodus 20:23, is termed a *categorical* (or *apodictic*) command. It is a positive or negative general (unconditional) rule and thus applies to every situation within its scope. No particular exceptions or punishments are mentioned. The idea is, “Do it!” or “Do *not* do it!” The prescription or prohibition, sometimes reinforced by a curse (Deut. 27:16), is simply to be obeyed at all times as behavior that publicly affirms the people’s loyalty to the covenantal relationship that they have with their God. The law in question might pertain to their belief system, religious practice, public morality, or civic responsibility, but in any case it also carried a significant theological component since all of the laws were given by divine decree. This premise is emphasized in Leviticus, with its repeated reminders like Leviticus 19:32: “Rise in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God. I am the LORD.”

What is the reason for adding “I am the Lord”? Were the people in danger of forgetting this fact?

How can you bring out the significance of this personal expression of affirmation in your translation?

As was mentioned in exercise 4 of section 4.2, categorical commands in the OT are generally presented in an *deductive* manner, that is, first the hortatory thesis and then the supportive material (in *italics*), e.g.,

Honor your father and your mother,
as the LORD your God has commanded you, so that you may live long... (Deut. 5:16)

Walk in all the way that the LORD your God has commanded you,
so that you may live and prosper and prolong your days... (Deut. 5:32; cf. 10:12-13)

There are occasional exceptions to this order, e.g.,

I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.
You shall have no other Gods before me. (Deut. 5:6-7)

Is there a possible special discourse function that could explain the reversal of normal order in the preceding example?

What is the normal way of giving commands or instructions in YL: hortatory thesis (command) first, then supportive material (deductive), or vice-versa (inductive), or does it not make a difference?

If YL prefers the inductive order, do you need to restructure these types of commands for the sake of naturalness, e.g., “Since the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name, you must not misuse the name of the LORD your God” (Deut. 5:11)? Explain your translation procedure in such cases.

Often we find categorical laws that relate to a certain general subject that includes a number of specific instances. What, for example, is the broad prohibition that unites the commands of Leviticus 18? Note the significance of the theological saying in 18:2b which prefaces these commands and is also found at their ending in verse 30 as well as several times in between.

The second type of law, of which Exod. 20:25 (above) is an example, is termed a *conditional* (or *casuistic*) command. It usually takes the form “If..., [then]...” and applies only to a specific situation.

Examples of the two main kinds of conditional commandment follow:

If you buy a Hebrew servant, he is to serve you for six years. But in the seventh year, he shall go free, without paying anything. (Exod. 21:2)

If a man beats his male or female slave with a rod and the slave dies as a direct result, he must be punished... (Exod. 21:20)

The first of the above examples is a *relational* command: The *if* clause specifies a particular relationship (with or without its attendant circumstances), while the *then* clause, here rendered “but” (lit., “and”), stipulates the conditions of the relationship.

The second example is an instance of a *remedial* commandment: The *if* clause describes some sort of violation, improper behavior, or impure condition; the *then* clause prescribes the appropriate compensation or retaliation that needs to be applied.

How must these different “laws” be rendered in your language?

The conditional idea needs special attention, because the corresponding word for “if” in the TL may be either more limited or considerably broader in semantic scope or logical usage than the corresponding biblical term. Is this true in your language?

As we noted in the case of prophetic poetry, the persistent violation of Yahweh’s sacred covenant with Israel, especially where gross apostasy was involved, regularly resulted in a “lawsuit indictment.” In such instances, one prophet or another would act as Yahweh’s spokesman to summon the whole nation, as it were, into God’s universal court of justice to answer charges (which they could not) and to receive the pronouncement of due punishment (which they either had already received or would face in the near future).

This type of legal discourse is very common in the prophets. We would do well to remind ourselves of the five principal elements of such a covenantal lawsuit (see section 5.3.2). List some examples below from Jeremiah 2, citing the verses that fit into each category:

1. **Introduction:** _____
2. **Indictment:** _____
3. **Elaboration:** _____
4. **Rebuke:** _____
5. **Warning:** _____

Many of the laws and instructions found in legislative prose have to do with the rules and regulations of worship in ancient Israel, for example, concerning the sacrifices, holy days, purification and cleansing rituals, and the instruments and accompaniments of worship, as well as commands governing the lives of priests and Levites. Usually, the various laws are collected into groups that cover the same general category, for example, concerning sacrifices in Leviticus 1:1 – 7:38, clean versus unclean items and practices in Leviticus 11:1 – 15:33, the crucial Day of Atonement ritual in Leviticus 16, and priestly regulations in Leviticus 21:1 – 22:16. But the discourse ordering and patterning often goes much further than that, as Mary Douglas has shown in her detailed studies of Leviticus (1999) and Numbers (1993). For example, with regard to Leviticus she writes as follows (1999:46, 50, 52, italics added):

Once Leviticus’ delight in craftsmanship and design is recognized, the interpretation is transformed. The priestly writing would have used the rhetorical forms that were most highly esteemed in the region.... *As in the rest of the Bible, Leviticus’ favorite literary form is parallelism...* In Leviticus and Numbers *the ring form dominates the whole composition* [A-B-A’, i.e., the conclusion matches the beginning in form and/or content, with a significant turning point somewhere in the middle], every couple of chapters, or four or five chapters, form a clearly defined ring, and each book is a maxi-ring containing all the constituent rings.... One of the technical problems of any writer is how to conclude. Clear signals of closure are necessary when literary conventions require numerous digressive analogies to build up the theme [as in the legislative literature].... Awareness of structure throughout gives the antique composer many other techniques for signaling that the end of a ring or the end of the whole narrative or treatise is imminent.

One of the common markers of closure in Leviticus is the formula “I am the LORD” (e.g., Lev. 22:2, 3, 8) plus or minus some further attribution such as “who makes them holy” (Lev. 22:9, 16). There may also be extra marking at the close of a major discourse unit, as in Leviticus 22:31–33.

An instance of a lower-level, paralleled ring structure is in Leviticus 22:10–13 (RSV), which features a series of alternating prohibitions and permissions regarding the key concept “holy thing(s)”:

- A¹⁰ “An outsider shall not eat of a holy thing.
A sojourner of the priest’s or a hired servant shall not eat of a holy thing;
B¹¹ but if a priest buys a slave as his property for money, the slave may eat of it;
and those that are born in his house may eat of his food.
C¹² If a priest’s daughter is married to an outsider
she shall not eat of the offering of the holy things.
B’¹³ But if a priest’s daughter is a widow or divorced, and has no child,
and returns to her father’s house, as in her youth,
she may eat of her father’s food;
A’ yet no outsider shall eat of it.

Such encircling mini-structures are common in legislative prose, serving to demarcate the discourse as well as to highlight certain key concepts within these bounded units, for example, the exceptional case involving “a priest’s daughter” in verse 12 above (C).

In Numbers 35:33–34 (below, RSV) we see a “terrace structure.” This is a pattern of parallelism that is somewhat different from a ring structure, but it performs a similar function in that it marks one major concluding portion of the book of Numbers, in this instance, by means of the common device of end stress (C’):

- A³³ You shall not thus pollute the land
B in which you live;
C for blood pollutes the land,
and no expiation can be made for the land,
for the blood that is shed in it,
except by the blood of him who shed it.
A’³⁴ You shall not defile the land
B’ in which you live,
C’ *in the midst of which I dwell*;
for I the LORD dwell in the midst of the people of Israel.”

Certainly, this is not poetry, but such literary patterns are nevertheless poetic in nature and hence also represent an important stylistic and functional aspect of the original text. Translators will probably not be able to do anything about these original artful constructions in their vernacular rendition, but they should at least recognize their presence so that any special semantic or structural significance that appears may be reproduced in the TL by means of an equivalent device and/or explanatory note.

The preceding text from Numbers also provides an extended example of metaphor, a prominent literary feature that translators will have to confront in legislative discourse, as well as in more poetic passages. As Bartholomew (Bartholomew, Greene, and Möller 2001:xxix) observes: “In the priestly literature there *are* central metaphors, such as clean/unclean, and holy/unholy, that structure the entire discourse... It must also be borne in mind that a text like Leviticus is more than a legal text; it is also educative material. And it can be argued that, in educative material, metaphors play a crucial role.” The problem is that figurative usage (e.g., blood polluting the land in Num. 35:33) is often so familiar that interpreters (and translators) forget its essentially non-literal nature, which then creates communicative pitfalls.

The following passage from Leviticus 12 (RSV) illustrates another type of problem that frequently arises in connection with ritual texts:

- ¹ The LORD said to Moses, ² “Say to the people of Israel, If a woman conceives, and bears a male child, then she shall be unclean seven days; as at the time of her menstruation, she shall be unclean. ³ And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised. ⁴ Then she shall continue for thirty-three days in the blood of her purifying; she shall not touch any hallowed thing, nor come into the sanctuary, until the days of her purifying are completed. ⁵ But if she bears a female child, then she shall be unclean two weeks, as in her menstruation; and she shall continue in the blood of her purifying for sixty-six days.

What is the special problem that confronts translators in the preceding text? Give an example.

Which words or phrases in this passage would need to be expressed by a euphemism in YL?

Speaking of figurative language, McConville (in Bartholomew, Greene, and Möller 2001:332–3) notes that “Deuteronomy uses a number of important metaphors and symbols in individual ways when compared with their use in other parts of the Old Testament....” There are other notable topics in Deuteronomic theology that might be considered in relation to this issue, such as kingship, treaty, land, the divine name, the brotherhood of Israelites, and circumcision. Deuteronomy 11:16–20 (RSV) is a good illustration of this:

¹⁶ Take heed lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them, ¹⁷ and the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and he shut up the heavens, so that there be no rain, and the land yield no fruit, and you perish quickly off the good land which the Lord gives you.

¹⁸ “You shall therefore lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul; and you shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ¹⁹ And you shall teach them to your children, talking of them when you are sitting in your house, and when you are walking by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. ²⁰ And you shall write them upon the doorposts of your house and upon your gates, ²¹ that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land which the Lord swore to your fathers to give them, as long as the heavens are above the earth.

For reflection, research, and response

1. Pick out all the figures of speech in Deuteronomy 11:16–20 and tell whether you are able to translate them literally in YL. If not, how must these concepts be expressed so as to reproduce the vigorous legislative prose in an appropriate manner.
2. Write a hypothetical “study Bible note” in which you explain the biblical notion of *covenant* for the people of your language and cultural setting. If you compose this note in YL, give also a back-translation into English.
3. Find clear examples of a *categorical* command as well as a *conditional* command in Exodus. Look for passages that present a cultural problem for you in translation; then explain what this is and tell how you would have to resolve it in YL.
4. In Exodus 25:17 we read: “Make an atonement cover of pure gold – two and half cubits long...” What type of command is this – a “categorical” or a “conditional” one? Or is this some other type of discourse (literary genre)? Check the context to make sure! Explain your answer.
5. Study Leviticus 17 (in the Hebrew text or an interlinear translation if possible) and use some of the literary-rhetorical criteria that we have practiced in this workbook to identify its thematic center. Give reasons for choosing this passage as the discourse peak, making use of a structural diagram if necessary to clarify your argument. How would you distinguish this focal point in your translation?
6. How would you translate the legislative refrain “I am the LORD” in Leviticus 19:12: “Do not swear falsely by my name and so profane the name of your God. I am the LORD” (NIV). What is the function of this refrain in Leviticus? How can you give it the same impact in YL?
7. How would you classify Deuteronomy 8:1–20 and Joshua 23:2b–16? What is the principal discourse type that each of these texts manifests? What other genres of discourse are included in each passage? List them and note how they serve to divide the text into smaller segments. Tell where you would put paragraph breaks in each one and give reasons for your breaks. Use features such as reiteration, patterns of participant or topical reference, structural parallelism, marked syntactic movements, the embedding of direct speech, unusual vocabulary, concentrations of figurative language, and distinctive verb sequences in conjunction with each other in order to demarcate the internal discourse units and indicate points of special prominence within the text.

12.2.3 Sapiential prose

In section 5.3.3 we examined a number of examples of sapiential, or wisdom, poetry. Now we will consider several compositions that are clearly more prosaic in form. These are not so common in the Old Testament (except in the book of Ecclesiastes), but they do serve to illustrate the great variety of literary genres found in the Scriptures as a whole. The prose types listed below fall into two pairs of closely related genres that an author uses for rhetorical purposes as part of an argument. One pair – parable-allegory and fable – is comparative in nature and highly figurative, while the other – reflection and autobiography – is more personal and meditative in style.

1. Parable

The *parable* is a genre that employs a figurative comparison to make a pragmatic point, teach a lesson, or influence the audience regarding a particular issue. Most OT parables are relatively short. Analogy is the essence of the Hebrew generic term *māshāl* (מָשָׁל), and in the case of a parable the comparison is usually based on a fictional little story or some familiar experience or situation in life that has a clear beginning and end point. The contextual setting is crucial to the understanding of a parable, for it provides listeners with the clues for both interpreting and then applying its key character(s) and event(s).

In 2 Samuel 12:1b–4 (RSV) we can see the emotive tension that a longer parable can generate:

^{1b} There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. ² The rich man had very many flocks and herds; ³ but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. And he brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children; it used to eat of his morsel, and drink from his cup, and lie in his bosom, and it was like a daughter to him. ⁴ Now there came a traveler to the rich man, and he was unwilling to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the wayfarer who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb, and prepared it for the man who had come to him.

It is rather hard to differentiate a parable from the related genre known as an *allegory*. In fact, the Hebrew language itself makes no distinction, nor does the Greek term *parabolê* (παραβολή). One way to explain the difference (in English) is to note that an allegory tends to involve more of a direct, point-for-point comparison between the “image” (usually a closely related set of them) and its intended meaning, the “topic,” whereas a parable presents a less overt, comparative lesson based on analogy.

Is the following passage a parable or an allegory? Why do you think so? Does this literary distinction matter when translating these passages in YL? Why or why not?

¹ Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come, and the years draw nigh, when you will say, “I have no pleasure in them”; ² before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars are darkened and the clouds return after the rain; ³ in the day when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men are bent, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look through the windows are dimmed, ⁴ and the doors on the street are shut; when the sound of the grinding is low, and one rises up at the voice of a bird, and all the daughters of song are brought low; ⁵ they are afraid also of what is high, and terrors are in the way; the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper drags itself along and desire fails; because man goes to his eternal home, and the mourners go about the streets; ⁶ before the silver cord is snapped, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher is broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern, ⁷ and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it. (Eccl. 12:1–7, RSV)

Explain the meaning of this passage.

Some major translations format this text as poetry and others as prose. What type of discourse do you think it is and why?

Would you render it as prose or poetry in YL (or something in-between)?

If you feel that poetry is more appropriate, draw vertical strokes to mark the places in this text where you would propose starting a new poetic line.

2. Fable

A *fable* is a minor genre that is similar in many ways to a parable or allegory, except that it typically is set in the world of nature and uses animals or plants as its chief characters. A fable is normally used to teach a lesson warning against or reproving bad behavior and encouraging or commending the good.

A rare example of a fable in the Old Testament is in Judges 9:8–15 (RSV):

⁸ The trees once went forth to anoint a king over them; and they said to the olive tree, 'Reign over us.' ⁹ But the olive tree said to them, 'Shall I leave my fatness, by which gods and men are honored, and go to sway over the trees?' ¹⁰ And the trees said to the fig tree, 'Come you, and reign over us.' ¹¹ But the fig tree said to them, 'Shall I leave my sweetness and my good fruit, and go to sway over the trees?' ¹² And the trees said to the vine, 'Come you, and reign over us.' ¹³ But the vine said to them, 'Shall I leave my wine which cheers gods and men, and go to sway over the trees?' ¹⁴ Then all the trees said to the bramble, 'Come you, and reign over us.' ¹⁵ And the bramble said to the trees, 'If in good faith you are anointing me king over you, then come and take refuge in my shade; but if not, let fire come out of the bramble and devour the cedars of Lebanon.'

What is the intended contextual meaning of this fable?

Do you have such fables in your cultural setting?

Would this type of text be classified differently from a parable in YL? Explain why or why not.

Does this passage present any kind of translation challenge for you? If so, specify what this is and how you propose handling it.

3. Reflection

A *reflection* is a *proposition* or *hypothesis* put forward by the speaker/author, who then reflects upon it from various perspectives in order to bring the audience to a certain conclusion. It is a type of discourse that characterizes the book of Ecclesiastes.

A typical example is the Teacher's reflection found in Ecclesiastes 6:1–9 (RSV):

¹ There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, and it lies heavy upon men: ² a man to whom God gives wealth, possessions, and honor, so that he lacks nothing of all that he desires, yet God does not give him power to enjoy them, but a stranger enjoys them; this is vanity; it is a sore affliction. ³ If a man begets a hundred children, and lives many years, so that the days of his years are many, but he does not enjoy life's good things, and also has no burial, I say that an untimely birth is better off than he. ⁴ For it comes into vanity and goes into darkness, and in darkness its name is covered; ⁵ moreover it has not seen the sun or known anything; yet it finds rest rather than he. ⁶ Even though he should live a thousand years twice told, yet enjoy no good – do not all go to the one place? ⁷ All the toil of man is for his mouth, yet his appetite is not satisfied. ⁸ For what advantage has the wise man over the fool? And what does the poor man have who knows how to conduct himself before the living? ⁹ Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of desire; this also is vanity and a striving after wind.

The Teacher usually propounds what may be termed “counter-wisdom” (or “anti-wisdom”), discussing the common sapiential themes of Israel's religious sages from a skeptical, antithetical, or pessimistic perspective. The aim is to challenge dead orthodoxy and a mechanical *do ut des* religious practice – that is, simply follow the standard rules of morality and God will be good to you.

What is the author's conclusion here?

Do you have examples of such critical, pessimistic discourse in your cultural setting?

If not, are people going to have difficulties in understanding a book like Ecclesiastes?

What might be done to clarify the nature and purpose of this insightful didactic and reflective genre?

4. **Autobiography**

A subtype of “reflection” (see above), an *autobiography* is told as if it were an actual personal experience of the speaker/writer. The account, told in the first person, may even be true to a greater or lesser extent, but the point is not its historicity so much as the fact that it is an ethical or theological lesson that the writer is trying to get across, whether directly and positively as in Proverbs, or indirectly and negatively as in the Teacher’s discourse.

An example of autobiography is that expressed by the Teacher in Ecclesiastes 1:12–18 (NIV):

¹² I, the Teacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem. ¹³ I devoted myself to study and to explore by wisdom all that is done under heaven. What a heavy burden God has laid on men! ¹⁴ I have seen all the things that are done under the sun; all of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind. ¹⁵ What is twisted cannot be straightened; what is lacking cannot be counted. ¹⁶ I thought to myself, “Look, I have grown and increased in wisdom more than anyone who has ruled over Jerusalem before me; I have experienced much of wisdom and knowledge.” ¹⁷ Then I applied myself to the understanding of wisdom, and also of madness and folly, but I learned that this, too, is a chasing after the wind. ¹⁸ For with much wisdom comes much sorrow; the more knowledge, the more grief.

The conclusion of this autobiographical account is the same as in the literary reflection above – what is it?

Included within this text are two passages that might be interpreted as poetic sayings or aphorisms. Where are they located?

Do they need to be marked in a special way in YL?

What harm or loss is there if these two aphorisms are not distinguished at all?

Do you find the book of Ecclesiastes relatively easy or hard to translate? Why does this seem to be the case?

For reflection, research, and response:

1. Summarize the long *allegory* in Ezekiel 17 in terms of its imagery and intended meaning (which is explicitly given in the same chapter). Would there be a need to mark this type of discourse in YL, and if so, how could this best be done? There is actually a second and related allegory at the end of Ezekiel 17, but in this case no interpretation is given – it takes the form of a prophecy. Would readers have a hard time determining the meaning of this prophetic allegory? If so, what can be done about it?
2. The issue of *euphemism* comes to the fore in Ezekiel 23:1–10 (quoted below from the RSV). What kind of a literary text is this? How does recognizing its genre affect your interpretation of it? Do you have an equivalent genre or discourse style in your oral or written tradition of verbal art? If so, briefly describe it. Mention some of the difficulties that you face when translating this text in YL.

¹ The word of the Lord came to me: ² “Son of man, there were two women, the daughters of one mother; ³ they played the harlot in Egypt; they played the harlot in their youth; there their breasts were pressed and their virgin bosoms handled. ⁴ Oholah was the name of the elder and Oholibah the name of her sister. They became mine, and they bore sons and daughters. As for their names, Oholah is Samaria, and Oholibah is Jerusalem.

⁵ “Oholah played the harlot while she was mine; and she doted on her lovers the Assyrians, ⁶ warriors clothed in purple, governors and commanders, all of them desirable young men, horsemen riding on horses. ⁷ She bestowed her harlotries upon them, the choicest men of Assyria all of them; and she defiled herself with all the idols of every one on whom she doted. ⁸ She did not give up her harlotry which she had practiced since her days in Egypt; for in her youth men had lain with her and handled her virgin bosom and poured out their lust upon her. ⁹

Therefore I delivered her into the hands of her lovers, into the hands of the Assyrians, upon whom she doted.¹⁰ These uncovered her nakedness; they seized her sons and her daughters; and her they slew with the sword; and she became a byword among women, when judgement had been executed upon her.

3. Identify the *fable* and its interpretation in 2 Kings 14:9–10. Is there a danger that people might misunderstand this piece of advice, if you translate it literally? If so, how might you mark it as non-literal and didactic in YL?
4. What sort of discourse do we find in Jeremiah 29:4–23? You may wish to classify this text in more than one way, but give reasons based on the text’s formal features and function why it may be viewed as a distinctive instance of literary communication. Would this passage present any problems if you translated it meaningfully in YL? Explain why or why not.
5. What is the meaning of the sapiential *reflection* in the following text, Ecclesiastes 4:13–16 (RSV):

¹³ Better is a poor and wise youth than an old and foolish king, who will no longer take advice,
¹⁴ even though he had gone from prison to the throne or in his own kingdom had been born poor.
¹⁵ I saw all the living who move about under the sun, as well as that youth, who was to stand in his place; ¹⁶ there was no end of all the people; he was over all of them. Yet those who come later will not rejoice in him. Surely this also is vanity and a striving after wind.

Compare the preceding translation with that of the GNT for the same passage:

^{13–14} Someone may rise from poverty to become king of his country, or go from prison to the throne, but if in his old age he is too foolish to take advice, he is not as well off as a young man who is poor but intelligent. ¹⁵ I thought about all the people who live in this world, and I realized that somewhere among them there is a young man who will take the king’s place. ¹⁶ There may be no limit to the number of people a king rules; when he is gone, no one will be grateful for what he has done. It is useless. It is like chasing the wind.

Why is the order of verse 13 and verse 14 reversed in the GNT? Which version is easier to understand? Cite several examples to support your answer. Then tell how you might prepare a *LiFE*-like translation of this passage in YL – that is, a rendering that is not only understandable and stylistically natural, but also pragmatically compelling, as in the original.

Would you consider Ecclesiastes 12:9–14 to be a “reflection”? What is the special importance of this pericope within the book as a whole? Is there any way to stylistically “mark” this conclusion? Explain.

12.2.4 Narrative prose

In the Old Testament, narrative prose is the most familiar and perhaps also the easiest genre to translate, although degrees of literary excellence are certainly possible. The simplest sort of narrative is a *genealogy*, which is a record or table of the descent of an individual, family, or larger kinship group from a notable ancestor or line of ancestors.

The OT genealogies are all patrilineal (with descent traced through the male line). They may be either *linear*, as in Genesis 11:10–26, or *segmented* (i.e., branched in nature, listing two or more lines of descent from the founding personage), as in Genesis 36:20–28.

Biblical genealogies were not only summary historical records, but they also functioned to distinguish the people of Israel from their most closely related neighbors in Palestine. In addition, they reaffirmed the people’s covenantal status in relation to Yahweh; in the turbulent post-exilic times they served also to formally document the purity of the nation, the priestly lineage in particular.

In a succinct genealogical record, any special elaboration, qualification, or variation from the standard manner of reporting is noteworthy. Observe for example the importance of what is said by means of such novelty in Genesis 5:18–31:

¹⁸ When Jared had lived a hundred and sixty-two years he became the father of Enoch.

¹⁹ Jared lived after the birth of Enoch eight hundred years, and had other sons and daughters.

- ²⁰ Thus all the days of Jared were nine hundred and sixty-two years; **and he died.**
- ²¹ When Enoch had lived sixty-five years, he became the father of Methuselah.
- ²² Enoch walked with God after the birth of Methuselah three hundred years, and had other sons and daughters.
- ²³ Thus all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years.
- ²⁴ *Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.*
- ²⁵ When Methuselah had lived a hundred and eighty-seven years, he became the father of Lamech.
- ²⁶ Methuselah lived after the birth of Lamech seven hundred and eighty-two years, and had other sons and daughters.
- ²⁷ Thus all the days of Methuselah were nine hundred and sixty-nine years; **and he died.**
- ²⁸ When Lamech had lived a hundred and eighty-two years, he became the father of a son,
- ²⁹ and called his name Noah, saying,
 "Out of the ground which the LORD has cursed this one shall bring us relief from our work and from the toil of our hands."
- ³⁰ Lamech lived after the birth of Noah five hundred and ninety-five years, and had other sons and daughters.
- ³¹ Thus all the days of Lamech were seven hundred and seventy-seven years; **and he died.**

The special text formatting above helps distinguish the exceptional material in these passages, especially when translating for a more literarily sophisticated readership. There might also be ways to do this in an oral-aural manner if a certain language happens to have a rich genealogical tradition and a distinctive mode of preserving ancestral names for posterity, for example, through the use of royal "praise poetry."

What is the situation in your culture and language? Are genealogies very highly valued in your oral narrative or ancient musical tradition? Explain.

Is there any need to stylistically mark Genesis 5:24 in your translation to draw attention to its special significance? If so, how could this be done?

How does the preceding genealogy differ from the list of names reproduced below from 1 Kings 4:2–6 (NIB, reformatted)? What are the main differences?

- ² And these were his *chief officials*:
- Azariah son of Zadok – *the priest*;
- ³ Elihoreph and Ahijah, sons of Shisha – *secretaries*;
- Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud – *recorder*;
- ⁴ Benaiah son of Jehoiada – *commander in chief*;
- Zadok and Abiathar – *priests*;
- ⁵ Azariah son of Nathan – *in charge of the district officers*;
- Zabud son of Nathan – *a priest and personal adviser to the king*;
- ⁶ Ahishar – *in charge of the palace*;
- Adoniram son of Abda – *in charge of forced labor*.

How would you classify 1 Kings 4:2–6 in terms of the four major types of prose discourse?

Which type is it the closest to. Why do you say so?

Now look at 1 Kings 7:2–8 and 48–50 (quoted below from the NIV). Where does each fit into our system of classification in terms of both form and function? Give reasons for your conclusions in this case.

A. ² He built the Palace of the Forest of Lebanon a hundred cubits long, fifty wide and thirty high, with four rows of cedar columns supporting trimmed cedar beams. ³ It was roofed with cedar above the beams that rested on the columns – forty-five beams, fifteen to a row. ⁴ Its windows were placed high in sets of three, facing each other. ⁵ All the doorways had rectangular frames; they were in the front part in sets of three, facing each other. ⁶ He made a colonnade fifty cubits long and thirty wide. In front of it was a portico, and in front of that were pillars and an overhanging roof. ⁷ He built the throne hall, the Hall of Justice, where he was to judge, and he covered it with cedar from floor to ceiling. ⁸ And the palace in which he was to live, set farther

back, was similar in design. Solomon also made a palace like this hall for Pharaoh's daughter, whom he had married (1 Kgs. 7:2-8)

B. ⁴⁸ Solomon also made all the furnishings that were in the LORD's temple:
the golden altar;

the golden table on which was the bread of the Presence;

⁴⁹ the lampstands of pure gold (five on the right and five on the left, in front of the inner sanctuary);

the gold floral work and lamps and tongs;

⁵⁰ the pure gold basins, wick trimmers, sprinkling bowls, dishes and censers;

and the gold sockets for the doors of the innermost room, the Most Holy Place, and also for the doors of the main hall of the temple. (1 Kgs. 7:48–50)

List the formal and functional differences between text A and text B above.

Does either of these discourse types cause problems when you translate them in YL? If so, explain why and how they may be handled by way of a *LiFE* method.

Old Testament *narratives* are more developed than genealogies in that they present a sequence of “events” that are related by cause-and-effect. *Events* are significant actions, activities, or happenings that involve a perceptible change of state or situation. Narratives may be studied from a narrower or wider perspective – that is, from the standpoint of a story or a history. We will briefly consider each of these approaches in turn.

A “story” is a dynamic narrative typically consisting of an interaction of seven essential components: *structure, setting, plot, point of view, characterization, dialogue, and rhetoric*. The analyst needs to carefully examine these components, first individually and then in relation to each other in the complete text. We will now analyze the major story components of the Joseph story of Genesis 37 (see also Wendland 2004b, section 4.3). The sample questions here are suggestive of the things that should be asked when carrying out a detailed narrative study. (They may be supplemented by the additional questions in section 7.2.4 of Wendland 2004b.)

1. Structure

First we are interested in how a story is “demarcated,” both externally and internally. The initial and final boundaries of a story are normally established by major shifts in any of the other six features of narrative, but primarily by a change in the setting and/or cast of characters. A story’s internal organization involves some sort of segmentation into smaller *episodes* consisting of one or more *scenes*, which in turn consist of one or more *paragraphs*. These internal units may be similarly delineated, except that the shifts involved are not as prominent. All of the episodes and scenes of a given plot-based story are normally quite closely related to one another, usually by featuring one or two main characters who are engaged in a unified and coherent sequence of actions interconnected by cause-and-effect relations.

What are some structural reasons for beginning a new chapter at Genesis 37 and at 38?

At which point may Genesis 37 be divided into two “episodes”?

What are the literary features that support such a division of the text?

Episode 1 consists of three scenes. Write out the verse numbers of each one and give some textual evidence to support your proposed organization of the discourse.

The scenes of episode 2 are not so easy to distinguish. How many do you find and where?

Is it helpful to begin a new paragraph unit in YL at every new set of actions or speeches?

Why is it important to do a structural study at the start of every narrative analysis?

What are some of the most important literary (or oral) structural indicators in YL, whether of aperture or closure?

2. Setting

The features of time, place, and background circumstances are important because they serve to orient the audience so that they can better perceive and interpret the events recorded. These contextual variables may change during the course of the account, thus breaking it up into “episodes” and perhaps also smaller “scenes,” as noted above. The more aspects of the setting that change at any given point, the more important the structural boundary that may be posited there. If these major shifts are accompanied by a significant change in the cast of characters, then a new “story” may be said to begin. Several distinct stories that pertain to a certain important character constitute that person’s “history” (e.g., the history of Joseph as recorded in Genesis 37; 39 – 45; 47 – 48; 50). Usually, some important information about the setting is given at the beginning of a story, but other details may be added later on as “background” (e.g., to provide some qualification, an explanation, a preview of future events, or a review of past events).

Notice how the setting of the Joseph story is given in 37:1. But what is the deeper, thematic meaning here (see 35:27)?

Notice the instance of “exclusion” by which chapter 36 is set apart, while the main narrative line continues from 35:29 to 37:1. What is the particular significance of the setting specified in these passages?

Of what special importance is the formulaic opener “This is the account of Jacob” in 37:2a?

Why is “Jacob” mentioned here, not “Joseph”?

What crucial aspects of this story’s circumstances are included as part of the setting in 37:2b?

Verses 3–4 move us from the story’s background setting to the “initial situation,” from which point the “plot” begins to develop.

What kind of verb tenses (or other linguistic markers) do you need in YL to describe the actions and states that are represented here?

Is verse 5 a setting statement or part of the narrative proper? Explain your answer.

How does the overall psychological mood of the story’s setting change as we move through this chapter? What is it that contributes to this shift? (It could be such things as a parenthetical narrator comment, a highly emotive character speech, and/or a subtle shift in the main sequence of events.)

Are the characters’ spatial movements noteworthy for any special reason? For example, are they fast or slow or directed up or down, in or out, to or from some prominent place or goal?

What contextual information pertaining to the temporal, spatial, or sociocultural setting appears to have been left implicit in the original text of chapter 37 because the author assumes it to be known by his intended audience?

Which aspects of this implicit material need to be made explicit so that people today can correctly understand the biblical message?

How can these relevant facts best be conveyed – within the text of the translation (e.g., a noun classifier) or in supplementary helps (e.g., an explanatory note)?

Of special importance (since it is often overlooked or ignored) is information concerning ancient social and political institutions, class structures, economic systems, religious rituals, culturally distinct customs, and conventions of politeness.

3. Plot

As noted earlier, this concerns the narrative plan of a given story's events. This dynamic plan moves along an obvious trajectory from one point of interpersonal equilibrium ("steady state") to another that may be similar to (e.g., the story of Job), or as is usually the case, different from the original state (e.g., Jonah). A plot presents a crucial problem, conflict, crisis, test, or task along with its ultimate resolution (whether a success, failure, or somewhere in between). During the course of a plot's consequential *cause-to-effect* development, there may be a high point in the action (a "peak") where a decisive step is taken in determining the eventual outcome. The high point is normally somewhere near the close of the story and is sometimes referred to as the *turning point* of a plot. Often there is some type of additional stylistic marking when the peak is reached, such as a "crowded stage," the introduction of a new character, rapid and dramatic action (or, conversely, slow and drawn-out activities), a "flashback," personal expression of great emotion, or a decisive explanation or important revelation. In some stories an emotive high point, or "climax," may also be present, usually represented in intensified direct speech. The movement, or "pace," of a plot's unfolding action may be relatively fast or slow and with more or less detail (in accordance with TL norms), depending on such devices as sentence length, lexical repetition, the amount of qualifying attribution included, the use of ellipsis, and the inclusion of direct discourse and/or a comment (aside, parenthesis) by the narrator.

How is the plot of Genesis 37 presented? Try to give a summary outline.

What is the central "problem," or motivating cause that generates the plot action of Genesis 37? In what way is this problem reinforced or highlighted by repetition or some other literary device?

How is this plot "complicated" – that is, what happens to make the problem worse, or more difficult to resolve than before?

Does any flashback or some other deflection from the main event sequence occur in this chapter? If so, at which verse(s)? What is the function of this temporal displacement?

Where do events of the plot seem to move the slowest? Where the fastest? Why does this happen in each case?

Where does the action peak of the plot occur? How is it marked in the text?

Do you notice any emotive climax in this chapter? If so, how is it highlighted?

Are there special devices in YL that can be used to foreground the peak or the climax of stories? If so, explain what these are and how they might apply in a Bible translation.

What is the final outcome or interpersonal situation of this story? Why is this important for the larger history of Jacob and Joseph's lives?

4. Point of view

Every story has either a third person point of view (as when a narrator or author tells the story) or a first person point of view (as when one of the characters or participants tells what was witnessed, told, or personally experienced). The use of dialogue, of course, shifts the perspective to that of the speakers. When telling a certain story, the biblical narrator often, but not always, gives us the point of view of the main character, which may include even a revelation of that person's thoughts and feelings. At times, a narrator may directly intervene in a story to make an explanatory comment or offer his own perspective on the events that he is recounting. Such "asides," or parenthetical remarks, are frequently marked by transitional words or phrases at the beginning and/or ending of the digression (e.g., "that is" in Gen. 35:6, 19b).

What is the primary point of view from which Genesis 37 is told, or is there no single dominant perspective? On what basis do you come to this conclusion?

Where do major shifts in the point of view occur, and what is their rhetorical effect?

Whose point of view is adopted at the chapter's climax? What might be the reason for this?

Whose point of view is represented in verse 36? What effect does this have on our perception of the story?

Should Genesis 37:36 be regarded as an aside? Why or why not? What difference does it make?

How does the point of view shift at the onset of chapter 38? Which other narrative elements change at this point?

5. Characterization

We need to carefully examine the manner in which the narrator introduces and portrays the persons in his account. Usually, there is only one or at most two major characters in a given episode or scene, though there may be a number of minor ones. Often two or more of the characters will be set in *contrast* to one another. In Hebrew narrative, descriptions of characters tend to be rather brief. Normally, only the most essential details are given, and readers are left to depend on the characters' words and actions for a fuller picture of who they really are. Some analysts distinguish further between "round" and "flat" characters, the former being more complex and fully developed, though less predictable. Flat characters, on the other hand, have very little personality and usually manifest only a single noteworthy trait. Other distinctions that may be included in more detailed stories include "agents" (e.g., servants), who simply perform some necessary action at the moment, and "props," which are important inanimate objects within a certain account (e.g., Noah's ark, the ark of the covenant, Judah's seal, cord, and staff of chap. 38).

Name the major character(s) of Genesis 37. Why do you consider him (them) to be the most important?

How do we learn the most about these characters – from their words, actions, or the narrator's description of them? Give an example.

Who are the minor characters? What makes them less important?

How would you classify the characters in this story to be "round" or "flat" (or somewhere in-between)? Explain, with examples.

Which character expresses the most intense feelings and attitudes? Give examples.

Which pair or pairs of characters contrast most strongly with each other? What is the significance of this?

Are there any "agents" or important "props" in this chapter? Name them.

In the narratives of your oral or written tradition, are major characters marked in any special manner? If so, tell how.

How are characters introduced in narratives of YL as compared with Hebrew or Greek? Do any special linguistic devices mark their appearance (e.g., front-shifting to the head of a clause, use of much descriptive attribution)?

What is the preferred way in YL of referring to characters once they have been introduced (i.e., "participant reference")? Is it with pronouns, demonstrative forms, indefinite mention? Is there any difference in this respect between major and minor characters?

Is any character in the Genesis 37 account portrayed in a very positive or a very negative light? If so, name the person and tell what is it that depicts him the most strongly.

6. Dialogue

The direct speech of the characters is really the key to understanding and interpreting biblical narrative. Often a story consists mostly of direct discourse, while pure narration is present only for

the introduction, conclusion, and internal transitions that move the plot development forward from one speaker and speech to another. The conflict or problem, as well as the thematic peak and resolution of the plot, may be manifested entirely in direct discourse. The speech of a particular character in the vicinity of the peak may include an especially high degree, or “climax,” of personal feelings and emotions. When analyzing a dialogue-rich story, it is important to note who does most of the speaking and what he (it usually will be a male character) says in contrast to other speakers on the scene (e.g., any repetition, alterations, elaborations, rejoinders, objections, rebukes, and reprimands). How does what speakers say relate to the main action that they are engaged in, or the central topic that they are conversing about. It is also important to note how dialogue moves the plot forward and brings it to a final resolution. A more detailed analysis will, in addition, investigate the major “speech acts” of the discourse and how they function in interrelation with each other.

Who speaks the most in Genesis 37? Which other characters speak, and for what purpose?

Which characters do not speak in this chapter? Is there any reason for this?

Who utters the most important speech in the entire chapter? Where does this occur, and how is this speech marked in a distinctive way?

Which are the most important speech acts of the story? Do you anticipate any difficulty in expressing these clearly in YL? Explain.

Give several specific examples of how direct speech helps reveal the character of the speaker.

Notice where the narration occurs in this chapter in relation to the dialogues. What does this tell you about the discourse structure and its purpose?

What is the point of the little dialogue in 37:15–17?

What does Jacob’s utterance in verse 35 suggest about him?

7. Rhetoric

Finally, we also need to look for the special stylistic features that the narrator employs to foreground key aspects of the narration or dialogue. We must identify the diverse devices that add greater impact, appeal, and persuasiveness to the account. That is what rhetoric is all about – using language effectively to achieve particular communication goals in and through a given text, oral or written. Several literary forms common in Hebrew narrative discourse are found in poetry as well (see section 5.1), but in prose they are used somewhat differently and for different purposes. The most important one is formal and semantic *recursion* of various kinds (from reiterated key words to repeated type-scenes), which serves to emphasize an author’s main theme, develop character, and help demarcate, order, and arrange his text. Other common techniques are figurative language, ellipsis, allusion and enigma, parallelism (e.g., inclusio, chiasm), syntactic displacements, irony and sarcasm, hyperbole, and euphemism. The point where many rhetorical features come together in a story is normally an emotive climax or a thematic peak.

Try to give one good example each of five distinctive stylistic devices found in Genesis 37.

Find a point in this story where several literary features converge? What do you think their rhetorical purpose is at this place in the account?

Notice where the chief instances of repetition occur in this chapter. What is their apparent function in each case?

Point out the significant instances of recursion – exact, synonymous, and equivalent – that are found in 37:31–33 and 38:17–18, 25–26. These two stories are not quite as different as they may seem on the surface.

Identify three rhetorical questions in Genesis 37, each with a different communicative goal. How would you express these in YL?

The word *blood* is repeated in the Genesis 37 story but used in a different sense at least four times. What are the different senses? (You may have to consult an interlinear version to find all the instances.)

Joseph's account of his dream in verse 7 might be a good place for several ideophones in Bantu languages. Would these be effective stylistic devices to use in YL? If not, what narrative technique would you use to heighten the impact of this "dream report"?

In the Hebrew text of chapter 37, several instances of poetic phrasing appear (e.g., in the direct speech of verse 7). If you can access the Hebrew text or an interlinear version, point out where this occurs and its rhetorical impact.

Jacob's cry of anguish in verse 33 sounds like this in Hebrew: *târôp târôp yôsêp* ("Joseph has surely been torn to pieces!"). How could you express this poetically in YL, that is, with the same measure of oral-aural forcefulness and feeling?

What is the primary rhetorical purpose of Genesis 37 within the larger Joseph narrative?

Since the rhetoric of *dialogue* is such a prominent and functional part of OT stories, it may be helpful to examine its crucial operation in another example: 2 Sam 16:15 – 17:14 (NIV).

¹⁵ Meanwhile, Absalom and all the men of Israel came to Jerusalem, and Ahithophel was with him. ¹⁶ Then Hushai the Arkite, David's friend, went to Absalom and said to him, "Long live the king! Long live the king!"

¹⁷ Absalom asked Hushai, "Is this the love you show your friend? Why didn't you go with your friend?"

¹⁸ Hushai said to Absalom, "No, the one chosen by the LORD, by these people, and by all the men of Israel – his I will be, and I will remain with him. ¹⁹ Furthermore, whom should I serve? Should I not serve the son? Just as I served your father, so I will serve you."

²⁰ Absalom said to Ahithophel, "Give us your advice. What should we do?"

²¹ Ahithophel answered, "Lie with your father's concubines whom he left to take care of the palace. Then all Israel will hear that you have made yourself a stench in your father's nostrils, and the hands of everyone with you will be strengthened." ²² So they pitched a tent for Absalom on the roof, and he lay with his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel.

²³ Now in those days the advice Ahithophel gave was like that of one who inquires of God. That was how both David and Absalom regarded all of Ahithophel's advice.

¹⁷¹ Ahithophel said to Absalom, "I would choose twelve thousand men and set out tonight in pursuit of David. ² I would attack him while he is weary and weak. I would strike him with terror, and then all the people with him will flee. I would strike down only the king ³ and bring all the people back to you. The death of the man you seek will mean the return of all; all the people will be unharmed." ⁴ This plan seemed good to Absalom and to all the elders of Israel.

⁵ But Absalom said, "Summon also Hushai the Arkite, so we can hear what he has to say."

⁶ When Hushai came to him, Absalom said, "Ahithophel has given this advice. Should we do what he says? If not, give us your opinion."

⁷ Hushai replied to Absalom, "The advice Ahithophel has given is not good this time. ⁸ You know your father and his men; they are fighters, and as fierce as a wild bear robbed of her cubs. Besides, your father is an experienced fighter; he will not spend the night with the troops. ⁹ Even now, he is hidden in a cave or some other place. If he should attack your troops first, whoever hears about it will say, 'There has been a slaughter among the troops who follow Absalom.'

¹⁰ Then even the bravest soldier, whose heart is like the heart of a lion, will melt with fear, for all Israel knows that your father is a fighter and that those with him are brave.

¹¹ "So I advise you: Let all Israel, from Dan to Beersheba – as numerous as the sand on the seashore – be gathered to you, with you yourself leading them into battle. ¹² Then we will attack him wherever he may be found, and we will fall on him as dew settles on the ground. Neither he

nor any of his men will be left alive. ¹³ If he withdraws into a city, then all Israel will bring ropes to that city, and we will drag it down to the valley until not even a piece of it can be found.”

¹⁴ Absalom and all the men of Israel said, “The advice of Hushai the Arkite is better than that of Ahithophel.” For the LORD had determined to frustrate the good advice of Ahithophel in order to bring disaster on Absalom.

Compare the speeches of Hushai and Ahitophel in the preceding passage.

Do you see differences between the two in terms of argument structure, stylistic form, and rhetorical function?

Which one of the two debaters was verbally more effective in your opinion (regardless of who actually won)? Explain why you think so.

It will help you to answer if you understand the background, which you can read in 2 Samuel 15:13 – 16:14.

Point out three aspects of the rhetoric of dialogue in 2 Samuel 16:15 – 17:14 that would be difficult to translate in YL and explain why.

Suggest some functionally equivalent stylistic features that might overcome the problems and keep the same level of impact and appeal in YL.

History is a broader type of narrative discourse than *story*. A history may include a number of distinct but interrelated (to varying degrees) “stories” as well as other literary genres, and it may cover the span of many years, for example, the “David history” of the Books of Samuel. The guiding hand of a history’s author is more evident in the text as he weaves different genres together to create a unified account with an ideological (yet still essentially theological) plan and purpose. As history, the Books of Samuel tell how the Davidic monarchy was established by Yahweh in Israel. A major goal is to show how it was God who brought David to power and sustained him despite his serious character flaws, errors of judgement, and outright sinfulness. Similarly, the book of Genesis is history; in fact, it is composed of ten “histories” (*tôledôwt*), each (except the first) recounting the important events in the life of one of the great men of God, as the “beginnings” of the human record and God’s monumental interventions on behalf of a chosen family and nation are unfolded from one era to the next.

Below is a list of fifteen different genres and subgenres that may be incorporated within a narrative text, along with a reference to a passage that exemplifies it. Following that a series of unidentified passages is listed. Choose a letter from the options in the box to identify each passage, using each letter just once. If any of the terms are unfamiliar, look them up in a Bible dictionary

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| a. dirge (2 Sam. 1:26–27) | b. battle taunt (1 Sam. 17:43–44) |
| c. indictment decree (1 Sam. 15:22) | d. oath (1 Sam. 15:44–45) |
| e. judicial parable (2 Sam. 14:5–7) | f. battle report (2 Sam. 10:15–19) |
| g. eulogy (1 Sam. 29:5) | h. divine dedication (1 Sam. 1:28) |
| i. judgement decree (1 Sam. 15:33) | j. prophecy (1 Sam. 10:6–7) |
| k. royal listing (2 Sam. 23:24–28) | l. thanksgiving psalm (2 Sam. 22:2–4) |
| m. petition (2 Sam. 7:25–26) | n. sacred vow (2 Sam. 15:8) |
| o. blessing (1 Sam. 25:32–33) | |

___ Asahel the brother of Joab was one of the thirty; Elhanan the son of Dodo of Bethlehem, Shammah of Harod, Elikah of Harod, Helez the Paltite, Ira the son of Ikkesh of Tekoa, Abiezer of Anathoth, Mebunnai the Hushathite, Zalmon the Ahohite, Maharai of Netophah....

___ The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold and my refuge, my savior; thou savest me from violence. I call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised, and I am saved from my enemies.

___ I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; very pleasant have you been to me; your love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women. How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!

___ Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands!

- ___ Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?... Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and to the beasts of the field.
- ___ Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has also rejected you from being king.
- ___ And now, O LORD God, confirm for ever the word which thou hast spoken concerning thy servant and concerning his house, and do as thou hast spoken; and thy name will be magnified for ever, saying, 'The LORD of hosts is God over Israel,' and the house of thy servant David will be established before thee.
- ___ Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me! Blessed be your discretion, and blessed be you, who have kept me this day from bloodguilt and from avenging myself with my own hand!
- ___ God do so to me and more also; you shall surely die, Jonathan.... Shall Jonathan die, who has wrought this great victory in Israel? Far from it! As the LORD lives, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground; for he has wrought with God this day.
- ___ As your sword has made women childless, so shall your mother be childless among women.
- ___ Alas, I am a widow; my husband is dead. And your handmaid had two sons, and they quarreled with one another in the field; there was no one to part them, and one struck the other and killed him. And now the whole family has risen against your handmaid, and they say, 'Give up the man who struck his brother, that we may kill him for the life of his brother whom he slew'; and so they would destroy the heir also. Thus they would quench my coal which is left, and leave to my husband neither name nor remnant upon the face of the earth.
- ___ For this child I prayed; and the LORD has granted me my petition which I made to him. Therefore I have lent him to the LORD; as long as he lives, he is lent to the LORD.
- ___ Then the spirit of the LORD will come mightily upon you, and you shall prophesy with them and be turned into another man. Now when these signs meet you, do whatever your hand finds to do, for God is with you.
- ___ But when the Syrians saw that they had been defeated by Israel, they gathered themselves together. And Hadadezer sent, and brought out the Syrians who were beyond the Euphrates; and they came to Helam, with Shobach the commander of the army of Hadadezer at their head. And when it was told David, he gathered all Israel together, and crossed the Jordan, and came to Helam. And the Syrians arrayed themselves against David, and fought with him. And the Syrians fled before Israel; and David slew of the Syrians the men of seven hundred chariots, and forty thousand horsemen, and wounded Shobach the commander of their army, so that he died there. And when all the kings who were servants of Hadadezer saw that they had been defeated by Israel, they made peace with Israel, and became subject to them. So the Syrians feared to help the Ammonites any more.
- ___ If the LORD will indeed bring me back to Jerusalem, then I will offer worship to the LORD.

Autobiography may be classified as a subtype of narrative (as well as “sapiential prose,” as shown in section 6.2.3). Why would an autobiography be classified as a “narrative” text? Read the following autobiographical account, which is from Nehemiah 2 (RSV), and list what you find to be its distinctive feature(s):

¹ In the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was before him, I took up the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had not been sad in his presence. ² And the king said to me, “Why is your face sad, seeing you are not sick? This is nothing else but sadness of the heart.” Then I was very much afraid. ³ I said to the king, “Let the king live for ever! Why should not my face be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchers, lies waste, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?” ⁴ Then the king said to me, “For what do you make request?” So I prayed to the God of heaven. ⁵ And I said to the king, “If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' sepulchers, that I may rebuild it.” ⁶ And the king said to me (the queen sitting beside him), “How long will you be gone, and when will you return?” So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time.

⁷ And I said to the king, “If it pleases the king, let letters be given me to the governors of the province Beyond the River, that they may let me pass through until I come to Judah; ⁸ and a letter to Asaph, the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the fortress of the temple, and for the wall of the city, and for the house which I shall occupy.” And the king granted me what I asked, for the good hand of my God was upon me.

Are autobiographical accounts common in your oral or literary narrative tradition?

If so, do they manifest any special stylistic characteristic other than the first-person perspective to differentiate them from stories, for example? If possible, describe these features and give examples.

Point out three special translation problems that you noted in the preceding text, whether major or minor, and tell how you would deal with them in YL.

A more detailed way of analyzing the Bible’s narrative discourse (as well as other types of discourse) is to prepare a “sequential discourse segmentation chart” (see section 3.6.6 for an NT Greek-based illustration of this procedure). To do this, one needs a very literal, preferably interlinear, translation of the Hebrew or Greek text; for those who know the biblical languages, of course, no translation is needed. In the example below, the Hebrew text is not reproduced, but a hyphenated translation gloss for the words comprising each “lexical unit” has been written down in designated columns with reference to every main “verb” (including the substantive verb ‘be’, whether expressed or unexpressed) of the passage under consideration. These are set out line by line as indicated by verse numbers and letters along the right-hand margin. This is illustrated below using Genesis 37:1–7 (DO designates the sign of the direct object ‘eth, the = sign designates the Hebrew “hyphen” [maqeph], and all implicit information is indicated in brackets):

post-verb3	post-verb2	post-verb1	VERB	pre-verb2	pre-verb1	ref.
in-land-of Canaan	in-land-of journeys of his-father	Jacob	and-he-dwelt			1a
		generations-of Jacob	[are]		these	2a
	to-the-flock	with=his-brothers	he-was tending	son-of=seventeen year(s)	Joseph	b
wives-of his-father	with=sons-of Bilhah and-with=sons-of Zilpah	a-young-man	[was]		and-he	c
unto=their-father	their-report bad	Joseph	and-he-brought			d
	more-than=his-brothers	DO-Joseph	he-loved		and-Israel	3a
		to-him	[was]	he	for=son-of=old-ages	b
	a-robe-of decorations	for-him	and-he-made			c
post-verb3	post-verb2	post-verb1	VERB	pre-verb2	pre-verb1	ref.
			and-they-saw			4a
	more-than=his-brothers	their-father	he-loved	that-DO-him	their-father	b
			and-they-hated			c
	for-peace	to-speak-to-him	they-were-able		and-not	d
	a-dream	Joseph	and-he-dreamed			5a
		to-his-brothers	and-he-told (it)			b
	DO-him	to-hate more	and-they-increased			c

	unto-them		and-he-said				6a
	the-this	the-dream		hear=now			b
				I-dreamed		which	c
in-the-middle-of	the-field	sheaves	ones-binding [were]	we		and-look!	7a
	my-sheaf		it-rose-up			and-look!	b
			it-stood-upright			and-even=	c
	your-sheaves		they-gathered-around			and-look!	d
	to-my-sheaf		and-they-bowed-down				e

A sequential discourse segmentation chart of this type may be analyzed for various kinds of information and to several degrees of detail, depending on one’s knowledge of Hebrew. (Note that it would be better if the chart could be laid out on the long side of the paper so that the vertical columns could be made to line up more evenly.) At a basic level, the items to look out for are these five: (1) syntactic constituents that are shifted out of the normal, default prose order (V-S-O); (2) full noun phrases in pre-verb position; (3) any expanded syntactic “slot,” whether Subject, Verb, Object, or Adjunct; (4) non-verbal predications; and (5) all explicit conjunctions or transitional expressions.

With regard to word-order shifts in Hebrew, there are several important distinctions to be noted. A particular syntactic constituent, usually a subject, less often an object or adjunct, may be advanced either to the head (pre-verb) of its clausal unit or – less frequently – reversed to the very end. Constituent advancement, or “front-shifting” (see section 5.1.6 and also Floor 2004, Levinsohn 2006b, and Lunn 2006: chap. 3), has two principal discourse functions: topicalization and focalization.

1. **Topicalization** = introducing (or reintroducing) a new major or minor “topic” into the discourse, usually as a full noun or noun phrase within the main clause of a sentence. The relative strength of a given topic is greater if it is an *agent* (vs. a patient), *human* (vs. inanimate), and/or *definite* (vs. nonspecific).
2. **Focalization** = linguistically marking certain information, other than the topic, as being “in focus,” that is, having a special salience or holding the greatest attention within a particular clause or sentence. This process normally involves some sort of contrast, disjunction, restriction, expansion, replacement, specification, or shift of emphasis within the prevailing flow of information. In cases where both topicalization and focalization are present in the same predication, the latter normally occurs after the former.

Both of these functions need to be distinguished from *intensification*, which refers to a very localized heightening of the qualitative nature of a specific concept or proposition within a clause. Intensification may be produced by exact repetition, the addition of intensifying affixes, use of a graphic figure of speech, an exclamation, ideophone, or any close combination of such literary forms.

As to the salient “markers” in the short sample text of Genesis 37:1–7 that was displayed in the sequential discourse segmentation chart above, we may make some preliminary observations as an example of what to look for and how to interpret what is found. The summary that follows is of course subject to revision as the rest of the pericope is similarly charted (“spatialized”) and examined with a sharp linguistic and literary eye.

1. Markers of Topicalization:

- “these” (2a) – marks the onset of the tenth and final “generations” section in Genesis.
- “Joseph” (2b) – indicates that Joseph is a chief character in the account that follows.

2. Markers of Focalization:

- “and he” (2c) – begins the crucial contrast between Joseph and his brothers in this initial stage-setting section of the narrative.
- “and Israel” (3a) – introduces a significant element of conflict into the Joseph story.
- “son of his old age” (3b) – highlights the special reason for Jacob’s great love for Joseph.
- “their father” (4b) – Jacob provoked the family crisis because of his favoritism, at least from *their* perspective (“and they saw...”).
- “which I dreamed” (6c) – use of the cognate object in this redundant relative clause is another way of turning the spotlight on a key aspect of the narrative; namely, Joseph’s dreams.

3. Markers of Intensification:

- “with [the] sons of” (2c) – expansive description heightens the element of contrast.
- “and they hated him all the more” (5c) – an intensification of 4c–d in this narrative preview that summarizes and sets the stage for the detailed account to follow.
- “and look!” (7a, b, d) – progressively underscores the excitement in Joseph’s voice as he naively recounts his dreams to his unwilling audience (hence perhaps also ironic here).
- “and even” (7c) – creates a mini-climax in Joseph’s description of his provocative dream.
- “sheaf/sheaves” (7a, b, d, e) – repetition accents the respective metaphorical referents, Joseph versus all the other family members.

Do you agree with the preceding analysis? Discuss this in class and make any revisions that the group feels is necessary.

The same sort of chart as the one given for Genesis 37:1–7 can be prepared to analyze narrative discourse in the Greek New Testament (see Dooley and Levinsohn 2001, chaps. 8, 11, 18) and also texts of other genres. Such syntactic displays are particularly helpful for studying OT *prophetic* and NT epistolary types of literature.

Of course, analysis is only the first part of the translator’s task; the second part is just as important; namely, to render the text at hand not only accurately, but also as dynamically and beautifully as in the biblical text. Salisbury (2002:273) says of this goal with reference to narrative discourse, “If a hearer or reader of your translation cannot visualize the story scene by scene, then some of the impact is lost. Your translation should capture and hold the attention of its readers in the same way that the original story did to its original hearers.”

For reflection, research, and response:

1. What is the rhetorical purpose of the genealogies in 1 Chronicles 1 – 9? Skim through these texts and locate three passages where some additional information is included. Suggest why this material is important to the Chronicler, and tell how it is distinguished in the original text (if it is so marked). Is there any way of calling attention to this information in YL so that the reader does not simply jump over it?
2. Write out a summary analysis of the 1 Samuel 17 narrative of David and Goliath according to its seven principal story constituents: (1) structural organization, external and internal; (2) plot progression; (3) setting/scene; (4) point of view; (5) characterization; (6) dialogue development; and (7) stylistic and rhetorical features. Be prepared to present aspects of your analysis in class and hand in the written assignment for evaluation.
3. Look again at the list of fifteen passages from 1 and 2 Samuel that were cited earlier in this section. Try to identify the *poetic* passages. Point out several distinctly poetic features in each one that lead you to this conclusion, and suggest how you might render them in translation.
4. In a fascinating study of “reading the lines” of the Hebrew Bible (as well as “between” them, i.e., via inter- and intra-textual analysis), Pamela Tamarkin Reis challenges many commonly held assumptions of scholars by reading biblical texts as integrated, intelligible literary masterworks. She does not find warrant in these stories for the too-easily accepted conclusion that they are patchworks from multiple authors and sources. Her analyses are patently literary, though she is well informed by modern

scholarship and traditional (medieval rabbinic) interpretation” (from the dust cover of Reis 2002). The following is a summary concluding her careful literary analysis of 1 Samuel 28 (*ibid.*:166) [my additional comments are in brackets]. *Check out her conclusions for yourself and, if you agree, explain where and how these might affect your translation, e.g., with respect to lexical usage (or the text’s accompanying paratext).*

I have presented arguments that expose the witch’s motivation and King Saul’s defection from monotheism. The charge against Saul is grave, but the text demands it. His record of yielding to entreaty, his proclivity for magic, and his fear–numbed stupor constitute the background for his penultimate act of desperation. Among the evidence in the foreground is the pointed use of the root **בָּנָד** [in 28:8, i.e., “clothing” or “treachery,” used with the verb “put” on” **לָבַשׁ**; cf. the verb in v. 7: **בִּקֵּשׁ** “seek out” *contra* Lev. 19:31!] tying Saul to treachery, to the eating of blood by his army, and to *teraphim*. The phrase **אֵלֵי־הַמְּזֻזָּה** (on the bed) used in the [Hebrew] Bible only of Saul and of *teraphim*, again links Saul to ancestor worship. The witch’s use of distinctly covenantal terminology—the technical term, **כִּרְת** [though in a different, perhaps ironic verbal context in v. 9], plus her equation in the form of: as I did x, now you do y—delineates the heretical bargain. The absence of detail in the meat preparation (made noticeable by juxtaposition of fuller detail in the preparation of the bread) becomes substantive evidence of the bloody rite when coupled with the word **זָבַח** [v. 24] (sacrifice, rather than a verb meaning, simply, slaughter) and the needlessly explicit mention of the unleavened, and thus sacrificial character of the bread [**מִצֵּדָה**, v. 24; cf. Lev. 2:4, 11]. That the witch’s meal is a blasphemous ritual is further indicated by the surprising use of the allusive word **נָגַשׁ** (offer, approach) [v. 25] where we are led by double precedent to expect **שִׁים** (set) [vv. 21–22]. Saul’s end, his final terror [v. 20]—not of death but of life—shows the playing out of an inexorable justice. It is the unforeshadowed penalty for his treacherous blood worship of false gods.

5. Identify some of the different literary genres that are incorporated within the *history* of 1 and 2 Kings. Beside each passage listed below, write the name of the genre that it illustrates.

1 Kings	2 Kings
8:25–30 _____	19:21–28 _____
1:29–30 _____	7:1 _____
2:2–4 _____	7:2b _____
20:39–40 _____	10:34–35 _____
19:11b–13a _____	15:13–14 _____
11:31–36 _____	22:19–20 _____
19:19–21 _____	19:29–31 _____

6. Note the *repetition* in Daniel 3:2–3. How “artistic” is that repetition? Some modern translations (e.g., GNT) go so far as to eliminate it. But the principle of relevance (as well as common sense) tells us that the exact repetition must be there for a reason. Note other instances of repetition in Daniel 3, of the lists in particular, which are characteristic of the style of Daniel. What rhetorical intention could repetition serve in this case – especially when the text is read aloud? Is *satire* a possibility? Would such repetition serve the same purpose in YL? If not, how could the same effect be created in your translation of Daniel?
7. The narrative accounts of Ezra and Nehemiah contain a number of examples of the following type of discourse (from Ezra 7, RSV). What would you call this particular genre? Tell why in terms of both form and function?

¹² “Artaxerxes, king of kings, to Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven. And now ¹³ I make a decree that any one of the people of Israel or their priests or Levites in my kingdom, who freely offers to go to Jerusalem, may go with you. ¹⁴ For you are sent by the king and his seven counselors to make inquiries about Judah and Jerusalem according to the law of your God, which is in your hand, ¹⁵ and also to convey the silver and gold which the king and his counselors have freely offered to the God of Israel, whose dwelling is in Jerusalem, ¹⁶ with all the silver and gold which you shall find in the whole province of Babylonia, and with the freewill offerings of the people and the priests, vowed willingly for the house of their God which is in Jerusalem. ¹⁷ With this money, then, you shall with all diligence buy bulls, rams, and lambs, with their cereal offerings and their drink offerings, and you shall offer them upon the altar of the house

of your God which is in Jerusalem. ¹⁸ Whatever seems good to you and your brethren to do with the rest of the silver and gold, you may do, according to the will of your God. ¹⁹ The vessels that have been given you for the service of the house of your God, you shall deliver before the God of Jerusalem. ²⁰ And whatever else is required for the house of your God, which you have occasion to provide, you may provide it out of the king's treasury. ²¹ "And I, Artaxerxes the king, make a decree to all the treasurers in the province Beyond the River: Whatever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven, requires of you, be it done with all diligence, ²² up to a hundred talents of silver, a hundred cors of wheat, a hundred baths of wine, a hundred baths of oil, and salt without prescribing how much. ²³ Whatever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be done in full for the house of the God of heaven, lest his wrath be against the realm of the king and his sons. ²⁴ We also notify you that it shall not be lawful to impose tribute, custom, or toll upon any one of the priests, the Levites, the singers, the doorkeepers, the temple servants, or other servants of this house of God. ²⁵ "And you, Ezra, according to the wisdom of your God which is in your hand, appoint magistrates and judges who may judge all the people in the province Beyond the River, all such as know the laws of your God; and those who do not know them, you shall teach. ²⁶ Whoever will not obey the law of your God and the law of the king, let judgement be strictly executed upon him, whether for death or for banishment or for confiscation of his goods or for imprisonment." ²⁷ Blessed be the LORD, the God of our fathers, who put such a thing as this into the heart of the king, to beautify the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem, ²⁸ and who extended to me his steadfast love before the king and his counselors, and before all the king's mighty officers. I took courage, for the hand of the LORD my God was upon me, and I gathered leading men from Israel to go up with me.

The preceding passage has not been formatted to show paragraph units. What effect does this have on your reading and understanding of this text? Give an example. Where would you put paragraph breaks if you were translating the passage in YL? Tell why. In other words, which markers indicate to you that a new unit should begin at such-and-such a verse?

Note that Artaxerxes' "letter" actually includes two distinct types of discourse with respect to communicative function. Designate and describe these two. Then list the formal markers within the text that help you to recognize them as such.

8. Where is a significant chunk of *narrative* text in the book of Isaiah? What is the function of this large medial section of divergent discourse? What part does it play in the organization of Isaiah as a whole? Observe the combined evidence of structural, stylistic, and thematic unity demonstrating that Isaiah was conceived of and composed as a single book, not several "books" simply patched together. Does the issue of compositional history of a given book have any relevance for Bible translators? If so, what is it?
9. List the chapter and verse references of the sections covered by each of the ten "histories" of Genesis. The first section is different in several respects from the nine that follow. How does it differ? Mention several of its main distinguishing features. How and why do the histories of Esau and Jacob differ from one another?
10. *Irony* plays a crucial role in the story of Jonah. There are different kinds of irony. Look it up in a dictionary and note the different senses listed there (cf. 5.1.5). One type of irony is a rhetorical device in which the words used convey some contrast to their literal meaning. The writer presents something that sounds out of place, absurd, inappropriate, inconsistent, contradictory, or the opposite of what might be expected. In the Scriptures the ironic element is often manifested in the words or actions of a major character. Mention three instances of such verbal or situational irony that you notice in the book of Jonah.
11. (This exercise is only for students who can use a Hebrew interlinear text.) Prepare a sequential discourse segmentation chart for Genesis 37:17–25. What does the chart tell you, especially with regard to any instances of focalization or intensification that you find? In other words, how can such a study help give you a better picture of the rhetorical dynamics of this stage of the Joseph story? Finally, point out how such a detailed text study can also help you to become a better translator.

12.3 Identifying and analyzing New Testament prose genres

Only a selection of the main New Testament genres and subgenres of prose will be considered in this section. They are grouped into four main categories: *narrative*, *epistolary*, *locutionary*, and *poetic* discourse. The first two of these are primary macrogenres, while the second two refer to specific styles of composition; namely, a representation of direct speech (*locutionary*) and a text that manifests a lyrical overlay (*poetic*). In these two latter cases, we are dealing with texts that certainly were originally meant to be read and heard aloud. Therefore, the analytical concerns of aural esthetics and persuasive rhetoric must be taken into consideration during the analytical process.

It will be helpful here to review of a set of possible analysis procedures. The following twelve steps (see sections 3.6 and 5.4) may be applied to all four categories of prose discourse:

1. Read the entire text aloud (several times) and determine its main genre and subgenres.
2. Study the complete textual, intertextual, and extratextual context as carefully as possible.
3. Plot all occurrences of exact and synonymous repetition in the pericope.
4. Find all instances of disjunction and content shifting (e.g., topic, setting) within the discourse.
5. Isolate and describe the obvious areas of special stylistic concentration within the text.
6. Identify the major areas of discourse demarcation and the points of projection (peak, climax).
7. Analyze the larger compositional (syntactic-semantic) structure of the entire pericope.
8. Prepare a complete thematic (word/symbol/motif) study, especially the key concepts and clusters.
9. Explain any outstanding linguistic and literary features that remain unaccounted for.
10. Note the major speech functions (speech acts) and their interaction in the discourse overall.
11. Do an explicit stylistic and structural comparison of the features of the SL text with TL features for possible form-functional matches.
12. Prepare a well-formatted *LiFE* translation as a trial, testing it comparatively against other versions.

We will not be able to carry out all of these steps for the various prose text types considered here, but students are encouraged to at least keep them in mind when reading through sections 6.3.1 – 6.3.3. Of course, it must always be remembered that there is more than one way by which a set of text analysis procedures can be formulated and performed, as a comparison of the lists of steps in sections 3.6 and 5.4 reveal. The class should discuss the various options and come up with a sequence of steps that seems to work the best for the group. The course instructor may assign certain selected procedures to be performed with respect to one or more of the sample passages in the following sections.

12.3.1 Narrative prose

Each of the four Gospels and the book of Acts manifests a mixed macrogenre. That is, the text exhibits a variable combination of significant aspects of ancient biography and history (both of which are types of narrative prose), with the Gospels favoring the former and Acts the latter. Moreover, depending on the particular book and passage, the Greek text appears to be influenced by a Semitic style derived either directly from the Hebrew Old Testament or indirectly via the relatively literal Septuagint translation. According to Bailey and vander Broek (1992:91–2), Greco-Roman *history* focused on the great deeds (*praxeis*) of significant personages as viewed from a larger social, cultural, political, and/or military perspective, while *biography* emphasized the character (*ethos*) of such individuals and how their words (*logos*) and deeds served to reveal that character, whether good or evil, as a model to be emulated or avoided.

An ancient biography might be composed to fill an apologetic or ideological function in relation to its central character. For this reason it is important to carefully examine any synoptic parallels (with respect to Matthew, Mark, and Luke), noting any differences of treatment or perspective that might indicate a different authorial purpose or audience (e.g., the parallel passages of Matt. 9:18–26, Mark 5:21–43, and Luke 8:41–56). Biblical history-biography was of course written from the wider viewpoint of God’s comprehensive “salvation-history” as centered in the person and works of the promised Messiah. For that reason, certain pertinent OT citations are often included to demonstrate the intertextual and theological connection between the two testaments.

Scholars have identified a number of different subgenres in any given Gospel narrative (including *genealogy*, considered in section 6.2.4). The four most prominent subgenres:

1. **Miracle story**

A *miracle story*, as the name suggests, is a narrative text that recounts how Christ (or in Acts, an apostle) performed some miraculous action in demonstration of God’s power over the limitations and afflictions of human life or the forces of nature. Such a conquest might involve an *exorcism* (with typical motifs such as confrontation, expulsion, and reaction, as in Mark 5:1–20); a *healing* (petition, challenge, expression of faith, therapeutic action, and outcome, as in John 2:1–11); a *controversy* (challenge, key counter-question, debate, and final saying supported by miraculous action, as in Luke 13:10–17); a *rescue* (crisis, appeal, and act of deliverance, as in Mark 4:35–41 and Acts 12:1–17); and an *epiphany* (as in Matt. 14:22–33). The striking interplay between Christ’s (or an apostle’s) speech and actions is especially prominent in such stories. This dynamic progression or movement should be reflected in a literary translation, using narrative devices of the TL oral or written tradition. Other features of importance in this subgenre are: the reactions of other characters on the scene; the peak point of the central crisis; the role played by Christ’s miraculous intervention; and any subsequent discourse that the miracle provides an occasion for.

Analyze Mark 3:1–6 (RSV) in terms of the relevant distinctions noted in the preceding paragraph:

¹ Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there who had a withered hand. ² And they watched him, to see whether he would heal him on the sabbath, so that they might accuse him. ³ And he said to the man who had the withered hand, “Come here.” ⁴ And he said to them, “Is it lawful on the sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?” But they were silent. ⁵ And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, and said to the man, “*Stretch out your hand.*” He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. ⁶ The Pharisees went out, and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.

Where does the peak of this miracle story occur, and what is your evidence for this conclusion?

Why is Christ’s command “stretch out your hand” quoted exactly?

Why is this statement so important in the context?

How would you format this text on the printed page to better reveal the narrative development?

Give some specific examples and reasons for your suggestions.

2. **Commissioning story**

A *commissioning story* is a narrative type with the following basic sequence of plot elements: (a) *introduction*, (b) *confrontation*, (c) *reaction*, (d) *objection*, (e) *reassurance*, (f) *commission*, and (g) *conclusion*. The sequence may vary according to the context, however, with the elements sometimes occurring in a different order or some omitted or repeated. A commissioning story features the calling of a man or woman of God to perform a special service for the Lord. An example is Christ’s calling of Saul on the Damascus road (Bailey and vander Broek 1992:145): (a) Acts 9:1–3a, (b) 3b, (c) 4a, (b) 4b, (c) 5a, (f) 5b–6, (c) 7, and (g) 8–9.

Commissioning stories are most frequently found in Luke. The same pattern occurs also in a number of OT narratives.

Why would the “objection” and “reassurance” elements not be necessary in the Acts 9 story?

Find another example of a commissioning account in the NT and analyze it into the narrative stages listed in the preceding paragraph.

3. Didactic story

A *didactic story* is a kind of narrative that usually begins with a brief narrative section (sometimes a simple “bridge” text) that leads up to a dialogue involving Christ and some other person or group. There are several overlapping subtypes, depending on the perspective. If the story is told from the perspective of Christ, subtypes include *correction* (e.g., Mark 9:33–37), *exhortation* (e.g., Mark 11:20–25), and *commendation* (Mark 9:33–37). If the story is told from the perspective of the character(s) whom Christ addresses, subtypes include *quest* (e.g., Mark 12:28–34), *objection* (Mark 2:15–17), and *inquiry* (Mark 7:17–23). When analyzing a discourse of this type, one must pay attention to how the biblical writer employs the narrative segments of the text to build up to a rhetorical climax in a memorable saying (aphorism) of Christ, which often ends the section/scene. Such a didactic account is sometimes termed a “pronouncement” story.)

Read the following passage from Mark 12:13–17 (NIV) and answer the questions that follow:

¹³ Later they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Jesus to catch him in his words.

¹⁴ They came to him and said, “Teacher, we know you are a man of integrity. You aren’t swayed by men, because you pay no attention to who they are; but you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not? ¹⁵ Should we pay or shouldn’t we?” But Jesus knew their hypocrisy. “Why are you trying to trap me?” he asked. “Bring me a denarius and let me look at it.” ¹⁶ They brought the coin, and he asked them, “Whose portrait is this? And whose inscription?” “Caesar’s,” they replied. ¹⁷ Then Jesus said to them, “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s.” And they were amazed at him.

What device does Christ use to help teach his point? Explain the meaning of his concluding line.

Does this need to be clarified in your translation so that readers will not miss the intended lesson?

Where in Mark 12:13–17 are paragraph breaks needed so that the reader can more easily follow the dialogue’s development and recognize its peak point?

How would you express Christ’s final aphoristic saying most fittingly in YL?

4. Parable

Parables are the best-known subgenre within the narrative accounts of the Gospels. They usually present a vivid extended simile in which some common experience from nature or everyday experience is likened to the kingdom of God as in Matthew 13:33 and Luke 13:20–21. In the Septuagint the word *parabolê* (παροβολή) ‘parable’ is used to translate the Hebrew *mâshâl* (מִשְׁלָל), which refers to a didactic saying or proverb. Literally, παροβολή means a saying that is placed alongside another, implying some sort of comparison or analogy between them. Normally, the main point, or ground, of this comparison is obvious from the context; however, at other times some research will be necessary in order to discern it. In any case, it always pays to check this out in a reliable commentary or translator’s handbook.

The longer parables of Christ present a condensed fictional story that often incorporates direct discourse. They feature one or more personages, whether royal or lowly, religious or secular, who are realistically engaged in some sort of daily activity. Typically, there is something unusual, surprising, ambiguous, enigmatic, or unexpected about the events, and this element provokes or leads up to the main point of the parable. This is normally not stated explicitly; rather, the hearers

on the scene (as well as those today) must make their own interpretation or come to their own conclusion. The implicit “lesson” always has something to do with God’s rule and purpose in the world, which frequently involves his chosen Messiah. In addition to their realism, vividness, conciseness, and open-endedness, Christ’s parables may be characterized by certain literary features such as a single narrative perspective; a duality in which only two characters or groups interact at one time; patterned repetition in sets of three (triads); a predominant end stress, lots of embedded direct speech; and a provocative issue that stimulates a new vision or an altered conception of reality – God’s manner of doing things in contrast to the world’s way.

The first challenge confronting translators is to correctly interpret the parable, that is, to identify the implicit lesson that Christ sought to teach by this popular method and then to convey it with a corresponding degree of literary artistry, rhetorical force, verbal fluency, narrative focus, didactic impact, and perhaps even subtle ambiguity as manifested in the Greek text. Parables cannot be taken for granted simply because they seem so familiar. They need to be repeatedly worked over and polished stylistically so that they can stand in the translation as worthy representatives of the vividly told original stories. A perfect match is of course impossible in compositional terms, but an informed, practiced, and creative procedure does tend to train translators to be ever more excellent in their efforts as they endeavor to emulate these well-known discourses. Often such repeated text shaping will serve to identify the team member who has the gift of storytelling, whether orally or in writing, and from there he or she can take over in producing that essential first draft which may then be revised where necessary and improved where possible.

Study the following parable, Luke 15:11–24 (RSV), and be prepared to comment on the skill of the Master Storyteller:

- ¹¹ And he said, **A**
 “There was a man who had two sons;
¹² and the younger of them said to his father,
 ‘Father, give me the share of property that falls to me.’
 And he divided his living between them.
- ¹³ Not many days later, **B**
 the younger son gathered all he had
 and took his journey into a far country,
 and there he squandered his property in loose living.
¹⁴ And when he had spent everything,
 a great famine arose in that country,
 and he began to be in want.
- ¹⁵ So he went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country, **C**
 who sent him into his fields to feed swine.
¹⁶ And he would gladly have fed on the pods that the swine ate;
 and no one gave him anything.
- ¹⁷ But when he came to himself he said, **D**
 ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have bread enough and to spare,
 but I perish here with hunger!
- ¹⁸ I will arise and go to my father, **D’**
 and I will say to him,
 “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you;
¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son;
 treat me as one of your hired servants.” ’
- ²⁰ And he arose and came to his father. **C’**
 But while he was yet at a distance,
 his father saw him and had compassion,
 and ran and embraced him and kissed him.
- ²¹ And the son said to him, **B’**
 ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you;
 I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’
²² But the father said to his servants,
 ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him;
 and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet;
²³ and bring the fatted calf and kill it,
 and let us eat and make merry;

²⁴ for this my son was dead,
and is alive again;
he was lost,
and is found.
And they began to make merry.

A'

In the above passage, notice the thematic correspondence (similarity or contrast) between the paired sets of parallel panels, as indicated by the capital letters on the right-hand margin.

A = Separation (~ death!)

A' = Fellowship (~ resurrection!)

B = Everything lost

B' = Everything restored

C = Complete rejection

C' = Total acceptance

D = Problem (lost-ness)

D' = Solution (found!)

Do you have a literary (oral) genre similar to the “parable” in YL? If so, what are its main stylistic features?

Where does the peak point(s) occur in this parable and how is it (are they) marked?

How does the discourse structure serve to call attention to this/these areas of emphasis?

Are there any other important stylistic features of dramatic narrative that you notice – and what is their apparent rhetorical function?

How can you duplicate these literary effects in YL?

Are there any additional vernacular features (e.g., deictic highlighters or dramatic ideophones) that you must use to tell this parable effectively according to its genre in your oral tradition? Give three specific examples.

For reflection, research, and response:

1. Green and Pasquerello (2003:46–7) point out the importance of “history-writing”:

In the Greco–Roman world, history–writing was a powerful means for validating or authorizing beliefs and practices, even peoples. By showing the antiquity of a people, one might establish continuity with the past, give that people a sense of identity, teach that people who they must be and how they must live, and/or legitimate their existence and practices among outsiders...One scene leads to another, and another, moving from beginning to middle to end, in the service of a grand *telos* that gains its meaning from the whole of the parts, and projects its meaning back over the parts of the whole.

Apply these notions to the Luke–Acts narrative and suggest any possible implications for the translation of these two books.

2. Critically evaluate the following proposal regarding the patterned discourse structure of Luke (and Acts) and the example given to illustrate this feature (McComiskey 2004:1-2, 122). Does it sound credible in terms of form and function? Give your assessment, whether for or against this interpretation. If you feel that this proposal has sufficient validity and credibility, how would it affect your translation (or annotation) of these books? Should such *intratextual* literary arrangements be distinguished or marked in some way, and if so, how might this be done (for other patterns of this nature, consult McComiskey).

Luke’s arrangement of material and his variety of compositional techniques often reveal his perception of interrelatedness between pericopes. As he considered where to place various accounts in his Gospel, or how to interconnect them through previews and the like, the decisions were greatly affected by similarities (or interrelatedness) he observed between them. ... By this method, the Evangelist communicates how he has interpreted the linked passages in light of each other. ... The phenomenon ranges from the subtle use of a brief preview or review to bold structural interconnection between extensive blocks of material. Thus, our study covers correspondences that are *not* structural, but guide

the reading process by pointing ahead or behind to material that Luke considered relevant for interpreting the passage at hand. It also covers correspondences that *are* structural. These too guide the reading process in similar fashion, but they additionally reflect the intended organization of material from the level of a section to that of the whole Gospel. ... It furthermore develops a detailed parallel structure that organizes all of Luke 4:14–24:53, and therefore, coupled with the generally accepted parallel structure of 1:1–4:13, covers the entire Gospel. ...

JOHN

JESUS

1:57	Now the time came for Elizabeth	1.	2:1–7	The time came for Mary to be delivered and she gave birth to a son .
1:58	And her kinsfolk and neighbors rejoiced when they heard what the Lord had done .	2.	2:8–[16]	The shepherds rejoiced , glorifying and praising God for all they had seen and heard.
1:65–66	These verses give a description of the reaction (fear) to the events, a mention of the news and of the laying it up in the hearts of those who heard .	3.	2:17–18	These verses give a description of the reaction (wonder) to the event, a mention of the spreading of the news , and of Mary's keeping all this in her heart .
1:59–64	The child is circumcised on the eighth day and named John as the angel had directed .	4.	2:21	The child is circumcised at the end of eight days and named Jesus as the angel had directed .
1:67–79	A prophetic hymn of God's act and John's function .	5.	2:22–38	A prophetic hymn of God's act and Jesus' function .
1:80a	The child grew and became strong in spirit.	6.	2:39–40	The child grew and became strong .
1:80b	He was in the wilderness until...	7.	2:41–52	He went down to Nazareth until...

Now you may make a note of the principal correspondence, lexical and/or conceptual, that you see between the following two sets of passages from Luke 24 and Acts 1. What is the literary-functional significance of these *intertextual* similarities? Is there any compositional significance here, for example, regarding the issue of authorship? Is there a need to call attention to these

parallels in your translation? If so, how do you suggest doing this in a way that your readers will benefit from?

LUKE 24:	33-34, 36	36-43	49	47-48	51-52
ACTS 1:	3	3	4	8b	9, 12

3. Outline the miracle story in Acts 3:1–10. Where does the peak of this narrative occur? Why do you say so? Are there any markers in the biblical text that would highlight this climax? (If possible refer to the Greek text.) How does this story relate to the Acts 3:11–26 discourse that follows it?
4. Closely compare Matthew 8:14–17, Mark 1:29–34, and Luke 4:38–41. Each text presents the same healing event. Point out two major differences in these miracle stories. How do these differences reflect their respective authors' strategies in relation to different audiences?
5. Review the basic components of a commissioning story. Now identify them in the account of the "calling" of Mary (Luke 1:26–38, NIV):

²⁶ In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, ²⁷ to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." ²⁹ Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. ³⁰ But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. ³¹ You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will ever end." ³⁴ "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" ³⁵ The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. ³⁶ Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. ³⁷ For nothing is impossible with God." ³⁸ "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." Then the angel left her.

What variations in the standard pattern do you see here? What might be their purpose?

6. What difference(s) do you see between the Matthew 1:1–17 and Luke 3:38 genealogies? Is there a peak point in either one of these passages? If so, where does it occur and how is it marked (if at all)? How does each of these genealogies relate to the rhetorical purpose of its author? Can you suggest why each genealogy is placed where it is in the larger account?
7. The book of Acts contains several short letters that need to be translated distinctly from their surrounding narrative text. Point out three stylistic features that distinguish Acts 15:23–29 (below, RSV) as being such a letter. Point out any potential translation problems that you see here. Tell how you would deal with them in YL.

23 "The brethren, both the apostles and the elders, to the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greeting. **24** Since we have heard that some persons from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your minds, although we gave them no instructions, **25** it has seemed good to us, having come to one accord, to choose men and send them to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, **26** men who have risked their lives for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. **27** We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will tell you the same things by word of mouth. **28** For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: **29** that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from unchastity. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell."

8. What type of text is the Revelation 7:5–8 passage that follows? How does it differ from narrative discourse? What particular problems of translation and format presentation does it pose?

⁵ twelve thousand sealed out of the tribe of Judah, twelve thousand of the tribe of Reuben, twelve thousand of the tribe of Gad, ⁶ twelve thousand of the tribe of Asher, twelve thousand of the tribe of Naphtali, twelve thousand of the tribe of Manasseh, ⁷ twelve thousand of the tribe of Simeon,

twelve thousand of the tribe of Levi, twelve thousand of the tribe of Issachar, ⁸ twelve thousand of the tribe of Zebulun, twelve thousand of the tribe of Joseph, twelve thousand sealed out of the tribe of Benjamin.

9. The analysis of many of Christ's longer *parables* can be broken down into three sequential steps:
 - a. Identify the *specific audience* that Christ has in mind (and their spiritual need).
 - b. Pick out the point of *surprise* or an *unusual* and *unexpected* turn in the story.
 - c. Specify what kind of a *response* element (b) was intended to elicit from (a).

Delineate these three steps then as you analyze the two parables found in Luke 18:2-5 and 10-14.

Do you have to *mark* stage (b) in some special way when translating the parables so that people do not miss the point? If so, how can you do this? Do you have a special way of signaling the parable *genre* in YL? If so, tell what the typical markers are.

10. Analyze Luke 15:25–32 (below, RSV), which is the second – and climactic – half of the Parable of the Lost Sons. First, see if you can detect any special structural patterning in this section. Then format or outline this arrangement on a separate paper. Suggest where the peak point occurs and how it is marked in the text. Do you observe any other important stylistic features that need to be noted? What is their function in the discourse? Finally, explain how this section of the parable relates to the first part (displayed above) and how Christ's implied teaching is thereby clarified as well as foregrounded in a literary manner.

²⁵ "Now his elder son was in the field; and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ And he called one of the servants and asked what this meant. ²⁷ And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has received him safe and sound.' ²⁸ But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, ²⁹ but he answered his father, 'Lo, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command; yet you never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends. ³⁰ But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your living with harlots, you killed for him the fatted calf!' ³¹ And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. ³² It was fitting to make merry and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.' "

11. Pick out places in the following passages from Romans that presuppose the narrative account of the Genesis 3 account of the human fall into sin: 3:23; 5:12–21; 7:7–12; 8:19–22; and 8:28–30. What is the significance of these allusions for Paul's developing argument? In other words, how does Paul utilize the Genesis narrative to motivate, frame, and guide his current theological discussion? Is it likely that most members of your primary TL audience will detect and understand these meaningful allusions? If not, how would you fill the crucial information gap? Give one example of your strategy.
12. How would you classify the following passage – what kind of discourse does it represent and what are the formal signals that indicate this? Where in the Bible do you guess this text is found? Note that it manifests a mixed compositional style since it includes several different literary genres.

¹ And a great portent appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars; ² she was with child and she cried out in her pangs of birth, in anguish for delivery. ³ And another portent appeared in heaven; behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems upon his heads. ⁴ His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven, and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to bear a child, that he might devour her child when she brought it forth; ⁵ she brought forth a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne, ⁶ and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which to be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days. ⁷ Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, ⁸ but they were defeated and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. ⁹ And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world – he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. ¹⁰ And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.

¹¹ And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. ¹² Rejoice then, O heaven and you that dwell therein! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!" ¹³ And when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had borne the male child. ¹⁴ But the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle that she might fly from the serpent into the wilderness, to the place where she is to be nourished for a time, and times, and half a time. ¹⁵ The serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, to sweep her away with the flood. ¹⁶ But the earth came to the help of the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed the river which the dragon had poured from his mouth. ¹⁷ Then the dragon was angry with the woman, and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and bear testimony to Jesus. And he stood on the sand of the sea. (RSV)

Would you translate the preceding text as a narrative in YL? Why, or why not? Do you need to mark its incorporated subgenres stylistically? If so, which portions? What kind of literary marking would you use? Finally, where would you put the paragraph breaks in this passage and why at these points?

12.3.2 The prose of direct speech (locutionary prose)

Often embedded within NT narrative texts are chunks of direct speech of varied sizes and different speakers. In the Gospels the main speaker is almost always Christ. In the book of Acts, it is one of the apostles, usually Peter or Paul, although there are exceptions such as in Acts 7, where Stephen is the main speaker, and Acts 8:26–40, where Philip is.

John's Gospel is known for some of Christ's longest discourses. With whom is Christ speaking in the following passages?

John 3: _____	John 4: _____
John 5: _____	John 6: _____
John 8: _____	John 10: _____

The expert oratory of Christ is extensively demonstrated throughout all four Gospels. The ancient methods of rhetorical *argumentation* (verbal persuasion) can frequently be discerned in his discourses. These sometimes take the form of a simple wisdom saying, or *aphorism*. Aphorisms are used to teach a lesson, challenge the audience in some way, rebuke them, or illustrate some truth about the kingdom of God. Such incisive, at times hyperbolic or paradoxical, sayings may be stated in three different syntactic modes: declaration, question, and imperative. We also see the Semitic style of parallel expressions (coupled lines) as in the following examples:

1. Declaration

Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth.
I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. (Matt. 10:34)

2. Question

What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?
Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? (Mark 8:36–37)

2. Imperative

First let the children eat all they want...
for it is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs. (Mark 7:27)

The three basic types of Hebrew poetic parallelism – synonymous, contrastive, and additive – can be found in one form or another in the discourses of Christ:

1. Synonymous

What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight;
what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs. (Matt. 10:27)

2. Contrastive

For whoever wants to save his life will lose it,
but whoever loses his life for me and the gospel will save it.¹⁹ (Mark 8:35)

3. Additive

No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment,
for the patch will pull away from the garment, making the tear worse. (Matt. 9:16)

Longer passages and collections of such parallel sayings also occur, as in a “judgement saying,” which in its fullest form consists of the following five elements.

1. introduction with a *formula* such as “If anyone” or “whoever”
2. use of the *same verb* in both parts
3. reference to God’s *eschatological* judicial action
4. based on the principle of *retributive justice* (“an eye for an eye”)
5. a chiasmic or terraced arrangement of parts

An example of the fifth element may be seen in the textual arrangement of Luke 12:8–9:

I tell you –
whoever acknowledges me before men
the Son of Man will also *acknowledge* him before the angels of God.
But he who *disowns* me before men
will be *disowned* before the angels of God.

The passage in Matthew 9:16 about sewing a patch on a new piece of clothing also exemplifies Christ’s use of a rhetorical argument pattern. This one is known as a *syllogism* (actually, its condensed form, the *enthymeme*, cf. Wendland 2004b:206-208). In it there is a general premise underlying the specific example that leads listeners to a particular conclusion in the verbal context at hand:

Premise-general: No normal person deliberately destroys something useful.

Premise-specific: Putting an unshrunk patch on a new garment would ruin it.

Conclusion: Nobody would sew an unshrunk patch on a new garment

Implication-1: Any such action would be regarded as foolish and wasteful.

Implication-2: Do not act in such a way!

Of course, it is not necessary for translators to analyze every saying of Christ so explicitly. In the case of more difficult passages, however, this method may serve to clarify the meaning and also help to ensure that the intended import and implication is represented in the TL. In cases where ambiguity or misunderstanding results from a literal rendering, translators may wish to restructure the text so that both its sense and also its “salt” (impact and appeal) are preserved.

Another subgenre of argumentative discourse that occasionally appears in Christ’s speeches is similar to the *midrashic* (*peshet*) interpretation of the Jewish rabbis. By means of this technique a teacher of the Law would make an authoritative comment on a particular text from the Old Testament, whether an interpretation or a contemporary application. In most instances when Christ referred to the Hebrew Scriptures (or the LXX), he would do so without explicitly stating (as the rabbis did) that this was his own interpretation and not equal to God’s Word itself. We see this, for example, in the repeated “but I tell you” sayings of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5 (e.g., in vv. 22, 28, 32, 34, 39, and 44).

A longer more developed variation of this style is found in Matthew 12:3–8, where it is applied to the narrative setting that has just been reported. Christ’s “argument” is outlined below on the right-hand margin:

¹⁹ Observe here the chiasmic A-B=B'-A' construction that is typical of antithetical texts in the New Testament as well as the Old.

- ² When the Pharisees saw this, they said to him,
 “Look! Your disciples are doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath.” *Case (issue) at hand*
- ³ He answered,
 “Haven’t you read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? *Exception introduced*
- ⁴ He entered the house of God,
 and he and his companions ate the consecrated bread –
 which was not lawful for them to do, but only for the priests. *Example from Scripture*
- ⁵ Or haven’t you read in the Law
 that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple desecrate the day
 and yet are innocent *Analogy from Scripture*
- ⁶ I tell you that one greater than the temple is here. *Comparison (lesser => greater)*
- ⁷ If you had known what these words mean,
 ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice,’ *Citation (of the opposite case)*
 you would not have condemned the innocent.
- ⁸ For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath *Conclusion (climactic reason)*

In passages like the one above, it is important to perceive the often implicit rhetoric of Christ’s argument. Otherwise, his underlying point may be missed. In this instance, there is an analogical relationship between the OT incident reported in 1 Samuel 21:1–6 and the apparent infringement of a Sabbath Day law by Jesus’ disciples. On both occasions godly men in extreme circumstances did something that was forbidden. In such situations, however, a higher law applies, that of saving lives, and therefore both David and also the disciples were acting within this larger intention of God’s law. Besides, the priests and other holy men of God were clearly allowed on occasion to do what was prohibited to others as a Sabbath norm (see Lev. 24:8–9, Num. 28:9). Above all (where the argument reaches its peak), God’s Messiah could overrule any prohibition or command made to human beings.

As far as translating such passages is concerned, it is important to employ explanatory footnotes where necessary along with the pertinent cross-references so that readers can recognize the broader context enough to follow the argument. A judicious use of text formatting may also clarify the line of reasoning.

What do you think about the print arrangement shown above – does it help to reveal the intricate dynamics of the discourse?

Would your primary target readership be able to discern the significance of the indentations and parallel lines?

As part of his rhetorical strategy in the so-called Sermon on the Mount, Christ uses a variety of compositional devices to present his persuasive appeal in support of the divinely established principles of the kingdom of heaven (see Wendland 2004b:418–43). Below is a list of ten broad categories of such stylistic features. Following that is a series of Scripture passages. Choose a letter from the options to identify each passage.

- | | |
|---|--|
| a. Evocative imagery and metaphor | b. Ambiguity, enigma, and paradox |
| c. Old Testament citations and allusions | d. Condensation and ellipsis |
| e. Contrast, antithesis, and dissociation ²⁰ | f. Rhythm and sound play (alliteration, punning) |
| g. Hyperbole, irony, caricature | h. Insertion of direct speech |
| i. Rhetorical and leading questions | j. Syntactic movement, either front- or back-shift |

___ “You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bushel....In the same way, let your light shine before men....” (Matt. 5:14–16)

___ “When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men that they are fasting....But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting....” (Matt. 6:16–17)

²⁰Dissociation, such as we find in Matt. 6:1–4, is a contrastive personal form of argumentation that separates the true reality of a situation from its appearance as popularly believed (or as conceived of and practiced by a particular group, like the Pharisees). Another good example of argumentation by dissociation is in Matt. 5:17–20, a text which confronts believers with a new (or renewed) vision of reality; namely, the true nature of the kingdom of God, as well as the “woe” passages of Matt. 23.

- ___ “And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full.” (Matt. 6:5)
- ___ “Now let your word/speech be ‘Yes’, ‘Yes’, ‘No’, ‘No’; but the excess of these is from [the] evil [one].” (Matt. 5:37)
- ___ “If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?” (Matt. 5:46–47)
- ___ “But when you are doing alms, let not your left know what your right does, so that your alms might be in secret; and your Father, the one seeing in secret, will repay you.” (Matt. 6:3–4a)
- ___ “So why do you see the chip, the one in the eye of your brother, but the – in your own eye – beam [front-shift focus] you give no thought to?” (Matt. 7:4)
- ___ original text of Matthew 5:13a–b:
 Ὑμεῖς ἐστε τὸ ἅλας τῆς γῆς; You are the *salt* of the earth; (9 syllables)
 ἐὰν δὲ τὸ ἅλας μωρανθῇ, but if the *salt* loses its saltiness, (9 syllables)
 ἐν τίνι ἀλισθήσεται; how can it be made *salty* again? (8 syllables)
- ___ “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” (Matt. 5:43–44)
- ___ “Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name...?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you....’” (Matt. 7:22–23)

Which of these NT stylistic devices are common in the narrative tradition of YL?

Look up each of the passages cited above and determine how the artistic-rhetorical device specified functions within its context.

Would the same function be generated by a literal rendering in YL?

If not, how do you propose maintaining communicative equivalence in each case?

All of these features operate in varied combinations and proportions throughout Matthew 5 – 7 to constitute a masterfully arranged instance of religious teaching (acclaimed also by those who were actually on the scene, Matt. 7:28–29).

Another such artfully composed instruction is found in Matthew 6:1–18, which includes a number of these devices in rhetorical interaction. Identify the most obvious literary forms in this passage. Refer to the Greek text if possible. The RSV text of Matthew 6:1–18 has been reformatted here in order to highlight its main poetic parallels:

¹ “Beware of practicing your piety before men in order to be seen by them; for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

² “Thus, when you give alms, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by men.

Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.

³ But when you give alms,
do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,
⁴ so that your alms may be in secret;
and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

⁵ “And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by men.

Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.

⁶ But when you pray,
go into your room and shut the door
and pray to your Father who is in secret;
and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

⁷ “And in praying do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do;

for they think that they will be heard for their many words.

⁸ Do not be like them,
for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

⁹ Pray then like this:
Our Father who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name.

¹⁰ Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread;

¹² And forgive us our debts,
As we also have forgiven our debtors;

¹³ And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.

¹⁴ For if you forgive men their trespasses,
your heavenly Father also will forgive you;

¹⁵ but if you do not forgive men their trespasses,
neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

¹⁶ "And when you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites,
for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by men.

Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.

¹⁷ But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face,

¹⁸ that your fasting may not be seen by men
but by your Father who is in secret;
and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Observe the intricate pattern of parallels in Matthew 6:1–18.

There is a brief introduction or title: verse _____.

The text is then composed of ___ (how many?) parallel panels, each of which corresponds to a poetic paragraph/strophe.

There is also a larger incorporated strophe that does not quite fit the established pattern exhibited by the rest of the pericope. Which verses are included in this extraordinary segment? verse _____ to verse _____

The indentation of the text shows that each of the parallel texts comprises four utterance units. See if you can list below the corresponding verses that belong to this tripartite structure:

Strophe A – a: _____	Strophe B – a: _____	Strophe C – a: _____
b: _____	b: _____	b: _____
c: _____	c: _____	c: _____
d: _____	d: _____	d: _____

Can you suggest a reason why the strophe that spans verses 7–15 is distinct in terms of form, content, and/or function?

How might this affect your translation strategy for these verses?

The persuasive speech of Christ demands decision and provokes action, yet is able to break through the limits of ordinary discourse to encourage new attitudes and behavior by conveying a new vision of truth and reality. This new perspective is not limited to the expressive potential of human discourse but, more importantly, it serves to stimulate effective and insightful communication within the diverse sociocultural settings and interpersonal situations in which language is used. The rhetoric of Christ is captivating, life-challenging, and life-changing speech. His inductively shaped discourse also features many lifelike examples that are characterized by an occasional humorous touch, down-to-earth realism, and immediate personal relevance.

Fill in the specific textual instances of this appealing manner of argumentation to fit the general categories that are proposed below for Luke 12:22–31:

EXHORTATION (v. 22): _____

REASON (v. 23): _____

ANALOGY-a (v. 24): _____

EXAMPLE (v. 25): _____

EXHORTATION (v. 26): _____

ANALOGY-b (v. 27a): _____

EPITOME (v. 27b): _____

ANALOGY-c (v. 28): _____

EXHORTATION (v. 29): _____

EXAMPLE (v. 30): _____

EXHORTATION (v. 31): _____

Observe that the various analogies in verses 24 to 28 move from the lesser to the greater, while the repeated exhortations are negative (*prohibitions*). However, the exhortation of verse 31 moves from the _____ to the _____, and is _____ in nature (*prescription*). Notice also that a simple, but profoundly significant logical *enthymeme* underlies Christ’s overall argument in this passage:

Major premise: All living beings are cared for by God.

Minor premise: People are living beings.

Conclusion: Therefore, all people too are cared for by God.

Thus by means of varied forms and expressions of content throughout this pericope, through direct exhortation and figurative implication, the Lord’s disciples are encouraged – “Don’t worry!” They must not set their hearts on this world, but rather upon the kingdom of God, which is the climactic religious principle that is enunciated right at the end.

The Sermon on the Mount, along with all of Christ’s other speeches, includes many memorable lines to motivate its hearers to respond in thought and action to the spiritual blessings and the responsibilities of the divine rule that the Messiah was in the very process of inaugurating. Such forthright, presupposition-

challenging discourse deserves to be formally expressed in the vernacular in such a way that his words have a similar effect on local audiences today.

The discourses of Christ in John's Gospel tend to be stylistically quite different from those of the Synoptic Gospels. They manifest these principal compositional features:

1. A *question and answer technique* that often leaves the person(s) to whom Jesus is speaking puzzled, confused, and misunderstanding what he means.
2. A dialogue that displays *longer and longer speeches by Jesus* until at last the discourse is pretty much transformed into a monologue in which he teaches some profound theological truth(s), the dialogue at times seeming to merge into a commentary by the evangelist on Jesus' words.
3. *Deep figures of speech* (e.g., metaphors such as the self-disclosing "I AM" statements) and *symbols, ambiguous expressions, aphorisms, words with double meanings, much repetition, and subtle irony* (saying one thing but really implying the opposite).

See if you can identify some of these stylistic elements in John 3:1–21, which follows (NIV). While the manner of speaking seems rather simple and straightforward, the meaning of Christ's words is not always easily discerned. His teachings are intended to provoke deep thought about his divine mission on behalf of his Father and the corresponding demands upon those who wish to live in fellowship with God. Pick out three examples of this thematic perspective in the text below, especially where expressed in provocative and figurative terms. Point out any translational problems that you anticipate in these instances. Also consider the NIV footnotes to this passage, and suggest any others that you will have to add in YL.

¹ Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. ² He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him."

³ In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.^a"

⁴ "How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!"

⁵ Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. ⁶ Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit ^b gives birth to spirit. ⁷ You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You^c must be born again.'⁸ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."

⁹ "How can this be?" Nicodemus asked.

¹⁰ "You are Israel's teacher," said Jesus, "and do you not understand these things? ¹¹ I tell you the truth, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. ¹² I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? ¹³ No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven – the Son of Man.^d ¹⁴ Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, ¹⁵ that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.^e

¹⁶ "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son,^f that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.^g ¹⁹ This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. ²⁰ Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. ²¹ But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God."

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| <p>a. 3:3 Or <i>born from above</i>; also in verse 7
 b. 3:6 Or <i>but spirit</i>
 c. 3:7 The Greek is plural.
 d. 3:13 Some manuscripts <i>Man, who is in heaven</i>
 e. 3:15 Or <i>believes may have eternal life in him</i>
 f. 3:16 Or <i>his only begotten Son</i>
 g. 3:18 Or <i>God's only begotten Son</i></p> |
|--|

The book of Acts, like the Gospels, contains much argumentative discourse, especially in the sermons or homilies of Peter and Paul. The major public discourses of the apostles fall into two general categories: the *evangelistic* speeches and the *defense* speeches. The first group, when spoken before a *Jewish* audience, usually contains the following compositional elements, any one of which (except the first) may be repeated:

1. a direct address to the audience
2. mention of some serious misunderstanding or wicked behavior
3. background allusion to the OT Scriptures to establish an authoritative frame of reference
4. witness to Jesus the Christ (including the main thesis or theme)
5. proofs from Scripture, declaration of salvation
6. an appeal for repentance

Identify these elements in Peter's evangelistic sermon in Acts 3:12–26, which follows. Also indicate where you would place paragraph breaks and why. Finally, make a note of any places where important translational issues arise and describe what these are.

"Men of Israel, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? 13 The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. 14 You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. 15 You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this. 16 By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has given this complete healing to him, as you can all see. 17 "Now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. 18 But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Christ^a would suffer. 19 Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, 20 and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you – even Jesus. 21 He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets. 22 For Moses said, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you. 23 Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from among his people.'^b 24 "Indeed, all the prophets from Samuel on, as many as have spoken, have foretold these days. 25 And you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers. He said to Abraham, 'Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed.'^c 26 When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways."

- | |
|---|
| <p>a. 3:18 Or <i>Messiah</i>; also in verse 20
 b. Deut. 18:15,18,19
 c. Gen. 22:18; 26:4</p> |
|---|

Paul, when delivering an evangelistic speech to a *Gentile* audience, replaces allusions to and quotations of Scripture quotations with more general references to God's creative and preserving activity (see, e.g., Acts 14:16–17 and 17:24–27).

As for the *defense* (apologetic) speeches found in the closing chapters of Acts, Paul's discourses of this kind include most of the following compositional elements:

1. terms of address
2. reference to Paul's good character

3. clarification of the legal issues involved
4. refutation of the charges against him (including various proofs)
5. claims of innocence
6. testimony to his righteousness
7. evidence of his apostolic authority

Normally, Paul's defense speeches get interrupted towards the end or are even completely shut down by a hostile audience before being completed.

Read Paul's words spoken during his trial before Felix as recorded in Acts 24 and analyze them in terms of the main dialogue constituents listed above.

For reflection, research, and response:

1. Find a good example of each of the three forms of *aphorism* (declaration, question, imperative) in the speeches of Christ and write them out on a separate sheet of paper. How would you render these dynamically in YL?
2. List three important stylistic-rhetorical techniques of Christ that we have discussed and find an example to illustrate each one from a single pericope. (If you do not have a favorite text of your own, you may try Luke 17:26–30.) Then explain how these features function in the passage that you have selected. In other words, how do they increase the impact and appeal of Christ's words at that point and in relation to the discourse as a whole?
3. On the basis of a cognitive-stylistic study of popular literature in English, Gerard Steen (in Semino and Culpeper 2002:205) concludes that "metaphors are often found at turning points in conversations. They often function as summaries and assessments there..." Have you noticed this in the conversations of Christ? A good example is found in John 9. Point out the crucial summarizing metaphor complex there. What are the implications of this for translation? Can you preserve this discourse-marking effect in YL with the same impact and appeal? Explain, with an example.
4. Identify the primary ground(s) of comparison for each of the metaphors involved in the seven distinct "I Am" assertions of Christ in John's Gospel (see John 6:35; 8:12; 10:7, 9; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1). Be sure to determine this with reference to the current context and the stated or implied extratextual setting. Can you convey these with the same form and meaning (including sense, impact, beauty, pragmatic implication) in YL? If not, what trade-offs do you have to make in order to prepare an acceptable rendition for the problem cases?
5. Study the quotations below from Robert Tannehill's excellent book, *The Sword of His Mouth* (1975), and suggest how they apply to literary text analysis and translation of the Scriptures.

It is my conviction that Biblical scholarship has overlooked the significance of forceful and imaginative language in the synoptic sayings....The purpose of a human utterance is seldom restricted to conveying information. If the scholar is concerned only with informational content, he will often not be able to understand fully the speaker's purpose, nor the significance of his strategy of communication, nor the type of response sought from the hearer. (p. 1)

One can properly claim to interpret a text only if he (sic.) takes account of the intention embodied in the text. The interpreter must allow the text to speak in its own way. He must recognize and respect the particular kind of event which is intended to take place between text and reader and clarify the nature of that event for others. (p. 7)

[F]orm is an integral aspect of a text which must be considered if its full significance is to be understood....[A]ll formal features which give special qualities to a text,

particularly features which increase its power to challenge the will and awaken the imagination, are relevant.... (pp. 8-9)

[W]e should look closely at the form of the synoptic sayings to see how part interacts with part, modifying and enriching meaning, and how tension between parts twists words away from their surface meanings and points to something deeper....[W]e must respect the unity of our texts, regarding each as an equilibrium of forces which is disturbed when any part is examined without attention to the whole. (pp. 16-7)

Certain formal features of the [biblical] texts are the public signs that we are dealing with a distinctive mode of language....Formal analysis can protect us against superficial responses to imaginative utterance by examining in detail this [inbuilt] system of controls. (pp. 28-9)

Through pattern the [biblical] text gains unity and particularity. Pattern heightens the interaction of the parts, enforcing, contrasting, and enriching. The patterns of these sayings contribute especially to tension, which is strong and pervasive. This tension is the formal reflection of the text's desire to challenge prevailing structures of the personal world and to grant a new vision of some region of existence. (pp. 55-6)

6. The following text is Acts 4:24b-30 (RSV). What genre does it manifest, and what are the stylistic and structural markers that support your classification? Point out three translation problems that you notice (other than the archaic English). Suggest how you would handle these problems in YL. How would you format this passage in terms of line and paragraph breaks?

^{24b} "Sovereign Lord, who didst make the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, ²⁵ who by the mouth of our father David, thy servant, didst say by the Holy Spirit, 'Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples imagine vain things?' ²⁶ The kings of the earth set themselves in array, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Anointed' – ²⁷ for truly in this city there were gathered together against thy holy servant Jesus, whom thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, ²⁸ to do whatever thy hand and thy plan had predestined to take place. ²⁹ And now, Lord, look upon their threats, and grant to thy servants to speak thy word with all boldness, ³⁰ while thou stretchest out thy hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of thy holy servant Jesus."

7. Many dialogues in the Bible may be classified as "dramatic" in nature, that is, a narrative composed for the most part as a sequence of speeches between two (rarely more) chief characters. Various types of argument are often manifested as the dialogue reaches a climax, with one speaker verbally defeating the other (one speaker may represent a group, such as the Pharisees). Outline the debate that takes place in the dramatic dialogue of Matthew 4:3-10 (below, RSV). Would the respective arguments of Jesus and Satan be clear if rendered literally in YL? If not, what must be done to clarify the point and purpose of either speaker? Finally, how would you format this text with paragraphing to make it look more "dramatic" on the printed page?

3 And the tempter came and said to him [Jesus], "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." **4** But he answered, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'" **5** Then the devil took him to the holy city, and set him on the pinnacle of the temple, **6** and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, 'He will give his angels charge of you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'" **7** Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God.'" **8** Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them; **9** and he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." **10** Then Jesus said to him, "Begone, Satan! for it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.'"

8. There is a logical *enthymeme* that underlies Christ's question in Luke 14:28. The main elements of this mini-argument are given below, but in mixed-up order. See if you can fit them into the standard pattern for such types of reasoning (fill out the blanks in the box):

- a. requires serious planning (counting the cost)
- b. building a larger tower
- c. a major building project
- d. therefore, building a tower
- e. requires serious planning (to avoid failure)
- f. is an example of a major building project

Major premise = _____ + _____
Minor premise = _____ + _____
Conclusion = _____ + _____

Is this sort of reasoning and argumentation apparent to most people of your language-culture? If not, what can be done to clarify such passages in your Bible translation? In the case of Luke 14:28, is the immediate context (e.g., v. 29) sufficient to clarify Christ's point? Explain your answer.

9. The following speech by Christ is actually a prayer. Name three major discourse characteristics of a prayer and then analyze the one set out below (John 17, RSV, reformatted). Indicate the larger structural units (paragraphs) and list any important patterns and stylistic devices that you notice. What is the rhetorical function of each of these devices? Would they cause you any difficulty when translating this passage into YL? Explain any potential problems that you find.

¹ When Jesus had spoken these words,
he lifted up his eyes to heaven and said,

Father, the hour has come;
glorify thy Son that the Son may glorify thee,

² since thou hast given him power over all flesh,
to give eternal life to all whom thou hast given him.

³ And this is eternal life,
that they know thee the only true God,
and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.

⁴ I glorified thee on earth,
having accomplished the work
which thou gavest me to do;

⁵ and now, Father, glorify thou me in thy own presence
with the glory which I had with thee
before the world was made.

⁶ I have manifested thy name to the men
whom thou gavest me out of the world;
thine they were, and thou gavest them to me,
and they have kept thy word.

⁷ Now they know that everything
that thou hast given me is from thee;

⁸ for I have given them the words which thou gavest me,
and they have received them
and know in truth that I came from thee;
and they have believed that thou didst send me.

⁹ I am praying for them;
I am not praying for the world
but for those whom thou hast given me,
for they are thine;

¹⁰ all mine are thine, and thine are mine,
and I am glorified in them.

¹¹ And now I am no more in the world,
but they are in the world,
and I am coming to thee.

Holy Father, keep them in thy name,
which thou hast given me,
that they may be one, even as we are one.

¹² While I was with them,
I kept them in thy name,
which thou hast given me;

I have guarded them,
and none of them is lost but the son of perdition,
that the scripture might be fulfilled.

¹³ But now I am coming to thee;
and these things I speak in the world,
that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves.

¹⁴ I have given them thy word;
and the world has hated them
because they are not of the world,
even as I am not of the world.

¹⁵ I do not pray that thou shouldst take them out of the world,
but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil one.

¹⁶ They are not of the world,
even as I am not of the world.

¹⁷ Sanctify them in the truth;
thy word is truth.

¹⁸ As thou didst send me into the world,
so I have sent them into the world.

¹⁹ And for their sake I consecrate myself,
that they also may be consecrated in truth.

²⁰ "I do not pray for these only,
but also for those who believe in me through their word,

²¹ that they may all be one;
even as thou,
Father, art in me, and I in thee,
that they also may be in us,
so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

²² The glory which thou hast given me I have given to them,
that they may be one even as we are one,

²³ I in them and thou in me,
that they may become perfectly one,
so that the world may know
that thou hast sent me
and hast loved them even as thou hast loved me.

²⁴ Father, I desire that they also,
whom thou hast given me, may be with me where I am,
to behold my glory which thou hast given me
in thy love for me before the foundation of the world.

²⁵ O righteous Father, the world has not known thee,
but I have known thee;
and these know that thou hast sent me.

²⁶ I made known to them thy name,
and I will make it known,
that the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them,
and I in them.

What do you think of the poetic format used above? Does it clarify the thoughts of this prayer? Is the text any easier to read? Explain your answers and suggest any revisions that come to mind. How do you propose translating and formatting this well-known pericope in YL – as prose or as poetry? Explain.

10. Analyze Paul's public speech to the Athenians in Acts 17:22–31 (below, NIV). Indicate where you would put paragraph breaks and why. Outline the main aspects of Paul's argument strategy here – how does he try to convince his audience of his main point(s)? Point out three effective rhetorical techniques that he employs in this effort. Would this speech be difficult to translate in YL? Tell why, or why not. Make a list of the important *presuppositions* that Paul makes as he unfolds his argument. How apparent would these be to the people of your culture? Identify any major discrepancies or contradictions.

²² ...“Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. ²³ For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you. ²⁴ “The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. ²⁵ And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. ²⁶ From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. ²⁷ God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. ²⁸ ‘For in him we live and move and have our being.’ As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring.’ ²⁹ “Therefore since we are God’s offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone – an image made by man’s design and skill. ³⁰ In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. ³¹ For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead.”

11. Direct speech, including direct speech in the Epistles, normally manifests a great deal of idiomatic language. Consider the following Semitic-style religious expressions in their textual context and suggest a nonfigurative meaning that most closely renders the idea in English. Then see if you can find a corresponding figure or idiom in YL to convey any of them (from Nida 2003:119):

let the dead bury their dead (Luke 9:60)

putting the hand to the plow and looking back (Luke 9:62)

give glory to God (John 9:24)

to be in bitter gall (Acts 8:23)

to pour out blood (Rom. 3:15)

bearing a scar (Gal. 6:17)

strengthen weak knees (Heb. 12:12)

gird up the loins of the mind (1 Pet. 1:13)

Now examine the following set of idioms, all of which involve the “heart” (*καρδια*) in Greek (Nida *ibid.*). What do you think is their primary meaning in the passage specified? Under which generic concept could all these usages be classified? Do you have any “heart” idioms in YL (or perhaps a functionally equivalent figure that features a different body part)? Finally, translate each of these passages idiomatically in your language and with reference to your culture.

to turn the heart towards (Luke 1:17)

to open the heart (Luke 24:45)

to make hard the heart (John 12:40)

to fill the heart (Acts 5:3)

to put into the heart (Acts 19:21)

to go up upon the heart (1 Cor. 2:9)

to broaden the heart (2 Cor. 6:11)

12.3.3 Epistolary prose

The discourse types and techniques found in the New Testament letters are somewhat different from those of the Gospels and Acts. On the other hand, since the letters are in effect written sermons delivered at a distance, they are characterized by the style of direct speech, which, as we have seen, is also prominent in the Gospels and Acts, most notably in the speeches of Jesus and the apostles, respectively. There are several other important similarities in terms of general composition, most notably:

1. Argument strategy

Argument strategy normally incorporates a number of *deductive* (cause-effect) and *inductive* (exemplifying) devices that pertain to the current topic. Observe, for example, the various kinds of “proofs” that Paul employs in 1 Corinthians 15 in his argument for belief in a bodily resurrection.

- a. a **reductio ad absurdum**, demonstrating in a sequence of conditional clauses the utter folly of denying the fact, or even the possibility, of a bodily resurrection (vv. 12–19)
- b. a **thesis statement** for the entire argument: since Christ has been raised, believers too will be raised (v. 20)
- c. a **paradigm** from Scripture contrasting Adam (death) and Christ (life) (vv. 21–23)
- d. an **explanatory digression**, revealing the temporal sequence and theological significance of the eschatological order that has been brought about by the soteriological work of Christ, as epitomized by his resurrection (vv. 24–28)
- e. **everyday examples** that illustrate the importance of a belief in the resurrection: baptizing for the dead (29), facing danger, persecution and death (vv. 30–32)
- f. a **secular quotation** from the Greek poet Menander (v. 33)
- g. **analogies** from nature, comparing the resurrection to the “rising to life” of seeds (vv. 36–38) and comparing different types of “bodies” in the universe (vv. 39–41) to the resurrection body (vv. 42–44)
- h. **paradigm** from Scripture, returning to the contrast between Adam and Christ, including a citation of Genesis 2:7 (vv. 45–49)

2. Syllogisms

Syllogisms are often partially implicit in Paul’s letters and combined, one being purposefully woven within or alongside another. For example, in 1 Corinthians 15:50–57, which is the passage following the text summarized above, one of his major lines of reasoning may be stated in the following syllogistic terms:

General premise: Human beings need transformed (or heavenly) bodies to enter the heavenly kingdom of God.

Specific premise: All believers in Christ will become transformed by God at the resurrection.

Conclusion: Therefore, all believers in Christ will be able to enter the heavenly Kingdom of God.

- What is the importance of Paul’s linking the three crucial concepts of faith in Christ, a bodily resurrection, and eternal life in heaven?
- Is the apostle’s logic clearly stated and able to be followed when translated into YL? If not, what is the problem and what can be done about it?

3. Midrash

The apostolic writers, following the example of their Lord, normally based their authoritative arguments about salvation and new life in Christ on the Old Testament Scriptures. Four types of *midrashic* exegesis are especially prominent in the New Testament: running commentary, peshet interpretation, typological reading, and allegory:

- a. In **running commentary** a particular theme is developed in a sequence of alternating Bible texts and comments (e.g., reasons, proofs, assertions), as in Galatians 3:

3:6	refers to	Genesis 15:6 with a comment in	3:7
3:8		Genesis 12:3	3:9
3:10b		Deuteronomy 27:26	3:10a
3:11b		Habakkuk 2:4	3:11a
3:12b		Leviticus 18:5	3:12a
3:13b		Deuteronomy 21:23	3:13a
3:16		Genesis 12:7 (13:15, 24:7)	3:15, 17–18

- b. In **peshier interpretation** we have what amounts to a paraphrase of one or more Scripture texts, the interpretation of the original passages being modified to fit the contemporary context, as in 1 Corinthians 15:54–55.
- verse 54 => Isaiah 25:8 in a modified form as derived from both a Hebrew text as well as the Septuagint with the addition of “in victory” at the end.
- verse 55 => Hosea 13:14, but modified in a similar hybrid manner to focus on the main theme, which is Christ’s victory over death in the resurrection.
- c. In **typological reading** an important OT person or event is shown to correspond to certain aspects of the Christian faith and life, thus demonstrating the continuity in God’s saving plan for his people. A prominent instance of this occurs in Romans 5:12–21, where Adam is presented as a contrastive type to Jesus the Christ. Each forerunner brings into the world a new set of circumstances for humanity, Adam in a negative way (sin => death), Christ in a positive way (justification => life).
- d. In **allegory** some well-known OT reference is used symbolically to illustrate a closely-related series of NT truths. The conflict between Abraham’s two wives, for example, is cited in Galatians 4:21–31, with Sarah and her son Isaac representing the “new Jerusalem” of Christ’s kingdom of grace and freedom from religious ceremonialism, and Hagar and Ishmael representing “Mount Sinai” and slavery to the demands of the Mosaic law.

4. Homily

Homily is a basic form of instructive pastoral discourse occasionally found in John’s Gospel and frequently in the Epistle to the Hebrews. A homily consists of three basic components:

- a. Scripture-based or apostolic examples and proofs;
- b. a conclusion that arises from the preceding; and
- c. a subsequent exhortation pertaining to the Christian faith and/or life.

An example of such a homily is in John 3, in which a = verses 3–15, b = verses 16–17, and c = verses 18–21.

In Hebrews, an interesting feature of the third hortatory segment (c) is that it often functions simultaneously as a bridge to the next distinct homily in the letter. We see this at the very beginning of Hebrews, after the formal introduction to the homily as a whole (1:1–4).

Observe that the linked series (termed a *catena*) of Scripture passages leading up to the conclusion of Hebrews 1:5–13 is very elaborate. The conclusion that Christ is clearly superior to any of the angels, is, on the other hand, rather low-key and left largely implicit, expressed in the form of a rhetorical question. In some languages it may be necessary to make the crucial theological implication of the climactic verse 14 explicit so that it is not overlooked or undervalued in the vernacular development of the author’s argument.

What works best in a translation into YL?

Point out any other potential translation problems that you notice in the passage below.

A. (Heb. 1:5–13)

⁵ For to which of the angels did God ever say,
 “You are my Son;
 today I have become your Father^a”^b?

Or again,
 “I will be his Father,
 and he will be my Son”^c?

⁶ And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says,

“Let all God's angels worship him.”^d

⁷ In speaking of the angels he says,
“He makes his angels winds,
his servants flames of fire.”^e

⁸ But about the Son he says,
“Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever,
and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom.
⁹ You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness;
therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions
by anointing you with the oil of joy.”^f

¹⁰ He also says,
“In the beginning, O Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth,
and the heavens are the work of your hands.
¹¹ They will perish, but you remain;
they will all wear out like a garment.
¹² You will roll them up like a robe;
like a garment they will be changed.
But you remain the same,
and your years will never end.”^g

¹³ To which of the angels did God ever say,
“Sit at my right hand
until I make your enemies
a footstool for your feet”?

B. (Heb. 1:14)

¹⁴ Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?

C. (Heb. 2:1–4)

¹ We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away. ² For if the message spoken by angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, ³ how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. ⁴ God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

a. 1:5 Or <i>have begotten you</i>
b. 1:5 Ps. 2.7
c. 1:5 2 Sam. 7.14; 1 Chr. 17.13
d. 1:6 Deut. 32.43 (see Dead Sea Scrolls and Septuagint)
e. 1:7 Ps. 104.4
f. 1:9 Ps. 45.6, 7
g. 1:12 Ps. 102.25–27

5. Apocalypse

Apocalypse in the Epistles tends to be organized in terms of four basic elements, just as in the Synoptic Gospels. These elements are summarized below and exemplified from Mark 13:

- a. predictions about persecutions and sufferings for believers before the end time (vv. 6–20)
- b. predictions about the coming Messiah (or false messiahs) using standard Ancient Near Eastern eschatological imagery (vv. 21–26)
- c. description of the final salvation or judgement scene and related events (v. 27)
- d. accompanying paraenetic (hortatory) and didactic passages (vv. 28–37 + 5, 9a, 14–16, 18)

Try to pick out these same elements in the epistolary apocalypse of Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:16 – 5:11 (below).

^{4.16} For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. ¹⁸ Therefore encourage each other with these words. ^{5.1} Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, ² for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. ³ While people are saying, “Peace and safety,” destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. ⁴ But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. ⁵ You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. ⁶ So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled. ⁷ For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. ⁸ But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. ⁹ For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁰ He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. ¹¹ Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

Note any possible problems for translating this particular passage as well as this type of discourse. What solutions can you suggest? Give three specific examples.

Which element of the four constituents listed above is missing in 1 Thessalonians 4:16 – 5:11?

Can you suggest a reason for this vis-à-vis Paul’s argument strategy?

Suggest where the main paragraph breaks need to be made and why you have picked these places in particular.

It is important to observe how the apocalyptic material fits in relation to the discourse that surrounds it, especially the preceding text.

¹³ Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. ¹⁴ We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. ¹⁵ According to the Lord’s own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep.

Explain the connection to the preceding text in the Thessalonians passage, that is, what Paul teaches his readers in 4:13–15.

Do you need to introduce an explicit bridge between these two sections in YL? If so, propose an appropriate wording.

Pick out the four apocalyptic elements in Christ’s letter to Ephesus in Rev. 2:1-7 (note how the second element has been modified).

Which apocalyptic theme is emphasized in Rev. 4-5? What are the important structural and thematic features of these two chapters in relation to the Apocalypse as a whole (cf. Wendland 2008:chs. 8,11)?

But while there are some similarities, as we have seen, between the prose of the NT Epistles and the prose of the Gospels and Acts, their differences – in terms of genres, devices, and the overall discourse structure – are also pronounced. The larger organization of a New Testament letter generally consists of just three principal parts: *introduction*, *body*, and *conclusion*, but each of these may be structured in different ways. The Pastoral Epistles, for example, though composed for a similar purpose, are quite varied in their discourse organization and literary style. In most epistles the structural adaptations that occur are most notable in the large, central “body,” depending on the communicative circumstances and the content being conveyed, but considerable diversity is displayed even in the more formulaic “introduction” and “conclusion.”

In Galatians, for example, we have the initial specification of who the writer and addressees are (Gal. 1:1–2), followed by a standard *salutation* (i.e., “grace” + “peace” in v. 3) along with an expansive

doxology (vv. 4–5). However, Paul deliberately excludes both the expected *thanksgiving* in which he normally praises the recipients for certain aspects of their Christian character or behavior and also the accompanying prayer that God would strengthen these demonstrated virtues (as in Eph. 1:15–17). Why does Paul feel that it is necessary to omit such a vital pragmatic as well as theological component? The reason is dramatically and forcefully stated in the very next verses: The Galatians were in danger of deserting the central core of apostolic preaching, the only saving “gospel of Christ” (Gal. 1:6–7). Clearly, Paul’s introductions were not stereotyped or perfunctory, certainly not after the opening salutation.

The same is true of his conclusions. Typical letters of that day contained a final greeting and last wish for good health as well as a word of farewell. Paul, too, always ended up with a benediction (e.g., “May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit” in Gal. 6:18), but an assortment of other epistolary elements could precede this, such as a peace wish (e.g., Phil. 4:9), a doxology (Rom. 16:27), references to the circumstances of writing (Gal. 6:11), a personal commendation (Rom. 16:1–2), a call for the holy kiss of Christian fellowship (1 Cor. 16:20), the names of people to be greeted (Rom. 16:3–15), and the names of those sending greetings (Phlm. 23–24). Also included might be last-minute appeals (2 Cor. 13:11), admonitions (Gal. 6:12–17), as well as final instructions (Col. 4:16–17). All of these distinctions may be considered discourse subcategories of the NT epistolary genre. In each case, then, they need to be identified and clearly demarcated within a given letter so that similar styles of TL writing (or speaking) may be found to match them as closely as possible.

As already mentioned, the “body” of a NT letter normally manifests greater compositional variety than the introduction and conclusion. In addition to the subgenres of argument, syllogism, midrash, homily, and apocalypse (described above), a number of other discourse types are prominent (usually combined with each other to form major sections that relate to a particular theme). They are briefly defined and exemplified below:

1. **Doctrinal exposition**

Doctrinal exposition, which consists of basic instruction, clarification, and scriptural support with respect to the chief doctrines of the Christian faith, in particular, the “gospel” about Jesus the Christ as this relates to the Mosaic law. Thus all people are sinners in the eyes of a holy and righteous God, as clearly revealed by the law (e.g., Rom. 3:9–20), but Christ has redeemed them (us!) all through his sacrificial death, this gift of salvation being received solely by faith (e.g., Rom. 3:21–31).

2. **Paraenetic admonition**

Paraenetic admonition, in which a number of imperatives are often bunched together in order to specify how or how not to live as a faithful, self-sacrificing Christian in everyday communal circumstances. These lists of loosely related precepts and principles are not meant to be exhaustive in any given instance, but rather are representative of what the believer’s behavior ought to be like (e.g., Rom. 12:1–21).

3. **Topoi discussion**

Topoi discussion, which is more tightly organized around a particular ethical subject than the two preceding genres. First Corinthians is quite clearly organized according to this principle; it touches on a variety of subjects that were of concern to Christian congregational life, such as church discipline (chap. 5), lawsuits among believers (6:1–11), issues pertaining to marriage (chap. 7), eating certain foods (chap. 8), apostolic rights to congregational support (9:1–14), women’s head covering during worship (11:2–16), proper observance of the Lord’s Supper (11:17–34), and practice of charismatic gifts (chaps. 12, 14). Frequently, these pastoral “discussions,” or deliberations, include arguments that manifest the following five components (illustrated from Rom. 13:1–7):

- a. **Injunction.** An exhortation concerning the desired ethical action – what to do, or avoid doing. “Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities...” (Rom. 13:1).

- b. **Reason.** The apostolic/biblical rationale for such action. “[F]or there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God” (Rom. 13:1).
- c. **Refutation.** A contrary position on the matter (occurs optionally). “Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgement on themselves” (Rom. 13:2).
- d. **Elaboration.** Further explanation and reasoning in favor of the injunction (e.g., a specification of the positive results of obedience or, conversely, the negative consequences of disobedience). “For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.... This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor” (Rom. 13:3–4, 6–7).
- e. **Conclusion.** A statement at or near the end that summarizes the apostolic position regarding the issue under discussion (occurs optionally). “Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience” (Rom. 13:5).

4. Virtue and vice lists

Virtue and vice lists, which consist of a detailed specification of a number of commendable or condemned attitudes and ethical behaviors. Such a list is given in support of a particular exhortation by the writer. The positive and negative parallels are frequently conjoined in the same context for added comparative impact (e.g., Gal. 5:19–23, Eph. 4:31–32, Titus 1:7–10). The listing effectively “slows down” the discourse and helps hearers to focus on the apostle’s broader faith-life application. The text may manifest certain other literary features, such as internal euphony, rhythm, topical arrangements, and balance. Galatians 5:22–23 is an example:

Ὁ δὲ καρπὸς τοῦ πνεύματος ἐστὶν
 ἀγάπη, χαρὰ, εἰρήνη,
 μακροθυμία, χρηστότης, ἀγαθωσύνη.
 (Note the longest terms in the middle)
 πίστις, πραΰτης ἐγκράτεια·
 κατὰ τῶν τοιούτων οὐκ ἐστὶν νόμος.

²² But the **fruit** of the Spirit is
 love, joy, peace,
 patience, kindness, goodness,
 faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control.
 Against such things there is no law.

What is the larger issue in Paul’s argument that this list heightens?

Do such lists function as a heightening device in your literary-rhetorical tradition?

Describe any major correspondences or conflicts in regard to lists that you find in YL and literary tradition.

Translate the preceding passage in a *LiFE*-like manner in YL.

5. Household codes

Household codes, which present a series of instructions directed at key members of the typical Greco-Roman household, especially as they relate to each other in complementary pairs: husband

and wife, father and children, master and slaves. This secular literary form was “Christianized” by the apostles to show how a Christ-centered family produced a strong church and a strong society. It also demonstrated to the pagan authorities that Christianity was no threat to the state. It is important to note the variations in these codes in the different letters and to consider how they might reflect or arise from the specific extratextual setting.

Contrast Ephesians 5:21 – 6:9 and Colossians 3:18 – 4:1.

What difference(s) do you notice between these two texts, and how might you account for them with reference to their respective compositional contexts?

6. **Diatribes**

Diatribes, a rhetorical technique in which the speaker or writer debates with a hypothetical addressee in order to develop his argument concerning a particular issue. Often diatribe is used to emphasize what has just been taught in the letter or to transition to a new point (e.g., Rom. 6:1–4 in response to 5:20–21 and leading up to 6:5–14). In Romans there are many instances of diatribe, the dramatic features of which are listed and exemplified here from Romans 6:1–3:

- a. **Exclamation** “What shall we say, then?”
- b. **Rhetorical question leading to a negative or a false conclusion** “Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?”
- c. **Rejection of the implied answer** “By no means!”
- d. **Reasons for the rejection** (in the form of RQs, examples, sayings, biblical quotations, and references) “We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?”

Note that the “reason” of Romans 6:3 acts also as the transition to the new topic that begins in 6:4 (“We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life”).

What is the main topic and point of this following section (6:5–14)?

Does it need to be marked more overtly or strongly as such in YL? If so, explain how this may be done.

7. **Formulaic expressions**

Formulaic expressions to help listeners orient themselves as they hear the body of a letter being read. Paul regularly inserted certain expressions at key junctures in the text’s development, usually relating to the doctrinal or paraenetic purpose at hand and often introducing important themes or sub-themes into the discussion. Some examples are “I want you to know that” (Gal. 1:11); “I appeal to you” (1 Cor. 1:10); “I do not want you to be ignorant” (2 Cor. 1:18); “Now concerning” (1 Cor. 7:1). The Pauline Epistles will occasionally also include short liturgical formulae to highlight what Paul has just said. The liturgical formulae are of two types: blessings and doxologies.

- a. **Blessings** are typically tripartite, consisting of a reference to God, a description of God (e.g., “who is blessed forever”), and a concluding “Amen!” Such a blessing is seen in the final noun phrase of Romans 1:25, “...they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.” In this example, the blessing serves to heighten the contrast between a holy Creator and degenerate humanity (see Rom. 1:18–24).
- b. **Doxologies** are also tripartite: first a reference to God in the dative case (including also a personal or relative pronoun), then an ascription of glory to God with or without further modification, and finally a concluding “Amen!” In Ephesians 3:21 we find this important doxology: “...to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever

and ever. Amen.” It is the conclusion to Paul’s prayer on behalf of his readers and also brings the first half of the epistle to an end.

Liturgical formulae, in addition to their structural and topical marking functions, perform a phatic function as well in that they relate the letter writer (pastor) to his addressees (congregation), psychologically and spiritually. The use of these formulae supports the view that the epistles often serve communicatively as “sermons proclaimed at a distance.”

Do you have a genre in your literary tradition that corresponds to these religious praises and wishes?

If so, describe them in comparison with the Greek forms described above.

If not, how will you translate the NT blessings and doxologies with a distinctive style?

For reflection, research, and response:

1. Study Paul’s argument strategy in 1 Corinthians 9 as he defends his right to receive support from those whom he served with the gospel. Make an outline of the different rhetorical features that he uses and tell how they operate to develop and reinforce his reasoning in this chapter.
2. We have already discussed the importance of identifying the major and minor *theses* of hortatory discourse, which thus form the “backbone” of the text, and of distinguishing these from the various types of *supportive* material that may accompany them (cf. sec. 4.2). For example, in 1 Cor. 1:4-17 we find a hortatory thesis in v. 10 (“Now I appeal to you...”) surrounded by supportive material, namely, Paul’s “thanksgiving” on behalf of the congregation (vv. 4-9) and Paul’s summary of the situation in relation to his prior activity among them (vv. 11-17; Levinsohn 2006a:3). These different types of discourse may be marked in specific languages by various surface features, such as conjunctions, special particles, transitional phrases, shifts in word order, tense/aspect markers, and distinctive verb forms. It is important that sufficient research be done in this regard based on natural oral and written text material in the TL.

Now make a study of Paul’s sequence of exhortations in chapters 5 and 6 of 1 Corinthians. First, decide how many distinct “arguments” are present and what their respective themes and text boundaries are. Then identify the main *hortatory theses* and note their different surface forms in the original (if possible). Distinguish the different types of *supportive material* in each case. Finally, determine how you must express the main theses in YL so that they will be readily apparent to your target audience—a group that is only *hearing* the text being read aloud. Discuss as a group any particular problems that you encounter when doing this exercise.

3. What is the major *enthymeme* (implicit syllogism) that underlies Jude’s condemnation of false teachers in verses 8–10 of his epistle?

Major premise: _____

Minor premise: _____

Conclusion: _____

4. Review the different aspects of midrashic interpretation that are described earlier in section 6.3.3 and show how these are manifested in 1 Peter 2:1–10. Then tell how this particular instance of interpretation serves as the foundation for Peter’s paraenetic exhortation in the next section of his letter, that is, 2:11–17. Make a note of points where this line of argumentation would not be entirely clear if rendered literally in YL. What must you do to explicate the passage – and yet also express it as forcefully as in the original text?
5. Point out the *topoi* discussion structure that is present in James 2:1–13; in other words, specify the injunction, reason, refutation, elaboration, and conclusion in these verses. Would any of these present a problem when rendering them in YL? If so, identify these expressions and tell why they would cause difficulties for translators.

6. Consider the list of virtues in 1 Timothy 3:2–7. How do these particular virtues fit into Paul’s instruction at this point in the letter (cf. 3:14–15)? Is it necessary to clarify the point of this passage in YL? Explain why, or why not. How does verse 16 link up with the discussion that precedes it? In other words, what is the immediate relevance of this Christological confession to what Paul has just written?
7. Study the “household code” in 1 Peter 2:18 – 3:7. Where does the focus of the whole passage lie and how have you determined this? Does this particular emphasis come out clearly in your translation? If not, what might you do in order to stylistically mark this foundational peak?
8. Analyze the diatribe discourse of Romans 3 according to the model given earlier in section 6.3.3. What principle is Paul arguing for? How does he make his point by the diatribe method? Point out any places in the text that might cause some difficulty when translating this passage into YL and tell why. Explain how you would solve these problems.
9. Consider the four typical text elements typically found in apocalyptic discourse. Identify examples of these four in Revelation 4 – 7. How do these features operate together to heighten the overall impression and impact of this type of writing? The book of Revelation is not normally classified as an epistle, but how does the book’s structure suggest that it was meant to be read and interpreted that way? Note all the intertextual references and allusions that are found in Revelation 4 – 7 and suggest why these are a vital part of its apocalyptic “argument.”
10. Identify the “doxology” in Gal. 1:1–5. Specify its main parts. Can this be translated as a single sentence in YL? Explain why or why not and explain how you would handle this passage. What is the distinctive discourse constituent in Paul’s introduction to the Romans (1:1–7)? What is the literary function of this insertion, and how will you call attention to this in your translation?
11. Ryken (2002:194–5) claims that “the more literary a text is, the more regularly it employs ambiguity in the sense of multiple meanings, so that it is entirely possible that the phrase “the obedience of faith” (Rom. 1:5) can legitimately embrace some of the suggested interpretations... [in the six different versions listed for comparison].” His point is that a more literal rendering preserves the ambiguity and hence is more “literary” in nature as well as being a more accurate translation. How would you respond to this argument from the perspective of a *LiFE* approach to the communicational issues involved? How do you recommend translating “the obedience of faith” in Romans 1:5? Give some reasons for your choice.
12. Use a study Bible, commentary, or other reference book to explore the symbolism of “Babylon” in 1 Peter 5:13 (see Zech. 2:7; Rev. 18:2, 10). How many levels or aspects of significant denotative and connotative meaning do you discern? Which of these might need to be identified in a footnote in your translation? Analyze the literary and theological import of another highly negative symbol in the epistles – plus one equally positive image of special significance.
13. What is distinctive about the style of 1 John 2:12–14 (quoted below from the RSV)? How will your decision about textual form influence how you format this text? Study this portion in its context and suggest what communicative function it performs.

¹² I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven for his sake. ¹³ I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, children, because you know the Father. ¹⁴ I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

Now evaluate Peterson’s translation of this same passage (quoted below from *The Message*) – his interpretation as well as structure. Would you recommend any corrections or improvements?

I remind you my dear children: Your sins are forgiven in Jesus’ name. You veterans were in on the ground floor, and know the One who started all this; you newcomers have won a big victory over the Evil One.

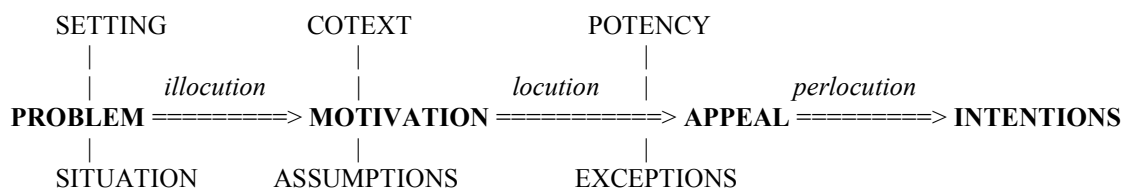
And a second reminder, dear children: You know the Father from personal experience. You veterans know the One who started it all; and you newcomers – such vitality and strength! God’s

word is so steady in you. Your fellowship with God enables you to gain a victory over the Evil One.

14. The following diagram (from Wendland 2004b:219) summarizes a method for investigating the rhetorical setting of an epistolary argument. After reading pages 219–223, provide a *definition* of each of the ten elements in this diagram.

Then apply these elements as you summarize the contextual situation that forms the cognitive background to Paul’s letter to the Philippians. Write your summary out on a separate piece of paper and indicate which aspects of this information seem to be most crucial to readers for a proper understanding of this epistle. (Note that the feature “potency” might be better termed “authority,” since it includes all explicit and implicit references to the author’s perceived or ascribed status, prestige, and power to command, which supports his present appeal or command.)

Why does such background material need to be carefully studied *before* preparing to translate one of the NT epistles, especially in a *LiFE* manner?



15. **MAJOR ASSIGNMENT:** Review the following steps for analyzing literary discourse in the Scriptures. Then apply these steps to Paul’s letter to Philemon. Write out your detailed study so that it may be handed in to the instructor for assessment. Several of the best write-ups will be selected for oral presentation and discussion by the entire class.

- a. Read the entire text aloud (several times) and determine its main genre and subgenres.
- b. Study the complete textual, intertextual, and extratextual context as carefully as possible.
- c. Plot all occurrences of exact and synonymous repetition in the pericope.
- d. Pinpoint all instances of disjunction (“breaks”) occasioned by transitional formulae and content shifting (e.g., topic, setting).
- e. Isolate and describe the obvious areas of special stylistic concentration within the text.
- f. Identify the major areas of discourse demarcation and points of projection (peak, climax).
- g. Analyze and display the larger syntactic-semantic structure of the entire pericope.
- h. Prepare a complete thematic study (word/symbol/motif), especially the key concepts and clusters.
- i. Explain any outstanding linguistic and literary features that remain unaccounted for.
- j. Note the major speech functions (speech acts) and their interaction in the discourse.
- k. Make an explicit stylistic and structural comparison for identifying possible form-functional matches between the SL and TL.
- l. Prepare a well-formatted, trial *LiFE* translation and test it comparatively against other versions.

16. [For students who can refer to the NT Greek text or who can work with an interlinear version:] Prepare a “structural discourse segmentation chart” for Philemon under the headings below, with special reference to the features of topicalization, focalization, and intensification, as illustrated in section 6.2.4. This will help you to identify the various patterns of repetition in Philemon, the areas of disjunction and content shifting, significant word order variations, and the points of special stylistic

concentration. The analysis template is given below, followed by a reformatted (utterance-oriented) version of the Greek text for your reference.

ref. pre-verb2 pre-verb1 VERB post- verb post-verb2 post-verb3

¹ Παῦλος δέσμιος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ καὶ Τιμόθεος ὁ ἀδελφὸς Φιλήμονι τῷ ἀγαπητῷ καὶ συνεργῷ ἡμῶν

² καὶ Ἀφρία τῇ ἀδελφῇ καὶ Ἀρχίππῳ τῷ συστρατιώτῃ ἡμῶν καὶ τῇ κατ' οἶκόν σου ἐκκλησίᾳ,

³ χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

⁴ Εὐχαριστῶ τῷ θεῷ μου πάντοτε μνεῖαν σου ποιούμενος ἐπὶ τῶν προσευχῶν μου,

⁵ ἀκούων σου τὴν ἀγάπην καὶ τὴν πίστιν, ἣν ἔχεις πρὸς τὸν κύριον Ἰησοῦν καὶ εἰς πάντας τοὺς ἁγίους,

⁶ ὅπως ἡ κοινωνία τῆς πίστεώς σου ἐνεργῆς γένηται ἐν ἐπιγνώσει παντὸς ἀγαθοῦ τοῦ ἐν ἡμῖν εἰς Χριστόν.

⁷ χαρὰν γὰρ πολλὴν ἔσχον καὶ παράκλησιν ἐπὶ τῇ ἀγάπῃ σου, ὅτι τὰ σπλάγχνα τῶν ἀγίων ἀναπέπνυται διὰ σοῦ, ἀδελφέ.

⁸ Διό, πολλὴν ἐν Χριστῷ παρρησίαν ἔχων ἐπιτάσσειν σοι τὸ ἀνήκον

⁹ διὰ τὴν ἀγάπην μᾶλλον παρακαλῶ, τοιοῦτος ὢν ὡς Παῦλος πρεσβύτης νυνὶ δὲ καὶ δέσμιος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ·

¹⁰ παρακαλῶ σε περὶ τοῦ ἐμοῦ τέκνου, ὃν ἐγέννησα ἐν τοῖς δεσμοῖς, Ὀνήσιμον,

¹¹ τὸν ποτέ σοι ἄχρηστον νυνὶ δὲ [καὶ] σοὶ καὶ ἐμοὶ εὐχρηστον,

¹² ὃν ἀνέπεμψά σοι, αὐτόν, τοῦτ' ἔστιν τὰ ἐμὰ σπλάγχνα·

¹³ ὃν ἐγὼ ἐβουλόμην πρὸς ἐμαυτὸν κατέχειν, ἵνα ὑπὲρ σοῦ μοι διακονῇ ἐν τοῖς δεσμοῖς τοῦ εὐαγγελίου,

¹⁴ χωρὶς δὲ τῆς σῆς γνώμης οὐδὲν ἠθέλησα ποιῆσαι, ἵνα μὴ ὡς κατὰ ἀνάγκην τὸ ἀγαθὸν σου ᾗ ἀλλὰ κατὰ ἐκούσιον.

¹⁵ τάχα γὰρ διὰ τοῦτο ἐχωρίσθη πρὸς ὥραν, ἵνα αἰώνιον αὐτὸν ἀπέχῃς,

¹⁶ οὐκέτι ὡς δοῦλον ἀλλὰ ὑπὲρ δοῦλον, ἀδελφὸν ἀγαπητόν, μάλιστα ἐμοί, πόσῳ δὲ μᾶλλον σοὶ καὶ ἐν σαρκὶ καὶ ἐν κυρίῳ.

¹⁷ Εἰ οὖν με ἔχεις κοινωνόν, προσλαβοῦ αὐτόν ὡς ἐμέ.

¹⁸ εἰ δέ τι ἠδίκησέν σε ἢ ὀφείλει, τοῦτο ἐμοὶ ἐλλόγα.

¹⁹ ἐγὼ Παῦλος ἔγραψα τῇ ἐμῇ χειρὶ, ἐγὼ ἀποτίσω· ἵνα μὴ λέγω σοι ὅτι καὶ σεαυτὸν μοι προσοφείλεις.

²⁰ ναί, ἀδελφέ, ἐγὼ σου ὀναίμην ἐν κυρίῳ· ἀνάπαυσόν μου τὰ σπλάγχχνα ἐν Χριστῷ.

²¹ Πεποιθὼς τῇ ὑπακοῇ σου ἔγραψά σοι, εἰδὼς ὅτι καὶ ὑπὲρ ἃ λέγω ποιήσεις.

²² ἅμα δὲ καὶ ἐτοίμαζέ μοι ξενίαν· ἐλπίζω γὰρ ὅτι διὰ τῶν προσευχῶν ὑμῶν χαρισθήσομαι ὑμῖν.

²³ Ἀσπάζεται σε Ἐπαφρᾶς ὁ συναιχμάλωτός μου ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ,

²⁴ Μάρκος, Ἀρίσταρχος, Δημᾶς, Λουκᾶς, οἱ συνεργοί μου.

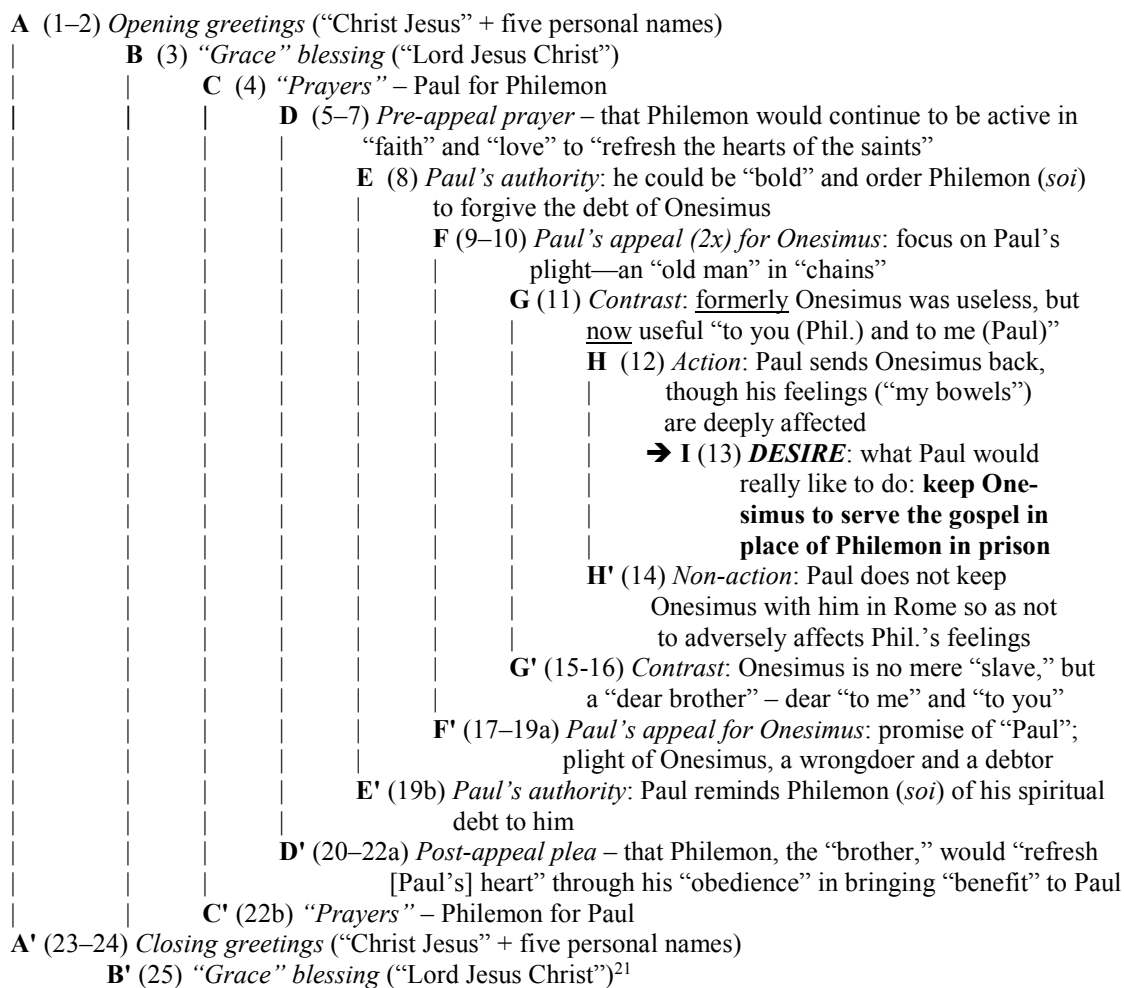
²⁵ Ἡ χάρις τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ μετὰ τοῦ πνεύματος ὑμῶν.

17. As we saw in section 6.3.1, a *narrative* consists of a series of chronologically arranged events (the “story”), which the narrator often rearranges (e.g., as flashbacks or flash-forwards) or otherwise modifies (e.g., through repetition, deletion, and marked intensification) in order to create greater impact and appeal. The resulting restructured, cause-effect-oriented sequence is the “plot,” often exhibiting one or more high points of action (the “peak”) and/or emotion (the “climax”). Some epistles and other types of argumentative discourse that refer to historical events may also be analyzed with reference to the implied narrative that they incorporate. Similarly, the actual referential sequence of events may be rearranged in plot form as part of the author’s rhetorical strategy. Consider the following diagram of a “referential sequence” in comparison with a “plot sequence,” either of which may be posited with regard to Paul’s letter to Philemon. Note which events have been dislocated in the plot and suggest a reason for this in light of your interpretation of Paul’s appeal to Philemon on behalf of Onesimus. Do you need to explain the significance of this rhetorical device for your readers in a marginal comment? If so, propose an appropriate explanation for your intended target group. Does a text analysis of this sort have any important implications for translators? Assuming that it does, mention the most important one that comes to mind.

Referential Sequence	manifested in the text at verse:	“Plot” Sequence
1. Philemon incurs a debt to Paul.	19b	7
2. Paul is imprisoned.	9 (cf. 1, 10, 13, 23)	2
3. Onesimus runs away and incurs a debt .	15 (cf. 11–13, 18–19a)	5
4. Onesimus is converted by Paul in prison.	10	3
5. Paul hears of Philemon’s love and faith.	4–7	1
6. Paul sends Onesimus back to Philemon.	12	4
7. Paul sends letter of appeal/repay O’s debt .	17–19a	6

- | | | |
|--|---------------|----|
| 8. (projected) Onesimus arrives with the letter. | 12 (implied) | 8 |
| 9. Philemon responds to Paul's appeal (how?). | 20–21 (cf. 9) | 9 |
| 10. Paul pays a visit to Philemon. | 22 | 10 |

18. Study the following diagram of a proposed chiasmic arrangement for the letter to Philemon. Do the linguistic discourse markers and literary-rhetorical devices in the original text support this arrangement? The center of a chiasmus normally indicates a point of special interest or importance in the text as a whole. Does that hypothesis hold true here in light of what you see below? Does it confirm your interpretation of Paul's argument strategy in this epistle?



Based on the preceding structural perspective, we might conclude that a major aim of Paul's is to make Philemon aware of his desire that Onesimus be released to go back as a free man to serve Paul in his prison ministry, as expressed in segment I. Assuming that hypothesis to be viable, how do you explain the muted manner in which Paul conveys his wish, burying it within a dependent syntactic construction (a purpose clause) that is embedded within yet another subordinate sequence in verses 10–13?

What might you do to make it more manifest in your translation – either within the text or someplace outside? A related question: What is the possible significance of Paul's choosing διακονέω as the word

21 Note the twist in the general pattern at the very end, that is, A'–B', perhaps in itself just another unobtrusive way of formally signaling the letter's conclusion.

for “helping” in verse 13 – as distinct from δοῦλος in verse 16 – and how does διακονέω relate to the overall theme of this epistle?

19. The following is a listing of some specific stylistic devices and rhetorical techniques used within the text of Philemon. Select the three that you consider most important to Paul’s overall argument and tell how you would render these with corresponding impact and effectiveness in YL:
- a. the indirect summons of supporting witnesses through the personal references of verses 1–2 and 23–24
 - b. the ironic self-abrogation of one’s right or authority, such as the power to “command” Philemon what to do (v. 8)
 - c. the use of emotive personal terms (e.g., “prisoner” – vv. 1, 9; “old man” – v. 9; “begotten” – v. 10; “in chains” – v. 10; “partner” – v. 17)
 - d. an appeal to divine providence and planning (suggested by the particle “perhaps”), that is, God purposefully working in the “short separation” of Onesimus and Philemon for their “eternal” benefit (v. 15)
 - e. “especially to me...how much more to you” – a *qal wehomer* rabbinical rhetorical device that progresses from the lesser to the greater (v. 16)
 - f. a vicarious analogy with regard to desired action – to “receive him as me” (v. 17)
 - g. the “anticipation” of problems or objections (18)
 - h. parenthesis/ellipsis (19a)
 - i. “not to mention” what is then immediately mentioned (*paralipsis*) (19b)
 - j. concealing one’s ultimate objective or primary request and leaving this to the addressee(s) to figure out (21)
 - k. committing oneself to the “obedience” of the addressee without actually commanding the person what to do (21a) – even what is “above and beyond the call of duty,” an instance of calculated understatement (21b)
 - l. the further addition of “one thing more” (22), whereby the writer/speaker seemingly adds an afterthought, yet one that is actually tied in with his preceding argument
 - m. Paul’s “token offer” to repay the financial debt incurred by Onesimus (19 – an offer that he was probably not in a position to carry out, though there is some debate on this issue)

12.3.4 Poetic prose

As noted in section 5.3.1, lyric discourse is found in the New Testament over and above the periodic incorporated citations of OT poetry. Such discourse may not be pure “poetry” according to the Greco-Roman literary standards of the day, but it does give abundant evidence of the stylistic features that characterize artistically composed poetic texts the world over, namely: parallel phrasing, sound effects, figurative language, condensed expression, emphatic devices, and shifting patterns with respect to normal lexical collocations, morphology, and syntax.

We want to take particular notice of devices such as *sustained rhythm*, *meaningful repetition*, *lined parallelism*, *figurative language*, *rhetorical intensification*, and *syntactic condensation*, most of which are well illustrated in Philippians 2:5–11, which was considered earlier. See how many of these characteristics you can identify in the following text, either the Greek or the English (NIV):

τοῦτο φρονεῖτε ἐν ὑμῖν
ὃ καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ,

Introduction

· ὃς ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων	A
οὐχ ἄρπαγμὸν ἠγήσατο τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ,	
ἀλλὰ ἐαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν μορφὴν δούλου λαβών,	B
ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος·	
καὶ σχήματι εὐρεθεὶς ὡς ἄνθρωπος	C
ἐταπείνωσεν ἑαυτὸν	D
γενόμενος ὑπήκοος μέχρι θανάτου,	E
θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ.	E'
διὸ καὶ ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸν ὑπερύψωσεν	D'
καὶ ἐχαρίσατο αὐτῷ τὸ ὄνομα τὸ ὑπὲρ πάντων ὀνομα,	C'
ἵνα ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ πάντες γόνα κάμψῃ	B'
ἐπουρανίων καὶ ἐπιγείων καὶ καταχθονίων	
καὶ πάντα γλώσσα ἐξομολογήσῃται	A'
ὅτι κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ πατρὸς.	

⁵ Let this mind be in you,
Which was also in Christ Jesus:

⁶ Who, being in very nature *God*,
did not consider equality with *God* something to be grasped,
⁷ but made himself nothing,
taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.

⁸ And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to *death* –
even *death on a cross!*

⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,

¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

¹¹ and every tongue confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of *God the Father*.

The following reformatting of the same passage segments the text into its parallel features in a different way (see section 5.3.4). This scheme considers the words in italics to be Pauline additions to an original hymn in Greek. Note that there is no “right” or “wrong” method of formatting such texts; it is just that one may be preferable to another in representing what appears to be the chief aspects of the original discourse structure and purpose.

Which poetic arrangement of the text do you prefer for use in YL and why?

Or perhaps you have a somewhat different structuring of this passage to suggest. If so, defend your alternative to the class.

Christ Jesus:

⁶ Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,

⁷ but made himself nothing,
taking the very nature of a servant,

being made in human likeness.

⁸ And being found in appearance as a man,

he humbled himself
and became obedient to death –
even death on a cross!

⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,

¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

There are two closely related poetic genres that we can identify in the NT literature – *hymns* and *creeds*. Hymns, or hymn segments, are scattered throughout the letters of Paul; they are found also in the book of Revelation. The emphasis is on praising God for who he is and what he has done for humanity through his Son, Jesus the Christ. The preceding passage from Philippians exemplifies such a hymn; in it the *affective* (expressive, emotive) and directive functions of communication are foregrounded. The lyrical nature of Philippians 2:6–11 serves to further heighten the divine theme. That is, through the rhythm, power, and beauty of the language the audience is attracted to the subject matter and a greater impression is made upon their perception, understanding, and memory.

Creeds, which are summary confessions of faith, do not manifest quite as many poetic qualities as hymns and they make less use of figurative language. However, they are often composed in parallel-line arrangements that encourage a rhythmic expression when spoken or recited aloud. The creedal statements found in the Pauline letters tend to be marked by four features:

1. a verb of confession (e.g., ὁμολογέω) or transmission (e.g., παραδίδωμι)
2. a conjunction showing that indirect speech follows (e.g., ὅτι ‘that’)
3. the phrases of testimony uttered in rhythmic sequence
4. some point of special emphasis or an element of major contrast which the confession highlights

This fourth feature can be seen in 1 Corinthians 15:3–8:

³ παρέδωκα γὰρ ὑμῖν ἐν πρώτοις,
ὃ καὶ παρέλαβον,
ὅτι Χριστὸς ἀπέθανεν ὑπὲρ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν
κατὰ τὰς γραφάς
⁴ καὶ ὅτι ἐτάφη καὶ ὅτι ἐγήγερται τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ τρίτῃ
κατὰ τὰς γραφάς
⁵ καὶ ὅτι ὤφθη Κηφᾶ εἶτα τοῖς δώδεκα·
⁶ ἔπειτα ὤφθη ἐπάνω πεντακοσίοις ἀδελφοῖς ἐφάπαξ,
ἐξ ὧν οἱ πλείονες μένουσιν ἕως ἄρτι,
τινὲς δὲ ἐκοιμήθησαν·
⁷ ἔπειτα ὤφθη Ἰακώβῳ, εἶτα τοῖς ἀποστόλοις πᾶσιν·
⁸ ἔσχατον δὲ πάντων ὡσπερὶ τῷ ἐκτρώματι ὤφθη **καὶ μοί**.

³ For what I received I passed on to you
as of first importance:

that Christ died for our sins
according to the Scriptures,

⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day
according to the Scriptures,

⁵ and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve.

⁶ After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time,
most of whom are still living,
though some have fallen asleep.

- ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles,
⁸ and last of all he appeared **to me also**,
as to one abnormally born.

Where does the climax of this confession occur, and how is it marked in the discourse structure? Look at the Greek text, if possible.

How would you distinguish this passage in YL in order to highlight its important structural and thematic function?

Do you have a particular genre of literature (orature) that would be most suitable to express a confession of faith such as this? If so, describe its stylistic features.

For reflection, research, and response:

1. Identify all the poetic features that you can see (and hear!) in the “Hymn of Mary” (Luke 1:46–55). Choose three of them and explain how they function to heighten the communication of Mary’s words. Tell how you would translate them with equivalent communicative effect in YL.

“My soul glorifies the Lord
⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
⁴⁸ for he has been mindful
of the humble state of his servant.
From now on all generations will call me blessed,
⁴⁹ for the Mighty One has done great things for me –
holy is his name.
⁵⁰ His mercy extends to those who fear him,
from generation to generation.
⁵¹ He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;
he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.
⁵² He has brought down rulers from their thrones
but has lifted up the humble.
⁵³ He has filled the hungry with good things
but has sent the rich away empty.
⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel,
remembering to be merciful
⁵⁵ to Abraham and his descendants forever,
even as he said to our fathers.”

2. What is the literary genre of 1 Corinthians 11:23–26? (Both the Greek and the NIV rendition are presented below.) Specify three of its prominent poetic style markers and suggest functional equivalents of these in YL. Then propose a suitable poetic or prose format in which to display the structure of this important passage. Finally, prepare a *LiFE* translation of this text and give a literal back-translation into English.

²³ Ἐγὼ γὰρ παρέλαβον ἀπὸ τοῦ κυρίου,
ὃ καὶ παρέδωκα ὑμῖν,
ὅτι ὁ κύριος Ἰησοῦς ἐν τῇ νυκτὶ ἧ παρεδίδοτο ἔλαβεν ἄρτον
²⁴ καὶ εὐχαριστήσας ἔκλασεν καὶ εἶπεν,
Τοῦτό μού ἐστιν τὸ σῶμα τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν·
τοῦτο ποιεῖτε εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν ἀνάμνησιν.
²⁵ ὡσαύτως καὶ τὸ ποτήριον μετὰ τὸ δειπνήσαι λέγων,
Τοῦτο τὸ ποτήριον ἡ καινὴ διαθήκη ἐστὶν ἐν τῷ ἐμῷ αἵματι·
τοῦτο ποιεῖτε, ὡσάκις ἐὰν πίνητε, εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν ἀνάμνησιν.
²⁶ ὡσάκις γὰρ ἐὰν ἐσθίητε τὸν ἄρτον τοῦτον καὶ τὸ ποτήριον πίνητε,
τὸν θάνατον τοῦ κυρίου καταγγέλλετε ἄχρις οὗ ἔλθῃ.

²³ For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.” ²⁵ In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.” ²⁶ For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

3. Both the Greek and the RSV texts of Revelation 19:6b–8 are presented below. Point out the most notable stylistic features of this passage. What is the genre of this text? Why do you say so? Would you be able to render this same passage poetically and purposefully in YL? If so, mention several of the techniques you would use.

Ἀλληλουϊά,

ὅτι ἐβασίλευσεν κύριος

ὁ θεὸς [ἡμῶν] ὁ παντοκράτωρ.

⁷ χαίρωμεν καὶ ἀγαλλιῶμεν

καὶ δώσωμεν τὴν δόξαν αὐτῷ,

ὅτι ἦλθεν ὁ γάμος τοῦ ἀρνίου

καὶ ἡ γυνὴ αὐτοῦ ἠτοίμασεν ἑαυτήν

⁸ καὶ ἐδόθη αὐτῇ ἵνα περιβάληται

βύσσινον λαμπρὸν καθαρὸν·

τὸ γὰρ βύσσινον τὰ δικαιώματα τῶν ἁγίων ἐστίν.

“Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns.

⁷ Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory,
for the marriage of the Lamb has come,
and his Bride has made herself ready;

⁸ it was granted her to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure” –
for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

What do you make of the final line of the preceding passage? What purpose does it serve?

How would you mark this line in YL so that it does not read (or sound) like part of the hymn?

4. The text below is Colossians 1:15-20. To help you discover the main literary features of this passage prepare a sequential discourse segmentation chart (as you did for Philemon), using the headings for each column on the highlighted line following the English translation below. Write a summary in which you describe the form and function of these different stylistic techniques and tell how they bring out the text’s special literary and religious nature. Re-format both the Greek text and the English translation (NIV) in a manner that better represents the genre of this passage; in the case of the English, you will have to re-punctuate and re-capitalize it as well.²² Finally, make a *LiFE* rendering of this passage in YL along with a literal English back-translation.

²² “Rhetoric, structure, and pace are all at work in modern English punctuation, whose rules were established by the end of the eighteenth century. Although structure is the strongest rationale today, punctuation remains a largely intuitive art. A writer can often choose among several correct ways to punctuate a passage, each with a slightly different rhythm and meaning” (Lupton 2003:7). *Can the punctuation be used for such a literary-rhetorical purpose in YL? Explain why—or why*

¹⁵ ὅς ἐστιν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου, πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως, ¹⁶ ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, τὰ ὄρατα καὶ τὰ ἀόρατα, εἴτε θρόνοι εἴτε κυριότητες εἴτε ἀρχαὶ εἴτε ἐξουσίαι· τὰ πάντα δι’ αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν ἔκτισται· ¹⁷ καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν πρὸ πάντων καὶ τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκεν, ¹⁸ καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν ἡ κεφαλὴ τοῦ σώματος τῆς ἐκκλησίας· ὅς ἐστιν ἀρχή, πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν, ἵνα γένηται ἐν πᾶσιν αὐτὸς πρωτεύων, ¹⁹ ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ εὐδόκησεν πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα κατοικῆσαι ²⁰ καὶ δι’ αὐτοῦ ἀποκαταλλάξαι τὰ πάντα εἰς αὐτόν, εἰρηνοποιήσας διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ, [δι’ αὐτοῦ] εἴτε τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς εἴτε τὰ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς.

¹⁵ he is the image of the invisible God the firstborn over all creation ¹⁶ for by him all things were created things in heaven and on earth visible and invisible whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities all things were created by him and for him ¹⁷ he is before all things and in him all things hold together ¹⁸ and he is the head of the body the church he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead so that in everything he might have the supremacy ¹⁹ for God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things whether things on earth or things in heaven by making peace through his blood shed on the cross

ref.	pre-verb2	pre-verb1	VERB	post-verb1	post-verb2	post-verb3
15a	ὅς	ἐστιν	εἰκὼν	τοῦ θεοῦ	τοῦ ἀοράτου,	
15b			[ἐστιν]	πρωτότοκος	πάσης κτίσεως,...	

5. In all of the preceding examples, we have analyzed poetic NT texts and asked how we might render these poetically in our mother tongue translation. The following is an interesting illustration of quite a different literary approach. The excerpts below are taken from an article that documents the poetic-theological genius of late President of Tanzania, *Mwalimu* (“Teacher”) Julius Nyerere, who translated the *prose* of the four Gospels into a popular *poetic* form of Swahili. Study this example (from Philip Noss and Peter Renju, forthcoming) and consider its possible relevance and application to your wider translation setting, e.g., as a special portion for youth, for a dramatic stage presentation, or as the basis for a musical rendition of selected familiar texts:

not. If not, can anything take the place of punctuation in YL, for example, to show where major and minor pauses should occur in your translation when it is read aloud?

Up to a third of the Old Testament is written in poetic form. Without attempting to determine why each Biblical author resorted to what may be identified as poetry, there is no doubt that some of the motivation for such literary rendering was emotive, that is, for the creation of impact. Another purpose would have been to serve as an aid to memory. Mwalimu Nyerere, seeking to accomplish similar purposes among his people, recognized that poetry is the most effective means of reaching the people with the best Message of all. He therefore sought to engage his readers and listeners through the well-known and popular sub-genre of *tenzi*. In this form, the message of the Bible can be recited, sung, and retained in memory.

This was the poetic form that was the most appropriate for President Nyerere's translation of Holy Scripture. It was a familiar form that was suitable for the development of long and serious themes. The structure was flexible and relatively simple to manipulate. A single line of eight syllables was long enough to express a complete idea, but short enough to allow for the formation of phrases in creating stanzas.

Nevertheless, the poet-translator Nyerere found himself obliged to stretch the limits both of poetic form and of translation accuracy. He maintained the Biblical format of verses and chapters and sections. Therefore, instead of strictly adhering to the four-line stanza of the classical *tenzi*, he allowed himself the freedom to create stanzas of as few as two lines and as many as twelve lines, depending on the content and length of the verses that he was rendering in Kiswahili. He also abandoned the traditional rhyming scheme in favor of rhyming couplets. Although the majority of his stanzas have an even number of lines, some stanzas have an odd number of lines. In these cases, the final syllables of the last three lines in the stanza rhyme with each other. The translator did, however, strictly adhere to the pattern of eight measures per line.

Given the long history of the *tenzi* tradition, a wide variety of devices are available that enable the composer to remain with the prosodic constraints imposed by the poetic form that he has adopted... These devices are present at all levels of language: phonology, morphology, grammar, syntax, and lexicon.

[The following is Mwalimu Nyerere's Swahili version of John 3:16.]

<i>wa maana Bwana Mungu</i>	Because Lord God
<i>Alipenda ulimwengu,</i>	He loved the world,
<i>Akamtoa Mwanawe</i>	He gave Son-his
<i>Wa pekee auawe,</i>	Only that he be killed,
<i>Ili atayemwamini</i>	So that he who him believes (will believe)
<i>Asiangamie sini,</i>	He not perish never,
<i>Bali awe na uzima</i>	But he be with life
<i>Unaodumu daima.</i>	It which remains continually.

[The following are two additional examples from an appendix, as translated and analyzed by Noss.]

Matt. 7:26c

<i>Yeye ni kama mjinga,</i>	He is like a fool,
<i>Mjenga kwenye mchanga:</i>	A builder where there is sand:

Analysis:

<i>Yeye ni kama <u>mjinga</u>,</i>	anadiplosis and word play
<i><u>Mjenga</u> kwenye mchanga:</i>	apposition

Matt. 7:27c

<i>Na nyumba ikaanguka</i>	And the house fell
<i>Anguko kubwa hakika.</i>	[And] the fall [was] great truly.

Analysis:

<i>Na nyumba <u>ikaanguka</u></i>	anadiplosis, enjambement
<i>(Na) <u>Anguko</u> (lilikuwa) kubwa hakika.</i>	asyndeton, ellipsis

Following the Swahili examples above, try to render these same passages poetically in YL. Describe the poetic devices that make these texts sound “poetic” in YL. Can you think of a local situation of use in which this type of a translation might be very effective? Describe the public (oral) “performance setting” that you have in mind.

13 Martin Luther's Hermeneutics—A few thoughts

(Noted in commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation – October 31, 1517)

In a 1964 article in *Theology Today*, Gerhard Ebeling laid out some of the hermeneutical directions found in Luther's early writings. He focuses on three areas where Luther displays both some continuity with the terminology and problems of medieval interpretation, but also breaks free in significant ways.

At the beginning of his early treatise on the Psalms, Luther is still functioning within the constraints of the medieval fourfold method, applying it more "intensively" and more "on principle" than other exegetes of his time. Yet, he fundamentally shifts the ground of the fourfold by arguing that the literal sense is already a Christological sense. The "I" of the Psalms – even the penitential Psalms – is Christ, and from this Christological-literal sense, Luther develops the other senses so that they uncover a theology of the cross embedded in the text.

As Ebeling puts it, "to connect the psalms with Christ in the *sensus literalis* promoted a christology which clearly emphasized the characteristics of the true humanity of Christ up to the God-forsakenness on the cross, thus a theology of the cross. And, to make the *sensus literalis* the basis for the other interpretative possibilities of the fourfold sense of Scripture made the christological starting-point of the theology of the cross central for ecclesiology (*sensus allegoricus*), soteriology (*sensus tropologicus*), and eschatology (*sensus anagogicus*). As a result, the *sensus tropologicus* did not aim toward man's deed but toward faith as the actual manner in which man responds to Christ. This means that Christ, tropologically understood, is faith."

Ebeling also examines the difference between Luther's understanding of letter/spirit and earlier views. Like Origen, Luther reads the letter/spirit distinction as a distinction between two worlds, but these two worlds are interpreted not as referring to a cosmic Platonic dualism but as an existential dualism, man *coram Deo* and man before the world:

"In overcoming the conception of Origen with regard to 2 Cor. 3: 6, the interpretation of Holy Scripture is not concerned with the disclosure of an allegorical hiddenness, but with the revelation of God in the hiddenness under the opposite. Thus the interpretation of Holy Scripture is concerned with the theology of the cross as the substance of Holy Scriptures, the significance of which must be established through exegesis. This new stamp which Luther presses upon the understanding of letter and spirit is the preparation of Luther's later distinction between law and gospel. The traditional structure of the twofold sense of scripture is thus principally destroyed. Luther does continue to use the allegorical method in a limited way as a means of decorative application. But, in the correct understanding, the one, plain, grammatical sense is the truly theological one which includes within itself the duality of law and gospel in its orientation to the substance of Holy Scripture; or, to say it more exactly, the basic task of theological hermeneutics occurs in the distinction between law and gospel. To the degree to which Luther's distinction of law and gospel differs from the scholastic differentiation

of the natural and the supernatural, Luther's understanding of the doctrine of the two kingdoms changes, too, in comparison to the Middle Ages."

Finally, Ebeling finds a crucial difference between medieval interpreters and Luther in their conceptions of the very purpose of hermeneutics. For Thomas, the big linguistic problem of theology was finding language adequate to God: "With reference to God one can only speak by approximation, since all linguistic possibilities are contingent upon space and time and hence cannot describe God as such. The very structure of a sentence which is by necessity determined by a time-word is contradictory to the nature of God."

Ebeling connects this to the relative priority of love over faith, and of sacrament over word, among medievals: "Theologically, the inadequacy of linguistic communication can be felt especially well. The Catholic-scholastic tradition shows this in two ways: First, the true means of grace is not the word but the sacrament. For the word keeps man at a distance from God and God at a distance from man. The sacrament, however, unifies man with the divine itself. Grace is infused into man in form of a created reality, as habitus of the soul; it becomes a property (virtus) of man. And secondly, the highest so-called theological virtue and the very heart of the reality of grace is, correspondingly, not faith as expression of distance, but love as the expression of the unification which overcomes distance."

The subordination of the word/faith combination is part and parcel of the view that "the word basically considered as weak and dark. It is inadequate and must be explained. Hermeneutics in this understanding is, to a certain extent, the result of this weakness of language and, as a therapeutic measure, it is simultaneously the evidence for that weakness and darkness of language."

For Luther, theology does not aim primarily at descriptions of God but at attempting to expose man's condition, to announce God's judgment over sinners. In this context, "the word-event in human language is the most suitable form of God's communication with man. Hence the relationship of God and man is a relationship of word and faith. This does not contest the sacrament, but re-interprets the sacrament as one aspect of the word-event."

This also has soteriological import. Luther's approach does not "eliminate love but it refers love to its proper place as the fruit of faith. For faith and love are to each other as doer and deed, as person and work. And the decisive question is what constitutes man's being as person, i.e., the question of man's being before God. Here the distance of distinction between man and God is affirmed and considered as something in keeping with true communication."

The goal of the interpreter for Luther is to enable the word to do its work, not to unveil hidden mysteries: "This understanding of language is not defined from the point of view of signification but from the viewpoint of the word-event which must be accounted for and which, in turn, enables such accountability. The hermeneutical result is, therefore, that the very word as such is of hermeneutical importance and is able to illumine, to bring about clarity, and to give life. The hermeneutical task can only consist of the fact that we devote ourselves to the service or

the word-event in such a way that the word becomes truly word, and that it occurs as pure word in the fullness of its power.”

One noteworthy stray comment from earlier in the article: “In keeping with this is his conscious attention to the specifically biblical use of language in distinction from the theological terminology which was philosophically tinted. Furthermore he attempted to establish a language, free from the scholastic structure of language, which would be closer to the subject and more suitable for it.”

Overall, Ebeling’s article helps to show how central hermeneutics is to the Reformation, and how crucial was Luther’s effort to refurbish theological language by speaking as the Bible speaks.

(Read more at <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/leithart/2007/03/luthers-hermeneutics/#uPoZr0jThXIvPROR.99>)

History is full of giants of the faith who have immensely helped the church interpret the Bible properly. One giant in particular stands out: Martin Luther. Along with John Calvin, Luther is perhaps most loved for his radical Christ-centeredness when it comes to Bible interpretation. He’s prominent because God used him at such a vital crossroads in church history. As one of the driving forces of the Reformation, Luther helped Christians refocus biblical hermeneutics back to the text of Scripture and away from the authority of the church. Let’s briefly look at his hermeneutical method.

Luther’s method for interpretation, if named anything, may be termed “historical interpretation” because he rejected allegory.[1] More accurately, Luther’s method may be labeled Christological. He believed that the sole content of Scripture is Christ. Christ is the incarnate Word of God, therefore the Bible can only be God’s word if it deals with Christ.[2] Luther further held that “all Scripture is interpreted by its relationship to the gospel.”[3] In other words, every text must be seen in light of God’s redemptive work in the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Thus every text relates to the gospel either by promising, foreshadowing, proclaiming, or reflecting upon the person and work of Christ. The modern interpreter is helped by Luther’s Christological hermeneutic because the gospel is timeless. Since Christ lived, died, and rose for believers past, present, and future, the gospel is immediately applicable to the modern reader. The gospel, therefore, is the applicational bridge from the ancient text to the modern reader.

Luther led the charge for what is called *sola scriptura* (Scripture alone), the “key foundational premise of the Reformation.”[4] *Sola scriptura* holds that only Scripture holds divine authority for the life and conduct of Christians. Scripture authenticates itself and the church, not the other way around as the papacy supposed. Because Scripture is the final authority for Christians, its message is not regionalized or relegated to a certain time period. Modern interpreters must acknowledge the Bible is authoritative for their life even in the twenty-first century.

As Augustine taught more than a millennium before, Scripture interprets itself which implies that Scripture is clear in itself.[5] Here Luther leads the modern interpreter to be confident that Scripture is living, active, and harmonious.

Finally, one valuable element of Luther's method of interpretation is that he accounted for the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the interpreter. The Holy Spirit enables Christians to understand accurately what a passage teaches about Christ.[6] Because of this, just like Luther in the 1500s, readers today can be confident that God has provided through his Spirit the ability to objectively understand and subjectively experience the truths of Scripture.

[1] William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, Robert L. Hubbard, Jr. *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*. Rev. ed. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 47.

[2] Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2006), 185.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Klein et al. *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 47.

[5] Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics*, 185.

[6] Klein et al. *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 47.

<https://jamespruch.com/2012/05/17/how-martin-luther-interpreted-the-bible/>

SEE ALSO:

“The Significance of Luther's Hermeneutics for the Protestant Reformation”

Originally published in *Concordia Theological Monthly* Volume: 24 Number: 4 in 1953, p. 241-261. (<http://media.ctsfw.edu/Text/ViewDetails/6604>)

“Martin Luther's Concept of Biblical Interpretation in Historical Perspective”

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“Martin Luther's Christological Hermeneutics”

David S. Dockery, *Grace Theological Journal*

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14. Proper Biblical Hermeneutics—A Synopsis

(By Prof. Paul O. Wendland, 2015)

14.2 Works from the Presupposition of Faith

1. Passages have a *scriptural* context

- Unity/Verbally inspired—no competing voices, but complementary voices. This follows from all the passages which ascribe one divine Voice speaking through every prophetic voice. For this same reason it is also legitimate and proper to consider:
- All that Scripture has to say on a subject. The context of Scripture is not some system of doctrine or confessional statement determining how we are to read the Scriptures. It is rather our practice of letting Scripture interpret Scripture, allowing the clear wording of clear passages shed light on those less clear. The analogy of faith = “the sum total of all the Scriptures have to say *on a particular subject or doctrine* (e.g. the doctrine of Christ). It is not an appeal to a doctrinal system, but the narrower and wider contexts of Scripture as it speaks to a particular subject.
- Christ is at the center of both old and new Testaments

Luke 24:44 (GNT4th)

Εἶπεν δὲ πρὸς αὐτούς, Οὗτοι οἱ λόγοι μου οὓς ἐλάλησα πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἔτι ὄντων ὑμῖν, ὅτι δεῖ πληρωθῆναι πάντα τὰ γεγραμμένα ἐν τῷ νόμῳ Μωϋσέως καὶ τοῖς προφήταις καὶ ψαλμοῖς περὶ ἐμοῦ.

- Law and Gospel are the two chief doctrines:

John 1:17 (GNT4th)

ὅτι ὁ νόμος διὰ Μωϋσέως ἐδόθη, ἡ χάρις καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐγένετο.

Romans 3:20–23 (GNT4th)

διότι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου οὐ δικαιωθήσεται πᾶσα σὰρξ ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ, διὰ γὰρ νόμου ἐπίγνωσις ἁμαρτίας. Νυνὶ δὲ χωρὶς νόμου δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ πεφανέρωται μαρτυρουμένη ὑπὸ τοῦ νόμου καὶ τῶν προφητῶν, δικαιοσύνη δὲ θεοῦ διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰς πάντας τοὺς πιστεύοντας. οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶν διαστολή, πάντες γὰρ ἥμαρτον καὶ ὑστεροῦνται τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ

14.2 Practices a proper historical-grammatical Hermeneutics

2. Passages have an *historical* context
 - We will attend to the author, recipients, social, cultural, economic, educational, religious, political, geographical, and agricultural situation in Biblical times.
 - This includes knowing the time in the unfolding of God’s plan of salvation when a writing took place (Hebrews 1:1-2; Gal 3:16-4:4).
 - What the passage *means* is discerned in what it meant/could have meant ‘there and then.’ It must be *applied* to the ‘here and now,’ but its meaning is not *derived* from the ‘here and now’ context. To discover meaning, we must always ask, “What did God mean to say to the original recipients of the message?”
 - We will give primacy to the historical context revealed in the Scriptures themselves, and let this guide how we will receive the historical reconstructions and interpretations of latter day scholars.
 - We will not allow a human “construct” or interpretation of a situation in history—developed from extra-biblical data, or that is a product of a philosophical/doctrinal system—make the text go away, that is, void the plain meaning of the text.
 - We will allow the historical background to add depth and color to our understanding of what the words are plainly saying.
3. Passage occur in a *literary* (written) document:
 - Words derive their meaning from common usage and from their use in context:
 - ✓ As a word is used commonly within a language, it may have a range of several possible meanings. As an isolated lexeme, a word thus “comes” to a specific context with “an open mind” that is, with all possible meanings in play.
 - ✓ But once used in a sentence the word’s range of possible meanings is quickly limited by its collocates.²³
 - That’s why careful concordance and dictionary work needs to be done, especially on the most important words.
 - We assume that the Biblical writers were not writing in a secret code, but to be understood by their listeners.

²³ Words that occur with it in the sentence. “Hand” may be a noun or a verb. In the sentence “Hand me the pliers.” It is clearly a verb with the meaning, “grasp and give.” Cf “day” = period of light (opp. “darkness”); indefinite period of time (‘in my day...’); a roughly 24 hour cycle of light and darkness. See use in Genesis. Collocates make clear what the word’s meaning in the specific context is.

- Thus the primary place for finding meaning is at the phrase or sentence level, not the word level. Often too much is made of individual words, either by false etymologizing or by treating words as if they were concepts (cf Barr’s “illegitimate totality transfer=what a word means anywhere it must also mean in this particular place under consideration)
- Careful attention must be given to studying a sentence’s grammar.
- At the same time, sentences occur in paragraphs, paragraphs occur in books, books occur in the context of the Holy Scriptures. Going up and down the ladder of these “contexts” (seeing a verse in its immediate, wider and, finally, Scriptural context) is what we mean by the hermeneutical circle.
- We may legitimately distinguish forms, patterns, discourse features, and genres
- So far as Greek is concerned, we attend especially to:
 - ✓ Identifying parts of speech (conjunctions, particles, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, nouns)
 - ✓ The presence or absence of the article
 - ✓ Verb tenses
 - ✓ Participial use
 - ✓ Word order (displacement, front-shifting)
 - ✓ Word patterns
 - ❖ ABABAB (alternating)
 - ❖ ABBA (chiastic)
 - ❖ ⋈BCDEF⋈
- We may legitimately do word study from extra-Biblical sources, as well as discourse, narrative, and genre studies from extra-Biblical sources
- None of these “studies,” whether they are done purely done within the circle of the text/canon, or including materials from outside of the circle of the Scriptures, whether looking from the discourse level down to the word level, dare set aside what the text is plainly saying (e.g. Udo Schnelle’s analysis of John’s ‘placement’ of the cleansing of the temple; word studies on BAPTIZW)
- No other text, context, paradigm, worldview, agent, or authority can be allowed to add to, take away from, or change the plain meaning of the text, which is the Divine Author’s intended meaning.

14.3 Practices Exegesis (drawing from) not Eisegesis (reading into)

- What’s needed (according to 2 Peter 1:20-21) is not a creative interpreter
2 Peter 1:20–21 (GNT4th)

²⁰ τοῦτο πρῶτον γινώσκοντες ὅτι πᾶσα προφητεία γραφῆς ἰδίας ἐπιλύσεως οὐ γίνεται.²¹ οὐ γὰρ θελήματι ἀνθρώπου ἠνέχθη προφητεία ποτέ, ἀλλὰ ὑπὸ πνεύματος ἁγίου φερόμενοι ἐλάλησαν ἀπὸ θεοῦ ἄνθρωποι.

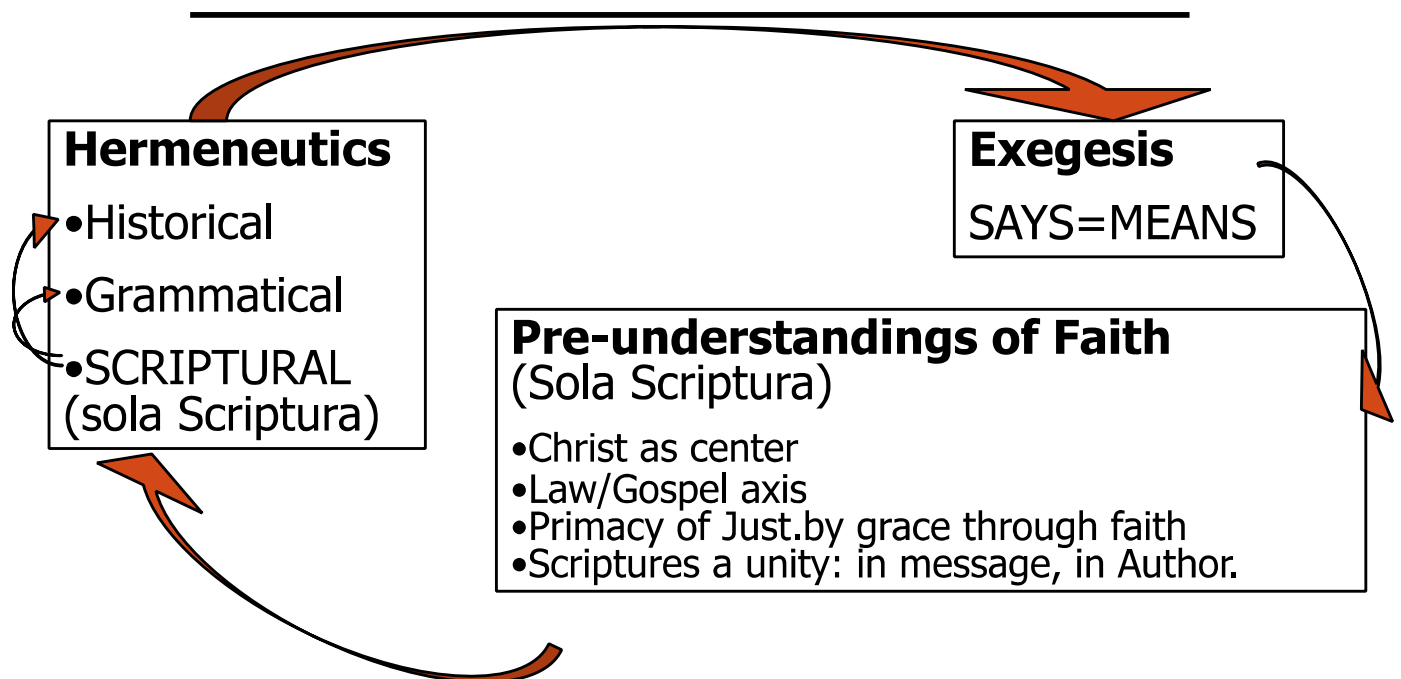
- but someone who attends carefully to what the divinely-inspired text is saying, letting historical narrative be historical narrative, poetry be poetry, parable be parable, letter be letter, etc.
- No prophetic Word is capable of an individualized interpretation: it neither came about as a prophet's individualized interpretation, nor is it to be understood from one's own, individual perspective.
- *The easiest thing in interpretation is to find what you're looking for. The hardest thing is to observe what is there.*

Theological Approach to Interpretation

Presupposition of Faith

ψυχικὸς δὲ ἄνθρωπος οὐ δέχεται τὰ τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ θεοῦ... ἡμεῖς δὲ νοῦν Χριστοῦ ἔχομεν.

(1Co 2:14-16)



14.4 SUMMARY

14.4.1 HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- Author and his situation
- Recipients and their situation
- Social, cultural, economic, educational, religious, political, geographical, agricultural situations
- Knowing at what point in *God's Kingdom* (the reign of *God* in history) the words or the prophecies were written.
 - Adam to Noah
 - Time of Patriarchs
(Abraham's covenant of grace)
 - Time of Moses
(Covenant of law)
 - Time of Kings
 - Exile and post-Exile
 - Time of Christ
 - After Pentecost

14.4.2 LITERARY CONTEXT

- Word, sentence, section, book (line of thought)
- Word:
 - Parts of speech:
 - Nouns; adjectives; adverbs;
 - verbs; participles
 - definite article; connecting particles;
 - Common usage:
 - establishes a words "range of meanings"
 - usage in entire book,
 - usage in all works by same author,
 - usage in all of Scripture.
 - In the outermost circle word's use in extra-biblical literature. Yet remember: Biblical writers are writing to communicate with their contemporaries.
 - Immediate context:
 - Narrows a word's meaning down
 - Collocates: the word 'day' in English and in Hebrew can mean many things; when combined with "evening came, morning came, day one," it must refer to a normal temporal day much as we know them.

- Etymology is not very useful
 - Except to build vocabulary;
 - Identify rare word meanings;
 - Common usage always trumps etymology.
- Syntax: (sentence, paragraph, discourse level.)
 - Article (or its lack)
 - Verb tenses
 - Participles
 - Cases, prepositional phrases, identifying subjects and predicates
 - Conjunctions and particles
 - Word order (displacement—any shift from the usual; front-shifting)
 - Word patterns that give clues as to paragraph and discourse units
 - Repetition of words, thoughts
 - ABABABAB (alternation)
 - ABBA (chiastic)
 - ABDCEFA (*inclusio*)
 - ABA (intercalation—'sandwich')
 - •Careful attention must be given to studying a sentence's syntax.
 - •At the same time, sentences occur in paragraphs, paragraphs occur in books, books occur in the context of the Holy Scriptures.
 - Going up and down the ladder of these "contexts" (seeing a verse in its immediate, wider and, finally, Scriptural context) is what we mean by the hermeneutical circle.
 - •We may legitimately distinguish forms, patterns, discourse features, and genres
- Genre
 - Apocalyptic
 - Poetry
 - Epistle
 - Narrative
 - Prophecy and teaching
 - Parables
 - Often mixed types in single books
 - Don't treat one form as if another
 - Determined by immediate context, clear witness of Scripture
- Handling figures of speech
 - It's purpose: to teach and increase emotional impact
 - Figures of comparison (metaphor)
 - Note point of comparison
 - Figures of association (metonymy)
 - Type and symbol
 - Looking for major Scriptural themes and archetypes:

- Exile and return
- Exodus
- New creation
- Shepherds
- Rivers
- Zion, Jerusalem

14.4.3 SCRIPTURAL CONTEXT

- The nature and the content of this text is like no other in the world. The Scriptures are to be taken as a unity because they are:
 - A revelation from the most-high God to man
 - Holy Spirit-breathed into God's chosen prophets and apostles - every word of it.
 - Without error, whether viewed in its entirety or in any of its parts because God, its Author, cannot lie.
 - Centering in Christ and
 - The message of God's justification of the whole world of sinners in him
 - Convicting us with Law; consoling us with Gospel
 - Exemplified in the NT quotations of the OT
- We believe this because this is the plain testimony the Scripture gives of itself. This is how it presents itself to the reader.
- Only Scripture can reliably interpret Scripture
 - Studying the immediate and wider context
 - Parallel passages
 - The above two points = the hermeneutical circle for Lutherans. Looking at each word, each sentence, each paragraph, each larger unit of discourse, each book until we see a passage in the light of the entirety of the Scriptures. Moving up the contextual hierarchy and going back down again.
 - The analogy of faith = all that the Scriptures have to say on a given subject. (Not = all the articles of faith taken as a unit).

No other context, agent, text, paradigm, worldview, or authority can ever be allowed to add to, take away, or change the plain meaning of the text, which is the Divine Author's intended meaning.

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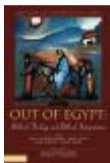
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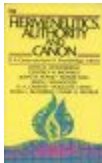
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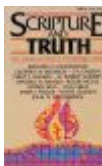
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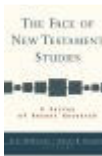


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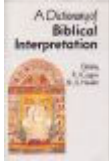
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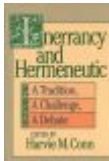
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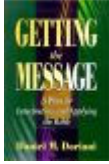
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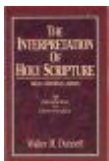


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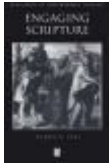
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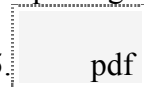
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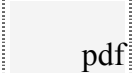
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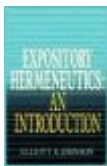


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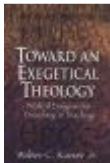


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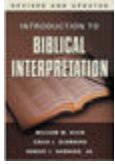


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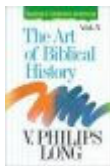
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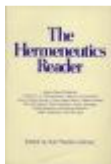
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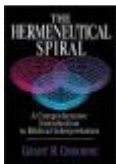


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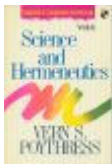
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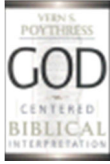
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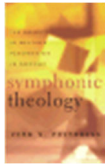
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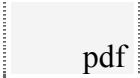
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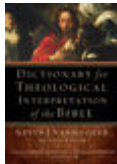
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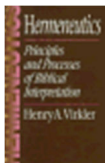
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